

FALL 2020

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PHOTO BY GEORGIANNA DECARMINE



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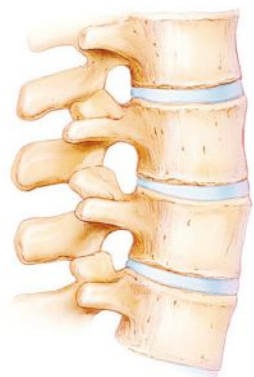
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1001 University Drive • State College, PA 16801
PH 814-867-2222 • FX 814-278-1303
centeredmag.com

PUBLISHER
Marlene Sample

EDITOR
Sarah Rafacz
editorial@centeredmag.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
R Thomas Berner

ART DESIGNER
Tracy Lee Miller

POETRY EDITOR
Steven Deutsch

CONTRIBUTORS
Georgianna DeCarmine
Jackie Naginey Hook
Mary McGuire
Abby Minor
Monica Montag
Zack Papalia
David Pencek
Kate Staley
Jennifer Anne Tucker

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES
Corinna Anskis
corinna@statecollegemagazine.com

Rick Isenberg Jr.
scmsales1@statecollegemagazine.com

Brooke Watson
brooke@statecollegemagazine.com

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editor's note

fall 2020



PHOTO BY JOHN MARK RAFACZ

It's easy to fall into a pattern of forcing yourself to be productive. In our culture, down time is sometimes viewed as a negative. Why take a break and relax when you could accomplish something instead?

I've always been weird about unstructured time. I need to be doing something, anything. I like to keep myself busy. The busier, the better.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced me to take a breath. When *Centered* and *State College Magazine* were on publishing hiatus during the months of April and May, I had a lot of free time. More free time than I had had in years. I was worried. What on earth was I going to do with all that time? Be alone with my thoughts? As someone with anxiety, it wasn't exactly a welcome idea.

How lucky I am that I only had to worry about filling my free time.

The pandemic has caused massive disruptions to many people's lives — losing jobs, wages or housing; struggling to keep businesses afloat; being scared of or becoming sick with the virus; losing loved ones.

Taking a rest during this time was a luxury not afforded to many. I felt guilty about feeling worried about it.

It turned out to be such an important time in my life. I was forced to deal with my mental health in a serious way, something I had been putting off for, well, my entire life.

This issue of *Centered* focuses on rest, recovery and coping with the continuing stress of the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially during this time, it's critical to take breaks, breathe and rest when you can. As difficult as it might seem, we have to prioritize our mental health and take care of others so that we can continue to find joy and *live* in these uncertain times.

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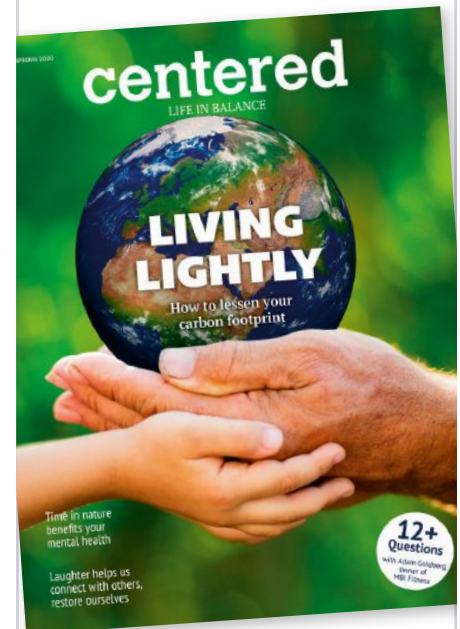
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The Wayside, Daucus carota

BY ABBY MINOR

The umbel and the pasture.
The reaving and the ridge.
The snapshot and the spirit.
The lily and the lens.

The distance and the daughter.
The button and the bract.
The cure and the common name.
The ovary and the grass.

The lace and the long light.
The daughter and the dead.
The blood and the button.
The gaze and the breast.

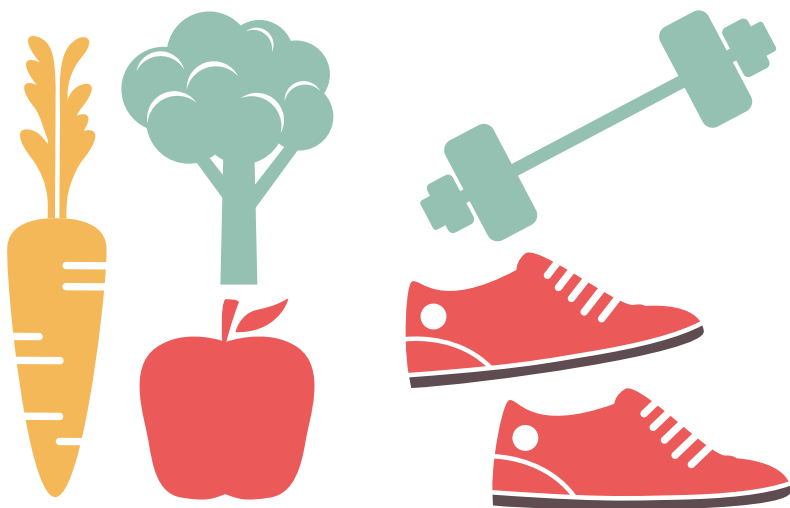
The season and the stem.
The winnowing and the among.
The chicory and the child.
The egg and the sun.

The breath and the dark blossom.
The map and the fallow.
The fruitful and the fence row.
The obedient and the wild.

The seed and the pocket.
The aperture and the collar.
The petal and the haze.
The little book and the ridge.

Photographer/herbalist Jennifer Anne Tucker and poet Abby Minor collaborate around issues of gender and sexuality, ecology, spirit and the politics of escape. This current collaboration is for Fem-Fusion: Visual Art + the Written Word, an exhibition for the Art Alliance of Central Pennsylvania scheduled for summer 2021.





Strengthening Your Immunity

Now more than ever, it's important to build up your immune system.

BY ZACK PAPALIA

IT is no secret that regular exercise and healthy eating are key to a myriad of positive health outcomes. From the physical and physiological to the social and the psychological, few things have as wide-ranging impacts as proper fitness and nutrition. One area that often goes overlooked, however, is the impact of these behaviors on immunity. Now, perhaps more than ever, the importance of maintaining a strong and resilient immune system is taking center stage. While it is important to understand that immune response is a highly complex system, with no one single precursor, there are simple things we can do each and every day to ensure our body is in the best position possible to fight off infection and disease.

FUELING YOUR DEFENSES

When thinking through your diet, keep it simple. Focus on consuming real food. Fruits, vegetables and whole grains are

all full of vitamins and minerals essential in building and maintaining the body's defenses. Also, bodies digest and absorb nutrients better when they are coming from real food rather than supplements. It is important to focus on healthy eating overall, rather than thinking a couple pills in the evening will make up for a day of poor nutrition. In addition, the fewer processed foods the better. Foods high in processed fats, added sugars and artificial ingredients have all been linked to increases in systemic inflammation, a condition that weakens and inhibits your body's overall immunity.

OUTRUN INFECTION

Regular exercise has been shown to significantly reduce your risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and a slew of other major chronic diseases. Many of these chronic conditions are considered risk factors for numerous infections, such as COVID-19. If your

body is already preoccupied battling chronic disease, it is less ready and able to fend off new infection. Even as little as 30 minutes of walking each day has been shown to reduce your risk of chronic disease and benefit your immune system.

AMASSING MUSCLE

Beyond the immune impacts of overall aerobic health and physical fitness, recent research suggests that muscle mass may also play a significant role in immune function. Specifically, when the body is battling disease or infection, muscles may act as amino acid reservoirs, providing the building blocks necessary to support and strengthen your immune system during prolonged infections. As such, regular strength training may not only help strengthen your muscles and bones but your immune system as well.

Smoking, alcohol consumption, sleep and stress all play a major role in immune function too. It is important to understand that the immune system is a complex network of sensations and responses throughout your body. No one factor can be expected to be a cure-all, but taking small steps toward healthy behaviors can go a long way to helping maximize your immunity for years to come. ♦

Zack Papalia, Ph.D., MPH, CSCS, has more than a decade of experience in teaching, coaching and business development related to exercise science, nutrition and public health. He is a graduate of Penn State (B.S. kinesiology, Ph.D. kinesiology) and the University of Pittsburgh (Master of Public Health). From 2014 to 2019, Zack taught kinesiology at Penn State. Currently, he serves as population health management consultant for the mid-Atlantic region for USI Insurance Services, helping businesses throughout our region develop programs to keep their employees.

Rest Up



Rest is an important element to maintaining physical and mental wellness.

BY JACKIE NAGINEY HOOK

When I'm writing an article or column, part of my process is pondering the theme in my heart and head. And one of the things I love that often happens is I somehow begin to see and experience connections that give me insight into the theme.

Although as I was pondering the theme of "rest and recovery" for this article, it became a reality for me in a way I could have done without. Our son, James, is a punter for the University at Buffalo, and while he's home, my husband, John, and I join him on local fields to practice. John throws James balls to simulate snaps, James punts them and I retrieve and collect them in a bag for the next round. It's a system we've enjoyed many times.

Until recently when James decided to take one last punt without the toss. John had already walked to the other end of the field where I was, and unaware of each other's intentions, we collided as the ball descended. In trying to catch my balance, I jammed my ankle, fell to the ground and bumped my head causing a slight concussion. (My dad likes to say I was injured playing football.) I now had the opportunity to live the theme as my ankle, head and neck were quick to tell me that rest was needed for my recovery.

In doing so, I became aware that rest comes in two different forms. There is rest that helps us recover so we can return to health, and there is rest that keeps us healthy in the first place and eliminates the need for recovery.

Rest for recovery is something we all need at one time or another. Whether we're recovering from an injury, an illness or even a bad day, we need rest to help us heal. Athletes know this concept well and talk about both active and passive recovery. Active recovery means a lighter

workout, and passive recovery is complete abstinence from exercising.

But rest for recovery isn't just about physical rest. We can apply rest to each of the six dimensions of wellness — emotional, occupational, physical, social, intellectual and spiritual. You can ask yourself if you're feeling balanced in each of these arenas, and if not, rest for recovery might be what you need.

For example, much of my work is with people who are grieving and when it comes to emotional balance, they often desire it. Some find that by expressing their grief and moving it from the inside to the outside, they feel relief and rest afterward. Others find that by spending time in an activity that brings them joy, they get a little rest from their grief.

My experience has been that if I'm not feeling balanced in any of the six dimensions, my body often begins to notice first and sends me signals to rest. The challenge is heeding the warnings or better yet incorporating a regular practice of rest before the warnings come.

And this brings us to the second form of rest: the rest that keeps us healthy in the first place and eliminates the need for recovery. This can be a spiritual practice.

Rest is an important part of some religious traditions with a whole day devoted to it like Sabbath and Shabbat. People observe rest on these days and consecrate that time to the divine.

To truly rest, we must have one thing: faith. This is where another sign arose during my pondering for this article. I'm taking an online class titled *The Heart of Your Business*. On a recent Zoom call, Heart of Business founder Mark Silver was talking about "The Top Five Surprisingly Necessary Qualities for Small Business Owners." When he got to the third qual-

ity, trust or faith, he said: "Faith is what allows you to rest." The light bulb went on. If we have trust or faith that all will be well, then we can let go enough to rest. If we don't have that, we're likely to be on guard much of the time, busy trying to control outcomes and unable to rest.

In this way, rest can become a spiritual practice. Set aside time to rest and when you struggle with it, see if you can go deep within to determine what stands between you and letting go into the rest. I encourage you to bring love and compassion to your searching and be open to what unfolds. These aren't quick fixes but can lead to finding more wholeness within. Many of us have had the experience of lying in bed at night with our minds racing, unable to rest. It isn't until we let go of those thoughts that we can move to sleep. The same is true when incorporating rest as a spiritual practice. Meditation, contemplation and prayer can all help too.

Letting go is a big part of what the spiritual journey is all about. We practice letting go each day until the ultimate letting go when we take our last breath.

"The most important decision we make," Albert Einstein said, "is whether we believe we live in a friendly or hostile universe." I hope you choose to live in a friendly universe, especially in these pandemic days. ♦

Jackie Naginey Hook, M.A., is a spiritual director, Life-Cycle Celebrant and end-of-life doula whose work helps people find hope, healing and wholeness. She coordinates the Helping Grieving Hearts Heal program with Koch Funeral Home, including Having the Talk of a Lifetime, grief companionship, memorable funeral ceremony creation, remembrance service facilitation, community outreach and end-of-life support. She also offers individual and group spiritual direction, programs and retreats in loss, grief, spirituality and forgiveness. She has a B.S. in business from Penn State and an M.A. in wellness from the University of Central Florida. She can be reached at Jackie@JackieHook.com.



Just Breathe

Mindfulness, meditation and breathing exercises can help to calm a racing mind.

BY DAVID PENCEK

IT seems odd that although many of us have been at home, for the most part, since mid-March due to COVID-19, we still feel the need for rest and recovery. Those feelings will likely be only amplified for families now that schools are back in session, and children are back in classrooms, in some form or another.

Tensions are high and patience may be running low for many of us. We all need a chance to breathe and rest — even for just a few moments.

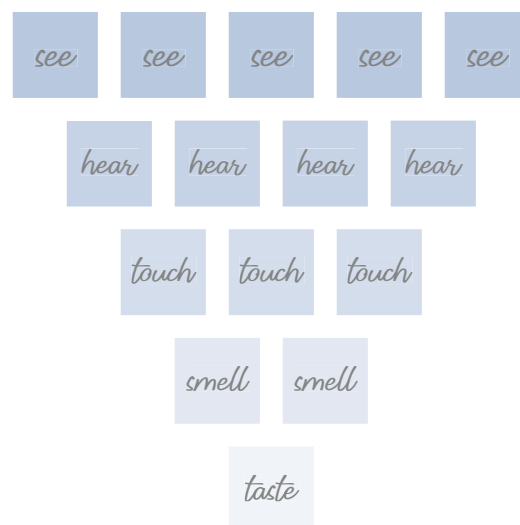
With basically every aspect of our lives now under one roof — family, work, leisure, school — all meshed together, we need to give ourselves those moments to rest. Those moments will help us recover mentally from all the stress and anxieties that may be bombarding us and allow us to better interact with others.

One way to do this, as recommended by Kerry Bestwick, co-owner of The PYP Studio in State College, is to set aside about three to five minutes each day to sit and just breathe. Bestwick suggests what's called the 5/4/3/2/1 technique.

During your five minutes of sitting, think about *five* things you can see, *four* things you can hear, *three* things you can touch



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or feel, *two* things you can smell and *one* thing you can taste.

“This technique is amazing to bring us into the present moment,” says Bestwick, who has been teaching mind body practices and techniques since 2001. “Come out of your head and simply tap into the five senses. Those five minutes will zoom past and you will have given yourself the biggest gift of creating a little space for the muscle called the mind versus its default setting, which is contraction — how the mind loves to hold on, grip, cling and swing like a monkey nonstop through trees.”

Rest and recovery also can come in the form of some exercise. Jessica Minelli has been teaching yoga for nearly two years and is a certified health and wellness coach. She says yoga has proven to be a great relaxing activity for people who may be dealing with a lot of stress.

“A friend who is a nurse mentioned how wonderful (yoga) is,” Minelli says. “It helps her relax and check out of her work life.”

Minelli has trained with the Veterans Yoga Project in order to provide a program called Mindful Resilience Yoga.

“The idea behind this form of yoga is providing tools through

yoga that individuals can use to work their way through trauma,” she says. “We focus on five pillars in Mindful Resilience Yoga, which are Breath, Mindful Movement, Meditation, Guided Rest and Gratitude. The focus is more of a total body approach rather than just a physical one.”

Bestwick suggests breathing practices that help provide relaxation. One is “counting the breath,” where you take as many long breaths in and slow breaths out as you can in three minutes.

“The goal here is with fewer breaths taken, the body is typically in a calmer, more expansive, restful space.”

Another technique is “elevator breathing.” Count a long, slow breath for five seconds, as an example, and then exhale by one more second, so six seconds in this case. “The breath will likely differ each time — that’s perfect.”

Finally, she suggests “boxed breathing,” which Bestwick says is a Navy SEAL technique for deep focus and calm under pressure. Breathe in for a slow four count, hold the breath for a four count, exhale for a slow four count and suspend the breath for a four count.

She says if you set aside five minutes a day for mindfulness-based practices such as sitting and being present, intentional breathing and meditation, you’ll notice the benefits in the ability to create a new behavior.

“It’s the ability to be in a committed practice, to have compassion and choose to meet yourself with what is happening in your head, in this season in your life and also the world at large,” she says. “When you can sit with what is, this is the beginning of a powerful meditation practice.”

“All of this self-care, self-growth work begins with the ability to sit with ourselves first, to create who we will be, before we guide our children, our teams, our communities.” ♦

David Pencek is a communications specialist for the Jana Marie Foundation.



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Working Together

How can parents help their children through the stress of a pandemic?

BY KATE STALEY

When babies in the womb are not growing well, they are stressed. In my pregnancies, for unknown reasons, the placenta for each of my babies was smaller than it should have been. That meant the placentas were not as effective in transmitting nutrients from me to support my babies' growth. The impact of this was only noticed in the last trimester when my babies started to "fall below" the normal gestational growth curve. My doctor started telling me that they would likely need to be delivered earlier than the 40 weeks of a normal full-term pregnancy. As the weeks went by and the babies grew but

continued to be much smaller than babies that same gestational age, the doctor told me that in response to the stress, my babies' lungs would likely mature faster than they do in normal pregnancies. It turns out that somehow development knows when it is going awry, leading the baby's system and the maternal system to work together to hasten fetal lung development, so that premature delivery does not compromise the infant's ability to survive outside the womb.

It worked. My babies were each born somewhat early, and they were each able to breathe on their own right away with-

out supportive respiratory care.

The COVID-19 pandemic is like that for many of us.

The current state of affairs is stressful for all of us. There is near constant worry about the "what ifs." And of course it goes far beyond that for those who lost people they love.

But I can't help but wonder if the pandemic stress isn't challenging us to connect and grow in new ways, to adapt to current circumstances — so we can survive now and thrive later?

Humans are not built for managing ongoing uncertainty well. At the level of



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our “felt experience,” uncertainty causes distress; it taxes our ability to cope, it makes us want to put our head in the sand like the proverbial ostrich and pretend it doesn’t exist. It’s that childlike hope that if we don’t look, the monster won’t really be there.

And yet, almost everything that we used to take for granted — the big “givens” that created the structure and organization of our daily lives — is disrupted or gone altogether (e.g., the usual monthly income, jobs we go to every day, open schools and child care facilities, the ability to easily connect with friends and family, getting hugs from people we care about, good health). We now live in a constant state of flux with events that impact us happening almost weekly.

Ongoing uncertainty without an identifiable endpoint is even more challenging — by definition, humans experience this as highly stressful.

And that’s what we have with COVID-19.

So what can we do?

How can parents and children work together? How can our two “systems” work together to address this stress, to help each other, so when we emerge on the other side of this pandemic (whenever that is), we are all as whole and healthy as possible?

The first step in managing a highly challenging situation is to acknowledge its impact. Minimization, dismissiveness and avoidance are oft-used coping strategies in response to situations where we feel we don’t have much control. These are not “bad” strategies. They are even adaptive to some extent. After all, if you can’t do anything about a given situation, maybe it is best to ignore it and try and discount its impact on you, right? In the short term, engaging in these strategies can provide us with a break from the experience of our stress. A recent NPR segment spoke to one example of this. Apparently there are record numbers of people rewatching episodes of old and familiar shows — heartwarming shows, comedies and dramas in which people can actually resolve out-sized and crazy problems.

All that escapism is great — it just doesn’t work as an endless strategy. You can’t proactively manage something you don’t look squarely at.

For families, sure — go ahead and do some TV/movie watching if it works to relax you. Better yet, pick a show that has something for everyone and watch it together as a family. I confess that when our younger daughter came home for a few weeks, she turned us onto past seasons of *Survivor*. We have been having a blast. She explained all the nuances (yes, there are nuances) and strategies

of how best to survive. We learned about her previously-unknown-to-us fascination with the show, my husband ended up applying to get on a future season and we all wished that 39 days was the total length of time we needed to endure with this pandemic.

In addition to this kind of shared experience, I would also encourage you to actively check in with each other over a family dinner or some kind of family meeting on a weekly or biweekly basis. How does each person in the family think they are managing? What strategies are they using? How do they know the pandemic is stressing them — what do they notice about their behavior (for example, more irritable, less patient, more self-critical), changes in their usual patterns of functioning (eating or sleeping more or less, difficulty concentrating at work or school), their feelings (more anxious, more down, in a funk that can come on abruptly, angry and acting out)? Then think about *how* — concretely and specifically — can you help each other feel better? What activities (new and old ones) can you do that will allow you to play and laugh and feel connected?

Even little kids can participate in these regular discussions.

In doing this all together, you can give voice to what your children — no matter their age — may be feeling and experiencing but didn’t know the words for yet. You

can model that you too have similar reactions, that indeed it's *normal* to experience stress-related responses in a time of stress. You can remind and reassure your children (and they need this at all ages — well into their 20s, as I can attest with my young adult children) that this pandemic *will* end. It's true we can't identify precisely *when* yet, but it will end. And you can figure out new activities that you can do — maybe buying a badminton kit or croquet or learning new board games or a fun online game you can play with friends in distant places (try the Houseparty app), or try charades with the family/friends you may be “sharing a pod” with, and make plan for families hikes, biking or water tubing while the weather allows. Nature is a wonderful healer as well as restorer of faith in the larger world.

The best approach to managing high stress is engaging in a mix of stress-relieving activities: try a family movie night, an afternoon hike up Mount Nittany, a game of flashlight tag with the others in your pod and so on.

Human beings are staggeringly able to adapt — even to highly adverse circumstances. If the two “systems” — parents and children — can work together, connecting and communicating in intentional ways, they can and will cope with the stress of the pandemic. In doing so, we can all emerge from these difficult and uncertain times — birthed into a new post-pandemic world, stronger and more resilient. ♦

Katharine (Kate) Staley, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist and assistant director of Community Education and Outreach for Penn State Counseling and Psychological Services. Prior to that she served as a consultant to CASEL, a nationally recognized foundation focused on helping children and youth improve their social, environmental and academic competence. She was the lead developer of program content for Penn State's “Child Sexual Abuse Conference-Traumatic Impact, Prevention and Intervention” in 2012. She received her Ph.D. and M.S. from Penn State and her B.A. from Brown University.



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An illustration on the left side of the page shows several stylized human figures from the chest up. They are wearing various types of face masks, including surgical masks and cloth masks. The figures are rendered in a flat, graphic style with muted colors like beige, light brown, and grey. The background behind them is a light, textured grey.

Pandemic Life

How to not only cope with the anxiety and uncertainty of the pandemic but also *live* in this time.

BY SARAH RAFACZ

Artist Peggy Klinger feels like the COVID-19 pandemic has made her lazy and unmotivated.

Without in-person classes and social interactions or gallery shows to look forward to, Klinger, who is retired, is less inclined to wander into her studio to paint.

“It has depressed my mood,” she says. “I feel guilty because I’m not painting.”

Being stuck at home because of the pandemic has led to some depression, which in turn contributes to the neglect of the painting sitting on the easel. And it snowballs from there, says Klinger, who focuses on oil painting and is the president of the Farmland Preservation Artists of Central Pennsylvania.

“It’s not overwhelming, but it’s kind of insidious,” Klinger says. “It just kind of builds on itself.”

She’s not alone.

“Our crisis response system, individually, is not built to be in extended crisis mode,” says Dr. Mary McClanahan, a licensed psychologist at The Highlands in State College, a provider of psychological services for adults and adolescents.

When the pandemic shuttered nonessential businesses, schools and universities in mid-March, a sense of impermanence accompanied it. Messages on the news and even from government officials contributed to a sense that if we all did our part, it would be over in a few weeks — maybe a few months at most.

Now it’s been six months, with no end date in sight.

Erina MacGeorge, a Penn State professor of communication arts and sciences who specializes in interpersonal and health communication, is part of a team of researchers that in August published findings about mental health in the first two months of the pandemic. The averages in April and May, she says, suggest that we weren’t *that* stressed, anxious or depressed. The finding tracks because a lot of U.S. residents weren’t living in virus hotspots, many were hearing messages that the virus wasn’t a big deal or they had effective ways of coping, and by May many states had either reopened or were about to. She says she thinks a lot of people felt better at that point because they thought the virus was going away.

But small yet significant groups of people were seriously affected from a mental health standpoint, she says. That's problematic for those people and anybody who cares about them.

"I understand anyone, literally, who feels depressed or stressed or anxious," she says. "And so I want to be really careful that my results hopefully don't get interpreted as, 'Oh we're all doing fine.' Well, on average, we were doing better than you might have thought in May — but it's September now. And a lot of things have happened since then. And not everyone was fine in May."

It's important to note that George Floyd was killed by police at the end of May, and the resulting protests have been ongoing since. The effects of systemic racism and police brutality have a compounding effect on mental health for many Americans. COVID-19 also disproportionately affects Black and brown communities.

Feelings of loss, grief and disruption are pervasive right now, but there are some strategies to help cope with those emotions — and, beyond that, ways to truly *live* even during a pandemic.

"One of the things that we all have to do is to come to terms with *literally* living through the creation of history. This pandemic is a historical event and will be for generations to come. And there's nothing normal about living through a pandemic," says Dr. Ben Locke, senior director of Counseling & Psychological Services at Penn State.

We don't know how much longer the COVID-19 pandemic will drag on or what our lives will look like on the other side. But for those of us lucky enough to not have been affected physically by the virus, we can still find ways to live our lives.

"This is really more of a marathon than it is a sprint," Locke says.

Accept Reality

With the exception of those of us who are more than 100 years old, no one has lived through a pandemic like this before — one that brings society and economies to a halt. It's important to recognize that what we've always thought of as normal, which helps us predict what comes next, has been disrupted. Locke says that creates a lot of uncertainty and distress.

People might be experiencing grief and trauma from the death of a loved one or their own sickness. But Locke says feelings of loss, grief and disruption also come from lost opportunities, canceled events and interrupted goals. Tied to those losses is "an erosion of our typical relationships and social connections that

we have that give us a sense of belonging and meaning."

The reality in front of us is that until an effective vaccine is available, and everybody does their part to help cut down on transmission, we can't return to "normal." And even when we can return, it will be gradual and it might not be the same normal.

Part of accepting our new reality is realizing how much is out of our control, McClanahan says. People need space to grieve that. "Who am I now in this different time without my normal routine, without my fill in the blanks?"

It's OK to not be OK. If you're really struggling, seek out professional medical or psychiatric care.

Reset Your Mindset

Locke says the mindset you adopt is key to dealing with uncertainty. If you wake up every day and focus on how frustrating the pandemic is "that's going to put you in a bad place again and again and again."

"Recognizing and accepting that this is going to be a difficult time and things aren't going to be normal allows you to reset your expectations and then do what you can within those expectations," he says.

Get up every day and review your mindset for the day. Focus on gratitude, what you have and the people in your life. Intentionally build a routine that is healthy for you within these limitations, Locke suggests. It will allow you to maintain a sense of purpose and health. Ask yourself what will contribute to your physical, nutritional and spiritual health — and then try to do those things every day. Some days you might do better than others, and that's OK. If you do your best every day, those contributions to your health will have a positive effect over time. Maybe it's going for a socially distanced walk with a friend or taking a hike.

McClanahan says it's a great time to try new hobbies, even if you might not be great at them. Give yourself permission to fail, she says. "It looks and feels like the world is going to hell, is it really that important if you're not good at" whatever hobby you want to try?

Find the silver linings where you can. Practice meditation and mindfulness.

It's also worth potentially giving yourself some peace of mind by limiting your exposure to social media and bad news, especially before bedtime. Be thoughtful about what you're consuming. McClanahan suggests avoiding the comments, calling them "the pit of despair." You won't emerge happily from them.





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Focus on What You Can Control

Not much in life is truly in your control. But sometimes we forget that. What the pandemic brought to the forefront is just how much is random and chaotic about our lives.

When it's been your experience or belief that you're in control of your future and can do what you want and then suddenly your control is dramatically curtailed, it can lead to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, Locke explains.

Accepting your lack of control can be difficult. Locke suggests reflecting on the "Serenity Prayer," often used in the Alcoholics Anonymous program: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference."

When you're experiencing a loss of control or agency, Locke says, the easy thing to do is to feel frustrated. The harder thing to do is say: OK, that has changed. Now what am I going to do?

You can control whether you wear a mask in public and practice good hygiene and social distancing. Even taking those basic preventative steps can help you feel like you are doing something positive.

MacGeorge also suggests establishing a "risk budget" for yourself, something she's been personally reflecting on. Commit to being respectful of other people's risk budgets, especially

those who perceive a greater amount of risk than you do. But it's important to decide what risks you are and are not willing to take, and then act accordingly. Maybe grabbing a to-go coffee and sitting six feet away from a friend in the park will make you feel better.

"We create more stress for ourselves when we aren't thoughtful and planful about what risks we're willing to take," she says.

Help Others

If you're lucky enough to not have to worry about health, food, housing or money during the pandemic, consider helping people who aren't in that fortunate position.

McClanahan says small moments of joy can be found during this time by helping others.

Volunteer at a local nonprofit that has a mission you believe in. Give blood. Go to the grocery store for a high-risk neighbor. Donate to a deserving cause. Lend a listening ear to a struggling friend or family member.

Practice Extending Grace

"It's so important that we extend grace to ourselves and to others," Locke says.

Everybody is struggling together, he says. It's easy to lose

sight of extending grace to yourself and those around you who are working hard while also maybe struggling in serious ways.

Remember that you don't know what others are going through. And give yourself the space to go through what you're going through, whether it's a lost job or opportunity, a sick relative or even lack of motivation.

People put in the practice so they can play the concert, or run the race or play the game, Locke says. When those things are stripped away, it feels like: Why bother?

Klinger says she has to convince herself to do something constructive in the field of art to keep her mental cheerfulness. "We're sort of coasting," she says. "It's not just me; I've talked to other artists. And it's hard to get motivated. Most shows are canceled or they're online, which is fine, but it's not nearly as much fun."

"Motivation in a pandemic where your momentum is so dramatically slowed and so much of the typical goals that you work for are going to be delayed" requires you to extend your sense of time, Locke says. What you might have been planning to do in six months might need to be reframed for a year and a half from now.

Look Forward

MacGeorge's research suggests that to the extent that people, in general, were able to look forward and anticipate a better future, the less depressed they were likely to feel. People who found themselves able to look to the future were more likely to see the pandemic as something they learned and grew from rather than only a crisis or trauma.

When you're dealing with a problem, like the pandemic, that you can't completely resolve, MacGeorge says, try to look ahead and anticipate that things might get better — and that there are ways of going on and enjoying your life even amid the disruptions.

McClanahan suggests looking at both the big picture and the little picture. What percentage of your lifespan will the pandemic take up? She calls it "Google Earthing" — pull back and look at your life. Look at where you are and see everything around you. "This is obviously going to have implications for the rest of my life," she says, "but I won't be walking around in a mask for the rest of my life."

"If we think about living through a pandemic, it's new problem after new problem after new problem," Locke says. "And chances are when we come out of the other side of this, we will all have adapted in unexpected and new ways. And that process of having lived through a distressing time, adapting our way of being and coming out the other side will make us stronger, more flexible and more capable of being successful down the road." ♦



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Rolling into Balance

BY MONICA MONTAG

Because many aspects of our lives have been turned upside down, forgotten or neglected these past months, it's a great time to take a moment and check in with where we might be out of balance and how to regain it. Each spoke on this bicycle wheel represents an essential aspect of your body-mind health. Once you assess how your wheel is balanced, check out the suggestions for small positive changes to bring health, balance and joy into your life.

Use the Wheel for Self-Discovery

Imagine that the center point of the wheel is the least desirable state and the outside of the circle is the most desirable state. Look at each category, taking a moment to think about where you are now. Where is that in relation to where you want to be? Then mark a point along the line for each of the eight categories, where you feel you are right now. Next, connect the dots. Is your wheel balanced or does it look like a multi-pointed figure? Keep in mind that it can be challenging to smoothly roll through life when your wheel (life) isn't balanced. Consider this wheel from two perspectives. First, note any categories that are out of proportion to the others. These are areas that could use some attention. Aim to bring more balance to your wheel and less bumpiness to your "life ride." Second, consider how to enhance all the categories so they are closer to the outside or most desirable. Take small, manageable steps in one area at a time to reach your goals.

Balancing Your Wheel

Eat whole foods. Adequate protein is the foundation for vibrant energy and a positive outlook, so be sure you are eating sufficient amounts of whole food protein at every meal. If you combine this with lots of vegetables, cooked and raw, your cells will sparkle.

tip: Boost the protein in your next meal. Instead of reaching for that box of cereal, make two eggs and toast and check your energy two hours later. If you are lagging, you may need to adjust the mix of macronutrients. Or if lunch is up next, make a hardy tuna fish salad sandwich with raw veggies on the side rather than nuking a hot dog. Again, check in with your energy two to three hours later. Make adjustments to your lunch until you arrive at a meal that gives you plenty of sustained energy all afternoon.

Hydrate. Know how much fluid intake you need in a day. Too little can leave you fatigued and foggy; too much can leach out your minerals and cause leg cramps and heart palpitations. Take your body weight in pounds, divided by two, to get the number of ounces you need each day. Caffeinated drinks count as half their total volume.

tip: Pinch the skin on the top of your hand. If it bounces back quickly, you are well hydrated. If it retracts slowly, you are probably dehydrated.

Get adequate cofactors. Most people need an array of B complex vitamins and some minerals, most commonly, magnesium, to feel their best. Think of these as the spark plugs that convert your fuel (protein, carbs and fats) into energy. Nutritional testing can help you determine your needs.

tip: If you're not taking a high-quality multivitamin, start now. Most better quality multivitamins will require you to take two per day to give you enough potency and range.

Move. Our bodies were designed to move. It's tempting to sit most of the day when there are so many forms of entertainment that encourage sitting, on top of work-related sedentariness. Movement doesn't need to be formal exercise but can include using your body mindfully while doing the activities of daily living. There are a myriad ways to incorporate exercise into daily routines.

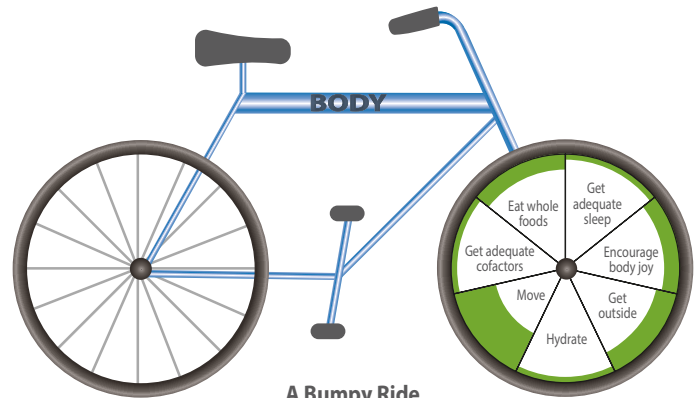
tip: Incorporate movement into everyday activities. Stretch your legs on your vanity while brushing your teeth, contract your stomach muscles while climbing the stairs, do shoulder rolls and contracting rhomboids while sitting in your car waiting at a traffic light, practice deep knee bends while doing housework.

Get outside. Outdoor time is essential for our good health and psyche. Being outside airs our brain, allowing us to connect with nature and the natural rhythms of the seasons and life cycles. The Japanese concept called “forest bathing” involves immersing ourselves in nature without necessarily doing anything. It’s not about hiking or climbing but simply being in nature mindfully, experiencing the stillness and folding into the sounds, the smells and the sights. Being at one with whatever is happening in that slice of life at that moment is one of the most pleasant of all life’s activities. And it turns out that there are measurable benefits to the immune system, blood pressure and mood.

tip: Combine outdoor time and movement in a practice called “grounding.” The goal is to walk outside for 20 minutes every day, either in bare feet, socks or non-rubber soled shoes such as moccasins. Make sure you are in direct contact with the earth. Asphalt, as in your driveway or your lawn, is suitable, whereas a deck would not serve the purpose. You could stretch and ground at the same time as a lovely finish to your workday.

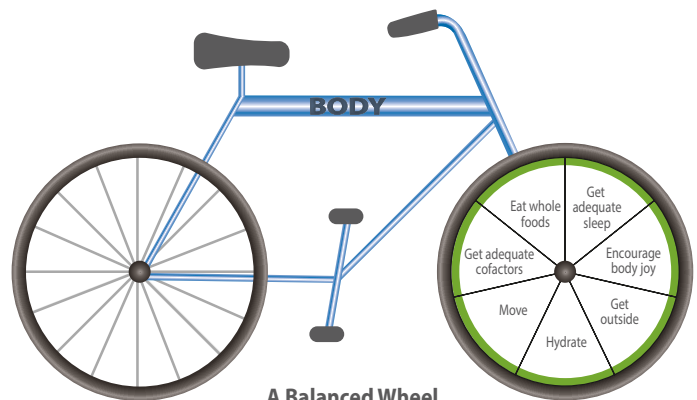
Get adequate sleep. During sleep, we recharge our bodies in every way: We repair tissues, improve metabolic function and balance hormones, recalibrate the master clock in the brain, remove toxic waste products, integrate life events often as dreams and generally restore homeostasis.

tip: Work on timing to get the best night’s rest. Develop a nightly routine that includes a hot Epsom salt bath and/or stretching. Practicing stress-relieving activities during the day, such as deep breathing and mindfulness breaks, will help you fall asleep later in the day because the stress hormones remain in a more normal range all day long. The most restorative time to sleep is from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m., which means being in bed by 9:30 p.m. and asleep by 10 p.m. Really. If your bedtime is much later, use melatonin (3 mg is a good place for most people to start) to nudge it back to an earlier time.



A Bumpy Ride

Focus on body joy, increasing movement, incorporating more whole foods into the diet and getting outdoors more often.



A Balanced Wheel

This set of lifestyle habits would make for a smooth ride.

GRAPHIC BY TRACY LEE MILLER

Encourage body joy. Don’t get lost in all the “shoulds” about how you are supposed to treat your body. Tune into what brings your body joy and make sure you include that in your “diet,” too. At the same time, while you’re making positive changes in your lifestyle, accept how your body is right now — weight, warts and all.

tip: Practice self-acceptance and love with something as simple as applying hydrating body lotion or giving yourself a foot massage. Thank your body for all it does for you every day.

Remember to use the wheel exercise as a tool for self-knowledge, not a weapon to beat yourself up. Choose small, measurable and sustainable changes to roll forward into balance. And above all, be well.

Monica Montag, MA, HHP, CN, is a certified nutritionist, certified holistic lifestyle teacher and health detective. She founded BeWell Associates more than 28 years ago. She has degrees from Wesleyan University, University of Virginia, American Health Science University and the National Institute for Nutritional Education. Learn more about her work at bewellassociates.com.

12+ Questions

with Sarah Flynn

Sarah Flynn, also known as Lady Grey, has spent a lot of energy trying to change the conversation around body positivity, empowerment and inclusion — and breaking out of the boxes that others put us in or that we sometimes construct around ourselves.

She was a dance teacher for more than 30 years and five years ago founded Lady Grey's Lovelies, a vintage dance and vaudeville group that pre-coronavirus performed intimate cabarets in The Attic at The State Theatre.

After facing a second battle with breast cancer and deciding to have a double mastectomy, she says she realized that there was a greater legacy question facing her. "Cancer really re-prioritizes your life. That's it. It just does." She was asking herself why she was still here and focusing her attention on figuring out what the universe was trying to tell her.

It led her to launch Live Outrageously, a life coaching business, during the summer. "It's this idea," she says, "to live in a way where you really just don't care what other people think of you."



PHOTO BY GEORGIANNA DECARMINE

[1] What's your favorite way to relieve stress?

I have two great playlists that I use as mood shifters — one for being happy and energized and one for calming down and finding my center. I also swear by long-form affirmations when you really need a brain reset. The use of a 5-minute affirmation can be powerful when I need to truly let go of what I can't control.

[2] What's your go-to healthy snack?

Oh my word. I love food. But if I had to narrow it down, I'd say avocados and hard-boiled eggs.

[3] What's your favorite unhealthy indulgence?

The (long) list includes dirty martinis, macarons and excellent cheese.

[4] How are you feeling right now?

I'm energized and ready for an incredibly rewarding week. My new online course, "Journey to Authenticity," launches on Friday (Sept. 4), so I am hard at work putting the finishing touches on everything.

[5] Name one health-related goal you're working toward.

Recovering from two major surgeries (including a double mastectomy), my goal this month is to do ballet barre and abs/arms work six days a week.

[6] Is there a fitness- or health-related accessory/ piece of equipment you couldn't live without?

My very large pile of custom tap shoes is my most cherished physical equipment, but massage therapy and trigger point work have been invaluable for my overall wellness. For life balance, my planner helps me carve out time for prayer, self-care and goal-setting — and it helps identify places I could use connection time with family and friends.

[7] Favorite athlete or sports team?

I'm a Chicago girl. The only rule in this house is that

you don't like the Green Bay Packers.

[8] Run or walk? Why?

Stop and smell the roses. It isn't a race. Don't let other people's lives be your road-map. You do you. Take the time that you want and need to enjoy life at your own pace.

[9] Are you a morning person or a night owl?

Ask my family: I don't do mornings. My very best creative work happens between 8 p.m. and midnight. I direct the vaudelesque ensemble Lady Grey's Lovelies. Our "Late Night Cabaret" puts us home and in bed around 3 a.m.!



[10] If you could be the best in the world at any sport, which would you choose?

100 percent figure skating!

[11] Do you have a mantra that helps you through the tough times?

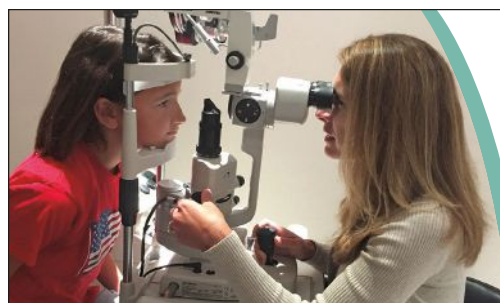
It's the mantra many of my Live Outrageously clients use when they brush their hair or their teeth every day: "I am loved. I am beautiful. I am valued." After my second fight with breast cancer, feeling beautiful has been an immense challenge. This mantra has helped me continue to rewire my brain to see beauty when I look in the mirror, to embrace my new body.

[12] What or who is your biggest motivator?

Frankly put, cancer re-prioritizes life for you and makes you ask yourself why you're still alive. Since the beginning of the year, I have been building Live Outrageously to help people live authentically. I'm motivated every time I see a brave client begin discovering their authentic self, deconstructing their limiting beliefs and finding their circle of true friends. My fierce clients are my motivators — their strength and determination to design a life they love reminds me to do the same.

[+] What is the best advice you've ever received? From whom?

Honestly, most of my advice is from outrageous women. However, my favorite pearl of wisdom is from the Dr. Jimmy Slyde, the grandfather of tap dance: "If you don't ever fall, then you're not really dancing."



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Remember

BY MARY MCGUIRE

silent dusk and now
the crows one by one
gliding to the trees
one by one
until the trees bloomed
bouquets of black
the sky, the trees were
what I dreamed—
the Dutch winter of Breughel
that near pain of innocence,
bird, trees, sky, earth

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