

NEW ZEALAND

Reader's Digest

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JOHN
TOYMAKER



FOR LOVE - AND WOODWORK

John's proud of the many children's toys he's helped make. Prouder still, because he'd never made a wooden toy until he was introduced to the workshop in his Ryman retirement village.

That introduction happened not long after he and his wife moved in six years ago - a decision that John's glad they made when they did. The timing gave the couple a chance to make the village their home before his wife required full time care.

The decision to move happened several years after his wife had been diagnosed with the early stages of Alzheimer's. The pair were thinking about their future. "I was looking ahead. I knew about Ryman, and when I first went one of the things I asked to see was the

care facility. It was seeing the way they look after people that really sealed my decision. I knew what was ahead of us, so it was to make provision for that."

For John, choosing Ryman was about doing what was best for his wife, but the decision came with another benefit. "One of the things that really settled it for me was my family, and their relief when they knew we were going to a Ryman village. They were relieved to know that their mother and father would be looked after."

The couple moved in and immediately started enjoying village life together. They travelled extensively and immersed themselves in all that was going on. For John, that included meeting up with new friends in the

workshop to make wooden toys that are sold to raise funds for charity.

Even though he's saddened that his wife's Alzheimer's has progressed, John is grateful for the care she's receiving. "I know she is in the right place. Everything that we planned has come about and I'm pleased with the way things are going. I don't have to worry. She's healthy, she'll be here long after I'm gone, but I know she'll be okay. That's a real relief."

"When we needed care, it was there. I'm so grateful for that."

John can't speak highly enough of the care facilities at his village. He sees them as a major benefit of choosing Ryman.

"A lot of people, even though they're fit and healthy, look at the care facilities as a reason for moving to Ryman because they say, 'you don't know what's around the corner'. Well, I did know what was around the corner and when we needed care, it was there. I'm so grateful for that."

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rymanhealthcare.co.nz

John pictured with friend
and fellow toymaker Murray

The logo for Ryman Healthcare, featuring a stylized 'R' inside a blue square, with the words 'RYMAN HEALTHCARE' below it.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Clearer View Of The World

IF YOU'VE EVER TRIED to select the perfect colour for your interior wall, you'll appreciate how complex colours can be. Less so for bees, it seems. This month's Genius article, 'The Mystery Of The Blue Flower' (page 134) discusses the fascination humans have with the colour blue, and why it so rarely appears in the world of plants and animals. We have our limited vision perception to blame for not spotting the full colour spectrum - while for bees, blue is everywhere.

This month's 'Then and Now, High Heels' (page 86) unearths some historical surprises that will add nicely to your pool of knowledge - just perfect for any trivia night. I don't want to give too much away, but the fashion trend for shoes that offer a bird's-eye view started with a very colourful character of French history, and has never looked back.

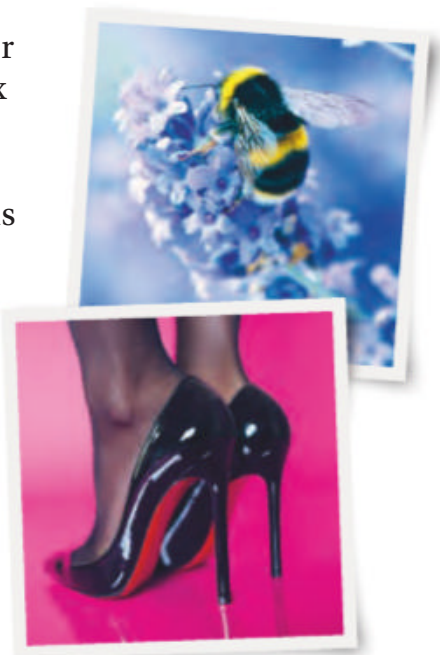
Puzzles are a key part of our magazine and, more than ever, they are also viewed among health professionals as giving our brain a valuable workout. Our Bonus Read, 'Brain Games That Really Work' (page 116), delves into different types of puzzles and offers insider tips on how to solve each type. Whether you're a wordsmith or a number cruncher, there's a puzzle type to help you maintain and build mental clarity and performance.

Also, a special thank you to readers who have sent us comments about the articles in recent times. We love receiving your feedback. The November issue has something for every taste and interest in the household - we hope you enjoy it.

Happy reading,

Louise

LOUISE WATERSON
Editor-in-Chief



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LETTERS

Reader's Comments And Opinions

When Love Prevails

'Will We Ever See Our Child Again?' (June) depicts the traumatic, heart-wrenching ordeal of a young couple, forced to abandon their newborn second daughter under China's strict one-child policy, 20 years ago. Their unflinching faith was answered resulting in a joyful reunion with their daughter, now a well-educated woman living across the world. Miracles do happen when true, deep-seated love prevails, transcending distances thanks to modern technology, social media and some kind hearts. Family



love is life's greatest blessing. What greater pride and happiness can there be for parents than to be rewarded with the success of their children, and blessed with family love?

VIMALA THIAGARAJAH

Peace On Earth

Mike Hilton's letter (Letters, August) rings with so much truth. The so-called space race will not benefit us here on Earth, except to boost the ego of the boffins that are spending so much money on it. The average

person would be naïve to believe that humans could evolve to live on another planet. Our evolution has taken millions of years. As Mike says – we should be looking for peace on Earth. The world has had enough wars as all they do is kill people.

Let us know if you are moved – or provoked – by any item in the magazine, share your thoughts. See page 10 for how to join the discussion.

To this end I believe that someone of renown should address world leaders and exhort them to live in peace with their fellow beings. A good motto would be, 'Negotiation – Not Confrontation'. **NEIL KEEDLE**

Lighting Up Their Lives

Salman's Mutjaba's story ('The Pandemic Lit Up Our Village', My Story, September) about how his village of Shujghal came together during the global pandemic to build a micro hydro power plant, was a stand-out read for me. It made me think of the trivial things we can anguish over, and things we take for granted in developed nations, such as the simple act of turning on a tap or light switch, without knowing their source or the science behind this. Despite suffering the

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FINS ARE NOT AS THEY SEEM

We asked you to think up a clever caption for this photo.

Beneath the icy surface Jaws was actually a little 'koi'.

MICHAEL GOATHAM

This has always got me to the front of the queue at feeding time.

BEVERLY HURST

Any fin will do.

CLAIRE JOLLIFFE

Can't seem to make any friends since I got this new fin!

MARTINA MORRISSEY

Congratulations to this month's winner, Beverly Hurst.



CAPTION CONTEST

Come up with the funniest caption for the above photo and you could win

\$100. To enter, email

editor@readersdigest.co.nz

or see details on page 10.

READER'S DIGEST

devastating loss of a loved family member on the job, this hard-working community persevered and achieved a life-changing goal. There is indeed 'strength in numbers.' **SUSAN ALLEN**

Cool Mint

'Mint, The Coolest of Them All' (I Am The Food On Your Plate, September) is a good account of its efficacy. Additionally, mint improves brain function, lessens breastfeeding pain and relieves indigestion. It is also good for the skin as it clears off dead cells, removes dirt from pores and revamps your skin to a smoother tone. However, people with heartburn or gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD) should not eat mint, according to a 2019 medical review. Peppermint may soothe an upset stomach, but it can also make heartburn worse.

SYED RIFAQUAT ALI

Ordinary To Extraordinary

I just loved 'Extraordinary Uses for Ordinary Things' (August). Lockdown has given me the time to sort through my wardrobe – a job I usually don't enjoy because more often than not, and in spite of my best efforts, a much-loved item of clothing will always be found covered in mould.

I have fashioned a dehumidifier as per your instructions and look forward to the results.

BENITA JOHANSEN

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MY STORY

Leaving New Zealand Behind

*It's hard to say goodbye
to a home you never knew
you had before visiting*

BY Nico Franks

WHY WOULD ANYONE in their right mind leave New Zealand right now, home to Auckland, the world's 'most liveable' city and run by a leader recently declared by *Fortune* magazine as the world's greatest?

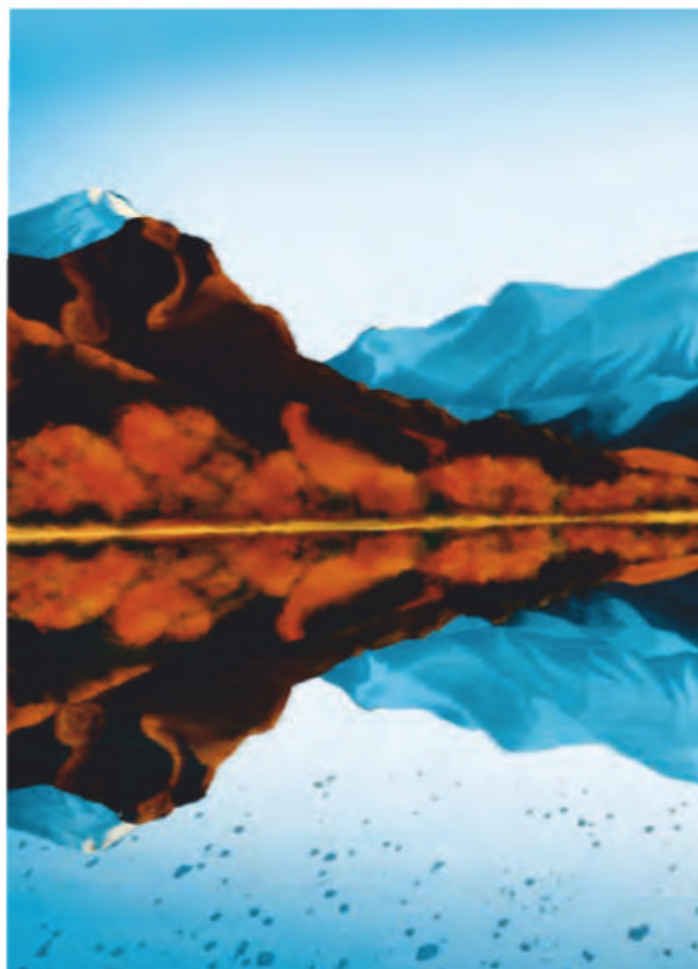
It's a question I've been asking myself since I returned to the UK at the end of June; the country where I was born is registering over 30,000 new cases of COVID-19 every day at the moment, while New Zealand, where I'd spent 2021, so far remains pretty much COVID-free.

Despite being a New Zealand

citizen, I'd never been to Aotearoa before I arrived there at the start of 2021.

A Kiwi passport is arguably one of the most sought-after items in the world right now and I have a small house in Stratford, New Zealand, to thank for mine. It was here that my mum and dad, both Brits, met in the 1980s. Kiwi passports followed their marriage and a few years later my parents decided to move back to the north of England to be closer to my grandparents as they started a family.

Thirty years later I travelled across the world in a mask during a global pandemic, clutching the small black





document that meant I could trade Boris Johnson for Jacinda Ardern – the political equivalent of swapping a dog-eared Magikarp for a shiny Charizard in a game of Pokémon.

While my colleagues, friends and family understandably numbed themselves to the horrors of an escalating pandemic, I guiltily collapsed into the caring *kia ora* of a COVID-free utopia, beginning with

Nico Franks is a 31-year-old journalist now based in the north of England. His hobbies include writing about Leeds United, making short films and searching for the perfect hot sauce.

what was essentially 14 days in the cushiest prison of all time.

My managed isolation flew by as I basked in the summer sunshine and enjoyed the calm that came with relinquishing all decision-making responsibility. I learnt how to meditate using a show on Netflix and pondered life's big questions: Why did *The Chase* always seem to be on TV whenever I switched it on? And why were the dating apps now suddenly so full of women holding up large fish?

On my first day of freedom, a friend took me to Waiheke Island, a glorious place full of vineyards and beaches where New Zealand singer-songwriter Lorde films her music videos that I had no idea existed, and part of me still thinks is part of some elaborate fantasy.

I gorged myself on sparkling rosé and fresh seafood, intoxicated by the combination of alcohol and sheer relief of being able to hear live music, hug friends and speak freely to strangers again.

One dilemma I've faced throughout my time in New Zealand has been how much to post on social media and the decision I came to was nothing.

The urge to post pictures at times was unnervingly strong. But social media is clearly poison. I don't think there's a way of posting a picture from on top of a mountain when

READER'S DIGEST

pretty much everyone you know is stuck indoors, without coming across as unbearably smug.

Nevertheless, I feel like I almost got repetitive strain injury from taking my phone out of my pocket to snap photos of staggeringly stunning scenery as I explored the country's North and South Islands. With the borders closed and New Zealand pretty much tourist free, I had the chance to skydive, bungee jump, swim with dolphins and see glories like Milford Sound, Tongariro National Park and Mount Taranaki without a bum bag in sight.

I don't want to make it sound like life in New Zealand is perfect. The country is plagued by an obsession with car ownership, social inequality exists just as it does in other countries, and everyone seems to go to bed at about 9.30pm. But it's not far off.

For example, many of New Zealand's public toilets would get a better hygiene rating than the kitchen of my first London flat share. You can confidently leave your helmet attached to your bike and no one will steal it. People will often just smile at you on the street. And the pies. My goodness, the pies.

The pies are exceptional. But the best thing about New Zealand is how te reo Māori and plenty more aspects of Māori, Pasifika and Indigenous cultures are set to have an ever-greater presence in day-to-day life here in the coming years.

And most of the country seems

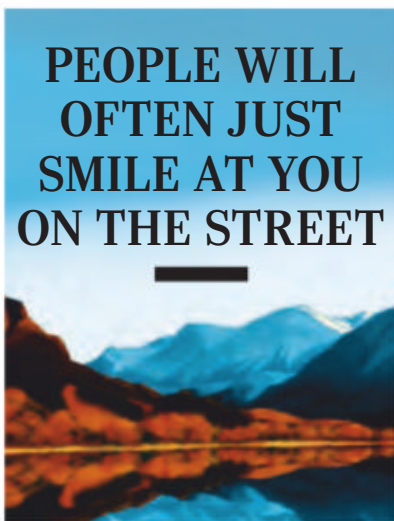
pretty on board with their gradual but radical re-positioning from an outpost of Britain to one of the biggest islands in the South Pacific, as an Auckland-based TV producer described it to me.

And yet I left them for Boris Johnson's post-Brexit Britain. As life in the UK gets

ever closer to something resembling 'normal', I'm steeling myself for the grind of London life again.

I am insanely lucky and privileged to have been able to experience life in New Zealand for six months.

But there's little point in living life without the constraints of COVID-19 if most of the people you love aren't there to do it with you. So, for me, it's so long Aotearoa New Zealand, and thanks for all the pies.



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NEW ZEALAND
Reader's
Digest

SMART ANIMALS

Protecting loved ones is a natural instinct



Simbo the Great

USULA P. WIJESURIYA

When we decided to adopt a dog, my son, Udaya, aged 12 and an avid Enid Blyton fan, claimed this dog was going to be his version of Timmy, the wonder dog from the *Famous Five* books. He named him Simbo and took full charge of the cross-breed German shepherd; feeding him, brushing him and allowing him to sleep on his bed. They were inseparable. Together they went on endless treks in our neighbourhood. Ours was the ideal location for adventures because our house stood on the banks of a lake with plenty of scrub jungle around.

One day, while Udaya was at

school, I was in the living room writing at my desk. My youngest child, who was two at that time, was sitting on the floor beside me playing with his toys. There was a gap of about a metre between us. Suddenly Simbo, who was nearby, gave an unusually loud growl and I looked up to see a cobra, about a metre long, slithering along between me and my child. I was stunned but Simbo sprang into action. He pounced on the cobra, held him by the neck, just below its outspread hood, and

You could earn cash by telling us about the antics of unique pets or wildlife. Turn to page 10 for details on how to contribute.

began dashing it hither and thither. It was a mortal battle between snake and dog.

Foolishly, I shouted, “Simbo! Simbo!” For a moment, Simbo lost his concentration to look over at me and the cobra struck him on the cheek. Both Simbo and the cobra died. My foolishness and his obedience cost him his life. Simbo died a hero.



Mother’s Guardians

LESLIE W. JOHN

Back in 1945, my mother was at home alone on our property, convalescing after some major surgery. It was a Friday, market day, and my father had left her to go 16 kilometres away to Horsham, in regional Victoria, to do the shopping. My brother and I were at work and my younger sisters were at school.

Suddenly, Tom, 16, our next-door neighbour of artful character, silently appeared in the lounge

room where she was resting. Tom didn’t know that Mum would be home and had let himself in to ‘case out the joint’. My mother screamed in fright, making the lad run for his life.

As he dashed out, he was beset upon by two resident magpies that my mother, a lover of birds, fed and ‘spoke’ to every morning. They dive-bombed him relentlessly for the 500 metres back to the boundary fence. The magpies then returned and took up sentry duty on the cedar tree at our front gate until we arrived home.

Although all was forgiven on our part, whenever the lad came over to our place to kick the football, or to play quoits and darts with my brother and me, the magpies would fly down from the tall gum tree and take up guard on the cedar tree. Even if we were home they would attack him if he came near the cedar tree. When he was gone they would depart, too.

As the pair grew older, they continued to always protect my mother from strangers. They were Mother’s guardian angels.

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Adding A Chicken Coop To Your Backyard

Chickens are clean, friendly and reward you with eggs

BY *Dr Katrina Warren*



Our regular pet columnist, Dr Katrina Warren, is an established and trusted animal expert.

RAISING CHICKENS in suburban backyards is steadily rising in popularity due to the increasing community interest in sustainable living and people looking for simple ways to connect with nature. Fun and useful pets, they help reduce waste by eating food scraps and provide their owners with nutritious, fresh eggs. While reasonably low maintenance, chickens still have some specific care requirements.

PERMISSION Check with your local authority as rules differ around keeping chickens. Many do not permit roosters to be kept in residential areas due to the noise they make.

GOOD PETS FOR CHILDREN Chickens have their own quirky personalities and help teach children about the responsibility and routine needed to care for another living creature. Handle them often and gently from when they arrive and they should quickly become comfortable.

HOW MANY TO KEEP? As chickens are flock birds, be sure to get more than one. Three or four is generally a good number for an average-sized yard. Each chicken should have at least one square metre of space, but more space is always better.

BREEDS Popular chicken breeds for keeping as pets are the Orpington, Isa Brown, Pekin and Silkie.



ACCOMMODATION Chickens need a coop and a safe enclosed area to roam during the day. The coop should be secure to protect them from predators and extreme weather. You should always secure them in their coop by nightfall.

They need at least one nesting box for every three to four hens. Line nest boxes with bedding such as quality wood shavings or straw. Chickens like to roost so they will also need a perch positioned off the ground and protected from the elements.

FOOD Chickens are omnivores. They should be fed a good-quality commercial poultry pellet appropriate for their age. This can be supplemented with fresh fruit and vegetables. Chickens enjoy table scraps such as pasta, rice, vegetable peelings and apple cores, which

Chickens are friendly and affectionate if treated gently from a young age

helps reduce household waste. They should not be fed avocado peel or pits, citrus, onion, garlic, nuts or any human food that is high in fat, sugar or salt. They love to scratch in the garden and will eat weeds.

MAINTENANCE Chickens bathe themselves by rolling in dust, which cleans their feathers. Chickens will usually create their own dust bath area by digging a hole in the dirt, but you can create a spot for them by providing fine sand.

SHORT CHECKLIST FOR KEEPING CHICKENS

COOP: Able to be securely closed, weather and predator proofed.

NESTING BOX: A comfy place to lay their eggs.

PERCHES: Elevated timber with space for chickens' feet to rest comfortably.

FEEDER: Food trays or dispensers elevated from the ground to prevent soiling.

WATERER: Clean, fresh water from a drinker that attaches to the coop. Their water should be replaced daily.

WORMER: Every three months, worming liquid can be added to their water.

EXTERNAL PARASITE CONTROL: Prevent ticks, mites and lice with a dusting powder or spray them every 2-3 months.

HEALTH



Home Truths

We've been spending a lot of time indoors since COVID-19 struck, but could we make our homes healthier?

BY *Susannah Hickling*

OPEN YOUR WINDOWS

The air circulating indoors is up to five times more polluted than what's wafting around outside.

Pollutants include mould, building materials and products you use around the home. Fine particles can get into the lungs, bloodstream and organs. Poor indoor air quality has been linked to asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and even lung cancer. Ventilate your home as often as possible.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES When you come in from outside, you're tramping all sorts of nasties into your inner sanctum. Beyond the ubiquitous dog mess and chewing gum, your footwear can also carry unhealthy dust from traffic fumes, oils and other harmful chemicals. Keep your slippers by the front door.

CURB HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS

Perhaps less surprisingly, cleaning products can also contain noxious chemicals, giving rise to asthma or allergies. A Norwegian study found that women who used cleaning products regularly had a greater decline in lung function than those who were less house-proud. We're not suggesting you keep a dirty home, but you might want to opt for allergy-friendly products and avoid sprays, which release chemicals into the air and not just onto surfaces.

CONSIDER WOOD OR TILES

Carpets harbour germs and pollutants, such as dust mites, pet dander and pesticides, and catch anything that's floating in the air in your home – even when you're assiduous about vacuuming. The materials used to make synthetic carpets and the compounds they emit may add to indoor pollution, triggering or aggravating allergic reactions, respiratory and heart problems. If you have allergies, consider wood flooring or tiles.

BEWARE FLATPACK FURNITURE

MDF in shelving and modern furniture often contains formaldehyde, a volatile organic compound (VOC) classed as a carcinogen. It's found in the resin that binds the wood dust and scrap together. Whether cancer-causing or not, formaldehyde has reportedly been linked with itchy eyes, sore throats, wheezing, headaches and runny noses. To avoid your building becoming sick because of MDF, opt for solid wood.

CUT OUT CANDLES Reduce indoor pollution by forgoing scented candles and air fresheners. These release chemicals which turn into our old friend – formaldehyde – when they reach the air. Candles also give off soot, which, again, is not good for your lungs.

NEGLECT PERSONAL CARE

I bet you never thought we'd advise you to do that! It's lovely to look and smell nice, but a 2018 study found that an ingredient commonly found in deodorants, shampoos and lotions, siloxane, gives off emissions comparable in magnitude to traffic and considered harmful to health. Try to restrict your use of these products or opt for ranges that don't contain harmful ingredients. Also limit hairspray and spray perfumes, as they also emit VOCs and contribute to potentially toxic air pollution.

HEALTH

Silent Causes of Haemorrhoids

BY Jessica Migala



Three out of four adults endure haemorrhoids at some point in their lives. “Haemorrhoids are dilated, swollen and inflamed veins in the rectum,” says gastroenterologist Dr David Greenwald. “They may be asymptomatic or cause discomfort and occasional bleeding.”

Here are some everyday habits that can cause haemorrhoids.

YOU'RE LIFTING HEAVY OBJECTS

You may think it's harmless to pick up one end of the couch while you're moving, but that could increase pressure in the rectum, causing the veins (the haemorrhoidal plexus) to swell like a balloon, says gastroenterologist Dr Darren Brenner. Lifting correctly – with your legs, not your back – can help. The same goes for the gym. Challenge yourself, but make sure that your workout and weights match your abilities.

YOU SIT ON THE TOILET FOR TOO LONG

Sitting too long on an open toilet bowl will cause gravity to put undue stress on these veins. Take all the time you need to go, but once you're done, flush and head out.

YOU MAY NOT BE GETTING ENOUGH FIBRE

“Consuming an adequate amount of fibre – whether through food, supplements, or a combination – leads to bulkier stools, which are then generally softer,” explains Dr Greenwald.

YOU HAVE DIARRHOEA

Going to the toilet multiple times a day can also lead to straining. The fix, says Dr Brenner, is to address the underlying cause of your diarrhoea. It may be viral, irritable bowel syndrome, medications or a food-borne illness. Or you may need to simply regulate your diet.

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News From the

WORLD OF MEDICINE

SLEEP APNOEA'S TOLL ON THE HEART

As one of the most prevalent sleep disorders, obstructive sleep apnoea (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. When this happens, the sleep cycle gets interrupted. But untreated sleep apnoea 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' night-time 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 their heart raced and the more their

short-term heart rate varied. Too much of this, over time, 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 people with more serious cases, the most effective solution is continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP), a machine that pumps a constant stream of air into your throat via a mask.

BENEFITS OF REGULAR MAMMOGRAMS

If you've missed a routine breast-screening appointment because of the pandemic, schedule one sooner rather than later. In a 2020 study of Swedish women reported in *Cancer*, those who'd attended their last

two mammograms before a breast cancer diagnosis were less likely to be diagnosed with advanced tumours. Screening also substantially reduces the risk of having a terminal breast cancer diagnosis.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

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The **Monkey** *Whisperer*

Andie Ang's personal interest in monkeys was sparked when she was a child. Today, the primatologist is a global expert on one of Singapore's most delightful primates, the Raffles' banded langur

BY Lam Lye Ching

PHOTOS: COURTESY DR ANDIE ANG; GETTY IMAGES



Endemic to Singapore and the southern Peninsular Malaysia, only 70 Raffles' banded langurs are left in Singapore

Primatologist and research scientist Andie Ang, PhD, grew up with an extended family of animals – cats, dogs, birds and fish filled the family home in Singapore. Then, in 1995, her father saw some sailors mistreating a small young monkey. Bringing the African vervet monkey home, he added it to the family's menagerie.

Just ten at the time, Ang clearly remembers her excitement on first seeing the golden-furred little monkey. She named him Ah Boy and they soon became close companions. "I would cycle through the neighbourhood and Ah Boy would tag along," recalls Ang. "Neighbours would stop to look and comment, 'Oh, so cute!'"

Ah Boy ate whatever her mother prepared for the family's lunch and dinner. He also quickly developed a daily routine of climbing onto Ang's shoulders to groom her scalp, meticulously pulling her hair apart in search of anything that shouldn't have been there. "My scalp was always clean," she laughs.

But as the years passed, the family became unable to care for the monkey, so Ang turned to the internet for help. Her search led her to the US-based International Primate Protection League, who recommended she contact the Singapore-based Animal Concerns Research and Education

Society (ACRES). Repatriating an animal to its native country is a complicated and costly process. First, Ah Boy was moved to Singapore Zoo to start his rehabilitation. ACRES then helped Ang with the fundraising, paperwork and logistics needed to return Ah Boy to his native Africa, where a new home awaited him at the Munda Wanga Wildlife Sanctuary in Zambia.

TURNING POINT

In May 2004, after two years of planning, the day arrived for Ang and Ah Boy to say goodbye. It was a tearful parting for her and involved loads of photos. Later that day, Ang determined that she wanted to study primates. "The experience made me want to know more about primates, the threats to them, and how we can help," she says.

After enrolling in a Life Sciences degree at the National University of Singapore (NUS), Ang went on to complete a PhD in Biological Anthropology with a specialty in Raffles' banded langurs. Also known as the Banded Leaf monkey, the black-and-white langurs are endemic to Singapore and the southern Peninsular Malaysia.

Critically endangered and elusive, langurs have black fur, ivory bands on the underside of their bodies and limbs, and white rings around their eyes. When Ang started her doctorate, the species had not been studied for 15 years.

Today, she spends hours in Singapore's Central Catchment Nature Reserve, where the entire local population of Raffles' banded langurs can be found, doing field research under the shady forest canopy. However, finding them has its challenges. "They are shy, which means they usually dash off upon seeing people," she explains.

"There are only 70 of these langurs left in Singapore, which means that the chance of spotting one is quite low. They are found on the mid- to high canopy and rarely come down to the ground, making observations very difficult among the foliage."

GATHERING DATA

A typical day in the field for Ang starts at 7.30am. She searches for the langurs by scouring under trees for any sign of droppings to analyse. She then follows and observes them to gather information on their diet and behaviour.

"Obtaining genetic data is important to help us understand various aspects of the species," Ang says. "We extract DNA from faecal samples to study the genetics of the animals, and to understand their diet and the general health of the animal."

Over the years, Ang has had some unexpected experiences. One evening, back in 2011, a post appeared on her Facebook feed of a car accident involving a langur. She rallied five friends from her NUS lab and they drove out to the accident



Langurs live in upper tree canopies and are very elusive

site to find the body. She was hoping to examine it for research purposes; to take measurements and analyse the bones.

When they couldn't find the animal, they turned their search to "the next best thing" – blood. After an hour of searching, a team member found a scratch on the road similar to the one in the Facebook photo. When they gently dug into the soil, a pebble came loose exposing some liquid blood underneath. Dr Ang brought it back to the lab and the recovery revealed important genetic markers that she has used to compare with DNA samples from the langur droppings.

The biological samples have allowed Ang to update the information on Singapore's local population of langurs, report on their reproductive biology and infant development, and learn more about their feeding ecology. "This provides valuable

information on the species of trees the langurs require to feed and thrive for conservation," she says.

Ang's research has also confirmed that the langurs in Singapore and those across the Johor Strait, in the southern Peninsular Malaysia, are the same subspecies. This has raised hope of possible translocation and reintroduction of the species in both localities for conservation.

COMMUNITY HELP

Langurs use their long tails to travel through the tree canopies, and strong grasping hands and feet to forage for fruit and immature leaves. But the development of the Bukit Timah Expressway saw their forest homes broken up with roads. Sadly, a number of langurs were hit by cars while attempting to cross the road to reach other parts of the forest.

In August 2016, Ang started a citizen science programme to help monitor the langurs. After a short training session, the citizen scientists helped with field observations on weekends for 24 weeks. The data they collected helped local authorities plan and construct rope bridges over roadways in the area for the langurs to cross safely.

In May 2020, using additional data collected by the 143 citizen scientists,

Ang published a paper advocating for the conservation of a small patch of forest, at the eastern end of the Central Catchment Nature Reserve, from further development. The citizen scientists had revealed it was a vital feeding ground.

In addition, convincing residents who live near the forests and at times have found monkeys to be aggressive hasn't been easy. To help nurture a coexistence, Ang volunteers at the Long-tailed Macaque Working Group, which organises free tri-monthly guided nature

and monkey walk sessions. Long-tailed macaques, which are smaller than the langurs, are the other species of monkeys found in Singapore.

The working group also identified and named every monkey living in residential areas. The change in the attitudes of residents was profound. They were learning more about 'Annette' and 'Edgar', and enjoyed discovering the monkeys' individual personalities. They had unwittingly become citizen scientists, and complaints dropped dramatically.

As a result of Ang's work and growing support among locals, the community has come to better understand the value of native wildlife. The future of this small population of Rafles' banded langurs has become a lot more certain. **R**

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Sting

The singer songwriter finds comfort, innocence and improvement in life

BY *Danny Bowman*

He is Sting, he is Gordon Sumner, he is the ex-frontman of The Police, one of the most pioneering bands of the post-punk era, who sold 75 million records worldwide; he is the man to ask about a Police reunion, right? Wrong.

Asking Sting whether or not the idea of the trio linking hands again isn't something the 69-year-old former frontman wants to discuss.

It's not because Sting is particularly offended by the idea, nor that he has spent the best part of 40 years cultivating a reputation as a wholly content solo artist (although that's true).

Perhaps it's more that he is a creative type who doesn't necessarily crave the company of others.

To support this notion is an intriguing shot taken at the end of The Police's final gig, held at the Melbourne Showgrounds on March 4, 1984. Drummer Stewart Copeland and lead guitarist Andy Summers stare out into the worshipping crowd knowing the era of the band had come to a close just a few moments before; the camera lingers on their faces to capture the emotion of the moment, as the congregation pours a sombre, messy mass of elation and sadness onto the musicians. And then there's Sting - grateful for the adulation but, instead of reflective and melancholy like almost everyone else in the arena, he's alive, excited and focused straight away on the solo experiences he knows he is going to create for himself.



When the band reformed in 2007 for a somewhat ill-fated reunion, although the project replenished bank balances, it also cemented the reality that these were three men who should leave the past exactly where it is.

"At the time I labelled the tour an exercise in nostalgia, and that was simply how I felt, and is still how I feel today," Sting begins. "I think it's OK to be honest about your feelings and that was the way it went for me.

"That's not a slight on the people I was with or the way things panned out; it's just how I saw it by the end; and let's be honest, that's not how I wanted to remember it. If I thought that would be the emotion I'd be leaving with, I wouldn't have done it in the first place."

Sting's bandmates have been similarly non-complementary, not so much about the experience, but when commenting on their front man's aversion to life as a threesome.

"I think it happens to all these white male singers - it's a classic mistake," says Andy Summers. "The singers all want the solo career - they should go and do a solo album then go back to the power base where the real chemistry and magic is, because you'll never get that chemistry and magic again. It was the sound of the three

of us - that's what made it, and it's never been as good since. Look at the tour - we had an incredible turnout all across the world, and no one can do that on their own."

Deep down, you know Summers yearns for Sting to feel the same way he does. Like a scorned lover desperately trying to convince an ex they still have feelings towards them. Yet, there are far too many frayed emotional ties to make another reunion a possibility. And it would be pointless. Not only did the experiment fail, twice, but Sting is entirely his own man now, to

his immense credit - which takes us back to why he wouldn't want The Police back together.

"I think there is a freedom in being a solo artist," he says.

"It's not a power

thing, at all - it's just about producing exactly the brand and style of music that feels right for you.

"Music, in every form, is a collaborative process, but never more so in a band, where you have to consider other people almost more than you do yourself," he says. "To have total creative freedom is, for me, the ultimate thrill of being a solo artist."

So while some have speculated that Sting's ego was the thing that broke up the band, they should perhaps note that it's a character trait that no longer seems to be a major factor in

Sting's music has crossed multiple genres - rock, pop, folk, reggae and new wave

his life. The songwriter, in 2021, is, ultimately, a man at peace. He is reflective and undoubtedly driven by creative satisfaction rather than anything cloaked in industry awards or money.

“It’s great fun to have a hit record, it really is, but it’s not why I make records,” he says. “It’s easy to get swept along in the excitement of the charts – a lot more so in the 1980s than it is today – but I make records out of love and curiosity, even if it’s always nice to have something on the radio.”

FOR SOMEONE WHO THIS YEAR celebrates five decades of song writing, and whose music has crossed multiple genres – rock, pop, folk, reggae and new wave being in particular abundance – Sting’s influences continue to harness breadth and bravery.

“When I make a record I want to go on a journey,” he says. “I need to learn as much about music as the listener – that’s really important to me. It’s been a long time since I went into a project wanting to play it safe,” he continues.

Sting is a man of culture and influence that stretches way beyond the sound that emanates from a speaker. Long before The Police signed their first record deal with A&M in 1977, the musician’s pursuit of experience



Every Breath You Take ... Stewart Copeland, Sting and Andy Summers sold over 75 million records as The Police

saw him working on building sites, in offices and even as a school teacher.

From early days earning his stripes around the Polish clubs of his native Wallsend on North Tyneside, where watching bands live could mean dodging punch-ups and the opposite sex in equal measure, Sting admits he struggles with the trend of modern era music entertainment where ‘musicians’ are cherry-picked on reality shows. In a matter of weeks they are transformed to global superstars, and that’s problematic, he says.

“I feel the reason a lot of them crash and burn has much to do with the way that exposure comes about in the first place. You can ride the wave for a while, but so many of those careers are built on loose foundations, on being fast-tracked to the top.”

If there was someone who could shadow new entrants into the industry, it would be Sting, yet his time is



In 1985 Sting embarked on a solo career, going on to release a string of highly successful albums

best spent elsewhere these days. He remains a fierce devotee to philanthropic causes, with involvement with Friends of the Earth, Amnesty International, victims of the September 11 attacks, plus humanitarian projects in Brazil and Tibet. And in June he launched his My Songs tour. In his spare time he's even making efforts to listen to his own music.

"I do that from time to time, it's true," he reveals. "It's much nicer now there is a vinyl revival and we can all share in this incredible medium together. I had the great privilege of putting a record on the other day - you know, taking it out of the sleeve, putting it on the turntable and lowering a needle onto it and hearing that lovely noise before the music starts. It's a fantastic ritual that I actually miss so much that I'm going to go back to that - I'm going to go back to vinyl!"

WHETHER STING'S regression ends there, we will have to wait and see. In recent years there are hints of a rebelliousness in collaborations that imply he's not willing to simply fade away; and in fairness, he never has. From allowing US rapper Puff Daddy to sample his music, to making an entire album with reggae musician Shaggy in 2018, to performing with artists as diverse as Eric Clapton,

Sam Moore and Julio Iglesias - it's all proof of a man still enthralled and enchanted with music - and the world around him, in all its forms.

"I am a citizen of the world - I vote, I pay tax, I'm a dad, I'm a husband," he says. "And this world isn't any madder now than it was before; it's just that in the past it was presented to us then gone... people didn't pore over it on social media for hours and hours. The important thing is we fill our lungs and keep breathing it in."

Every time Sting speaks his mind it is with bruising honesty. These days everything he favours is a long way from those rebellious post-punk roots - countless musicians half his age have long since given up on discovering something new about themselves, their music and the spaces around us.

For Sting, the search goes on. **R**

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Robin Bailey had a memorial tattoo of her now deceased husband, Sean Pickwell (left)



TRIBUTE

In The Name Of **LOVE & LOSS**

Memorial tattoos are providing comfort to the grieving

BY *Cath Johnsen*



Shortly before Robin Bailey lost her husband to liver cancer in 2019, she decided to have his heartbeat rhythm, which had been captured from an ECG, tattooed on her arm.

“I’m really proud of it, it’s something that

READER'S DIGEST

means a lot to me," the radio host from Queensland says. "I'll often find that when I'm having a bad day or I'm struggling, which is still a fair bit, I'll rub it, like in some way I'm hoping that it might just start beating back at me."

Robin's husband, Sean Pickwell, was still alive when she had her tattoo done, and he sat holding her hand during the procedure, supporting her as she in turn supported him through his battle with cancer. Sean's daughter was also there, getting the same heartbeat tattoo in what was an emotional tribute.

"I think for Sean, it made him feel that he would be remembered," the 52 year old says. "He was very ill at that point, and he knew that he

Robin had her husband's heartbeat rhythm tattooed on her arm



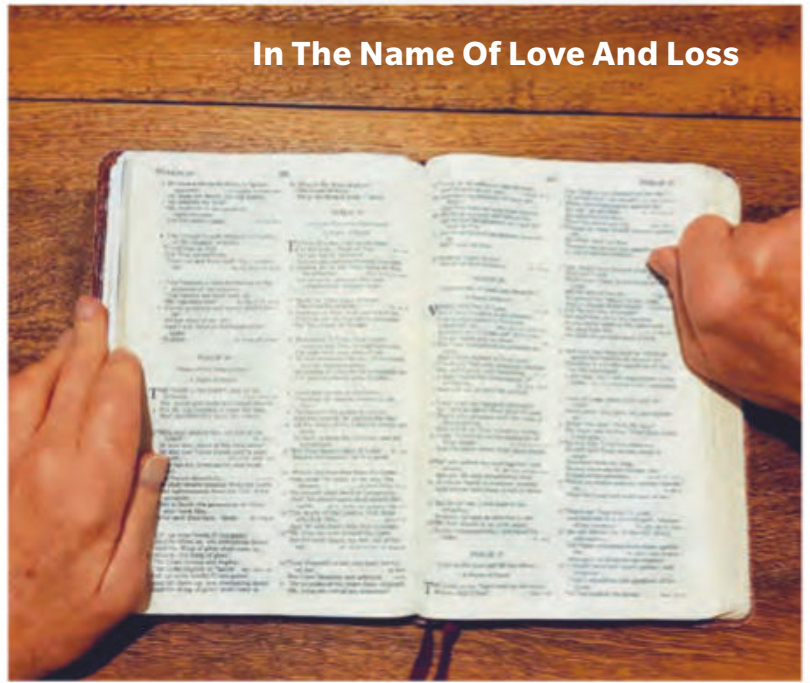
didn't have long left, but in some way, I think we were stamping him on us, and I think he really appreciated it."

The word tattoo comes from the Polynesian term, *tatau*, and in the Māori culture of Indigenous New Zealanders, the ancient practice of tattoo is called *tā moko*. Not unlike erecting a tombstone or carefully preserving someone's ashes, many people are choosing to mark their bodies permanently to honour a friend or family member that has died, using the physically painful procedure of tattoo art to represent their emotional pain.

However, many people don't consider a memorial tattoo until after their loved one has died, sometimes years later, following deep reflection about the words or images that would best symbolise their relationship.

For 25-year-old Hannah Marshall, it was a photo of her father's gnarled and severely arthritic hands on his beloved Bible, opened to read the *Psalms*, that sparked the idea for her memorial tattoo. "Dad was a pastor and he had his own congregation," Hannah explains. "Mum took this photo just a couple of weeks before he passed from kidney cancer. Dad's hands were definitely unique to him and something that I'll remember forever.

"But he absolutely hated tattoos so I don't know what he would think



This photo of her father reading the Bible sparked the idea of a tattoo for Hannah Marshall

was worse: the fact that I got a tattoo or that I got a tattoo of the Bible,” Hannah laughs.

After finding out that her father’s illness was terminal, followed by his passing in 2018, Hannah credits the cancer support service for young people, Canteen, as a lifeline through those tough years. “Canteen was really there for me,” Hannah says.

“I didn’t have any friends at high school going through anything similar, so having that network where I could meet others that understood, and to be able to access the Canteen services really helped.”

Canteen counsellor and national clinical adviser, Claire Malengret, says there is a growing body of research that suggests that people get memorial tattoos for two main reasons: to honour and remember someone, and to help in their own

experience of grief and loss. “When our young people at Canteen get tattoos, they want to make that permanent mark that lasts forever, ensuring that their loved one is never forgotten,” Claire explains.

“It’s a powerful expression of the continuing relationship they have with that person who has died.”

Memorial tattoos provide a prompt for the bereaved to talk about their deceased friend or family member. For this reason, many people choose to have their memorial tattoos on their arms and feet, where it’s visible for other people to see, and prompt a dialogue about the deceased.

“You’ll find that when people are telling stories about their loved one, they often touch their tattoos, so I think it’s deliberately visible so that they can keep telling that story,” adds Claire.

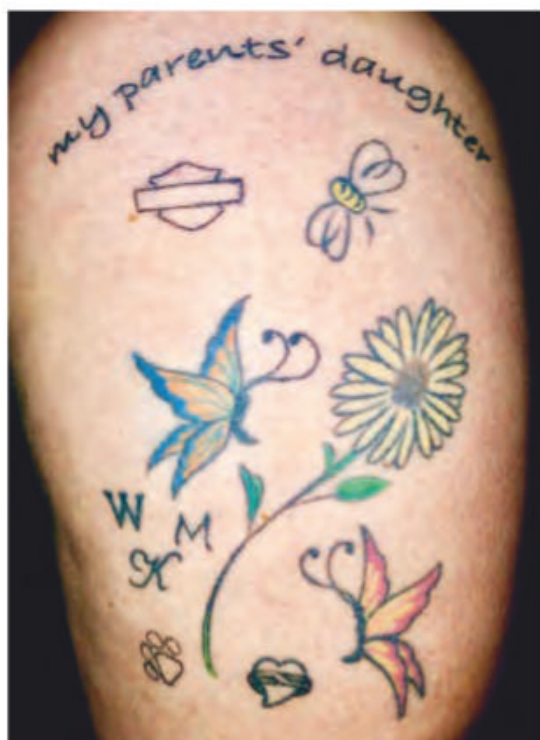
PHOTOS: COURTESY (LEFT) ROBIN BAILEY; (RIGHT) HANNAH MARSHALL

For some, the idea of a memorial tattoo can appeal many years later as a tribute. For Ryan Jones, of Derby in the UK, his memorial tattoo – the date his grandfather passed away in Roman numerals on his right forearm – helps him to remember his grandfather’s legacy.

“I chose this particular idea as my granddad died when I was 13 years old,” says Ryan. Despite the pair being very close, in the years following his grandfather’s death Ryan, now 21, was overwhelmed by guilt that he didn’t think enough about him.

“I only have good memories of him and wanted something to really remind me of his presence and impact on my life – a tattoo is a great permanent reminder about what a legend he was to me.”

Ryan has plans to get another tattoo in his grandfather’s honour, this time a half-sleeve on his forearm. As his grandfather loved painting boats in watercolour, Ryan would like to get a tattoo of one of the boats he painted, and also add some nautical-themed objects, such as a compass and a sailor’s knot. “When it comes to tattoos, I am not a fan of getting any without meaning,” he says. “When I came up with the idea to honour my grandfather with a permanent piece of art on my skin, I could not pass up the opportunity. I now plan to honour all my family members in this way.”



Deborah Davidson’s butterfly tattoo remembers her two infant children

Using the human body as a canvas is not a new concept. Deborah Davidson, 68, a sociologist from York University in Toronto, Canada, says tattooing is one of the most ancient and persistent forms of body modification. She says that the earliest archaeological evidence goes back over 5000 years, and artefacts that were probably used in tattooing go back over 10,000 years. In 1000 BCE, tattooing was found virtually everywhere.

In more recent times, the tattoo has often been associated with subgroups, such as non-conforming punks or anarchy-loving bikies, but Deborah says that tattooing has never been limited by its relationship to deviance or subcultures.

“It’s become far more widely accepted as a social phenomenon,

as a mark on your body for various reasons,” she says. “A lot of people who have memorial tattoos said they would never have thought of getting a tattoo before and many only have memorial tattoos.”

Deborah is a perfect example of this. Admitting that she had never thought of getting a tattoo herself, she had a change of heart in her mid-50s when she decided to have two butterflies etched into her skin in remembrance of two infants she had lost decades earlier.

“I had two babies many years ago,” she says. “They were born and died shortly after birth and their loss, their lives and my loss of them was never acknowledged at the time.

“After I saw memorial tattoos on some lovely people, I got some of my own and then of course, tattoos are like potato chips, you can’t just have one, so I got more.”

Now, Deborah has numerous tattoos to acknowledge her family members, both living and non-living, and has written a book called *The Tattoo Project*, a print version of her website, which is a collective community

effort to create a digital archive of crowd-sourced memorial tattoos and their accompanying stories.

One thing that stands out from Deborah’s collection of stories is that for many people, memorial tattoos not only mark their sorrows, but remind them of joyful times.

“Virtually all the time when I speak to people about their memorial tattoos they smile,” Deborah says. “You can ask about the death and they’ll tell you, but they also want to speak about the life that existed.”

At Zealand Tattoo in Queenstown, manager Sam Tan says they have around six to eight people each month booking in for a memorial tattoo. Common designs include names, portraits and Māori symbols to represent the person that has passed on. “In rare cases, we have people asking for the ash to be mixed into the ink,” Sam says. “They need to be aware of the risk of contamination in the ink, but we have found it to be quite safe. The feeling they get from it is amazing, it’s quite touching.”

It’s been said that grief is a souvenir of love. It seems the tattoo has also become a souvenir of both love and loss. **R**



It’s Finally A Girl

A Michigan couple, whose large family attracted attention by growing to include 14 sons, has welcomed their first daughter – nearly three decades after the birth of their first child. AP

LIFE'S LIKE THAT

Seeing the Funny Side



If Tooth Be Told

My dentist, looking at my dental X-ray, muttered, "Where is your wisdom tooth, man? I can't see it here!" He continued to look at the X-ray film and stopped at a specific shaded area and said, "Here we go. It is hidden down here!"

My wife, who was also waiting in the room, commented, "I am not surprised at all, doctor. His wisdom is not immediately obvious most of the time, to be fair!"

SUBMITTED BY PAUL JOSEPH RICHARD

Stuffing His Face

My husband was most displeased with the jar of pimiento-stuffed green olives he had recently bought. "They're just not vinegary," he said.

"They were vinegary enough when I ate them," said our youngest son.

"When did you eat them?" I asked.

"This morning. I sucked all the red things out and put the olives back in the jar."

SUBMITTED BY LINDA BENNETT

Out Of Shape

Why did I have to learn what a rhombus is? Literally nothing is rhombus shaped.

MARIE FAUSTIN, COMEDIAN

Toilet Training

My friend George adopted an adorable but stubborn terrier puppy who refused to be housebroken. Frustrated, George signed them both up for expensive obedience classes.

Recently, I saw man and pup out for a walk and asked how the training was going.

“Well,” George said, “I don’t poop in the house anymore.”

SUBMITTED BY JANE HAMILTON O’FALLON



TRYING HIS LUCK

Dubious claims my toddler made this week:

- He invented the thumbs-up.
- Only ‘some’ lizards can read.
- He forgot how to eat carrots.
- His daycare allows swords.

@HENPECKEDHAL



THE GREAT TWEET OFF: PETTY REVENGE EDITION

Cross with your partner? The ‘adults’ of Twitter have some ideas how to get even with the one you love.

I know it sounds mean, but when I’m angry at my wife and want to lash out, I open a bottle of some condiment when there’s already one open. @THEBOYDP

I now charge my wife for finding things for her that are in plain sight. @FATHERWITHTWINS

My husband made me angry so for dinner I’m making him kale and tofu salad. @SWEETMOMISSA

Thinking about making an audio recording of me eating cereal and clanking my spoon on the bowl just to send to my wife when we are in a fight. @SIMONCHOLLOND

The next time my linguist boyfriend annoys me, I’m just gonna say ‘irregardless’ and see what he does. @AUBVIOUSLYNOT



I Am The
FOOD ON YOUR PLATE



Cinnamon

Warm, woody and a little bit floral

BY *Diane Godley*

How do you make the ordinary extraordinary? Add a little sprinkle of me, that's how. I, warm, aromatic cinnamon, can turn the humdrum into the striking, boring into exotic. From stewed apples and porridge to rich Middle Eastern cuisine, sweet buns and desserts, I put the razzamatazz into your food. So, it's hardly surprising that I was highly prized among ancient nations where I was regarded a gift worthy of kings and gods.

With my place of birth kept top secret by those who plied my trade, I was something of a mystery to the ancients. To fill the void of my origins, elaborate stories were invented. Today, one would describe the Ancient Greek historian Herodotus's (c. 484-425 BCE) account of me as pure fiction when he wrote that I was guarded by winged serpents. Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BCE) was also not afraid to use poetic licence. He suggested I came from Arabia where

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

giant 'cinnamon birds' collected sticks from cinnamon trees to build their nests, which were plundered by those who worked for the spice merchants. Laughable, in retrospect.

Hundreds of years later, Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder tried to make his people see this foolishness for what it was, stating the fanciful tale was made up by the spice traders so they could charge more for their highly desirable commodity. Regardless, the vivid image of the cinnamon bird had taken hold and was believed in some parts for another thousand years.

What those men from antiquity did get right was that I do come from a tree. In fact, I am the inner bark from evergreen aromatic trees known as *Cinnamomum*. I am native to both Sri Lanka (*Cinnamomum verum*), often referred to as Ceylon cinnamon, and China (*Cinnamomum cassia*), and have close cousins in Vietnam, Indonesia and other hot, humid southeast Asian countries.

You may hear people get a bit hoity toity when talking about me behind my back. Some suggest that Ceylon cinnamon is the only real cinnamon because it is more delicate in flavour and texture. The bark of my cassia family may be tough, but it gives off a sweet, perfumed aroma and is the preferred spice of bakers.

The difference between my Ceylon and cassia families can clearly be seen in the quills – if you know what you're looking for. To make Ceylon quills, my bark is carefully peeled from cut branches and rolled by 'cinnamon peelers' into metre-long quills till they're 1 cm in diameter. Then they are cut into manageable 8 cm lengths. The quills are tan in colour and made up of many paper-thin, concentric layers of bark.

To make cassia cinnamon, the tree is coppiced, or cut to ground level, and the outer layer of bark removed to get to the aromatic inner layers, which are loosened and removed from the tree. After drying, any large chips of bark are ground into powder. My small, upper branches produce metre-long strips that, during the drying process, curl inwards like a scroll, becoming cassia quills. The bark is about 3 mm thick and hard – so don't try putting it in your coffee grinder – and a deep shade of reddish brown.

It is very difficult to distinguish between the two once ground, especially as some of the commercially sold ground cinnamon is a combination of the two. However, 70 per cent of me comes from two countries: China and Indonesia, so you are more likely to be sprinkling cassia over your porridge than Ceylon.

**HIGHLY PRIZED
AMONG ANCIENT
NATIONS, I WAS
REGARDED A GIFT
WORTHY OF KINGS
AND GODS**

READER'S DIGEST

Today, I am used to add flavour to a wide variety of food and drinks. I complement fruit such as apples and pears, am a staple ingredient in savoury dishes from the Middle East, India and Malaysia, used in baking to create strudels and other sweet treats, and sprinkled in drinks, such as chai tea and gluwein (mulled wine).

In previous times, however, I was used for an assortment of other purposes. To preserve their dead, Ancient Egyptians added me to the embalming ointment during mummification. I was also added to kyphi, an incense which the Egyptians would burn on religious occasions and for medicinal purposes. Centuries later, but before refrigeration, I was used in preserving meat, possibly because of my antibacterial properties or because

my scent helped mask the stench of decaying flesh.

But let's not end on such a rotten note. Some claim my nutritional attributes can support blood sugar management in people with diabetes and my prebiotic properties improve gut health. I have long been used in Chinese herbal medicine and in Ayurvedic medicine to treat flatulence and relieve digestive discomfort. I contain antioxidants with anti-inflammatory effects, and am a good source of fibre – just two teaspoons provide 2.5 grams of fibre, that's equivalent to half a cup of raw cabbage.

Freshness maximises my health benefits. When stored in an airtight container in a dark place, I will last for about a year when whole, but will start to lose flavour after a few months when ground. So keep me fresh! **R**

CHAI TEA

- In a saucepan place: 1 cinnamon quill; 2 cm sliced fresh ginger; 1 tsp black peppercorns; 1 whole star anise; 1 tsp cardamom pods; 1 vanilla pod; 5 whole cloves; and 3 cups of water. Bring to boil, then simmer for 5 minutes (longer if you want to develop the flavours further).
- Take saucepan off the heat and add ¼ cup of black tea leaves. Let it steep for 5 minutes.



- Filter liquid through a sieve and return to saucepan with ½ cup of milk. Gently heat.
- Pour into cups and add honey to taste.



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ART OF LIVING

HOW TO
Find
Peace

ANYTIME,
ANYPLACE

Meditation is simpler than it sounds. Follow these directions from a sceptic who tried and liked it

BY *Dan Harris and Jeffrey Warren*
WITH *Carlye Adler*

FROM THE BOOK **MEDITATION FOR FIDGETY SKEPTICS**

PHOTO: ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS



If you had told me as recently as a few years ago that I would someday become a travelling proponent for meditation, I would have coughed my beer up through my nose.

In 2004, I had a panic attack at work. Unfortunately for me, that meant I was in front of millions of people, delivering the news, live, on the US television show *Good Morning America*. In the wake of my nationally televised freak-out, I learned that I had undiagnosed depression. For months, I'd been having trouble getting out of bed in the morning and felt as if I had a permanent low-grade fever.

The panic attack ultimately led me to embrace a practice I had always dismissed as ridiculous. For most of my life, to the extent that I'd ever even considered meditation, I ranked it right alongside aura readings and new age music.

Further, I figured my racing type-A mind was way too busy to ever be able to commune with the cosmos. And anyway, if I got too happy, it would probably render me completely ineffective at my hypercompetitive job.

Two things changed my mind. The first was the science. In recent years, there

has been an explosion of research into meditation, which has been shown to reduce blood pressure, boost recovery after your body releases the stress hormone cortisol, strengthen the immune system, slow age-related atrophy of the brain, and mitigate the symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Studies also show that meditation can reduce violence in prisons, increase productivity in the



workplace, and improve both the behaviour and the grades of school-children.

Things really get interesting when you look at the neuroscience. In recent years, researchers have been peering into the heads of meditators, and they have found that the practice can rewire key parts of the brain involved with self-awareness, compassion and resilience. For example, one study from the *Harvard Gazette* found that just eight weeks of meditation resulted in measurable decreases in grey matter density in the area of the brain associated with stress.

The second thing that changed my mind about meditation is that it does not necessarily entail a lot of the 'weird' stuff I feared it might. Contrary to popular belief, meditation does not have to involve folding yourself into a pretzel, joining a group, or wearing special outfits. The word meditation is a little bit like the word sports; there are hundreds of varieties. The type of meditation discussed here is called mindfulness meditation, which is derived from Buddhism but does not require adopting a belief system or declaring oneself to be a Buddhist.

I began my practise slowly, with just five to ten minutes a day, which is what I recommend that everyone aim for at the start. Frankly, if you find time for even one minute a day, you can count that as a win.

Meditation does get easier the longer you keep at it, but even after doing it for years, I get lost all the time. Here's a random sample of my mental chatter during a typical session:

In. Out.

Man, I am feeling antsy.

Words that always make me giggle: ointment, pianist.

Wait, what? Come on, man. Back to the breath.

In. Out.

Likes: baked goods.

Dislikes: fedoras, dream sequences, that part in techno songs where the French accordion kicks in.

Dude. Come. On.

In. Out.

In.

Alternative jobs: papal nuncio, interpretive dancer, working double time on the seduction line ...

You get the idea.

To give you a sense of exactly how simple it is, here are the three-step instructions for beginning meditation.

1 Sit comfortably

It's best to have your spine reasonably straight, which may help prevent an involuntary nap. If you want to sit cross-legged on the floor, go for it. If not, just sit in a chair, as I do. You can close your eyes or, if you prefer, leave them open and adjust your gaze to a neutral point on the ground.

2 **Bring your full attention to the feeling of your breath coming in and out**

Pick a spot where it's most prominent: your chest, your belly or your nostrils. You're not thinking about your breath; you're just feeling the physical sensations. To help maintain focus, make a quiet mental note on each in breath and out breath, like 'in' and 'out.'

3 **Every time you catch yourself wandering, escort your attention back to the breath**

This third step is the key. As soon as you try to focus on your breath, you'll start having all sorts of random thoughts, such as:

What's for lunch?

Do I need a haircut?

What was Casper the Friendly Ghost before he died?

This is totally normal. The whole game is to notice when you're distracted and begin again. And again. And again.

It is like a biceps curl for the brain. It is also a radical act: you're breaking a lifetime's habit of walking around in a fog of rumination and projection, and instead focusing on what's happening right now.

People assume they can never meditate because they can't stop thinking. I cannot say this enough: the goal is not to clear your mind but to focus your mind – for a few nano-seconds at a time – and whenever

WHEN YOU'RE READY TO TAKE IT FURTHER

• **Count your breaths**

from one to ten, and then start over. Breathe in, one, then out. Breathe in, two, then out, and so on.

• **Recite a short phrase**

Some people like to do this to help them stay focused. "Just this breath" is a good one to try. It reminds us not to start anticipating the next breath, or to think about the last one, or to imagine in any of the

innumerable ways the mind can cook up that anything else is supposed to be happening – "just this breath".

• **Recruit an image**

Sometimes I imagine the in breath as a gentle wave moving up the beach, *pshhhh*, and on the out breath, the wave recedes, *ssssssh*. Back and forth. Find a mental image that works for you.

• **Give guided audio meditations a shot**

Some people wrongly assume that guided meditations are a form of training wheels – or cheating. I disagree. Instructions are quickly forgotten, so having someone in your ear can be really helpful. My advice is to experiment with both audio and solo meditations and see what works best for you.

How To Find Peace Anytime, Anyplace

you become distracted, just start again. Getting lost and starting over is not failing at meditation. It is succeeding.

I have been meditating for eight years, and I am still plenty ambitious. However, these days I'm not as sweaty, agitated and unpleasant about it as I used to be. Meditation has helped me sort out my useless rumination from what I call constructive anguish.

I have learned that the less enchanted you are by the voice in your head, the more you can make room for entirely new thoughts and feelings to emerge. It has enabled me to take even more delight in my work, my wife and our son, Alexander, who suffuses me with warmth whether he's offering me a chicken nugget or wiping macerated muffin on my sleeve.

I am less in thrall to my desires and aversions, which has given

me a wider perspective and, at times, a taste of a deep, ineffable unclenching.

In sum, meditation empowers you to tap into what lies beneath or beyond the ego. Call it creativity. Call it your innate wisdom. Some people call it your heart. *Ew.* **R**

FROM THE BOOK
*MEDITATION FOR FIDGETY
SKEPTICS* BY DAN HARRIS
AND JEFF WARREN WITH
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In Hot Water Over A Cold Treat

It may have been record-breaking heat, but desire for ice cream still isn't classed as an emergency, according to the Canadian Mounties. A 34-year-old man was charged with dangerous operation of an aircraft after illegally landing his bright red helicopter in a high school carpark in the centre of a small town so his passenger could buy an ice cream cake from a fast-food shop known for its frozen treats. Temperatures in Saskatchewan were reaching up to 38°C.

NEWSER



An aerial photograph of a vast, lush green field. A blue line, possibly a path or a boundary, winds across the field. Several people are scattered along this line, some appearing to be walking or standing. The overall scene is bright and vibrant, suggesting a sunny day in a park or a large open space.

SEE THE WORLD...

Turn the page »

...DIFFERENTLY





TO KEEP THEIR FEET DRY, these farmhands float in large boat-like bowls near Huai'an, China, to harvest 'water caltrop' – or in the local lingo, *lingjiao*. This method has proven the best way to pick the 'water chestnuts', which are the fruit of a type of aquatic plant that grows in slow-moving marshes, ponds or other shallow waters. A sweet white seed is found in a pink shell-like pod when freshly picked. As the pod dries, it darkens and starts to resemble a bat or a horned bull's head. Its sweet flavour makes these water fruit popular snacks, and a welcome ingredient in casseroles – adding a rich autumn profile to a well-prepared meal.

PHOTOS: ZHOU CHANGGUO/VCG
VIA GETTY IMAGES; (THIS PAGE) HE
JINGHUA/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES

READER'S DIGEST

SWEPT OUT TO SEA





DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

*A scuba dive on a wild, starless night
quickly descends into a fight to stay alive*

BY *Diane Godley*

ILLUSTRATION BY *Marcelo Baez*

When the alarm woke Oksana Samkova on January 12 this year, she rolled over and looked out her bedroom window to check on the weather. That evening she was heading out on a night dive at Port Noarlunga in the St Vincent Gulf, 30 kilometres south of Adelaide, as part of her advanced scuba diving course. Instead of the calm, sunny day she had hoped for, what she saw was grey, blustery weather – with the wind so strong it was sending her outdoor furniture flying.



Oksana in her diving gear. Everything was black except for the fins

A little panicked, Ukrainian-born Oksana called the diving company to find out if the night dive had been called off. But they assured her that the weather would settle down. The dive would go ahead.

That evening at sunset, around 8.30pm, the group of eight divers and two instructors gathered at the Port Noarlunga carpark for the pre-dive briefing. It was here where they would be paired up into ‘buddies’, go through their signals and make sure everyone had all their equipment.

The wind had not died down, and the ocean was wild and choppy. It was high tide, and the reef that runs parallel to the shore at the end of the 300-metre long jetty – where the group was to dive – was being pounded by waves. On a normal mid-summer’s evening, there would be lots of people about; fishing off the jetty and families eating dinner

on the beach. Tonight, the divers were all alone.

The conditions made Oksana nervous, her skin tingling with apprehension, and her gut feeling told her not to go ahead. Realising she only had one torch instead of the required two for a night dive, Oksana spoke to the instructors, who assured her she would be fine as her buddy had two.

Aware that she was nervous, they assured her that once they had sub-

merged, away from the choppy surface, the water below would be calm.

OKSANA MOVED TO AUSTRALIA with her two sons five years ago to live her dream, and scuba diving was part of that dream. So she put on her new diving gear – a black 7 mm wetsuit to keep out the cold South Australian water, a black buoyancy control device (BCD) with integrated weight pockets, and a regulator and oxygen tank. She strapped the torch to her leg. She'd only dived a few times in her new equipment, and was still modifying the amount of weight she needed to descend.

On a previous dive, on a calm, sunny day, her instructor thought she was

too heavy in the water and told her to remove some of the weights from the pockets of her BCD.

Tonight, before grabbing her snorkel, mask and fins, and walking to the end of the jetty, Oksana did something she'd never done before a dive. She took a selfie. *If something happens to me, this will be my last photo*, she thought. Then she did what any sane person would do and dismissed her thoughts as rubbish.

IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO ME, THIS WILL BE MY LAST PHOTO, SHE THOUGHT, THEN INSTANTLY DISMISSED IT

With the wind still gusting, the divers walked to the end of the jetty to the steps, where they were to descend by jumping into the churning black water below. Even with all her gear weighing her down, the wind nearly blew her off the jetty. At this point, Oksana realised with some alarm that she had left her delayed surface marker buoy (DSMB) in the car – a brightly coloured inflatable tube that alerts rescuers to your position.

By the time they reached the end of the jetty, it was quite dark. *I don't like this*, Oksana said to herself. Something was telling her not to jump. But seeing most of the group in the water, she pushed on. A few divers were still on the jetty, and Oksana asked them

READER'S DIGEST

to wait until she was in the water before they jumped in. She didn't want to be last.

With mask and fins on, regulator in her mouth, and a little air in her BCD, she descended the steps. *I don't want to do this*, she thought. *But I have to*. The group in the water was waiting for her to jump. So, she closed her eyes and dropped into the sea.

When the whole group was in the water, they gave the 'OK' signal and each diver started releasing the air from their BCD to descend. Usually they descended vertically, feet first, but Oksana was having trouble. She didn't have enough weight in the pockets of her BCD, and she couldn't

rip current was pulling her away from the jetty – and the group of divers below the surface. She tried descending once more, but again, she couldn't get below the surface. Adrenaline was coursing through her veins, making her tremble. Oksana was in full panic mode now and hyperventilating. The rip current was pulling her northwards, parallel to the shore.

STILL STRUGGLING to descend and escape the rip current, Oksana started inhaling sea water. Gasping for air, she told herself not to panic, all the while coughing up water.

Each time she bobbed back up to the surface after another failed

UNABLE TO DESCEND OR SWIM OUT OF THE RIP, SHE WAS STEADILY CARRIED AROUND THE HEADLAND

get through the tumultuous surface water. Again and again, she tried to descend, only to find herself bobbing around on the surface. Each time she resurfaced, she was more out of breath and her heart was beating increasingly faster.

Cloud obscured any moonlight, and the water was jet black. The only light came from the jetty. She reached for her little torch; its light was just strong enough to see fish and to identify herself underwater. Then she realised a

attempt to descend, she noticed that as well as being pulled northwards, she was being propelled towards the shore.

With no way to get back to the jetty, Oksana made a conscious decision to head to shore. She could see the shoreline and a little further ahead, towards the end of the beach, the headland soaring above her.

Given the foul weather, no one was on the shore or jetty to see the faint light flashing on the surface of the



This is a caption this is a caption this is a caption this is a caption

Port Noarlunga Reef runs parallel to the coast and is a popular spot for scuba divers. On calm days, the 300-metre-long jetty provides easy access to underwater adventures

water. “I was about half a kilometre away from the jetty,” recalls Oksana. “I was so scared.” Unable to descend, and loaded up with all the heavy diving gear, she was unable to swim out of the rip and was steadily being carried around the headland.

At first, she shone her torch towards the jetty where her group was underwater. However, once she was too far away, she started pointing it towards the beach, hoping with all her heart that someone was out there on this wild night and might see a light. She had no idea how long she’d been in the water.

With the current still in full swing, she was carried past the headland towards the next beach. Oksana was

now about a kilometre-and-a-half from the jetty. To save the little air left in her tank, she abandoned any more attempts to descend and let the rip take her. *I’ll get out at Christies Beach*, she thought. With her faint torch shining towards the shore, she hoped her dive group was looking for her.

AS AN EMERGENCY OPERATING nurse, Oksana is routinely exposed to other people’s trauma. She also teaches frontline workers how to overcome secondary trauma. Without even realising it, that night, all alone in a dark sea, she had begun to put the strategies she teaches into practice.

“I was in survival mode,” she says.

"I was thinking strategically and practically."

But once Oksana made it around the headland, the swell was even bigger. Two-metre waves reared up and crashed over her, pummelling her like a boxing bag. Swallowing water, coughing and spluttering, she was terrified and totally exhausted.

Then the rip current changed tack and was not only pulling her northwards, but also further out to sea.

When Oksana realised her oxygen tank was close to empty, to preserve the remaining air for an 'emergency', she took the regulator out of her mouth and put in the snorkel, then inflated her BCD to the max to keep her afloat. With a black wetsuit and black

Beach, five kilometres from where she started.

She pushed the on/off button and, fortuitously, it came back to life. To preserve the battery, she turned it on to the lowest setting, which meant it gave off only the faintest of light.

Oksana didn't know how long the torch would last. She'd practically run out of air, and she was nowhere near the beach. Any fight she had left was also draining away.

Then her thoughts turned to her two sons, aged 15 and 12. She rallied the last of her strength to keep going. All she wanted to do was survive and see her two boys.

Gasping for air, she told herself to breathe steadily and shone her faint

SHE HEARD A BEEPING NOISE AND REALISED HER TORCH HAD STOPPED WORKING

BCD, the only chance Oksana had of being found on that very dark starless night was from her faint torchlight.

Suddenly she heard a beeping noise. She quickly realised her torch had stopped working. Panicking, she thought, *This can't be happening.*

"YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME!" she screamed at the torch, the only thing that could help her get spotted.

Oksana was now about one kilometre from the shore at O'Sullivan

light towards shore. The torch failed again. Panicked, Oksana pressed the button over and over until the faint light reappeared.

DRIFTING FURTHER OUT TO SEA, Oksana saw a blue flashing light on the shore. She had no idea what was happening there, but she desperately hoped it was for her.

Then she saw a light on the water. *Maybe they are coming for me,* she

Swept Out To Sea



Oksana was in hospital for two days where she received oxygen therapy for her weakened lungs

thought. Frantically she waved the faint torch light.

Suddenly, a bright light appeared in the water. Turning her head, she saw a boat. She had been found. She would get to see her kids again.

Volunteers with the South Australian Sea Rescue Squadron threw Oksana a life ring, which she held on to with all her remaining strength, and they pulled her on board. "It was the happiest moment of my life," she says.

The volunteers took her heavy gear off in the boat, and helped her ashore. "I could hardly walk. I was coughing and couldn't breathe," she says.

Then came a round of concerned questions. "They wanted to know how long I'd been in the water," she recalls.

"I asked what time it was, and they said almost midnight. I'd been in the water for over three hours."

She learnt later that when her dive group realised she was missing, they searched below the water, the jetty, and the carpark. When they couldn't find her, they rang emergency services.

A police officer went to the headland and, looking out to sea, saw a faint light being carried to the next beach and radioed in the new information.

The paramedics took Oksana to hospital where

an X-ray revealed that her lungs were close to collapsing because of all the water she'd swallowed. The reality of her ordeal really only hit her when she was reunited with her sons. "I thought I may never see them again," says the single mum.

One month after her near-death experience, Oksana got back in the water. "I wanted to dive again. I knew if I didn't do it soon, I never would," she says.

"I dive with more weight on me now - and the weather needs to be perfect." **R**

Oksana Samkova is a registered nurse and expert in vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue in frontline workers and first responders. www.oksanasamkova.com.

LAUGHTER

The Best Medicine



High Roller

A frog appears in front of Patricia Whack, a bank teller, and asks: “Ms Whack, I’d like to obtain a bank loan, on consideration of this blue marble elephant as collateral.”

Patricia goes to her manager, who asks to see this talking frog in person. As it turns out, his name is Kermit Jagger, and he is the son of Mick Jagger.

The manager promptly nods in approval, and Patricia cannot believe what she is witnessing.

So she whispers in his ear, “Sir, are you sure about this? I mean, not considering the fact that he’s a frog, his collateral is a blue marble elephant. I mean, what the heck is a blue marble elephant?”

The bank manager replies: “It’s a knick-knack, Patti Whack. Give the frog a loan. His old man’s a Rolling Stone.”

Upjoke.com

Sounds Good

Actors who could cure my lisp? I’m pretty sure

Anne Hathaway but I’m going to ask Colin Firth. **OLAF FALAFEL, COMEDIAN**

Clocked Out

A man’s grandfather clock stopped working. He called a repair shop to get it fixed, but they wanted \$50 to come and collect it.

“I’ll bring it to you,” he said. So he strapped the clock to his back and started walking down the big hill he lived on. Halfway down, he slipped, and slid down the hill into the town just as a lady was crossing the street.

He barrelled straight into her and knocked her over.

Dazed, disgruntled, and still on the ground, she asked, "Why can't you just wear a wristwatch like everyone else?!"

SUBMITTED BY ROGER REAKOFF

Feline Funny

Mum No. 1: How on earth do you get your sleepyhead son to wake up in the morning?

Mum No. 2: I just put the cat on the bed.

Mum No. 1: How does that help?

Mum No. 2: The dog's already there.

Scout Life Magazine

Crossing The Line

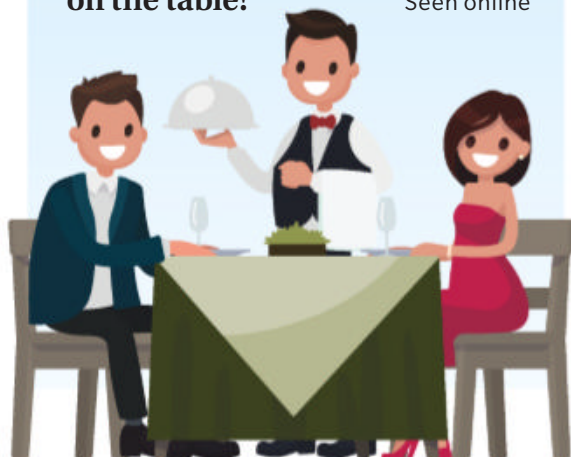
I work as a customs officer and yesterday was my yearly review. It didn't go very well, apparently they think I'm borderline incompetent.

Seen on Twitter

WAIT FOR IT!

People say being a waiter is a bad job, but hey, it puts food on the table!

Seen online



Laughter



BREWING THE DAY

Two neighbours live side by side. One is rich and the other one is poor.

The poor neighbour has a magic lamp. Every morning, he rubs the lamp and a genie comes out and intones, "Ask whatever you want." And the poor man asks for a cup of tea.

The rich neighbour, envious of the magic lamp, offers the poor man his magnificent house and flashy car in exchange for the lamp.

Gleefully, the rich man takes the magic lamp home and rubs it. Out pops the genie, who intones, "Ask whatever you want."

"Can I have an even bigger house and an even better car?" asks the rich man.

"Sorry, sir, I only serve tea and coffee," replies the genie. RD

HUMOUR



This Is The Simple Life?

BY Patricia Pearson

Having lived my whole life in the city, the countryside takes some getting used to. A couple of years ago, my husband and I traded a city duplex for a 19th-century farmhouse, and soon discovered what happens when you run out of milk for your coffee. Either you borrow your neighbour's cows, literally, or you drive 15 kilometres to the 'corner store' over

gravelly, pot-holed roads. Also, it requires sufficient fuel.

In the city we mostly walked or took public transport. If we had to drive, we would fill up at the petrol station at the end of our block. But here, the nearest station is – according to Google Maps – precisely 30.2 kilometres in the opposite direction from the corner store. Either you make a habit of keeping the

ILLUSTRATION: NISHANT CHOKSI

tank filled, or you drink your coffee black.

Meanwhile, the nearest grocery and pet stores are more than half an hour's drive away, so when we once ran out of our usual organic, antibiotic-free, specially-formulated dog food, the only approximate substitute at the corner store turned out to be a can of Spam.

"You can't feed our dog Spam!" my husband spluttered. "Why not just give her a bowl of salt paste?" Instead, having almost run out of petrol, I fed her some eggs, leading to an all-night riot of farting.

Shortly after that, I flew off on a business trip with the car keys in my handbag, accidentally stranding my husband (and dog) for five days. He could not replenish supplies without embarking upon a day-long hike, which was a lesson in maybe buying a second vehicle.

There are, on occasion, taxis available, but I only discovered this out of desperation the following spring, when my favourite team made their championship final at a time when our internet had been knocked out (yet again) by a wind storm. My husband was away with the car, and the nearest bar with TV screens entailed a 40-minute cab ride. My driver, a retired prison guard, wound up getting lost. At least he showed up, unlike the various repair people in our

new rural community who promise to give you an estimate and then drift away like dandelion fluff.

I always used to think that friends and relatives who lived in the countryside were timid when it came to city traffic and feared urban crime. But it turns out the reverse is also true. My son, for instance, is as tough as a cop when he's in the city, but when he first visited our farmhouse, he shrieked helplessly at some leaping grasshoppers.

He was learning what we had already learned: the countryside is where the mice are. And the flies, stoats, coyotes and roving gangs of 70 million ladybirds that show up in your bedroom each spring as if

spawned from the sock drawer.

One evening in the kitchen, my eye was drawn to a black, ten-centimetre-long millipede creeping across the stone floor. It looked like a minion of Satan. Unwilling to touch it, I trapped it beneath a Le Creuset pot and ran upstairs, dinner abandoned. The next day, I drove to the city for a planned weekend away, feeling like the villain in an Edgar Allan Poe story who has walled up their foe and just left them there to die and haunt them.

Another time, pulling in to the driveway with my visiting daughter, I spied a hunched-over black bear in the forest to one side of our property.

WHO KNEW THE VEGETABLE KINGDOM WAS SUCH A SOAP OPERA?

READER'S DIGEST

"Stay in the car," I hissed at Clara, my heart thumping. The bear straightened up and morphed into my husband in his black raincoat, who had been bending over a log pile.

It is not an advantage, in the countryside, to be about as competent as Mr Bean. Gardening ought to be easier, I feel.

In the city, I grew herbs in pots, and that's about it. But I was prepared to adapt when we moved to the countryside, so I bought some vegetable-growing books. Unfortunately, they all seemed to take certain base knowledge for granted, such as how to tell the difference between pH levels in the soil. I'd only ever seen pH on shampoo bottles.

The books baffled me, like trying to learn calculus when you're only seven years old. Once, I overheard neighbours here discussing how to sharpen a chainsaw, and all I could comprehend was their lips moving.

I began watching YouTube videos late into the night, scribbling notes on how to water celery seeds so that they germinate, and why my broccoli seedlings were so spindly that they

kept falling over with a sigh. It turned out there were all sorts of relationship dynamics to sort out between the growing vegetables. Whole lists of statements like: "Potatoes don't get along with cucumbers" whereas "Carrots prefer to grow beside tomatoes." Who knew the vegetable kingdom was such a soap opera?

I managed to produce a grand total of one lettuce, six bird's eye chillies, and ten individual beetroots in my first harvest. Also zucchinis. A lot of them. I can now say with authority that zucchinis are just a ridiculous vegetable. They engage in empire-building all over your available soil and oblige you to spend half the summer rapid-assembling batches of ratatouille before reverting to using the zucchini as a bludgeoning instrument. They don't freeze well. You force your friends to take them away.

All this has made me feel serious respect for my ancestors. They actually managed to feed themselves from the ground without starving to death by winter. That seems like a magical power to me now. So does ordering take-away. **R**



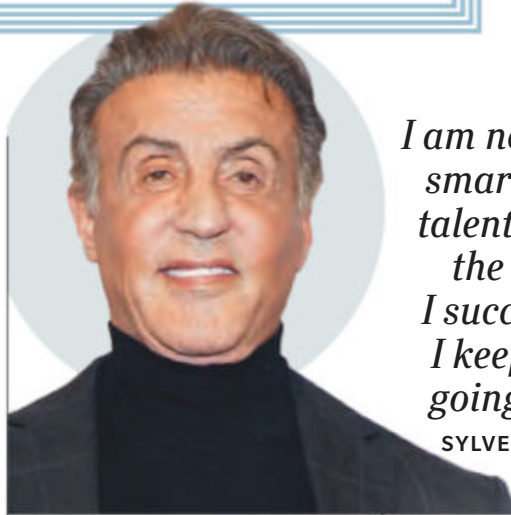
Catfight In The Air

A plane leaving Sudan's capital of Khartoum was forced to land after a stowaway cat attacked the pilot. The Boeing 737 was at cruising altitude about an hour after departure, when the hissing feline passenger appeared in the cockpit and clawed at the terrified pilot. The plane returned to Khartoum after the crew failed to capture it. ATI

QUOTABLE QUOTES

We lift our gazes not to what stands between us but what stands before us. We close the divide because we know to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside. We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another. We seek harm to none and harmony for all.

AMANDA GORMAN,
SPOKEN POET AND ACTIVIST

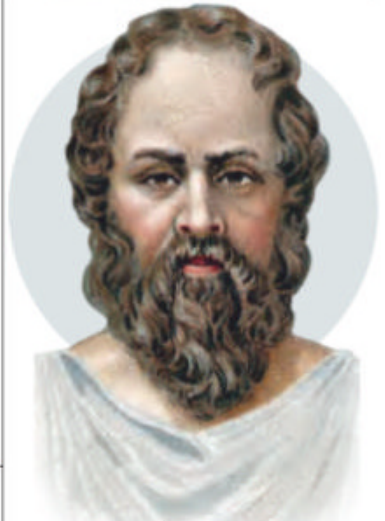


I am not the richest, smartest or most talented person in the world, but I succeed because I keep going and going and going.

SYLVESTER STALLONE,
ACTOR

**REMEMBER,
TODAY IS THE
TOMORROW
YOU WORRIED
ABOUT
YESTERDAY.**

DALE CARNEGIE,
WRITER



If a rich man is proud of his wealth, he should not be praised until it is known how he employs it.

SOCRATES,
GREEK PHILOSOPHER

Listen to your body. I listen to mine and every day it tells me not to do Zumba.

AMY SCHUMER, COMEDIAN



PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

*Small
Steps Can*
**STOP
HARMING
OUR
OCEANS**

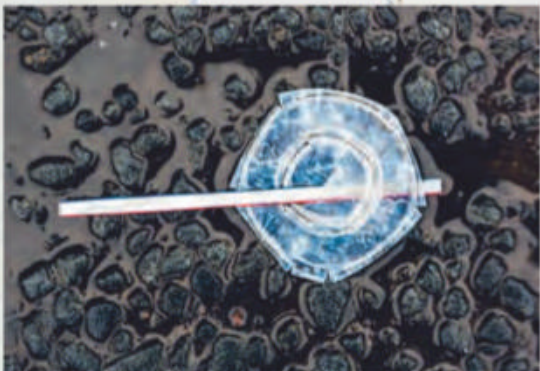
By 2050, by weight more plastic will exist in the ocean than fish. We can help prevent that by changing how we use plastics

BY *Elizabeth Yuko*

Small decisions with a big impact

When we learned about risks to the oceans at school, it usually involved a lesson about a large oil spill that left local wildlife – birds or marine mammals, in particular – in a slick coat of dark oil. And while that is definitely a terrible scenario, most of us won't find ourselves in charge of a massive oil tanker anytime soon.

But we are faced with countless choices every day as consumers, and even small decisions can do major damage to our oceans. From the food we eat, sunscreen we use, clothes we wear to the plastic products we use, we could all probably do a better job of being more mindful of the impact we're having on the oceans.



Single-use plastic straws

We already know that plastic bags and soft drink can rings are bad for the environment and end up in the

ocean. But few people realise that straws are among the top ten items found during beach clean-ups and can cause a lot of harm to seabirds, turtles and other marine creatures, according to Dr Dune Ives, chief executive officer of Lonely Whale, an environmental organisation campaigning to protect the world's oceans from continued damage. "For the vast majority of us, refusing the single-use plastic straw is the easiest and simplest way to take action today to address plastic pollution," she says. "If we don't act now, by the year 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish (by weight)."



Driving too much

From driving our cars to powering our homes and businesses, fossil fuel use has caused a significant increase in carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels in the atmosphere – and is harming the world's oceans. "Increased CO₂

READER'S DIGEST

levels in our ocean makes the water more acidic, and acidic waters make it more difficult for calcifying sea animals to produce the carbonate they need to survive," says marine scientist Guy Harvey. "This includes animals like coral, whose reefs protect the coastline and support billions of dollars of industries," he says. Not only shellfish but plankton, the foundation of the marine food chain, are at risk. The good news is that healthy oceans can actually help reverse climate change. "We can help by reducing energy use and supporting renewable resources," Harvey suggests.



Single-use plastic water bottles

Though it seems like they've been around forever, single-use plastic water bottles are a relatively new phenomenon, entering the market in the 1990s. "Today, 500 billion plastic bottles are used around the globe annually, one million single-use plastic bottles are sold every minute around the world yet only around 30 per cent are recycled," says Ives. Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic

– the source material of water bottles, soft drink bottles and more – makes up over 10 per cent of global plastic production. Opting for reusable water bottles instead can not only help people save money, but it can also improve ocean health, as plastic bottles are among the top five most common items found in beach clean-ups.



Glitter

Not only is glitter really annoying and impossible to get out of your house, but it's also terrible for the oceans. "Most glitter products used for children's arts and crafts are made from plastic and when washed down the kitchen sink will contribute to the growing problem of microplastics in our environment," says Ives. Microplastics are consumed by fish, birds and sea turtles.

One study found that microplastics have even contaminated the deepest point of the ocean, Challenger Deep, in the Pacific Ocean's Mariana Trench, she says. But you don't have to give up your children's craft projects – instead, opt for eco-friendly alternatives such as food colouring and salts.



Household chemical use

Thanks to the COVID-19 global pandemic, we're all probably using more cleaning products than usual. But household consumers need to think carefully before they pour chemicals down the drain, according to Lindsay French, a STEM education coordinator. "Improper disposal of chemicals can lead to polluting our oceans and marine life that inhabit them," she says. Instead, she recommends opting for sustainable alternatives – like ones that don't contain phosphorus or strong chemicals that might otherwise affect our water quality or contribute to coral bleaching – and safely disposing of household chemicals through recycling programmes.

COVID-19 waste

Take a walk down any city street today and you'll likely see latex gloves and face masks on the ground alongside plastic bags and old newspapers. In other words, the coronavirus is changing the type of waste we make, and what could potentially end up in the oceans.

"For example, a washable cloth



face mask is more environmentally friendly than a disposable one, and reusable utensils are safe when washed appropriately," Ives says. With a chance of more pandemics in the future, now is the time to reconsider how we protect ourselves and the environment, she says.



Eating beef

Though we may be aware of the impact that eating farmed beef has on air pollution, some may not realise that it has an effect on the oceans, too. Raising beef uses a lot of water and releases methane, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change, according to marine biologist Sandy Trautwein. "Eat less beef, and instead choose sustainable seafood, vegetables and chicken,"

READER'S DIGEST

she says. However, 90 per cent of the world's fish are caught at or above sustainable levels, she adds. Seafood that is farmed or wild-caught locally is usually more sustainable than imported wild-caught seafood.



Eating non-sustainable seafood

The idea that there are always 'plenty of fish in the sea' is not only a terrible way to approach dining, it's also not a great mindset when it comes to sourcing food. For starters, we know today that fish and shellfish consume large amounts of plastics and microplastics. To protect the ocean and yourselves, Ives advises that we choose plant-based diets and know where your fish is coming from. "When ordering, ask from where the fish was harvested and how it was harvested," she says.

Releasing balloons

A balloon release is a popular way to end a memorial or celebration, but as lovely as the balloons symbolically floating into the sky might be, it's terrible for oceans. "Released balloons can



travel for many kilometres and pollute even the most pristine places, as well as our oceans," says Ives. Balloons are the highest-risk plastic debris item for seabirds – 32 times more likely to kill than ingesting hard plastics, according to Ives. Instead, she suggests using sustainable options like sky lanterns, paper streamers or wildflowers.




Some sunscreens

Putting on a thick layer of sunblock is good protection for your skin, but picking the wrong one can harm our oceans. Specifically, some sunscreens contain harmful chemicals to our reefs' ecosystems, including oxybenzone and butylparaben. "Oxybenzone

disrupts coral reproduction, causes coral bleaching and damages coral DNA,” French says. Butylparaben is a preservative ingredient shown to cause coral bleaching. When selecting a sunscreen, consumers should try to consciously purchase products such as biodegradable, non-toxic, ‘reef-safe’ sunscreen.



Purchasing clothing made out of plastic

A lot of the clothing we wear is made from fabrics made of synthetic fibres. And it’s not just apparel: towels and bedsheets can be made of plastic-based materials, too. “These plastic pieces are found within strands of fibre and can break off into tiny pieces for even the smallest organisms down the food chain (plankton) to eat,” French says. For example, polyester, which is found in a variety of clothing, is a type of plastic in a fibre form. “Upon washing polyester materials, these tiny fibres make their way down the washing machine drain and unfortunately into the ocean,” she explains. 

Stop Harming Our Oceans

FAST FACTS

- Rubbish has been found on the deepest seabed on Earth, 11 kilometres below the surface.
- Litter that doesn’t sink to the ocean floor ends up on shorelines or one of five offshore plastic accumulation zones.
- The largest of these zones, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (GPGP), is three times the size of France.
- 1.8 trillion plastic pieces are estimated to be floating in the GPGP – that’s equivalent to 250 pieces of debris for every human in the world.
- An estimated 100 million tonnes of plastic is currently found in our oceans, equivalent to 480,000 blue whales.
- The amount of plastic in the ocean is predicted to outweigh fish by 2050 unless action is taken.
- In 2013, 18-year-old Boyan Slat from the Netherlands founded The Ocean Cleanup to rid the world’s oceans of plastic.
- Today, The Ocean Cleanup comprises engineers, researchers, scientists and computational modellers who have built and are trialling the world’s first ocean clean-up system in the GPGP.



PHOTO FEATURE

An Instant **KICK**

***Adrenaline, a stress hormone,
boosts our bodies to peak
performance to get us out of
danger – if so desired!***

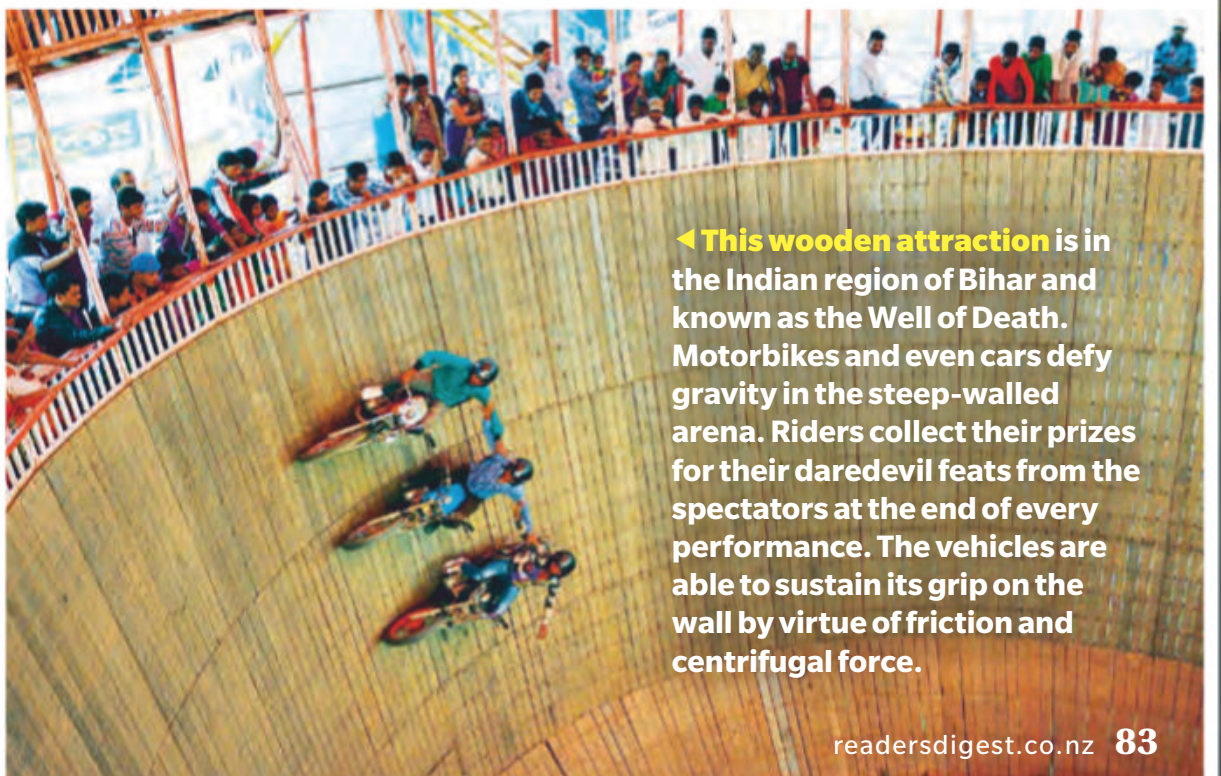
BY *Cornelia Kumfert*

Wingsuit BASE jumping is one of the most dangerous sports in the world. Extreme athletes hurl themselves from planes, helicopters, mountaintops or skyscrapers and plunge to the depths below. They can reach speeds of up to 250 kilometres per hour during their breathtaking manoeuvres, depending on what type of wingsuit they are wearing. But such a rush of adrenaline comes at a price – no other extreme sport has a higher number of casualties every year.

► **The whole world** held its breath when Felix Baumgartner plummeted down to Earth from an altitude of 39 kilometres in 2012. His fall from the edge of the stratosphere lasted four minutes and 19 seconds. Reaching a top speed of 1,342.8 km/h, the Austrian broke the sound barrier completely unaided.



▲ **These three boys** are on their way to school in Indonesia. In 2015, heavy rain destroyed the suspension bridge connecting their village to the outside world. Not wanting to miss class, the students shuffled across what was left of the bridge every morning.



◀ **This wooden attraction** is in the Indian region of Bihar and known as the Well of Death. Motorbikes and even cars defy gravity in the steep-walled arena. Riders collect their prizes for their daredevil feats from the spectators at the end of every performance. The vehicles are able to sustain its grip on the wall by virtue of friction and centrifugal force.

► **The highest and fastest** roller coaster in Europe is in Salou, Spain. Anyone daring to ride on the 112-metre-high 'vertical accelerator' needs nerves of steel and a good stomach because the Red Force accelerates to 180 kilometres per hour in just five seconds.

▼ **Nothing stands a chance** if it gets between these jaws. With a bite force of up to 1.8 tonnes, the great white shark is arguably one of the most powerful living creatures in the world. In fact, it could probably even tear this shark cage apart. It is just as well that the shark in the photo seems totally uninterested in taking a bite.



PHOTOS: (SHARK) DAVID WALL/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; (ROLLERCOASTER) DAVID CARAVIAS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO;
(BUNGEE JUMP) ANAGIOTIS KOTSOVOLOS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



▲ **Jumping off** the 43-metre-high Kawarau Gorge Suspension Bridge in the Otago region takes a lot of courage. Yet, every year, hundreds of people with hearts pounding and pulses soaring line up to bungee jump off this structure. All that keeps them safe is the elastic cord tied around their ankles – which makes sure the jumpers are catapulted back into the air before they hit the ground.

HIGH HEELS

There comes a time in a woman's life – usually after she's been wearing them for several hours – when she wonders why high heels were ever invented. Allow us to enlighten you ...

BY Zoë Meunier

It seems we can point the finger *waaay* back to the Persian cavalry in the tenth century. Yes, the first heels in history were a strictly male phenomenon. As those manly Persian horsemen galloped across the plains, wielding their bows and arrows, they found that wearing a delicate heel kept their feet stable in their stirrups. Since only the wealthy owned

horses, heels became a debonair display of just how rich one was.

Persian couture spread to Europe at the turn of the 17th century, when charismatic Persian king Shah Abbas I sent a delegation of soldiers to Russia, Germany and Spain to gain support in defeating the Ottoman Empire. 'Persia-mania' ensued, as a boom of interest in Persian goods saw European



READER'S DIGEST

aristocrats embracing heels, hoping some of that virile Persian masculinity would rub off (along with, inadvertently, the skin on the backs of their heels).

As the heel trend gained legs, men donned heels for the same reason many women wear them today – the lovely shape they bestowed upon one's calf. Male fashion became all about emphasising the legs: high heels were teamed with tight, coloured stockings and loose breeches. The look was particularly popular among rich courtiers and kings – none more so than King Louis XIV.

Much like Christian Louboutin, who later became famous for his towering heels with a red sole, Louis's signature look was tight-fitting shoes with a red heel. Heels of any kind in the French court at Versailles were an important status symbol, but the red Louis heel was especially symbolic – meaning its owner was not only wealthy enough

to be unconcerned with sullyng his shoes, but also powerful enough to crush his enemies underfoot.

Being a king (and perhaps slightly egotistical), Louis passed an edict in 1670 stating that only nobility could wear red heels – disobedience meant potential beheading, a fairly strong disincentive. Artworks of the time show exactly who was in the King's favour – the higher the heel of the courtier, the closer the kinship.

So what had women been up to while all this male one-upmanship was going on? While not wearing heels as such, as early as the beginning of the 16th century, the women of Europe had been staggering around in towering platform shoes, some as high as 60 cm.

Known as 'chopines', these monstrosities are believed to have originated with Venetian prostitutes for 'heightened' sex appeal, but soon became popular among aristocrats for their ability to prevent their

**WELL
HEELED**
Stepping out
through the
ages



16th Century
CHOPINES



1670s
LOUIS XIV HEEL



1920s
PUMPS

clothes dangling in the filth that covered the streets.

Of course, there's no use keeping your clothes out of muck if you end up falling face-first into it, so to keep from keeling over on their mini-stilts, these Euro aristocrats would use maids, male servants and noblemen as human crutches. As for disembarking from a gondola, don't even ask.

Accidents did invariably occur, and while women were apparently happy to risk life and limb, chopines were eventually legislated against.

With the exception of French Queen Catherine de Medici in the 16th century, who at 150 cm tall wanted some additional height for her wedding, it wasn't until the start of the 18th century that women adopted more traditional high heels for themselves. European noblemen took this as a personal affront to their masculinity and began abandoning their heels in droves. By the 1730s, heels had all but disappeared from men's fashion, never to return again but for a few notable

exceptions – such as cowboys (who wear heeled boots for the same reasons as the Persian cavalry); rock stars (The Beatles rocked 'Beatle boots' featuring pointed toes and Cuban heels, while glam rockers from David Bowie to KISS to Motley Crue broke all kinds of heel barriers); and vertically challenged actors and politicians, from Al Pacino to Vladimir Putin.

As women legged it into the 20th century, heeled boots were hugely popular – especially ones with buttons lining the side of the leg, although floor-trailing fashions meant they could barely be seen.

As hemlines rose in the 1920s, women did the Charleston in pumps. These featured elongated toes and thick heels, detailed with bows or crisscrossed straps, but they stayed chunky-looking until after World War II, which introduced the ultimate high heel – the stiletto.

Named after an Italian knife with a needle-sharp point, the stiletto was engineered sometime between 1948



1990s

VIVIENNE WESTWOOD



2000s

MANOLO BLAHNIK



2020s

CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN

READER'S DIGEST

and 1954, when techniques invented for aircraft carriers were applied to shoe construction.

The stiletto's genius was a small metal 'shank', which joined the inside of the shoes so the heel and foot of the shoe could operate separately, while the use of aluminium and injection moulding to fuse metal and plastic made it possible to raise heels higher than ever.

At first, stilettos caused some controversy, as they began creating little holes in great ballrooms everywhere, but this design flaw was overlooked when women realised just how good they looked in them. The structure of the shoe elongated the legs, thrust the chest forwards and tilted the bottom backwards, accentuating feminine curves.

The stiletto's reputation as a weapon in a woman's seduction arsenal was aided by movie stars, not least screen icon Marilyn Monroe, whose famous wiggly walk was not just honed by the 10 cm heels she wore, but also her secret trick of cutting half a centimetre off one heel to double the sway factor.

By the 1960s, women had a new style icon – Audrey Hepburn, whose kitten heels in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* would see many women adopting a lower heel again, the balls of their feet breathing a silent sigh of relief.

Throughout the bra-burning 1970s, many women rejected heels altogether, thanks to their incompatibility with long skirts, daisy-picking and festivals in paddocks. But as power dressing asserted itself in the 1980s, the bold working woman needed a shoe that complemented her razor-sharp shoulder pads and sky-high perm, so stilettos rose to the fore again.

In the 1990s, the high end of fashion also saw the high end of heels. In 1993, supermodel Naomi Campbell took to the catwalk in a pair of Vivienne Westwood platform heels that nearly put chopines to shame – and proceeded to fall in a big heap moments later. Where's a human crutch when you need one?

A similar fate befell another ambassador for sky-high heels – fictional character Carrie Bradshaw in TV's *Sex and the City*. Manolo Blahnik-loving Carrie discovered how treacherous heels could be when she became 'fashion roadkill' after her own spectacular catwalk tumble.

And today? Protracted coronavirus lockdowns have seen many a heel gathering dust in the back of a cupboard, as ugg boots became the stay-at-home footwear de jour. Only time will tell which direction heels will take next.

GLAM ROCKERS FROM DAVID BOWIE TO KISS BROKE HEEL BARRIERS



TELL ME WHY...



Toothpaste Is **MINT** Flavoured

While chocolate toothpaste might sound delicious, there is a reason for the refreshing taste

BY Kelly Bryant

Who decided the default flavour of toothpaste should be mint? The answer lies somewhere back in history, with a range of hits and misses of other flavour options.

“People prefer mint to other ingredients because it has a high content of a key active ingredient – menthol,” explains Colgate spokesperson Catalina Lee. “Menthol tricks the brain, sending a signal that creates a sensation that you have ice in your mouth. It’s a refreshing and clean taste.”

In Colgate’s case, the brand began using peppermint and spearmint oil to flavour its toothpaste in the late 1800s. According to Lee, the Egyptians were the first to use a teeth-cleaning paste around 500

BCE. This was long before the toothbrush as we know it today was invented in 1938. Similarly, around 500 BCE, Ancient Greeks and Romans were also believed to have started using some form of toothpaste, but it was the Chinese who got creative with the stuff, using an array of different substances to freshen their mouths, like ginseng, herbal mints and salt.

“Be thankful for flavouring in toothpaste,” says Lee. “Brushing is a boring routine, and flavour engages people in their brushing. And without mint or other flavours, today’s toothpaste would taste unpleasant, bitter, astringent and metallic.”

If you’re interested in taking a walk on the wild side, she notes that there are other flavour profiles to consider such as clove, anise and citrus oils. **R**



How
INSOMNIA
&
DEPRESSION
Are
LINKED

*The good news is that treating
one can improve both*

BY *Lisa Fields*

Thomas Muller-Rorich fell into a depression while on holiday with his family back in 1992, when he was 38. Thomas found himself inexplicably unhappy, irritable and tense. He yelled at his children for playing noisily and picked fights with his wife over nothing.

After returning home, his mood didn't lift; he lost his appetite and couldn't concentrate at the electrical engineering firm that he ran. Two years later, he was formally diagnosed with depression.

Shortly after he began experiencing insomnia, waking at 4am with anxious feelings that prevented him from falling back asleep, making it even harder for him to be productive.

"The combination of depression and insomnia definitely made things worse," says Thomas, now 67. "I felt empty and numb, and that everything I had done in life was wrong."

It's becoming increasingly clear that insomnia and depression are linked. A widely cited 2011 German meta-analysis showed that insomnia doubles the risk of developing depression compared with those who have no sleep difficulties. And in 2020, follow-up research found that the conditions have a bi-directional relationship, and that early treatment for insomnia may help to prevent depression, although more study is needed.

Globally, both insomnia and depression affect hundreds of millions of people of all ages.

Approximately one-quarter of adults in New Zealand may suffer from a chronic sleep problem, highlighting insomnia as a major public health issue. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates 264 million people globally experience depression. Closer to home, estimates suggest that one in seven New Zealanders will suffer depression at some point in their life. And some people experience both simultaneously.

"Sleep disorders and depression often occur together," says psychotherapist and somnologist Dr Hans-Gunter Weess. "Up to 80 per cent of depressions are accompanied by sleep disorders. They're like siblings."

And about half the number of people with insomnia report symptoms of depression. "Their risk of developing depression is up to three times higher, compared with people without sleep disorders," adds Dr Weess.

Both conditions can negatively affect health: people with chronic

How Insomnia & Depression Are Linked

insomnia are more likely to have weaker immune systems and get sick more often, and they're at greater risk of high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. People with chronic depression are more likely to experience stress, chronic pain or weight gain, and they may be at risk of misusing drugs or alcohol.

People may not always know which came first, insomnia or depression, but it isn't necessary to be sure. Research shows that treating one condition may improve symptoms of both.

"It's not so much a case of the chicken or the egg, what caused what," says Dr Dan Chisholm, programme manager on mental health for the WHO. "The things that might help are going to help both of those conditions."

Why insomnia may increase the risk of depression

People with insomnia may have trouble shutting down their minds at bedtime. "They have very frequent, brief wake-reactions all the time," says clinical psychophysiological Dr Dieter Riemann, founder of the European Insomnia Network. Dr Riemann co-authored the 2011 and 2020

studies mentioned earlier. "Usually, if you're a good sleeper, your whole brain and all relevant brain centres go into a sleep state. We assume that in insomnia, some parts of the brain do not sleep as deeply."

Repeatedly losing sleep this way can affect mood.

"In your waking hours, you're more likely to be irritable, a bit exhausted, a bit less likely to want to interact socially," says Dr Chisholm.

If you find yourself staring at the clock all night, panicking that you'll be a wreck tomorrow, you may feel powerless to help yourself. "We want to have control over everything, but you

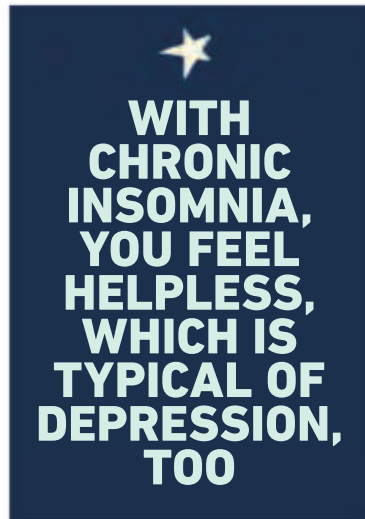
can't control your sleep; sleep is involuntary," Dr Riemann says.

"Chronic insomnia means feeling helpless. And feeling helpless is a typical feature of depression."

Why depression may increase the risk of insomnia

One classic symptom of depression is altered sleep habits. Many people with depression experience insomnia as a matter of course.

"Often, depression is diagnosed through a checklist, and that includes sleeplessness as well as irritability,



feelings of sadness and so on,” says Dr Chisholm. “There’s a clear relationship, in that sense, between depression and one of its underlying symptoms.”

Sometimes, traumatic life circumstances elicit such strong responses that people may experience both depression and insomnia.

“Someone may be in a state of psychological grief or stress that causes depression symptoms and insomnia symptoms,” says Dr Alexander Sweetman, a research associate who studies insomnia at Flinders University in Adelaide.

“The pandemic has led to an increase of mental health problems covering depression and insomnia,” Dr Riemann adds. “It’s fear-associated: can I get infected? The lockdown. The social consequences. The economic consequences. And many people have worked from their home, so the structure of their lives was altered.”

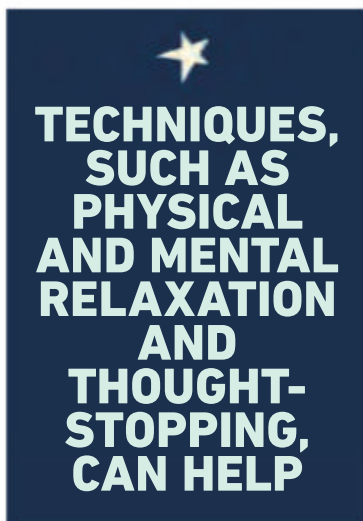
Treatments are available for both conditions

Coping with insomnia or depression by itself may seem draining; having both problems simultaneously may feel like a great challenge. But there are many resources to help you find

relief. Whenever possible, seek treatment for both conditions. “If you have severe depression coupled with insomnia, you should not neglect the insomnia,” Dr Riemann advises.

“Many doctors will say, ‘Okay, I’ll give you a sleeping pill for a week or so.’ But there’s no special attention paid to it. It’s good to have an eye on both.”

Treatments for one condition may help to alleviate both, but this isn’t always the case. This is why doctors recommend treating both insomnia and depression, if you realise that you have both conditions. If you don’t realise that you have both, treating one disorder may still help.



Experts recommend:

Catch insomnia early. The 2011 German study suggests insomnia may be an early sign of depression, and that people with chronic insomnia may double their risk of developing depression.

“There is some evidence that identifying and treating insomnia symptoms early can reduce depression symptoms and also prevent them from becoming worse in the future,” Dr Sweetman confirms.

Make lifestyle changes. Modest changes may reduce depression risk

How Insomnia & Depression Are Linked

and protect against insomnia. “You don’t need to rush off to see a specialist; some people might end up there, but there are other things we can do to take care of ourselves,” says Dr Chisholm. “Physical exercise is very important for good sleep and protection against depression, as are healthy eating habits and staying off alcohol. Be active and go back to the things that interest you and give you pleasure.”

Opening up to a trusted friend about your struggles with insomnia or a depressed mood may help. “This can often be very therapeutic in its own way,” Dr Chisholm says. “If there are still issues, then you might need, and want, to seek help from a health professional.”

Limit sleep medication. Sleeping pills should be taken only for a short time, if at all, because you may develop a dependence. Plus, the medicine won’t address underlying causes of your insomnia.

“A hypnotic works well in the short term,” says Dr Riemann, but it doesn’t do anything to address sleep issues in a sustained way. “It only helps you when you take it.”

Seek cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBT-I). Learning techniques to help you sleep more effectively may help with both insomnia and depression. CBT-I involves thought-stopping and physical-and-mental-relaxation techniques and can have a positive effect



on both disorders. Therapists who administer CBT-I may suggest that you stop napping, create a calming bedtime routine, avoid looking at the clock while you’re in bed, use your bed only for sleep and sex, get out of bed to read or do something relaxing if you can’t fall asleep, and always get up at the same time each morning.

Consider therapy and antidepressants. For depression coupled with insomnia, going for talk therapy and taking antidepressants may improve both conditions. Sedative antidepressants taken in the evening have proven to be effective in the treatment of depression with insomnia.

OLDER ADULTS: IS IT DEPRESSION?

It may be difficult for older adults to recognise that they're depressed. Many people equate depression with a constant feeling of sadness, but some

older adults don't have this experience. Instead, they feel more tired, irritable or restless than usual. They may have trouble making decisions, or feel unmotivated to

follow their daily routine. They may also experience difficulty thinking clearly or concentrating. Fortunately, seeking treatment can alleviate these symptoms.

Not all antidepressants have the same impact on insomnia. The most common type of antidepressant, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), may cause sleep problems in some people.


"Some of them may induce insomnia, maybe in 20 to 30 per cent of subjects," Dr Riemann points out. "You shouldn't take these drugs at night. Take them in the morning so that there's not so much effect on sleep."

Thomas Muller-Rorich found relief from his depression and insomnia after getting psychoanalysis and taking antidepressants and sleeping pills. He experienced insomnia and

depression once more in the early 2000s but recovered again with the help of doctors and medication.

"I was happy to see that depression - and insomnia - are treatable," he says. "I became myself again, was able to show my love for my family, and enjoyed work."

If you're experiencing insomnia and depression, struggling with sleep and with your emotions, it doesn't matter which problem developed first; seek treatment from your doctor and know that self-care can also help you get through it.

"Things can and do get better," adds Dr Chisholm. 



Simple As 3.141592...

Swiss researchers have broken the record for the most precise value of the mathematical constant pi. They ran a supercomputer for 108 days to calculate the value of pi by more than 12 trillion decimal places. The first ten digits of pi, the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter, are 3.141592653, but pi is what is known as an irrational number, meaning it has infinite decimal places. WWW.LIVESCIENCE.COM



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ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Humour On The Job



Cows Theory

My professor once went to hear the esteemed French philosopher Jacques Derrida speak. The entire talk was about cows; everyone was flummoxed but listened carefully and took notes about ... cows. There was a short break, and when Derrida came back, he announced, “I’m told it is pronounced ‘chaos’.” @pmgentry

Wrong Thread

While out walking with my son, a doctor, I fell and cut my hand.

Quickly realising that the injury would require sutures, he voice-texted his nurse: “My mum has a bad cut. I’m on the way to the office to sew her up.”

His ‘smart’ phone transcribed the last part of his message: “I am on the way to the office to sober up.”

SUBMITTED BY TERRY KELLEN

Pushing The Envelope

What happens when you rearrange the letters of MAILMEN? They get really upset. @DADSAYSJOKE

Bigger And Boulder

This Twitter alert from the police 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." @SheriffAlert

Isn't It Obvious?

Teachers share questionable questions they've been asked:

- "What are those pyramid-shaped things in Egypt called?"
- "If the patient has a brain haemorrhage, can we tie a tourniquet around the neck to stop it?"
- "Well, I've taken this test twice, but everyone else in here hasn't taken it, so am I taking my test for the first time or the third time?"
- "How old was the average 18 year old in 1942?"

Reddit.com

Physical Distancing

I coughed and my wife, who's also working from home, broke out the tape measure to make sure I was two metres away from her.

VIC TAFUR, SPORTSWRITER

The Customer Is Always Right

I had an angry couple return a new microwave to our store because it was 'blue' and they hadn't ordered a blue one. I had to open the packaging in front of them, peel off the blue protective plastic cover and reveal ... their silver microwave. @OhOlivera



DON'T CALL US, WE'LL CALL YOU

These human resource managers shared the oddest job candidates they've interviewed.

"What about the job interests you?"

"What job do you mean?"

"This job, the job you applied for..."

"What job is this again? What do you do here?"

She listed all of her ex-boyfriends who currently worked there and said she couldn't wait to see the looks on their faces when she showed up to work.

"And what do you think you could bring to this role?"

"Hire me and find out."

Reddit.com


QUIZ


Checkmate!

Around the world, no board game fascinates more people than chess

—
BY Doris Kochanek

QUESTIONS

1 According to legend, the inventor of chess asked his ruler for grains of rice as a reward. One on the first square, two on the second, on all further squares twice as many as on the preceding one. His wish was initially granted. Then it turned out an unimaginably large amount of rice – 18 trillion grains – would be needed for this reward. The ruler got out of this by:

a. ordering the inventor to count the grains of rice

b. having the inventor's head cut off

c. giving his daughter as a wife to the inventor instead of rice

d. dying before fulfilling the wish

2 During the 18th century, chess grew quickly in popularity in Europe. Chess clubs and so-called chess cafés were founded, where like-minded people met to play. The most famous was probably the *Café de la Régence* in Paris, where boards could be rented. Who

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES



READER'S DIGEST

is said to have met there for either the first or second time?

- a.** Camille Claudel and Auguste Rodin
- b.** Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
- c.** Marie and Pierre Curie
- d.** George Washington and Thomas Jefferson

3 Today, chess computers regularly defeat even the best players in the world. In 1996, a computer managed to win a game against a reigning world champion for the first time. Who was playing against whom at that time?

- a.** Big Bird against Magnus Carlsen
- b.** Deep Blue against Garry Kasparov
- c.** Red King against Boris Spassky
- d.** Tiny Tim and Jan Timman

4 *The Queen's Gambit* is a hit series on Netflix. The main character is a young woman who

Chess musical: Björn Ulvaeus (left), lyricist Tim Rice (centre) and Benny Andersson



made it from orphan to world chess champion. What is a Queen's Gambit in chess?

- a.** an opening move
- b.** a game that is broken off
- c.** a defensive strategy
- d.** an attacking move

5 The chess board is a square shape with a total of 64 smaller squares. How much of the board remains free if all pieces are placed at the start of the game?

- a.** a quarter
- b.** one-third
- c.** half
- d.** two-thirds

6 In 1984 Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, who rose to fame as members of the pop group Abba, released their album *Chess*. What is the plot of the musical of the same name, to which Benny and Björn composed the music?

- a.** Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972
- b.** the rivalry of two chess players during the Cold War
- c.** a game of chess between Churchill and Stalin
- d.** the rivalry between two elderly chess-playing Moscovite neighbours

7 With a pawn a player is allowed to advance only one square - except for the opening, where he is allowed a double move. What

happens to a pawn that reaches the opponent's baseline?

- a.** It falls out of the game
- b.** It captures two freely chosen pawns of the opponent
- c.** It is exchanged for a queen, bishop, knight or rook of the same colour
- d.** The player earns a new pawn

8 Napoleon called chess an imperial game, Goethe a touchstone of intellect, Freud called it noble. What did the brilliant Albert Einstein think about the game? He reportedly said that chess was:

- a.** the fastest game in the world
- b.** the combination of art and science
- c.** a child's pursuit
- d.** a fool's folly

9 Tournament players all over the world can recognise the pieces at a glance even in the middle of a game, thanks to the so-called Staunton design. The International Chess Federation, commonly referred to by its French acronym FIDE, adopted this appearance of the pieces as a standard when FIDE was founded in 1924. What caused the Staunton figures to become established?

- a.** their designer was a sponsor of FIDE
- b.** they lie particularly well in the hand
- c.** they could be mass produced
- d.** all of the above



Anya Taylor-Joy in *The Queen's Gambit*

10 In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the famous sorcerer's apprentice and his friends have to win a game of chess. What special feature did author J.K. Rowling come up with for the magical version of the game?

- a.** the pieces are alive
- b.** the kings are invisible
- c.** the rooks keep changing colour
- d.** the pieces speak

11 Many experts consider Bobby Fischer to be the best chess player of all time. At the age of only 15, he became the youngest grandmaster, and in 1972 the US-born player won the world title. But Fischer was also considered a difficult character. What is true about him?

- a.** he repeatedly made anti-Semitic statements
- b.** he sometimes made eccentric demands at tournaments
- c.** he was wanted by arrest warrant in the US after 1992
- d.** all of the above

>> Turn to page 106 for quiz answers

ANSWERS TO CHESS QUIZ

1 a. According to legend, the ruler's arithmetician advised his master to order the inventor of the game to count the grains of rice if he wanted them.

2 b. Revolutionaries and life-long friends Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are said to have met for an aperitif in the *Café de la Régence* in Paris in August, 1844.

3 b. In 1996, Deep Blue beat world champion Garry Kasparov in a game. The computer was developed by the IBM group. The following year, after further improvements, Deep Blue won a match of six games 3½-2½ under tournament conditions against Kasparov.

4 a. The Queen's Gambit is an opening in chess in which the pawn makes the first move before the queen.

5 c. In the starting position there are 32 pieces on the board. This leaves 32 squares free, which is half of the board.

6 b. The musical *Chess* is about the rivalry of two chess players during the Cold War. During this period, games between Soviet and Western players were often stylised into confrontations of the political systems.

7 c. When a pawn reaches the opponent's baseline, it turns into a queen, bishop, knight or rook. Usually the queen is chosen because she is the most powerful piece in the game.

8 a. According to Einstein, chess is the fastest game in the world because you have to arrange thousands of thoughts every second.

9 c. The design of the pieces, named after the British chess master Howard Staunton, originated in the middle of the 19th century. It prevailed because the pieces could - among other things - be mass-produced at low cost.

10 a. In magic chess, the pieces are alive. In the game that Harry, Ron and Hermione play they are also life-size.

11 d. The fact that his mother was Jewish did not prevent Bobby Fischer from making anti-Semitic statements. In 1975, he lost his world title to Anatoly Karpov after refusing to defend it because he could not agree with FIDE on the terms of the match. The US issued a warrant for Fischer's arrest in 1992. He had participated in a match in Yugoslavia and violated sanctions of the US government. Fischer never entered his home country again. **R**



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Travellers on Western Australia's backroads need to be prepared for rough conditions, and to bring plenty of water



There's
NOWHERE
Like The
OUTBACK

*A road through a remote Australian region
leads to glorious landscapes and insights
into the First Nation's ancient culture*

BY *Bob Ramsay*

FROM **CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC**

WE WERE LUCKY.

We got our flat tyre as we drove into the Mount Barnett Roadhouse on Western Australia's notorious Gibb River Road. Luckier still, three burly guys changed our tyre, with dire warnings to get to the Over The Range service station to fix it, pronto. Otherwise, well ... I guess that's why our rented four-wheel drive came with a satellite phone, an emergency locator and 40 litres of water.

My wife, Jean, and I had wanted to experience one of the English-speaking world's most remote places that non-explorers can navigate on their own: the Kimberley region, an area in the northwestern corner of Australia, much bigger than Germany or Japan, with a population of just

34,000 people. And in May 2018, we got the chance to visit.

The Gibb is an iconic, tyre-ripping gravel road that runs 660 kilometres through the region along, as its name suggests, the Gibb River. In the May-through-October dry season, it's hot and desolate. Still, your four-wheel drive better have an air-intake snorkel so it can ford the dozens of rivers you'll cross. Oh, and watch out for the 'road trains', those linked trucks that can measure up to 53 metres – and take three kilometres and clouds of blinding dust to pass.

In the wet season, don't even think of driving the Gibb. You'll drown in the rain-flooded plains that for half the year are bone dry.

PHOTOS (PREVIOUS SPREAD AND THIS ONE): GETTY IMAGES



There's Nowhere Like The Outback

The only way to explore the Kimberley is by this very bad road, or by air. We did the latter first, taking the lay of the land from the sky before we set off down the Gibb on four wheels. To do that, we went to the jumping-off point for helicopter tours in the Kimberley: the HeliSpirit hangar in Kununurra.

"You from Canada, mate?" asks James Bondfield, our young helicopter pilot.

"Uh, yes, I am." When we Canadians open our mouths in Australia, we're almost always mistaken for Americans.

"I worked in Canada," says Bondfield, explaining that he had built up

his flying hours in the oil sands in northern Alberta. He also flew in the forests of Papua New Guinea, Malaysia and Indonesia before returning home and rising to be, at age 30, the chief pilot of a company whose 25 helicopters are opening the Kimberley to visitors drawn to dramatic, relatively untouched landscapes.

During the next two days, Bondfield, like any great guide, takes us

The Kimberley region's many attractions include (from top to bottom): blue-winged kookaburra and other wildlife, the Pentecost River, and the King George Falls



where we want to go, then shows us his own secret places there. We first picnic atop King George Falls in the Balangarra Indigenous Protected Area, a one-million-hectare homeland of First Peoples in Australia and whose rock art, dating back more than 40,000 years, is drawing global attention.

Bondfield lands us near some caves covered in the ochre images of ancient plants and animals. Their brightness is barely faded despite tens of thousands of years of torrential weather. We crawl into crevices all afternoon, snap photos and return with shots of paintings that are among the oldest made by humans anywhere in the world.

From there, we fly to the remote Berkeley River Lodge, a 20-cabin resort on the Kimberley Coast. Over dinner of grilled barramundi, Bondfield asks if we've had a chance to go fishing in Australia yet. No, we have not – not with local rivers filled with 'freshies' and 'salties': fresh- and salt-water crocodiles. The former may attack you, while the latter will.

"Well, if you want to get up before sunrise tomorrow, I can fly you to my favourite fishing hole," he tells

us. And so, the next morning at dawn, we land on a ledge of a tributary of the Berkeley River, feeling safe in Bondfield's charge. And it doesn't matter that the one barramundi I hook gets away. What matters is the thrill of watching the sun rise over one of the most ancient landscapes on the planet.

LATER THAT DAY, BONDFIELD drops us back in Kununurra, the starting point for our journey on the Gibb.

While drivers often carry two spares because tyres get shredded, not just flattened, on the Gibb, the rental company we hire our four-wheel drive from assures us we'll be fine with just one.

Three days later, after we got our flat changed by those three burly men, we limp into Over The

Range, the garage seemingly at the end of the universe, to get the tyre fixed. It looks like a junkyard, filled with hollowed-out tyres and skeletons of cars.

Owner Neville Hernon – who looks like the Mad Max of tyre repair – lives on-site with his wife. Their leaflet, pinned up at every roadhouse along the Gibb River Road, says: "Drop in to our depot for advice, have a look

**THE CAVE
PAINTINGS ARE
AMONG THE
OLDEST MADE
BY HUMANS
ANYWHERE
IN THE WORLD**

There's Nowhere Like The Outback



The Berkeley River Lodge is so remote that it can't be accessed by road – visitors have to be flown in

at our Wet Season photos, or just to say hello.”

As we wait for Hernon to fix our flat, we do have a look at those wet season photos. All the scraggly desert surrounding us was under water. Everywhere. Hernon soon approaches with a grim smile and bad news: the tyre has to be replaced.

It takes him 15 minutes to do just that. And so we continue to our next stop, happy as clams that we had to drive only 20 kilometres to reach the Over The Range garage, and knowing the law of supply and demand is working perfectly in the Outback.

When we arrive in the tiny settlement of Imintji, we are greeted by a man who appears to be the perfect

Aussie Outback wrangler. John Bennett is tall, dust-tanned, with tall leather boots that even the fangs of the local, lethal king brown snake surely couldn't pierce.

“Howdy,” Bennett greets us. “How are y'all?”

Hmmm ... Aussie wranglers don't talk that way. Texas cowboys do. It turns out that Bennett, CEO of the local Imintji Aboriginal Corporation and manager of a campsite and arts centre for tourists, came to Australia in 2005 from Waco, Texas, where he had been a mining supervisor. Bennett was drawn to the area by the love of a woman. Of Cherokee descent, he understood first-hand the hardships of Indigenous people,

READER'S DIGEST

and in 2011 he started working for a group of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley area whose ancestors are believed to have been the first people in Western Australia.

IMINTJI, WHICH MEANS 'THE PLACE TO SIT DOWN' in the Ngarinyin language, was established as an outstation in the 1950s. Outstations are small communities on traditional land, and this one serves as an important stop-over place along the Gibb River Road. A big part of Bennett's job as CEO of the community

John Bennett, CEO of the Imintji Aboriginal Corporation, and David Bradman, a member of the Imintji arts community, examine Aboriginal rock art



is working with the regional and federal governments to make sure local Aboriginal peoples, specifically the Imintji, Tirrilantji and Yulmbu, get the rights, grants and respect they're entitled to.

Bennett and local artist Edna Dale are the public faces of the rise of Aboriginal tourism in Western Australia. Dale is the daughter of the late community elder Jack Dale Mengersen, one of Australia's most revered Aboriginal artists and a custodian of the folklore and stories of his people. Edna learned to paint at her father's feet. Her work as an interpreter of ancient rock art is sold at the Imintji Art Centre and regional museums. The centre is both a gallery and a school – during our visit, half a dozen artists are at work, nearly all doing rock art.

That tradition is kept alive today through the Camping With Custodians programme, which lets visitors stay on Aboriginal land and learn from locals; the camping fees stay in the community.

During our time in this dusty little art-outpost near the middle of the Gibb, we run into a huge subculture of Australian travel known as 'caravanning'. The variety of recreational vehicles and people we encounter along the Gibb – from wealthy retirees in super-deluxe caravans to impoverished students in beaten-up Volkswagen vans – speaks to the allure of this lifestyle. A few



Above: A Camping With Custodians art class; (right) some of the artwork created in the class based on Aboriginal rock art techniques and themes

caravanners stay overnight at small campgrounds, such as the one in Imintji; many more stay at big ones like El Questro, which can hold 850 people. They may spend a week on the road or, as thousands do each year, drive the 15,000-kilometre Highway 1, which rings the country.

Bennett is eager to get more of these caravans to stay overnight at Imintji. Not that it's short on business. Almost everyone travelling the Gibb stops there for fuel and drinks, and maybe to buy some art.

Before we rattle away from Imintji and on to Derby, the coastal town with the highest tides in Australia, at the end of the Gibb River Road, we wonder if First Peoples tourism in the region can continue to prosper



as it serves time-starved, demanding visitors like us. Bennett is certain that it can.

“It’s easy to think Aboriginal peoples and tourists have nothing in common, except curiosity for the tourists and paying work for the Aboriginal peoples,” he tells us. “Sure, it starts that way, but I’ve seen it grow into real mutual respect.” **R**

FROM CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC (SEPTEMBER 10, 2020), © 2020 BY RAMSAY INC.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CAMPING WITH CUSTODIANS



BONUS READ



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THAT REALLY WORK

Researchers know more than ever about how puzzles and twisters keep your mind sharp. (Hint: Start with games that are tough!)

BY Sari Harrar





T

onya Brigham could never resist a good sudoku – or any sudoku. The 50-year-old smoothie-shop owner and mother of two wrestled with the puzzles while waiting in lines and raced to solve them in record time using strategies plucked from YouTube videos. “If it’s a 30-minute puzzle, I try to figure it out in 12,” she says. “Sudoku lets me challenge myself, take a breather, and then go back into the world’s chaos.”

After several years of playing sudoku, Brigham noticed something

unexpected: her brain seemed sharper and more focused. “I didn’t have much, if any, brain fog during menopause,” she says. At work, she found she could easily put together employee work schedules in her head. “A lot of stores use an electronic scheduling tool, but I have all the data in my mind,” she says. “I can very quickly see the holes and how to fill them. It’s the same with inventory. I think I have that capacity because of the game.”

We call them games, but for many people, brainteasers and challenging

puzzles are serious business. American football legend Tom Brady credits his seven Super Bowl championships – his most recent aged 43 – in part to high-tech brain training games he performs on an app called BrainHQ. Queen Elizabeth reportedly keeps a crossword puzzle stashed in her royal handbag. In a 2019 University of Michigan survey, half the midlife and older adults said they played mentally challenging games to maintain or boost memory.

2						
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GAMES SEEM TO WORK

In one 2020 University of Edinburgh study, researchers found that 1091 women and men who frequently played cards, bingo or chess or did crossword puzzles had sharper thinking and memory skills – equivalent to an IQ up to 5.6 points higher – than those who rarely did.

The study doesn't prove that the puzzles directly led to the higher IQs, but it does show that even people who increased their game-playing in their 70s seemed to get brain benefits within a few years.

“In our older sample, it appears that the cognitive exercise provided by playing everyday games staved off a bit of the natural process of cognitive ageing,” says lead study author

■ CHALLENGE 1: LATIN SQUARE

WHY IT MAY WORK: Latin square puzzles involve shading in blocks in a grid according to a set of specific rules. In a University of Sydney study, doing difficult Latin square puzzles activated brain regions that hadn't been activated in participants when they were working on easier versions of the puzzle.

PLAY IT: Shade in exactly seven of the empty squares in this grid so that: (1) there is only one shaded square in each row and in each column, (2) no shaded squares touch each other, even diagonally, and (3) the number of shaded squares bordering on the squares containing figures is equal to the figure in each particular square.

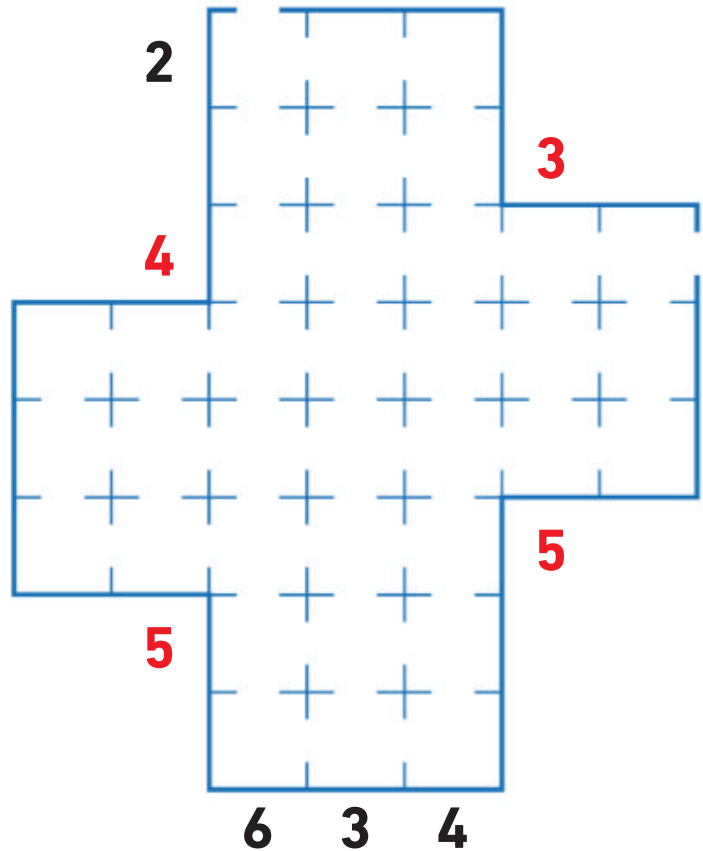
Answer on page 139.

■ CHALLENGE 2: PATH FINDER

WHY IT MAY WORK:

We use visuospatial skills constantly, for instance, when navigating the supermarket, using a map, or figuring out how to use a tool. In a recent study from Japan's University of Tsukuba, people who did visual reasoning exercises regularly for several weeks improved their thinking skills.

PLAY IT: Draw a path that leads from one of the maze's openings to the other. The path can move up, down, left, or right but not diagonally and can pass through any cell only once. The



black numbers tell you how many cells the path passes through in that single horizontal or vertical line of boxes. The red numbers

indicate the total number of cells the path passes through in both its vertical and horizontal lines.

Answer on page 139.

Drew M. Altschul, a research psychologist at the university.

Exactly how games sharpen memory and cognitive function is still something of a mystery. But advances in neuroimaging allow researchers to study how the brain reacts to all sorts of outside stimulation, edging them closer to understanding how brain challengers work. "We've known for many years that physical

exercise keeps our bodies strong," says longevity expert and psychiatrist Dr Gary Small. "And now scientific evidence suggests that mental exercise keeps our brains young and limber, too."

EXERCISE IS KEY

To get significant cognitive benefit, you need to tackle a variety of word, number and spatial-reasoning

Brain Games That Really Work

puzzles, and they need to be tough. Does Brigham's sudoku habit really deserve the credit for her powerful memory? Perhaps.

But for the activity to be really effective, you have to up the difficulty level pretty consistently. Our brains are pretty smart. They adjust to problem-solving patterns quickly and easily slip into a kind of automatic pilot. That default mode, which researchers call 'low-dimensional manifold', is great for helping us take care of daily business, such as folding laundry or catching a ball, without having to figure out each time how to do the task.

But low-dimensional challenges aren't tough enough to grow your brain. "Choose challenges that make you think harder," says University of Sydney neuroscientist Dr James Shine. "I know that's not easy. It's uncomfortable and frustrating. We make mistakes. Stress hormones kick in – and that's actually helpful for getting your brain onto new routes."

Learning happens, he says, when you feel a little uncomfortable – in that zone where you get some things wrong, but it's not so difficult that you can't get anything right.

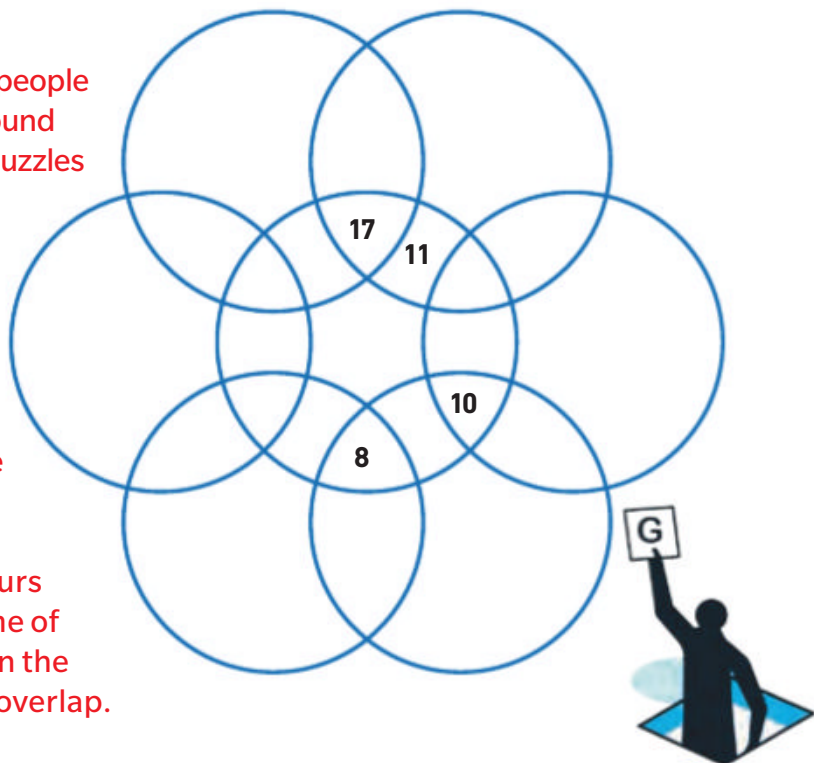
That said, the challenges don't

■ CHALLENGE 3: BUBBLE MATHS

WHY IT MAY WORK: In a 2019 University of Exeter study of people aged 60 to 93, researchers found that those who did number puzzles at least once a day scored higher for working memory, verbal reasoning and learning than those who tried them once a month or less.

PLAY IT: Assign exactly one whole number from one to seven to each of the seven bubbles. Each number occurs only once. The sums of some of the numbers are revealed in the areas where their bubbles overlap.

Answer on page 139.



READER'S DIGEST

have to be the kind of high-tech, personalised games that Tom Brady uses. For instance, a sudoku fanatic could benefit by switching things up and trying a game called Latin square, in which players shade

squares in the grid rather than inserting numbers.

A few years ago, 60 women and men in Australia completed Latin squares as part of a study. As the puzzles grew more difficult, with fewer

clues in each grid, players slowed

down and made more mistakes. That's when Dr Shine and his team discovered

something surprising: the

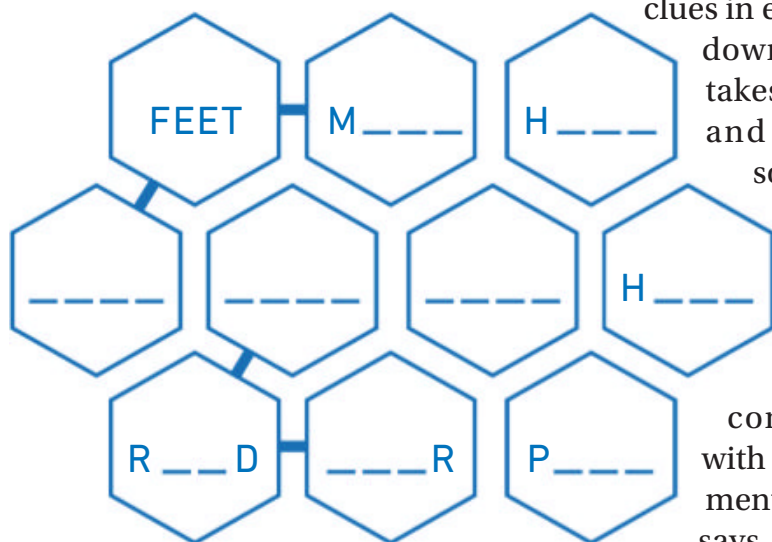
players' brains had made a shift. "More regions of the brain got involved, especially in the prefrontal

cortex, an area involved with problem-solving, judgement and memory," Dr Shine says. "The brain was moving

out of the usual patterns we follow every day, exiting the major highways it normally takes when solving problems, and taking less-travelled back roads."

PLAY WITH FRIENDS

Another easy way to up your brain game is to play with friends. When University of Pittsburgh researchers performed detailed brain scans of 293 older adults for a 2020 study, they found healthier grey matter in the orbitofrontal cortex, middle frontal gyrus and temporal pole – areas where cell loss contributes to age-related dementia – in those who spent the most time doing brain-stimulating activities with other people.



■ CHALLENGE 4: WORD WORM

WHY IT MAY WORK: In a 2019 UK study, regular word puzzlers bested those who rarely try these brain twisters on 14 tests for attention, information processing, executive function (planning and decision-making), working (short-term) and episodic (a type of long-term) memory.

PLAY IT: Join the hexagons by creating words that are only one letter different from the connecting words. Each hexagon must connect to exactly two adjacent ones, as shown with FEET and R ___ D. The result forms a continuous loop.

Answer on page 139.



Those who met seven times a week with friends, neighbours and family for activities such as playing board games; going to lectures, concerts or movies; or just chatting had fewer tiny holes and spaces in these pinkish-grey clumps of cells.

Brains without holes are healthier. They process information faster, are more flexible, and are linked to sharper memory in older adults. Geriatrician Dr Cynthia Felix thinks that brain-stimulating social activities – even once a week – may encourage the growth and maintenance of connections between the cells because the activities keep brain signals moving. Online virtual get-togethers may help, too.

Kent Brody, a 73-year-old lawyer, exemplifies the game-player who incorporates his habit into a full life. By 6.30am he is hard at work on a

crossword puzzle with a cup of coffee and Mozart playing on the smart speaker in his study. Brody, who does three or four puzzles a day, says he relishes the head-spinning difficulty of cryptic crossword puzzles. “The feeling of accomplishment is wonderful when you get that *aha* moment and see the cleverness of the person who constructed the puzzle,” he says.

Brody also enjoys Words With Friends, an app that lets you play a Scrabble-like game online with other people. He hopes his puzzle habits will help forestall age-related thinking and memory declines that have affected others in his family. “Everyone has moments when they can’t come up with a name, but I want to avoid bigger problems,” he says.

A word about fun: while specific games seem to tickle specific parts

of our brains, researchers have long touted the more general benefits that come from giving the mind an enjoyable time-out. "You have to play because it is relaxing and enjoyable, and it challenges you at the same time," Dr Small says.

"There are neurochemical changes involved in every mental experience. A positive mood is better for brain health. In contrast, depression and stress increase risk for cognitive decline. That's why, when playing a game, you have to ask yourself, *Is this fun?*"

TAKE A PAGE FROM GAMERS

If you're willing to put down your pencil for something more high-tech – and potentially more effective – take a page from gamers. Two neuroscience studies found that adults young and old who played the Super Mario 3D World video game for 30 minutes a day for two to four weeks improved on tests of associative memory, which includes remembering things such as what you had for lunch or what you told your spouse a few hours earlier.

"Associative memory is a kind of memory that starts declining in our 20s and is associated with Alzheimer's disease later in life," says the lead author of the study, Dr Craig Stark, a professor of neurobiology and behaviour. "The change we saw in older adults in memory ability was equivalent to someone 15 years younger."

■ CHALLENGE 5: POINTS OF VIEW

WHY IT MAY WORK: Playing all sorts of brain games at home for fun boosts memory, thinking speed, and other mental skills, according to a large 2016 UK review of 19 studies. And you don't have to play on a computer. Some research suggests using paper and pencil engages the brain in more ways than using a keyboard, and that could have memory benefits.

PLAY IT: Put the pictures in the grid so that the descriptions on the edges are true for the first picture in each row or column in the direction of the arrow. There can't be more than one picture per cell, each picture is used once, and some cells remain empty.

Answer on page 139.

The study also found that a solitaire app did nothing to affect memory and that the older study volunteers who played the simpler game Angry Birds got only a little boost.

What's so super about Mario? Dr Stark believes that complex, three-dimensional video games have the same effect as when our brains are forced to navigate new, immersive environments.

Another study of his, published in 2020, found that people who went on scavenger hunts – following clues for signs, benches, towers and gates in several parks – scored significantly higher for memory skills. Both

Brain Games That Really Work

A crossword puzzle grid with the following clues:

- Top clues (pointing down): plant life, has windows, flies, often sits on water
- Left clues (pointing right): found on land, in animal kingdom, is attached by a stem, goes underwater
- Right clues (pointing left): found in nature, has wheels, is human-made, stays in one place
- Bottom clues (pointing up): can have people inside, is alive, made of metal, has wings

Below the grid is a list of words with corresponding icons:

- house (house icon)
- submarine (submarine icon)
- birchbark canoe (canoe icon)
- duck (duck icon)
- airplane (airplane icon)
- tree (tree icon)
- fish (fish icon)
- bird (bird icon)
- leaf (leaf icon)

experiences seem to stimulate the seahorse-shaped hippocampus, which plays a starring role in learning and memory. Ageing and chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes diminish its powers, contributing to age-related lapses and even dementia.

Dr Stark thinks that exercising the hippocampus could counteract these things. He's seen something similar in studies on mice and other animals that play with new toys and then experience a boost of chemicals that carry signals from one brain cell to another.

GOOD NEWS AND BAD

There is both good and bad news related to these findings. The good news: "Even just carefully looking around you at everything in a room, at where objects are placed in relationship to one another, can help. So can getting outdoors and going to new places," says Dr Stark.

The bad news: Doing a crossword puzzle once a week won't do for you what putting yourself in a new environment can, he says. "Humans didn't develop a whole hippocampus and memory system to sit on a deck playing crossword puzzles."



Perhaps, but that doesn't mean your preferred puzzle isn't helping you. Truth be told, there is considerable debate in the world of neurobiology about what does and doesn't work to grow our brains.

People don't respond to physical exercise programmes or diets in the same way, says Professor Aaron Seitz, director of the Brain Game Center for Mental Fitness and Well-Being at the University of California, Riverside. "We have evidence they don't respond to brain challenges in the same way either. One type of game or training may work well for some people but not for others," he says.

Professor Seitz is in the process of recruiting 30,000 volunteers across the US for what may be the world's biggest brain-game study. It will look at the effects of a variety of games and trainings on working memory in people of various ages, personality types, level of game experience and

with different conditions that can affect brain health, such as diabetes and heart disease. "The results could help brain scientists build better brain-fitness programmes and aid consumers in choosing brain challenges best suited for them," Professor Seitz says. That data is sorely needed. "Finding out how games and brain trainings work and exactly how much they help is complicated," Dr Small says.

A game may train you only to play that game better, not to remember the grocery list or your new neighbour's name.

And studies of brain benefits for long-term game players may not fully factor out other habits. "People who play games regularly also tend to have more education and be more likely to exercise, eat a healthy diet and not smoke," Dr Small says. "All those factors also influence brain health."

PAMPER YOUR BRAIN

One fact all researchers embrace: your brain loves pampering. If your goal is to slash the risk for dementia, ongoing research suggests that your little grey cells will work better if you eat well, exercise and pay attention to artery health in addition to playing brain games.

According to a 2015 Finnish study, following a Mediterranean-style diet packed with produce and good fats,

Brain Games That Really Work

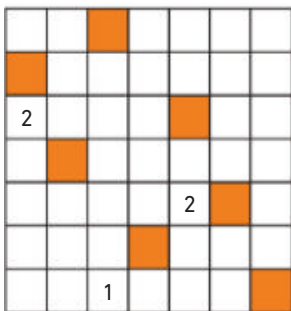
getting regular exercise, maintaining healthy blood pressure and body weight and playing brain-training games, slashed the risk of thinking-and-memory declines associated with dementia. Participants in the study also boosted memory by 40 per cent and increased mental processing speed by 150 per cent.

Dr Small agrees that an all-around brain-health strategy can be powerful. In research at the University of California, he found that just two weeks of eating and sleeping better made volunteers' brains function more efficiently. "There was less activity in certain areas," he says. "The brain didn't have to work as hard."

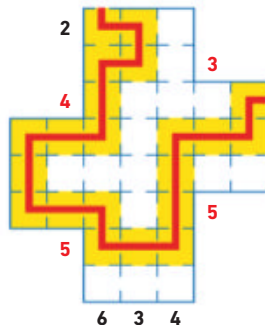
In fact, Dr Small suggests that if you find yourself debating whether to spend the next 20 minutes taking a walk or playing a brain game, you should choose the walk. Physical activity can help keep the arteries that deliver oxygen and fuel to your brain cells healthy and can even promote the growth of new brain cells and connections between them. "If you do one thing to help your brain, I'd say it's exercise," he says.

"Reducing stress and getting good sleep and a healthy diet are also important," he says. "Brain games work best as part of a whole package of brain-healthy strategies." And remember: a little fun never hurts. **R**

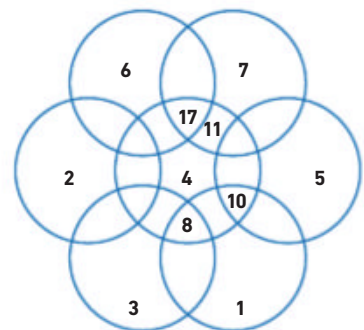
ANSWERS TO BRAIN GAME CHALLENGES



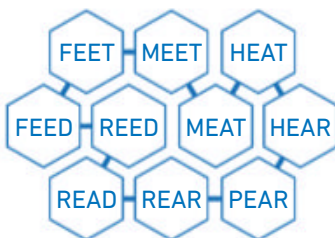
Challenge 1: Latin Square



Challenge 2: Path Finder



Challenge 3: Bubble Maths



Challenge 4: Word Worm



Challenge 5: Points of View

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RD RECOMMENDS



Non
Fiction

Fish Of The Day

Clarke Gayford & Mike Bhana

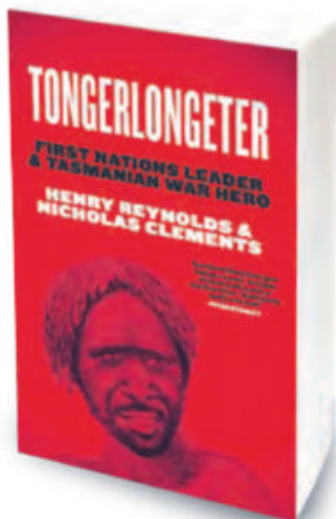
PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

New Zealand's first man of fishing, Clarke Gayford, and his buddy and film maker, Mike Bhana, take us on an epic voyage across the oceans to the world's best fishing spots. Packed with beautiful images, including underwater photography that gives you front-row viewing of the fishing action, this book covers 25 fabulous locations in New Zealand, Vanuatu, Tahiti, Hawaii and Australia. And because it pays to know the best way to cook your catch, the pair have compiled 35 seafood recipes from top chefs, making this a must-have for anyone who loves fish and fishing.



PHOTO: MIKE BHANA; PUBLISHER:
PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE NEW ZEALAND

COMPILED BY DIANE GODLEY



Tongerlongeter
Henry Reynolds and
Nicholas Clements

NEWSOUTH BOOKS

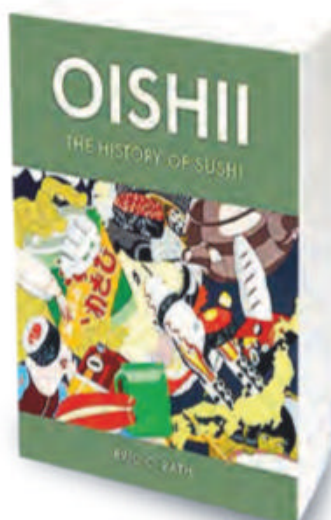
Tongerlongeter was a First Nations leader of the Oyster Bay nation of southeast Tasmania in the 1820s. Along with his allies, he led a remarkable frontier resistance that inspired terror throughout the colony, forcing Governor George Arthur to launch a massive military operation. Although Tongerlongeter escaped, cumulative losses took their toll. Having lost his arm, his country, and all but 25 of his people, the chief was exiled to Flinders Island. An epic story of resistance, suffering and survival.

Oishii: The History
Of Sushi

Eric C. Rath

REAKTION BOOKS

Sushi and sashimi are perhaps the best-known Japanese foods. But, according to Eric C. Rath, a professor of pre-modern Japanese history and an expert on Japanese food history, these global sensations are also the most widely misunderstood. Sushi was originally a means to preserve fish. *Oishii* traces the history and development of sushi and its evolution from street food to five-star cuisine. Included in the hardcover book are historical and original recipes and 65 illustrations and photographs.



A Dog's Best Friend

Laura Greaves

PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

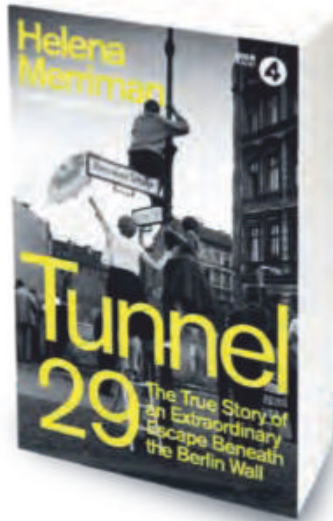
Laura Greaves, the author of *Extraordinary Old Dogs*, returns with a collection of more heartwarming tales of unlikely friendships. Humans and dogs may have been best friends for thousands of years, but dogs from around the world are building bonds with feathered, furred and even finned pals. In *A Dog's Best Friend*, Greaves regales tales of inseparable buddies for whom species is no barrier to unconditional love. They may be unusual pairings, but they prove to be as devoted as any human twosome.

Backyard Bees

Doug Purdie

MURDOCH BOOKS

Bees around the globe are under threat from insecticides and habitat loss. But we can all do our bit to show our favourite little pollinators some love, simply by adding more bee-friendly plants to your patch – regardless how small that may be. Author Doug Purdie maintains more than 100 beehives on city rooftops, balconies, backyards and community gardens. His guide, *Backyard Bees*, will assist you with plant selection as well as provide friendly, expert advice on keeping happy, healthy bees and harvesting their liquid gold.



Tunnel 29

Helena Merriman

HODDER & STOUGHTON

I love a Cold War story, especially when it involves the two Berlins. This story – with Stasi spies and harrowing anecdotes from behind East Berlin prison gates – reads like a thriller. It's 1962, a year after the Wall was erected overnight to keep the inhabitants of communist East Berlin from defecting to the West. Thousands of families were split up. This is the story of Joachim Rudolph, an engineering student and recent escapee from the East, who helped dig a tunnel under the Wall to free dozens from the brutal regime.

The Hundred Years War

Jamie Wall

ALLEN & UNWIN

The tour of South Africa's rugby team, the Springboks, to New Zealand in 1981 triggered the largest act of civil disobedience in the country's modern history. Thousands took to the streets in a culmination of years of anger about continued contact by the All Blacks with a team representing a racist apartheid regime. Jamie Wall weaves rugby and social history into this entertaining account, examining how the two cultures were brought together by rugby, torn apart by racism, then brought back together in a new era of rivalry.





Movies

Eternals **Superhero**

Eternals is the latest superhero picture from Marvel Studios. It follows an immortal alien race who were created by Celestials and have lived on Earth in secrecy for over 7000 years. When the Deviants, monstrous creatures long thought lost to history, mysteriously return to Earth, the Eternals are forced to reunite to defend humanity from these evil creatures. Based on the 1970s Marvel Comic, the movie is directed by Chloé Zhao, the Oscar award-winning director of *Nomadland*, and stars actors from around the globe including Gemma Chan (*Crazy Rich Asians*), Richard Madden (*Rocketman*) and Angelina Jolie (*Maleficent*).



Last Night In Soho

Psychological thriller

Eloise (New Zealander Thomasin McKenzie) is an aspiring fashion designer with a strange sixth sense. When she mysteriously slips back in time to London's swinging '60s, she finds herself transported into the body of her idol, Sandy (Anya Taylor-Joy, *The Queen's Gambit*) a dazzling wannabe singer. Here, she falls in love with singer Jack (Matt Smith, the 11th Dr Who), but 1960s London is not what it appears, and time seems to fall apart with shady and horrifying consequences. A British psychological horror film directed by Edgar Wright.



Podcasts



Monkeys Out On The Town

Do yourself a favour and make time to listen to this hilarious RD Classic about the day 100 monkeys escaped from a pet store and ran amok through the streets and buildings of New York. They lead everyone on a merry chase, getting up to all sorts of monkey business in the most unlikely places.



West Cork

Praised by critics and listeners alike, *West Cork* is an insightful examination into the murder of French TV producer Sophie Toscan du Plantier in a coastal Irish village in December 1996. The podcast carefully pieces the evidence together and looks at how the event still haunts the close-knit Irish community.



Something Rhymes With Purple

If you'd like to enhance your vocabulary, hosts Gyles Brandreth and Susie Dent delve into topics around the English language in this award-winning podcast. They expand on the meaning and origins of words you may not be aware of and share insights and quirky anecdotes.



The Wind In The Willows

Enter the magical world of Ratty, good-natured Mole, wealthy Mr Toad of Toad Hall, and the elusive Badger in Kenneth Grahame's much-loved book. Suitable for all but the very young, it is a timeless and enchanting story about friendship. You can find it in Apple Podcasts.



Audio Book

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THE GENIUS SECTION

*Sharpen Your
Mind*



The Mystery Of The **BLUE FLOWER**

*The story of how nature's
rare colour owes its
existence to bee vision*

BY *Adrian Dyer*

FROM **THE CONVERSATION**

At a dinner party, or in the schoolyard, the question of favourite colour frequently results in an answer of 'blue'. Why is it that humans are so fond of blue? And why does it seem to be so rare in the world of plants and animals?

We studied these questions and concluded blue pigment is rare at least in part because it's often difficult for plants to produce. They may only have evolved to do so when it brings them a real benefit: specifically, attracting bees or other pollinating insects.

We also discovered that the scarcity of blue flowers is partly due to the limits of our own eyes. From a bee's perspective, attractive bluish flowers are much more common.

A history of fascination The ancient Egyptians were fascinated with blue flowers, like the blue lotus, and went to great trouble to decorate objects in blue. They used an entrancing synthetic pigment (now known as Egyptian blue) to colour vases and jewellery, and semi-precious blue gemstones, such as lapis lazuli and turquoise, to decorate important artefacts, including the Mask of Tutankhamun.

Blue dye for fabric is now common, but its roots lie in ancient Peru, where an indigoid dye was used to colour cotton fabric about 6000 years ago. Indigo blue dyes reached Europe from

India in the 16th century, and the dyes and the plants that produced them became important commodities. Their influence on human fashion and culture are still felt today, perhaps most obviously in blue jeans and shirts.

Renaissance painters in Europe used ground lapis lazuli to produce dazzling works that captivated audiences. Today many blues are created with modern synthetic pigments or optical effects. The famous blue/gold dress photograph that went viral in 2015 not only shows that blue can still fascinate – it also highlights that colour is just as much a product of our perception as it is of certain wavelengths of light.

Why do humans like blue so much? Colour preferences in humans are often influenced by important environmental factors in our lives. An ecological explanation for humans' common preference for blue is that it is the colour of clear sky and bodies of clean water, which are signs of good conditions. Besides the sky and water, blue is relatively rare in nature.

What about blue flowers? We used a new online plant database to survey the relative frequencies of blue flowers compared to other colours.

Among flowers which are pollinated without the intervention of bees or other insects (known as abiotic pollination), none were blue.

But when we looked at flowers that

need to attract bees and other insects to move their pollen around, we started to see some blue.

This shows blue flowers evolved for enabling efficient pollination. Even then, blue flowers remain relatively rare, which suggests it is difficult for plants to produce such colours and may be a valuable marker of plant pollinator fitness in an environment.

We perceive colour due to how our eyes and brain work. Our visual system typically has three types of cone photoreceptors that each capture light of different wavelengths (red, green and blue) from the visible spectrum. Our brains then compare information from these receptors to create a perception of colour.

For the flowers pollinated by insects, especially bees, it is interesting to consider that they have different colour vision to humans. Bees have photoreceptors that are sensitive to ultraviolet, blue and green wavelengths, and they also show a preference for 'bluish' colours. The reason why bees have a preference for bluish flowers remains an open field of research.

Why understanding blue flowers is important About one-third of our food depends on insect pollination. However, world populations of bees and other insects are in decline, potentially due to climate change, habitat fragmentation, agricultural practices and other human-caused factors.

BLUE FLOWERS EVOLVED FOR ENABLING EFFICIENT POLLINATION



The capacity of flowering plants to produce blue colours is linked to land use intensity, including human-induced factors like artificial fertilisation, grazing and mowing that reduce the frequency of blue flowers. In contrast, more stressful environments appear to have relatively more blue floral colours to provide resilience.

For example, despite the apparent rarity of blue flower colours in nature, we observed that in harsh conditions, such as in the mountains of the Himalaya, blue flowers were more common than expected.

This shows that in tough environments plants may have to invest a lot to attract the few available and essential bee pollinators. Blue flowers thus appear to exist to best advertise to bee pollinators when competition for pollination services is high.

Knowing more about blue flowers protects bees

Urban environments are also important habitats for pollinating insects, including bees. Having bee-friendly gardens with flowers, including blue flowers that both we and bees really appreciate, is a convenient, pleasurable and potentially important contribution to enabling a sustainable future.

Basically, if you plant and maintain a good variety of flowers, the pollinating insects will come. **R**

An Associate Professor at RMIT University in Melbourne, vision scientist Adrian Dyer is interested in how the brain of a bee performs complex cognitive thinking.

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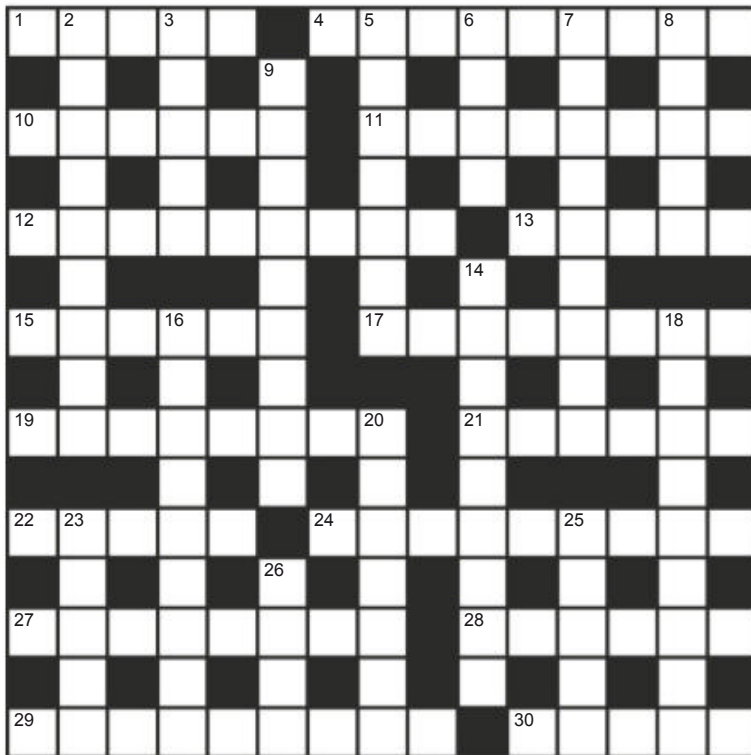
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PUZZLES

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles and mind stretchers, then check your answers on pages 142.



ACROSS

- 1** Baby's garment (5)
- 4** Bizarre (9)
- 10** Liverpool English; Liverpudlian (6)
- 11** Cooking pot (8)
- 12** Spoke quietly (9)
- 13** Yellowish-brown colour (5)
- 15** Dated (3,3)
- 17** Tender of sheep (8)

- 19** Paper-cutting instrument (8)
- 21** Uncover (6)
- 22** Transport (5)
- 24** Magyar (9)
- 27** Sheath for a sword (8)
- 28** Degrees in a right angle (6)
- 29** Hard water weather event (9)
- 30** Root vegetable (5)

Crosswise

Test your general knowledge.

DOWN

- 2** Boozy (9)
- 3** Saint -----, London cathedral (5)
- 5** Ulcer (7)
- 6** Tense (4)
- 7** Old ocean liner, perhaps (9)
- 8** Icon (5)
- 9** Depression (9)
- 14** Cleansing agent (9)
- 16** Brother of Hannibal; Carthaginian general (9)
- 18** Got going again (9)
- 20** Tremble (7)
- 23** Capital of Ghana (5)
- 25** Regenerate (5)
- 26** Agreement (4)

Puzzle Answers

PAGES 142

9			8				4	
	5	8						
2		6		9	7	5	1	
8		9						
	2	4		1		6	9	
						8		1
	9	2	6	5		3		7
						9	5	
	8				9			2

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY: To win, you have to put a number from 1 to 9 in each outlined section so that:

- Every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numerals (1-9) without repeating any of them;
- Each of the outlined sections has all nine numerals, none repeated.

IF YOU SOLVE IT WITHIN:

15 minutes, you're a true expert

30 minutes, you're no slouch

60 minutes or more, maybe numbers aren't your thing

BRAIN POWER
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FAMILY FUN

**Puzzle
Answers**

PAGES 142

Spot The Difference

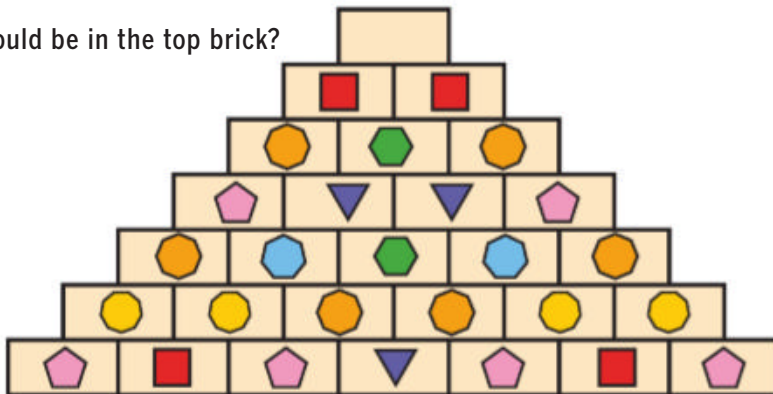
There are ten differences. Can you find them?



Shape Bricks

What shape should be the top brick?

What shape should be in the top brick?



TRIVIA

Test Your General Knowledge

- 1.** Which fast-food chain is the largest in the world? *1 point*
- 2.** If having no religious affiliation were to be counted as a religion, it would be the second largest in the world. True or false? *2 points*
- 3.** Is it possible for a human to get scared to death, literally? *1 point*
- 4.** In October 2020, what was born from an embryo that had been frozen for 27 years? *2 points*
- 5.** The 17th-century artisan Antonio Stradivari made musical instruments that now sell for very high prices. What kind of instruments did he make? *2 points*
- 6.** Which Egyptian pharaoh was entombed with a dagger made from meteorite iron? *1 point*
- 7.** Which one of these foods is not a

- rich source of potassium: lentils, radishes, bananas or avocados? *2 points*
- 8.** How would you write the decimal number 8 as a binary number? *2 points*
 - 9.** Which are more numerous: birds, humans or cattle? *1 point*
 - 10.** Did Neanderthals know how to make fire? *1 point*
 - 11.** Which of Newton's Laws states that 'for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction'?
 - a) calculus of infinitesimals.
 - b) third law of motion.
 - c) law of universal gravitation. *2 points*
 - 12.** What is the romanised Arabic word for 'moon'? *1 point*
 - 13.** Which sea is situated between Australia and New Zealand? *1 point*



- 14.** How do emperor penguins tell each other apart? *1 point*

16-20 Gold medal **11-15** Silver medal **6-10** Bronze medal **0-5** Wooden spoon

ANSWERS: **1.** McDonald's. **2.** False. It would be the third largest, after Christianity and Islam. **3.** Yes, but it is very rare. **4.** A baby girl. **5.** Stringed instruments, particularly violins. **6.** King Tutankhamun. **7.** Radishes. **8.** 1000. **9.** Birds. There are 400 billion birds, 7.7 billion humans, and 1.5 billion cattle. **10.** Yes. **11.** (a) 1011. **12.** Qamar. **13.** Tasman Sea. **14.** By listening to each other's unique calls.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

From Page 138

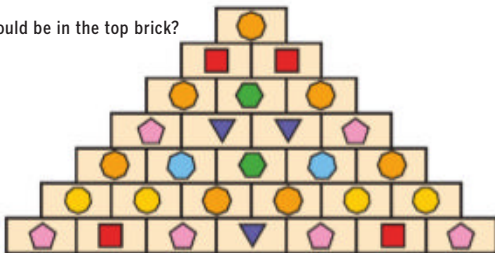
Crosswise



Sudoku

9	3	1	8	2	5	7	4	6
7	5	8	1	4	6	2	3	9
2	4	6	3	9	7	5	1	8
8	1	9	5	6	2	4	7	3
3	2	4	7	1	8	6	9	5
6	7	5	9	3	4	8	2	1
4	9	2	6	5	1	3	8	7
1	6	7	2	8	3	9	5	4
5	8	3	4	7	9	1	6	2

Shape Bricks



AN OCTAGON: Each shape has the same number of sides as the sum of the sides of the two shapes below it. If the number is over 10, then the last digit is used instead. For example, $9+8=17$ so the brick above is 7-sided. The top shape is an 8-sided octagon because there are two 4-sided shapes below it.

Spot The Difference



What shape should be in the top brick?



WORD POWER

Sink Or Swim

Any leaks in your vocabulary?

Set sail with this quiz of ocean terms and find out

BY *Rob Lutes*

- 1. aphotic** – A: without buoyancy. B: relating to an ocean zone lacking light for photosynthesis. C: dispersed throughout shallow waters.
- 2. seagirt** – A: surrounded by the sea. B: in flight above the ocean. C: powered by tidal energy.
- 3. atoll** – A: ring-shaped coral region. B: raised deep-water plateau. C: strong ocean breeze.
- 4. tsunami** – A: flightless seabird. B: tidal wave. C: area of warm tropical water.
- 5. breaker** – A: severe ocean storm. B: shipwreck. C: wave crashing into foam at the shore.
- 6. foreshore** – A: shore area covered and uncovered by the tide. B: ocean mooring. C: exclamation at land sighting.
- 7. benthic** – A: relating to extreme water turbulence. B: free of living organisms. C: occurring in ocean depths.
- 8. floe** – A: zone of nutrient-rich water. B: strong current. C: sheet of ice floating on the sea.
- 9. welter** – A: rise and fall with the waves. B: sink. C: erode.
- 10. reef** – A: ridge near the surface of the water. B: crude wooden watercraft. C: strong current hazardous to swimmers.
- 11. salinity** – A: cloudiness. B: saltiness. C: acidity.
- 12. nekton** – A: seaweed. B: cold water at ocean floor. C: animals that move freely in the ocean.
- 13. flotsam** – A: shipwreck debris on the ocean surface. B: narrow sandbars formed by ebb tide. C: large waves caused by earth tremors.
- 14. whelm** – A: engulf. B: raise from seabed. C: make seaworthy.
- 15. tidal bore** – A: edge of a tide that pushes up a river. B: underwater cavern excavated by tides. C: tedium induced by watching the tide.

Answers

1. aphotic – (B) relating to an ocean zone lacking light for photosynthesis. Once at sea, Rupa gazed down and dreamed of exploring the aphotic darkness below.

2. seagirt – (A) surrounded by the sea. Despite its historic connections to Europe, England was always a seagirt nation, set apart from the continent.

3. atoll – (A) ring-shaped coral region. Far from desolate, the remote atoll was lush with tropical plant life.

4. tsunami – (B) tidal wave. Abigail's dive shop was obliterated by the tsunami.

5. breaker – (C) wave crashing into foam at the shore. While the adults relaxed on the beach, the kids frolicked in the breakers.

6. foreshore – (A) shore area covered and uncovered by the tide. Antoine searched the foreshore for hermit crabs.

7. benthic – (C) occurring in ocean depths. Many benthic organisms are seldom seen by humans.

8. floe – (C) sheet of ice floating on the sea. Gabriel carefully guided his vessel past the large floe on the starboard side.

9. welter – (A) rise and fall with the waves. Niamh watched the raft welter in the choppy seas.

10. reef – (A) ridge near the surface of the water. Fred's boat was just one of many that were wrecked on the reef.

11. salinity – (B) saltiness. The study revealed that higher ocean salinity is linked to a lower freezing temperature.

12. nekton – (C) animals that move freely in the ocean. Ocean animal life can be broadly divided into plankton – the drifters, and nekton – the swimmers.

13. flotsam – (A) shipwreck debris on the ocean surface. Malene walked along the shore collecting flotsam left by the tide.

14. whelm – (A) engulf. The enormous waves threatened to whelm Dyson's lifeboat.

15. tidal bore – (A) edge of a tide that pushes up a river. A group gathered to watch the tidal bore race upriver against the current.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

5–8: Fair

9–11: Good

12–15: Word Power Wizard

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