

SEPTEMBER 2023

Reader's Digest

THE
GENIUS
ISSUE

HOW TO BOOST YOUR MEMORY

By BETH WEINHOUSE

THE WEIRD HABITS of History's Geniuses

From the book
EDISON'S GHOSTS

Next Stop THE AFTERLIFE

By KEN JENNINGS

I SHUT UP AND EVERYTHING CHANGED

From TORONTO LIFE

SMART WAYS TO BE LAZY

By RD READERS

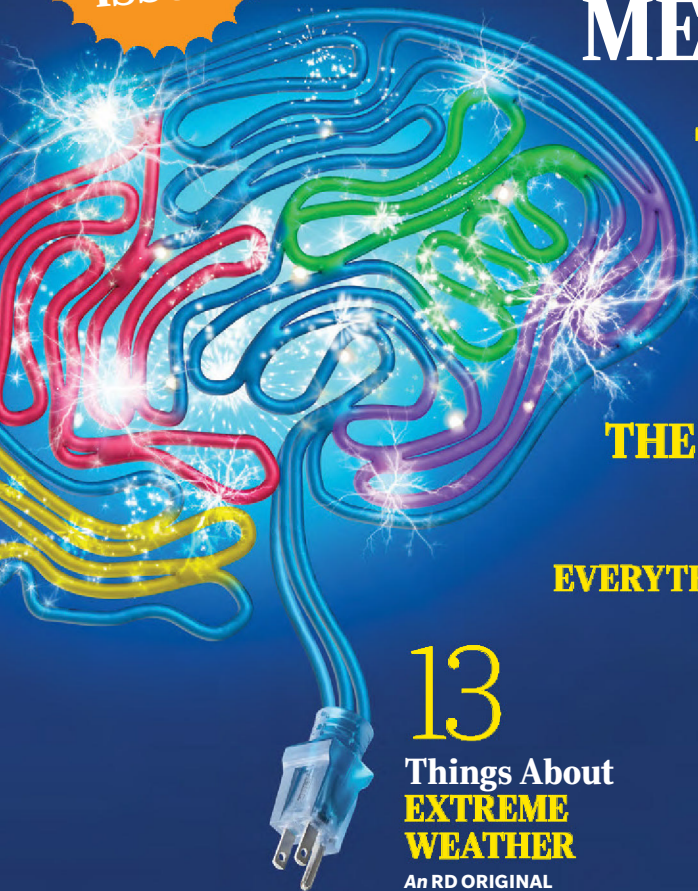
A Tough Time for Teachers

By ADAM PIORE

13

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A Trusted Friend in a Complicated World

56

Features

47

COVER STORY

MAKING MEMORIES*

How we remember ...
and how not to forget.

BY BETH WEINHOUSE

56

GENIUS

Einstein Did What?!*

Silly slip-ups from a
few of history's greatest
genius minds.

BY KATIE SPALDING FROM
THE BOOK *EDISON'S GHOSTS*

62

NATIONAL INTEREST

Teachers Put to the Test*

Facing low pay, school
shootings and angry
parents, educators
are leaving the profes-
sion—and students
are paying the price.

BY ADAM PIORE

72

YOUR TRUE STORIES

Lazy at Its Finest*

Clever ways to get
things done, from inge-
nious chore-avoiders.

BY READER'S DIGEST
READERS

76

DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

A Marine's Toughest Battle

Doctors said there was
slim hope for the baby
born with only half a
heart. But her father
had just begun to fight.

BY ROBERT KIENER

86

HEALTH

The Upside of Anxiety

How to worry well.

BY PATRICIA PEARSON

92

INSPIRATION

The Sound of Silence*

How shutting up for
three months and
walking more than
600 miles transformed
my life.

BY D.G. MARSHALL
FROM *TORONTO LIFE*



Departments

4 **Dear Reader**

WORLD OF GOOD

7 **The Puffling Patrol**

EVERYDAY HEROES

8 **Electrocuted at the L Train**

BY DEREK BURNETT

DEPARTMENT OF WIT

12 **Next Stop, the Afterlife***

BY KEN JENNINGS
FROM THE BOOK
100 PLACES TO SEE
AFTER YOU DIE

BEST PET PALS

16 **Misty the Rescue Dog**

FOOD PASSPORT

21 **Rah Rah, Ramen**

BY LEILA EL SHENNAWY

13 THINGS

26 **Bluster About Extreme Weather***

BY CAITLIN
STALL-PAQUET

WHERE, OH WHERE?

32 **Turnip Rock**

THE RD LIST

102 **Only Murders in the Building, Dennis Quaid, Inside Comedy and More**

QUOTABLE QUOTES

105 **Marie Kondo, Rick Rubin, Juliette Lewis and More**

TRUSTED FRIEND

112 **Lakeside by Jeannie Phan**

The Healthy

35 **The Eyes Are the Prize**

BY BETH WEINHOUSE

40 **News from the World of Medicine**

BY SAMANTHA RIDEOUT

Brain Games

106 **Jungle Walk, Four-Part Harmony and More**

109 **Word Power**

12



Humor

Life in These United States	18
Humor in Uniform	24
All in a Day's Work	30
Laughter, the Best Medicine	44

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DEAR READER

Total Recall

HERE ARE A lot of funny password jokes, but my favorite is: “First they ask you to create a password so complicated that you can’t remember it, and then they lock you out when you forget what it was.”

To be honest, I had to look up that joke because I couldn’t remember it. If you’re like me, you can recall every word to a song you haven’t heard since high school but can’t remember the password you created yesterday. Our brains are funny—and fickle—things.

This month, we’re talking about memory, specifically the factors that can boost or break down our brainpower. See “Making Memories” (page 47) for tips on strengthening your recall. One tip: Do puzzles. I recommend starting with our Brain Games section (page 106).

Reading is another way to keep your mind sharp. Finding time to read can be a challenge. Finding what to read can be an even bigger challenge,

especially when you can’t remember the name of that book a friend recommended.

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The Puffling Patrol

CROUCHING LOW, 9-YEAR-OLD Sigrún Anna Valsdóttir peers under a truck, the beam from her flashlight catching the glint of two small, shiny black eyes. It's after dark, and as a member of the Puffling Patrol, she is on a mission to rescue a puffling—a baby Atlantic puffin. The black-and-white seabirds are beloved on Heimaey, one of Iceland's many islands, and each year, as the baby birds leave the nest, residents set out to rescue those who become disoriented by the lights of the island's only town. After a half-hour standoff, the puffling darts out from underneath the truck and into the cardboard box Valsdóttir has waiting. In the morning, the girl will release the bird off a cliff and watch it fly out to sea. **R**

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS LINDER





Electrocuted at the L Train

A stranger had fallen onto the train tracks, where deadly jolts of electricity kept anyone from grabbing him

—
BY *Derek Burnett*

IT WAS a sunny afternoon in June of 2022 when Anthony Perry stepped off the train at Chicago's 69th Street station. The 20-year-old, who worked nights in a grocery store, was on his way to see his grandfather so they could go look at a car Perry was thinking about buying.

On the platform, two men were throwing punches. Then the unthinkable happened: The pair tumbled over the edge and onto the tracks. One man ended up on his back, fending off blows. Suddenly, he started bucking and convulsing. The aggressor

straddling him leaped backward, bounded back up onto the platform and disappeared.

The man had fallen atop the third rail, the conduit for the 600 volts of electricity that power Chicago's L trains. As Perry and other horrified onlookers watched, he twitched grotesquely as the current surged through his body, his head bouncing up and down off the tracks.

"Help him!" a woman wailed. "Please, someone!"

Perry couldn't just stand there and watch. He sat at the edge of the

Anthony Perry
ignored the
inherent dangers
of a busy train track
to save a stricken
passenger.



platform and eased himself down. Assuming that every rail between him and the man was electrified, Perry took a few quick bounds, high-kneeing it as he'd done in high school football, until he was standing over the victim.

The guy looked dead, his body still thrashing rhythmically as the electricity pulsed, his head banging against a steel rail. Perry wondered how he was going to escape the situation he'd just put himself into—straddling the deadly rail, about to lay hands on a

PERRY WAS RECRUITED BY THE CHICAGO FIRE DEPARTMENT.

body coursing with electricity. The train he'd just gotten off was idling, thankfully. But had the conductor seen him? Would it start up again?

Putting his trust in God, Perry reached down and grasped the victim's wrist. Instantly, he felt a blast of electric shock shoot through his body. Perry flinched and jumped back. He reached down a second time, and was shocked again. But the third time he seized the man's wrist and forearm and, braving the shock, yanked. The guy's body slid briefly along the third rail, coming to rest on the gravel on the outer edge of the tracks, beside a concrete barricade.

The man was breathing, but

raggedly. Something wasn't right.

"Give him chest compressions!" yelled a woman on the platform wearing scrubs.

Perry was no expert, but for a few moments he worked on the man's heart until the victim began convulsing. Once again, Perry grabbed him, keeping him from flailing back onto the third rail or smashing his head into the concrete.

Then he heard a commotion behind him—paramedics and firefighters had arrived. They'd told authorities to cut the circuit, deactivating the third rail. Perry let the professionals take over. His heart still racing from the adrenaline and the electric shocks, he climbed back up onto the platform, grabbed his things and continued on to his grandfather's. As planned, they went to look at the car he wanted to buy, but it had been sold.

The evening news reported the incident, crediting an anonymous hero with saving the victim's life. After a friend outed him to the media, Perry became the toast of Chicago. Just days after the incident, a local philanthropist rewarded him with a car. Perry was then recruited by the Chicago Fire Department and is now training to be an EMT.

Out of all the people on the platform that day, why was Perry the only one to help? As he sees it, he alone was not thinking about what harm might befall him. "The word I'll use is *faith*," he says. "Faith over fear." **R**

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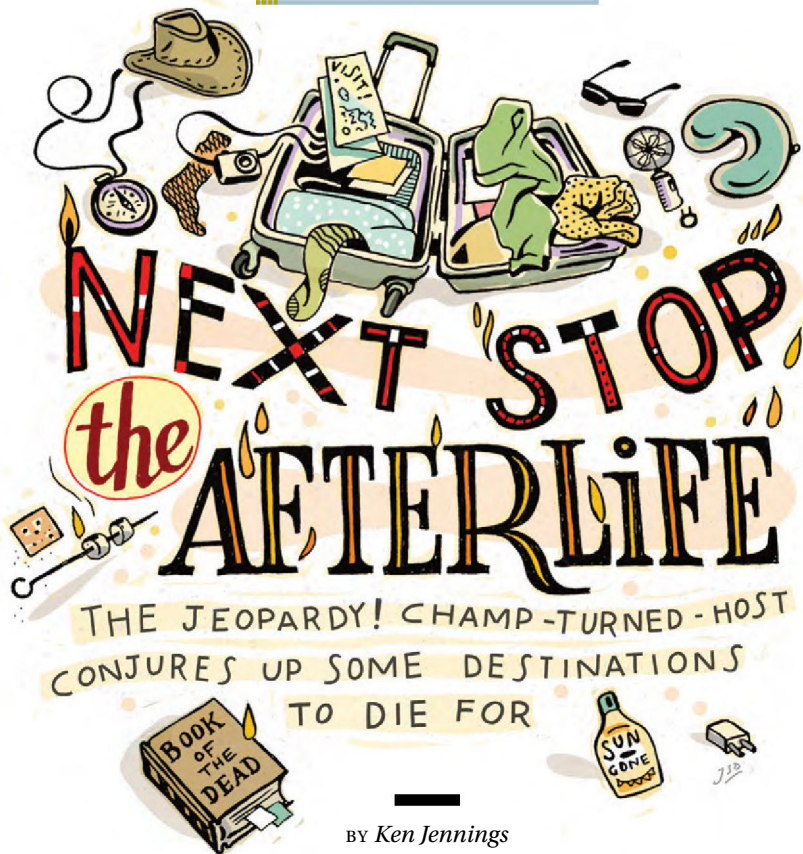
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DEPARTMENT OF WIT



THE JEOPARDY! CHAMP-TURNED-HOST
CONJURES UP SOME DESTINATIONS
TO DIE FOR

BY Ken Jennings

FROM THE BOOK 100 PLACES
TO SEE AFTER YOU DIE

THERE'S NO WAY to know for sure where you're going when you die, but it's never too early to investigate your options. After all, eternity is an awfully long time to end up in the wrong place.

DUAT

Ancient Egypt

We know more about how the ancient Egyptians died than about how they lived. Duat, their underworld, was full of obstacles, which could be navigated successfully only with the protective spells found in the Egyptians' famous *Book of the Dead*. Those obstacles comprise a full Indiana Jones temple of doom: There's a lake of fire, torture chambers and even booby traps. But for the adventurous traveler, the iron walls and turquoise trees of Duat make for an afterlife unlike any other.

► TOP ATTRACTION:

The Hall of the Two Truths is a can't-miss. Get an early start, because you'll want to arrive washed, anointed in myrrh, and wearing fresh clothes and white sandals. Final judgment in Duat takes place in this long, columned chamber, where Osiris and the other Egyptian gods sit enthroned under a canopy. Anubis, the jackal-headed judge of the dead, will weigh your heart against an ostrich feather. If the scales balance exactly, Osiris will welcome you into the afterlife.



HADES

Ancient Greece

The Greek god of death was Hades, a name that came to apply to his whole underworld realm. It is, for the most part, an awful and gloomy place.

► TOP ATTRACTION:

Cerberus. The iconic mascot of the Greek underworld is a savage three-headed hound, each of his necks bristling with snakes. He will be a meek little puppy dog as you enter but will not hesitate to devour you should you try to exit, so get your cuddles in the first time you pass him.



HEL

The Norse

Thanks to Marvel movies, Norse mythology is hotter right now than it's been in almost a thousand years. Viking warriors always had an appealing afterlife in Valhalla, but the majority of mortals do not die a valiant death. Most wind up underground in Hel. Odin gave this icy realm to Loki's daughter, also named Hel.

Hel (the daughter) is the grim, cruel mistress of the hall of Eljudnir (meaning "damp with sleet"). Her dish is Hungr ("hunger"), her knife is Sultr ("famine"), her bed is Kor ("sickbed") and its curtains are Blikjandabol ("gleaming disaster"). In short, she runs the world's worst Ikea.



INFERNO

The Divine Comedy

Dante offers another take on hell. In theory, his Inferno should hold millions of unbaptized people, but somehow he mostly runs into his favorite literary characters and his political opponents now receiving their comeuppances. That's the thing about hell: Nine huge circles, but it still feels like a small town.

► TOP ATTRACTION:

The city of Dis. On the fifth circle of hell, you can light a flame in a tower battle-ment and Phlegyas, a king from Greek mythology that nobody remembers, will appear to ferry you across the river Styx to Dis, a spectacular city of glowing minarets. Once inside Dis, you're in for a surprise: This is the sixth circle, where heretics burn forever.

THE LAND OF THE UNLIVING

DC Comics

Ancient Greeks and Egyptians could only aspire to a cosmology as confusing as the ones in superhero comics. When you die in the DC Universe, you might be greeted by Nekron, a force of evil with skeletal monster makeup and body armor. Nekron rules the Land of the Unliving, where souls await judgment and sometimes turn into a zombie space army called the Black Lantern Corps. But your best bet might be to hang on for a few years. Resurrection is always just one new writer away. **R**



Misty grew from a mischievous puppy into a hero dog.



BEST PET PALS

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Misty the Rescue Dog

BROOKFIELD, IL

I WAS FIGHTING a migraine one summer day and decided to step outside for some fresh air. I was gazing at our koi pond, my rescue dog Misty nearby, when suddenly I fainted.

Eventually, I gasped awake to Misty desperately yanking my arms, legs and clothes, slowly but surely pulling me from the water. She'd managed to get my upper body on land, bringing me back to consciousness by licking my face and whimpering.

Once I got to my feet, she had my wrist in her mouth, gently pulling me away from the pond and toward the house so I could call for help.

While the paramedics worked on me, Misty never left my side. They determined that I was concussed, had been out for three to five minutes, and had been facedown and almost fully submerged in water. I could have drowned if Misty hadn't acted so quickly.

Now, whenever I'm in the yard, Misty sticks close and always makes sure she's between me and the pond. Not many people can answer "Who rescued who?" quite the way I can. **R**

—Nominated by CATHY ARREDIA

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LIFE
IN THESE
United States

As we boarded an airplane some years back, the two women behind me were voicing their anxiety about flying. That is, until they peeked into the cockpit and got a glimpse of our pilots.

"Whoa," one said. "They're both good-looking."

Her friend sounded relieved. "Good," she said. "They have more to live for."

—PAULA DAVIS
Denver, CO

During a bus tour in Canada, our guide pointed out all the points of interest. "And over there," he said, indicating the golden arches of the local McDonald's, "is the American Embassy."

—PATRICIA WOOD
Richmond, VA



Headlines we thought we'd never have to see:

♦ "Stop licking toads to get high"

—OUTSIDEONLINE.COM

♦ "Why You Should Think Twice Before Getting Your Nose Hair Waxed"

—HEALTHDIGEST.COM

Following the funeral service for my grandmother, my family and I drove to the cemetery. When we arrived, my 3-year-old asked where we were.

"This is where we're going to bury Oma," I said gently. He let out a deep sigh. "It's sad, isn't it?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "I

didn't bring my shovel."

—TRACI PAGLIO
Pawleys Island, SC

A greeter welcomed my friend and me when we walked into a Bass Pro Shops store. Pointing to the canes my friend and I use, I joked, "We really don't need the canes. We just use them to beat off the women."

She shot back, "And you'll need the other end of the cane to hook them."

—GEORGE BERRIEN
Verona Beach, FL

The moment I realized I wasn't as smart as I thought:

♦ When someone told

me they had the same name as me, I said “Really? What’s your name?”

◆ I was shopping for clothes when I spotted someone I recognized. We made eye contact and smiled at each other. It was just then I realized I was walking toward a full-length mirror.

◆ After this conversation with my boss: “I will be in late tomorrow. I have a doctor’s appointment.” “Is everything OK?” “Yes, why do you ask?”

◆ I said, “I’m consistent, just not all the time.” And it really had to be pointed out to me.

—REDDIT.COM

Instead of “emotional” support, my son said “mimosational” support and I want that a lot more.

—[@FATHERWITHTWINS](#)

YOUR FUNNY STORY
about friends or family could be worth \$\$\$*.* For details, go to page 2 or [RD.COM/SUBMIT](#).

Marriage can be difficult but rewarding. Like this morning, I told my husband, “I love you.” And he looked deep into my eyes and said, “Do you know where my keys are?”

—[@TRACIEBREAUX](#)

BACK TO SCHOOL

I asked my granddaughter how her first day of first grade went. “Well,” she said, “I don’t know how to read yet.”

—SUSAN WESTON
Trenton, MI

A freshman at a Catholic high school, I was attending our first Friday mass, so naturally I sang my heart out. Suddenly, the principal, Sister Matilda, appeared by my side. She leaned over and said, “Mr. Godfrey, the Lord will not mind if you mouth the words.”

—DON GODFREY
Ocean Isle Beach, NC

My 10-year-old grandson Sam was so excited. He had just gotten a saxophone, which he was learning to play for the school band. I watched proudly as he took the instrument out of the case, assembled it and positioned it around his

neck. He played one note, then carefully reversed the process.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

He answered, “That’s all I know.”

—JUDY PUGLIESE
Shrewsbury, MA

In high school, a classmate responded to a teacher’s question with a “yo mama” joke. Without missing a beat, the teacher said, “Leave my mother out of this. I don’t make fun of your parents and look what they produced.”

—REDDIT.COM



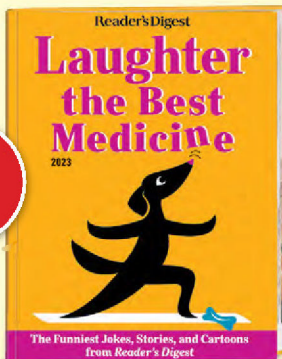
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†IQVIA ProVoice Survey™ Jan 2005 – Mar 2022.



Rah Rah, Ramen

The slurpy, savory story of a Japanese sensation

BY *Leila El Shennawy*

YOU MAY THINK of ramen as college kid cuisine, but dressier versions of this noodles-and-broth dish, with toppings such as roast pork, fish cakes, bamboo shoots and poached eggs, blow the instant kind out of its bowl. Over the last few years in the United States, gourmet ramen restaurant options have jumped more than 30%, so you can likely enjoy this Asian sensation close to home.

Chinese immigrants first brought the wheat noodle recipe to Japan, according to historian George Solt. In his book, *The Untold History of Ramen*,



History of Ramen, he tells of a scholar from China during the 17th century who instructed the Japanese feudal lord he worked for to add pork and vegetables to his noodle soup.

By 1910, the first ramen restaurant in Japan, Rai Rai Ken, was serving the dish to Tokyo diners. It was called *shina soba* in Japanese (*shina* is an archaic

TOKYO REMAINS THE RAMEN CAPITAL, WITH WELL OVER 10,000 SHOPS.

Japanese word for “China,” while *soba* are thin buckwheat noodles). But the Japanese pronunciation of *lamian*, the Chinese word for the soft wheat noodles, evolved into today’s “ramen.”

World War II interrupted the dish’s popularity, as food shortages led the Japanese government to ban “luxury foods,” including ramen. In 1945, as the seven-year Allied occupation of Japan began, the worst rice harvest in decades caused widespread hunger. Fearing that food shortages might alienate the population and lead them to gravitate toward communism, the U.S. occupiers began to import American wheat into Japan. The renewed availability of wheat noodles refueled the demand for ramen, which became a street food as food stalls popped up to sell the tasty and affordable dish to the hungry population.

In 1958, a Taiwanese businessman named Momofuku Ando created a dehydrated version of ramen that only required the addition of boiling water. It came to the U.S. in Styrofoam cups under the name Cup O’Noodles in the 1970s. (In 1993, the company dropped the O’, so now the official name is Cup Noodles.) The Americanized version had shorter noodles that could be eaten more easily with a spoon, as opposed to the traditional chopsticks.

Today there are two museums in Japan dedicated to Ando’s creation, and his name inspired Korean American celebrity chef David Chang’s Momofuku Noodle Bar in Manhattan. Chang’s restaurant, an early seller of gourmet ramen, helped change the perception of the dish from a cheap, prepackaged pantry staple to a complex and indulgent treat.

Hungry visitors to ramen shops can typically choose from four broths: *shoyu* (which is soy sauce-based), *miso* (made with fermented soybean paste), *shio* (or “salt,” often with a chicken or fish base) or *tonkotsu* (rich and fatty, made from pork). The salty broth is what gives ramen its mouthwatering umami, a pleasant savory taste.

Tokyo remains the ramen capital of the world, with well over 10,000 ramen shops. Among them: Ichiran, with locations not only in Japan but also in Hong Kong, Taiwan and New York City.

Whether you choose *shio* or *shoyu*, or instant or gourmet, *itadakimasu*—bon appetit! **R**





"It's always easy to spot the alpha male."

When our son came home on leave from Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, his thrilled little sister followed him everywhere, even into the bathroom to watch him shave. That's when she noticed a star tattoo on his shoulder. A few minutes later, she excitedly told me the news: Her brother got a star on his shoulder, "probably for making his bed every day."

—MARIE
CHENARD FRITZ
Winnfield, LA

Spotted—this sign at U.S. Army Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri: "Drive carefully. The man you run over may be your replacement."
—JESSE BEER
Milford, IN

My unit was boarding a ship headed for post-war Germany when a sergeant holding a clipboard ordered us to sign up for kitchen duty. I'd had my share of scrubbing pots and pans in basic training, so I avoided the task by signing the name of an

old friend, Alvin Harris. Three times a day for eight days, the ship's loudspeaker blared: "Alvin Harris, report to the kitchen!" My ruse was never discovered, but life eventually got even. After my Army service, I got married and have been washing dishes every day for 70 years.
—WAYNE WHITE
Walnut Creek, CA

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



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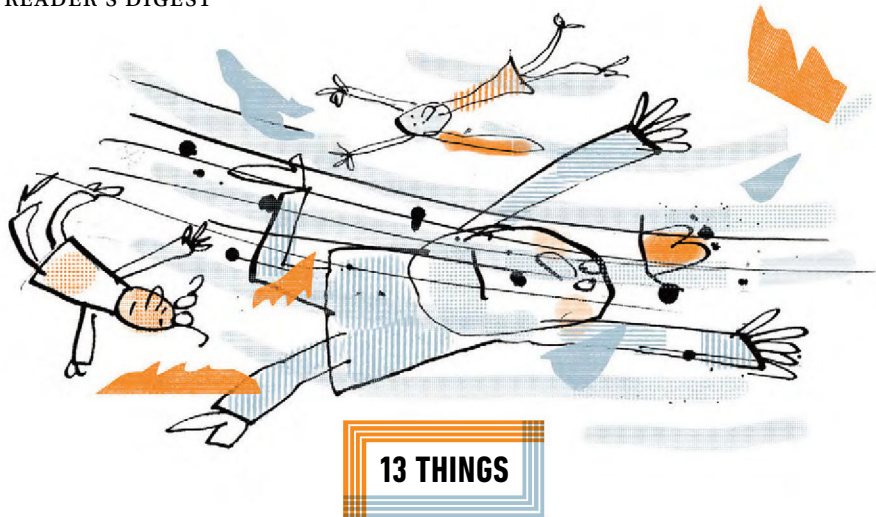
* Data from this study was collected with the outside US version of the FreeStyle Libre 14 day system. FreeStyle Libre 2 has the same features as FreeStyle Libre 14 day system with optional, real-time glucose alarms. Therefore the study data is applicable to both products. † Fingersticks are required if your glucose alarms and readings do not match symptoms or when you see Check Blood Glucose symbol during the first twelve hours. ‡ Data based on total active Medicare patients with CGM readers. § Patients must meet Medicare eligibility coverage criteria.

References: 1. Fokkert, M. *BMJ Open Diabetes Res Care* (2019): <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjdc-2019-000809> 2. Evans, M. *Diabetes Ther* (2020): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13300-019-00720-0> 3. Kroeger, J. *Diabetes Ther* (2020): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13300-019-00741-9> 4. Haak, T. *Diabetes Ther* (2017): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13300-016-0223-6> 5. Data on file. Abbott Diabetes Care. 6. Local Coverage Determination (LCD) L33822, Glucose Monitors, <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/lcd.aspx?LCDId=33822>.

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13 THINGS

Bluster About Extreme Weather

BY *Caitlin Stall-Paquet*

1 HURRICANE WHO? We've been naming storms since the 19th century, thanks to a meteorologist in Australia who started naming them after politicians he disliked. Using female names caught on in the United States in the 1950s. Weather reports even included sexist clichés about “temperamental” storms “flirting” with

coasts. Male names got folded into the mix by 1979, after Florida feminist Roxcy Bolton campaigned for equality.

2 THE ASSOCIATION with destruction can make hurricane monikers plunge in popularity as baby names, which is what happened to Katrina after 2005 and then Ida after 2021. Both were

Category 5 hurricanes, the most catastrophic on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, with winds of more than 157 mph. Particularly bad storms such as these have had their names retired by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the group that selects the names. The WMO lists 21 alphabetical names each year (it

skips Q, U, X, Y and Z). All 21 names were used in both 2020 and 2021.

3 MAYBE NOT with cats and dogs, but it really does rain animals sometimes. Tornadoes can pick up critters and carry them long distances, leading to accounts of frogs or fish falling from the sky as recently as last year, when anchovies rained down on San Francisco.

4 SOME SAY animals can predict the weather, though many such theories are unproved. Purported patterns include cows lying down ahead of rain and birds flying lower prior to storms. One link that has been proved is that coastal sharks swim deeper into the water during the drop in barometric pressure that precedes tropical storms.

5 ICE CAN increase the weight of tree branches thirtyfold. During the Great Ice Storm

of 1998, freezing rain brought down millions of trees across Canada and the northeastern United States. Widespread power outages left more than 5 million people without electricity—some for a month.

6 BLIZZARDS CAN wreak similar havoc, and they can happen in unlikely places. During Iran's 1972 blizzard—called the worst in history—almost 26 feet of snow fell over nearly a week. “Once-in-a-generation” storms such as this are happening more often as polar winds meet warmer-than-usual winter conditions.

7 RISING AVERAGE temperatures across the globe are contributing to more frequent heat waves and bigger storms. Earlier this year, Cyclone Freddy raged for a record 34 days, hitting parts of Africa. Human activity is known to compound the disastrous effects

of extreme weather too. In British Columbia, in 2021, torrential rain over forest areas that had been clear-cut led to deadly mudslides. Major flooding in Germany and Belgium in 2021 and Australia's unprecedented bush fires of 2020 have also been attributed to climate change.

8 AFTER BURSTING onto the scene in the 1970s, the disaster-movie genre—with hits such as *The Poseidon Adventure* and *The Swarm*—really took off in the 1990s. Even so, *Volcano*, *Hard Rain* and *Avalanche*, to name a few, just couldn't match the success of one of the decade's biggest blockbusters: *Twister*.

9 LIGHTNING SPRITES, common in the Midwest, make skies glow with jellyfish-like shapes during thunderstorms. The crimson lights are produced by electric discharges in a middle

region of the atmosphere known as the mesosphere. Tall buildings are especially prone to lightning strikes, so skyscrapers are equipped with lightning rods to safely dissipate the energy if they get hit. Chicago's Willis Tower (formerly called the Sears Tower) was struck 250 times from 2015 to 2020.

10 MONGOLIA'S southern province of Dornogovi experienced a record 20-hour sandstorm in 2021. These storms occur when strong winds sweep across dry desert. They can sometimes cause "blood rain," a reddish precipitation from dust carried from the Sahara Desert mixing with water before falling back to earth. This rare event occurred in the sky over Spain in 2022.

11 INTENSE HEAT waves can melt power lines and buckle railway tracks, which happened last year in the United Kingdom. People also tend to lose their cool during hot weather: Studies show that violence spikes as our bodies heat up, possibly due to a drop in serotonin and an increase in testosterone, which can make us more aggressive.

12 EVERY YEAR 1,200 or so tornadoes are reported in the United States. That's 75% of all the tornadoes in the world. Tornado Alley, which runs vertically through the middle of the country from South Dakota to Texas, bears the brunt. The Lone Star State is hit most frequently, averaging 137 tornadoes a year, but a neighboring state,

Oklahoma, holds the record for the biggest twister ever. In 2013, a 2.6-mile-wide one barreled through El Reno, Oklahoma, at never-before-seen ground speeds of 295 mph.

13 WHILE MOST people wisely seek safety during extreme weather, storm chasers run toward the action. Despite the danger, deaths are rare, and these extreme-weather bugs gather invaluable meteorological data. You can stream the spectacular videos they capture on platforms such as WeatherSpy. Girls Who Chase, founded by extreme-weather lovers Jen Walton and Melanie Metz in 2021, inspires and educates women to head out into the eye of the storm and to pursue careers in science. **R**



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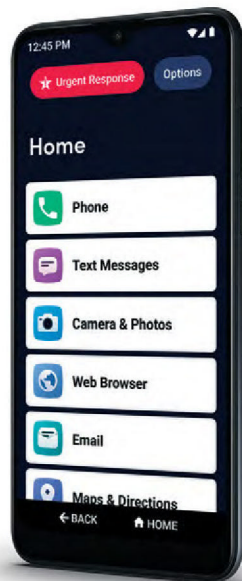
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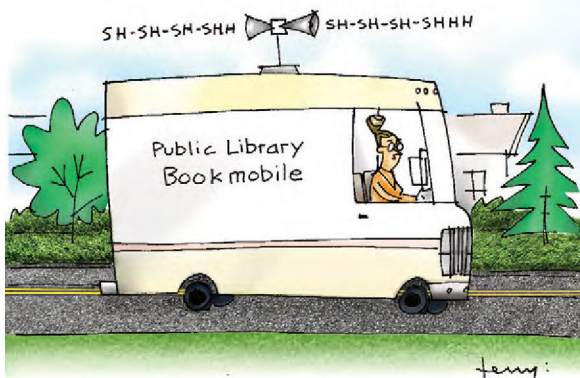
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ALL
in a Day's
WORK



On the first day of school, I asked each of the kids in my first grade class to say what they wanted to be when they grew up. One boy said “artist.”

“Oh, that’s wonderful!” I gushed. “What kind?”

He replied, “Con.”

—SARA LIDTKE
Keizer, OR

I was walking near New York’s Wall Street and popped into a deli. I ordered a sandwich and chatted with the owner. I asked whether being in the financial district ever led to his getting valuable tips from his informed customers.

He paused his sandwich-making. “Every day, those

brokers come in here,” he said. “They get their bagels, sandwiches, doughnuts, coffee ...” He pointed toward the door of his shop. “And every day, they’re out there on the sidewalk, pushing and shoving on a door that is clearly marked ‘pull.’”

—STEVEN SCHARFF,
in the New York Times

My 12-year-old cousin asked my boyfriend, a teacher, how he sleeps at night knowing he’s giving kids homework.

—[@LEMONMOMBLEY](#)

I was screensharing in a meeting and realized I had multiple tabs open searching “do cats feel love?”

—[@KATEWILLETT](#)

Lawmakers from around the world have created many laws, some stranger than others:

◆ All beached whales and sturgeons in the United Kingdom must be offered to the monarch, according to a decree from 1322. Nevertheless, in 2004, the late Queen Elizabeth II waived her right to a 264-pound sturgeon caught by a fisherman in Wales.

◆ Since 1915, using bread to clean wallpaper or floors is prohibited in Austria.

◆ In 1995, the city of Barra do Garças in Brazil passed a law setting aside 12 acres for a UFO airport to cater to the “flying saucers” reportedly spotted in the area.

—READER'S DIGEST
INTERNATIONAL EDITION

When our pastor was in graduate school, the dorm cafeteria was not known for its culinary excellence. One evening, as he finished saying grace, his

friend pointed to his dish and said, “Sorry, Steve, it didn’t work; it’s still there.”

—GORDON HOUSTON
Livonia, MI

Three of us peppered the job candidate with questions regarding an opening in our department. We were pleased with his answers until we got to the end of the interview. When we

asked the candidate whether he had any questions for us, he replied, “Yes, I have. What job am I interviewing for?”

—KARIN GREEN
Cheyenne, WY

YOUR FUNNY WORK
story could be worth
\$\$\$*. For details,*
go to page 2 or
RD.COM/SUBMIT.

FLY THE CHATTY SKIES

Flight crews offer up safe travels and ad-libs:

◆ “Hi, I’m Captain Amanda Smith. Yes, I’m a female pilot and, as a benefit, if we get lost on the way I won’t be afraid to stop and ask for directions.”

◆ “Please refrain from smoking until you reach designated smoking area, which, for California, is Las Vegas.”

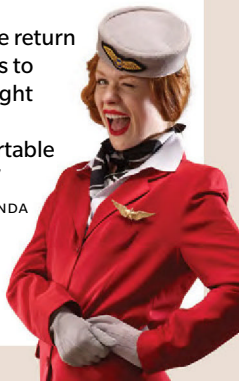
◆ “I’ve just been informed that my mother-in-law has passed through security and will be boarding this flight shortly. If you all sit down fast, we should be able to get out of here before she arrives.”

◆ “Most of you already have your seat belts fastened. Now we will demonstrate how you did that.”

◆ “Ladies and gentlemen, I’d like to share some words with you that my father shared with me when I turned 18: Pack your bags and get out.”

◆ “Please return your seats to their upright and most uncomfortable position.”

—BOREDPANDA
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WHERE, OH WHERE?

Thousands of years of erosion, along with the trees on top, have made this massive rock resemble a root vegetable, hence its name: Turnip Rock. The shallow water around it allows visitors—who kayak 3½ miles into the lake to see it—to rest before paddling back. And three-quarters of the calls that the local chamber of commerce receives are about Turnip Rock. Where is it? (Answer on PAGE 111.)

- A** Acadia National Park, Maine
- B** Grand Marais, Minnesota
- C** Port Austin, Michigan
- D** Coeur d'Alene, Idaho



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A stylized illustration of a woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing blue-tinted sunglasses and a teal and black striped top. She has a slight smile. There are decorative starburst graphics around her eyes.

The Eyes Are the Prize

*How to protect them
and preserve your vision*

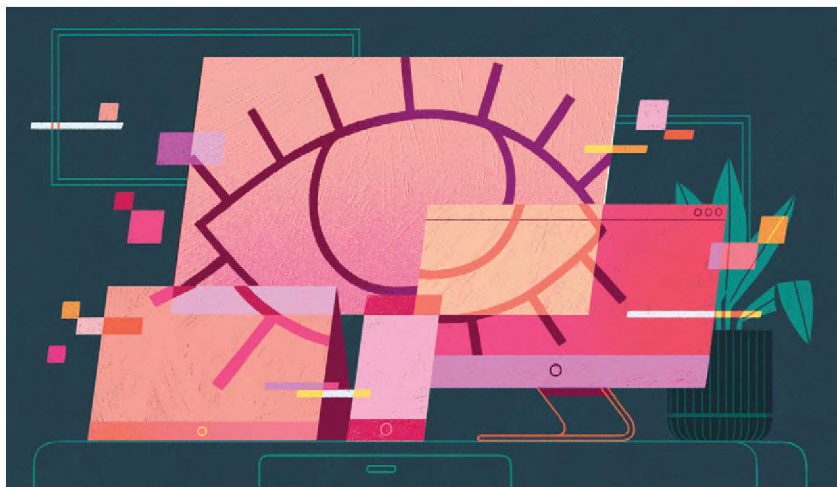
BY *Beth Weinhouse*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Kate Traynor*

WE WATCH OUR salt and fat intake to protect our hearts. We exercise and take calcium to protect our bones. We slather on sunscreen to protect our skin. But what can we do to protect our eyes? Turns out, quite a lot. We asked experts what lifestyle steps people should be taking to protect their vision and eye health.

Spring for some quality shades ...

“Protecting the eyes from ultraviolet light—sunlight—is very important,” says Esen Akpek, MD, an ophthalmology professor at Johns Hopkins University. “It’s one of the biggest



things in our environment to have an impact on the eyes. Ultraviolet light has been shown to have an effect on cataract development and macular degeneration.”

To shield your eyes, wear sunglasses certified to block out 99% to 100% of UVA and UVB light. Surprisingly, dark lenses aren't necessarily the most protective. “In fact, if the lenses are dark but not UV-protected, that's worse for your eyes, because when you're looking through dark lenses your pupils dilate, which lets more UV light inside to do damage,” says Dr. Akpek.

... and some sports glasses

You don't have to be doing construction or factory work to need protective eye-wear. Gardening, yardwork, home repairs and sports all pose the risk of trauma to the eye. The American

Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) recommends sports glasses with polycarbonate lenses, which resist shattering, and eye protectors that have been tested to meet the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards.

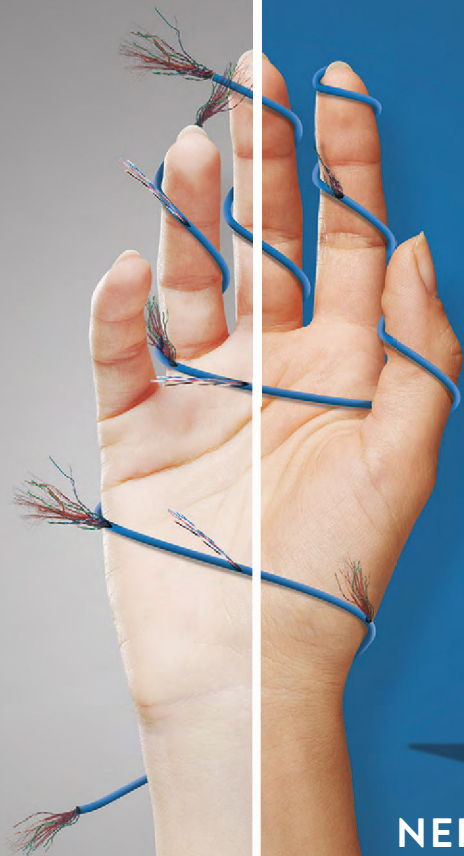
“I see people who've been gardening, leaned forward and gotten poked in the eye by a branch,” says Davinder Grover, MD, an ophthalmologist at Glaucoma Associates of Texas. “Or people working in the yard with weed whackers or lawn mowers that have caused objects like rocks to hit them in the eye.”

Take a break from screens

The AAO says there's no scientific evidence that the light from electronic screens damages eyes. But staring at a screen can leave eyes fatigued and may even blur vision. The National Institutes of Health recommends taking a break

NERVES CAN CHANGE AS YOU AGE

Which may cause occasional feelings of nerve discomfort such as stabbing, burning, tingling, and numbness.†



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every 20 minutes to look at something about 20 feet away for 20 seconds. Glasses that block blue light don't seem to do the trick, according to multiple studies, says Dr. Akpek.

One reason for eye fatigue during screen use is that people tend to blink less when staring at computer screens, and that can lead to dryness. "One of the best ways to prevent that is hydration with water—four or five glasses a day," says Dr. Grover. "If you still feel your eyes are dry or getting tired, or your vision is occasionally blurred, use a lubricating eye drop."

Eat for your eyes

Research shows that foods rich in vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc, lutein, zeaxanthin and omega-3 fatty acids are linked to lower risk for age-related macular degeneration, cataracts and maybe even dry eye.

♦ For omega-3 fatty acids, look for fish like salmon, tuna and halibut.

♦ For lutein and zeaxanthin, eat dark leafy greens like spinach, kale and collard greens.

♦ For lots of vitamin C, grab citrus, strawberries, tomatoes, red and green peppers, and broccoli.

♦ For vitamin E, choose peanuts, almonds, sunflower seeds, avocado, pumpkin and asparagus.

♦ For zinc, good sources are beef, fortified cereals and especially oysters.

You can skip supplements that claim to boost eye health, says Dr. Grover.

Stop those bad habits

First, the obvious: Smoking isn't just bad for your lungs; it can harm eyes too. "Smoking is terrible," says Dr. Akpek. "It causes dry eyes, makes thyroid eye disease worse and correlates with severe macular degeneration." Smoking also increases the risk of cataracts and can harm the optic nerve.

Also, try not to rub your eyes. "Rubbing makes inflammation worse," says Dr. Akpek. "The more you rub, the more itchy your eyes will get. And rubbing has been linked to thinning and bulging of the cornea. It can lead to infections." Instead, "take medication or use drops for allergies or dry eye," says Dr. Grover.

Repair the air

Indoor heating and air conditioning can dry out the air ... and the eyes. Outdoor cold and wind can be drying, too, while pollution and allergens can cause irritation. In addition to lubricating eye drops, "air purifiers and humidifiers are our friends," says Dr. Akpek.

FINALLY, don't forget to see an eye specialist for a checkup. Not all eye problems are noticeable, and all are best treated when found early. "For most people, unless there are noticeable problems, the AAO recommends a baseline exam by an ophthalmologist at age 40, and then follow-ups as recommended by the doctor," says Dr. Grover. For more information on how to protect and care for your eyes, visit the AAO's patient website, eyesmart.org. **R**

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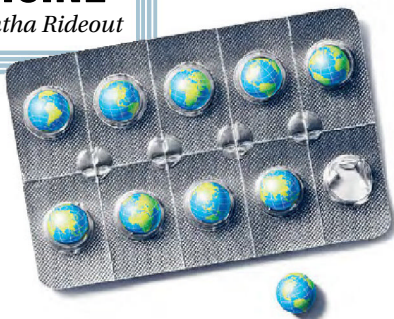
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News FROM THE

**WORLD OF
MEDICINE**BY *Samantha Rideout* **CRAVING CAFFEINE?
TRY DECAF**

If you love your coffee but worry about consuming too much caffeine, you will be reassured to know that research indicates that regular coffee is a low-risk stimulant. It might even offer some protection against type 2 diabetes and Parkinson's disease. But it can also cause heartburn, jitters or insomnia. So if you are trying to quit or cut back on caffeine, try decaf. An Australian study shows that drinking decaffeinated coffee can alleviate withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, fatigue and irritability. This surprising result probably tapped into the placebo effect: Even when people knew they were drinking decaf, it looked, smelled and tasted like the real thing, which they associated with feeling alert and well.

**The Price of
Procrastination**

More than just a lazy habit, procrastination can be bad for your health, suggests a study of more than 3,500 students in Sweden. Over nine months, those who habitually delayed important tasks experienced more anxiety and depression, poor sleep, and pain in the neck, shoulders and back. Fortunately, cognitive behavioral therapy, either in person or through books and websites, can help. Strategies include learning to break down big goals into smaller ones and managing distractions—for example, turning off your smartphone until you've finished a task.



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The Upside of Commuting

People who work from home know the rub: For all that it costs in time and money, commuting to and from a job provides an opportunity to disengage from work before jumping into the responsibilities of home life. This “in-between” time can help prevent burnout, according to a report in *Organizational Psychology Review*. Obviously, this works best if you can take public transit or opt for an easy drive instead of a busy road, and if you use the time well, perhaps to do something fun and relaxing such as listening to music.

Chronic Pain and Antidepressants

For more than two decades, doctors have been prescribing depression medications for ongoing pain, which is notoriously hard to treat. In fact, data from a cross-section of countries—the U.S., Canada,

Taiwan and the U.K.—shows that among seniors, antidepressants are used for pain more often than for depression. Most of these prescriptions are “off-label” (meaning they are not officially approved for this purpose). And this treatment isn’t as strange as it may sound: Antidepressants affect neurotransmitters, including those that send pain signals to the brain. A new *BMJ* review synthesized about 25,000 participants to get an overview of what we’ve learned so far about treating chronic pain with antidepressants. Although tricyclics are the most commonly used antidepressant drug class for pain, it’s unclear if they really help. But the review did find evidence that SNRI (serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors) antidepressants can help relieve people with fibromyalgia, nerve pain, post-operative pain and chronic back pain.

Purple Power

For an extra boost of good health, reach for vegetables that are red or purple in color. Radishes, purple potatoes, red cabbages, purple carrots, eggplants, purple cauliflowers and red onions all contain anthocyanins, a type of antioxidant that can help lower blood pressure and may slow cancer growth. A new study review from Finland says these veggies also reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes by affecting energy metabolism, gut microbiota (tiny organisms including bacteria) and inflammation. Reddish fruits such as blueberries, strawberries and blackberries contain anthocyanins too, but the research shows that the kind found in vegetables are particularly powerful. **■**



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Kevin walks into a bar in Boston and orders three shots of Scotch. He solemnly downs each one, pays up, then leaves. The next day, he does the same. On the third day, the bartender asks, "Why the three shots?"

"Well," says Kevin, "it's one for me and one each for my brothers: Dennis in Seattle and Hank in Dallas. It makes me feel like we're still drinking together."

But a month later, Kevin orders only two shots of Scotch. "I hate to ask," says the bartender, "but did one of your brothers die?"

"No, no," says Kevin.



"I've just decided to stop drinking."

—BARTENDERSBUSINESS.COM

Once there was a man named Odd. All his life, he was teased and mocked because of his strange name. It got so bad that on his deathbed, he insisted that his headstone be blank,

lest he live with that name for all eternity. He got his wish. The day of his funeral, the gravedigger arrived looking for the correct plot. When he spotted the blank headstone, he scratched his head and thought, *That's odd.*

—BRENDA PIPP
North Port, FL

No one in the history of the English language has ever said anything respectful following "With all due respect ..."

—DAVE KONIG, *comedian on Dry Bar Comedy*

I'm a positive person. To me, going bald is not about hair loss, it's about face gain. It's not

a receding hairline, it's an advancing facial frontier. It's exciting. One day, I'll have a whole head of face.

—SHENG WANG,
comedian

Yiddish curses are famously detailed and nasty. Case in point: “May you be so rich your widow’s husband has to never work a day.” Here are three for modern times from the book *Schmegoogle*, by Daniel Klein (Chronicle Books).

◆ “After walking 12 blocks with your thighs squeezed together in a desperate search for a public restroom, may you find one at a fancy restaurant but be barred from entering because you aren’t wearing a tie!”

◆ “May your health insurance provider decide that constipation is a preexisting condition!”

◆ “You should emerge from the desert scorched and parched to find before you a

luxury hotel with 1,000 empty rooms, but they don’t accept AmEx extra points!”

A reporter, interviewing a man celebrating his 110th birthday, asks, “What’s the secret to your longevity?”

“No matter what, I never ever argue with anyone,” says the elderly man.

“Surely there must be more to it than that,” insists the reporter. “What about factors like genetics, diet, exercise?”

The old man shrugs. “Maybe you’re right.”

—GARY KATZ
Long Grove, IL

“What’s a couple?”

I asked my mom. She said, “Two or three.” Which probably explains why her marriage collapsed.

—JOSIE LONG, *comedian*

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COFFEE DOODLES

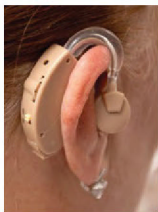
German artist Stefan Kuhnigk turns coffee spills into coffee art on his Instagram page, @thecoffeemonsters



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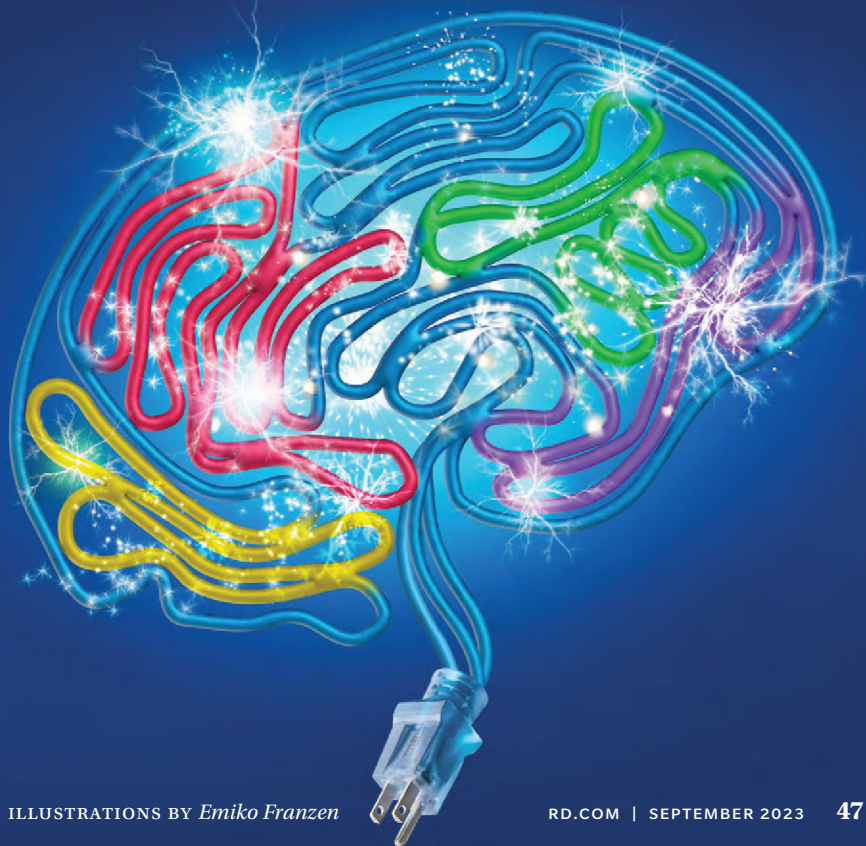
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COVER STORY

MAKING MEMORIES

HOW WE REMEMBER ... AND HOW NOT TO FORGET

BY *Beth Weinhouse*



TMB STUDIO

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Emiko Franzen*

RD.COM | SEPTEMBER 2023

47

The last time my husband and I went out for an elegant restaurant dinner, the server came to our table and began to recite a long list of specials, with detailed descriptions of how the dishes were made and where the ingredients had been sourced. Her recitation went on and on, and as she spoke I became almost more interested in how she could remember all those descriptions than I was in thinking about the food. Meanwhile, I couldn't remember where I'd put my keys before we left for the restaurant.

The good news is that not remembering where you put your keys is generally not a sign of incipient dementia. And on the flip side, being able to remember a long list of restaurant specials isn't necessarily a sign of extraordinary mental ability, either. Memory is far more complicated than these two examples could ever show, and there's a wide range of what's considered normal.

While most of us are terrified about developing dementia, fewer than 10% of adults age 65 and older will wind up with dementia such as Alzheimer's.

"Developing a neurodegenerative condition like Alzheimer's is not what we consider healthy, normal aging," says Joel Salinas, MD, behavioral neurologist at NYU Langone Health and chief medical officer of Isaac Health, a memory clinic. While some memory loss is normal as people age, he says, "It's not the kind of decline that interferes with the ability to live your life."

And, he adds, "There are areas that actually improve with age. Vocabulary is one. The other is theory of mind and perspective taking ... what some people call wisdom."

Jessica Zwerling, MD, director of the Center of Excellence for Alzheimer's Disease at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, compares the effect of aging on memory as "kind of like getting traffic on the brain. It may take longer to retrieve a word; it may come to you later. The speed of processing can go down, but your hippocampus [the part of the brain most associated with memory] should be functioning."

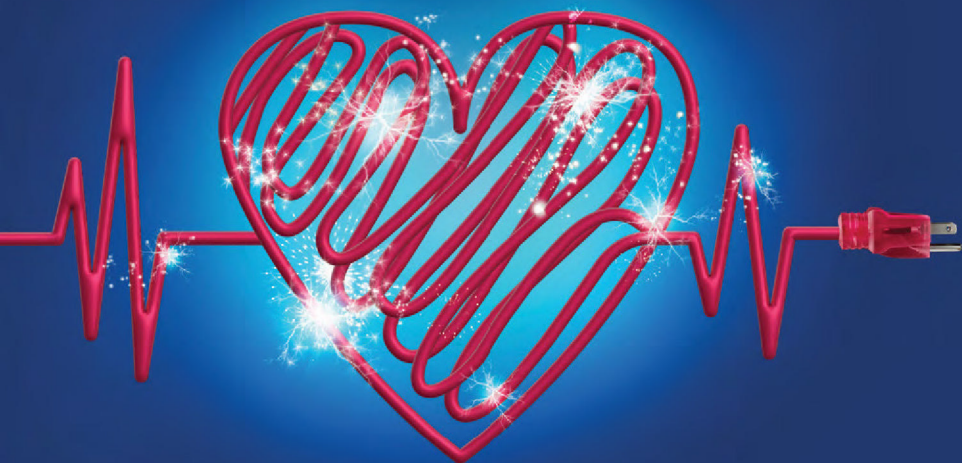
The hippocampus is where memories are created and cataloged, but it doesn't work alone. The amygdala, next to the hippocampus, singles out certain memories as being important. And the memories themselves are stored in various sections of the cerebral cortex, the outer layer of the brain.

"Memory is all these different brain networks working in concert with each other," says Dr. Salinas.

While genetics and family history play some role in the risk of memory problems, so do plenty of other factors. Addressing any of these may make your memory sharper.

MEMORY BOOSTERS

The brain might be the place that memories are stored, but it doesn't exist in a vacuum. The health and efficiency of the brain depend a lot on the general



health of the body. To put it succinctly: What's good for the body is good for the brain. Many of the lifestyle factors that can boost memory are the same that have a positive effect on general health. Taking steps to improve your lifestyle in any of the following four areas will help keep your mind sharp and your body strong.

EXERCISE

Regular physical exercise doesn't just build muscles and keep weight in check. It also protects memory and thinking skills.

"Exercise helps improve blood vessel health and blood flow. That helps with the activity of brain cells and also helps reduce the risk of brain inflammation,"

says Dr. Salinas. "It also helps brain cells repair themselves and their connections to other brain cells."

Studies bear this out. Research at the University of British Columbia found that regular aerobic exercise, the kind that increases your heart rate, also increases the size of the brain's hippocampus. And a University of Maryland study found that memory improved in both cognitively healthy older adults and those with mild cognitive impairment after a 12-week exercise program.

If you're not into running or even fast walking, how about dancing? It turns out that taking a dance class may be one of the best activities you can do for your brain. Dr. Zwerling's

colleagues at the Albert Einstein School of Medicine looked at the effects of physical activity on preventing cognitive decline and memory loss, and found that ballroom dancing was particularly effective. At the University of Illinois at Chicago, a Latin ballroom dance program for older sedentary adults had similar results, finding improvements in memory, attention and focus.

“Dancing combines physical activity, learning something new, and social engagement,” says Dr. Salinas. “The more of these factors an activity has, the better off you’ll be.”

DIET

Many people probably recall their mothers telling them to eat fish “because it’s brain food.” I remember when I learned in school that the brain actually runs on glucose, which is a form of sugar. “Aha!” I told my mother. “Fish isn’t brain food. Chocolate is brain food!” My mother didn’t buy it, and she was right. While the brain does run on glucose, it’s healthier for body and brain to get sugar from fruits and vegetables, not from products with added sugars like sweet pastries and candy. Too much sugar restricts blood flow to the brain and can even cause brain atrophy.

The real brain foods are those that reduce inflammation and promote cardiovascular health. In 2015, doctors from Rush University Medical Center and the Harvard Chan School of Public Health published an eating plan aimed at preserving cognitive function. Called the MIND (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) diet, it’s a hybrid of the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets. The MIND diet emphasizes brain-healthy foods such as whole grains,



vegetables, nuts, beans, berries, poultry and fish (yes, Mom was right!).

Sweets, sadly, are on the brain-unhealthy foods list, along with foods high in saturated and trans fats, including red meat, cheese, fried foods, butter and margarine. Studies have shown that the MIND diet, even when followed moderately rather than perfectly, significantly reduces the risk of developing neurodegenerative diseases including Alzheimer's.

SLEEP

"Sleep is critical for memory formation, especially long-term memory formation," says Dr. Salinas, explaining that sleep is when memories are processed and stored. "When you're asleep, the brain runs the tape of what it recorded during the day, gets rid of information that isn't relevant and then stores other information for the long term."

That explains why people with undiagnosed sleep apnea or other sleep disorders are at higher risk of developing cognitive disorders like Alzheimer's. The more you can keep a regular sleep schedule and get at least seven hours each night, the better off your brain—and the rest of you—will be.

CHALLENGING YOUR BRAIN

Maybe you're an avid bridge player, a crossword puzzle fanatic or someone who regularly attends local college lectures. All those activities—and many other mentally engaging ones—can help keep our minds active. To get the

most memory boost out of puzzles or intellectual activities, though, the key is to keep things fresh and challenging. For instance, if you've mastered one type of brainteaser puzzle, move on to another. If you're the family checkers champion, decide to master chess. Learning a new language is often cited as an ideal activity for brain health.

"New and challenging is important because that's what helps form new pathways in the brain, helping information go from one part of the brain to another," says Dr. Salinas.

MEMORY BUSTERS

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

The brain requires a rich blood supply to deliver the nutrients and oxygen it needs. So cardiovascular health—the health of the heart and blood vessels—is crucial. Have your blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly and treated if high.

Hypothyroidism is another medical condition that can cause a temporary slowdown in thinking. "The thyroid is kind of the gatekeeper for all metabolic functions," says Dr. Zwerling. Low thyroid hormone levels can affect memory and concentration, leaving people feeling they have "brain fog."

Two other fairly common conditions can also potentially affect memory. Dehydration can cause temporary memory problems by limiting blood flow to the brain. And deficiency in vitamin B12 can result in temporary

memory loss or dementia since the vitamin helps produce red blood cells, and a deficiency restricts oxygen delivery to the brain.

Treating any of the above conditions—which can be something as simple as drinking more water during the day to prevent dehydration, or taking thyroid medication or B12 supplements—can restore memory function.

Mental health is also brain health. “Anxiety and depression can get in the way of the brain’s functioning,” says Dr. Salinas. Levels of serotonin, a brain hormone, decrease, affecting attention and memory. Again, treating the underlying problem may have the added benefit of helping restore brain and memory function.

MEDICATIONS

“The first thing I look at is the medications they’re taking,” Tatyana Gurvich, PharmD, associate professor of clinical pharmacy at the University of Southern California, says of older adults who mention memory problems. Cognitive impairment is one of the most common medication side effects. It can be caused by a single drug or by several drugs taken in combination. While drug side effects can affect younger people, they’re more common in seniors.

“There are definitely medications that can cause cognitive slippage and confusion,” says Gurvich. “Some are over the counter.” She cites sedating antihistamines like diphenhydramine

(Benadryl) as a common culprit, and warns that the drug is sometimes added to pain relievers or cold and cough remedies, so it’s important that people read labels carefully.

Many prescription medications, too, may have cognitive side effects. “These include some drugs used for incontinence, irritable bowel syndrome, depression, diarrhea, coughs,” says Gurvich. Others that have been flagged include anti-anxiety drugs, cholesterol drugs, anti-seizure drugs, narcotic painkillers, drugs to treat Parkinson’s disease, hypertension drugs and sleeping aids.

“What’s important,” says Gurvich, “is to let your physician know all the medications you’re taking, including over-the-counter medication, if you’re worried about cognitive impairment.” Better still, she says, is to have a medication check with a physician at least every six months to a year.

Fortunately, Gurvich says, the kind of cognitive impairment or memory problem caused by medication is usually reversible, meaning that when you stop taking the medication your memory should return to normal.

ALCOHOL AND CANNABIS

Using alcohol and/or cannabis regularly may cause cognitive slippage including memory problems, especially in older people.

“Some adults, when they were younger, used to have a couple of alcoholic drinks at night, and they

STRESS

“Stress can create an inflammatory state and affect memory, which is why stress management is important,” says Dr. Zwerling. Stress floods the system with hormones to meet that stress, “which isn’t really conducive to deliberate, deep thinking,” says Dr. Salinas. And it doesn’t have to be major stress to have that effect. “Smaller stresses, lots of little stresses that build up day to day, can affect thinking too,” he says.

Dr. Salinas advises that having a strategy to cope with stress will have an impact on your

brain health: “meditation, yoga, social engagement, phoning or texting a friend for emotional support—whatever you can do to get out of that fight-or-flight state.”

CAN YOU TRAIN YOUR BRAIN TO REMEMBER?

So you’re generally healthy and you’ve addressed a lot of these issues already, but you’re still not feeling as sharp as you’d like. You forgot the name of someone you’d met before. Or maybe you’re tired of looking for your glasses again. Call it brain fog, mommy brain,

continue to do that as they age. That may be too much in an older person and could lead to cognitive impairment,” says Gurvich.

The same, she says, is true for marijuana. “Older people who may have used cannabis in the 1960s or ’70s are excited that it’s becoming legal. But they have to understand that it’s a very different substance—not the same stuff they smoked when they were teenagers.” With marijuana so much more potent now than it was decades ago, she says, “If they’re using it regularly, it absolutely could cause cognitive slippage.”





COVID brain or just general distraction ... whatever it is, you'd like it to go away.

Daniel Schacter, PhD, professor of psychology at Harvard University and author of *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers*, explains that there are three reasons (unrelated to age or dementia) why people forget things: "One is transience, the natural tendency for memories to fade over time. Another is absent-mindedness—if you're not really focused on what you're doing, you don't encode the memory to remember it later. And the third is blocking, when information is available and you're paying attention, but you're blocked. It's on the tip of your tongue, but you can't pull it up." And,

he says, there are different solutions for addressing each of these problems.

FOR TRANSCIENCE:

"One of the easiest things you can do is just try to engage in what people in our field call retrieval practice. Retrieving a memory is one of the most effective ways to make it last over time," says Schacter. He compares it to reviewing your photos after you go on vacation: "You're reactivating experiences and strengthening your memory for them."

Schacter describes a study comparing one group of people who were asked to read a story and told there would be a test about it later, to another group of people who were asked to read the story three times but not told there

would be a test. Result: The people who were told they'd be tested remembered the story much better later on.

"You don't need an external tester," says Schacter. "You can self-test. For instance, if you've just been introduced to somebody and you want to remember their name, bring the name to mind, then wait a bit. Then bring it to mind again and wait a little longer," and so on.

FOR ABSENT-MINDEDNESS:

"This is the *Where did I put my keys? My glasses?* kind of forgetfulness," says Schacter. "It's not age related ... unless it becomes extreme to the point you can't function in your everyday life. I'm prone to these kinds of errors as much as anyone else." To address this issue, Schacter suggests using the environment and external cues.

"For instance, I find it's helpful to have a place in my house to always put my keys and glasses, and be mindful about not putting them elsewhere," he says. And for things like forgetting appointments, "modern technology offers us ways to offload our memories." Use your phone or your laptop to record dates and set reminders for yourself, he suggests.

FOR BLOCKING:

Blocking on names and faces is among the most common memory complaints, particularly as people get older. "Unfortunately, by the time blocking has occurred it's probably too late to do much about it," says Schacter. "But you can be proactive and anticipate situations where blocking may occur."

The names we block on most are usually people we're familiar with but haven't seen recently or don't see frequently. "So if you know you're going to a party and will see a lot of people you're familiar with but haven't seen in a long time, try to find out in advance who's going to be there, and review the names," he says.

THE THING TO REMEMBER about memory (pun intended) is that there are many different factors that can affect it ... and just as many ways to sharpen it.

As for me, I'm now taking a Spanish class, trying to work out more and keeping my keys in the same place always. I'm trying to follow the MIND diet a bit too. But I haven't given up chocolate yet, and I refuse to believe it's not brain food! **R**



We All Crave Connection

In a study of how important Wi-Fi is to Americans, 45% of respondents said they couldn't live without it. Some even said they'd be willing to give up dining out (36%), sex (29%) or sleep (20%) for one year to ensure that they had flawless, high-speed Wi-Fi.

NETGEAR.COM



Einstein Did What?!

Silly slip-ups from a few of history's greatest genius minds

By Katie Spalding

FROM THE BOOK **EDISON'S GHOSTS**



It's possible that some people are just too smart for their own good. Or that some of history's best-known brainiacs lacked good old-fashioned common sense. Consider these scenes from throughout history.



Punked by Benjamin Franklin

To give Franklin his due, he made groundbreaking discoveries in the field of electronics. He invented both *battery* (the word) and batteries (the thing) and came up with the concept of “positive” and “negative” charges. But this comes second to Franklin's true electrical vocation: practical jokes.

Picture the scene: It's summer 1749 and you've been invited to a party at your good pal Ben's house. You sit down, pick up your wine glass to take a sip ... and are hit with an electric shock straight to the mouth.

This was a typical hazard of being friends with Benjamin Franklin. Not only did his guests put up with electrified wine glasses, they were also spooked by dancing spiders made from cork and string, and invited to

send sparks of electricity between one another through air kisses.

Franklin also invented a party game called *Treason*, in which players were told to touch a portrait of King George and would receive a shock when they did so. He even adapted the game to work with multiple players at once. “If a Ring of Persons take a Shock among them,” he wrote, I assume while giggling like the villain from a 1940s B movie, “the Experiment is called the *Conspiracy*.”

The father of electricity first encountered its wonders after witnessing an experiment-slash-vaudeville show in 1743, and was electrified by the experience, to say the least.

“I never was before engaged in any study that so totally engrossed my attention and my time as this,” he wrote to fellow electrician Peter Collinson.

Collinson had just sent Franklin an exciting gift: a Leyden jar. Physicists had been able to generate electricity for millennia. But the Leyden jar allowed them to store and use it on demand. It would take nearly 7 trillion jars to store the amount of electricity in a single AA battery today. But for physicists of the time, a whole new world of experiments had opened up.

Exactly what those experiments were, Franklin left to the imagination.

Napoleon's Fluffiest Foe

History is written by the victors, which is how Napoleon Bonaparte managed to be such a noble man of the people, right up until his defeat at Waterloo,

at which point he became a short, angry warmonger. Still, he fought more than 60 battles and lost only eight times, which is an impressive record. If only one of those defeats hadn't been against a herd of bunnies.

Pleased with himself at having won the War of the Fourth Coalition against most of Europe, Napoleon decided to celebrate by taking his favorite generals on a rabbit hunt. Thousands of bunnies were brought to a field in cages. Presumably, the hunters expected the rabbits to take one look at their assembled might and run for the hills. What in fact happened was that the rabbits thought, *Excellent, some humans, who most likely have cabbage,*

I imagine, while hopping merrily toward them.

The rabbits swarmed the coaches, overpowering the coachmen with fluffiness. Napoleon jumped into his carriage and beat a hasty retreat. Fresh from victory against the combined armies of Britain, Russia, Prussia, Sweden, Saxony and Sicily, the emperor of France had finally been defeated.

NASA Spaces Out

We're used to thinking of NASA as the forefront of human knowledge, bringing us images of



the farthest reaches of the universe. But, in the 1990s, NASA's reputation was flagging. A new unofficial policy of "faster, better, cheaper" and a string of costly failures had earned it the nickname Not Another Space Attempt.

In 1999, NASA had just launched the Mars Climate Orbiter, or MCO for short, to study the red planet. At first, everything looked good: The MCO entered Mars's orbit right on schedule. It would have to fly behind Mars, temporarily losing contact with Mission Control, before coming back on the other side of the planet about 20 minutes later.

As anticipated, radio contact with the orbiter was lost at 9:05 a.m. NASA waited.

And waited.

Two days later, the mission was declared a loss. The probe, NASA discovered, flew more than 100 miles too close to the surface and disintegrated in the planet's atmosphere. Another mission failure might not have been so hard to swallow, had its cause not been so simple: essentially, a math error.

By 1999, most of the world had switched to metric units. The one major outlier, of course, was the United States.



The probe was run by a computer that measured the effect of its thrusters in imperial units (feet and pounds) but adjusted course in metric (meters and newtons). The probe veered way off course, burning up in space after taking just a single photograph.

It was an embarrassing loss, but it could be forgiven—if they hadn't gone on to make the exact same mistake again six years later when a test spacecraft crashed into the satellite it was meant to dock with, after reading GPS data in feet instead of meters.

Despite technically converting to metric in 1990, the agency continues to use a mix of metric and imperial to this day.

Ada Lovelace's (Husband's) Family Jewels

If asked to imagine the world's first computer programmer, there's a certain character you'd conjure. Thick glasses. Pants pulled up to the armpits. It's 1953. Maybe his name is Eugene.

You couldn't be more wrong.

The world's first computer programmer was Augusta Ada Byron King, countess of Lovelace, born in 1815.

She was the product of a short-lived marriage between Annabella Milbanke and poet Lord Byron, and showed an aptitude for science and math from a young age. At 19, she married a soon-to-be earl, William King, who'd make her a countess but who was hardly an intellectual or character match. Around the same time, she found lifelong collaborator Charles Babbage, a 41-year-old crank who was way closer to that prototypical nerd character. But all Lovelace cared about was that Babbage had the Difference Engine: an unfinished 4-ton steam-powered supercalculator. A "computer," as you might call it.

Lovelace immediately saw the machine's possibilities. "It might act upon other things besides number," she wrote, before immediately predicting the invention of the iPod: "Supposing, for instance, that the fundamental relations of pitched sounds in the science of harmony and of musical composition were susceptible of such expression and adaptations, the engine might compose elaborate and scientific pieces of music of any degree of complexity."

To her, it was a portal to the future. But, knowing the machine would never get off the ground without funding, Lovelace began gambling. This would've been less of a problem if she was any good at it. She was so bad that she once lost 3,200 pounds on a single horse race, which is about \$250,000 today.

The crowning glory of Lovelace's inability to hold on to money came when she was weeks from death and confided to her mother that she'd pawned her husband's family jewels for gambling funds—the ones in their place were paste replicas. Her mother paid for the jewels to be replaced before her daughter left this mortal plane.

Just prior to passing, with her debts finally paid off, Lovelace pawned the replacement jewels for more gambling money—and lost the whole lot. Who could've calculated those odds?

Einstein Put the "Nauti" in Nautical

Einstein is most famous today as, well, *Einstein*. He's the Hoover of geniuses; his name is synonymous with what he was. But among the accolades is something else truly impressive: his ability to make strangers save his life, over and over again, and never once even look like he might learn from it.

In 1939, Einstein rented a cottage in sleepy Cutchogue, Long Island, New York. He had one thing on his mind: sailing. Relaxing on a boat, he said, he could be oblivious to the world. There was just one problem: He was a terrible sailor.



“You had 30 people around here who’d tell you they rescued Einstein when he capsized, and towed him and his boat in,” recalled Cutchogue local Robert Rothman.

“We kids who were growing up around here know how to sail,” agreed fellow local and ex-kid Louise Thompson. “He didn’t.”

Einstein was known across the Eastern Seaboard for his nautical mishaps. He even made national news after somehow stranding himself in Connecticut. And this salty seadog never learned to swim—which, considering how much time he spent falling into water, was kind of impressive—forcing others to be alert to his rescue.

But if the residents of Cutchogue—

and everywhere else Einstein was fond of capsizing—knew the truth, they might not have been so forgiving. It’s not like he was doing it on *purpose*, right?

“While we were engaged in an interesting conversation I suddenly cried out ‘*Achtung!*’ for we were almost upon another boat,” wrote fellow academic Leon Watters. “He veered away with excellent control and when I remarked what a close call we had, he started to laugh and sailed directly toward one boat after another, much to my horror. But he always veered off in time then laughed like a naughty little boy.” **R**

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Teachers Put to the Test

*Facing low pay, school shootings
and angry parents,
educators are leaving the profession—
and students are paying the price*

BY Adam Piore

ILLUSTRATIONS BY Andy Potts





ROSEMARY CURTS didn't get into teaching for pay or prestige or because she wanted a drama-free life. Curts, an energetic 30-year-old high school teacher in Dallas, Texas, with long blond hair, glasses and a dimpled smile, got into it because she loves math, and she wants "to share that passion—and the beauty I see in math—with other people."

People like Jasmine, whom Curts first encountered when she was a sweet sophomore, bravely mixing it up in a class of intimidating juniors. Jasmine approached Curts after graduation last year to tell her she got into Texas Tech and planned to major in computer science, then hovered awkwardly until she got up the courage to finally blurt out what she really wanted to say: "You made me like math again."

In those moments, everything makes sense to Curts. Her life is full of purpose. She feels privileged. She remembers why she became a teacher.

But lately those moments have been getting harder to hold on to because of issues that have made teaching harder. A big one is staffing shortages. Last fall on the first day of school, 45 students filed into Curts's algebra class—15 more than usual. There were so many students that some had to sit on tables or hold their papers against the wall to write out their math problems.

"There weren't enough desks in my room for all the kids. And even if there were enough desks, we wouldn't have been able to fit them all in," says Curts.

TEACHING WAS ALWAYS a tough job. It's a lot of work, and in too many school districts, the pay stinks. Teachers also need to be proficient in far more than just the subject they've been hired to teach. They need to be comfortable talking to students and colleagues, and also adept at negotiating the bureaucracy.

It's only gotten tougher in recent years, as teachers have had to grapple with new fears about school shootings and an increasingly polarized political environment that has placed educators on the front lines of the culture wars. And, of course, COVID-19 only



compounded the problems. As a result, about 300,000 of the nation's roughly 3.1 million teachers left the field between February 2020 and May 2022. About 55% of the remaining educators say they are considering leaving the profession earlier than they had planned, according to a survey by the National Education Association.

The teaching exodus has caused states to take drastic measures. Arizona is recruiting college students to teach, while Florida schools are hiring unlicensed veterans to fill the gaps. In Utah, about 15% of teachers have not completed a teacher preparation program, and many are operating under an

emergency credential, which means they passed a background check and have demonstrated "minimal competencies and are willing to do the job," says Malia Hite, executive coordinator of educator licensing at the Utah State Board of Education. "That means we have teachers in classrooms teaching kids who don't have all of the skills to do the job." This is not a new situation, she adds, but it's gotten worse.

At least there are humans leading those classes. In the rural Mississippi town of Rosedale, geometry students learn from a recording because the high school's lone math teacher is forced to teach multiple classes at once.

At W.H. Adamson, the 1,500-student high school where Curts teaches, the administration began sending out a daily list of all staff vacancies and absences, along with a list of names spelling out who is responsible that day for covering them. Curts, who relies on teaching assistants to help her English as a Second Language (ESL) and special needs students, says the names of her assistants are on the coverage list most days, forcing her to decide between letting her special needs and ESL pupils fall behind, or slowing down

the class for the remaining 30 students.

Lately, the situation has gotten so dire that the school has resorted to splitting up sick teachers' classes and distributing them to colleagues.

"You don't want to be absent because you don't want to be a burden on everyone else," says Curts, who had COVID-19 last year and rushed back to work as soon as she could. "If you normally have a class of 30 kids and then suddenly you've got 15 more kids from someone else, you have a giant crowded classroom, the kids are noisy

and there's confusion. So when the classes are split like that, not only is learning affected that day for the kids, but also now the teachers whose classes they're sent into are affected."

Where Did All the Teachers Go?

Experts say the origins of the teacher staffing crisis are no mystery: Most teaching schools simply aren't graduating as many new teachers as they used to. In Ohio, the number of students completing teacher education programs has fallen by half over the past decade. In Pennsylvania, the number of new teachers graduated by



state schools has plummeted by two-thirds, from more than 20,000 new teachers a year in 2010 to fewer than 7,000 in 2021. Nationally, 20% to 30% fewer people are going into teaching each year than there were a decade ago, according to the journal *Education Next*.

Many economists and educational experts say poor pay is a big part of the problem. In the District of Columbia, a teacher's starting salary is \$55,209. But, according to Zippia, a job search website, the livable wage there for a family of three is \$68,000. In Montana, the starting salary is \$31,418, well below the livable wage of \$47,000 for a family of three. In 34 states, teachers' starting salaries are below \$40,000 a year.

Taking inflation into account, over the past 10 years teacher salaries have declined in most states. Real wages for teachers declined by 18.6% in Indiana between the 1999-2000 and 2018-2019 school years, says Edward Fuller, a professor in the Department of Education Policy Studies at Penn State. In Michigan the drop was 15.7%, and in Wisconsin it was 16.4%.

In some areas of Pennsylvania, Fuller's home state, teachers' pay is still \$18,000 to \$20,000 a year—the same salary he made when he taught back in 1990. In that state, 40% of teachers—those who are single with one child—would fall below the poverty level.

While salaries have declined, tuition and fees for higher education have increased by at least 20% over the past 10 years, in large part because states

have cut subsidies. The National Education Association notes that 32 states spent less on public colleges and universities in 2020 than in 2008. The higher costs mean many teachers are saddled with larger debt and smaller salaries to pay them off.

"Money matters," says Fuller, "particularly when you have other job opportunities." According to a recent study from the Economic Policy Institute, in some states, teachers make almost 33% less than others with equivalent degrees. Frustration is so widespread that last July a teacher in Ohio went viral on TikTok after announcing he was quitting his job as an early education teacher after six years to take a job as a Walmart store manager because he could make almost 50% more "not using my degree."

A Job to Nowhere

Pay isn't the only issue motivating teachers to look elsewhere. Career advancement—or lack thereof—is another factor. Matthew Kraft, an associate professor of education and economics at Brown University, says that for many teachers there's nowhere to go but sideways.

"When you ask students about why they were interested in but ultimately didn't choose to go into teaching, they tell you things like pay, of course, but they also tell you that there's a real lack of career advancement opportunities," he says. In other fields, professionals may see a clear ladder to climb, leading

to a managerial position, for example. Teaching doesn't really work that way.

Amy Morton, of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), notes that the only path to professional advancement in American

IN 2022 ALONE, THERE WERE 51 SCHOOL SHOOTINGS.

teaching requires leaving teaching and going into administration.

"A teacher who's teaching in their first year is basically doing the same thing in their 30th year, and they simply have to put in the years to earn higher pay," she says.

Workplace safety is another issue cited by teachers, ever since the 1999 Columbine shooting ushered in a new era of school violence. In 2022 alone, there were 51 school shootings. As a result, 4 in 10 educators say they feel less safe in their schools than they did five years ago, according to a survey by the EdWeek Research Center.

It's not just guns. Students and parents have gotten far more aggressive.

"Schools have become this place to have debates about what should be taught," says Brian Schultz, an education professor at Miami University in Ohio. "As a result, people in the public

sphere are questioning not only teacher content expertise, but also the ways that we engage young people in classrooms." For example, is it too political?

Teachers, he says, be they novice or experienced, are "fed up, they're disgusted, they're annoyed and they really find it troubling for their professional acumen to be questioned."

Add it all up, plus throw COVID-19 into the mix, along with budget cuts that increasingly have teachers reaching into their own pockets to buy supplies, and it's been a recipe for crisis.

"It's just been exhausting," says Hite. "We keep asking teachers and educators to do one more thing, but we're not taking anything off their plates and they're really tired."

Course Correction

The most obvious solution to the great teacher exodus is better salaries, and the American public is on board, with one 2022 survey from *Education Next* showing that 72% of Americans support raises for teachers. In Wisconsin, for instance, a poll conducted by Spectrum News/Siena College found that 68% of likely voters support a state and local tax increase to help pay teachers. Still, federal action to incentivize states to raise teacher pay has been stalled by Republicans who tend to oppose federal involvement in what they consider a state matter.

Some states have acted, with Democratic and Republican governors enacting legislation increasing teacher pay.



Last year, in New Mexico, a law raising base salaries by 20% on average had bipartisan support, while in Mississippi, teachers received raises averaging more than 10%.

Offering apprenticeships is another way to draw in prospective teachers. The federal government has launched pilot programs in West Virginia and Tennessee that expand existing student apprenticeship programs and pay student teachers while they teach in classrooms. Right now, most student teaching positions are unpaid. In Ohio, educators at the University of Miami have launched a program that recruits inner-city teachers locally when they are

still in high school, and then provides mentoring, early college credit in high school, financial assistance to complete college and the guarantee of a job.

But nobody believes money alone will solve the problem. To find working solutions, we may find some inspiration abroad. Amy Morton and her colleagues at NCEE selected 10 top-performing nations and ranked them on the performance of students, the most equitable student outcomes (the smallest gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students) and the most efficient use of resources. Top marks went to Estonia, Finland, Hong Kong, Japan, Poland, Singapore, Korea,



Here in the United States, a growing emphasis on standardized testing has led many educators to complain that too much classroom time is taken up teaching to those tests. The problem, they say, is that these tests evaluate rote knowledge but do little to evaluate problem-solving, critical thinking or creativity. Test scores thus have little connection to the quality of learning, the likelihood of future student success or actual life skills.

But because the tests are used to evaluate school performance, and thus determine funding and who gets certain

Taiwan, and parts of Canada and China. The United States ranked last in all the “performance” categories: reading, math and science.

What those countries’ successful schools share in common—and what the United States needs to consider, Morton says—is a culture that distributes more leadership to teachers, promotes collaboration and gives teachers a clear path to promotion while getting them the mentoring they need.

The top countries on her list “have significantly fewer administrators,” she says, “but more empowered teachers.”

bonuses, they have increasingly come to dominate the agenda. Conversely, letting teachers have a freer hand would likely engage them, as well as students numbed by the incessant test taking.

Experienced teachers shouldn’t be limited to teaching students. They also need to coach novice teachers. But in America today, there’s a sizable catch. Because teachers who have put in the years can often request assignments in more desirable and wealthier school districts, the newest teachers often land where they’re needed most: the

high-needs schools in inner cities and rural areas, where they might not have the mentoring to help them get off to a successful start.

Incentivizing the old pros by giving them bonuses to stay in these schools would help ease the transition for newer teachers. In Finland and elsewhere,


CROWDED ROOMS MEAN LESS TIME WITH TEACHERS.

Morton says, new teachers work and interact regularly with “experienced teachers who can progress in their careers only if they demonstrate their ability to develop the capacity of their younger, less experienced peers.”

AT THE END of the day, it’s not only teachers who are suffering. Their students feel it too. Teachers are on the front lines of society, often the first to

spot students in trouble—some keep food in their desks for hungry kids. Crowded schoolrooms mean less face time with teachers. And if a teacher is burned out, unhappy and operating from a place of crisis, it’s difficult for that educator to pass along a love of learning. It’s hard to cultivate an atmosphere of infectious joy, wonder and curiosity when you’re broke, anxious and frustrated.

For her part, Rosemary Curts plans to stick around. But she understands why many are leaving. “Public education is worth fighting for,” she says. But she also recognizes that she has it a little easier than other teachers. “For one thing I don’t have kids, so I have more time for myself in the evening if I have work to do or if I want to rest. I have a strong support system with my family and my union. I wish that everybody could have that.”

Problems aside, “the connections you make with students,” she says, “the times that you see the ‘aha!’ moments when students get it,” still make it all worth it for her. “I’m not ready to give that up.” 

Your Package Is (Hopefully, Eventually) on Its Way

The Galapagos island of Floreana has no formal postal system. Instead, there is a barrel full of notes left by travelers passing through. Tour groups often stop by the barrel for visitors to sift through the pile and take anything that they can personally deliver. (Guides say simply slapping a stamp on a letter and dropping it in a mailbox is cheating.)

NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM

Lazy at Its Finest

*Clever ways to get things done,
from ingenious chore-avoiders*

BY *Reader's Digest* Readers

Pulling the Right Strings

Our kitchen is on the second floor with a deck outside, so my husband puts the trash bins beneath the deck with string tied to the lids. All we have to do is go outside, pull the strings so the lids open, drop the bags—and not miss.

—BEVERLY CANNADY *Locust Grove, GA*

A Flair for Flares

One night, tired of getting up to fan our bonfire, I asked my friend if he had an electric leaf blower. “Yes?” he answered. I suggested using it to stoke the fire. The rest of the night he sat with the leaf blower, flipping it on whenever the flames needed reviving. It’s been our method since.

—DONALD JENKINS *Parma, OH*

“You’ve Got Mail”

Our front door is 50 feet from our mailbox. To eliminate unnecessary trips, I devised the “mail alert.” I tied

fishing line around a tennis ball, resting it atop the mailbox, then wrapped the line around the mailbox door. When the door is lowered, the string pulls the tennis ball off. If the ball is hanging underneath the mailbox, I know the mail has arrived.

—DAVID CHANDLER
Owens Cross Roads, AL

DIY D-R-Y

I live in the Colorado mountains, where we rarely experience humidity. Therefore, I do not—and will not—dry the dishes. Why do a job the air will do for me if I just wait a few minutes?

—SARAH GRAVITY *Durango, CO*

Working Smarter, Not Harder

I had a co-worker who delighted in finding unpleasant tasks for me, such as sealing a stack of envelopes—for which I used a wet paper towel instead of my tongue. Once, she handed



me a long adding machine tape, asking me to find how many items were added together. Instead of counting each item, I used a ruler to figure out items per inch, and then measured the full length of the tape. Our supervisor commended me for handling an unpleasant situation well.

—MARY GARRETT *St. Peters, MO*

1% Inspiration, 99% Condensation



Walking to the other side of the house to fill my watering can is just too much trouble. Instead, I keep the can underneath the air conditioner vent near the door. It's a two-part solution: The can catches the drip, and the vent fills the can throughout the day so it's full when I water in the morning.

—LEN CHESTER *Southport, NC*

Reinventing the Wheels

Once, while pulling into the driveway, I rolled down the car window and grabbed my empty garbage can to “drive” it up to the garage. My neighbor gave me a thumbs-up and a huge smile. It's one thing to be lazy, but quite another to get affirmation for it.

—JERRY LANG *South Barrington, IL*

Mind, Sealed, Delivered

I wanted to write back to a friend, but the return address on the envelope he'd mailed to me was nearly illegible. Instead of deciphering it, I cut that portion off his envelope and taped it

to the addressee area of a new one. I enclosed my letter, and off it went. Ever since, he's called me the laziest person he knows.

—DAVID ZELINSKY *Towaco, NJ*

Now That's a Smart Appliance

Sometimes I'll push the button to add 30 seconds on my microwave, allowing the carousel an extra half-turn, because I don't want to reach all the way to the back for my food or beverage.

—RON S. *Monmouth, OR*

Hacking the Humans

As a computer analyst, I learned that when I didn't call people back right away about their “catastrophic” computer issues, they often resolved it themselves. When left to their own devices, people often get better at fixing them.

—DAWN MONTGOMERY *Skiatook, OK*

In the Bag

When I empty the garbage, I replace the bag with three new ones. And not three folded bags, either—three new bags fully loaded in the can. When it's time to take it out, I simply pull out the top one and *voila!* A fresh bag is already in place.

—LARRY LANE *Delavan, IL*

Make Your Bed Before You Get Up



I'm so lazy that I make my bed while I'm still in it. I hate making several trips around the bed to tuck corners

and pull comforters. Now, I lie in the center, fluff the covers, then use my hands and feet to spread the blanket to the corners. Then I stealthily roll out from under the covers so as not to disturb my handiwork.

—KEITH SEAGLE *Jacksonville, FL*

The Invisible Chauffeur

I was getting in the passenger seat and was too lazy to close the car door. I asked my husband, “Who is going to shut the door?” He said “Hold on,” stepped on the gas then quickly tapped the brake. The door closed softly by itself. The grandchild thinks it’s especially funny.

—BONNIE RADUNS *Basom, NY*

Channel Your Inner Einstein

When we were first married, our TV had no remote. Some nights I’d be so comfy I didn’t want to get up and change it. I’d call “I need a kiss!” to my husband and he’d come running to kiss me. After, I’d say, “Since you’re up, will you change the channel for me?”



—JANET MURPHY *Westland, MI*


A Stroke (or Spin) of Genius

I was a city girl who married a farmer. One day, my husband picked a bushel of green beans for me. The beans were very muddy from a recent downpour. I rinsed them in the sink several times but the mud was too thick. So I tried putting the beans in the washing machine on a cold rinse cycle with gentle agitation. Once the spin was done, they were squeaky clean.

—PAM BALDOCK *Bowling Green, KY*

By Far the Sharpest Tool

My family has a tradition of making memorial wreaths and grave blankets out of pine tree branches. I rarely participated—I guess I’m lazy. But once I found my mom and sister whittling branches into points to stick into Styrofoam and hold the shape. I picked up a branch, put it in a pencil sharpener and created the perfect point with little effort. Mom was thrilled and said, “If you’re looking for an easier way to get things done, always call Patti!”

—PATRICIA PELC *Melbourne, FL* 

HOW'D YOU MEET YOUR BEST FRIEND?

Oprah and Gayle met as young journalists working for a Baltimore news station. Bert found Ernie wandering Sesame Street in 1969 and the roommates have been inseparable ever since. Han Solo freed Chewbacca from intergalactic slavers and earned a dedicated Wookiee co-pilot along the way. You needn’t have driven off a cliff Thelma-and-Louise style to prove your loyalty to your own ride-or-die, but please go to rd.com/bestfriend to see terms and share your BFF origin story. It might appear in a future issue of *Reader’s Digest*.





DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

A MARINE'S Toughest Battle

*Doctors said there was slim hope
for the baby born with only half a heart.
But her father had just begun to fight.*

BY Robert Kiener
ILLUSTRATION BY Zachary Monteiro

It seemed so real, thought Rob Velez about the dream he'd had the night before.

Lying in bed after waking from a long night's sleep in his home outside London, he smiled as he remembered the wonderful scene. In it, he had been holding his newborn daughter in his strong arms. As she looked lovingly into his eyes, he was so overcome with emotion that the tough 50-year-old former U.S. Marine had started crying. He was in love. He'd never felt this much love for anyone.

Amazing, he thought as the morning sun streamed through his windows. *This was more than a dream.* He threw back his covers and put on some clothes. He had to tell his partner of four years, Zofia Fenrych, what he had learned from his dream.

Fenrych, a 40-year-old homeopathic therapist, listened to him as he told her about his dream. "You're pregnant. We're having another baby."

Fenrych laughed. They had a 2-year-old daughter, and both had 16-year-old sons from previous relationships. "No way I'm pregnant," she said.

"Honey," he said, "we *are* having a little girl. I saw her. And she'll be beautiful!"

To prove it, Velez zipped downstairs to the pharmacy to get a pregnancy test kit. An hour later, two red lines appeared on the test strip. Fenrych was indeed pregnant. She screamed in delight and the couple embraced.

"We're going to have a beautiful daughter," Velez said. "I know. I saw her last night."

FOUR MONTHS LATER, in February 2022, they went to the doctor's office for an ultrasound. They held hands as the sonographer moved an electronic probe called a transducer over Fenrych's abdomen. A two-dimensional image of their baby, whom they had already named Dorothea, appeared on the screen.

"We saw her tiny fingers and toes and watched as baby Dorothea, my dream daughter come true, actually moved," Velez remembers. "She was sucking her thumb. Then both of us let out a shout as it looked like she waved at us. She was so tiny, so beautiful!"

Suddenly, the sonographer stopped moving.

"We have a problem," she said. She

called in a pediatric expert from a nearby hospital.

An hour later, after studying the sonogram, the expert dropped a bomb. “I am so sorry,” she said. She explained that the baby had hypoplastic left heart syndrome (HLHS), a rare, often fatal condition. Dorothea had only half a heart; the rest was undeveloped. And because of that, she had little chance of surviving.

“Her best advice was that we elect to, and I’ll never forget the word, ‘terminate’ the pregnancy,” says Velez, choking back tears. “This was the moment that everything—our entire lives—changed forever.”

Never. That was the word both Velez and Fenrych used when they heard the doctor’s advice to have an abortion. “Forget about it!” Velez shouted at the pediatrician.

After digesting the news, Dorothea’s parents decided to enjoy every day they had with her. They took day trips to the seaside and visited nearby parks, where they would walk for hours and keep up a steady conversation with their unborn baby, explaining what they were doing and seeing.

On one trip to a botanical garden, as their 2-year-old, Batsheba, screamed with joy while she chased ducklings, Fenrych caressed her own

belly and told Dorothea, “See, your sister is having so much fun.” At home, Fenrych would play the piano, her son would play the violin and Batsheba would sing to her unborn sister.

“We wanted to include Dorothea in everything,” remembers Fenrych.

Velez, who had been stationed in England as a Marine and had moved back there for his job with a global financial services company in 2014, was now employed at a private equity firm that worked with health-care startups. He pulled every string he could to get a second opinion, only to hear the same

Zofia Fenrych with daughter Batsheba a few days before baby Dorothea was born



diagnosis and the same suggested medical path to take: Terminate the pregnancy.

Obsessed with saving his daughter's life, Velez quit his job and devoted all his time to researching HLHS. He and Fenrych dipped into their savings to survive. He wrote countless messages to doctors, surgeons, specialists and hospitals around the world, hoping to find someone who could help. A fetal echocardiogram at 24 weeks revealed even more bad news: In addition to HLHS, Dorothea also had a severe blockage in her heart. Their baby had only a 5% chance of survival, Velez and Fenrych were told. Then they found out about a risky in-utero fetal operation that might be able to repair her heart.

“We will do our best, but please remember the odds are not in our favor.”

No one in the U.K. could carry out the complex surgery, so Velez and Fenrych looked elsewhere, eventually locating a pediatric surgeon in Texas who agreed to perform the procedure. But it would cost the couple more than \$3 million.

Hoping to raise the money, they started a publicity campaign, giving countless interviews to the press. Velez also sent scores of emails to celebrities

and, as he remembers, “every billionaire I could think of.” But they raised only about \$60,000—far from what they would need. As the days ticked by, their chances of saving their unborn baby's life looked more and more hopeless.

LOOK CLOSER. It was in the middle of the night when Velez heard the voice in his head. He was sitting alone in his home office despairing that he'd failed his family. *Am I going crazy?* he thought. *Now I'm hearing voices!*

Look closer, the voice repeated.

“What are you talking about?” he answered out loud. “I've tried everything.”

Look closer to home.

Fine, thought Velez, I'll try again. He Googled “impossible cases,” “miracle surgeon,” “UK pediatric expert” and “HLHS.” Almost immediately a link to a Facebook page about Guido Michielon, a cardiothoracic surgeon, popped up in the search results.

Velez pored through the Facebook page, reading message after message from enthusiastic parents thanking Dr. Michielon for “saving our baby's life,” “giving us hope,” “changing our lives” and more. Even more remarkable, Velez discovered that the Italian-born surgeon was an expert in HLHS and had done more than 2,000 open-heart procedures with a special focus on neonatal surgeries.

How did I miss him? Velez wondered as he wrote an email to the London-

based surgeon, describing Dorothea's issues and including medical notes and copies of her sonograms. Within hours he got a reply: "I am in Italy now but will be back this Friday. I've moved you to the top of my appointment list."

Five days later, at the end of a long Skype conference call, Dr. Michielon gave the anxious parents the news they'd been praying for: "I can help you. I will operate on Dorothea after she is born and stabilized."

He explained that he hoped to basically "rewire" and "rebuild" her heart and veins several days after she was born. And, instead of costing millions, the operation, called the Norwood Procedure, would be fully covered by the U.K.'s National Health Service (NHS).

Velez and Fenrych were ecstatic. But they were jolted back to reality when the surgeon warned, "A child with HLHS has a very low chance of survival. And Dorothea's complications are even more severe than most. We will do our best. But please remember the odds are not in our favor."

ON JULY 7, at London's Royal Brompton Hospital, surrounded by a 20-strong team of medical personnel and a bank



of beeping and blinking medical monitors, baby Dorothea was born by cesarean section. Velez, dressed in surgical scrubs, stood alongside Fenrych and peeked over a curtain to see his newborn daughter.

"Look!" he shouted. "She has a full head of hair!"

The team rushed Dorothea into a resuscitator unit and placed an oxygen mask on her tiny face. A priest Velez had asked to come along hurriedly baptized her as she was being scanned.



As ill as Dorothea was, her parents never gave up hope.

As he left the operating room, Velez noticed a group of doctors looking at a screen that showed a sonogram of Dorothea's heart. Minutes later, the chief surgeon, Alain Fraissé, told Velez, "I don't know how to explain this but, somehow, there are four or five new veins in her heart that have appeared out of nowhere."

He explained that these new veins, which no one had seen on earlier scans or MRIs, were helping drain her heart. In other words, they were keeping her alive. He sounded astonished.

Dr. Michielon came out and hugged Velez. "She is stable and she is beautiful. Congratulations!"

THE MOOD SHIFTED dramatically on July 12, when Velez and Fenrych met with Dr. Michielon and his team at the hospital to discuss the Norwood Procedure operation scheduled for the next day. Velez sensed there was something

wrong. The normally ebullient physician seemed distant and didn't make eye contact.

The bad news was delivered by a hospital administrator: "We've decided that there is such a small chance your baby will survive the surgery that we cannot allow it to go forward."

The room fell silent. Velez could feel his own heart beating. And if she did survive, the administrator con-

tinued, "There's a very good chance she would suffer irreversible brain damage."

Velez looked over at Dr. Michielon for help. He was silent, looking down at the floor.

The administrator said, "We recommend compassionate care."

"You mean we should let her die," said Velez curtly. "After we've come this far?"

"You know I want to operate, but I cannot without the support of my team," said Dr. Michielon.

Velez went into what he called Marine mode.

"We're not going down like this," he told Fenrych. "Not after all we've been through." He went home and sent off blistering messages to the hospital CEO and the hospital attorney. One message demanded, "Who are you to play God?"

He reached out to a well-known human rights lawyer who had a successful record fighting for NHS patients.

Velez told Fenrych that he was ready to chain himself to the prime minister's office on Downing Street if he had to.

"The pressure was on," he says. "The U.S. First Marine Division had landed at Royal Brompton Hospital!"

Twenty-four hours later, the hospital administrators relented. The operation would take place.

AT 7:30 THE NEXT MORNING, Dr. Michielon, assisted by three pediatric cardiac surgeons and a team of nurses, began the delicate open-heart surgery that would reconstruct the right ventricle of Dorothea's heart so that it would pump blood to both her body and her lungs without the need of the malformed left ventricle.

After Dorothea's chest was opened, she was hooked up to a heart-lung machine that would temporarily take over for her heart and lungs while doctors operated on those organs. Surrounded by flickering monitors and the whirring of the heart-lung machine, Dr. Michielon began the intricate, precise procedure to build a new, larger aorta (the artery that carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body) by joining the pulmonary artery, which normally carries blood from the right ventricle to the lungs, to Dorothea's existing aorta. At less than

0.04 inch wide, it was unusually small.

This is time-consuming, painstaking work, because a baby's heart is only about the size of a walnut—and Dorothea's veins and arteries were so tiny, "really a hair," says Dr. Michielon. He needed to wear high-powered magnifying lenses to see as he expertly cut and sewed her blood vessels together.

The hours dragged by as the doctor and his team performed the delicate surgery. Their last step was to install a shunt from the right ventricle to the pulmonary artery, connecting them to direct the blood flow to the lungs.



Nearly 11 hours after he and his team began, Dr. Michielon finally relaxed, as he double-checked his work that had essentially re-plumbed the baby's faulty heart.

By 4:30 p.m., Dr. Michielon, exhausted and still dressed in scrubs, found the parents in the waiting room.

*The nurse came back.
“We’re still doing
CPR. We’re trying
to get her back.”*

“Looks good,” he told them, smiling broadly. “She is stabilized.” The three embraced in a celebratory hug.

Within minutes, Velez and Fenrych were startled by the screech of emergency alarms. A team of doctors and nurses rushed into the room where Dorothea was recovering from surgery. People screamed orders. A doctor yelled, “Cardiac arrest!” The alarm kept wailing.

After a few minutes, a nurse dashed out to tell them, “Dorothea’s heart has stopped. She’s had a heart attack. We are trying to revive her.”

Ten minutes later the nurse returned with the same message.

Fifteen minutes later she came back: “We’re still doing CPR. We’re trying to get her back.”

An hour later, Velez and Fenrych were ushered into the ICU. They were shocked to see their daughter tethered

to a dialysis machine and a life-support unit that helped her heart pump blood. Her chest was covered with dried blood and was swollen from more than an hour of CPR procedures. She was battered and bruised, but with the help of a bank of high-tech machines, she was still fighting to stay alive.

Velez and Fenrych reached beneath the network of tubes and lines that were keeping Dorothea alive and held her hand. When Velez felt his daughter squeeze his index finger in her tiny hand, he told her, “You are a fighter. You did it. You’re going to be OK.”

FOR THE NEXT FIVE WEEKS,

Velez and Fenrych rarely left Dorothea’s side in the ICU. They talked to her, played music for her and caressed her. On Aug. 26, Fenrych’s birthday, doctors removed Dorothea’s breathing tube and took her off the ventilator, moving her to only light assisted-breathing support from a CPAP machine. She would need a second open-heart operation in a few months, and doctors warned her parents that the next few weeks would be critical. To survive the upcoming surgery, Dorothea would need to put on weight and get stronger.

The tiny girl moved out of intensive care and amazed the hospital staff by





Although she's had her fill of doctors, Dorothea lets big sister Batsheba examine her.

putting on more than 3 pounds in the next two months. Her reconstructed heart was working well, and her oxygen levels became normal.

On Sept. 14 she was taken off the CPAP machine and began breathing on her own. On Nov. 24, Thanksgiving Day, Dr. Michielon performed the second surgery on her heart. He declared her prognosis excellent. She finally went home with her parents on Dec. 21, just in time for Christmas. She had defied the odds and lived up to her well-earned nickname: the miracle baby.

Today, says her proud papa, "She is a chubby, healthy baby and is constantly smiling and laughing. We sing happy birthday to her every morning because every day with her is a miracle.

"You know, right after we found out we were having a baby girl, we named her Dorothea. There was a good reason for that." He pauses and smiles as he watches Batsheba, now 3 years old, snuggle up next to her baby sister on their living room couch. He continues, "*Dorothea* is derived from a Greek phrase that means 'gift of God.'" **IK**

THE UPSIDE OF ANXIETY

HOW TO WORRY WELL

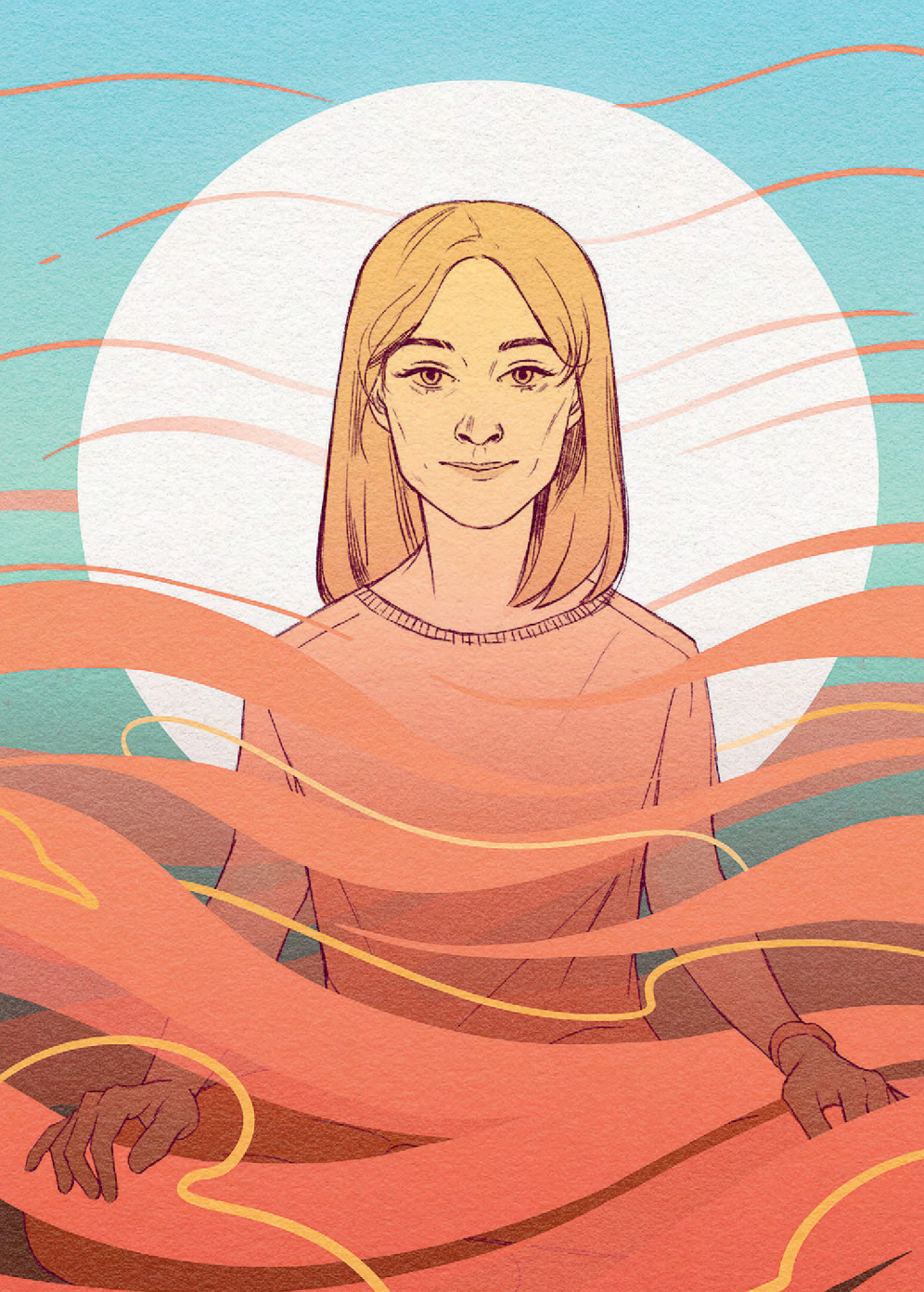
BY *Patricia Pearson*

I AM AN ANXIOUS TRAVELER. I arrive at airports and train stations extra early. I triple-check all my documents, and feel a tightness in my jaw, a slight clench in my stomach, until I've arrived where I'm going. Non-anxious people tease me for being a nervous Nellie.

I used to feel bad about my anxiety, seeing it as irrational, weak. But not anymore. I could write a book on this subject—actually, I did: *A Brief History of Anxiety (Yours and Mine)*. I've learned to respect my tendency to be hypervigilant.

Recently, I was driving along a country road at the start of a long trip that would mainly be on a major highway. I began feeling that something could go wrong. *What if I run out of gas?* I worried, even though I still had plenty. So when I spied a gas station just before the on-ramp I was going to take onto the highway, I gave in to my angst and decided to fill up. Just in case.

And that's when I discovered that one of my front tires was badly deflated. If I'd overpowered my sense of unease, talked down my anxiety, the tire would



have blown out at high speed on the highway. My nagging urge to plan ahead even though it wasn't strictly necessary saved me from a potentially catastrophic scenario.

A GROWING NUMBER of psychologists and neuroscientists are getting out the message that anxiety and other negative feelings have a positive role to play in our lives. Tracy Dennis-Tiwary, who recently published *Future Tense: Why Anxiety Is Good for You (Even Though It Feels Bad)*, thinks our culture goes overboard in demonizing difficult emotions.

She knows what it's like to get swamped from time to time by anxiety. "I remember a period at work when there was a lot going on," says Dennis-Tiwary, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at the City University of New York's Hunter College. Worries

ANXIETY CAN PROMPT US TO MOVE OUT OF A SITUATION THAT'S NO LONGER WORKING.



kept waking her up at 4 a.m. "It was like a yucky cloud of free-floating anxiety," she recalls. And it kept her from falling back to much-needed sleep.

Instead of trying to suppress this disconcerting feeling, however, she leaned into it. "If you sit with the anxiety, you have an opportunity to glean

information," she says. "For me, this one important ball that I had dropped at work finally rose to the surface of my mind. When I recognized this thing niggling at me and gave it space, I learned from it. I wrote down two or three things I could do to address it." The next morning, she felt calmer.

Psychologist Todd Kashdan, director of the Well-Being Lab at George Mason University in Virginia and co-author of *The Upside of Your Dark Side*, is a critic of what he calls gung-ho happyology. We don't always have to be smiley and serene, or worry there's something wrong with us. Sometimes, he says, worry itself is what is right. Fear of heights? Good, because you're not going to be the person who falls off a cliff while taking a selfie.

These experts wonder if the natural role that anxiety plays in our lives is somehow being forgotten. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced in March 2022 that the prevalence of anxiety and depression had increased globally by 25% over the previous year. The WHO called the finding "a wake-up call to all countries to step up mental health services and support." Do we know for certain that this data represents a public health crisis? Or could it mean that millions of folks are quite rightly feeling uncertain, stressed out and afraid?

The difference is important. For instance, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services now recommends routine screenings for anxiety by family



doctors. This is a positive development in that it recognizes the impact that anxiety disorders can have on those at risk. On the other hand, what if initiatives like this could funnel some of us into unnecessary treatments and medications? What if we lose sight of the benefits of our doubts and “what ifs”?

We can experience healthy, often completely valid periods of distress without being categorized as mentally ill, according to behavioral psychologists. Anxiety is an adaptive strategy in human evolution. It helps us to prepare for the uncertain future, “to remain vigilant,” Dennis-Tiwary says. Anxiety prompts us to resolve projected unknowns by planning and imagining, by plotting out possible scenarios.

“From an evolutionary point of view, anxiety is the best emotion to help us manage uncertainty,” she says, “because it forces us to run those what-if simulations. That’s what it’s good for.”

Likewise, neuroscientist Wendy Suzuki of New York University points out in her book *Good Anxiety: Harnessing the Power of the Most Misunderstood Emotion* that “if we simply approach anxiety as something to avoid, get rid of or dampen, we not only don’t solve the problem it’s alerting us to, but also we miss an opportunity to leverage the ‘generative power of anxiety.’” By “generative,” she means that anxiety can prompt us to move out of a situation that’s no longer working, to find the energy we need to get unstuck.

When we’re in an anxious state, the amount of dopamine in our brains increases, which prompts us to take action. In evolutionary terms, millions of years ago that might have meant looking for shelter to evade predatory animals. Today it might mean leaving a job because of a predatory boss.

By not facing up to our anxiety, we lose its benefits and can actually make things worse. Case in point for me: hiding unopened envelopes from the government entity I call the Tax Man in a drawer, even if they could be the routine updates or reminders that self-employed people like me receive, until I’ve turned it into a full-blown phobia.

According to Alice Boyes, who has a PhD in clinical psychology and is the author of *The Anxiety Toolkit*, coping with unpleasant feelings by avoiding them just reinforces your insecurity, because you’re not getting better at solving the problem. “Over time, you



will feel less and less competent," she warns.

THE KEY is to manage unease before it overtakes us, like tending a garden so the weeds don't spread. How do you do that? According to NYU's Suzuki, solutions include meditation, exercise, compassionate connection such as volunteering, access to nature and mentally reframing what we're experiencing.

For example, in her book, Suzuki writes about a startup entrepreneur who was beginning to feel daunted by everything that could go wrong in his high-stakes venture. This generated all kinds of "what-if" anxiety that kept him sleepless. He was, in psychological parlance, catastrophizing. Then, after talking to an old friend and mentor, he reached for a new tool: a reframe. He turned his "what ifs" into a goal-directed to-do list: "If this were to happen, then what could I do? Well, I could do X."

Dennis-Tiwary agrees that reframing is crucial. She points to a Harvard study in which socially anxious people were asked to speak in public. The researchers told some of them that having sweaty palms and a dry mouth or shaky knees was a *good* sign, a "positive coping tool" that optimizes the body for performance. The nervous speakers who had heard this message had lower blood pressure and a slower heart rate. In other words, they shifted to that sweet spot where they were ready to take on the challenge but were not distracted and alarmed by their own nervousness.

That's a pretty remarkable discovery. What it says is that we can reframe our fears so that they help us. Several years ago, I was the last in a long queue of speakers at a TEDx event. The theater was overly air-conditioned. I sat there shivering and growing tense, worrying that I would forget my speech about a book I'd recently written about death and dying.

The longer this mind-body feedback loop of physical tension and mental anxiety went on, the worse it got, until my legs felt so rubbery that I feared I would fall off the stage. It's a miracle that I made it through my talk.

Knowing what I do now, I would have paced and stretched in the hallway to keep my body warmed up and my breathing calm while I waited, not unlike an athlete before an event. I still would have been nervous, but I would have been proactively managing it.

“One of the key problems is that our perceptions about anxiety stop us from believing we can manage it,” says Dennis-Tiwary. She argues that anxiety isn’t the problem. “It is the messenger that tells us we are facing uncertainty and need to rise to the challenge. Or it’s pointing us to ways that our life needs to change, or that we need support.”

We can learn to manage anxiety. Suzuki’s advice about how to “worry well” includes meditation, which has

SPENDING TIME IN NATURAL LIGHT AND GREEN SPACES CAN RESTORE BALANCE.




been shown to calm the amygdala, the gland in the brain responsible for sending out alarm signals related to fear and anxiety.

Exercise helps quell anxiety too. Suzuki experimented with some of her students and found that even just a 10-minute workout could help them

feel less anxious before an exam. So hit the gym, enjoy the dance floor or go for a hike. Just spending time in natural light and in green spaces, what the Japanese call forest bathing, can restore our sense of psychological balance.

Since I know that humor increases oxytocin, a hormone that enhances social bonding and relatedness, I sometimes listen to stand-up comedy when I want to calm down. Social connection, touch and a grounding perspective on others’ suffering can soothe too, which is why volunteering and community involvement is good for us as well as those we help. (Isolation during the pandemic may well have been a contributing factor to that uptick in anxiety noted by the WHO.)

These are all well-founded techniques that can keep us from spiraling. The trick, as Dennis-Tiwary says, is to listen to anxiety when it shows up, and then to leverage that anxiety to make needed changes or extra plans—just as I did that day when I set off on my road trip.

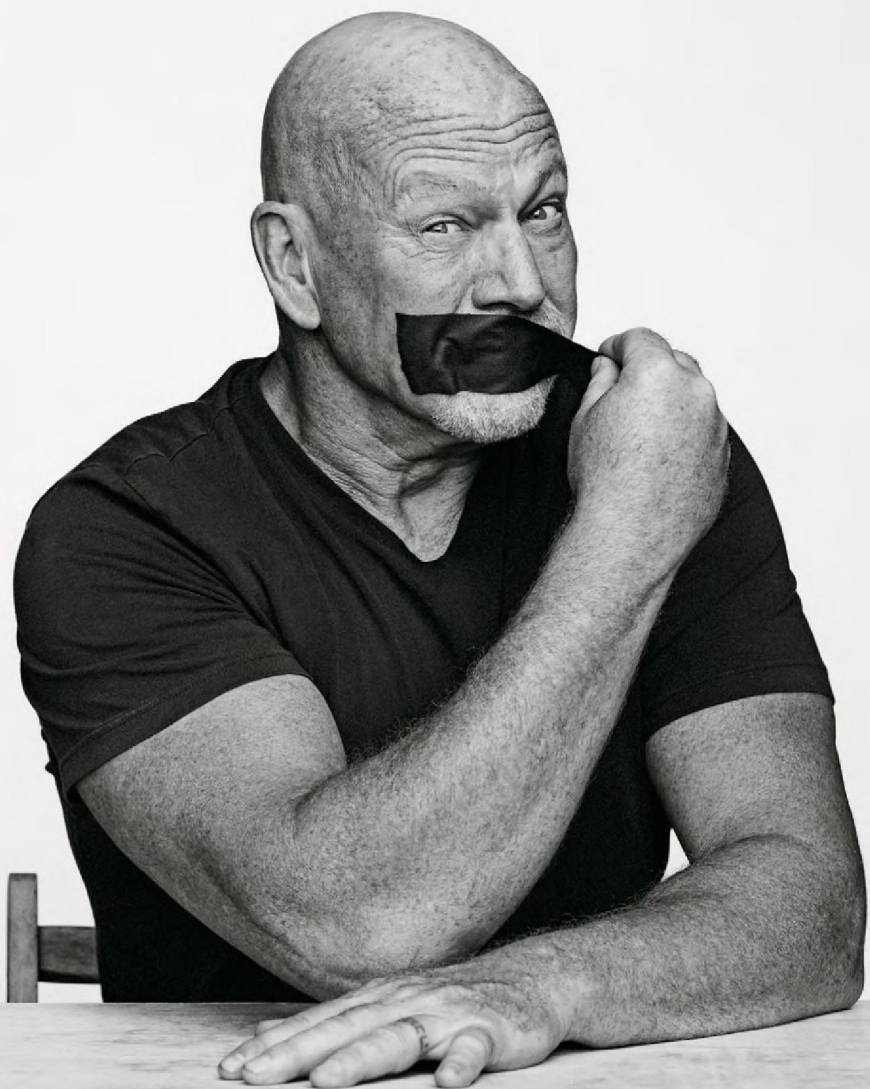
“Then,” she advises, “let it go. It’s a wave that you need to learn to ride.” 



Noodle It Around

In a bizarre incident earlier this year, someone dumped an estimated 15 wheelbarrow loads of pasta near a creek in Old Bridge, New Jersey. The reason remains an unsolved mystery. At least members of the community’s Facebook group had a little fun. Some residents posted pictures of a few noodles on the ground and called their renditions *impastas*. Another wrote, “We should send the perpetrators to the state penne tentiary.”

NYTIMES.COM





INSPIRATION

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

HOW SHUTTING UP FOR THREE MONTHS AND
WALKING MORE THAN 600 MILES
TRANSFORMED MY LIFE

By D.G. Marshall FROM TORONTO LIFE

AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, my mouth has been getting me into trouble. Growing up, I would say anything to get a laugh, no matter how crude or cutting. I used the gift of gab to get what I wanted from my parents (money, a later curfew) and to get out of what I didn't want (chores, groundings). I was asked to leave four different schools, mostly because I talked too much, and every one of my report cards said some variation of the same thing: **I'd do much better if I would just shut up.**

My mouth may have served me terribly as a student, but it set me up perfectly for a career in radio. In 2003, I launched a talk show on an AM station in the Toronto area. I would ask people about their religious beliefs and the role faith played in their lives. In my 16 years hosting the show, I interviewed rabbis, nuns, witches, Wiccans and satanist high priests, and had celebrities, politicians, religious leaders and spiritual gurus share the "why" behind their beliefs.

I think the show succeeded because it engaged people who don't usually listen to religious radio—people like me. After growing up in a churchgoing household and eventually becoming a pastor, I slowly began to reject organized religion. Still, I was fascinated by others' beliefs. I was consumed by the quest to understand the unknown and the unseen, and I traveled the world in

search of answers. I prayed among ancient petroglyphs in Australia, slept at Stonehenge and wept at the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. I thought I would surely discover some divine truth if I visited all the sacred sites and interviewed every spiritual leader.

But the only truth I discovered was this: I was a selfish, egotistical, judgmental jerk. It hit me about seven years ago, when I was close to turning 50, and almost every significant relationship in my life was in tatters. My wife of 28 years wanted a divorce. My kids weren't my biggest fans, and when I asked my daughter what I was doing wrong, she told me she didn't have enough time to explain it all.

I knew this much: The hunt for transcendence made me unbearable. I prioritized my radio-show guests, with whom I might spend an hour, over the people who meant the most to me.

I was constantly tearing into anyone I perceived as less enlightened than I was. Profanity and sarcasm were my default modes of communication. I drank too much and listened too little. I was miserable, as was everyone caught in my caustic orbit.

My report cards had been right—I'd do a lot better if I would just shut up. If my mouth was the root cause of my problems, maybe it was time to stop talking altogether.

Years earlier, I'd watched a movie called *The Way*, starring Martin Sheen. It followed the main character's journey along the Camino de Santiago, a series of 1,200-year-old trails that converge on a cathedral in northwestern Spain where the remains of St. James the Apostle are said to be buried.

So in 2016 I decided to take a three-month sabbatical from the radio show and walk the more-than-600-mile route without saying a single word. My plan was to finish the trek on my 50th birthday as a changed man.

WHEN I ARRIVED AT THE START of the Camino, in early October 2016, I was already worried that my quest was doomed. I was terrified that I'd accidentally speak, that my bum knees would prevent me from finishing the route, that even if I made it the whole way, I'd return home still a schmuck. Nonetheless, hungover from the night before, I walked out of the charming French town of St.-Jean-Pied-de-Port and began my two-month journey.

The first stretch of trail was a steep



D.G. Marshall (right), a lifelong loudmouth by his own admission, spent months in complete silence along the Camino de Santiago (above).



incline into the Pyrenees, and my body hated every step. I quickly realized that my hiking boots were too narrow for my feet. My 28-plus-pound backpack felt heavier with every stride. My knees started to creak, and sweat permeated my clothing.

One hour in, I wanted to give up. I don't know whether it was my ego or the goal of becoming a better person that propelled me forward. Either way, I kept walking.

Around the 7-mile mark, I trudged into the first *albergue*, one of hundreds of hostels along the Camino. The rustic abode, equipped with bunk beds and a rudimentary kitchen, was crawling with hikers speaking a potpourri of languages. It was there that I began to understand that the physical challenge, excruciating as it was, would be far easier than the vow of silence.

When the hostel staff or fellow travelers spoke to me, I pointed to my mouth, mimed the act of talking with my hand and then slid my index finger across my neck. I could usually get what I wanted using improvised hand signals. (To ask for milk in my coffee, for instance, I pretended to milk a cow.) If that didn't get the point across, I'd show people a note on my iPhone: "Please forgive me for not talking. I'm traveling for three months in a vow of silence. You can still talk to me :)"

And people did. Along the Camino, I was joined by pilgrims from Switzerland, Holland, Israel and Ireland. Some walked with me in silence; others

A wooden milepost indicates the distance to different villages along the Camino de Santiago.



shared their life stories. A gay man from Ireland told me about the rejection he'd experienced from his family. A woman shared her struggle to go on after the death of her child. I yearned to ask questions, to offer my advice or condolences. But all I could do was awkwardly type out a few questions on my phone.

Yet I couldn't keep my judgmental side entirely in check. One morning, about a month into my trip, I woke up around 5:30, grabbed my pack and walked downstairs to the hostel lobby, where I spotted a skinny, scruffy guy in his late 50s with his hair in a ponytail, staggering around and slurring his words. *Drunk before dawn? What's your problem, dude?* I didn't want him accompanying me on the trail, so I skipped breakfast and left.



Later that day, I checked out one of the many historic and architecturally stunning churches that dot the Camino. When I returned to the path, I heard a voice say “*Buen Camino*,” a common greeting among pilgrims. It was the guy I had tried to avoid. I smiled politely and hurried off, thinking I could outpace him. But about 2 miles later, he was somehow still close behind me.

Finally, he yelled out to me, and though I feared I’d spend the rest of my day listening to the ramblings of a drunkard, I let him catch up. The man introduced himself as Nico and explained that he had Lou Gehrig’s disease. It had ravaged his nervous system to the point where he stumbled and slurred. He’d decided to tackle the Camino while his body would still let him. I felt awful.

Before the Camino, I had absurdly high standards for how a person should be, despite my own shortcomings. In my head, people were boring and predictable, and almost everyone fell into one of the many categories I’d devised: religious whack jobs, arrogant showoffs, incense-burning virtue signalers, hopeless drunks and so on. Unless they had something else to offer me—good looks, wealth, wisdom, a willingness to laugh at my jokes—I treated them as if they didn’t exist.

Before I knew anything about Nico, I had pigeonholed him. I nearly deprived myself of a genuine human connection. Instead, we spent the next three days walking together. He told me stories about his career as a professional kickboxer, representing Germany internationally. I helped him fasten his belt and do up his jacket. We developed a profound bond, the very thing my life was lacking.

By the time we parted, it was obvious: By opening my ears and my heart, I could actually like people. And by closing my mouth, I gave them a chance to actually like me.

MOST DAYS FOLLOWED a familiar rhythm. I’d rise before dawn, pack my bag, put on my jacket, lace up my boots and walk for six to 12 hours. Every day was painful. One of my big toenails was black, and my pinkie toes were calloused. My shoulders and back ached from the weight of my pack. Because of the orientation of the trail, the sun

baked the left side of my face, which would leave me with long-term skin damage.

Still, there were moments of bliss. I was surrounded by endless fields of gold, mountainous air, soul-shattering sunrises. I snaked through deserted country villages and rested in the pews of majestic cathedrals.

One morning, a little over halfway through my trip, I spotted the Spanish city of León in the distance. For most pilgrims, León offers a place to sleep in a proper bed, to wine and **dine**, and to visit a museum or gallery. **For me**, it was a reckoning: The city of **125,000** shared a name with my **mother, Leone**.

She and my father **adopted me when** I was an infant. They were a **loving couple** who ran a funeral **home together** and raised me and my **sister** in the apartment above the **business**. They were kind, patient people of **integrity** who gave back to their **community**.

Despite their love and **affection**, I could never shake the **fear of rejection**. I'd do anything for **other people's** approval. As a kid, I once **accepted** a dare to give a bag of multicolored **rocks** to a developmentally challenged child and tell him they were pieces of chewing gum. It was just one of many times throughout my life that I did something for a laugh at someone else's expense.

I put my parents through hell. I flunked out of school numerous times. After ninth grade, I dropped out entirely. I refused to get a job and even stole the funeral hearse for joyrides

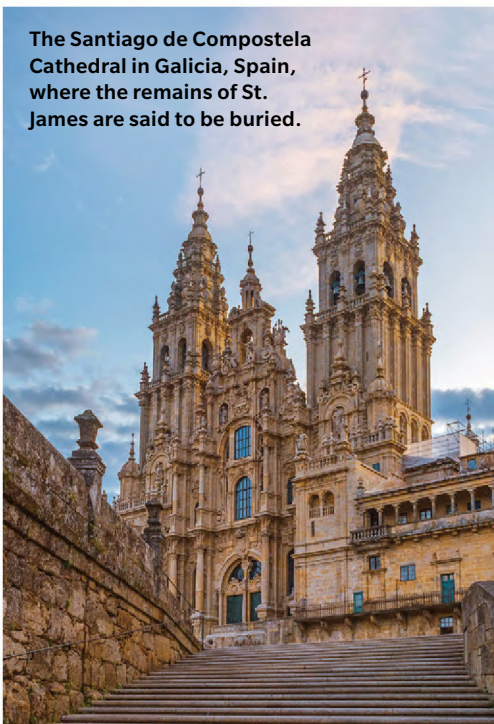
before I had my driver's license. When they tried to discipline me, I would rage at them and run away from home.

Just after I turned 17, I left home for good to work at a ranch in California. Despite receiving numerous letters from my mother, I never called or wrote back. Four years later, she died of pancreatic cancer. I never got to say goodbye.

By the time I was old enough to grasp how much pain I'd caused my mother, it was too late to apologize. That truth ate at me every day. I hated myself because of what I'd done, and that disdain emanated from me like a toxic cloud, infecting every relationship that followed.

Outside León, I continued along the trail past a cemetery, where I noticed

The Santiago de Compostela Cathedral in Galicia, Spain, where the remains of St. James are said to be buried.



an older woman carrying flowers to a gravestone. As I approached, her face broke into a warm smile. I was stunned. She looked exactly like my mother. “*Buen Camino*,” she said, continuing on her way.

I almost chased her down—to do what, I don’t know. Even if I did speak, what would I say? “You look just like my dead mother. Can I give you a hug?”

I knew it couldn’t be her, but the sight of her made me realize how much I missed my mom, how much I wished I could tell her I was sorry. I broke down in tears as pilgrims and cyclists passed me by.

A few days later, I came upon a monument called the Iron Cross. Compared to the elaborate ruins and ornate churches along the route, it was a remarkably ordinary structure: a metal cross atop a tall wooden post. At its base were tens of thousands of stones left by pilgrims. It’s a Camino tradition to leave a rock, symbolizing the unloading of a burden.

Knowing this, I’d brought one from home. I held it in my hand, thinking of the regret I’d carried with me since my mother’s death. Nothing will ever excuse the way I treated her. But holding on to my regret wasn’t helping me or the people around me. I knew I had to let it go. I threw the stone on the pile and, sobbing, kept walking.

ON NOV. 30, 2016, I woke up at 3:30 a.m., buzzing with excitement. I was only a few miles from the end of my journey.

Just as I had planned, it was my 50th birthday.

My final destination was Cape Finisterre, on the west coast of Spain; its name means “the end of the earth.”

MY BACK WAS SPASMING WITH PAIN AND MY BODY THROBBED, BUT I WAS ELATED.



With less than an hour left in my 60-day hike, I wandered off the path to climb to a high point in the pre-dawn darkness. Sitting alone, I watched the sun inch above the horizon, casting the clouds in shades of pink and orange as fishing vessels began to leave the harbor. It was the most awe-inspiring sunrise I’d ever seen.

Climbing down from my perch, I soon arrived at a worn 3-foot-tall stone marker denoting the end of the trail. An unfamiliar feeling swelled up inside me: pride. I had done it. My back was spasming with pain and my whole body throbbed, but I was elated. I’d overcome my fears, completed the journey and kept my vow of silence. I felt good about myself for the first time in a long time.

To cap off my trip, I’d arranged to spend a few weeks in a monastery on the Canary Islands, just off the western coast of Africa, silently writing and

reflecting. The Camino was everything I'd hoped it would be. I had seen the good in humanity. I had shed my shell of negativity. And I had begun to make peace with the deep-seated pain that was preventing me from being the person I wanted to be.

What would the monastery reveal? This: One night, I awoke and realized that I needed to repair the most important relationship in my life: my marriage.

I met my wife when we were both 20. She got pregnant, so we got married. We weren't madly in love, at least not then, but we were bringing life into the world, so it felt like the right thing to do. We had a son, then a daughter a few years later, and we poured ourselves into our kids' lives, ferrying them to school and sports.

As they got older, my wife and I retreated into our jobs. She worked at a youth camp, managing the barn, and I had my radio show. By the time our kids were adults, we were sleeping in different rooms. Our love had gone cold.

When she turned 50, in early 2016, my wife went on a solo trip to Australia and did some reflection of her own. Two weeks after she left, she sent me an email: She wanted out of our marriage. I was gutted, but I wasn't surprised. Yet before I left for the Camino, I had convinced her to stay.

Lying in the monastery bed, I shuddered at the thought of ever letting her slip away again. Despite our ups and downs, she was the person I needed most in the world. She tolerated me with saintly patience, and I loved her

intensely for it. My worst mistake was that I'd neglected to show it.

After returning home that December, I spoke for the first time in 90 days. On Christmas Eve, in a croaky, uneven voice, I apologized for everything and asked my wife to remarry me. She said yes.

I WISH I COULD TELL YOU that was my happily-ever-after moment. That, after all my soul-searching, I restored all my relationships and never acted like a jerk again. But life isn't a Hallmark movie.

Months after my return, my wife explained that she'd felt ambushed by my sudden proposal. She hadn't wanted to bring me down from my Camino high, so she'd said yes. Shortly after that conversation, she left. That felt like the end. But after a couple of years of separation, we started going on dates again, and then we signed up for couples therapy. We concluded that investing in a future together was worth a shot. Our relationship is still a daily battle of choice, but giving up after 36 years of shared history seems too easy.

It took two years for me to realize that there was no squaring the new me with my old life. Returning to the radio show, I felt myself reverting to the irritable, judgmental person I once was. The more I talked, the more I yearned for that Camino contentment, the serenity of unplugging from it all.

Eventually I decided that, if I was truly dedicated to becoming a better person, I needed a radical, permanent change. I quit the show, got rid of my



Cape Finisterre, on the west coast of Spain, marks the end of the Camino.



phone, abandoned my social media accounts and moved back in with my wife on a 100-acre farm in Caledon, northwest of Toronto.

Silence is now a part of my daily life. I am perfectly happy sitting on our front porch, literally watching the corn grow. Four horses, seven dogs, 30 chickens and an ass named Grace keep me company. When I get a craving for social interaction, I ride my horse to the local watering hole. It still takes all my effort to keep my inner jerk at bay, and I fail often. But I've found a way to keep the lessons of the Camino close at hand through SOS Retreats Canada. A couple

of times a year, I welcome groups of six to 12 to the farm for a weekend, during which they walk a 31-mile trail in silence. In the evenings, we relax and verbally debrief around the fire.

I'm not offering to help anyone find themselves, become successful, repair their marriage or cope with grief. All I'm offering is a place to slow down, shut up and listen. Because it's in the silence that the important stuff gets louder. **13**

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No White Noise

Snoring is basically bragging about being asleep—so loudly that it stops other people from sleeping.

 @IAMCHRISRAMSEY



The RD
LIST
 READ, WATCH, LISTEN

The Hill

Starring Dennis Quaid and Colin Ford

LOAD UP ON PEANUTS and Cracker Jack for this remarkable fact-based story about a pastor and his baseball-loving son. James Hill (Dennis Quaid) is protective of young Rickey (Colin Ford), who suffers from a degenerative back disease and wears Forrest Gump-like leg braces. But Rickey is a phenom at the plate in the sandlots of rural Texas. And despite his dad's concerns, he's determined to fulfill his dream of playing professional baseball. "When

I swing that bat," he declares, "I ain't crippled no more." Quaid starred in *The Rookie*, one of the most beloved baseball films of all time; co-screenwriter Angelo Pizzo also wrote underdog classics *Rudy* and *Hoosiers*. "It's an honor to have my story told this way," says the real-life Rickey Hill, now 67. "I hope audiences find inspiration in the depiction of my life." Spoiler alert: He ends up scoring big-time. (*In theaters Aug. 25*) —Mara Reinstein

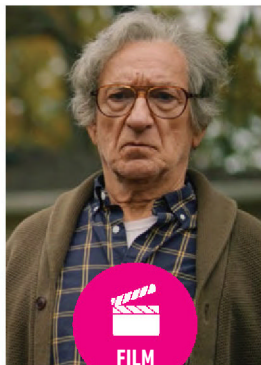


Only Murders in the Building

Starring Steve Martin, Selena Gomez and Martin Short

Look who's back in the building—the Arconia, that is, the grand Upper West Side apartment building home to a wealth of eccentric residents and a suspiciously high body count. Season 1 began with Charles-Haden Savage (Steve Martin), Mabel Mora (Selena Gomez) and Oliver Putnam (Martin Short) returning to the Arconia on the night of another neighbor's untimely passing. The unlikely trio, bonding over a shared interest in true crime, podcast their investigation. Fans already have a clue about Season 3: In the Season 2 finale, the lead actor of Putnam's Broadway show collapses on stage and seemingly expires. Martin, Gomez and Short are all knockouts—scene-stealing is the real crime. *(Season 3 streaming on Hulu Aug. 8)* —*Caroline Fanning*





Jules

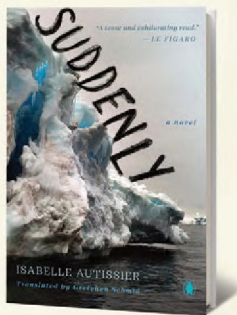
Starring **Ben Kingsley**

Imagine *E.T.* if septuagenarians, instead of kids, found the alien. Milton Robinson (Ben Kingsley) proclaims there's an alien in his yard, but few listen, at least in any meaningful way. "An illegal alien?" many—including his daughter—reply. Milton and his neighbors (Harriet Sansom Harris and Jane Curtin) name the alien Jules, feed him apple slices, dress him in their kids' old clothes and help repair his ship so he can flee. Ultimately, *Jules* is a poignant tale about late-in-life connection: The elderly trio find it easier to bond with an alien than with their adult kids and a world that insistently disregards them. (In theaters Aug. 11) —CF

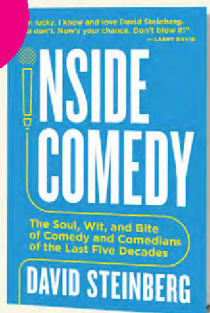
Suddenly

By **Isabelle Autissier**

Protagonists Louise and Ludovic aren't gritty adventurers; that'd be author Isabelle Autissier, the first woman to solo sail the world in competition, who dispatches her expertise for this bracing survival novel. So when the couple quit their office jobs to fix up a boat and sail the deep blue sea, they're critically underprepared for the unpredictable, unforgiving nature of, well, nature. A simple detour turns the desert island hypothetical into harsh reality. And this is no tropical enclave where castaways can sip coconut water and spear fish: It's an atomic Antarctic void with an icy breath that smothers life. The relationship succumbs quickly, and Louise and Ludovic might not be far behind. —CF



BOOKS



Inside Comedy

By **David Steinberg**

Name any of your favorite comedies over the past half-century—*Seinfeld*, *Friends*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Mad About You*, *The Golden Girls*—and David Steinberg had something to do with it. In *Inside Comedy*, an extension of his former Showtime interview series of the same name, the comedian/writer/director takes you behind the curtain of 50 years of show biz, sharing memories of icons from Groucho Marx to Tina Fey, Second City improv troupes, the set of *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* and more. Equal parts history and love letter, it's a must-read for anyone with an interest in comedy and entertainment. Humor me! —CF

COURTESY OF BLEECKER STREET (JULES). COVER DESIGN BY PAUL BUCKLEY. HANDLETTERING BY ELIZABETH YAFFE. COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY CAMILLE SEAMAN (SUDDENLY). ROBYN TODD (INSIDE COMEDY). THE NOUN PROJECT (FILM AND BOOK ICON)


QUOTABLE QUOTES

Tidying up means dealing with all the “things” in your life. So what do you really want to put in order?

—Marie Kondo,
TIDYING EXPERT, IN THE BOOK
MARIE KONDO'S KURASHI AT HOME



Marriage is the punctuation mark and the celebration of what you already have.

—Juliette Lewis,
ACTOR, IN SLATE



If you get drunk and want to lie, you're a fiction writer. If you get drunk and tell the truth, you're a memoirist. And if you get drunk and want to lie on the hood of a car and look at the sky, you're a poet.

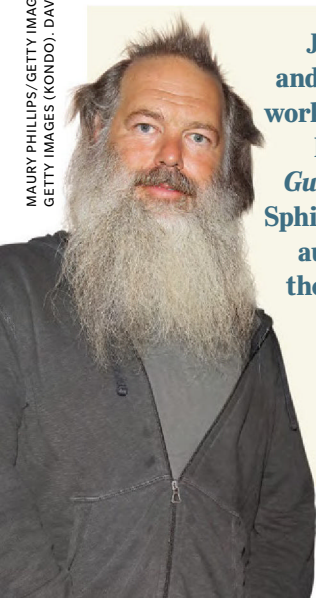
—Rebecca Makkai, NOVELIST, IN AN INTERVIEW
WITH THE CENTER FOR FICTION

Just as trees grow flowers and fruits, humanity creates works of art: the Golden Gate Bridge, the *White Album*, *Guernica*, Hagia Sophia, the Sphinx, the space shuttle, the autobahn, “Clair de Lune,” the Colosseum in Rome, the Phillips screwdriver, the iPad, the Philadelphia cheesesteak.

—Rick Rubin, MUSIC PRODUCER,
IN THE BOOK *THE CREATIVE ACT*

I think when you do the right thing for the world, most of the time, the profits follow.

—Martin Kon, PRESIDENT
OF AI STARTUP COHERE,
IN MACLEAN'S



Brain GAMES

SHARPEN YOUR MIND

Fact or Fiction?

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

1. *Alice in Wonderland* was inspired by a real girl named Alice.



FACT: **L** FICTION: **P**

2. Squinting is bad for your eyes.

FACT: **B** FICTION: **O**

3. Sept. 9 is the most common birthday in the U.S.



FACT: **R** FICTION: **S**

4. Selena Gomez is the most-followed person on Instagram.

FACT: **H** FICTION: **D**

5. There aren't any escalators in Wyoming.

FACT: **E** FICTION: **B**

6. A grizzly bear's bite can break a bowling ball.



FACT: **Y** FICTION: **L**

7. The fall equinox marks when the night becomes longer than the day.

FACT: **L** FICTION: **R**

8. The saxophone is named after its inventor.



FACT: **O** FICTION: **E**

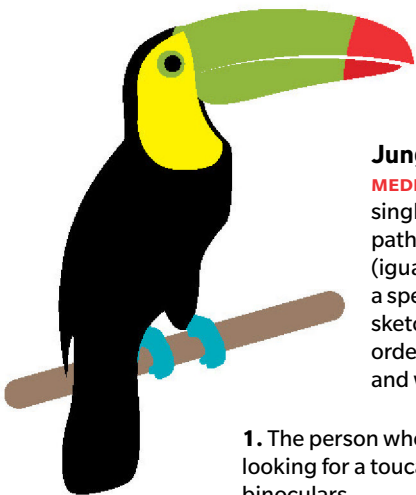
9. Barbara Walters, Martin Luther King Jr. and Anne Frank were born in the same year.

FACT: **N** FICTION: **Y**

BONUS QUESTION Which famous poet was also father to famous mathematician Ada Lovelace? (Need help? Turn to "Einstein Did What?!" on page 56.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Answers: 1. **F**; 2. **F**; 3. **F**; 4. **F**; 5. **F**; 6. **F**; 7. **F**; 8. **F**; 9. **F**. **Bonus question:** Lord Byron.



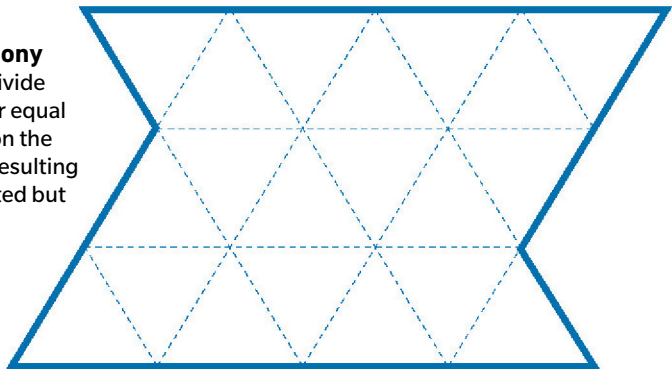
Jungle Walk

MEDIUM Cami, Joey, Sonya and Tim are walking single file through the jungle along a narrow path. Each hopes to spot a particular animal (iguana, monkey, sloth, toucan) and is carrying a specific item (binoculars, camera, compass, sketchpad). Using the following clues, what order are they walking in, what is Joey carrying and which animal does Sonya hope to see?

1. The person who is first is looking for a toucan with the binoculars.
2. The person who wants to take a picture of a monkey is not in the middle.
3. The person who wants to see an iguana cannot draw.
4. Cami has already seen lots of iguanas and sloths so she's looking for something else.
5. Sonya is right behind the leader with her sketchpad.
6. Joey thinks toucans are amazing but is hoping to see a different animal.
7. Tim is using his compass so they don't get lost.

Four-Part Harmony

MEDIUM Can you divide this shape into four equal pieces by cutting on the dotted lines? The resulting pieces can be rotated but not flipped.



Divide and Conquer

EASY Remove one of these five digits so that the sum of the remaining four is a number that the eliminated digit can be divided into evenly.

3 4 5 6 7

What's Cooking?

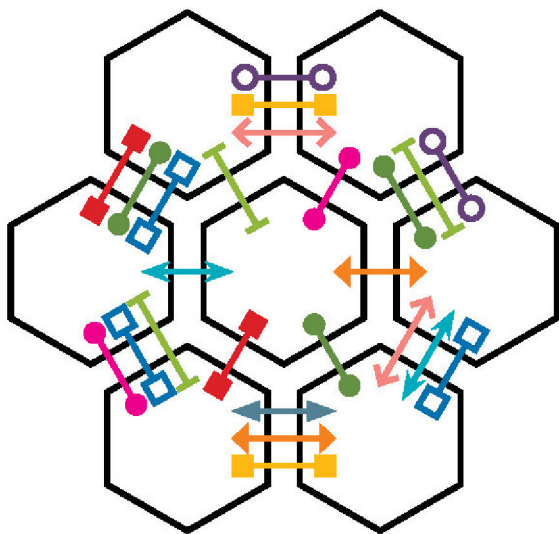
MEDIUM

Anna and Simone are writing a cookbook together. Anna provides 70% of the recipes and Simone contributes the rest. If Anna has 20 more recipes in the cookbook than Simone, how many recipes are there in total?



Well Connected

DIFFICULT Starting from any hexagon, visit all the other hexagons and get back to where you started without reusing a bridge in this diagram. Use only three types of bridges to complete your task. Which three types do you need? (The bridge types have different colors and distinct ends to assist you.)



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

For answers, turn to **PAGE 111**.


WORD POWER

This fall, we're heading back to school with words related to education. After all, learning is a lifelong pursuit! Master these terms and you'll go to the head of the class. Ace this quiz like the star pupil you are, then continue your studies by checking the answers on the next page.

BY *Mary-Liz Shaw*

1. pedagogy *n.*

('ped-uh-goh-jee)

- A education principles
- B logical progression
- C controversial teaching

2. syllabus *n.*

('sil-uh-buhss)

- A tool for counting
- B outline of a course
- C place to study

3. didactic *adj.*

(dy-'dak-tik)

- A related to Greek myth
- B morally instructive
- C imaginative

4. audit *v.*

('ah-dit)

- A serve detention
- B attend without credit
- C experiment

5. pedantic *adj.*

(pe-'dan-tik)

- A suddenly realizing
- B concerning all students
- C overly formal

6. polymath *n.*

('pah-lee-math)

- A wide-ranging scholar
- B scientific genius
- C enthusiastic teacher

7. innumerate *adj.*

(i-'noo-mer-uhnt)

- A ill-prepared
- B unskilled at numbers
- C infinitely wise

8. sophomore *n.*

('sahf-mor)

- A teacher's aide
- B measure of brain waves
- C second-year student

9. polytechnic *adj.*

(pah-lee-'tek-nik)

- A related to chemistry
- B many-sided
- C teaching applied science

10. elucidate *v.*

(eh-'loo-si-dayt)

- A lecture incessantly
- B grade strictly
- C make clear

11. philistine *n.*

('fi-luh-steen)

- A agile debater
- B biblical scholar
- C ignorant person

12. rubric *n.*

('roo-brik)

- A study of circles
- B grading guide
- C visual learner

13. tutelage *n.*

('too-tuh-luhj)

- A individual instruction
- B musical notation
- C full understanding

14. percipient *adj.*

(per-'sip-ee-uhnt)

- A unsolvable
- B witty
- C discerning

15. erudite *adj.*

('ehr-uh-dyt)

- A scholarly
- B newly published
- C intuitive



The Mother of All School Mottos

Graduates everywhere praise their *alma mater*, but the term originated with one institution of higher learning believed to be the oldest in the Western world: the University of Bologna in Italy.

Established around 1088, it became known as *Alma Mater Studiorum*, Latin for “nourishing mother of studies.” Today, it has about 93,000 students.

Word Power ANSWERS

1. pedagogy

(A) *education principles*

The new kindergarten teacher is an expert in elementary pedagogy.

2. syllabus

(B) *outline of a course*

As a World War I expert, Ms. Carmen extended her class syllabus past 1900.

3. didactic

(B) *morally instructive*

Dr. Seuss's stories are both didactic and entertaining.

4. audit

(B) *attend without credit*

Auditing an art class let me be creative without the fear of being graded.

5. pedantic

(C) *overly formal*

Baxter explained his theory in simple terms, avoiding pedantic detail.

6. polymath

(A) *wide-ranging scholar*
Leonardo da Vinci and W.E.B. Du Bois are two of history's most famous polymaths.

7. innumerate

(B) *unskilled at numbers*

The innumerate cashier relied on his register to give the right change.

8. sophomore

(C) *second-year student*

Sylvio transferred to a big state university as a sophomore.

9. polytechnic (C)

teaching applied science

An aspiring engineer, Cali attended the nearby polytechnic college.

10. elucidate

(C) *make clear*

In his book report, Kim tried to elucidate the novel's complex themes.

11. philistine

(C) *ignorant person*

The politician was a philistine when it came to supporting the arts.

12. rubric

(B) *grading guide*

Ms. Priya devised a different rubric for her ESL students' essays.

13. tutelage

(A) *individual instruction*

Abby learned about cars under the tutelage of a master mechanic.

14. percipient

(C) *discerning*

The percipient detective saw clues others missed.

15. erudite

(A) *scholarly*

Now that all her children completed post-graduate degrees, Marcia has quite an erudite family.

Vocabulary Ratings

9 & BELOW: Bookish

10-12: Scholarly

13-15: Professorial



SPECIAL OFFER

Brand-New Book Alert!

Introducing our latest keepsake collection, *The Best of Reader's Digest 2023*. Inside are our most moving stories and dramatic tales, from everyday heroes to larger-than-life characters, and from small moments to historical events spanning the past 100 years. It's all here, plus our best jokes, cartoons, facts and fabulous new stories we've never published before. You'll laugh. You'll cry. You'll want to read it again! See for yourself for just \$10 at rd.com/EP23.

ANSWERS

WHERE, OH WHERE?

(page 32)

C. Port Austin, Michigan.
(The lake in question is Lake Huron.)

BRAIN GAMES

(pages 107-108)

Jungle Walk

Walking order, first to last: Cami, Sonya, Tim, Joey. Joey is carrying a camera, and Sonya wants to see a sloth.

Four-Part Harmony



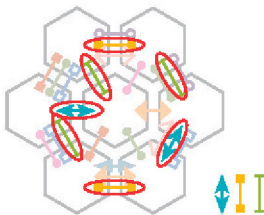
Divide and Conquer

5.

What's Cooking?

50 recipes. Anna provides 70% of the recipes and Simone provides 30%. The difference is 40%, which is 20 recipes. If 40% is 20 recipes, then 100% is 50 recipes.

Well Connected



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A TRUSTED FRIEND IN A COMPLICATED WORLD

Lakeside by Jeannie Phan, exclusively for *Reader's Digest*

OCCASIONAL DIGESTIVE UPSETS CAN MAKE FOR A BUMPY RIDE

Bloating

Gas

**#1 DOCTOR RECOMMENDED
PROBIOTIC BRAND[†]**

Occasional bloating and gas may be signs that the balance of good bacteria in your gut is off. **Align Bloating Relief + Food Digestion** adds more healthy bacteria to help relieve occasional digestive upsets, plus Vitamin B12 to help support the breakdown of fats and proteins in the food you eat.*

Help calm the waters with Align.

**#1 DOCTOR
RECOMMENDED
BRAND[†]**

align
PROBIOTIC

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PROBIOTIC
helps soothe occasional bloating*

+

VITAMIN B12
helps break down food*

with **DIGESTIVE ENZYMES**



*THESE STATEMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN EVALUATED BY THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION. THIS PRODUCT IS NOT INTENDED TO DIAGNOSE, TREAT, CURE, OR PREVENT ANY DISEASE.

†AMONG DOCTORS WHO RECOMMENDED A BRAND OF PROBIOTIC IN A PROVOICE 2022 SURVEY.

INTRODUCING

**No Bending Over.
No Touching Shoes.
No Kidding.**



*Martha
Stewart*

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