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Reader's Digest

JUNE 2021

**FOUR
LETTER
WORDS!**

Test Your
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**SMARTPHONE
SECRETS
YOU NEED
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An RD ORIGINAL

Living
Better
LONGER

From [MEDIUM.COM](https://www.medium.com)

A Dementia
That Can Be
CURED

From [THEHEALTHY.COM](https://www.thehealthy.com)

Teaching Music
from a Humvee

From [THE WASHINGTON POST](https://www.washingtonpost.com)

What Dogs Taught
Me About Love

By [JENNIFER FINNEY BOYLAN](#)

13 **FACTS**
You Can
Smell

By [EMILY GOODMAN](#)





LOVE in a Snap!

Delicious single-serve entrées to delight your cat.
New Fancy Feast Petites.



Fancy Feast
Petites

LOVE IS IN THE DETAILS®

Reader's Digest

A Trusted Friend in a Complicated World

Features

66

COVER STORY

YOUR BRILLIANT SMARTPHONE

Unlock your device's most helpful tricks and secrets with these 25 tips.

BY JODY L. ROHLENA

DAN SAELINGER



78

THE MIND

So You've Had It Rough? Good!

How we approach hardship could tell us how long we'll live.

BY MARKHAM HEID FROM
ELEMENTAL.MEDIUM.COM

86

NATIONAL INTEREST

I Cry for the Mountains

After a wildfire swept through the land where his family raised their cattle for more than a century, a rancher takes a tour of what's left—and what might come next.

BY DAVE DALEY FROM
THE ENTERPRISE-RECORD

96

DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

The Teacher Who Wrestled a Cougar

When a wild cat springs from the woods to prey on her young students, a day care owner instantly moves to protect them. A classic *RD* drama.

BY MARY MURRAY

104

FAMILY

Our Little Girl Chika

What is a real father? An orphan in Haiti teaches bestselling author Mitch Albom a wonderful new definition.

BY MITCH ALBOM FROM
THE BOOK *FINDING CHIKA*

110

FIRST PERSON

The Dogs Who Taught Me About Love

They weren't all nice. In fact, some of them were beasts. But each one showed me what it means to care for someone without reservation.

BY JENNIFER FINNEY BOYLAN

66

Departments

6 Dear Reader

8 Letters

EVERYDAY HEROES

14 **Fighting for Country and Beethoven**

BY SYDNEY PAGE FROM WASHINGTONPOST.COM

17 **Honk if You Love Birds**

BY ANDY SIMMONS

A WORLD OF GOOD

18 **Dairy Queen of Kindness, and More**

WHERE, OH WHERE?

26 **A Dreamy, Hidden Waterfall**

DEPARTMENT OF WIT

28 **Robots Gone Wild**

BY ANDY SIMMONS

YOUR TRUE STORIES

31 **A Beautiful Gesture, and More**



On the Cover

PHOTOGRAPH BY *Dan Saelinger*

Smartphone Secrets You Need Now	66
Living Better Longer	78
A Dementia That Can Be Cured.....	53
Teaching Music from a Humvee.....	14
What Dogs Taught Me About Love.....	110
Four-Letter Words!	121
13 Facts You Can Smell	44



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THE FOOD ON YOUR PLATE

32 **I Am Soy**
BY KATE LOWENSTEIN
AND DANIEL GRITZER

BEST PET PALS

36 **Mother Hen**

WE FOUND A FIX

42 **Grip a Stripped Screwhead, and More**

13 THINGS

44 **Scent-sational News About Smell**
BY EMILY GOODMAN

EVERYDAY MIRACLES

48 **With Open Arms, at Last**
BY TOM HALLMAN FROM
THE OREGONIAN

QUOTABLE QUOTES

64 **Dionne Warwick, Renée Zellweger, Cam Newton**



32

Humor

24

Life in These United States

40

All in a Day's Work

51

Laugh Lines

62

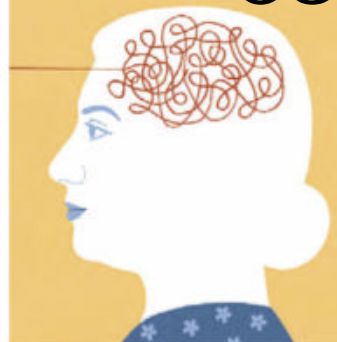
Laughter, the Best Medicine

77

Humor in Uniform



53



The Healthy

53 **A Dementia That Can Be Cured**

BY RUSSELL MCLENDON

57 **Do You Need an Air Purifier?**

58 **News from the World of Medicine**

Brain Games

117 **Fact or Fiction, and More**

121 **Word Power**

124 **Photo Finish**

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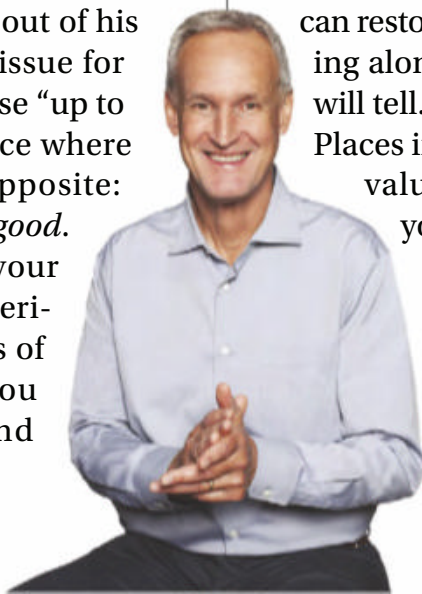
DEAR READER

A Good Place

IT SOUNDS ODD, I know, but I'd like to ask you to scan your life for the next minute, while you read this. You are looking for a place in your world where you've felt caring. Where you've seen people come together to help others in need, whether it's for a meal, a laugh, or a hand when disaster struck. A place of big hearts where you feel that you belong and where others share that feeling, even if they are strangers.

You know such a place because you've been there. It's on a front porch in your town after something difficult has happened and help is on the way. It's on a Zoom call with people collaborating respectfully to address a problem at work or in your city. It could be on the line with someone—a service representative or a local official going out of his or her way to solve an issue for you. You know the phrase “up to no good”? This is a place where you sense the polar opposite: These people are up to *good*.

Scan your schools, your stores, your online experiences, and your houses of worship—any place you gather with others and



We heard the story of last year's Nicest Place from a Buchanan, Michigan, teacher.

have felt the power of people being together no matter their background. This is the place where you have said to yourself, I feel helped ... These people are making good things happen ... I can help too.

Hold that thought, because now I will ask you to do one more thing. Take a moment to write me about those people and why you smile when you think about them. This is important. America today could use this example from your life. It has been a year of storms, shootings, a pandemic, and more, but in our communities, we are still standing—and these places are why. We need to hear any story, no matter how small, of people who have each other's backs.

In moments when we lose faith, the simplest submission—maybe yours—can restore it. Thank you for following along, and for the stories you will tell. This search for the Nicest Places in America is ongoing, and valuable. Join it. And thank you, as always, for reading.

Bruce Kelley,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Write me your story
at rd.com/nicest.

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† Vitamins C and E.

§ Contains 100 mg Caffeine

LETTERS
 NOTES ON THE
April ISSUE



Don't Waste Your Money

Another tip: Years ago, my husband and I installed heating in our ranch house's basement. Everyone thought we were crazy, but the power company said the basement would warm the floor upstairs and our bill would hardly rise. They were right! It went up only \$3 per month.

—BARBARA D'AUGOSTINE *Harrisburg, Pennsylvania*

You warn against buying unrefrigerated grocery store bouquets that are displayed near the fruits and vegetables because some produce naturally gives off ethylene gas, which can shorten flower life. While the gas can impact the longevity of some cut flowers, studies indicate that fresh produce in a ventilated grocery store will not have that effect.

—MAX TEPLITSKI, PHD
Newark, Delaware

Starting a New Chapter

I love to hear of people succeeding against all odds. Carl Allamby's story "From Car Doc to People Doc" was no exception. However, as a registered nurse who also went back to school and earned three degrees, I take exception to the wording "he'd like to become a doctor, but it would be more practical to aim lower." Physician education is difficult, no arguing

that, but an RN, a physician's assistant, and a physical therapist are not lower on any scale than a doctor. They are totally different jobs and require a good amount of education.

—DEANIE HONSINGER, RN
Roseville, California

The Last Days of the Pioneer

Here in Kingsbury County, South Dakota, the *Lake Preston Times* and *DeSmet News* both recently folded after over 130 years of publishing. Volunteers from both towns got together to start a new paper: the *Kingsbury Journal*. Four staffers and 42 volunteer writers, proofreaders, and deliverers put out a paper every week. It is a vital part of our community!

—MARY ROCKINO
Lake Preston, South Dakota

The Food on Your Plate

There was a mango tree where I stayed years ago in Costa Rica. I took advantage once and a day later noticed a strange

rash on my hand and arm that looked like poison ivy (small blisters) but didn't itch as much. When I returned to the States, my dermatologist asked if I'd peeled a mango lately. Apparently, mangos and poison ivy are in the same family. That's why you may see "washed in hot water" written on mango boxes.

—LOIS JEFFERY
Chesterland, Ohio

All in a Day's Work

Just read about some of the wacky billing codes doctors use to denote your visit for insurance companies, such as "Y93.D1: Stabbed while crocheting." Years ago, I got a bill for blood work when there shouldn't have been any charge. My insurance rep

realized the doctor mistakenly put in the code for "struck by a car while exiting a bus."

—LAURIE SANCHEZ
Kingman, Arizona

Top Folk Remedies from Around the World

You say that Germans use marigolds for health benefits. *Calendula officinalis* is sometimes called pot marigold, but it is a very different plant from the bushy-blossomed, pungently scented marigolds of the *Tagetes* genus that we are probably more familiar with. *Tagetes* can be used as a flavoring and colorant, but it doesn't have the medicinal properties that calendulas have.

—KRISTIN VICHICH
Hancock, Michigan

THANKS FOR THE MRES

◆ "The Taste of Home" brought back memories of eating MREs with my paratrooper hubby—sometimes when funds ran low, but more often for the thrill of adventure. We each had favorites: his barbecued beef and mine chicken à la king. There was something so cereal-box-prize about finding out what mystery dessert and snack came with your main meal.

—Donna McChristian
FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS

◆ I had to laugh when the author said her mother claimed MREs would constipate them. A friend in the reserves once joked that MRE actually stood for Meal, Refusing-to-Exit.

—Don Jacobsen
KENNEWICK, WASHINGTON

Yes, *Reader's Digest* Changed My Life

The very first story in our first issue back in February 1922 was "How to Keep Young Mentally." Helping improve readers' lives has been our mission over the past 100 years, whether it's with advice on health, relationships, or finances or just a chuckle to get through the day. If *RD* ever saved your health, wallet, or sanity, tell us about it and see terms at rd.com/thanksrd. We might publish it as we celebrate our centennial next year.



For adults with type 2 diabetes (T2D), along with diet and exercise, once-daily RYBELSUS® can help lower blood sugar

Wake Up to the Possibilities of Reaching Your A1C Goal



RYBELSUS® is proven to lower blood sugar and A1C

In a 6-month study of people with an average starting A1C of 8%, the majority of **people taking RYBELSUS® reached an A1C of less than 7%^a**:

- Nearly 7 out of 10 people on 7 mg of RYBELSUS®
- Nearly 8 out of 10 people on 14 mg of RYBELSUS®
- About 3 out of 10 people on a sugar pill



RYBELSUS® may help you lose some weight

While not for weight loss, in the same 6-month study, people with an average starting weight of 195 pounds **lost up to 8 pounds^a**:

- 5 pounds on 7 mg of RYBELSUS®
- 8 pounds on 14 mg of RYBELSUS®
- 3 pounds on a sugar pill

While many people in medical studies lost weight, some did gain weight.



RYBELSUS® does not increase the risk of major cardiovascular (CV) events such as heart attack, stroke, or death^b

^aIn a 6-month study looking at A1C with 703 adults with T2D comparing 7 mg RYBELSUS® and 14 mg RYBELSUS® with a sugar pill when both were added to diet and exercise.

^bIn a cardiovascular safety study, 3183 adults with T2D and a high risk of CV events were treated with either 14 mg RYBELSUS® or a sugar pill in addition to their usual diabetes and CV medications.



If eligible, you may pay as little as **\$10 for a 30-day prescription^c**



Text^d **RESULTS to 44535** to learn more about RYBELSUS®

^cCommercially insured patients only. Eligibility and other restrictions apply.

^dMessage and data rates may apply. Check with your mobile service provider. Message frequency will be based on your selections. Text **HELP to 44535** for help. Text **STOP to 44535** to quit. See Terms and Conditions of Use at RYBELSUS.com.



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What is Rybelsus®?

Rybelsus® (semaglutide) tablets 7 mg or 14 mg is a prescription medicine for adults with type 2 diabetes that along with diet and exercise may improve blood sugar (glucose).

- Rybelsus® is not recommended as the first choice of medicine for treating diabetes
- It is not known if Rybelsus® can be used in people who have had pancreatitis
- Rybelsus® is not for use in people with type 1 diabetes and people with diabetic ketoacidosis
- It is not known if Rybelsus® is safe and effective for use in children under 18 years of age

Important Safety Information

What is the most important information I should know about Rybelsus®?

Rybelsus® may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Possible thyroid tumors, including cancer.** Tell your healthcare provider if you get a lump or swelling in your neck, hoarseness, trouble swallowing, or shortness of breath. These may be symptoms of thyroid cancer. In studies with rodents, Rybelsus® and medicines that work like Rybelsus® caused thyroid tumors, including thyroid cancer. It is not known if Rybelsus® will cause thyroid tumors or a type of thyroid cancer called medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC) in people

Do not use Rybelsus® if:

- you or any of your family have ever had MTC, or if you have an endocrine system condition called Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia syndrome type 2 (MEN 2)
- you are allergic to semaglutide or any of the ingredients in Rybelsus®

Before using Rybelsus®, tell your healthcare provider if you have any other medical conditions, including if you:

- have or have had problems with your pancreas or kidneys
- have a history of vision problems related to your diabetes
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if Rybelsus® will harm your unborn baby. You should stop using Rybelsus® 2 months before you plan to become pregnant. Talk to your healthcare provider about the best way to control your blood sugar if you plan to become pregnant or while you are pregnant
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. Breastfeeding is not recommended during treatment with Rybelsus®

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Rybelsus® may affect the way some medicines work and some medicines may affect the way Rybelsus® works.

What are the possible side effects of Rybelsus®?

Rybelsus® may cause serious side effects, including:

- **inflammation of your pancreas (pancreatitis).** Stop using Rybelsus® and call your healthcare provider right away if you have severe pain in your stomach area (abdomen) that will not go away, with or without vomiting. You may feel the pain from your abdomen to your back
- **changes in vision.** Tell your healthcare provider if you have changes in vision during treatment with Rybelsus®
- **low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).** Your risk for getting low blood sugar may be higher if you use Rybelsus® with another medicine that can cause low blood sugar, such as a sulfonylurea or insulin. **Signs and symptoms of low blood sugar may include:** dizziness or lightheadedness, blurred vision, anxiety, irritability or mood changes, sweating, slurred speech, hunger, confusion or drowsiness, shakiness, weakness, headache, fast heartbeat, and feeling jittery
- **kidney problems (kidney failure).** In people who have kidney problems, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting may cause a loss of fluids (dehydration), which may cause kidney problems to get worse. It is important for you to drink fluids to help reduce your chance of dehydration
- **serious allergic reactions.** Stop using Rybelsus® and get medical help right away, if you have any symptoms of a serious allergic reaction including itching, rash, or difficulty breathing

The most common side effects of Rybelsus® may include nausea, stomach (abdominal) pain, diarrhea, decreased appetite, vomiting, and constipation. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are most common when you first start Rybelsus®.

Please see Brief Summary of Prescribing Information on the following pages.

See cost and savings info at RYBELSUS.com, and ask your healthcare provider about RYBELSUS® today.

RYBELSUS®
semaglutide tablets 7mg | 14mg

Brief Summary of information about RYBELSUS® (semaglutide) tablets

RYBELSUS®
semaglutide tablets 7mg | 14mg

Rx Only

This information is not comprehensive.

- Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist
- Visit www.novo-pi.com/rybelsus.pdf to obtain the FDA-approved product labeling
- Call 1-833-GLP-PILL

Read this Medication Guide before you start using RYBELSUS® and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking to your healthcare provider about your medical condition or your treatment.

What is the most important information I should know about RYBELSUS®?

RYBELSUS® may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Possible thyroid tumors, including cancer.** Tell your healthcare provider if you get a lump or swelling in your neck, hoarseness, trouble swallowing, or shortness of breath. These may be symptoms of thyroid cancer. In studies with rodents, RYBELSUS® and medicines that work like RYBELSUS® caused thyroid tumors, including thyroid cancer. It is not known if RYBELSUS® will cause thyroid tumors or a type of thyroid cancer called medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC) in people.
- Do not use RYBELSUS® if you or any of your family have ever had a type of thyroid cancer called medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC), or if you have an endocrine system condition called Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia syndrome type 2 (MEN 2).

What is RYBELSUS®?

RYBELSUS® is a prescription medicine used along with diet and exercise to improve blood sugar (glucose) in adults with type 2 diabetes.

- RYBELSUS® is not recommended as the first choice of medicine for treating diabetes.
- It is not known if RYBELSUS® can be used in people who have had pancreatitis.
- RYBELSUS® is not for use in patients with type 1 diabetes and people with diabetic ketoacidosis.

It is not known if RYBELSUS® is safe and effective for use in children under 18 years of age.

Do not use RYBELSUS® if:

- you or any of your family have ever had a type of thyroid cancer called medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC) or if you have an endocrine system condition called Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia syndrome type 2 (MEN 2).
- you are allergic to semaglutide or any of the ingredients in RYBELSUS®.

Before using RYBELSUS®, tell your healthcare provider if you have any other medical conditions, including if you:

- have or have had problems with your pancreas or kidneys.
- have a history of vision problems related to your diabetes.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if RYBELSUS® will harm your unborn baby. You should stop using RYBELSUS® 2 months before you plan to become pregnant. Talk to your healthcare provider about the best way to control your blood sugar if you plan to become pregnant or while you are pregnant.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. Breastfeeding is not recommended during treatment with RYBELSUS®.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. RYBELSUS® may affect the way some medicines work and some medicines may affect the way RYBELSUS® works.

Before using RYBELSUS®, talk to your healthcare provider about low blood sugar and how to manage it. Tell your healthcare provider if you are taking other medicines to treat diabetes, including insulin or sulfonylureas. Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of them to show your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

How should I take RYBELSUS®?

- Take RYBELSUS® exactly as your healthcare provider tells you to.
- Take RYBELSUS® by mouth on an empty stomach when you first wake up.
- Take RYBELSUS® with a sip of water (no more than 4 ounces).
- Do not split, crush or chew. Swallow RYBELSUS® whole.
- After 30 minutes, you can eat, drink, or take other oral medications. RYBELSUS® works best if you eat 30 to 60 minutes after taking RYBELSUS®.
- If you miss a dose of RYBELSUS®, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular schedule.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about how to prevent, recognize and manage low blood sugar (hypoglycemia), high blood sugar (hyperglycemia), and problems you have because of your diabetes.

What are the possible side effects of RYBELSUS®?

RYBELSUS® may cause serious side effects, including:

- **See “What is the most important information I should know about RYBELSUS®?”**
- **inflammation of your pancreas (pancreatitis).** Stop using RYBELSUS® and call your healthcare provider right away if you have severe pain in your stomach area (abdomen) that will not go away, with or without vomiting. You may feel the pain from your abdomen to your back.
- **changes in vision.** Tell your healthcare provider if you have changes in vision during treatment with RYBELSUS®.
- **low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).** Your risk for getting low blood sugar may be higher if you use RYBELSUS® with another medicine that can cause low blood sugar, such as a sulfonylurea or insulin. **Signs and symptoms of low blood sugar may include:**
 - dizziness or light-headedness
 - blurred vision
 - anxiety, irritability, or mood changes
 - sweating
 - slurred speech
 - hunger
 - confusion or drowsiness
 - shakiness
 - weakness
 - headache
 - fast heartbeat
 - feeling jittery
- **kidney problems (kidney failure).** In people who have kidney problems, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting may cause a loss of fluids (dehydration) which may cause kidney problems to get worse. It is important for you to drink fluids to help reduce your chance of dehydration.
- **serious allergic reactions.** Stop using RYBELSUS® and get medical help right away, if you have any symptoms of a serious allergic reaction including itching, rash, or difficulty breathing.

The most common side effects of RYBELSUS® may include nausea, stomach (abdominal) pain, diarrhea, decreased appetite, vomiting and constipation. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are most common when you first start RYBELSUS®.

Talk to your healthcare provider about any side effect that bothers you or does not go away. These are not all the possible side effects of RYBELSUS®.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store RYBELSUS®?

- Store RYBELSUS® at room temperature between 68°F and 77°F (20°C to 25°C).
- Store in a dry place away from moisture.
- Store tablet in the original pack.
- Keep the tablet in the pack until you are ready to take it.
- **Keep RYBELSUS® and all medicines out of the reach of children.**

Revised: 01/2020

Manufactured by: Novo Nordisk A/S, DK-2880 Bagsvaerd, Denmark
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EVERYDAY HEROES

Fighting for Country and Beethoven

During a stressful time, a National Guardsman still finds a way to lead his class

BY Sydney Page

FROM WASHINGTONPOST.COM

S GT. JACOB KOHUT finally had some downtime during his 12-hour shift standing guard outside the U.S. Capitol. He could have spent his lone break napping or cracking jokes with fellow National Guardsmen. Instead, he sat in the back of a Humvee, flute in hand, teaching students via his laptop how to play Beethoven's "Ode to Joy."

Kohut, 35, was one of the more than 20,000 troops providing security ahead of then President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration in January. That meant he was on double duty, as an active member of the National Guard and

as a dedicated school band teacher.

"I'm a soldier for the Guard, but I'm as much a soldier for music education," he says.

Kohut has been in the military for 11 years as part of the 257th Army Band, playing the bassoon and saxophone. He also has been a band teacher for more than a decade, and for the past five years, he's taught music at two Fairfax County, Virginia, schools—Canterbury Woods Elementary School in the morning and Frost Middle School in the afternoon.

When he was called up for duty, "my first thought was, What about

Watching
Sergeant Kohut
teach music has
“given me hope,”
says a fellow
guardsman.



my kids?" says Kohut. "The last thing these students need is a disruption in their teaching. I would rather teach the class, even if that means I'm tired."

When on duty, Kohut's days began in the morning with teaching his elementary class remotely from the drill floor of the DC Armory, finishing the lesson mere minutes before his Guard shift started at 10 a.m. Later in the day, during his break, he would go online to teach his middle school students from the back of a Humvee.

"I'M A SOLDIER FOR THE GUARD, BUT I'M AS MUCH A SOLDIER FOR MUSIC EDUCATION."



Diane Leipzig, the principal of Canterbury Woods Elementary, assured Kohut she would find a substitute teacher to cover his classes while he protected the Capitol, but he insisted on continuing to teach. Leipzig wasn't surprised. "He would do anything for his students," she says. "He's an excellent example. He teaches our kids the importance of practice, determination, and resilience."

Music has always been a driving force in Kohut's life. He was an avid saxophone player throughout high school, studied music in college, and ultimately earned his doctorate in music composition at George Mason University.

"What I really wanted was to teach," says Kohut, who is married and has a three-year-old son. "My mom, who is a single mother, was a music teacher. That's why I do what I do, because she was such a good role model."

Kohut's double duty has caught the attention of parents at Canterbury Woods Elementary.

"I just wanted to share how impressed I am with Dr. Kohut this week," Susi Brittain wrote in an e-mail to Leipzig. "This morning he taught band online from DC, in his fatigues—which just seems so beyond the expectations of a teacher in these circumstances."

Kohut insists he is not doing anything extraordinary—he's simply taking care of what needs to get done. "We are here to do what's needed, and if that means standing outside for 18 hours straight in the freezing cold, we're ready to do that," he says.

But amid the long and sometimes stressful hours of standing guard, Kohut said his teaching time offers solace.

As the 11 instruments played by his virtual students synchronized in song, the familiar melody of "Ode to Joy" rang through the Humvee. In that moment, Kohut realized there wasn't a timelier tune to teach his students.

"It's a symbol of unity and peace," he says. "And that's what the world needs right now." **R**

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Honk if You Love Birds

BY *Andy Simmons*

WHEN ARIEL CORDOVA-ROJAS rode her bike to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in Queens, New York, last November, she planned to go hiking and bird-watching. Bingo! A mile into her walk, she spotted a gorgeous female mute swan near the water's edge. Cordova-Rojas, 30, who had worked at the Wild Bird Fund rehabilitation center in Manhattan, knew that mute swans can be aggressive. But as she approached this one, it didn't move.

She was certain that the bird needed medical attention. Cordova-Rojas draped her jacket over the bird's head to keep it calm, gingerly picked it up, and cradled it in her arms. And then a thought struck her: What do I do now?

Her best bet was the rehab center, but that was across the East River and clear on the other side of town. How was she going to transport a 17-pound swan on her bike all that way? Luckily, some bemused strangers driving

by offered her, her bike, and the swan a lift to a nearby subway station.

On the subway, no one seemed particularly fazed by the feathered passenger. One guy, says Cordova-Rojas, was "sitting right in front of me on his phone. I don't know if he noticed there was a swan in front of him."

Cordova-Rojas called the rehab center en route, and Tristan Higginbotham, an animal-care manager, picked her up at the subway station and drove bird, bike, and rescuer to the facility. There, staff members determined that the swan might have lead poisoning, caused by ingesting weights used on fishing lines.

The staff got the swan back up on her webbed feet. She even made a boyfriend at the

center—another injured swan. Sadly, even with all that TLC, the swan contracted a bacterial infection. Two months after Cordova-Rojas came to her rescue, she passed away.

It's a disappointing ending, but the real story is just how far some people are willing to go to save a swan in the big city—literally. In all, Cordova-Rojas traveled two hours by foot, car, and subway (while hauling her bike). Says Higginbotham, "That's the perfect summary of who she is." **R**



If an animal is in need, Cordova-Rojas says, "I'm going to do whatever I can."

A WORLD OF GOOD

ALTRUISM

WE ALL SCREAM FOR ICE CREAM

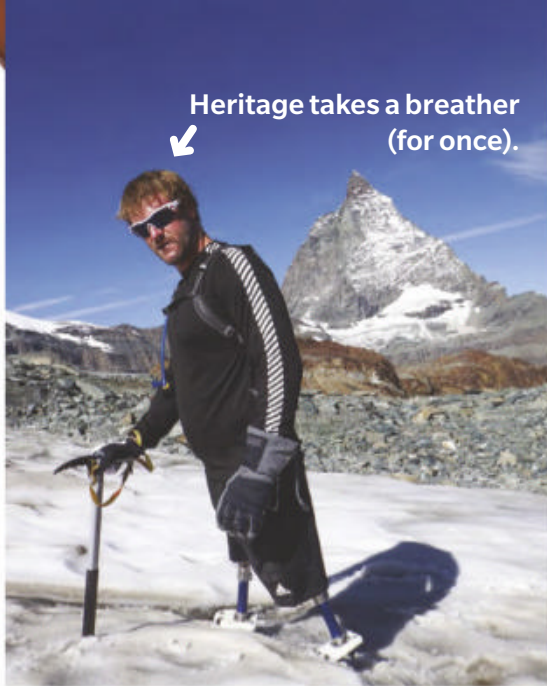
TINA JENSEN has seen a few daisy chains of kindness in her day, but nothing like this. A manager of two Dairy Queens in Brainerd, Minnesota, Jensen says that a drive-through customer will occasionally pick up the tab for the strangers in the next car, and then those grateful strangers will do the same for the car behind, and then the following car does the same. Sometimes the chain can last for 20 cars before petering out. Last December—in the heart of the holiday season and the third wave of COVID-19 illnesses—the kindness almost never stopped. In fact, it lasted for two days and over 900 cars. Or, put another way, people bought \$10,000



worth of ice cream for strangers.

“During times like these it kinda restores your faith in humanity a little,” said Heidi Bruse, who did her part to pay it forward in the line on one of the nights. “The way the world is now, you see a lot of anger, tension, and selfish behavior. What we witnessed was pure kindness, and it was a breath of fresh air, really.”





DETERMINATION

Disabled Veteran Conquers the Matterhorn

Neil Heritage lost both his legs in a suicide bomb attack in Iraq in 2004, but that didn't come close to stopping him. Heritage went on to complete triathlons, learn to ski, and join a team that rowed across the Atlantic Ocean. Now 39, he recently became the first above-the-knee double amputee to scale the Matterhorn. The British ex-corporal, who raised about \$8,000 for veterans' charity via sponsors of his climb, says he is "over the moon—it's been a dream for a long time." It was his third attempt to reach the peak.

Fellow climber Mark Hooks said it was "just so special, managing to achieve something we've worked so hard on over the years." Heritage is already planning his next challenge: kayaking the Amazon River.

FROM TOP: COURTESY CLIMB 2 RECOVERY. CHRISTOPHE SIMON/GETTY IMAGES

MOTHER EARTH

An Environmentalist Who Is a Cut Above

For most hairdressers, sweeping up around their chairs is just part of the job. For Thierry Gras, it didn't seem like enough.

As a child in the 1970s, he heard that human hair had been used to help soak up the 200,000 tons of oil that leaked from a tanker that ran aground off the coast of France. When Gras opened his own salon in the southern French town of Brignoles, he didn't want all that hair to go to waste. So he started *Coiffeurs Justes* ("Fair Hairdressers"), a program that collects hair and stuffs it into used nylon stockings. These hairy tubes can be used to line harbors, where they soak up eight times their weight in oil. The program is now gathering hair from salons in France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg. **R**



Gras in his salon

BOARDING PASS

IS YOUR BLADDER ALWAYS TAKING YOU ON A TRIP OF ITS OWN?



Urgency



Frequency



Leakage

**Take charge of your
overactive bladder (OAB)
symptoms by talking to your
doctor about Myrbetriq today.**

In clinical trials, those taking Myrbetriq made fewer trips to the bathroom and had fewer leaks than those not taking Myrbetriq. Your results may vary.



*Based on 24-month TRx shares for all branded OAB medications, IMS Health National Prescription Audit, March 2018–February 2020. THIS INFORMATION DOES NOT IMPLY SAFETY OR EFFICACY OF ANY PRODUCT; NO COMPARISONS SHOULD BE MADE.



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USE OF MYRBETRIQ (mirabegron)

Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) is a prescription medicine for adults used to treat overactive bladder (OAB) with symptoms of urgency, frequency and leakage.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

Myrbetriq is not for everyone. Do not take Myrbetriq if you have an allergy to mirabegron or any ingredients in Myrbetriq. Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood pressure worse if you have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq. Myrbetriq may increase your chances of not being able to empty your bladder. Tell your doctor right away if you have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream.



IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION (continued)

Myrbetriq may cause allergic reactions that may be serious. If you experience swelling of the face, lips, throat or tongue, with or without difficulty breathing, stop taking Myrbetriq and tell your doctor right away.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take including medications for overactive bladder or other medicines such as thioridazine (Mellaril™ and Mellaril-S™), flecainide (Tambocor®), propafenone (Rythmol®), digoxin (Lanoxin®) or solifenacin succinate (VESicare®). Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Before taking Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney problems. The most common side effects of Myrbetriq include

increased blood pressure, common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis), dry mouth, flu symptoms, urinary tract infection, back pain, dizziness, joint pain, headache, constipation, sinus irritation, and inflammation of the bladder (cystitis).

For further information, please talk to your healthcare professional and see Brief Summary of Prescribing Information for Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) on the following pages.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Like us on Facebook 
and visit Myrbetriq.com



 **Myrbetriq®**
(mirabegron)
extended-release tablets
25 mg, 50 mg



Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) extended-release tablets 25 mg, 50 mg

Brief Summary based on FDA-approved patient labeling

Read the Patient Information that comes with Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This summary does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment.

What is Myrbetriq (meer-BEH-trick)?

Myrbetriq is a prescription medication for adults used to treat the following symptoms due to a condition called overactive bladder:

- Urge urinary incontinence: a strong need to urinate with leaking or wetting accidents
- Urgency: a strong need to urinate right away
- Frequency: urinating often

It is not known if Myrbetriq is safe and effective in children.

Who should not use Myrbetriq?

Do not take Myrbetriq if you have an allergy to mirabegron or any of the ingredients in Myrbetriq. See the end of this summary for a complete list of ingredients in Myrbetriq.

What should I tell my doctor before taking Myrbetriq?

Before you take Myrbetriq, tell your doctor about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have liver problems or kidney problems
- have very high uncontrolled blood pressure
- have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if Myrbetriq will harm your unborn baby. Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if Myrbetriq passes into your breast milk. Talk to your doctor about the best way to feed your baby if you take Myrbetriq.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Tell your doctor if you take:

- thioridazine (Mellaril™ or Mellaril-S™)
- flecainide (Tambocor®)
- propafenone (Rythmol®)
- digoxin (Lanoxin®)
- solifenacin succinate (VESicare®)

How should I take Myrbetriq?

- Take Myrbetriq exactly as your doctor tells you to take it.
- You should take 1 Myrbetriq tablet 1 time a day.
- You should take Myrbetriq with water and swallow the tablet whole.
- Do not chew, break, or crush the tablet.
- You can take Myrbetriq with or without food.
- If you miss a dose of Myrbetriq, begin taking Myrbetriq again the next day. Do not take 2 doses of Myrbetriq the same day.
- If you take too much Myrbetriq, call your doctor or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.

What are the possible side effects of Myrbetriq?

Myrbetriq may cause serious side effects including:

- **increased blood pressure.** Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood pressure worse if you have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq.
- **inability to empty your bladder (urinary retention).** Myrbetriq may increase your chances of not being able to empty your bladder if you have bladder outlet obstruction or if you are taking

other medicines to treat overactive bladder. Tell your doctor right away if you are unable to empty your bladder.

- **angioedema.** Myrbetriq may cause an allergic reaction with swelling of the lips, face, tongue, throat with or without difficulty breathing. Stop using Myrbetriq and tell your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of Myrbetriq include:

• increased blood pressure	• dizziness
• common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis)	• joint pain
• dry mouth	• headache
• flu symptoms	• constipation
• urinary tract infection	• sinus (sinus irritation)
• back pain	• inflammation of the bladder (cystitis)

Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away or if you have swelling of the face, lips, tongue, or throat, hives, skin rash or itching while taking Myrbetriq.

These are not all the possible side effects of Myrbetriq.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store Myrbetriq?

- Store Myrbetriq between 59°F to 86°F (15°C to 30°C). Keep the bottle closed.
- Safely throw away medicine that is out of date or no longer needed.

Keep Myrbetriq and all medicines out of the reach of children.

General information about the safe and effective use of Myrbetriq

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in the Patient Information leaflet. Do not use Myrbetriq for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give Myrbetriq to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about Myrbetriq that is written for health professionals.

For more information, visit www.Myrbetriq.com or call (800) 727-7003.

What are the ingredients in Myrbetriq?

Active ingredient: mirabegron

Inactive ingredients: polyethylene oxide, polyethylene glycol, hydroxypropyl cellulose, butylated hydroxytoluene, magnesium stearate, hypromellose, yellow ferric oxide and red ferric oxide (25 mg Myrbetriq tablet only).

What is overactive bladder?

Overactive bladder occurs when you cannot control your bladder contractions. When these muscle contractions happen too often or cannot be controlled, you can get symptoms of overactive bladder, which are urinary frequency, urinary urgency, and urinary incontinence (leakage).

Marketed and Distributed by:

Astellas Pharma US, Inc.

Northbrook, Illinois 60062



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“You’re more than just a patient to me, Mrs. Melnik.
You’re a potential medical journal article.”

LIFE

IN THESE
United States

Every year for my birthday, my husband buys me a particular perfume that has a delicate floral scent that I especially love. This past year, with

money tight, I told him not to bother getting me a gift. Instead, I asked that he hand-write a beautiful letter encapsulating our 25 years together.

My husband leaned in, gently took my hand, and begged, “Can I please just buy you a bottle of perfume?”

—LISA COLLINS
Rock Hill, South Carolina

Scene: A morning with my six-year-old granddaughter, Emma

Me: Would you like bacon and eggs for breakfast?

Emma: I only like eggs when they’re mixed with something.

Me: Like omelets?

Emma: No, like brownies.

—ELIZABETH COOPER
Trinity, North Carolina

My mutant superpower is I can open any snack's packaging the wrong way so it's impossible to close it again.

—[@APARNAPKIN](#)

Spotted on the back of an Amish horse-drawn carriage in Pennsylvania, this handwritten sign: "Energy efficient vehicle: Runs on oats and grass. Caution: Do not step in exhaust."

—WILSON FRAMPTON
Lewes, Delaware

My favorite species of birds are the ones named by people who clearly hate birds.

- ◆ Drab seedeater
 - ◆ Goaway bird
 - ◆ Rough-faced shag
 - ◆ Common loon
 - ◆ Sad flycatcher
 - ◆ Little bustard
 - ◆ Perplexing scrub wren
 - ◆ Satanic nightjar
 - ◆ Monotonous lark
- [@STU_BOT3000](#)

My niece wants to know: If she donates her hair, and the recipient of her

hair commits a crime and leaves hair at the crime scene, will her DNA be found all over the crime scene and thus incriminate her? She's 12.

—[@PHILNOBILEJR](#)

While doing volunteer work, I began to sing a favorite song of mine to pass the time. Another volunteer perked his ears.

"Who sings that?" he asked.

"The Traveling Wilburys," I replied.

He nodded. "Well, let's keep it that way."

—CHRISTOPHER THORSEN
Wadesville, Indiana

GOT A FUNNY STORY about friends or family? It could be worth \$\$\$\$. For details, go to [RD.COM/SUBMIT](#).

LET'S SLEEP ON IT (IF WE CAN)

◆ My husband rolled over and open-mouth snored directly into my eyes last night if you're wondering how we keep the magic alive.

—[@Maryfairyboberry](#)

◆ My wife is napping, and I have to sneeze. This is not going to end well for me.

—[@RodLacroix](#)

◆ Sleeping under separate blankets should have been the marriage advice everybody gave me a year and a half ago.

—[@iSmashFizzle](#)

◆ It's funny that my wife thinks I have a "side" of the bed. I think she means my "sliver" of bed I've been allotted.

—[@Cheeseboy22](#)







WHERE, OH WHERE?

An RD PHOTO QUIZ

THE WORLD WATERFALL Database lists 17,082 falls in the United States, ranked just about any which way you can imagine: Olo'upena in Hawaii is the tallest, Oregon's Celilo gushes with the highest volume of water, and Wapama in Yosemite is America's highest rated, though it ranks a few notches below the Canadian side of Niagara. The little beauty pictured here, at a mere 101 feet tall, hasn't won any contests, though it could certainly contend for dreamiest, with its elegant stone bridge above and its eerie green pool below. Gorge-ous waterfalls like this are fairly common in this part of the country. Which fall is it? (Answer on PAGE 123.)

- A** Hurricane Falls, New Hampshire
- B** Hole in the Wall Falls, Montana
- C** Rainbow Falls, New York
- D** Teacups Falls, North Carolina

Robots Gone Wild

What happens when you train a machine to take over for humans? It screws up—just as humans do.

BY *Andy Simmons*



ROBOTS REALLY ARE taking over the world. They're writing novels—the first was *1 the Road*, a cyborg's homage to Jack Kerouac published in 2018. And they're making lunch: The California restaurant chain CaliBurger is trying out a robot that can flip 2,000 burgers a day. What human can compete—especially given that androids don't complain, ask for raises, or get drunk at the office Christmas party?

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the coining of the word *robot* by the Czech playwright Karel Capek, we thought it would be fun to take a look at another side of robotkind, one that's all too human. Here's a by-no-means-complete list of failed attempts by automatons to replace us flesh-and-bone types.

Hold the Beothurtreed

Janelle Shane, an optics research scientist, wanted to find out whether artificial intelligence could create a menu that didn't taste, well, artificial. So she fed a computer 30,000 cookbook recipes and then programmed it to create its own recipes. The result: Something called "Beothurtreed Tuna Pie." Want to make it? You'll need these ingredients:

1 hard cooked apple mayonnaise
5 cup lumps, thinly sliced

Once you have your apple mayo and lumps, "surround with 1½ dozen heavy water by high, and drain & cut into ¼ in. remaining the skillet."

Another specialty was "Tart Cover Shrimp Butter Wol," featuring "1 can fried pale fruit to cover that drain." Are you out of fried pale fruit? You might have some rice, though you've probably never used "1 cup grated white rice," as listed in another recipe. Clearly, Betty Crocker can sleep easy.

You Call That Service?

A few years back, the Henn na Hotel in Nagasaki, Japan, hired 243 robots to cover positions ranging from concierge to bellhop. Unfortunately, the check-in robots had trouble answering guests' questions and photocopying passports, while bellhop robots kept banging into walls and tripping over curbs. One in-room assistant sprang to attention every time a lodger snored, saying, "Sorry, I couldn't catch that. Could you repeat your request?" Not long after the experiment began, the hotel "fired" half of the malfunctioning robots. And they didn't get their tips, either.

Stop the Presses!

In 2017, the *Los Angeles Times* published a story about a 6.8 earthquake that shook Santa Barbara, California. You would expect such a large quake to have gotten a lot of press coverage. And it did ... in 1925, when the earthquake happened. Turns out the report was produced by a computer program called the Quakebot, which generates articles based on notices from the U.S. Geological Survey. When a staffer at

the USGS made an error while updating the historical data, the Quakebot jumped on it as if it were breaking news. Soon, Southern Californians were quaking in their boots over a non-earthquake.

You Look Familiar

Facial recognition software has one problem—it can't always recognize faces. The American Civil Liberties Union proved that point when it used the Amazon Rekognition software to match mug shots of criminals to 28 members of Congress. But what about soccer ball recognition? During a match last year, the Scottish soccer team Inverness Caledonian Thistle FC unveiled AI-programmed video cameras designed to automatically follow the ball. Alas, the cameras constantly mistook the referee's bald head for the soccer ball. One helpful viewer called the team to suggest supplying the ref with a toupee.

Quick, Grab a Broom!

What's the worst a robotic vacuum cleaner can do, right? Let Jesse Newton fill you in. Poor Newton: His new puppy pooped on the floor sometime before 1:30 a.m., while he and his wife were asleep. How did Newton come up with that particular time? "Our Roomba runs at 1:30 a.m. every night," he noted online a week later. "And it found the poop." And so it began: "The Pooptastrophe. The Poohpocalypse. The Poopening." The robot vacuum



spread the puppy's load throughout the house, decorating floorboards, furniture legs, and rugs, "resulting in a home that closely resembles a Jackson Pollock poop painting," as Newton described it.

Whatever You Do, Don't Anger Sophia

"Sophia" is a social humanoid robot developed by Hanson Robotics. She/it has an attractive face, with a square jaw, high cheekbones, and impressive eyebrows. And she can hold a conversation to rival the mere chitchat of Apple's Siri. This is surely the robot of the future. When CEO David Hanson and Sophia appeared on CNBC's *The Pulse*, Hanson asked the robot the question humans have been asking themselves about robots for years: "Sophia, do you want to destroy humans?" Without hesitation, Sophia—smiling a tad too broadly for our taste—responded, "OK, I will destroy humans." Humans, you've been warned. **R**

YOUR TRUE STORIES

IN 100 Words

A Beautiful Gesture

Our granddaughter was born with a pronounced facial defect. She and our daughter have endured many cruel comments. One day, while shopping, they were approached by a woman they didn't know. Both stiffened, awaiting a rude remark. But the lady smiled and said, "This gift card is for your beautiful daughter so she can buy something special for herself." God bless that woman for reminding them beauty comes in all forms!

—Terri Pharr
EL CAJON, CALIFORNIA

TO READ MORE *true stories* or *submit one*, go to RD.COM/STORIES. *If we publish yours in the print magazine, it could be worth \$100.*

Wrong-Way Driver

As I struggled to start the gray Plymouth Voyager, I noticed a lady glaring at me through the driver's side window. I realized only then that I was in the wrong car. I got out of the minivan and apologized profusely, explaining that my vehicle was identical. I prayed she didn't recognize me as the new school superintendent. As I walked away, I recalled that my wife had the Voyager. I had taken our green Volkswagen bug. The lady continued to stare at me as I got in and drove away.

—BOB FONTAINE *Eagle, Idaho*



She's on KP Duty

While the adults finished their coffee, RJ, 6, and his sister, Marissa, 4, went off to play. Soon, the doorbell rang. It was a police officer. "Is everything all right?" he asked. He said three 911 calls had come from the house. "We're fine," Grandma replied. "There must be some

mistake." The officer asked the kids whether they made the calls. Petrified, RJ said, "Not me." Marissa started sobbing uncontrollably. Then she looked at the officer and said, "But my brother didn't eat his vegetables."

—Catherine Venturi
SOUTH AMBOY, NEW JERSEY

THE
**FOOD
ON YOUR
PLATE**



I Am Soy ...
A Proto-Protein with a Problem

BY *Kate Lowenstein*
AND *Daniel Gritzer*

YOU MIGHT THINK of me as the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of vegetables.

I am a super-healthy meat alternative and nitrogen-fixing, soil-improving wonder crop. Yet I, soybean, am also tied to world wars, one of history's worst poisons, and deforestation and climate change—an agricultural monster incarnate. So am I primarily good or bad? Let me tell my story, and I'll let you decide.

First, the good: I am a delicious little package of nutrition that you can eat green, snappy, and salted (as with edamame, in those fuzzy bean pods), dried as a crunchy snack, or ground and processed into soy milk, tofu, or delightful tofu skins called *yuba*. I hide in endless American foods, including veggie burgers, soy cream cheese, soy nut butters and cheeses, and egg substitutes. (I'm also regularly found in less-healthy processed foods such as packaged baked goods and crackers.)

I'm essential in various Asian cuisines, as soy sauce, of course, and soybean pastes such as Japanese miso, Korean *doenjang*, and Chinese *doubanjiang*. In Japan they eat me fermented as slimy, wonderfully funky natto, while in China a different fermentation process turns me into the deeply salty, savory beans critical to black bean sauce. And don't forget

soybean oil, which is the second-most-used vegetable oil in the world, outranked only by palm oil.

Yet the first known mention of me to reach the New World wasn't until 1770, when Ben Franklin wrote a letter from London to a friend in Philadelphia, excitedly describing what he called "Chinese cheese" made from "Chinese Garavances." They called chickpeas garavances back then, so his characterization was a sign of his utter lack of familiarity with me.

I'm hardly offended—there are worse things to be mistaken for than a chickpea—but it, like most beans, requires a carbohydrate partner for you humans to get a complete protein (think rice and beans). I'm different; I have the full array of amino acids. So, nutritionally at least, I can truly substitute for meat—which, as your doctor may have mentioned, can be a healthy way to go. I'm also high in vitamin C, potassium, thiamine, and folate.

Franklin, I might add, wasn't totally wrong to mistake tofu for cheese. Making tofu is strikingly similar to cheese-making. Take my "milk" and coagulate it, but instead of using rennet, as you would with cheese, you generally use mineral salts rich in magnesium or calcium. After it coagulates to become silken tofu, the most basic form, you break that up into blocks and then drain and press it to get different levels of firmness.

Given my mind-boggling versatility, you'd think I would next tout my rank



MISO-MARINATED SALMON

In a small bowl, stir together $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white miso (shiro miso), 3 tablespoons mirin, 1 tablespoon sake, and 1 teaspoon soy sauce until smooth. In a dish that can hold four 6- to 8-ounce skin-on salmon fillets (each $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches thick), rub half the mixture all over salmon; reserve extra marinade. Cover and place in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes and up to 4 hours. When ready, preheat broiler and set rack 8 inches from broiler element. Using paper towels, pat excess marinade from salmon, then arrange, skin side down, on a foil-lined baking sheet, spacing fillets 1 inch apart. Broil until salmon is beginning to brown in spots, about 5 minutes. Remove from oven, brush salmon on tops and sides with reserved marinade, then return to broiler until browned on top and salmon begins to flake easily with a fork, about 4 minutes longer.

as the fourth-most-cultivated crop in the world. Actually, this is where the Mr. Hyde part comes in. In 2018, most of the 356 million tons of me grown globally was perversely devoted to

growing the food I should often replace in your diet: beef.

My role as livestock feed makes me a deforestation machine. In 2015 alone, the Amazon rain forest shrank by more than 2,000 square miles, and significant portions of the Cerrado, a critical savanna in Brazil, have been razed to make room for fields of me and the animals I feed. This is thought to have widespread global repercussions. The recurring droughts in California? Those horrible fires in the Amazon a couple of years ago? Scientists have good reason to tie those to the burning of South American forest to clear land and grow more of me.

Unfortunately, the darker part of my story didn't begin with climate change. In 1904, Russia and Japan went to war, fighting in part over soybean-rich land in Manchuria. As the bloodshed grew, I fed the warriors and my oil was used to literally lubricate war machinery. Later, in the 1960s, scientists developing ways to make me flower more efficiently discovered that the chemicals they were using could also make a powerful herbicide. The result was the horrific bioweapon Agent Orange.

Yet my potential for good also became clear decades ago. In the early 1900s, the legendary agricultural

scientist George Washington Carver trained his creative mind on me, identifying me as a great crop for reinvigorating depleted soil. (This is a truly healthy quality of mine eclipsed by our contemporary deforestation problem. If humans were to eat more of me rather than feeding massive quantities of me to livestock, the system would be far more efficient and we'd have healthier bodies and forests. Given that it takes six pounds of me to produce one pound of beef, the beef eater who eats more of me in meat's place lessens the demand for both of us, as strange as that sounds.)

Carver ultimately worked with the great technology innovator (and vegetarian) Henry Ford, who went next-level on me as he obsessively sought to develop soy-based paints, textiles, and fabric from his thousands of acres of soybean crops. Eventually Ford even funded research into a car built out of soy-derived plastics and resins. It never went beyond a concept car, but I haven't given up hope. Anyone have contact info for Elon Musk? **R**

Kate Lowenstein is a health journalist and the editor-in-chief at Vice; Daniel Gritzer is the culinary director of the cooking site Serious Eats.



Colette, Suzette, Antoinette ...

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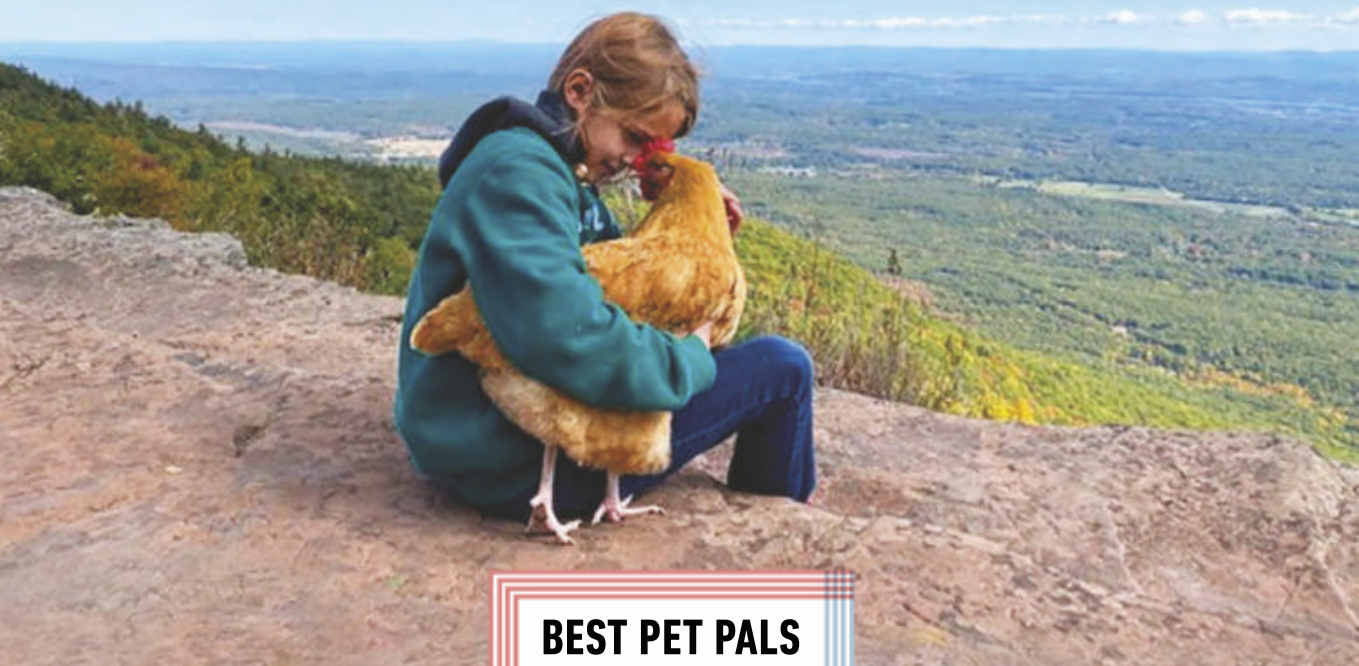
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BEST PET PALS
Contest

Mother Hen

Sophie & the Chicks

DELMAR, NEW YORK

FROM THE MOMENT my husband brought home a box of six chicks from Tractor Supply Company at the start of the pandemic, our nine-year-old, Sophie, hasn't let them out of her sight. She named them Trixie, Bearty, Sweet Pea, Speedie, Captain Flint, and Adrian (we were reading *Treasure Island* and watching *Rocky* at the time) and was very upset when

we wouldn't let them sleep in her bed.

Sophie takes at least one chicken everywhere we let her and has done incredible things with her flock. One hot day, she wanted to take Captain Flint to the creek. I wasn't so sure about it: Could chickens swim? Sophie balanced a stick on her river tube for Captain Flint to perch on, and the two floated down the creek.

Naturally, Sophie dressed as a chicken for Halloween and convinced us Trixie *had* to come. The reactions

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Sophie is rarely without a chicken on her hip—or head or handlebars. Here she is taking Trixie for a walk, for a scooter ride on the bike path, and out for some Halloween fun.

from neighbors were hilarious. “Wait, is that a *real* chicken you’re holding?” Trixie cooed the whole time.

The chickens are teaching us about love as well as loss and grief. Sadly, Captain Flint faced an untimely death after a hawk attack. We had a chicken funeral, said a few words about what a good chicken she was, and thanked her for the joy she brought to our lives before we buried her. Sophie painted a lovely picture in memoriam and has worn a pendant with Captain’s picture ever since.

The chickens weren’t allowed in the house until one morning after virtual

school when Sophie told me, “There’s nothing to feel happy about.” Since then, we’ve allowed one inside at a time if Sophie immediately cleans up after the visit. The chickens brought a glimmer of joy back to our lives. In a few short months, they have taught us to accept situations we can’t change and find joy where we can. I am so grateful.

—*Nominated by* EMILY CHROMCZAK

Have a Pet Pals tale? Enter your story and visuals and see terms at [RD.COM/PETPALS](https://rd.com/petpals). Nominees may appear in print and online.



COURTESY EMILY CHROMCZAK (3)

Knocking It Out of the Kitchen

Did not realize until now that “step up to the plate” was a baseball idiom. As a picky eater growing up, I thought it meant showing up to the table and tackling the meal as best you could.

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ALL
in a Day's
WORK



“OK, I messed up. He didn’t have to rub my nose in it.”

My husband is a physician and uses a dictation service to transcribe his oral notes. On occasion the typists have accidentally altered the sentence structure or words, resulting in something my husband had not necessarily intended. For example, one transcriber wrote, “The

patient is recently married; otherwise, he is normal and healthy.”
—ELAINE EHRENPREIS
Kew Gardens, New York

In case you’re wondering how being manager is going ... no one showed up today because I forgot to make this week’s schedule.

—[@ARIIGONZALEZV](#)

As she finished her dinner, my stuffed granddaughter turned to her mother and declared, “Mom, you make hamburgers so good, you could work at McDonald’s!”
—LINDA RAUCH
Roseburg, Oregon

A client was on trial, accused of assault with a deadly weapon—a

I realized just how long we've been working from home the day a package was delivered and my husband referred to the entrance of our house as "the lobby."

—KIM SCHAFFER *Mount Juliet, Tennessee*

charge he vehemently denied. The state's star witness, at the end of her lengthy testimony, made the very damning statement, "And that's when he started shooting at me with a .45."

For my client, that was his gotcha moment. Abruptly leaping from his chair, he pointed at his accuser and shouted, "That's a lie! It was a .38!"

—STEVE CLINE
Grand Junction, Colorado

This Twitter alert from the sheriff's office in San Miguel, Colorado, leaves no stone unturned: "A large boulder the size of a large boulder is blocking the southbound lane of Highway 145. Expect delays."

YOUR FUNNY WORK story could be worth \$\$\$**.** For details, go to **RD.COM/SUBMIT**.

AND WHAT'S YOUR EMERGENCY?

Four ER nurses share their strangest encounters on reddit.com.

◆ I once had a patient tell me he needed his "decapitation medicine." It took a minute before I realized he was asking for his constipation medication.

—NurseMorbid

◆ I asked a patient complaining of dizziness if she had ever been diagnosed with vertigo. Her daughter shook her head. "No, no," she said. "Mom's a Libra."

—tbmtonada

◆ It was 3 a.m. when a well-dressed man came in with his eight-year-old, healthy-looking son. "What's the problem?" I asked. He replied, "Well,

I was at a wedding and it occurred to me that my son is a little short. Can you give him something right now to make him taller?"

—Sxhpott1

◆ A man once came in with a minor puncture to his eye. He had wanted to see what it looked like to have a bow and arrow aimed at him, so he aimed a drawn arrow at his reflection in a mirror and accidentally fired it. The arrow bounced off the mirror and proceeded to hit him in the eye.

—tapirsaurusrex

—NURSEBUFF.COM



WE FOUND A FIX

5 TRICKS TO
*Improve Your Life**

1

Grip a Stripped Screwhead

HOME Let he who has not incompetently stripped a screw cast the first stone. Next time this happens to you, slip a rubber band over the tip of the screwdriver before tightening or loosening. The band is thin enough to fill in the screw groove (even a Phillips-head) and textured enough for the screwdriver to grasp. This works on screwheads that are already stripped and will also prevent the stripping of new screws if your screwdriver isn't a perfect fit.



**From RD.COM and FAMILYHANDYMAN.COM*

2

Save Fingernails from Key Ring Torture

AUTO Sliding a thick car key or fob onto your key chain is the modern-day equivalent of bamboo shoots under the fingernails. A staple remover can save you the agony. Its teeth delicately slide between the rings and hold them open while you painlessly attach or remove keys and membership cards.



3

Soften Hard-as-a-Brick Ice Cream

FOOD For all the dairy queens and kings who've tried to scoop rock-hard ice cream straight from the freezer, there's no need to bend another spoon. Run a sharp knife under hot water and use it to carve a tic-tac-toe board across the top layer of the ice cream. This increases the ice cream's exposed surface area and expedites the thawing process. If you still need help, run your scooper under hot water too.

4

The Gift That Keeps on Giving

MONEY Enter a different birthday each time you sign up with a company online. This way, instead of being flooded with celebratory discounts that you can't take advantage of all at once on your real birthday, you'll get regular discounts throughout the year. It's totally harmless for you and the company, and it could even help protect your identity if its database is hacked.

5

Freshen Up Your Window Screens

CLEANING Door and window screens are magnets for spiderwebs, dust, and icky debris, but they're devilishly tricky to take down to clean. One solution: Use a lint roller. Just a few swipes across the surface of the screen will cut down on that grime and fuzz. **R**

13 THINGS

Scent-sational News About Smell

BY *Emily Goodman*



1 WHEN AMERICANS were asked in 2018 which sense they would miss most if they lost it, smell came in dead last—only 2 percent of respondents picked it. Then came COVID-19. In early 2020, ear, nose, and throat doctors around the world saw an unusual number of patients who had unaccountably lost their sense of smell. Many of these specialists then developed the same condition, and

some became very ill. Suddenly, the stepchild sense took center stage.

2 RESEARCHERS SOON realized that smell loss is a leading indicator of COVID-19. Those infected with the virus are 27 times more likely than noninfected people to exhibit smell dysfunction—but only two and a half times more likely to run a fever. Some public health experts started

proposing using smell tests—not temperature checks—to screen people for the virus.

3 SCIENTISTS STILL don't fully understand the link between smell and COVID-19. While they know that patients who *don't* lose their sense of smell are more likely to be hospitalized and placed on a ventilator, they don't know why. Perhaps most worrying, they don't know whether this virus's adeptness at invading noses indicates similar skill at invading brains. (The smell receptors at the top of our noses are connected to the base of our brains.)

4 SMELL LOSS could also be an early warning sign of Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, or autoimmune diseases such as lupus. These disorders can shrink or otherwise disrupt the parts of our brains that process smell. Smell dysfunction is also the

most common early symptom reported by Parkinson's patients—even before they begin to experience motor-related symptoms.

5 THAT SAID, if your sniffer isn't as sharp as it used to be, don't panic. Our sense of smell naturally declines as we age. A third of people in their 80s can't smell at all. Smoking dulls the sense too (one more reason to quit). But you can boost your smelling savvy with a bit of training. Vary what you eat and pay attention to food's aromas—our sense is strongest when we're hungry.

6 IF SEEING is believing, smelling is tasting. Our palates are almost entirely dependent on our ability to smell. While taste buds distinguish among broad categories of flavor such as sweet and salty, it's the receptors in our nasal cavities that parse out the pasta from the pastrami.

7 WOMEN HAVE keener noses than men, perhaps because they have as many as 50 percent more cells in the part of the brain that processes smell. Studies have shown that women are better able to identify and distinguish among scents than men.

8 PREGNANT WOMEN have especially sensitive noses. One theory is that the increased sensitivity during pregnancy reduces the likelihood of the mother ingesting toxins. On the other hand, depression literally depresses our ability to smell.

9 WHILE NO scent is universally "good" or "bad," our negative response to odors we perceive as foul is detectable during an MRI brain scan. The smell/mind connection is such that smell can play a role in the treatment of PTSD. Most current approaches try to teach trauma victims

to suppress their fear memories, but they must first be able to recall those memories. Suggestive smells can help trigger them.

10 SCENT ALSO heightens our positive experiences—even if Smell-O-Vision movies never caught on. A Dutch museum recently took advantage of this by surrounding Jan Willem Pieneman's painting *The Battle of Waterloo* with a unique fragrance combination of gunpowder, sweat, and a perfume called 4711 Eau de Cologne, which is the one Napoleon wore.

11 HUMANS MIGHT not have the greatest sniffers in the animal kingdom, but we're sharper than

we might think. People willing to crawl through grass like dogs are perfectly capable of finding and following a scent trail. The species with the strongest sense of smell, however, also has the biggest schnoz: the African elephant. Elephants are so sensitive to scent that they can smell water from 12 miles away.

12 PEOPLE WITH anosmia have no sense of smell. Unable to detect odors such as smoke or spoiled milk, they are twice as likely to succumb to fire and food poisoning than those with the sense intact. Most cases are the result of illness or head injury (car accidents are a leading cause). Those who are born with anosmia often

don't realize it until their teens, as children aren't screened for smell disorders the way they are for vision and hearing problems.

13 COMPANIES IN France and Canada are developing devices that mimic our sense of smell and can be built into home appliances to create ovens that shut themselves off when they detect burning and refrigerators that alert you when produce is at its peak ripeness. Imagine all the wasted food we could save—not to mention never burning another piece of toast. **R**

SOURCES: INTECHOPEN.COM, LEARNABOUTCOVID19.ORG, MEDICALNEWTODAY.COM, MEDPAGETODAY.ORG, NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV, NPR.ORG, NYTIMES.COM, STATNEWS.COM, THEHEALTHY.COM, THESPOON.TECH, VUMC.ORG, WORLDATLAS.COM, YOUNGOV.COM, ZDNET.COM



Don't Do That, Please

Life hack for parents: Convince your kids you hate something you actually like. My five- and seven-year olds just spent ten minutes "tormenting" me by massaging my shoulders.

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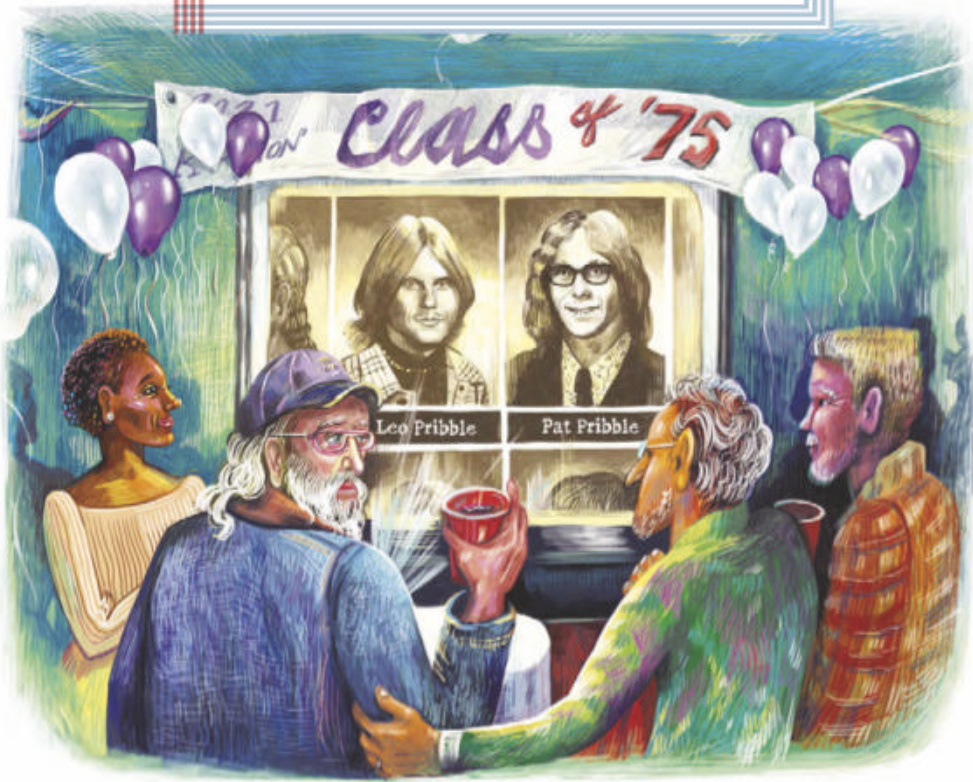
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EVERYDAY MIRACLES



With Open Arms, at Last

BY *Tom Hallman*

FROM THE OREGONIAN

THE SCARS THAT Pat Pribble carried through life were formed nearly 50 years ago, inflicted by fellow students in Woodland, Washington, who picked on him because he was different.

Pat's parents had held him back in the fourth grade, so he ended up in the same class as his younger brother, Leo. Forever the oldest kid in

the class, Pat tried to fit in. He played sports. He went on dates. But he was always just not good enough for this; just not smart enough for that. Pat Pribble was a target.

A trek through the high school years is filled with land mines. Bullies master the uncanny ability to find weakness, inflicting emotional pain with the precision of a surgeon with a

scalpel in hand. Allies vanish, as being popular becomes more seductive than being loyal.

After graduating, Pat drifted and lost his way. He was homeless for a stretch, and he never married or had children. He never had a career, only a series of jobs. Now 65, he lives in a studio apartment in Southeast Portland, Oregon, with his dog, getting by on Social Security.

From a distance, with his long gray hair and beard, Pat appears tough, the kind of man you might cross the street to avoid. It is a facade. To talk with him reveals a gentle side. He speaks quietly, measuring his words, careful not to reveal what he is thinking and feeling, as those were the very things others once seized upon to mock him.

Leo said his older brother always stood up for him. As a self-described closeted gay man in a small town, Leo said he kept his “head in the sand.”

“People sensed something about me,” Leo said last year. “They called me names; Pat got into fights defending me.”

After high school, Leo moved to Portland and then to Hawaii, where two big life changes occurred: He began his career as a floral designer, and he fell in love. After 15 years, Leo and his partner moved to San Francisco. They had been together for 36 years when the love of Leo's life died.

In 2010, at his high school class's 35th reunion, Leo ran into Jim Carey, who asked about Pat. Leo told Carey

that Pat wasn't there because he'd been picked on in school. “That bothered me,” says Carey. Decades later, one incident remained fresh.

“All of us would get in our cars and party down by the river,” Carey recalls. “Pat was there with a date and got his car stuck in the sand. A group of guys grabbed the side of his car and flipped it over with Pat and his date inside. He was begging for them to turn it over. They just kept laughing at him. Finally they pushed it right side up.” Carey falls silent. “Pat had it rougher than the rest of us.”

AN OLD SCHOOLMATE'S CALL CHANGES EVERYTHING FOR A FORMER OUTCAST.

Last November, as Carey planned for the 45th reunion in 2021—postponed a year because of the pandemic—he decided to personally invite Pat. With a bit of research, he found his number and called. Pat answered.

“Even after all these years,” says Carey, “the mind remembers a voice. It was Pat.” As the two men caught up on each other's lives, Carey learned that Leo had terminal brain cancer and had only months to live.

Days later, Carey called Leo. They talked for nearly two hours. “That was a sad call,” says Carey. “I was saying hello and goodbye to Leo at the same time.”

At the end, Carey asked whether there were any classmates Leo might like to hear from. Leo supplied a list of names. Carey tracked down the men and asked them to call Leo. He then made one more request—everyone should also call Pat. And so they did.

“We told each other stories,” Pat says of his conversations. “I talked about some of the lesser things, and the good things too. The love and kindness caught me unawares.”

Bruce Whitmire, now a dairy farmer, was one of the classmates who made the calls to Leo and Pat. Pat told him he'd been putting money aside each week to buy a bus ticket to San Francisco to visit Leo one last time before he died. Two weeks later, Whitmire called back to say he didn't want him to “take a damn bus.” He bought Pat a first-class flight to San

Francisco and said he would also be sending him “walking around money,” enough to do whatever he wished with his brother.

The Pribble brothers were touched. “Never underestimate people,” said Leo. “We're all different now than when we were kids.”

Leo passed away this past January. His former classmates had promised him that after he was gone they wouldn't lose track of Pat, and they have kept that promise. Every week, one or more of them call Pat to see how he's doing.

Healing wounds from the past has allowed Pat to look to the future. “I'll be at the next reunion,” he says. “These guys ...” He pauses, stifling tears. “Let's just say that everyone needs people like these guys in their lives.” **R**

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I Have an IKEA Joke, but It Needs Too Much Setup

The Internet loves a good joke—and many bad ones too. Some of the most popular follow a pattern that starts “I have a joke, but ...” and ends with the ironic reason why the joke can't be revealed after all. These are some of the latest and greatest:

I have a prune joke, but it's dated.

I have a *Stars Wars* joke, but it's forced.

I have a nihilist joke, but who cares?

I have a joke about a broken clock, but it's not the right time.

I have a joke about cows, but I don't want to milk it.

I have a joke about Zoom meetings, but my Internet connection is unstable.

HUFFPOST.COM AND MASHABLE.COM

LAUGH LINES

I only use shampoo that smells like raspberries so people don't think it's weird when I have jam in my hair.

—[@Dawn_M_](#)

Basically impossible to carry a watermelon around without seeming proud or ashamed of it.

—[@SamuelSaulsbury](#)

Grapefruit juice tastes like orange juice that just found out it has to work on its day off.

—[@JermHimselfish](#)

I buy seedless grapes because let's leave the grape-growing to the vineyards.

—[@Darlainky](#)

Do you think the guy who designed hand grenades really hated pineapples or really loved them?

—[@rachelle_mandik](#)

A cantaloupe is an antelope that doesn't.

—[@LeonEarlGrey](#)



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A Dementia That Can Be Cured

“I couldn’t even sign my name,” says an ex-teacher. It took years for doctors to spot the real cause.

BY *Russell McLendon*

AT FIRST, Dorothy Sorlie thought she was just getting old, though not as gracefully as she’d hoped. Retired from teaching English at a local college near her home in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Sorlie, then 74, began losing interest in things she’d enjoyed, including reading and cooking. “I thought, Where are the good authors these days? Well, it wasn’t the authors, it was me,” she said. She couldn’t concentrate. Her handwriting changed. The symptoms occurred so gradually that initially she wasn’t aware anything was

happening. “It wasn’t like when you get a pain in your knee and know you need to see a doctor,” says Sorlie.

Things kept getting worse. Her neat teacher’s handwriting went from sloppy to illegible. “When you have to sign over power of attorney to your husband because you can’t even sign your name—that’s a terrible feeling,” she says. She started worrying that she might be developing early dementia.

The physical symptoms progressed too. Despite having been a good swimmer, she found she could no longer even stay afloat in a pool. More worrisome, she began having trouble walking and started falling. She also experienced urinary incontinence.

Through it all, her doctors struggled to explain what was happening.

“My decreased mobility was blamed on my arthritis and my right foot, which needed surgery,” Sorlie told the *Eau Claire Leader-Telegram*. “My lack of interest ... I blamed on pain. The reality was I was unable to concentrate.”

Despite having surgery on her foot, Sorlie soon couldn’t walk on her own. She and her husband, Jim Urness, were desperate for answers. It would take years before they got them.

The doctors’ diagnoses, all incorrect, could account for one or two of Sorlie’s symptoms but not all of them,

I TRIED IT

Journaling for Back Pain

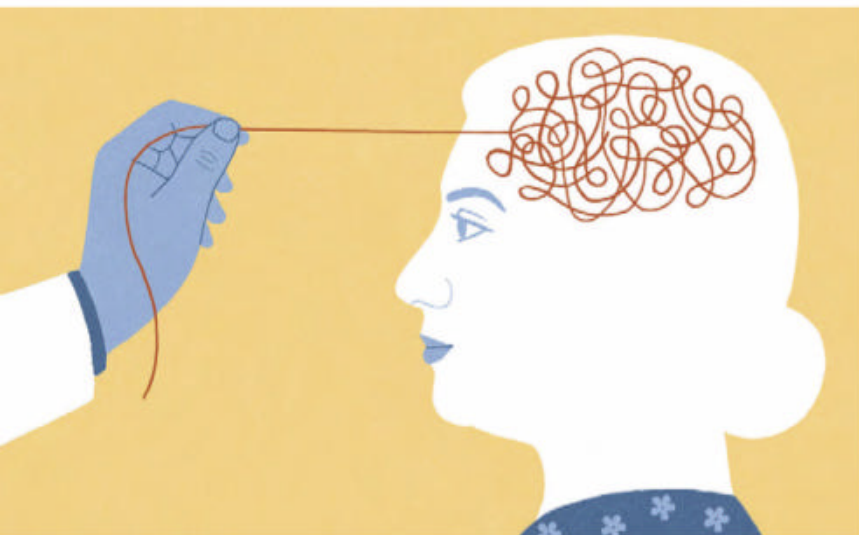


Dani Fagan

I was completely flummoxed by my debilitating pain until I read a book by John Sarno, MD. Dr. Sarno theorized that when we suppress strong emotions, such as anger, they can build up and eventually come out as a chronic ailment, commonly lower back pain (but also migraines, irritable bowel syndrome, joint pain, dizziness, and more). I had been told by physicians that my back pain was caused by my herniated disk. Because the mainstream medical model doesn’t widely

understand the mind-body syndrome, if something is found on an MRI, that’s likely to be your diagnosis. But Dr. Sarno said back pain is one of the most commonly misdiagnosed ailments there is. I found a psychotherapist who worked with Dr. Sarno and teaches an expressive writing method, called JournalSpeak, that helps you unload all the emotions and stress you’re feeling onto paper. This writing practice opened up a whole new pain-free, anxiety-free existence for me. I taught my nervous system to relax out of fight-or-flight mode, and the symptoms stopped firing. My MRI is still a mess, but I have no pain.

COURTESY DANI FAGAN



and none of the treatments seemed to help. “I think I was tested for Parkinson’s disease maybe 2,700 times,” Sorlie says. It wasn’t Parkinson’s. It wasn’t Alzheimer’s.

The couple traveled across the country looking for someone who could tell them what was wrong, or at least treat the symptoms. “Native American healing in northwestern Alabama. Diagnostic chiropractic in Michigan. Eastern medicine, natural medicine, and Western medicine, of course,” says Sorlie. She also visited the famed Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, for a consultation. One possible explanation for her symptoms after another proved incorrect.

Throughout the ordeal, Sorlie’s primary care doctor, Kevin Wergeland, an internal medicine physician at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire, refused to give up. “I’m blessed with a marvelous primary care doctor,” Sorlie says. “Never once did he say to me,

‘Dorothy, you’re getting older—adjust.’”

Dr. Wergeland sent her to a physical medicine and rehabilitation expert, who in turn referred her to neurosurgeon Jonathan Bledsoe, also part of Mayo in Eau Claire. Dr. Bledsoe ordered a CT scan, and Sorlie had barely returned home from her appointment when he called her. “He

said, ‘We’ve got it, and we can fix it.’”

When Sorlie returned to the office the next day, Dr. Bledsoe told her that the ailment responsible for all her symptoms was a little-known condition called normal pressure hydrocephalus (NPH). Throughout her two years of medical visits and tests, Sorlie had never heard NPH mentioned. Although her condition was detected at an advanced state, having progressed during the years she was searching for a diagnosis, it was treatable.

In fact, NPH is sometimes referred to as “treatable dementia.” It is an insidious and mysterious disorder that can mimic many more common problems, including Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s. An estimated 700,000 people in the United States have NPH, although it’s believed that fewer than 20 percent of them are correctly diagnosed.

NPH typically affects people 60 and older. Because the three main symptoms—difficulty walking, cognitive

problems, and urinary incontinence—can occur in people for other reasons, doctors can overlook or misinterpret them, explains Abhay Moghekar, MD, associate professor of neurology at Johns Hopkins University.

Older women often have bladder issues, for instance, and men may suffer from prostate disorders that cause incontinence. Walking can be compromised by arthritis, diabetes, or foot problems as well as by Parkinson's disease. And while Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, other conditions such as vascular problems, Lewy body dementia (which often occurs with Parkinson's disease), Lyme disease, thyroid disorders, and even depression can all cause cognitive changes. "But if you see the three symptoms together, your suspicion [of NPH] needs to be raised," says Dr. Moghekar.

The brain is surrounded by fluid, which helps to cushion and protect it. Sometimes too much of this cerebrospinal fluid accumulates, a condition called hydrocephalus. The excess fluid causes a rise in intracranial pressure and can damage brain tissues. Most cases of hydrocephalus occur either in newborns as a birth defect or later in life after a brain injury. When the condition occurs with no identifiable cause, it's dubbed idiopathic NPH. The "normal pressure" part of the name is misleading. While NPH can occur with little or no increase in intracranial pressure, often the

pressure fluctuates. Regardless, the excess fluid damages brain tissue and causes NPH's trio of major symptoms.

The preferred treatment is to surgically implant a shunt to divert excess fluid away from the brain to elsewhere in the body—typically the abdomen—where it can be harmlessly absorbed.

Sorlie's memories from the period after her shunt surgery are hazy, but she recalls her recovery as slow. She checked into a rehab facility and worked hard at physical, speech, and occupational therapy. She does remember lots of support from family, friends, and Mocha Joe, a rescued golden retriever therapy dog. "That dear dog," says Sorlie. "When I was at my worst, he would sit by my side."

Urness says that his wife recovered a lot faster than she thinks. "Dorothy sometimes doesn't give herself enough credit for her recovery from the most serious aspects of the condition," he says. "The major changes happened very quickly. I was greatly relieved within two weeks. And she continued to improve for a long time."

Sorlie is now free of NPH symptoms and walks five miles a day. According to Urness, she's at 120 percent. "And I'd just as soon you take off the 20 percent—I can't keep up!" he tells her.

"I know that there's no cure for this and that shunts can have problems," Sorlie says. "I realize that I'm getting older. But I'm feeling very healthy."

Sorlie is taking advantage of her

good health and using her dramatic recovery to inform others about NPH. She gives presentations to local organizations and senior centers and works with the Hydrocephalus Association as an outreach volunteer, a role that comes naturally to the longtime

educator. Her goal is to help others avoid the long journey she endured before finally getting a correct diagnosis and effective treatment. “If this awareness can help one person avoid what my husband and I endured,” Sorlie says, “then my efforts are worth it.”

Do You Need a Portable Air Purifier?



FROM RECORD WILDFIRES TO COVID-19, rarely have we been as focused on the air we breathe as we have been in the past few years. A portable air purifier might be just what the lung doctor ordered.

Most models scrub the air via a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter that removes at least 99.97 percent of airborne particles sized 0.3 micron or larger. This means that purifiers can capture pet dander, dust, pollen, mold, and air pollution that has entered from outside. Depending on the model, air purifiers with a HEPA filter may also

capture bacterial and viral particles that are 0.3 micron or larger. Even though the COVID-19 virus is smaller than 0.3 micron, it floats in the air on respiratory droplets, which are larger.

When you're shopping, pay attention to the clean air delivery rate (CADR). It tells you how quickly the filter will clean a room of a given size—the higher the number, the faster it works. To specifically remove gases and odors, the purifier should have an activated carbon filter.

Not everyone needs to buy an air purifier for everyday use, says Patricia Fabian, an indoor air quality expert and associate professor at Boston University's School of Public Health. But she says the purifiers make sense for people with underlying respiratory conditions, such as asthma, as well as for pregnant women. Others who might benefit include people with seasonal allergies or allergies to pets or mold and people who live with smokers, near industrial areas, or near freeways. The Environmental Protection Agency suggests that people who live in areas at high risk for wildfires consider buying one. **R**



News FROM THE
**WORLD OF
 MEDICINE**

EXERCISE PROTECTS THE DECLINING BRAIN

It's not unusual for some cognitive decline to occur as you age, and it's nothing to worry about. But if you have more difficulty with judgment, language, or memory than is expected for your age, a doctor may diagnose you with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), a condition that raises your risk of progressing to dementia. However, in a Korean study of nearly 250,000 people with MCI, participants who exercised more than once a week were 18 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. Physical activity may protect us by increasing blood flow to the brain or by aiding the production of the molecules that help neurons grow.

Multivitamin Benefits Include Illusion

Millions of us take a multivitamin every day—and we feel as if we're getting results. In a Harvard-led investigation, people who used these supplements rated their overall health, on average, 30 percent higher than nonusers' self-assessments. It turns out, though, that both groups actually had comparable levels of well-being, both physical and mental. It's possible that people with a more positive outlook are more attracted to multivitamins or that taking them promotes a healthy self-image.

Treating Epilepsy with a Keto Diet

Although ketogenic diets are a weight-loss fad, most dietitians wouldn't recommend them for that purpose. However, keto diets have been used successfully for over a century to reduce seizures in children. More recently, they've shown themselves to be effective for nearly 60 percent of adults with drug-resistant epilepsy as well. Keto diets are heavy on fats but low on carbohydrates, which forces the body to use fat for energy instead of its default source, the glucose that it breaks down from carbs. Researchers aren't sure why this metabolic change reduces seizures. If you're considering giving the keto diet a try for this reason, don't go it alone: You'll need monitoring and coaching from medical professionals to implement it safely and effectively.

DIABETES IN DOGS: A POSSIBLE RED FLAG FOR OWNERS

When Swedish researchers compared pets' veterinary records to their owners' medical records, they spotted a trend. In their study, which followed 332,546 human-pet pairs for up to six years, the owners of dogs with diabetes were 38 percent more likely to develop the condition themselves. The same connection was not seen among cat owners. Since dogs typically rely on their humans for exercise, insufficient physical activity might be the main shared factor at play. In any case, if the vet diagnoses your pooch with diabetes, it's a good time to examine your own lifestyle and risk factors.



Taking Your Blood Pressure? Check Both Arms

The ideal way to take blood pressure is by measuring it in both arms, according to international guidelines. In real life, this happens at best only half the time—even at the doctor's office. Checking both arms is important because when arteries stiffen and harden, one side is usually affected more than the other in a way that blood pressure testing may detect. A slight disparity isn't cause for concern, but a difference of 10 mm Hg in the systolic number could be a sign of cardiovascular problems. So the next time you're at a doctor's appointment, if they check only one arm, encourage them to take a few extra moments for the other one.

OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA'S TOLL ON THE HEART

As one of the most prevalent sleep disorders, obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) affects around one billion people worldwide. For those with this condition, the muscles in the back of the throat relax too much during sleep, creating a narrowed passage for air and causing breathing to stop and restart repeatedly. Each time this happens, the sleep cycle gets interrupted, which often leaves sufferers feeling tired all day. But the potential consequences don't stop there. Untreated sleep apnea may also raise the risk of dying from heart disease by up to five times.

A recent Finnish study explored one of the reasons for this by recording OSA patients' nighttime heart rhythms. When the body runs low on oxygen and suddenly awakens, this causes a surge of activity in the sympathetic nervous system—and releases stress hormones in the body. The longer a participant's breathing was interrupted, the faster the heart raced and the more the short-term heart rate varied. Over time, too much of this strains the cardiovascular system.

Fortunately, there are treatments that work well for OSA. Mild cases may improve with lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking or shedding excess weight. For more serious cases, the most effective solution is a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine that pumps a constant stream of air into your throat by way of a mask.



Grin (or Grimace) and Bear Your Vaccine

If a needle jab makes you wince, that might actually be a good thing. American participants in a study were asked to make various facial expressions while getting injected. Those who wore either a grimace or a genuine smile involving both the mouth and eyes reported about 40 percent less pain than those who maintained a stoic poker face.

Alcohol Impairment Begins Below Legal Driving Limits

In many countries, it's illegal to drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) above 0.05 percent. Now new research suggests that the ability to process visual motion can be compromised with a BAC as low as 0.015 percent. Clearly, it couldn't hurt to call a ride even if you've had as little as half a beer. **R**

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- Sherri H., Granville, NY

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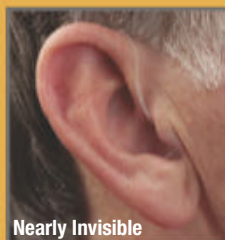
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“Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick.
Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick.
Then I thought, why not just take a bath?”

A teacher giving a lesson on the circulation of blood says to her class, “Now, if I stood on my head, the blood, as you know, would run into it, and I would turn red in the face.”

“Yes,” the whole class agrees.

“Then why is it,” she continues, “that while I am standing upright, the blood doesn’t run into my feet?”

One little fellow shouts, “’Cause your feet ain’t empty!”

—INNERWORKSPUBLISHING.COM

A golfer standing on a tee box overlooking a river sees a couple of fishermen and says to his partner, “Take a look at those two idiots fishing in the rain!”

—Submitted by
GREG LANG
Cincinnati, Ohio

Reading a letter at the breakfast table, a wife suddenly looks at her husband suspiciously.

“Henry,” she says, “I just received this letter from my mother saying she isn’t accepting our invitation to come and stay with us, as we don’t appear to want her. What does she mean? I told you to write and say that she was to come at

My stepfather doesn't like it when I call him my fake dad. He prefers *faux pa*.

—GLENN MOORE, *comedian*

her own convenience. You did write to tell her this, didn't you?"

"Yes," says the husband. "But I couldn't spell *convenience*, so I made it *risk*."

—HERWAY.NET

Another Round of "Guy Walks into a Bar" Jokes

◆ Charles Dickens walks into a bar and orders a martini.

The bartender asks, "Olive or twist?"

—PEREZGC

on reddit.com

◆ René Descartes walks into a bar.

"You want a beer?" the bartender asks.

"I think not," says Descartes, and then he disappears.

—GAMERTELLIGENCE.COM

GOT A FUNNY JOKE?
It could be worth \$\$\$.
For details, go to
RD.COM/SUBMIT.

◆ A pirate walks into a bar with a paper towel on his head.

"What's with the paper towel?" asks the bartender.

"Arrr!" the pirate

replies. "I've got a Bounty on me head."

—Submitted by

DEWEY FERGUSON

Madison Heights, Virginia

I just found out that I'm color-blind. This came right out of the purple.

—SCARYMOMMY.COM

PAPER PUSHER

Many goods sold on etsy.com are masterpieces of craftsmanship. A user named MrImprov, however, sells "Terrible Origami." Here are a few of his creations.



Ghost
\$91



Horse
\$100



Snowplow
\$98



Fist
\$88 (SOLD)

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Do you think I care what younger generations say about me? I *will* wear this fanny pack.

—Dionne Warwick, SINGER

When we look to our heroes, we agree, and that matters ...
We agree on our teachers and our first responders and firefighters.
When we celebrate our heroes, we're reminded of who
we are as one people united.

—Renée Zellweger, ACTOR

**Home is not where you were born. Home is where
all your attempts to escape cease.**

—Omar Taher, WRITER

At close to 99, I can tell you I've never lived alone. I've never laughed alone.
And that has as much to do with my being here today as anything else.

—Norman Lear, TV PRODUCER

Don't be like me. Be better than me.

—Cam Newton, ATHLETE



Foot Pain Keeping You From What You Love?

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Foot Pain Relief and
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INTENSIVE FOOT THERAPY – Lotion
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COVER STORY

YOUR BRILLIANT SMARTPHONE

*UNLOCK YOUR DEVICE'S MOST
HELPFUL TRICKS AND SECRETS
WITH THESE 25 TIPS*

BY *Jody L. Rohlena*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Dan Saelinger*



Remember way back when phones could only transmit our voices? Or when they got an upgrade to send brief written messages we now cleverly refer to as “texts”? At this point, those essential functions are only a fraction of what the smartphones in our hands can do. They are really mini computers, and they’re packed with more superpowers than a Marvel movie. Some are built-in features; some are apps you download. Most are free. All are worth a try, and might even change your life—or at least help you sleep better at night.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

SLEEP COMPANION

Do you toss and turn endlessly, or do you just wake up some mornings feeling as if you do? A sleep-tracking app can help. The product-testing company Wirecutter tried out a bunch and determined that SleepScore is the best at gauging how long it takes you to fall asleep, measuring how much and how deeply you sleep, and suggesting ways to improve your nightly recharge.

WHITE NOISE MACHINE

Got noisy neighbors? Blocking out their ambient sounds might help you get some peace. No special machine is needed with the White Noise app, which offers white noise, of course, as well as different “shades” (some people find lower-frequency “pink” noise to be more soothing than white, for instance), along with the sounds of rain, a ticking clock, waves, or whatever else you might want for your personal background soundtrack.

CALORIE COUNTER

We’re notoriously bad at measuring what we put into our mouths, which is why MyFitnessPal comes in handy. The app has nutritional information for more than 300 million foods (general, such as applesauce, and specific, such as Mott’s Unsweetened Applesauce), making it easy to keep track of your meals, snacks, and drinks. The running “ticker” shows how many calories you’ve consumed and how many you have left for the day based on the goals you input for yourself.

FITNESS TRACKER

Your phone’s built-in Health app can do pretty much everything a fitness tracker or smart watch can do, including counting your steps and collecting other health info. But if you specifically want to measure your heart rate, you’ll need a separate app. Try Instant Heart Rate, found to be accurate in a study by heart researchers at the University of California, San Francisco. It

SUNBURN PREVENTER

When you're spending time outdoors—whatever the weather, but especially on very sunny days—the Environmental Protection Agency has you covered. The EPA's SunWise UV Index app zeroes in on your ZIP code and lets you know the ultraviolet (UV) index, a measure of the strength of the sun's rays. Then the app will suggest how much protection you'll need over the course of the day.



turns your phone's camera lens into a heart rate monitor: Just put your finger over the lens to get your reading and see whether you're in the proper range for whatever you're doing—running, resting, or something in between.

HANDY HELPERS

DICTATION

Tired of typing? It's easy to dictate texts and e-mails with your phone. All you have to do is tap the microphone located on your phone's keyboard, and whatever you say will magically turn into typed text. Just be sure to enunciate or the message might not say what you intended!

DASHCAM

Odds are, you already rely on your phone for navigation. Use the CamOnRoad app, and it will simultaneously record dashcam video as you drive—which might be helpful should you have an accident and need to file an insurance claim. (Footage is stored in the cloud, so it won't eat up all your phone's memory.) The app can even tell if you've been in a collision and automatically call emergency services.

VIRTUAL WALLET

Cash took a serious hit during the pandemic, as many people worried about the germs that might travel with their bills and coins. If you still haven't tried Apple Pay or Google Pay, it's a good time to take the plunge.

These virtual payment methods store your credit or debit card information so you can pay by simply holding your phone or smart watch over a screen at the register—no contact needed. And don't worry, your linked financial information is encrypted so it can't be stolen. You can pay this way at 67 percent of American retailers (and some places you might not expect, such as taxis and gas stations), according to a survey by research firm Forrester.

On iPhones, Apple Pay is built in to your phone's virtual wallet; just tap the Wallet icon to get started. Google Pay works on iPhones and Androids; download the app and follow the prompts to set it up.

TURN AN OLD PHONE INTO A DIY SECURITY CAMERA OR A LIVE CAM TO WATCH YOUR PET WHILE YOU'RE AWAY.

PERSONAL BUTLER

Maybe you like to start the day with fresh coffee and the news. Or maybe loud rock music is the only thing that gets you out of bed. You can program your phone to automate your morning routine—or any sequence of tasks. For example, your phone can turn on the coffee maker, cue up a podcast, and turn on the lights at a set time each morning, or do the reverse and turn things off before you leave the house. For Apple devices, use the



TOOLBOX

Your phone is also a tape measure. With an iPhone, just open the built-in Measure app (if you don't see it, make sure your operating system is up to date) and click the ruler icon. You'll also see a level icon, for another handy built-in tool to help you straighten all the crooked pictures on your walls. On Android phones, search "ruler" or "spirit level" (that handy tool's official name), and digital versions should appear at the top of the results.

built-in Shortcuts app. For Androids, use the Google Assistant function.

SECURITY CAMERA

Do you have an old smartphone you're not using anymore? You can turn it into a DIY security camera or a live cam to watch your pet while you're away with the help of an app such as Alfred. Position the phone

where it can see whatever you want to monitor, and the app will broadcast a live feed to your primary phone.

DOCUMENT SCANNER

There are lots of apps you can use to scan and share documents from your phone; Wirecutter's favorite is Adobe Scan. Or you can do it with tools you're probably already using.

On an iPhone, open the built-in Notes app, tap the camera icon, then choose Scan Documents. Need to sign the document too? Tap the Share icon, then Markup, then Add, and choose Signature. On an Android, go to Google Documents and tap the plus sign, then the camera icon. Then take a photo of the document and send it along. To sign it first, look for the “scribble” tool under the drawing tab.

NAVIGATOR

If you like to hike or explore new places but worry about getting lost (or tend to forget where you parked your car!), phone map apps are useful companions. In Apple Maps, tap the blue dot that shows your current location. You will have two options: Mark My Location, which saves your spot, or Share My Location, to share where you are with others. In Google

LANGUAGE TUTOR

There are so many ways to learn a language besides in-person classes. With a language learning app, you can get more fluent any time you have a few free minutes. According to *PC Magazine*, the best is Duolingo, which offers instruction for more than 30 languages, customized for beginners and more advanced students.



Maps, it works the same way, only you choose Save My Parking. Then use the map app to navigate your way back to where you started.

MAPS

Your phone's built-in maps are great, but if you find yourself without a signal, you'll be glad you previously downloaded maps using the Maps.Me app, which you can open anytime, anywhere. It also offers dining options and directions.

ENTERTAINMENT

E-BOOK READER

If you find yourself out in the world with time to kill and wish you'd brought along a book, just download the Kindle app and you can buy a book or jump back into whatever you were reading on your Kindle device at home. Fun feature: If your chosen book also has an audio version, you can read and listen at the same time, or switch between modes by tapping on the audio or book icons located at the bottom of your screen.

RADIO

With so many ways to play music, sometimes you want to just listen to the radio. But you're no longer limited to what's on the air in your local area. The TuneIn radio app airs thousands of stations from around the country, with all kinds of music, as you'd expect, as well as talk, live sports, and even podcasts and TV shows.

REMOTE CONTROL

If you're always losing your TV's remote, you might want to download an app that can take its place. Most TV manufacturers have their own remote apps, and the news blog Android Authority says those are your best bet. The easiest way to find the one you need is to search for "TV remote app" and your TV's manufacturer.

TV GUIDE

It's back! And the TV Guide app does more than run down what's live on the air. You can keep track of what's playing on streaming services as well as

**SET REMINDERS FOR WHEN
YOUR FAVORITE SHOWS
COME ON SO YOU HAVE TIME
TO GRAB A SNACK.**

what's coming soon and what's about to depart. Set reminders for when your favorite shows come on so you have time to grab a snack and settle in.

JUST FOR FUN

STARGAZER

Is that bright star actually a planet? What constellation is overhead? Launch the SkySafari app (\$2.99) and see the night sky above you replicated on your phone screen and annotated with the names of all the stars and planets. Pay another few bucks for additional content packages and you

can see a 3D view of the galaxy, get guided audio tours of the cosmos, and more. While you're in stargazing mode, download NASA's free app, which offers fun facts for space lovers plus views from space, a tracker for the International Space Station, and other features astronomy buffs (and the newly curious) will enjoy.

SPORTS FAN ZONE

If you're a sports fan, you've probably sneaked a peek at your phone to look up game scores when you

IF YOU HAVEN'T LOOKED FOR APPS FROM YOUR FAVORITE SPORTS TEAMS, YOU'RE MISSING OUT ON COOL FEATURES.

were supposed to be doing something else. But if you haven't looked for apps from your favorite teams, you're missing out on some cool features, including game highlights and player stats as well as basics such as schedules and where-to-watch information. For example, NBA team apps are a must-have for pro basketball fans to keep up with game scores in real time, plus post-game interviews and lots more. Just be sure to choose your teams' official apps.

PET PHOTOGRAPHER

Your phone is probably already full of photos of your pets, but if you

want to zero in on the cuteness, try shooting in portrait mode, an option on many newer phones. When you open the camera, simply select portrait mode and the background will automatically be blurred, putting all the focus on your pet. (It works for people too.)

CUSTOM ARTIST

Want to get even more artsy? Try a photo-editing app such as Visionist, which can make any photograph look almost like a painting (choose your preferred style from a gallery of options).

RECIPE BOX

How many times have you found a delicious recipe online only to search in vain the next time you want to make it? The solution: Pinterest, the virtual bulletin board where you "pin" things you find in your virtual travels and want to save. You can store all kinds of links and images: holiday gift ideas, books you aspire to read, paint colors you like. Any topic you can think of can get its own "board," but if you're a beginner, saving recipes is an easy start. Just tap the plus sign to create a board, then call it Recipes (or something more clever that says "yum" to you). When you find a recipe you want to save, look for a button with the red Pinterest *P* logo (look for it next to the blue button with the *F* for Facebook or the bird for Twitter).

MINI TV

Sure, you can watch videos or download movies to view on your phone, but not everyone knows you can also enjoy live TV just as if you were sitting in your living room. Simply install your cable or satellite provider's app, and you'll have a TV with you wherever you go.



KEEP IT SECURE

All apps collect data as you use them. Following these four steps will help ensure you're not oversharing.

1.

For starters, download apps only from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store, not from random websites. These apps meet the major companies' quality standards.

2.

Before you accept an app's terms and conditions, look at what information it's planning to collect and think twice if it's asking for too many permissions. For example, why would a gaming app need access to your text messages? Also, most apps don't need to know

your location, but for those that do, you can choose to enable location services only when using the particular app, another smart privacy safeguard.

3.

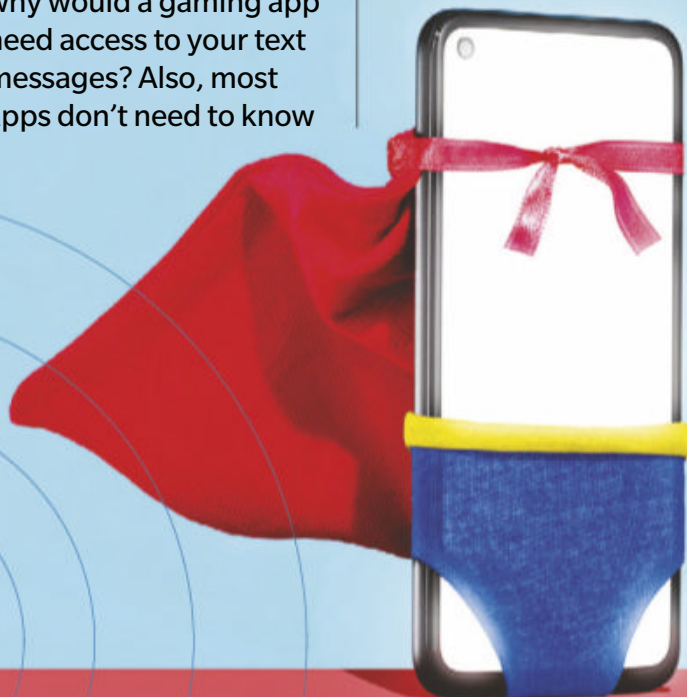
Sign up using an e-mail address you've set up just for things like app permissions and e-mail newsletters. Don't use your main e-mail address or your Facebook or another social media account. This way, if there is a security

breach, your exposure is contained to things connected to that address.

4.

And, of course, use a secure password, which means a long one (at least ten characters) with a mixture of letters, numbers, and special characters—and, sorry, a unique password for each app. According to security experts, a good trick is to create a memorable "passphrase" by creating a series of random words, and then substitute numbers or special characters (i.e., @ for a) for some of the letters. How will you ever remember them all? Go ahead and write them down—just store your cheat sheet in a secure location (not your wallet or phone case!). Or enlist a password manager such as 1Password or LastPass. **R**

For many more helpful tricks and secrets, visit rd.com/smartphones.



HUMOR *in*
UNIFORM

I knew my young wife was not up to speed with military protocol when we drove to the base commissary. Still, I was dismayed when she parked in the general's reserved parking space—something she mentioned she'd been doing for the past year. As a newly minted second lieutenant, I knew that was a big no-no. Even colonels couldn't park there, so I asked why she would do such a thing.

She said, "I thought that the sign meant for anyone in general."

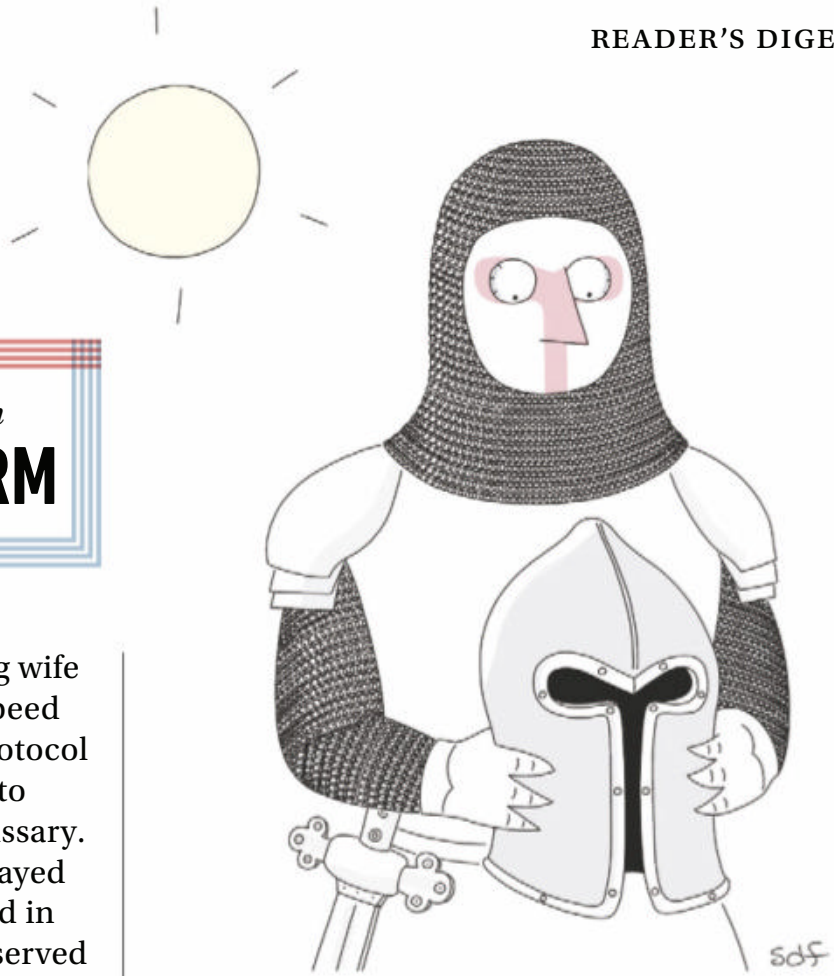
—ALFRED LUDWIG
Mesa, Arizona

Stationed in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm, I found myself in a world that had changed little since Biblical times. With so few creature comforts available, packages from home containing cookies and canned goods were received with great anticipation. When I got a box from my sister, I happily tore into it, only to discover

just how far from home I really was. She had filled it with packages of microwave popcorn.

—ROBERT T. SIMS
via gcfl.net

GOT A FUNNY STORY about the military or your military family? It could be worth \$\$\$\$. For details, see *page 4* or go to **RD.COM/SUBMIT**.



SO YOU'VE HAD IT ROUGH? GOOD!

HOW WE APPROACH
HARDSHIP COULD
TELL US HOW
LONG WE'LL LIVE

BY *Markham Heid*

FROM [ELEMENTAL.MEDIUM.COM](https://www.elemental.medium.com)



JAMES WARWICK/GETTY IMAGES

DURING WORLD WAR II,

an American woman named Shelley Smith Mydans reported on the conflict for *Life* magazine. Along with her husband, the photographer Carl Mydans, Shelley documented battles in both Europe and the Pacific.

Midway through the war, the Mydanses were captured in the Philippines. The Japanese held them in POW camps in Manila and Shanghai. But despite spending two years as prisoners of war, both Mydanses survived and went on to live long and productive lives. Shelley lived to 86, while Carl made it all the way to 97.

Many who survived the war were not so fortunate. A U.S. serviceman named Philip was also in the Pacific theater during World War II. Even before the war, Philip was prone to anxiety and “catastrophizing”—always predicting the worst. After he returned home, these traits intensified. Philip drank heavily and separated from his wife. Frustrated and resentful about his time overseas, blaming it for his failed marriage, Philip escalated his drinking. He tended not to exercise, and he was occasionally depressed. He died at age 64 of a heart attack.

The Mydanses’ and Philip’s very different stories were recounted in *The Longevity Project*, a book that summarizes an 80-year study based on interviews and health data collected

from approximately 1,500 people—each followed from youth until death. Its authors came to an unlikely conclusion. “We found that many people who lived through hard times went on to live long lives,” says coauthor Leslie Martin, PhD, a professor of psychology at California’s La Sierra University.

Unlike Philip, for whom the war seemed to push life onto a self-destructive path, Martin says that the Mydanses appeared to turn their World War II experience into a source of motivation. “They didn’t see their

“WE ACTUALLY FOUND THE MOST CHEERFUL AND OPTIMISTIC PEOPLE LIVED SHORTER LIVES.”

stress as meaningless—it seemed to fuel them,” she says. “And this ability to think about the hard things we go through as ultimately beneficial seems to be important.”

Eat right, exercise, avoid stress ... These vague directives are often framed as the necessary ingredients for a long and healthy life. There is definitely some truth to each of them. But those who have studied longevity say these are oversimplifications that tend to



prioritize action over attitude. While day-to-day habits and behaviors matter, a person's approach to life—including, and maybe especially, the way he or she reacts to hardship—is arguably the more important side of the longevity coin.

Confronted by difficult times, a lot of people start drinking, smoking, abandoning exercise, cutting ties with friends, or making other unhealthy choices. These new habits can be hard to kick once the problematic period has passed. However, certain qualities seem to safeguard some people from such pitfalls. Experts say one quality consistently tops the list. "In terms of personality characteristics, the

strongest predictor of a long life was being high on conscientiousness," says Martin.

Conscientiousness refers to someone who is organized, prudent, and persistent in their pursuits. "Conscientious people are planful and responsible, not impulsive," she says. "When they take on a task, they don't give up easily."

This may come as a surprise to those who assume carefree, take-it-easy types are best insulated against life's many injuries and injustices. "We actually found the most cheerful and optimistic people lived shorter lives," Martin says. "Being worried or anxious all the time is a problem,

but a little worrying—when you're thinking ahead and working through scenarios—can help you to be better prepared." Conscientious worriers tend to put their fretting to good use: They make choices or changes in response to their concerns. Their worrying is productive, not pointless.

While conscientious people are not totally risk-averse, they're judicious about the risks they're willing to take. These are folks who tend to wear their seat belts, eschew heavy drinking or drugs, and avoid other sources of undue risk. Conscientious people also tend to adopt and stick with healthy habits, and their awareness and diligence tend to lead them into

healthy relationships and jobs. All of these tendencies promote a long and healthy life.

Peter Martin, PhD, a professor of gerontology at Iowa State University, makes it clear that "anyone who has lived to 100 has faced many difficult situations." He echoes many of the above sentiments and mentions a few other characteristics that the long-lived seem to share. "They're not uptight or neurotic," he says. While not blasé about life's challenges, people who live a long time usually don't catastrophize—that is, they don't assume the worst, which is a habit that can lead a person to make choices that get him or her into trouble, such

HOW TO LIVE A CONSCIENTIOUS LIFE Experts share transformative tips

Hard times can set off all sorts of bad choices: drinking, smoking, cutting ties with loved ones. These decisions and their consequences often far outlive the trials that spawned them—a drinking habit escalates or lost friends are never replaced. But there's good

news: "It is certainly possible to change your personality, and it happens pretty quickly," says Gary Small, MD, former director of the University of California, Los Angeles, Longevity Center. Here are four things that conscientious people do automatically but others can

teach themselves to do.

1
Look for a Mentor

"Spend time with friends and colleagues who are diligent and organized and who have other admirable qualities," says Leslie Martin, PhD, a professor of psychology at

California's La Sierra University. "Associating with people who demonstrate these behaviors can make habit-forming easier, as their tendencies influence us."

2
Find a Purpose
"Increasing one's maturity"

as prematurely abandoning a healthy routine or a promising enterprise.

Additionally, he says, those who live a long time also tend not to engage in “upward comparisons.” They don’t

“A LITTLE WORRYING CAN HELP YOU TO BE BETTER PREPARED.”

spend a lot of time comparing themselves or their circumstances to those who are more fortunate. Instead, they think about people who have it worse or about past situations they

endured that were even more difficult.

Another underappreciated element of longevity is something Peter Martin refers to as gerotranscendence, which, roughly, is a preference for a cosmic or spiritual worldview rather than a materialistic or strictly rational one. He says many long-lived individuals seem to lean toward the spiritual as they age. “You see a pronounced reliance on religious beliefs—on putting faith in a higher power’s hands,” he says.

Adopting a more spiritual attitude may allow people to better work through the aspects of life that they find inscrutable or disconcerting. “When you’re able to hand things over to a higher being, that’s a way of

over the years is essential to maintaining good health, says Howard Friedman, PhD, coauthor of *The Longevity Project*. By this he means engaging in “meaningful work—work with a purpose—and doing good things for family, friends, and society.”

3

Form Deep Relationships

Don’t worry if you don’t have a boatload of friends: When it comes to bonding with others, it’s quality over quantity. “If you are an introvert with a few close relationships with supportive, healthy ties,

then that can be as good as being an extrovert with many more ties,” says Friedman.

4

Stick to It

Trying all the above is easy; staying with it, not so much. This is why Dr. Small says the core element of conscientious-

ness is sticking with a healthy change or ambition once you’ve started it. The more people push themselves to follow through on their goals—be they easy to achieve or difficult—the more they can build up their “tenacity” muscles or stick-to-itiveness.



letting go,” he says. At a certain point, letting go can reduce anger, frustration, and other emotions that push people toward unhealthy thoughts or actions.

Valter Longo, PhD, is director of the Longevity Institute at the University of Southern California. In 2019, Longo traveled around Italy to speak with centenarians in an effort to uncover patterns that might explain their enviable longevity.

He says that two themes emerged. One was genetic good fortune. “They’d say, ‘My sister made it to 94, my brother to 98.’ So genes played a big part in it,” he says. “The other story was the person who did not have any long-lived siblings or parents but was

in a concentration camp during World War II.” In other words, something about living through incredible hardship seemed to bestow longevity on certain survivors. Longo has a couple of theories about what that something could be.

His first is based in nutrition science. Much of his work—in mice and in people—has found that periods of fasting or caloric restriction can help clear away dead or dysfunctional cells in ways that may discourage the development of disease and also promote longevity. “If we give mice low levels of protein or calories for a while, then we feed them normally, they live longer than the mice we fed normally the whole time,” he says.

While malnourishment is an

extreme and inhumane example of forced deprivation, Longo points out that many places in the world where people tend to live into very old age are also places where people eat a vegetable-centric and meat-restricted diet. Along with clearing away dead or diseased cells, “eating this way could cause epigenetic changes that affect life span,” he says, referring to diet-induced alterations in the way some genes are expressed.

His second theory is more of an observation. “One thing all these centenarians had in common is that they all wanted to live—they wanted to go on,” he says. “They didn’t say, ‘I’m ready to die’ or ‘I don’t care anymore.’ They were still interested in life and paying attention to everything.” While most people are passionate and engaged when they’re young, a great many lose these attributes as life wears on. And this loss seems to matter.

Returning to the story of Philip, the heavy-drinking World War II vet who died young of a heart attack, Leslie Martin’s book says that he found his job merely “tolerable” and that he was looking forward to retirement—though he didn’t know how he would fill his time or whether he would enjoy himself. Even in his early 60s, he

didn’t seem to be involved in activities that gave his life passion or purpose.

Though some, like Philip, regard tough times as a sign that life is unfair or unpleasant, others emerge from a struggle with a greater sense of gratitude and a newfound resolve to commit their time and efforts to things that matter—to close friendships, to family bonds, or to hobbies or work for which they feel passionate. Despite their two years in captivity, Carl and Shelley Smith Mydans gladly returned to Japan when Carl was tasked with leading Time-Life’s Tokyo bureau, and the two continued to be engaged, writing and photographing until the end.

While everyone is entitled to a period of adjustment during difficult times, those who endure will not let those difficulties knock their lives or attitudes off course for good.

“If you dwell on the negative, you’re not going to do well,” warns Gary Small, MD, former director of the University of California, Los Angeles, Longevity Center. “But if you can see a challenge as something to rise to, it can be very gratifying to get to the other side.” **R**

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It’s Practically a Fruit

Of course I believe in science, like how jelly grows inside doughnuts.

 @DARKSIDEDEB





NATIONAL INTEREST

I Cry for the Mountains

*After a wildfire swept through the land
where his family raised their cattle for
more than a century, a rancher takes a tour
of what's left—and what might come next*

BY *Dave Daley*


FROM THE ENTERPRISE-RECORD

ever
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op.
the trees and
the horrible deaths suf-
life and our cattle.
ing was unimaginable.
you find groups of cows and
boy calves tumbled in a ravine





Nearly 400 cows headed into the range in the spring (left); most didn't make it out.



It

is almost midnight. We have been pushing hard for 18 to 20 hours every day since the Bear Fire (later called the North Complex Fire) tore through our mountain cattle range on September 8, 2020. There is so much swirling in my head, I can't sleep anyway.

The fire destroyed the range where our cattle grazed, our cattle, and even worse, our family's legacy. Someone asked my daughter if I had lost our family home. She told them, "No, that would be replaceable. This is not." I would gladly sleep in my truck for the rest of my life to have our mountains back.

I am enveloped by overwhelming sadness and grief and then anger. I'm angry at everyone, and no one. Grieving for things lost that will never be the same. I wake myself weeping almost soundlessly. It is hard to stop.

I cry for the forest, the trees and streams, and the horrible deaths suffered by the wildlife and our cattle. The suffering was unimaginable. When you find groups of cows and their baby calves tumbled in a ravine

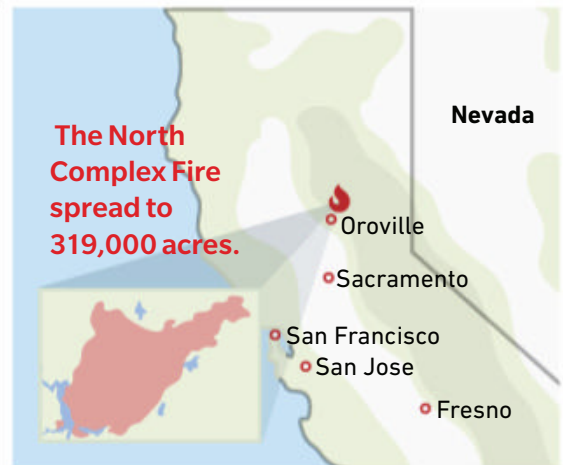


Nearly 5,600 firefighters spent almost four months battling the blaze.

as they tried to escape, burned almost beyond recognition, or a fawn and small calf side by side as if hoping to protect one another, you try not to retch. You only pray death was swift.

My family has taken cattle to the Plumas National Forest since before it was designated such and now leases a portion of the land for grazing. It is steep land on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in northern California, a vast forest of deep canyons, rivers, and creeks and the high ridges in between. It is not an easy place in the best conditions.

My great-great-grandfather started moving cattle to the high country sometime after he arrived in 1852 to look for gold. We were poor Irish immigrants trying to scratch a living from the land. There are six generations



who have loved this land, and my new granddaughter, Juni, is the seventh. In these first days and nights since the fire, I often find myself overcome with emotion as I think of the things she will never see but only hear in stories.

Day 1: The Fire

When news of the fire broke, my son Kyle, who ranches with me, and I are

CAROLYN COLE/GETTY IMAGES. MAP BY EMMA KUMER

sure it can't be as bad as it sounded. We were relying on spotty reporting posted to local news or social media. My daughter Kate, a veterinarian who practices about four hours away, says, "I'm on the way." My youngest son, Rob, a soldier stationed in Louisiana, says, "I have a lot of leave and I'm on a plane tomorrow."

At first, we can't get into the range, because it is completely locked down by fire officials for safety. We are frantic. We know cattle are dying as we wait. We have close to 400 cattle there, most of them calving or close to calving. They are the heart of the herd—good cows that know the land.

I receive a call from a Pennsylvania number. A wonderfully nice man from the U.S. Forest Service is calling to tell me about the fire because I have a permit to graze cattle in the area. I have to help him find the area on the map! He knows less than I do. Frustrating.

Later I get a call from another fire resource officer from the Forest Service. I ask about access. "Well," he says, "maybe next week, and only if we provide an escort. We have to make it safe first." All the cattle will be dead if I wait a week. I politely tell him I'll figure out an alternative, through private timberland and common sense.

I call our county sheriff. I have to wait one day, but he provides two sergeants to navigate the roadblocks until Kyle and I make it into the range.

We make a fast trip to reconnoiter.

We are unprepared for the total destruction of everything we have always known. Nothing left, and active flames burning trees and stumps. Shocking. Surreal.

We see dead cows everywhere. We go home hoping against hope that we have seen the worst. Only later do we realize that it was just the beginning.

DAY 2: "No Sound, Just Death"

It is 3:30 in the morning and time to start the nightmare again. Time to find the courage to throw some things in the truck, run with the kids to check and feed the survivors. I work to be optimistic because that is who I am. Not easy.

So many people have offered to help. I am grateful, but we're looking at almost 90,000 acres of incredibly difficult terrain. Much of it is unrecognizable, even to me. Only those with deep knowledge of these mountains can help.

My kids, a few close friends, and I strap chain saws and some alfalfa on four-wheelers and set out, hoping against hope to find something alive. It is eerie, and, as Rob says, "There is no sound in the forest, just death."

When we gathered cows, traditionally they were always toward the ridgetop in the morning and down by water in the afternoon. Now, we find nothing high up except the occasional dead cow that wasn't fast enough.

You learn as you ride through the apocalyptic murk. Rob's head goes

up, and I catch the scent at the same time. The scent of death and charred flesh mingled with acrid smoke that burns your eyes. Eight cows and three baby calves in a pile at the bottom of a ravine, rushing in terror to escape. A sight you won't soon forget.

But when we meet up, Kyle and Kate have great news. They found 16 head at one of our corrals, the largest group to date. I baited it with alfalfa last night. Remarkable.

Two are heifers that I gave Kyle and his wife, Jordan, for their wedding. Kyle branded them with my dad's original brand. My dad was a cow whisperer, gone more than four years now after roaming the mountains for almost 90. Maybe he is still helping lead us and the cattle home.

DAY 3: Last Man Out

I dread taking my mom to see this tragedy. She will be 90 in less than a month, still loves the mountains and gathering cows. She is tough, but this could break anyone. She first worked these mountains with my dad in 1948, when she was 18, he was 21, and they had just married. She told me later that she had always loved the outdoors but really was "sort of afraid of cows" since she had not ever been around them. She never told Dad and learned to be one of the best trackers and gatherers the mountains have ever seen, knowing every plant, tree, and road.

You can learn from old people. Far more valuable than a visiting scholar

or great consultant is local knowledge and observation. I wish we would listen.

I feel bad for Forest Service personnel. Most of them are great people who work there because they love the land the way I do. But they are chained to desks to write reports and follow edicts handed down from those who don't know. One-size-fits-all regulations are not a solution in diverse ecosystems. I grew up hearing stories from my dad and granddad of the "last man out" lighting the forest floor to burn the low undergrowth. It was a pact between our friends the Native Americans, who had managed it this way for 13,000 years, and the loggers, miners, and ranchers who came later. They worked together because they loved and knew the land.

I remember one December in the early 1960s. Snow was already on the ground of our ranch. I was about four years old and holding my grandfather's hand as he lit some piles of brush on fire to open the landscape. It was the practice he had learned from generations before.

A crew from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection showed up, put out the fire, and lectured him for burning. My granddad was the kindest, gentlest, and funniest man I have ever known. And he was mad. It was the beginning of the end for our forest home.

I earned my PhD in animal sciences at Colorado State 35 years ago. I loved



After the fire, much of the terrain was unrecognizable, even to the ranchers.

KENT NISHIMURA/GETTY IMAGES

teaching and ranching, so I did both, traveling nationally and internationally as the odd “academic cowman.” I am the current chair of the California Cattle Council and have served on many other councils and committees. I have walked the halls of Congress and met with legislators in Sacramento and DC. I advocate for the cattle community to anyone who will listen.

I invite any legislator or regulator,

state or federal, to come with me to this devastation. Put on boots and let’s go.

Look at the megafires California has experienced in recent years. Almost all of them start on state or federally owned land. The only buffers to these disasters are private, well-managed, grazed landscapes. They may still burn, but the fires are not as catastrophic and can be controlled.

Watch nature. She will talk to you.



“You only pray death was swift.”

Sometimes—most of the time—I think it is as simple as not seeing the forest for the trees. In my academic life, I worked with wonderful faculty, staff, and students who were committed to research and teaching. However, we rarely looked at the big picture because we were encouraged to publish in our disciplines without seeking out how our work connected with others’ or how our small piece was part of a larger solution. That siloed thinking plagues most bureaucracies and agencies. We only know what we know. In academia, most faculty is several generations removed from a direct connection with the land.

It’s no one’s fault. It’s everyone’s fault. Listen to the forest. Listen to the locals.

Day 4: Rescue and Recovery

I hold out little hope for live cattle. We have to get to one more area, Hartman Bar Ridge, between the middle fork and south branch of the Feather River. It is the farthest north, the

most breathtaking, and the hardest to access. One road in and one road out, choked with downed and sometimes burning trees.

We see a burned bear cub trying to climb a tree and then a mature bear, burned but staying in the water trying to ease the pain. We don’t euth-

anize even though our brains say we should. Our hearts say let them try. They made it this far.

We have about six miles of road to make passable, but chain saws and strong hands get us there.

I pass several streams and try to wade across one looking for cattle. All of the creeks have close to double the flow of last week. It strikes me as strange. I see some springs running that haven’t been active for years. And it hits me. We have released the water that the brush was sucking from the land. The Native Americans were right again. Observe. Let nature talk.

We see cattle tracks—lots of them! In one pocket, we pick up 14 head with nary a scratch: two old cows and a bunch of young stock. Those old ladies knew where to hide! Wisdom from days gone by.

After a long day, we have 32 alive and loaded. Some may not make it, but we have to bring them home to give them a chance. They made it this far.

More jarring, though, was to find 26 dead. That fetid smell of death permeated the walk I used to love.

Why did we find over half alive here and nowhere else? If anything, I assumed this steep ridge gave them no chance at all. And I realized that there had been a smaller fire here about five years ago. The country was more open and the fire moved quickly. More things lived. Trees, wildlife, and cows.

Day 5: "We Won't Quit"

We move as fast as we can, opening roads with chain saws and running four-wheelers down every logging spur. We hope against hope for cow tracks, but there are none.

By the end of a grueling day, we have seven head loaded. Three are badly burned and will get a chance for feed and water before they will most likely die or need to be euthanized. We know of three more live cattle that we have seen but not loaded. That may be it. Over one hundred brought home so far, but I will be surprised if 80 live. Many have lost their baby calves to fire. There are no words.

Our crew will be smaller today. Rob flies back to his Army duty station. Kate is back working as a veterinarian. Kyle and I will continue the search, compulsively walking creeks and canyons we have already searched, hoping something straggles in behind. You never know and you can't quit. That is not who we are.

And so we go on. What will happen? This is devastating emotionally and financially. I am not sure of the next steps. I do know this: We must change our land management practices if we expect the West to survive.

We won't quit. We need to get tougher and stronger. We never have quit for 140 years, and I won't be the first. I'll suffer the bureaucratic maze and try to make incremental change. And, as always, work with nature. I have to. Juni needs to see the moun-

WE FOUND AN ORPHAN HEIFER CALF TODAY. THAT RESCUE WAS GOOD FOR MY HEART.

tains the same way we have seen them forever, to have hot chocolate on a cold fall morning and gather cows. It can't be just stories from her granddad.

We found an orphan heifer calf today, about two weeks old. Her mother didn't make it. Kyle stumbled on her hiding in one of the few living willow patches along a stream. He followed her for over an hour straight up from the bottom of a canyon. We caught her, and she is now on a bottle getting milk replacer. That rescue was good for my heart. Juni's first heifer, I decide! They can grow up together. **R**

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DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

THE TEACHER WHO WRESTLED A COUGAR

*When a wild cat springs from
the woods to prey on her young
students, a day care owner
instantly moves to protect them.
A classic RD drama.*

BY *Mary Murray*

Nudged awake by the morning sun, the young cougar opened its jaws in a teeth-baring yawn and stretched its muscular forelegs.

Then it started down the mountain-side, crossed a narrow highway, and loped toward the wide, rushing river. For days, the cougar had been edging closer to the small lumber village of Lillooet on the Fraser River, at the edge of the mountains of southern British Columbia in Canada. Now, after drinking the river's cold water, the cougar bedded down again in a nest of tall grass.

On July 3, 1991, the five children in Larrane Leech's day care group were outdoors early, painting bright tempera landscapes under the penetrating sun. By 10 a.m., it was time to find shade, so Larrane decided they would walk down to the river. "We're going to pick berries now," she announced.

At 44, she had made her dream come true when she turned her home into a day care center. It had taken hard work to get her certification. After completing her courses in early childhood education, Larrane had volunteered in a day care center while

working at a lumber mill and raising three teen sons alone.

So far, the center was operating smoothly. But she always worried about keeping her clients satisfied, as well as being able to care for enough children to make the business pay off.

Larrane had known all five children in her care since they were infants. Three were siblings: playful Mikey, age two; three-and-a-half-year-old Alleshia, the tough little athlete; and Jessica Allen, five, the exuberant leader. Four-year-old Natani Leech was actually an aunt to the three siblings, and Larrane, in turn, was Natani's aunt. Only the bubbly toddler Lisa O'Laney, a few months shy of two, was unrelated to them. All were members of Indigenous tribes clustered around Lillooet, around 150 miles northeast of Vancouver.

The children had fallen easily into Larrane's daily routine. Everyone loved circle time, when they passed around a black-and-white eagle feather; the child who held it could talk about whatever he or she wanted. A nature

lover, Larrane also insisted they spend as much time as possible outdoors.

After clearing away the painting supplies and handing each child an empty jar on that July morning, Larrane called for Pal, her one-year-old German shepherd mix. Giggling with anticipation, Jessica and Natani paired off in front. Larrane linked Mikey's hand with Allechia's, took little Lisa's in her own, and said, "Let's go."

Larrane's house stood on a wooded slope not far up from the mighty Fraser River. The group made its way over the dusty gravel road and then onto a dirt trail through the trees. The two oldest girls broke into a run through the tall brown grass at the trail's edge, Natani's waist-length hair swaying back and forth. Larrane and the little ones hurried to keep up.

Stopping the children at the first berry bush, Larrane pointed to the clusters of plump, sweet, navy blue fruit. "Look, the berries are all over," she said. She helped Lisa find some clusters on the lowest branches. Mikey watched and then tentatively bit into a berry. "Mmm, good," he said, and got busy plucking more.

The cougar cocked an ear toward the birdlike chatter and reflexively sniffed the air. Cougars rarely attack people or show themselves, but as towns expanded into mountainous countryside, there had been more and more sightings, especially in southern British Columbia. At the time, the

province was home to some 3,000 of them.

The young cougar was instinctively versed in hunting strategies: Step silently and downwind through the brush to avoid being heard, scented, or seen; choose the weakest prey and attack from behind, clamping powerful jaws on the vital nerves and blood vessels of the prey's neck.

Larrane and the children moved slowly from bush to bush. Pal stopped frequently in the shade, panting. Within 20 minutes, the children had filled their jars and were almost at the river. Here, the ground fell steeply to a cool, shady strip of sand roughly 15 feet wide.

THE BIG CAT BEGAN TO LICK THE BOY'S SMOOTH SKIN WITH ITS ROUGH TONGUE.

"OK," Larrane commanded after the group clambered down to the sandbank, "let's get in our circle." She could not risk letting a child wander off. Suddenly Allechia jumped up and scooted toward the trees. "Come back, Allechia," Larrane called. Running after her, she caught up with the child and helped her back to the sandbank.

Now the cougar could see the funny little creatures that had been making



all the noise. These were perfect prey: small, wiggly, and oblivious.

Stepping over the thick carpet of pine needles, the cat slunk toward the children, never so much as rustling a leaf or snapping a twig. Then it did something remarkable, something only a young, inexperienced cat would do. It walked onto the bank and merely nudged Mikey backward onto the sand. The rules of hunting required that the cougar grab the boy's head in its mouth and carry him away. But the young cat paused, and to remove any hair before attacking and feeding, it began to lick the boy's smooth skin with its rough tongue.

Larrane sensed the children suddenly go quiet. She looked up to see the back end of a cat the size of Pal standing over Mikey. The cat's head was

down, out of sight behind its peaked shoulder blades, and its plumped, black-tipped tail swiped back and forth like a whip.

The sight of the cougar near her kids momentarily froze Larrane. Now Natani was giggling nervously. "Stop licking Mikey's face," she said playfully, as though talking to a house cat.

Larrane couldn't tell whether Mikey had been bitten; he was silent and hidden beneath the beast. Her mind racing wildly, she sprang impulsively toward the cougar. Blindly intending to grab its tail, she shifted aim at the last minute and seized the cat by the scruff of the neck. Tugging once, she shook it from side to side.

Instantly, the cougar unsheathed its claws and wheeled toward Larrane, swiping both Mikey and Lisa in the face. Growling and hissing, it stretched



up high and brought its paws down upon the head of the five-foot-one-inch woman. As she stumbled backward, one paw slipped onto her right shoulder, the claws grazing her ear.

This animal was capable of killing her. Although still in its youth, it had all the teeth and muscle a cougar needs to pull down a victim three times its size.

Aware now of the danger, four of the children shrieked and ran behind Larrane. Mikey lay still on the ground.

"Stay behind me!" Larrane screamed as she faced the beast. Acting before she could think, she grabbed the animal's forelegs and pulled them off her. The cougar's thrashing forced her back into a crouch. Her soft sandals shifted and slipped in the sand, making it difficult to keep a secure stance. Summoning all her strength, Larrane

forced herself back upright, still grasping the cat's thick legs. Then she thrust her arms forward and locked them straight out in front of her. At the same time, she used her thumbs to push the animal's paws inward to protect herself from being cut.

Locked in a deadly dance with the cougar, Larrane felt as though she were watching herself in slow motion. She stared at the animal's pink tongue and long ivory fangs. Stepping back and forth on its hind legs, the cat let out a menacing growl as it tried to tug its paws, with their sharp claws, away from her.

"Pal, do something!" Larrane yelled at the dog cowering on the sand not ten feet away. She felt the muscles in her arms, legs, and back weakening. What am I going to do? she thought. If the cat gets away from me, he'll kill the children. "Just go away and leave us alone," she yelled into the animal's face. "Leave us alone!"

The cougar was now trying a new tactic to break Larrane's grip. It began thrashing its upper body from side to side, and Larrane could sense its imminent escape. Again acting without any conscious plan, she arched her back to gather momentum, then shoved forward with all her might, thrusting the cat directly at the dog and shouting, "Pal, do something!"

The cougar fell backward but rolled instantly to its feet and darted past Pal through the brush farther along the sandbank.

Without knowing it, Larrane had responded perfectly. She had distracted the cougar from Mikey only a fraction of a second before it had a chance to crush the boy's skull in its mighty jaws. Then her aggressive movements and loud shouting probably scared the animal. Cougar experts say the cats often lose their appetite for killing when angrily confronted.

Watching the cat retreat, Pal gave chase, barking madly. In one bound, the cougar leaped halfway up a pine tree. It then climbed to the top, wrapped its paws around a branch, and hung there, looking down at the dog.

Larrane rushed to Mikey, who lay quietly on the sand. The left side of his face and neck was bathed in blood. But he was breathing, and his eyes were open so wide they seemed to bulge from his face.

He's alive, Larrane thought, gasping in relief. But he was eerily still. He must be in shock, she decided as she pulled him into her arms.

Then her eyes fell on Lisa, wailing at her side. The girl's face was also covered with blood.

Shifting Mikey to her right side and scooping Lisa up in her left arm, Larrane called to the other children, "We have to run home now." She saw their terror as they looked at her. She touched her face and felt blood dripping. It's scaring them just to look at me, she realized. "Let's go," she ordered, "as fast as we can!"



Larrane Leech threw herself between the children and the wild animal.

They scrambled up the hill, Lisa still crying, Mikey remaining silent. Larrane soon found the two children too heavy to carry and eased Mikey down. He suddenly jolted from his stupor. "Owie, owie, owie!" he screamed, tears coursing down his face.

Larrane pulled him along toward the house. Pal lingered behind, watching the cougar, before finally following the others. "Everything will be all right," Larrane called out to the kids. But deep down, she was not so certain. The cougar could be anywhere. She considered what it had already done—to Lisa, to Mikey, and to the dream she had worked so long to realize. Would any parents trust her with their children after this?

In five minutes, they were all inside the front door. Suddenly Larrane was aware of her own pain. Her thighs were bruised, and the scratches on her arm, forehead, and ear burned. Her hands shook as she telephoned the hospital and the parents of Lisa and Mikey.

COURTESY BETH MCLELLAN

At the Lillooet Hospital, Mikey needed 40 stitches to close lacerations on his chin and neck, but all his wounds were shallow. Lisa had been lucky, too: The cat had clawed within an inch of her right eye, and she required only 20 stitches.

Larrane's scratches needed only to be cleaned and left to heal. But the muscles in her arms, back, and legs were so sore that she had difficulty walking.

As awful as the attack was, Larrane now had to contend with the fact that she had no idea whether her beloved day care center could remain open. So she felt a sense of profound relief the morning after the attack when she opened the front door to four of her day care children—including Mikey. Only Lisa did not return.

For several days, as they sat in a circle passing the eagle feather, the children remained quiet. The pictures they painted at art time were showered with splatters of red.

Finally, a week later, Mikey took the eagle feather in his hand and said, "I had a dream last night."

"And what did you see in your dream?" Larrane asked gently.

"I saw an eagle. And he was sitting on my bed. Then he flew over me."

Larrane smiled. In Lillooet folklore, the eagle is a sign of strength, sent by ancestors as an assurance that the person who sees it will be kept safe. She knew the child was beginning to feel secure again.

Larrane felt secure too. She no longer had to worry about the cougar. Nine days after the attack, it had wandered into a neighbor's yard and was put down. But above and beyond her regained sense of safety, Larrane had met the greatest challenge of her life head-on and won. Her friends and neighbors applauded her strength. And as a result, Larrane knew that she could accomplish anything. **R**

In 1992, Canada's governor general honored Larrane's bravery by awarding her the Star of Courage. She died in 2020, at age 73.

THIS STORY originally appeared in the May 1993 issue of the Canadian edition of Reader's Digest.

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O U R L I T T L E
G I R L

Chika

*What is a real father?
An orphan in Haiti teaches
bestselling author Mitch Albom
a wonderful new definition.*



BY *Mitch Albom*
FROM THE BOOK **FINDING CHIKA**

COURTESY MITCH ALBOM. HAND LETTERING BY MARIA AMADOR



shortly

after a major earthquake decimated Haiti in 2010, Mitch Albom and his wife, Janine Albom, decided to take over operations at a struggling orphanage in Port-au-Prince. The children there became like family to the Alboms, especially one little girl named Chika. But at the age of five, Chika became ill. Her diagnosis: a rare brain tumor that no doctor in Haiti could treat. Though the Alboms never formally adopted Chika, they brought her home with them to Detroit to make sure she got the best medical care—just as any parent would.

Chika's father is alive.

We were always told he was dead. Now we are told differently. This is not uncommon in the Haitian orphan world. Adults who bring us children will sometimes say the parents are deceased to increase the kids' odds of acceptance.

Driving to the father's house, we meander through traffic out to a rural agricultural landscape. We park on a dirt road. There's a small square of land with a large breadfruit tree.

This is where Chika was born. And stepping out in front of me is her father.

He is small and compact, maybe five foot six, with a wide mustache, a



full head of hair, and deep bags under his eyes, which are bloodshot red. They rarely meet mine. I ask about his upbringing. I ask about Chika's infancy. He answers every inquiry with very few words.

He says he was there when Chika was born but was not at home when the earthquake happened. He confirms that after Chika's mother died, all four of his kids went to live with other people. He doesn't say why.

I ask whether he knew Chika was brought to our orphanage when she was three.

"Yes, I knew."

And it was all right with you?

"It was all right with me."

I don't ask why he didn't want Chika



Chika, age 4, playing the role of a sheep during a Christmas play at the orphanage run by the Alboms

“It doesn’t matter,” he says. “Whatever you think.”

I struggle to keep the conversation going. I invite him to the mission. I want him to see his daughter—and her to see him—perhaps because, deep down, I don’t know if they will get another chance. We drive back together, and as we approach the gates, there is part of me that feels suddenly extraneous, as if I’ve been nudged to the side of the picture. For all Janine and I have done with Chika, this man has a certain claim that we never will.

When we arrive, Chika is playing in the gazebo. She is sweating heavily.

“Chika,” I ask, “do you know who this is?” She looks up.

“It’s your daddy. Can you give him a hug?” (I say this in English so as not to embarrass him.)

She does. I leave them alone.

He sits on a bench, wearing a long-sleeved shirt despite the heat, and she sits next to him. From time to time I look over, but I never see them speaking. The sun bakes down.

After two hours, the father walks over, shakes my hand, and leaves.

Yours, not yours. We wrestled with this question many times, Chika. Remember what you once asked? *How did you find me?* I promised myself you would never feel lost again.

back, even though part of me screams for an answer. I remind myself I can never know the circumstances of his life or its hardships. I remind myself he lost his partner, the mother of his children.

I explain the reason I have come. Chika’s medical condition. The brain tumor. He nods now and then, although I’m not sure he understands.

“Whatever you think is best,” he says, “you do.”

I explain that her life could be in the balance. I say I have a hard question. If Chika should not survive, is it important to him that she be buried here in Haiti? I hate even saying the words, it makes me physically shiver, but it feels like something I must ask him.



Top: Janine (left) and Mitch Albom with Chika (center). Bottom: Mitch supervises Chika brushing her teeth in Michigan.



But seeing your father that day touched a nerve. True, we had to track him down. And he left the mission almost as quickly as he entered it. But what if he hadn't? What if he had said, "I'll take it from here"? Would I have been able, given your medical situation, to turn you over? To trust a man who had been so absent from your life to suddenly try

and save it? Would I have been doing right by you? What about doing right by him?

Is it true, as Pope John XXIII once said, that it's easier for a father to have children than for children to have a real father? Who steps aside? It's a debate that foster parents deal with regularly and why adoption agencies have strict rules on parental rights.

But we were neither of these. We were—we are—a place of love and shelter for Haitian children with few options. And when your health was threatened and we brought you to Michigan and you were lying on that hospital gurney with tubes and monitors and a white bandage around your little head, who had claim to you was the furthest thing from our minds.

OCCASIONALLY, by the way, even friends would use the *yours* word. "*It's great what you're doing for a child that's not yours.*" It puzzled me to think there would be any difference in our efforts if somehow you had our DNA. I remember the time we stood by a mirror, studying our reflections, and you held your arm up next to mine. I thought you were comparing our skin color. Instead, you pointed to a mole near my wrist and said, "Mister Mitch, why do you have that bump?" That's all you were interested in.

COURTESY MITCH ALBOM (2)

Yours, not yours. The paperwork at the orphanage is signed by me. It obligates us to nurture, feed, educate, and protect the children—all things mothers and fathers are supposed to do. But in the end, it is a document of responsibility, not parenthood. I am, for all our kids, just Mr. Mitch, their “legal guardian,” the words I used at the first hospital you and I went to, Chika. It feels sometimes like a diminished title. Still, when I look around, it is me, or Miss Janine, or our compassionate staff at the mission, kissing the children good night, waking them every morning, tying their shoes, cutting their sandwiches, reading them books, racing them to the doctor if something happens.

We did not bring any of these little souls into the world. That truth can never be overstated. But I wonder, Chika, whether anyone has blind claim over a child, save for God. I have witnessed the purest connection between an adoptive mother and her children, and I have witnessed helpless infants shunned by those who birthed them. The opposite also happens. After a while, you make peace with the truth: Love determines our bonds. It always comes down to that.

The day your father returned home, you ran a high fever, and you vomited again. And that night, while he slept in his cinder block house, you cried yourself to sleep at the mission. The next day, you seemed so weak that when the time came to leave, you didn’t even say goodbye to the kids. You just took my hand and led me to the car.

At the airport, you complained about walking, so I carried you through the lines, one arm tucked beneath you, one arm wheeling my roller bag. When we boarded the plane, I put a pillow on the armrest.

“Go to sleep, sweetheart,” I said softly.

You laid your head down and after a few seconds mumbled, “Mister Mitch?”

“Yes, Chika?”

“What will you do while I sleep?”

“I’ll read,” I said. “And think about how much I love you.”

You nodded, your eyes glazed.

“That’s what I’ll do too.”

At that moment, I didn’t care who belonged to whom. I was yours, even if you were not mine. And as I stroked your forehead, which was hot to the touch, I knew I always would be. **R**

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Matching Wedding Bandwidths

Before you marry a person, you should first make them use a computer with slow Internet to see who they really are.

WILL FERRELL, COMEDIAN



WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

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*The Dogs Who
Taught Me About*
LOVE

*They weren't all nice. In fact, some of them were
beasts. But each one showed me what it means
to care for someone without reservation.*

BY *Jennifer Finney Boylan*
ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Kendra Huspaska*

After we lost Indigo, I got a call from the Bed 'n' Biscuit. One of their customers was dying, and her dog, Chloe, needed a home. Given our recent loss, they asked, might our family be interested in adopting her?

They had to be kidding. After Indigo, we would never get another dog. Ever.



Indigo

IT HAD JUST BEEN a few years earlier, it seemed, that Indigo—a black Lab—had first barged through our

door. Her underbelly showed the signs of the litter she'd recently delivered, and between the wise, droopy face and the swinging dog teats, she was a sight to behold.

She had a nose for trouble. On one occasion, I came home to find that she'd eaten a five-pound bag of flour. She was covered in white powder, and flour paw prints were everywhere, including, incredibly, on the countertops. I asked the dog what the hell had happened, and Indy just looked at me with a glance that said I cannot imagine to what you are referring.

Time raced by. Our children grew up and went off to college. The mirror, which had reflected a young mom when Indigo first arrived, now showed a woman in late middle age. I had surgery for cataracts. I began to lose my hearing. We all turned gray: me, my spouse, the dog.

In August 2017, I took Indigo for one last walk. She was slow and unsteady on her paws. She looked up at me mournfully. You did say you'd take care of me when the time came, she said. You promised, Jenny.

She died that month, a tennis ball by her side.

I told the Bed 'n' Biscuit we were sorry, but we wouldn't be adopting any more dogs.

I'd owned a succession of dogs since 1964, each one of them a witness to a particular phase of my life. But with the loss of Indigo, all that was over. The days of my dogs, I now understood, were done at last.

Then one morning, as I was passing the Bed 'n' Biscuit in my car, I pulled over. I could at least lay eyes upon this Chloe. What harm could it do?

She had a soft face.

When Chloe entered our house, she was cautious, uncertain. She spent hours that first day going to every corner, sniffing things out. Finally she sat down by the fireplace and gave me a look. If you wanted, she said, I would stay with you.



Playboy

EVERYTHING I know about love I've learned from dogs. But everything I know about loss I've learned from them too. They fill our hearts. They leave floury paw prints all over the house. They lick the tears from our faces. And then, in what seems like no time at all, they're gone.

It reminds me a little bit of what people say about childbirth: If you really remembered how difficult it was, you'd never go through it more than once. And yet, year after year, dog after dog, I've forgotten the grief of losing them—right up until the moment that they give me that look with their gray faces: Jenny. You promised.

The pain of their loss doesn't seem to be lessened one bit by the fact that many of the dogs I've owned have been kind of terrible. My first dog, for instance, was a bad-tempered dalmatian named Playboy, a resentful hoodlum who loved no one but my father.

We lived in the farm country of eastern Pennsylvania then, and Playboy had no qualms about chasing donkeys, cows, and even, on one occasion, a leather-jacketed Hell's Angel racing by on a Harley. That dog once stole the Thanksgiving turkey right off the table. He bit people. There were times when my sister and I hated his guts. We were fairly sure the feeling was mutual.

And yet he was devoted to my father, a soft-spoken man who had always wanted to be a medieval history professor but who wound up working at a bank instead. At the end of the day, Dad would come through the door with the *Evening Bulletin* and tug off his tie, often with an air of grim exhaustion. Then he'd sit down in a leather chair, and Playboy would lie down at his side and roll around until his paws were in the air, and my father would rub the dog's belly. "Who's a good boy?" he'd ask. "Who's a good boy?"

It was a good question.

What did I learn about love from Playboy? That it is perfectly fine if everyone hates you as long as you are deeply loved by one person.



Sausage

IN ADOLESCENCE, I had another dalmatian, a sad, overweight blob named Sausage. I got her for my 11th birthday, and for several years, I adored her, carrying that dog around like a Raggedy Ann doll. Some nights she slept in my bed, her head upon the pillow next to mine. I'll always love you, I told the dog. We'll always be best friends.

But the promise I made as a child was hard to keep once I became a surly teenager and Sausage developed some obscure condition that

caused her to lose the hair on her tail. An unsettling brown goo oozed out of her eyes. Friends coming over to my house made fun of Sausage. They said my dog was gross, and in this they were not wrong.

More unforgivably, though, my dog was uncool, a reminder of the nerd I myself had been not so long ago.

And, so, I turned my back on her. I made other friends, some of them boys who owned hot rods with T-tops.

It was from Sausage that I learned this awful truth: Sometimes love fades, and as you age, it can be hard to keep a promise you made when you were young.



Matt the Mutt

AT THE END of her freshman year at Carleton, my sister brought home a terrible dog named Matt the Mutt, who'd been raised in her dormitory. She handed him over to my parents—he's yours!—and headed west. Just like that, the reign of Matt the Mutt began.

For the next eight years, the dog bounced around the house, lifting his leg pretty much wherever he pleased, knocking people over, barking incessantly. Anyone coming through the door—including my tired father with his briefcase and his newspaper—would be instantly assailed by the bouncing, howling creature.

Matt the Mutt was a love machine, a regular Pepé Le Pew. He would copulate with pretty much anything: ottomans, the mailbox, even the now-geriatric Sausage. Above all, he lived to make love to my grandmother's leg. Which was fine, I guess; my grandmother thought it was funny. He's got more spunk than your grandpa! said she.

From Matt the Mutt I learned this: Sometimes the happiest people are the ones that make everyone else's lives impossible.



Brown

WHEN I WAS in my twenties, my parents got a Lab named Brown. This time we swore—just once!—we'd own a dog that was not completely insane. In this our hopes proved nugatory. Brown developed a strange addiction to running water. She would move a kitchen chair to the sink with her snout and open the tap with her teeth. Then she'd stand on the chair, biting the running water. Later, the dog became obsessed with chewing her own paws, something the vet described as a lick granuloma.

Short of making her constantly wear one of those cones of shame, nothing could compel Brown to stop the chewing. That dog ate her own feet as if they were a delicacy rarer than clams casino. They were tasty, I guess.

We'd hoped that this time we'd have a normal dog. But from Brown I learned, instead, that sometimes people who seem the most normal turn out to be the craziest.

Still, it was Brown that provided me consolation when my father died of melanoma. As I sat in a chair in my mother's house, weeping, the dog came over and put her head in my lap. Do not be dismayed, for I am thy Dog, she said. Whoever lives in love, lives in Dog, and Dog in him.

Brown looked at me with steadfastness and adoration, and her tail thumped against the floor. There had been scars on her legs. Maybe, with time, they could be healed.



Lucy

I GOT MARRIED just after I turned 30, and we moved to a farmhouse in central Maine, where I got a job teaching English at Colby College.

There we were joined by a yellow dog I bought from a pig farmer. We called Lucy a Kennebec Valley Flycatcher on account of her fondness for biting flies right out of the air. Sometimes she'd look at me as if to say, They might be flies to you, but to me they are sky-raisins.

Lucy would give me other looks, usually in shades of disdain. When my daughter was in third grade, she wrote

an essay for school: "Our Dog Hates Us." It was true too. Everything about our family seemed to annoy Lucy. For a while this made me feel a little puny, until at last I realized that Lucy was just lonesome for the place she had loved first: our neighbor's pigsty.

And so from Lucy I learned this: Sometimes all people want is the thing they had when they were young.

EACH OF THESE dogs had taught me something about the perilous nature of devotion. Some people will tell you that the magic of dogs is that their love for us is unconditional, but I've never found this to be the case. What's unconditional is the love that we have for them.

At 60, I'm pretty sure that if there is any reason why we are here on this planet, it is in order to love one another. It is, as the saying goes, all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

And yet, as it turns out, nothing is harder than loving human beings.

That's where dogs come in. It's in our love for dogs that we can most express how hard it is to be human, how glorious, and how sad.

I remember my father, exhausted from his job, asking our terrible dalmatian, "Who's a good boy? Who's a good boy?"

It occurs to me now that in asking this, what he was really saying was, I am, Playboy. I am.

(Continued on next page)



Chloe

AFTER CHLOE JOINED us, I had hopes of having a conversation with her previous owner, the woman who'd been laid low by cancer. I wanted her to know that her dog had found a good home, and that we'd take care of her.

When I finally got through, though, I learned that Chloe's owner had died the week before.

It snowed that night, and I woke up in a room made mysterious by light and stillness. In the morning, I sat up and found that Chloe had climbed into bed with us as we slept.

Well? she asked. I touched her soft ears in the bright, quiet room and thought about the gift of grace.

If you wanted, I said, I would stay with you too. **R**

Jennifer Finney Boylan is the author of the book Good Boy: My Life in Seven Dogs, from which this was adapted.

The Weight of the World

Quarantining expanded so many waistlines. Time for revenge!
See how these COVID-era terms feel with a little extra padding on them.

COVID-30: Formerly COVID-15; the amount of weight gained by an average adult during quarantine. Sometimes related to a pan-demic.

Pan-demic: A potentially dangerous increase in the baking of bread in a quarantined home.

Flattening the curve: Trying to fit into your jeans after months of sweatpants.

(See COVID-30.)

THE NEW YORKER

BRAIN GAMES

7 Pages TO SHARPEN Your Mind

Fact or Fiction?

MEDIUM Determine whether each statement is fact or fiction. To reveal the solution to the bonus question at bottom, write the letter indicated in each of your responses in the corresponding numbered blank. Turn page upside down for the answers.

1. Pound for pound, human bones are stronger than steel.



FACT: **H** FICTION: **C**

2. Mozart composed his first piece of music when he was only nine years old.

FACT: **H** FICTION: **E**

3. Kansas and Arkansas share a border.

FACT: **E** FICTION: **N**

4. The five Marx Brothers were Chico, Harpo, Groucho, Gumbo, and Zeppo.

FACT: **V** FICTION: **R**

5. Giraffes can survive on less than an hour of sleep each day.



FACT: **Y** FICTION: **R**

6. The terms *skim milk* and *manager* first came into use in the 1950s.

FACT: **O** FICTION: **F**

7. The \$20 bill is the most commonly counterfeited banknote in the United States.



FACT: **O** FICTION: **L**

8. The United States has never had a military conflict with Canada.



FACT: **E** FICTION: **R**

9. Redheads require more anesthesia to be sedated than those with other hair colors.

FACT: **D** FICTION: **T**

BONUS QUESTION Which famous industrialist spent millions trying to turn soybeans into textiles and paints? (Need help? Turn to The Food on Your Plate on page 32.)

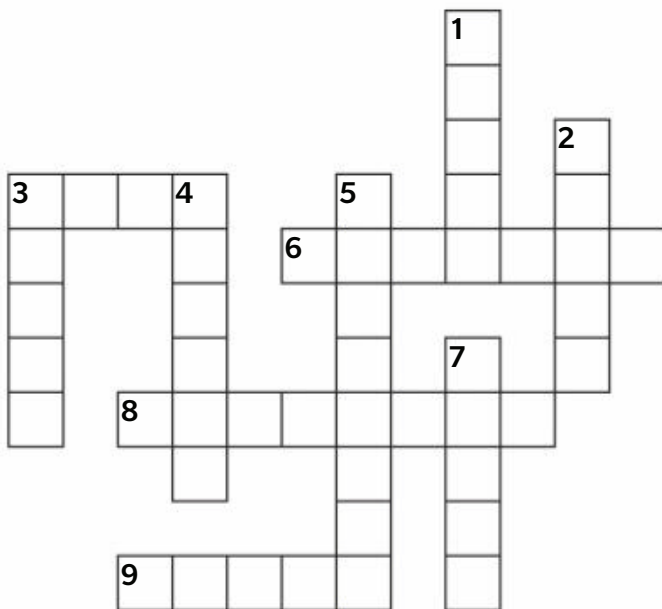
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Answers: 1. Fact. 2. Fiction; he was five. 3. Fiction. 4. Fiction; it's Gumbo, not Gumbo. 5. Fact. 6. Fiction; they were first coined by William Shakespeare. 7. Fact. 8. Fiction; the United States has invaded Canada a few times, most notably during the War of 1812. 9. Fact. **Bonus Question:** Henry Ford

Quick Crossword

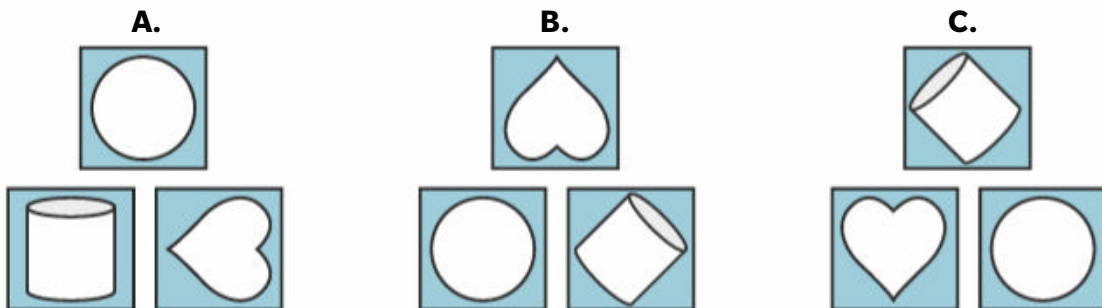
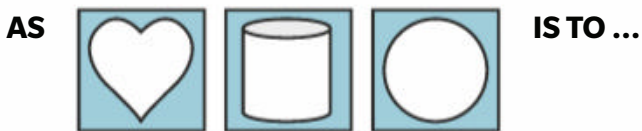
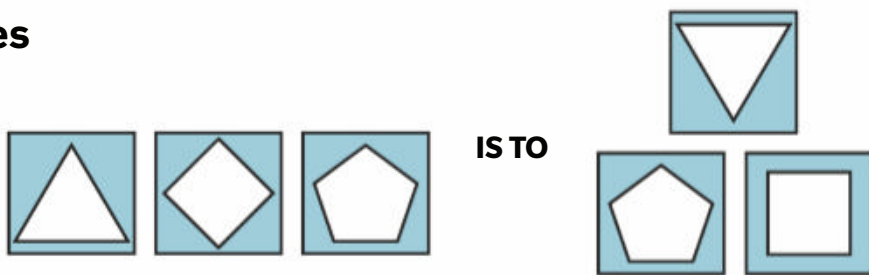
EASY To commemorate D-Day on June 6, fill this month's grid with the names of these famous men who stormed the beaches of Normandy.

- FONDA (Henry)
- GUINNESS (Alec)
- JONES (Bobby)
- FORD (John)
- DURNING (Charles)
- SALINGER (J. D.)
- BERRA (Yogi)
- EVERS (Medgar)
- DOOHAN (James)
- NIVEN (David)



Shapes

EASY



Dads and Grads

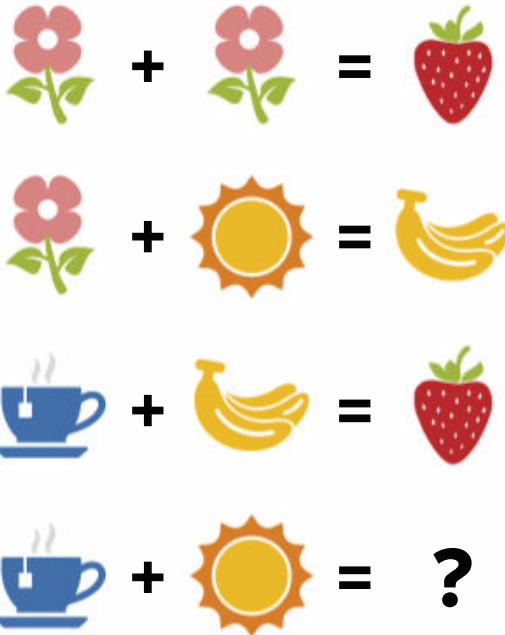
MEDIUM A joint Father's Day and graduation party is being thrown for Michael, Ken, James, Alberto, Elias, and Stephanie. Three of them are newly minted high school graduates; the other three are their dads. Based on the following clues, can you figure out who the graduates are and who each of their dads is?

- ◆ Stephanie went to the senior prom with Michael's son.
- ◆ Elias and James played on the school's baseball team. One of them is Alberto's son.
- ◆ Michael and Elias are not related.



Symbolism

DIFFICULT Based on these equations, what's the missing symbol?



Fill in the Blanks

MEDIUM How many common English words can you make by adding a letter to each of the blanks below? We found five. Proper nouns don't count.

___ **W E** ___ **T**

For more Brain Games,
go to RD.COM
/CROSSWORDS.

For answers, turn to **PAGE 123**.

CONNECTIONS:

Your link to values and insights each month

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WORD POWER

For June, we've rounded up some four-letter words for your puzzling pleasure. No, not those words—literally, words that have only four letters! We swear you can use all of these in polite company, but can you guess the correct definitions? Keep it clean and turn to the next page for answers.

BY Sarah Chassé

1. coif *n.*
(kwahf)

- A snub.
- B hairdo.
- C sea snail.

2. awry *adv.*
(uh-'ry)

- A off course.
- B absentee.
- C ironically.

3. bilk *v.*
(bilk)

- A avoid.
- B duplicate.
- C cheat.

4. udon *n.*
('oo-dahn)

- A mob boss.
- B violent uprising.
- C Japanese noodles.

5. rapt *adj.*
(rapt)

- A suddenly loud.
- B deeply absorbed.
- C swaying slowly.

6. coda *n.*
('koh-duh)

- A final passage.
- B ancient scroll.
- C poisonous snake.

7. laud *v.*
(lahd)

- A tax.
- B praise.
- C roam.

8. ecru *adj.*
('eh-kroo)

- A violet.
- B teal.
- C beige.

9. deft *adj.*
(deft)

- A deceitful.
- B masterful.
- C peaceful.

10. lynx *n.*
(links)

- A wildcat.
- B golf course.
- C web language.

11. oust *v.*
(owst)

- A hurry along.
- B fight on horseback.
- C force out.

12. iota *n.*
(eye-'oh-tuh)

- A secret society.
- B tiny amount.
- C dead battery.

13. vile *adj.*
('vy-uhl)

- A contained.
- B foul.
- C charming.

14. espy *v.*
(eh-'spy)

- A catch sight of.
- B sneak around.
- C accuse.

15. brig *n.*
(brig)

- A major general.
- B temporary jail.
- C rifle barrel.

Swearing, Symbolically

Getting back to those not-fit-to-print four-letter words: You've likely seen a string of keyboard characters standing in for inappropriate language (e.g., %@\$&*!), but you might not know the word for it: *grawlix*. Cartoonist Mort Walker is credited with coining the term, though comic strips were using symbols or squiggles for swear words as early as 1902, long before Sarge was hurling obscenities at the hapless Beetle Bailey.



Word Power ANSWERS

1. coif (B) *hairdo*. Even on a windy day, Zack's slicked-back coif doesn't budge an inch.

2. awry (A) *off course*. Our plans for a large wedding went awry because of the pandemic, so we had a private ceremony instead.

3. bilk (C) *cheat*. The hedge fund attempted to bilk investors out of millions of dollars.

4. udon (C) *Japanese noodles*. Hiro's restaurant serves udon in a savory broth, topped with steamed vegetables.

5. rapt (B) *deeply absorbed*. The rapt audience was mesmerized by the violin solo.

6. coda (A) *final passage*. "What a fitting coda to a terrible day—my tire is flat!" Sloane grumbled.

7. laud (B) *praise*. Students and colleagues alike lauded Mr. Ortiz at his retirement party.

8. ecru (C) *beige*. "Should I paint my kitchen ecru or a bright green?" Emil asked.

9. deft (B) *masterful*. Known for her three-point shooting and deft handling of the basketball, Paige was named rookie of the year.

10. lynx (A) *wildcat*. The lynx stalked its prey, ready to pounce.

11. oust (C) *force out*. After the fundraising scandal, Isabelle was ousted from the PTA.

12. iota (B) *tiny amount*. "Algebra has never made one iota of sense to me," Jed said with a shrug.

13. vile (B) *foul*. That vile odor can mean only one thing—Grandma burned the cabbage soup again.

14. espy (A) *catch sight of*. If you're sitting on the right side of the plane, you can espy the Statue of Liberty just after takeoff.

15. brig (B) *temporary jail*. The captain handcuffed the stowaway and escorted her to the brig.

Vocabulary Ratings

9 & BELOW: good form

10–12: well done

13–15: pure gold

ANSWERS

WHERE, OH WHERE?

(See page 26.)

C: Rainbow Falls in Watkins Glen, New York. (Not to be confused with the Rainbow Falls 200 miles north in Keene, New York, or the dozens of other Rainbow Falls in the U.S.)

BRAIN GAMES

(See pages 118–119.)

Quick Crossword

ACROSS

3. FORD

6. DURNING

8. SALINGER

9. EVERS

DOWN

1. NIVEN

2. JONES

3. FONDA

4. DOOHAN

5. GUINNESS

7. BERRA

Shapes

B. The first shape rotates 180 degrees. The second shape rotates 45 degrees and moves to the bottom right. And the third shape moves to the bottom left.

Dads and Grads

Alberto is Elias's dad, Ken is Stephanie's dad, and Michael is James's dad.

Symbolism



Fill in the Blanks

Dwelt, sweat, sweet,
swept, tweet

MAKE
US
LAUGH!



Caption Contest

What's your clever description for this picture? Submit your funniest line at RD.COM/CAPTIONCONTEST. Winners will appear in a future Photo Finish (PAGE 124).

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PHOTO FINISH
YOUR *Funniest* CAPTIONS



Winner

The new COVID-19 test: So easy a child can do it!

—CHAR JAMES *Virginia Beach, Virginia*

Runners-Up

“OK, now let’s play ‘Got Your Nose’ *my way.*”

—WILLIAM JONES *Wading River, New York*

“But I remember putting my Lego in here earlier.”

—CONNIE GRAHAM *Luray, Virginia*

To enter an upcoming caption contest, see the photo on PAGE 123.

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