

ASIA Reader's Digest

SINCE 1922

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AS PODCASTS

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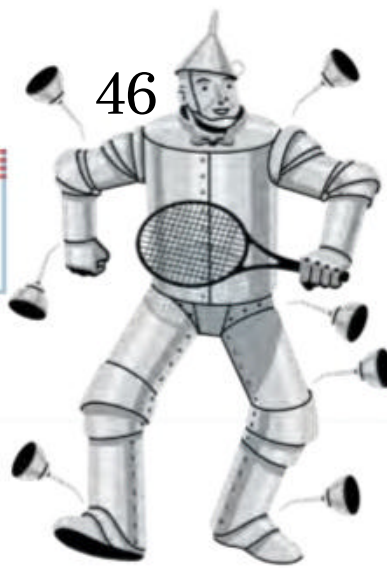
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LETTERS

Reader's Comments And Opinions

The Other Pandemic

Your story on 'Obesity: The Other Global Pandemic' (June) suggests we are environmentally inducing the equivalent of Prader-Willi syndrome (PWS) which results in excessive eating that gradually develops into morbid obesity. It's time we started taking the problem-solving approach in the story. Thank you for not fat-shaming us chubbies. JULIE ELLENDER



The Power Of Film

Thank you, Reader's Digest for the article about Steven Spielberg by Jonathan Dean ('A Life In Cinema', August/September).

As a child I loved dinosaurs and reading about fossils so when Jurassic Park came out, I was first in the queue at the cinema. When they got out of the car and walked across to those dinosaurs it was like I was walking with them. As old as

I was, I could still feel the magic of dinosaurs as I had when I was a child.

Thank you, Mr Spielberg, for all your wonderful films.

MELANIE BURGESS

Tiredness Takes Its Toll

Thank you for the article on tiredness, 'Tired Of Feeling Tired?' (July). In these hard times it is sensible to be aware of our energy ►

Let us know if you are moved – or provoked – by any item in the magazine, share your thoughts. See page 8 for how to join the discussion.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Improving Lives

MUSIC IS ONE OF LIFE'S

truly sweet pleasures. The great neurologist Oliver Sacks described music as “a remedy, a tonic, orange juice for the ear”. It has the power to lift us out of depression, move us to tears or just take us out of ourselves for a while. In ‘When Music Is Medicine’ (page 24), we meet people for whom music is not just a luxury – it’s a necessity. From managing movement disorders to making peace with complex emotions, it’s an irreplaceable aid in their everyday lives.

And don’t miss ‘Small Business, Big Heart’ (page 82), an insider’s perspective about the nurturing role played by family-run shops. Our Bonus Read this month is particularly special. In ‘Vision Quest’ (page 96), we share the inspiring story of the Pelletier family who travelled the world to show their children places they’d remember after they lose their eyesight. These stories and more.

Louise

LOUISE WATERSON
Editor-in-Chief

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► levels. I worked as a pharmacist and have had schizophrenia diagnosis since 1986, so have seen many people in need of rest and felt in myself weariness and exhaustion. One year my GP referred me for blood tests in case there was something physically wrong, but it was my mind that was tired.

The author Susannah Hickling listed nine causes, but one could add the negative effects of long-term mental illness, too. I felt really beaten down and rotten. Besides engaging with doctors and taking medication, I found meditation and reading very uplifting. I have also managed to place essays on mental health blogging platforms.

Being tired is serious and I encourage people to look after their mental health. **ANDREW LOW**

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The best letter each month will win a Pilot Capless Fountain Pen, valued at over \$200. The Capless is the perfect combination of luxury and ingenious technology, featuring a one-of-a-kind retractable fountain pen nib, durable metal body, rhodium accents and a 14K gold nib. Congratulations to this month's winner, Julie Ellender.



TUNNEL VISION

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

Just funnelling my thoughts.

ROBIN HOLMES

Having a 'pipe dream' takes on a whole new meaning!

HATICE KUCUKALI

I just needed to vent!

TROY SIMPSON

Public think tank.

SHARON LA PIRA

Sucked in!

MARIANNE MCVEIGH

Congratulations to this month's winner, Troy Simpson.



CAPTION CONTEST

Come up with the funniest caption for the above photo and you could win \$100. To enter, email asiaeditor@readersdigest.com.au or see details on page 8.



WIN!



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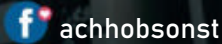
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MY STORY



The Language Of Gardening

BY *Maree Ackehurst*

My childhood was mostly silent. It was full of love, laughter, anger and sadness like any family, but these things passed quietly.

There was not the constant noise

of people talking over each other as they lived and worked together. The knowledge instilled in me was passed down by watching my mother as she moved through her silent world.

In the garden I loved to watch her hands as she deftly split roots,

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

pinched out soil, tucked in seedlings. She would lug rocks as she pruned, trimmed, watered, weeded and dug her garden. This work made her hands rough with cuts and scrapes, but when I held them, they were steadfast and filled with wisdom.

Her hands were never still, they were always teaching me things by showing me how. Sometimes, those same hands spoke to me literally. Basic sign language started in the family quite suddenly one day and then stopped just as quickly because my mother insisted lip-reading was quicker. Indeed, it was lip-reading that filled my early childhood with silent conversations, and it was our main form of communication with her.

From the vegie patch, half obscured by giant rhubarb or spinach leaves, my mother would mouth words such as, "Could you turn on the tap please" or "Can you see the lizard?" I would do the same to her, waving from my cubbyhouse to get her attention and if that did not work, throwing a stone into the

Language has always fascinated Maree Ackehurst. A librarian, she is currently working on a PhD in applied linguistics. Maree lives with her husband and two sons and her favourite pastime is gardening.

bushes near where she was working so she would look up. Now and then my throw was misjudged and I'd see the stone bounce off her straw hat.

Many times she would look at me intently and, without speaking, tell me "watch this" or "this is how", or "never touch this plant". We

often went for hours like this, barely a word spoken and yet we were talking in various ways the whole time.

My mother's knowledge, deeply buried within me, surfaced when my husband and

IT WAS LIP-READING THAT FILLED MY EARLY CHILDHOOD WITH SILENT CONVERSATIONS

I bought our first home, which came with a wild garden. I found myself digging with a stick, which proved useless, and after investing in a small spade I dug over the soil, through it, under it. The dirt felt like home. Sinking my hands into it, the cold seeping through my gloves, I sensed this was life, it was yielding, peaceful, final - and always silent.

Bails of pea straw, bags of compost, all manner of tools, gum boots and a paint speckled watering can took up residence in the corner of our porch. My husband bought me a large shovel, so I dug up rocks and replaced them with treasures brought to me by my mother.

Walking around the neighbourhood, I found myself

taking cuttings from anything that was growing over a front fence, knowing which to put in water and which to scratch on the stem and place straight into the soil.

I knew when to water the garden, and more importantly, when not to.

Watching the sun as it moved through the day, looking at the shadows, where it was hot and dry, which parts never saw light – somehow, I knew where to plant things. In areas where the soil was dead, mulch, worms and compost were added, and a living patch grew instead.

Filling my garden to the brim, I followed the mantra that ran through my mind, my mother's gardening mantra – choose the plants you love, not the ones you should.

There are no rules, which gave me total freedom on my patch. Yet, undeniably, there is a thread of logic that meanders through it all, a language that filters through the soil and rises from the plants.

AS I BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND

THIS, I also began to see why my mother spent so much time in her garden. For her it was the one place under her control.

Her deafness had come during an era of little tolerance for diversity, and much stigma about disability. The world outside her garden was demanding, unforgiving, inflexible and filled with rules that she struggled to follow – and there was

no logic to the way in which people reacted to her.

The language of life in her garden was rich with logic and acceptance. A language that soon became as rich and steady for me as it had for her. It whispers in my ear as I plan my plantings, buzzes around as I water, nudges me as I drag

THERE IS A THREAD OF LOGIC THAT MEANDERS THROUGH IT ALL, A LANGUAGE THAT FILTERS THROUGH THE SOIL AND RISES FROM THE PLANTS

and dig and weed.

Each day as this language grows stronger and the knowledge pours out of me, I find myself connecting more frequently to the times as a child I spent with my mother in her garden and the world of knowledge she passed on.

I now have gardening hands, with cuts and scrapes, and cherish their roughness. With any luck my kids will have them one day, too. **R**

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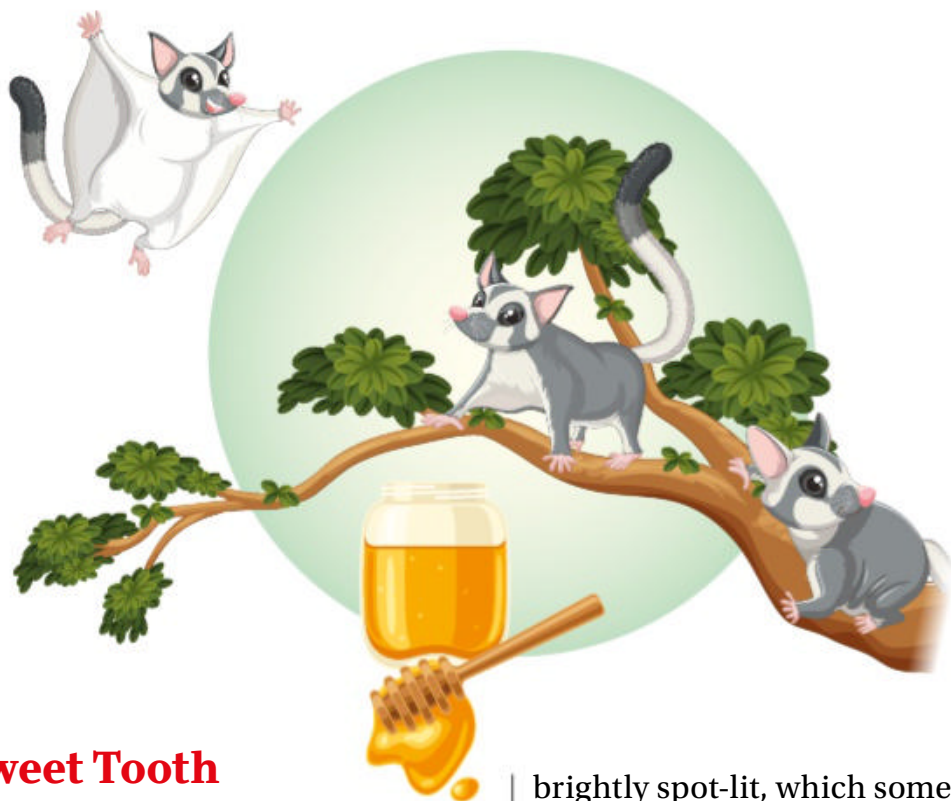
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SMART ANIMALS

Animal antics are rewarding to watch



Sweet Tooth

SAMANTHA KENT

I'd heard of a 'salt lick', but never a 'sugar lick' – not until I checked into a rainforest lodge in Queensland. A sign at reception advertised a 'possum show/sugar lick' that evening. I couldn't imagine what this might be – would possums be walking the high wire? Dumping my bags in the cabin, I followed a path through the undergrowth. The appointed spot was a platform decked out with chairs. Towering in front was a massive eucalyptus tree,

brightly spot-lit, which someone was brushing with honey.

Forty minutes passed without any sign of wildlife. I craned my neck to look into the canopy above but all was still. Then I caught a flicker on the side of the trunk – the tip of a furry tail. The flicker of fur sped around the front of the tree and into the light: a sugar glider with

You could earn cash by telling us about the antics of unique pets or wildlife. Turn to page 8 for details on how to contribute.

big dark eyes and two striking white stripes through its dark fur, was licking the honey. Shortly after, a dark shape spiralled down and landed almost on top of the glider: it was a brushtail possum, long and lithe. The glider scurried up the trunk and launched itself into the darkness. Another glider flew into the circle of light, its skin flaps fully extended and claws outstretched, and landed on the trunk.

From then on the action intensified: there was a mass of bodies jumping, gliding and corkscrewing down the tree, landing at different spots up and down the trunk, dashing in and out of the light and chasing each other's tails, all vying for a spot near the honey. The canopy was now a hive of activity, the trunk the central pillar of a carousel, only with possums and gliders circling it instead of horses.

This sugar lick was the highlight of my trip. It beckoned exquisite animals, scampering and agile, that I'd previously only seen in books.

The Reading Buddy

GERALD NABOURS

My Irish setter, Henry, was bred to be a show dog. But I recognised his calm, welcoming presence and docile nature right away and instead trained him to be a therapy dog. His job was to visit



primary school classes and listen to students read to him. They loved it and so did he.

Henry gave rapt attention to the readers and never corrected them or smirked when they stuttered. When they finished their book, students got to put a treat on Henry's nose, which he'd flip up and catch in his mouth.

One day, a special education student joined us in the library. Henry lay next to him on the floor as the boy worked hard at reading his picture book, repeating the lines aloud as Henry looked over his shoulder.

When they finished, the teacher whispered, "That was amazing!" Thinking she meant Henry's demeanour, I replied, "Yes, he's quite a dog."

"No," she said, "that was the first time this student has ever read aloud!" This is just one of many times Henry created a tiny miracle.



HEALTH

Household Air Pollution

It's not just outdoor pollution that can be harmful

BY *Anna-Kaisa Walker*

Surprisingly, the air inside our homes may be more hazardous than the air outside. Here's how to make sure your indoor space is healthy.

GAS STOVES

Natural gas-powered stoves are popular around the world. But experts have recently raised concerns: unlike electric and induction types, gas stoves give off nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) when ignited – and often at levels that exceed the safety limit set by the World Health Organization.

When the stoves are in use, the NO₂ can cause coughing and wheezing. People with asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease may experience inflamed

airways as well. To protect your family, turn on the extractor fan every time you cook; they're designed to remove smoke, grease and pollutants that are released during cooking. But less than 20 per cent of people use them consistently, says Brady Seals, a manager with the US-based environmental think tank RMI. "Use the back burners, as they're closer to the exhaust intake, and open a window – even for just five minutes."

VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS (VOCs)

Household items such as paint, carpet and detergents sometimes contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including benzene and formaldehyde. While most VOCs

ILLUSTRATION: KATE TRAYNOR

do not pose a significant health risk, a 2005 study published in the *Journal of Occupational Health* found prolonged, concentrated exposure in workplaces, such as industrial factories or nail salons, to be associated with cancer, liver damage and neurological problems.

To reduce your exposure, choose paint and furnishings that are certified as low or no VOC. When you're using cleaning products, especially those with bleach, ventilation is key, says Trevor VandenBoer, an environmental chemistry researcher at York University in Toronto. "Use an exhaust fan, open a window and give the room time to air out – ideally an hour."

Many VOCs stick to other particles, such as dust, skin flakes and lint, so VandenBoer recommends an activated carbon filter air purifier. Make sure it can capture particulates less than 2.5 microns in diameter (about one-30th the width of a human hair) because that size can be inhaled deep into your lungs. And vacuum often with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter that traps small particles.

MOULD

Common household moulds include *Aspergillus*, *Penicillium* and *Cladosporium*. They're mostly harmless, but when damp indoor conditions encourage growth, they

can release dust-like spores. This can trigger eye, nose and throat irritation, sneezing, coughing and asthma attacks.

Patches of black or green specks can appear on walls or tiles, along with a musty odour. It can be cleaned with vinegar or dish detergent. For patches larger than a bath towel, call a mould-removal specialist. Mould hides in the walls, so it's best to mitigate the growth.

As a habit, turn on an exhaust fan in the bathroom and run a dehumidifier to keep humidity levels below 50 per cent. Most have a hygrometer to measure humidity; home-humidity meters are also widely available.

RADON

An invisible, odourless gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil, radon leaches in from cracks and joints in the foundations and can waft up several levels. Inhaling high levels of radon, especially over many years, can cause malignant cell growth in the lungs, making radon one of the leading causes of lung cancer worldwide.

Standards vary from country to country for what are deemed safe levels of radon, but it's a good idea to find out what level is safe in your jurisdiction – and then check your home if radiation protection authorities recommend it.



Go Low

BY *Susannah Hickling*

Certain foods are linked to a higher risk of type 2 diabetes. Consistently eating foods that are high in fat and low in fibre, and carbohydrates with a high GI (glycaemic index), can raise your diabetes risk. But by making a few wise dietary choices you might be able to bring down or stabilise your blood sugar levels.

SWEET POTATO Cut down on white potatoes and opt for the sweet, orange-coloured variety. They have a much lower GI score and the flesh is also high in fibre.

PORRIDGE Oats are a low GI food – meaning they don't cause sudden rises and dips in blood glucose – and

contain healthy fats. Adding milk to your porridge increases the fat content, so opt for skimmed or soy.

BLUEBERRIES Most fresh fruit have low GI scores, though levels creep up as they ripen. Especially good if you're hoping to avoid type 2 diabetes are blueberries, grapes and apples. These were associated with a lower risk of developing the condition in a large 2013 US study, with blueberries coming out top of the table. Overall, a diet high in fruit and vegetables is a must if you're committed to controlling blood sugar.

GARLIC In a 2013 study of 60 people with type 2 diabetes and obesity, participants who took metformin, a drug prescribed to lower blood glucose, and garlic capsules had lower fasting and post-meal blood glucose levels than volunteers who took just metformin. Another 2017 study from China found garlic supplements had a beneficial effect on blood sugar and cholesterol levels. Eat it raw, cooked or take it in supplement form.

YOGHURT But, hang on, yoghurt is a high-fat dairy product and to be avoided, right? Not necessarily. It's high in saturated fat, but a large 2013 US study indicates it can lower the risk of type 2 diabetes. Plain yoghurt has a low GI score. Choose the unsweetened variety or Greek yoghurt.

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WORLD OF MEDICINE

FERMENTED FOODS MAY REDUCE STRESS

The trillions of bacteria that live in your gut influence how your digestive system communicates with your brain – a fact that prompted scientists from University College Cork to investigate whether our eating habits could influence our mental health.

In their recent study of people with poor dietary habits, half the participants received healthy eating advice and used the food pyramid as a guide. The other half adopted a diet high in fibre, grains and legumes, and ate two to three daily servings of fermented foods such as sauerkraut or kefir. After four weeks, the latter group felt less stressed and showed lower levels of chemicals that are produced by gut microbes and have been linked to mental health.

REVERSING SLEEP APNOEA

Roughly one billion adults live with obstructive sleep apnoea. This disorder contributes to problems like daytime fatigue, irritability and heart disease. The go-to treatment, a continuous positive airway pressure

(CPAP) machine, controls sleep apnoea by delivering pressurised air through a mask while the person sleeps. However, it doesn't address the underlying causes – often lifestyle related.

So, researchers at Loyola University Andalusia in Spain helped half of the recruited patients to eat and sleep better, exercise more, and smoke and drink less. Six months later, this group's sleep apnoea improved more, on average, compared to the control group, and 60 per cent of patients no longer needed a CPAP machine.

A BLOOD TEST FOR ALZHEIMER'S

When someone has cognitive issues, a doctor can order a PET scan or spinal tap to look for a build-up of a protein called beta-amyloid in the brain – one of the signs of Alzheimer's disease.

A study in *Neurology* confirms that a newer method, measuring the amount of beta-amyloid in the blood, is faster, less expensive, radiation-free – and only slightly less accurate.





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Written by,

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Women, Heart Disease & Menopause

Menopause is an inevitable part of every woman's life journey which presides about a third of a woman's lifespan. This is a time of change due to declining levels of estrogen, a feminine hormone responsible for many of a woman's bodily functions such as reproductive and bone health. During this period of menopause, there are adverse changes in cholesterol levels, blood pressure, body fat distribution and blood vessel health that contributes towards a higher risk of heart disease in women beyond the effects of ageing alone. In addition, there can be associated sleep disturbances and anxiety or depression during this period with a negative impact on heart health.

Menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes, sleep disturbances, anxiety or depression often can be managed with lifestyle modification which also helps to maintain good heart health. Adoption of healthy lifestyle measures such as exercise, consuming a healthy diet and refraining from smoking can counter these negative effects associated with menopause.

The current guideline recommendation for exercise is to achieve at least 150 minutes of moderate activity such as brisk walking, riding a bike or hiking; or at least 75 minutes of vigorous activity such as swimming, running or sports in a week. Ideally, these activities should be spread out evenly over 4 to 5 days or every day in the week. Muscle strengthening activities are encouraged for at least 2 days in a week.

A heart-healthy diet emphasizes increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, whole grains, poultry, fish, and nuts and reduced intake of saturated fatty acids, red meat, sweets, and beverages containing added sugars.

Hormonal replacement therapy (HRT), by virtue of replacing the depleted estrogen would be expected to ameliorate the negative impact of menopause but in reality, it may not be as straightforward. HRT may confer beneficial effects on the heart if used for younger women of less than 60 years of age or less than 10 years from menopause. Outside of this, there is either neutral or deleterious effect on heart health when HRT is used. In addition, HRT may be associated with an increased risk of venous blood clot formation and stroke in older women. The different types of estrogen formulation and the route of administration may have differential effects with observational studies suggesting transdermal estrogen preparation being safer. There may also be an increased risk of breast, endometrial and ovarian cancers depending on a woman's susceptibility and formulation of HRT used. In short, HRT is effective in countering menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes and mood disturbances but the decision to use HRT needs to be individualised after carefully considering the potential risks and benefits.

Sociocultural factors defines the environment and our lifestyle choices which in turn has a direct impact on our health. For

example, many working women may also be burdened with household responsibilities and caring for the elderly and the young which in turn heightens mental stress while also reduces time to exercise and adopting healthy eating habits and thus increases their risk of heart disease.

Healthcare providers should be aware of these important sociocultural factors and should seek to create awareness and encourage women to adopt healthy lifestyle choices whenever possible. Early recognition of anxiety/depression which are more common in women by healthcare providers allows timely treatment and reduces the negative impact on health.

It is important to maintain life's essential 8 which are - healthy diet, participation in physical activity, avoidance of nicotine, healthy sleep, healthy weight, and healthy levels of blood lipids, blood glucose, and blood pressure. Therefore it is advisable for women to undergo screening tests to evaluate their cholesterol, sugar and blood pressure levels which can be elevated with menopause and are often without any symptoms. However, these risk factors if left untreated may lead to a heart attack or stroke as a first manifestation. In addition, an overall evaluation of a woman's cardiovascular risk and strategies to optimise health including whether HRT may be beneficial is advisable.



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WHEN
Music
IS
Medicine

*This therapy is gaining credibility
as it shows real results*

BY *Anicka Quin* ILLUSTRATION BY *Petra Braun*

There's one patient that Sarah Rose Black still thinks about. Back in 2019, the nursing team in the palliative care unit at Toronto's Princess Margaret Cancer Centre asked if she could reach out to a patient who had been there for about a week. The man was struggling, and unwilling to engage with staff or be part of any



READER'S DIGEST

activities. "They told me, 'He's short and grumpy with us, and we wonder if you might have an in.'"

Black isn't a doctor or a nurse. Since 2013 she has played an important role for patients as Princess Margaret's on-staff music therapist. On any given day, she might see one person who's anxious about an upcoming procedure, another who's undergoing chemo and in need of a soothing moment. Or, like the man in the palliative care unit, it might be someone who doesn't yet know they need her.

She stopped playing. "Do you want me to continue?" she asked.

"Absolutely," he said through tears.

"It was as if the music went places that nothing else could," recalls Black. "He shared with me afterwards that he'd been holding in so much and had been unable to talk about anything – but the music showed up at a moment when it felt like a hug."

Anyone who has felt that spark of joy when a favourite song comes on the radio at just the right moment – or wept along with a singer who is ex-

*A music-therapy session can be as unique as an **INDIVIDUAL PATIENT'S NEEDS** on a given day*

So, on a wintry Wednesday afternoon, Black approached the patient's room and introduced herself.

She asked if she could sit, and offered to play some music. In an effort to convince him, she said, "If you don't like it, you can just tell me to leave."

After some gentle urging, the 70-something man, who had lung cancer, told her a few composers he liked and then turned away to look out the window. But as she started to play one of his favourites, Bach, on her portable keyboard, a change came over him. He unfolded his arms, turned towards Black and started to cry.

pressing heartache – will understand the emotional resonance of music. But now, a growing body of scientific evidence is actually demonstrating that music can be medicine, too.

In a review of 400 research papers looking into the neurochemistry of music, Daniel Levitin, a psychologist and neuroscientist at McGill University, found that playing and listening to music had clear mental and physical health benefits, including improving our immune systems and reducing stress levels.

One 2007 study from a team of Spanish researchers found that listening to music before surgery had

the same effect in reducing pre-operative anxiety as taking diazepam – an important finding, as anxiety before a major surgery can affect post-operative pain and recovery time. Another Spanish study, conducted in 2018 in the palliative care unit of Barcelona’s Hospital del Mar, found that patients participating in a music-therapy programme experienced significant decreases in tiredness, anxiety and breathing difficulties, as well as an increase in feelings of wellbeing.

Even major healthcare institutions are embracing music therapy on a wide scale. In 2019, the National Institutes of Health in the US introduced funding to support research projects in music therapy and neuroscience.

A music-therapy session can be as unique as an individual patient’s needs on a given day. With Black, who also sings, that inevitably involves the trolley of instruments she travels with (“I’m pretty much a one-woman band,” she jokes). Aside from the keyboard, to create rhythms and texture, she has other instruments such as a guitar, tambourine and more. She also brings recording equipment and an iPad to supply song lyrics.

If a patient loves classical music, she’ll play it. Maybe it’s folk or jazz.

She did a Bob Marley tune for a man’s assisted-dying process. “One woman spoke no English, but she taught me a Farsi folk song, and we had this wonderful exchange,” says Black. “She’d sing a line, I’d sing it back, and we were singing this beautiful song together.”

She’s gentle in her approach with patients. “I make it very clear that pre-existing musical experience or training isn’t required to participate,” she says. “If I were to ask, ‘What kind of music do you like?’ that might be a difficult question to answer. Instead I ask what they want to feel, which is an easier question to answer.”

If the goal is pain management, Black might match the pace of her playing with the patient’s breathing, and then gradually slow the music. This process, called ‘entrainment’, can help slow the breath, too, and has a calming effect.

Or a session might be about helping a patient process the emotions stemming from what they are going through. It may even be about connecting with loved ones who are in the room with them.

“Sometimes the patient says, ‘I’m having such a profound experience. I have no words,’” she says. “We know from so many wonderful brain studies that music can trigger memories



READER'S DIGEST

and touch parts of the brain that other mediums cannot.”

ONCE A WEEK, Carol Cameron hops on Zoom from her home in Madison, Wisconsin. She'll be joined by a dozen or so other participants, all following along as music therapist Jason Armstrong Baker leads them through drumming exercises – sometimes clapping their hands in a distinct rhythm he's laid out for them, sometimes tapping on their own bodies.

Like everyone taking part in the session, Cameron, 71, has Parkinson's disease, and this drumming circle – known as Rx 4 Rhythm – is designed to help strengthen her coordination. “My tremor is on my left side, so learning things with my left hand is difficult,” she says. “But it's really good to get this regular rhythm going – it gives you a feeling of overcoming a problem.”

Rx 4 Rhythm is just one of the programmes offered at the Johns Hopkins Centre for Music and Medicine in Baltimore. The research institution is the brainchild of Dr Alexander Pantelyat, a violin player and former member of the Penn Symphony Orchestra in Philadelphia. Today, he is a neurologist who specialises in

movement disorders like Parkinson's and Huntington's. The centre provides music therapy and more, Dr Pantelyat explains. They're taking music into the 'precision medicine' realm.

Applying that kind of treatment to movement disorders is relatively new; previously, it was mainly the domain of cancer therapies. “There's a revolution in oncology and cancer research – more people are being cured, and much of it can be attributed to a very targeted precision treatment that really is individualised for the patients,” he explains. “Just listening to music activates many regions of the brain simultaneously.”

He adds that there is an understanding in the field of music medicine that there can be tailored interventions using music that a person actually likes, that speaks to them culturally, personally or autobiographically.

One study from the Centre for Music and Medicine followed a choir composed of Parkinson's patients (called the 'Parkinsonics') to learn how singing might impact the speaking voice of those patients. After 12 weeks, the singers' speaking volumes – which often fade as Parkinson's



progresses – grew demonstrably stronger. The Rx 4 Rhythm drumming circle, meanwhile, came out of a 2015 study that showed that Parkinson’s patients had improved their ability to walk after six weeks of drumming practice.

The centre’s blueprint is to continue to fund these musically-oriented groups, even after the studies have wrapped up. “Patients in the Parkinsonics told us that they didn’t want to stop singing when the study was over,” says Dr Pantelyat. The centre now funds a professional choir

who are supporting them through their illness.

“There can be folks experiencing intensive symptoms, like a decline in their ability to verbally communicate,” says Devlin. Music, she notes, can sometimes help such patients find ways to respond again. “I’ve had the honour of making music with people, and all of a sudden they’re coming up with new words. It turns into this beautiful improvisational moment – and a care partner is saying, ‘I’ve never seen this happen.’”

It’s a powerful thing, she says, to

*Studies show that **MUSIC CAN TRIGGER MEMORIES** and **TOUCH PARTS OF THE BRAIN** that other mediums cannot*

instructor, a music therapist and a social worker to help the choir members carry on with their classes, which rolled onto Zoom calls during the pandemic.

And while sessions at the centre do have therapeutic goals – working on coordination, say, or breathing techniques for anxiety management – there’s a community-building element to the groups, too. Kerry Devlin is the centre’s senior music therapist and runs an online support group for people with a broad range of neurological disorders, along with their care partners – those in patients’ lives, usually loved ones,

witness someone find themselves again for a moment, and when a song is the vehicle for that shift.

Much of what Devlin does is designed to help patients feel like more than just cogs in the medical system. “Of course they want to come and receive medications and treatments, but they’re also a person,” she says. “It’s important when we’re thinking about holistic care to provide opportunities for patients to actually process the impact that a diagnosis is having on their lives.”

Music can have a profound effect on helping sick children, too. Ruth Hunston is a music therapist in the

READER'S DIGEST

'play department' at the Great Ormond Street Hospital in London.

As the UK's oldest children's hospital, it sees over 69,000 patients a year.

"When children are in the hospital, their worlds get much smaller," says Hunston, who explains that her programme, introduced in 2019, helps give young patients back some sense of control. "They're having so many things done to them and around them, but this allows them to create something themselves."

Extended time in paediatric care

to join. There's this beautiful interaction between everyone, and sometimes I get to step back and just watch them play - to really laugh and have fun."

AT THE DR BOB KEMP HOSPICE in Hamilton, Ontario, music therapy has become an integral part of patient care in residential end-of-life settings. "The palliative journey isn't really about someone dying," says Doug Mattina, director of the hospice's paediatric unit. "It's about bringing the most joy. It's providing the wrap-around care

*"There's this **BEAUTIFUL INTERACTION BETWEEN EVERYONE**, and sometimes I get to step back and just watch them play"*

can also affect a child's development, says Hunston. In light of that, much of her programme is designed to help them progress. "I've had lots of infants who have sat up for the first time at the drums, because they're just so motivated to play," she says. "Or they start making sounds because I'm singing to them, and they want more."

The parents also become part of the therapeutic process. "It's not easy being in a hospital, and it's not easy to leave your child there," she says.

"What's really lovely is when you go in and you start to make music, and the children invite their parents

not only for the individual but for those impacted by it."

Mattina himself experienced the music-therapy programme when his father spent his last days at the hospice. "I remember when the music therapist said to him, 'Bill, what kind of mood are we in today?' And he said, 'Today is time to dance,'" says Mattina.

He was so moved by the whole experience that he left a career in the foreign service to work full-time for the hospice. "Even though my father was feeling like crap, and we knew that we had days or hours left, me, my sister, my brother and my mum

would dance around his bed. His favourite song for this was ‘Rasputin’, and he would request high kicks from us as he clapped along. Sometimes he’d fall asleep as we danced.”

Sara Klinck directs the music-therapy programme at the hospice, where, at a patient’s bedside, she might improvise a call-and-response song to help them open up about how they’re feeling that day, or help a resident write a song as a legacy for their family.

“We might also revisit songs that have personal significance for residents and families, as a way to communicate emotion to one another,” she says. “It can feel like a whole choir as visitors and family members join in. For some people, sometimes what’s hard to say is easier to sing.”

It could also mean fulfilling a lifelong goal before a patient passes away, as she did for someone with late-stage amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).


“He had very limited movement in

his hands but had always wanted to play guitar,” says Klinck.

She brought in the instrument and laid it on his lap in bed. “He was able to put his hands on the strings and interact with them; often I moved the guitar, as well,” she says. This music experience was something his family felt would be very meaningful to him.

Finding those moments is the skilled therapist’s role, but as Sarah Rose Black notes, people have been connecting with music for their whole lives – she is just helping them access it again at a time when they need it most.

“We have a heartbeat, so we have a drum inside us; we are wired to be musical people,” she says. She smiles softly as she reflects back on one patient, a man in his late 30s with late-stage brain cancer.

“He said, ‘I have a lot of friends, and they’re great, but they don’t really understand what’s going on here,’” she says. “He told me that the music is like a friend who ‘gets it’.” 



Bubbling Over

Any day of the week Wellington local and self-confessed ‘bubble junkie’ Ash Kamel can be seen on the streets practising blowing bubbles and captivating passers-by. The New Zealander hopes to break the world record for the largest outdoor free-floating soap bubble – which stands at a whopping 96.27 cubic metres – by the end of the year. The record is currently held by American Gary Pearlman and has stood since 2015. Wellington local Alan McKay holds the world record for the longest free-floating soap bubble at 32 metres, set in 1996. STUFF.CO.NZ



TRUE CRIME



The Swiss Miss Marple

*A spouse suspected of cheating.
A con man eyeing an elderly woman's wealth.
It's all in a day's work for
Louisa Erismann, private detective*

BY *Juliane Schiemenz* ILLUSTRATION BY *Tom Ralston*

FROM **REPORTAGEN**

A blonde woman in her mid-60s walks through an exclusive Zurich neighbourhood. Well-groomed and slender, she is wearing a dark quilted jacket, black jeans, stylish but inconspicuous sneakers, discreet jewellery and fashionable glasses. She doesn't particularly stand out. People her age tend to fade into the background.

She smiles as she squints into the sun. Traces of a curious, sassy girl can be seen in her face – a girl who is pleased because no one can find her during a game of hide-and-seek. Her expression seems to say, *If they only knew!* The woman's name is Louisa Erismann, and she has been a private investigator for the past six years. I'll be accompanying her for the next week as she does her investigative work.

"It's great that you're coming along with me," Erismann whispers as we walk together through the residential area. "Two people together are less noticeable. And who would ever suspect they're being staked out by two women?"

We're doing what's called reconnaissance. Casing a place. I learned

that from reading the books *Guide to Surveillance and Profession: Detective*, which Erismann gave me to help me prepare for our week together. She advised me on the kind of clothes and shoes to wear; I, too, am in dark colours.

Today's reconnaissance involves a dispute between a man and his female neighbour. I am not permitted to share all of the details about this or any other assignments mentioned in this article. But this much I can say: Erismann has been hired to watch the neighbour.

Erismann completed a one-year vocational training programme in private investigating, which cost her about 8000 euros (US\$9000), at a school in Zurich. For her assignments she studies the target's daily routine, then puts him or her under observation. She'll watch them at 5am, again at noon, then in the afternoon. Sometimes stakeouts take up to 15 hours.

In her unremarkable car Erismann keeps a pair of binoculars, and jackets, toques and scarves with which she can quickly disguise herself; they also help her stay warm during long periods of surveillance. There are shopping bags in the trunk, so she can open it and make it appear as if she just came from the supermarket. Her detective kit also includes wigs, a change of shoes, thermal underwear, vitamins and bananas.

In her office she has manuals on surveillance methods and forensics,

along with a copy of the Swiss Civil Code. Erismann always obeys the law when conducting her investigations, and respects the privacy not only of her clients but also of the people she investigates. “Once, a client wanted me to record a video through a keyhole. That is prohibited, and I won’t do it. In proper surveillance work, you don’t have to violate people’s privacy.”

Once, she signed up as a guest at a Tupperware party because she was observing the host. Another time she was hired by a filmmaker who desperately wanted to buy a mansion, so she tracked down its owners. On another occasion, she was assigned to watch a woman who had been on sick leave for more

than a year due to a broken foot; Erismann discovered an up-to-date photo on social media of the woman walking her dogs.

Erismann always has several cases on the go. A recent one involved a lawyer who disappeared once a month. His wife had no idea where he was going, but then she discovered that one of his Viagra pills was missing. The wife hired Erismann, who followed his trail to Germany, where she found he was frequenting various hotels. In the wheel well of his car,

she discovered a bag containing sex paraphernalia.

Indeed, Erismann mostly investigates wealthy men suspected by their wives of cheating; about two-thirds of her clients are women. “In my experience,” says Erismann, “if a spouse suspects something is going on, they are usually right.” Only once in her professional career has a suspicion of infidelity proved unfounded.

“Wives wait until they can’t bear their suspicions any longer,” she says. “They don’t want to believe it. And some don’t figure out that their partner is cheating until they get an STD.” Erismann’s cases often include gathering evidence of infidelity, which can be used to substantiate financial and custody-related

claims in the event of a divorce.

Erismann does the reconnaissance work and takes the photos, then delivers the bad news. The emotionally charged nature of her assignments quickly creates a friendly, even maternal, bond with her clients. Sometimes, she later accompanies them to court, not only for divorce hearings but also for cases of alleged stalking or rape.

In one case, a lawyer hired Erismann because his elderly mother was at risk of being defrauded. A German

**Erismann
does the
reconnaissance
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bad news**



man had weaselled his way into the mother's heart and wallet; she had already given him more than 100,000 euros (US\$110,000). Her son told Erismann he thought she was going to change her will to include the man. The son didn't want to stand by and watch his inheritance disappear.

But his mother refused to share the suspected con man's identity with him, so Erismann followed him. She discovered that this wasn't his first scam: he'd assisted other wealthy seniors with their financial transactions so he could obtain their credit card and bank information. Erismann took photographs of relevant account statements sitting on his car's dashboard, and forwarded the evidence to her client. He was able to convince his mother not to change her will.

Erismann does most of her work from her car, but she also has a small office in Seefeld, one of Zurich's priciest districts. It looks nothing like those smoky film noir detectives' agencies, with light streaming in through slanted blinds. Instead, it has a desk, chair, computer, telephone, files and law books. No plants, no personal touches. There is a meeting room with a long table, metal chairs and a flip chart. "People come to see

me because this is a good address," says Erismann. "If I were somewhere else no one would notice me."

Before setting up her one-woman detective agency, Erismann worked for 20 years in sales at a large German optometry group. Before that, she and her then-husband owned a photography and optometry store. Erismann had trained as a photographer, taking photos at events, company parties and weddings, and became skilled at close observation and taking photos when her subjects were not paying attention to her.

Then, two painful events led her to the profession that she took up at an age when most people are thinking about retirement. The first was 12 years ago, when Erismann

tailed her own boyfriend "because I couldn't trust him anymore," she recalls. "I had asked him many times if there was another woman, and he always said no. But I could tell by his facial expressions, by how he answered, that something wasn't right.

So she set up camp in a cornfield that gave her a sightline to his home and observed it from a Saturday morning until the next afternoon. She wore black to camouflage herself, and brought along binoculars, a camera and a notepad.

Years ago,
Erismann
tailed her
own partner.
*"I couldn't
trust him
anymore"*



Her thoughts tormented her. “If you think someone is cheating on you, it’s horrible,” she says. “That’s why I understand my female clients. There’s this awful self-doubt: what did I do wrong? Why am I not enough anymore?” There in the cornfield, Erismann felt torn. “I thought, *What I’m doing here isn’t fair. But on the other hand, I wanted to find out, even if it was going to be bad.*” Erismann discovered the truth: Her partner was indeed seeing another woman.

The second big shock in Erismann’s life was her youngest brother’s murder at the age of 40. She doesn’t like to talk about it, saying only that she helped solve the crime. She and her family suspected who the killer was, and that it had been a contract killing. It was her only murder investigation, but it proved to be a turning point: Erismann wanted to become a detective.

When we arrive in a labyrinth of semi-detached houses, we walk to the one where the woman in the dispute with her neighbour lives. Suddenly Erismann whispers: “Someone’s coming.” I want to turn around, but have been told that it would make us look suspicious. A man crosses our path, looking at us. The last thing we want is for him to question our presence. We talk loudly about buying a house.



Louisa Erismann, private detective

Next, we reconnoitre the thrift store where the woman works. I enter first, but I’m not sure of the plan; do Erismann and I know each other or not? The target asks me if I need any help; I tell her I’m looking for a poncho. As I browse, I see that Erismann is also pretending to be a customer. Wearing a bright red hat, she poses in front of a mirror.

Erismann comes over and tells me that I should try on the fringed poncho. Ah ... so we do know each other! The target looks at me, then busies herself with another customer. These stakeouts, as banal as they sometimes seem, help Erismann get a feel for the people involved in a case.

After a few minutes, I leave the store and head for the car, but Erismann waves me off. Never go straight

to your car, she tells me later, because someone could be watching, and maybe noting the plate number. Once a detective's vehicle has been 'made', the only option is to change to another one.

Erismann has a penchant for acting. When she does surveillance in residential areas, she takes a leash with her. "If anyone asks me what I'm doing on their property, I say I'm just looking for my lost dog." Having received threats during investigations, she always carries pepper spray.

She hasn't had a holiday in six years. And her personal life? "I'm always busy - what man would put up with that?" Erismann shows me photos on her phone of her cats, Fellini and Flash. "It's nice to come home and they're both there. They cuddle my hurts away. Humans can be quite cruel."

So has her view of love and relationships changed because of her work? No, says Erismann. She doesn't like to think in terms of victims and perpetrators in cases involving infidelity. "Both sides have a part in the failure or success of a relationship." Nevertheless, she spends hours comforting clients, recommending lawyers and giving practical advice such as the need to

copy records of the husband's assets.

The next day we visit a middle-class suburb of Basel. A man has hired Erismann to follow his ex-wife. He claims she treats their children badly, often leaving them at home alone. He says she makes him pay full alimony despite the fact that she works as a house cleaner. She also claims not to own a car, but Erismann discovers that she does have one.



A man has hired Erismann to watch his ex-wife; he says she mistreats their children

We keep a lookout for the younger son at his school, until Erismann recognises him by his backpack; she has been told it has a green dinosaur on it. We follow the boy to his front door. He rings the bell, but no one answers, so he crosses the street to a playground and sits on a railing. A while later, the mother arrives, and

she and the son enter the apartment.

Erismann and I sit on a wall across from the house and pretend to talk. After about ten minutes, mother and child appear on the balcony. Erismann signals to me that the mother has noticed us, so we walk to the entrance of the next building, where we can't be seen.

"In moments when I have to take cover, I sometimes get a huge adrenaline rush," says Erismann. She's proud of the fact that she's never been busted while investigating a case.

We take the long way back to the car and pass a bus stop. Erismann sees a teaching opportunity: “What would I do if I was on a stakeout nearby and someone spotted me?” She sits down in the bus shelter and assumes the air of an innocent passenger. “I wait for the bus.” A few times she has had to jump on a bus or tram to maintain her cover.

Back in the car, we settle in to watch the woman’s apartment. Erismann looks out for residents who might be watching us. “Old folks behind sheer curtains are the most dangerous,” she says.

When the mother leaves with two children, Erismann takes pictures and contacts the father. Then she decides to do another round of surveillance alone on foot, since we may have already been seen together. She pulls her hair into a ponytail and puts on a hat and a different jacket. “Call me as soon as they return,” she says.

I peer through the car windows. It’s 1.45pm and drizzling. Two boys walk by on their way to the playground. I stare at the raindrops on the window. I’m not allowed to look at my phone; I could miss something.

But nothing happens, and about 15 minutes after she leaves, Erismann

swings open the car door. We decide to head back to Zurich. On rainy days like this, when people aren’t coming and going, Erismann typically does her paperwork: reports, photos, files.

That evening I leaf through the detective books again, which also contain ads: one is for a ballpoint pen with a spy camera and built-in microphone; another features ‘search gloves’. The ads promise the sort of thrill that this afternoon did not deliver.

Sitting in a car for hours, waiting, watching, taking pictures. Disappearing into the background, far from the excitement and drama of private-eye movies and novels. Is that the daily routine of a detective?

And yet there is something Erismann

has in common with those famous fictional detectives: they are non-conformists whose curiosity leads them to the truth. That is what drives her, too. Her lifestyle is unconventional and she is interested in human nature. In a world focused on youth and beauty, on those who stand out, Louisa Erismann knows that staying in the background is an excellent place from which to observe. **R**

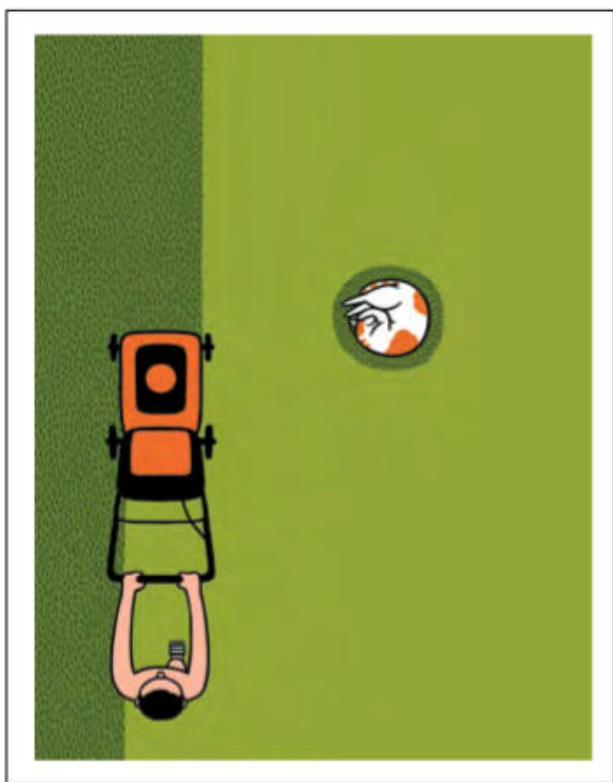
FROM REPORTAGEN (MAY, 2021), © 2021 BY REPORTAGEN

For a second round of surveillance, she puts on a hat and wears a different jacket



LIFE'S LIKE THAT

Seeing The Funny Side



Doggone It!

My husband saw a dog running to and fro by our gate. "That's the neighbour's dog - escaped yet again," he grumbled.

He went outside and wrestled with the collarless dog, before bundling it into our car and taking it back to its home up the road. He came back ten minutes later, full of pride about his good deed for the

day, and explained that our neighbours weren't home, so he'd left the dog in a secure part of the garden for them.

Later that day, there was a knock on our door. Our neighbours had come to tell us that they had found an unknown dog enclosed in their garden, while their own dog was safely inside the house!

SUBMITTED BY LEAH ROTTIER

Warm Welcome

My brother-in-law recounted how, several years ago, he would make regular visits to France.

He said he was very impressed that every time he pulled into a petrol station, he would be greeted with a "Well, hello!" by the attendant, and would reply, "Well, hello to you!"

He could never understand how the attendants all knew he was English-speaking and were all so polite to him.

Then someone pointed out that what they were actually saying was, "*Huile ou l'eau?*" (Oil or water?).

SUBMITTED BY CLED HERBERT

Bright Eyes

“Mum, how come your eyes are so blue?”

“They’ve always been bright and sparkly,” I say, smiling, with an extra glint now at the comment from my 13-year-old son.

“Must be the excitement of this short trip away,” I add, really taken with this enlivening image of my holiday self.

“No, underneath.” He pats the skin by his eyes as if rubbing salt into the wound.

SUBMITTED BY NICKY TORODE



BAGGING A SNAKE

Last year we went away for a holiday to a wonderful place with vineyards and orchards. We got back home and started unpacking the camper van. As I walked past one of our bags, I heard a hissing sound coming from it.

We had heard stories of snakes in the orchards. Terrified, I ran to find my husband. He came and noticed the hissing was steady – no snake could hiss that long. He started rummaging through the bag and found a sandal pressed against an aerosol can.

SUBMITTED BY DAWN FARBER



THE GREAT TWEET-OFF: WEATHER WISE

The folks of Twitter observe the weather keenly.

Me in winter: I don’t do well with the lack of sun and cold.

Me in spring: I don’t do well with allergies while things around me thrive.

Me in summer: I suffer in the heat and humidity like a dying hog.

Me for the two weeks of autumn: Nice. @THEREALCBRAD

The weather is warming up so now the kids can finally go outside and get some fresh air while they play on their phones.

@RODLACROIX

“Rain, rain, you can stay. You’re getting me out of a soccer game!”
A parent’s lullaby.

@KSUJULIE

How different species deal with winter:

Birds – fly south;

Bears – hibernate;

Humans – complain.

@INTERNETHIPPO

On the one hand I am excited for summer. On the other, there are so many people I don’t want to see in shorts.

@JULIUSSHARPE





SEE THE WORLD...

Turn the page »



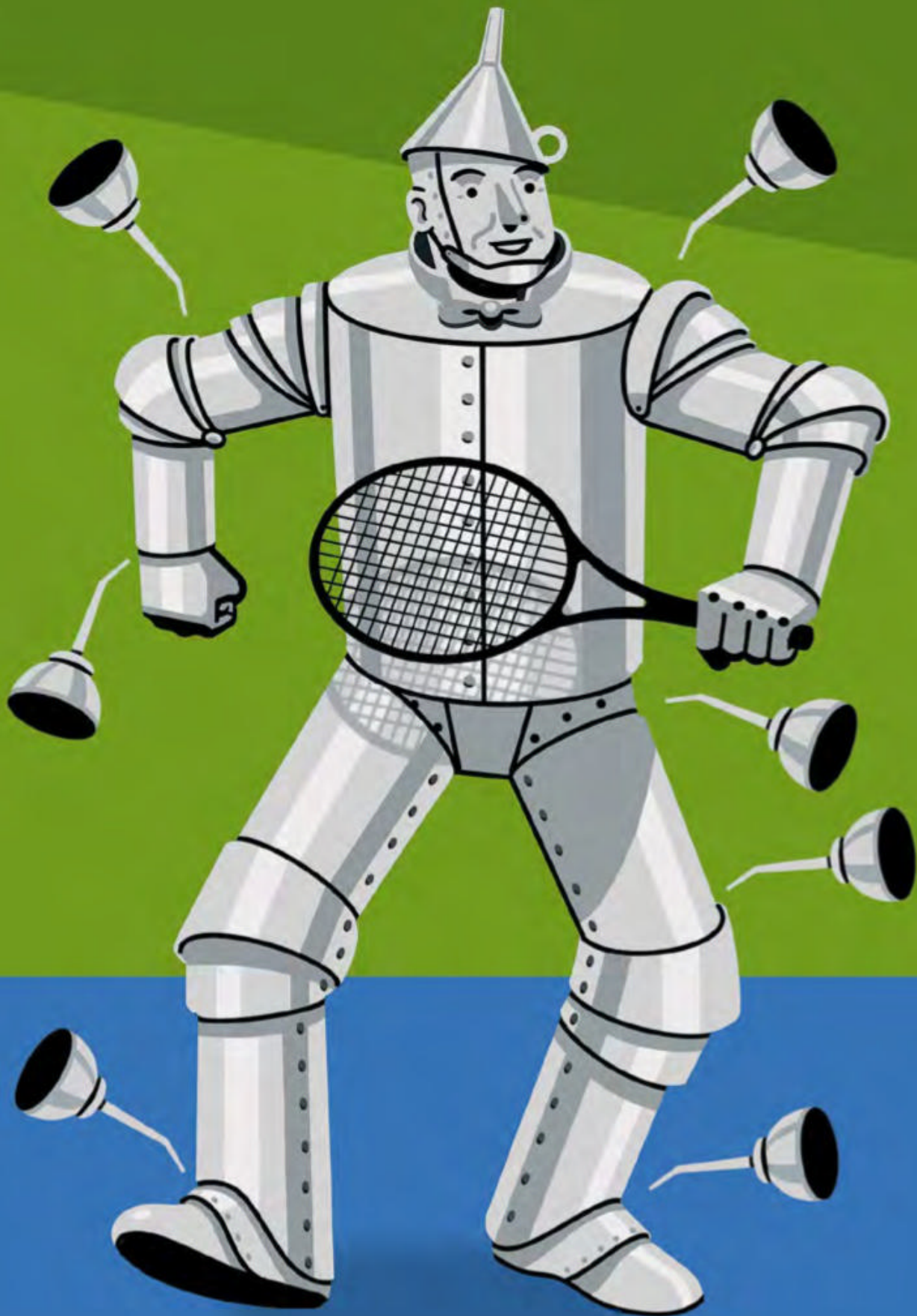
...DIFFERENTLY

Land Art

In the huge landscape painting *World in Progress II*, its creator, who seems to be supporting an animal folded out of paper, is easy to miss. Lying on the ground, Guillaume Legros, who works under the name Saype and lives in Switzerland, becomes part of his work. It was to be admired in September 2021 at the feet of the headquarters of the UN in New York. "Ephemeral artworks" is what Saype calls these paintings, which he sprays onto grass using biodegradable paint. *World in Progress II* was a gift from Switzerland to the organisation for its 75th anniversary. Saype hopes the work will remind people of their duty to future generations.

PHOTOS: PICTURE ALLIANCE/KEYSTONE/
VALENTIN FLAURAUD







No More ACHES?

How we may
(finally) be
outsmarting
joint pain

BY *Patricia Pearson*

ILLUSTRATION BY *Dan Page*

It might be in yoga class when you first feel it – when did downward dog start getting so hard on the wrists? Or it could be at your weekly squash or tennis game that you notice your knees screaming back at you whenever you pivot. Chances are, it's arthritis, which isn't just an 'old-people' problem: It usually kicks in between the ages of 40 and 60.

By far the most common type of arthritis is osteoarthritis. It's usually the result of decades of physical activity that wears down the cartilage in our joints. That's the rubbery, frictionless tissue that acts as a shock-absorber between bones. After years of wear and tear, or an injury such as a

READER'S DIGEST

fracture or dislocation, that cushion can harden and fray like a dried-out rubber band, causing the entire joint to become inflamed and painful. The word arthritis comes from the Greek *arthro*, which means 'joint' and *itis*, which means 'inflammation'.

Osteoarthritis, or OA, is diagnosed in two-thirds of people who experience any sort of joint pain. The World Health Organization estimates that 528 million people worldwide have OA, and an increase over the next decade is projected as the population ages.

The joints that bear the brunt of OA are most often the knees, knuckles, base of the thumb, lower back and hips. Sufferers might notice swelling or even feel a grating sensation in the joints, and some people experience aching that's deep enough to wake them up at night. Stiffness is common, particularly in the morning, and things like opening a jar or bending down aren't as easy as they used to be.

Fortunately, some innovative solutions may be on the way.

HOW CAN YOU EASE THE PAIN?

Maintaining a healthy body weight helps, since it'll mean less load on your joints. Keeping extra weight off also minimises your risk of getting OA in the first place. Exercise is often the first treatment doctors suggest. If you're not already active, low-impact options like walking, cycling

or swimming are good ways to start moving more. Exercise helps ward off stiffness and keeps muscles supple around the joint.

Yoga might bring relief, too, according to Arthritis Australia. Some arthritis experts also recommend seeing a physiotherapist, who can teach you movements to improve mobility and increase your strength to support the affected joints. But most people find that these things don't eliminate pain, or they help only if symptoms are mild to moderate.

Over-the-counter pain relievers, such as ibuprofen and naproxen, relieve pain and stiffness, but aren't a long-term solution because they can irritate the stomach. Doctors might prescribe an oral corticosteroid such as prednisone, but it can cause side effects such as weight gain, mood swings and high blood pressure, so it should be used only briefly.

For some, corticosteroid injections can offer temporary relief, but two recent US studies found that they might actually lead to a progression of OA.

Doctors may also recommend hyaluronic acid, which is injected into the joint to act as a viscous fluid replacement for the cartilage, like oil in a car engine. But it's no cure. While the injection may temporarily relieve pain and even slow down progression of the disease, according to a landmark study in the *British Medical Journal* last year, it provides little to no long-term benefit for most patients.

Another injectable treatment, which has been used since the 1980s to treat torn tendons and joint injuries, is platelet-rich plasma. Your own blood is removed, enriched with platelets and then injected. Some athletes have tried it for sports injuries – notably, Tiger Woods. But it appears to have mixed success, according to the *American Journal of Sports Medicine*, and much more research is needed to find out how to make it work better.

So far, the only truly effective osteoarthritis treatment is a complete joint switch-out, whether it's the replacement of knuckles, knees or hips. Millions of people around the world undergo the surgery, but the catch is that the new joints last only so long – 15 to 20 years – so many doctors don't recommend it for anyone who is under the age of 60.

HE FOUND POSITIVE WAYS TO LIVE WITH IT

Ben Bebenroth, a farm-to-table chef, didn't have much relief from OA pain until he underwent knee-replacement surgery. His osteoarthritis started when he was 15, after he injured his left knee in a snowboarding accident. For a long time, he self-medicated with alcohol and over-the-counter painkillers so he

could keep up with his busy lifestyle and stay active. "I dealt with my pain that way for 25 years," says the now 45 year old.

Aside from exercising and keeping his weight in check, he tried hyaluronic acid injections, steroid injections and even three arthroscopic, or 'keyhole', surgeries (sometimes recommended in cases where the OA was caused by injury). Nothing worked. Finally, Bebenroth

underwent a total knee replacement at the unusually young age of 40.

"When you reach the point of bone-on-bone contact, you just grin and bear it until you can't anymore," he explains.

Bebenroth knows it's inevitable that he'll develop some degree of arthritis in

his right knee – that's what happens if one joint takes the brunt of wear and tear when the injured one is long favoured – but in the meantime the surgery has allowed him to return with new enthusiasm to his work, and to the hiking and snowboarding he loves.

He also avoids all sugar and alcohol, and supplements his diet with nutrient-dense, anti-inflammatory foods like turmeric and ginger from his organic farm, where he grows ingredients he uses at his restaurant. Featuring many foods from



**"DIET
HAS BEEN
CRITICAL FOR ME.
The fewer
inflammatory
foods I eat, the
better I feel"**

READER'S DIGEST

the Mediterranean diet – fish, nuts, beans, lean meats, leafy vegetables – an anti-inflammatory diet is well established as being joint friendly.

“Diet has been critical,” Bebenroth says. “The fewer inflammatory foods I eat, the better I feel.” Stretching, meditation and movement have also helped. “This way of living helps me move away from being in a reactive state, when you’re angry at your pain and end up soothing yourself with a sweet treat.”

NEW HOPE

Given how many people suffer from OA, a lot of researchers are working on solutions – and are at last finding some. At Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, for example, researchers are planning to launch a clinical trial this year for a knee gel made of water-absorbing polymers that simulates cartilage.

Using stem cells derived from our own bodies also shows promise. In 2018, researchers at Stanford University School of Medicine in California managed to isolate skeletal stem cells in adult humans, a significant step towards regenerating cartilage.

“We thought skeletal stem cells existed for some time, but we weren’t sure,” says Dr Charles Chan, an assistant professor of surgery at Stanford.

“We used a technique called FACS, which is sort of like a jelly bean sorter. It allows us to separate types of cells based on the protein on their surface. There were around 100 types.”

To understand which was which, the researchers transplanted the cells into mice to see what they differentiated into. Some turned into bone.

Dr Chan and his colleagues then discovered that they could foster the growth of new cartilage with these

cells by sending them a new

set of instructions. In

their experiments, they

created a microfracture by drilling a tiny hole in bone tissue.

“This provokes skeletal

stem cells to gush up in a blood clot,” Dr

Chan explains. “Left on

its own, this would turn

into scar tissue, or what we

call fibrocartilage. It acts like a Band-

Aid, holding everything in place. But

it’s not as bouncy or slippery as regen-

erated cartilage.”

What if, the team wondered, they

somehow changed the chemical

signalling that was telling the cells

what to do? “We thought maybe we

could interrupt the cells as they

developed into cartilage on their


way to becoming bone – coax them

to finish their work at the carti-

lage stage,” explains Dr Chan. The

chemicals the team used to try this

already had regulatory approval for



**Researchers
are working on
AN INJECTIBLE
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TO CURE THE
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Source: The Edge-Lipper, 31 July 2023.

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READER'S DIGEST

other applications, such as bevacizumab for various cancers.

It worked. The result of their experiment in laboratory mice, and then in human joint tissue infused into mice, “is that you get a nice piece of cartilage,” Dr Chan says. “It’s durable. And the subjects get dramatic improvements in their pain and their movement.”

The team is now raising funds for human clinical trials, where they plan to start with osteoarthritis in patients’ thumbs and fingers. If all goes well, they may be able to bring an injectable medication to market that doesn’t just ease the symptoms but actually cures the disease.


PAIN REDUCTION

Meanwhile, the Melbourne Stem Cell Research Centre in Australia has conducted a number of trials on the use of adipose- (fat-) derived stem cells in the treatment of osteoarthritis. Similar experiments are taking place in Italy and Ireland. The idea is to work with our mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs), which are important for making and repairing cartilage and bone. They seem to have multiple positive effects, including calming inflammation set

off by the body’s immune response and reducing nerve pain.

“Patients undergo a mini-liposuction,” says principal investigator Julien Freitag, a Melbourne-based musculoskeletal specialist. Then, the fat tissue is transferred to a laboratory, where the MSCs are expanded and injected into a patient’s joint; a second injection is given six months later.

While it remains somewhat unclear exactly how MSCs weave their healing magic, says Dr Freitag, “our clinical research conducted over the last nine years has been incredibly promising.” That research, which includes a randomised controlled trial and data collected from actual cases, shows pain reduction and improvements in joint function. “We are seeing significant benefit to patients, whether they have mild, moderate or severe osteoarthritis.”

Given that other research centres are also deep into treatment research, a government-approved breakthrough therapy will probably emerge in the next ten to 15 years. If it proves to be as safe and effective as it has been in research so far, millions of sidelined athletes will be able to get back out onto the field, or just enjoy everyday life more. 



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PRETTY COLOURFUL

**Attracting
comrades of the
same species,
scaring off
predators,
making themselves
invisible –
animals use colour
in so many ways**

BY *Doris Kochanek*





PHOTO FEATURE



PERFECTLY ADAPTED to their environment, chameleons remain virtually invisible to predators and prey. When the animals signal to fellow chameleons, on the other hand, they take on brightly coloured hues.



THIS SHIELD BUG from the *Pentatomoidea* family shimmers like a precious stone. That is why it is also referred to as a jewel bug.

THE RED-EYED TREE FROG is one of the most beautiful representatives of its species. Nocturnal, it uses its bright red eyes to startle predators.



WITH ITS FACIAL COLOURATION, the dominant male mandrill makes it clear who is the boss of the group and has the right to mate with the females.



READER'S DIGEST

AT FIRST GLANCE, the red rock crab impresses with its colours. At second glance, it is its unique ability to cling so tightly to rocks that even the strongest surf can't tear it loose.



THE RAINBOW LORIKEET (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*) carries the rainbow in its plumage. Unlike most bird species, female rainbow lorikeets are just as magnificent as the males. Which, by the way, is true for most parrot species.



IN AQUARIUMS, Siamese fighting fish are a real eye-catcher. Distinguishable by their colourful and long veil-like fins, males are highly territorial and will attack other males if placed in the same tank. They are so pugnacious they sometimes even attack their own reflection.

LAUGHTER

The Best Medicine



Career Paths

Five surgeons were talking about the best patients.

The first surgeon says, "Accountants are the best to operate on because when you open them up, everything on the inside is numbered."

The second surgeon says, "Nah, librarians are the best. Everything inside them is in alphabetical order."

The third surgeon responds, "Try electricians, man! Everything inside them is colour coded!"

The fourth surgeon intercedes, "I prefer lawyers. They're heartless."

To which the fifth surgeon, who has been quietly listening to the conversation, says, "I like engineers. They always understand when you have a few parts left over at the end."

NEWS.AMOMAMA.COM

Sweet Pairing

What do you get when you cross an elephant and a bumblebee?

A ton of honey.

SUBMITTED BY SEBASTIAN VALE

CARTOON: SCOTT MASEAR. ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

Home Truths

I love the difference between people's stories of rescue dogs and rescue cats. Dog owners will be like, "I prepared for months, applied, had a home check, did a foster-to-adopt trial period - and then the rescue dog chose me!"

And cat owners are like, "I found him near the garbage bins."

@DANIELLEWEISBER

In The Dark

Two mafia hit men are walking in the woods at night. One turns to the other and says, "It's really dark in here. I'm scared."

"You're scared?" says the other mobster. "I have to walk out of here alone." SUBMITTED BY ROBERT LOVE

Puns That Don't Fall Flat

I found a classical composer crouched down in the corner of our wardrobe.

"What are you doing in there?" I said in shock, to which he replied, under his breath, "Shh, I'm Haydn!"



Everyone used to really like that band The White Stripes, but I always thought they were middle of the road.



I was listening to Bob Marley on the radio when I got pulled over by the police. They asked for my licence and reggae station.

SEAN LEARY, COMEDIAN



Lounge about and couch a hearty laugh

Why did the genuine leather sofa cross the road?

To get to the other hide.

The furniture store salesman told me, "This sofa will seat five people without any problems."

I said, "Where on earth am I going to find five people without any problems?"

My wife didn't want to buy a bed from the local furniture store because of their motto:

'We stand behind every bed we sell.'

Never embarrass your mattress.

Otherwise, you'll make it plush!

I lay down on the couch and my fiancé said,

"I thought you said you were interesting!"

I said, "No, honey, I said I was into resting."

Bought a new recliner sofa.

Apparently if I don't like it, I can take it back.

SOURCES: LIVINGSPACES.COM, UPJOKE.COM, EASYFAMILYFUN.COM



The Dog-Park **TRADING POST**

BY *Richard Glover*

Down at my local dog park, the scene is one of constant frivolity. Everyone smiles. Everyone says hello. Are dog owners nicer than other people? I can't imagine that's true, but sometimes it feels like it is. Certainly, perhaps due to the presence of their animals, the humans of the dog park find it easy to be friendly. When I take Clancy, my kelpie, there,

dogs are a magnet for humans and a lightning rod for conversations.

At the same time, I have to admit that I may have become too dependent on my fellow dog owners. Whenever a question forms in my mind, instead of turning to Google I think: "There'll be an answer at the park."

Not long ago, there was the grand swapping of recommendations

ILLUSTRATION: SAM ISLAND

for professional services. It started with an older fellow with a similarly elderly Labrador. "Does anyone know a good computer person?" he asked.

"I've got one," said a lady sitting with her schnauzer, "but I'm slightly loath to share his details in case he gets booked up. I'd be willing to do so in return for a good dentist."

"Oh, I have one of those," said a young mother, jiggling a toddler on her hip as she patted her blue heeler, "but I wonder if anyone knows a good place where you can get your knives sharpened."

"The butcher up the road does that," said a man walking past with a whippet.

Into the pot of offerings I submitted an all-female painting crew and an excellent roofing chap. Out of it, I picked up an acupuncturist and a place where you can get a tarp repaired.

The downside of my dependency on the dog park is that people who are not dog owners think I'm slightly mad.

"That's a beautiful painting," said a friend the other day in my living room as he stared at a lush green landscape by painter Remnim Alexander Tayco. "How did you come across the artist?"

"While walking my dog," I said. "He has a kelpie-cross that Clancy adores."

Or when asked where I found my accountant, I reply: "I met her at the dog park."

At this point, people crinkle their noses, as if to say, "What a peculiar place to find an accountant." But what would be a better place? The local

greengrocer? A ten-pin bowling alley?

At least I'm confident my accountant, as the loyal owner of an even-tempered pug, is unlikely to suddenly disappear with all my money.

Of course, meeting people is easier when you both have a dog in tow. Think about it: in most places where you meet strangers, you have to navigate some potentially rocky shores.

"So where do you work?"

"I don't. I was fired last week."

"But children - you have children?"

"Yes, but estranged. They objected to what I did to their parrot."

"Hobbies?"


"Taxidermy. That was the problem with the parrot." Suddenly the ship is sinking, with all hands lost.

Compare this to the smooth landing when you meet a fellow dog owner. "What breed is your dog?" you might inquire. Or the sure-fire "That's a beautiful pup. What is his or her name?"

Within minutes, you'll have invited each other to dinner.

Clancy, for his part, always chooses to play with dogs whose owners are excellent company. God knows how he assesses their character from a distance. Maybe they just smell right.

Whatever the reason, dog parks are a rich source of not only top tips but also the small joys of strangers reaching out to each other - a reminder that people, most of the time, are kind, generous and welcoming.

We're not as good as dogs, of course, but we're not half bad. 

IT'S A WIN-WIN

*Celebrating other
people's victories can
bring on more
of our own*

BY *Juli Fraga*

FROM **THE NEW YORK TIMES**

When Eugenie George first heard that her friend passed a financial counseling exam, her heart sank. She'd failed that test weeks earlier, and needed the credential to advance her own career.

"My inner child got upset," recalls George, a financial writer and educator. But then, instead of stewing, she called her friend. "I told her I failed and admitted I was jealous," she says. George knew that being upfront would defuse her envy, but she was surprised when it shifted her attitude

ILLUSTRATIONS: MAGUMA



EMPATHY HAS A ROLE IN DAILY LIFE, PROPELLING KIND ACTS SUCH AS HELPING OTHERS



so she could share her friend's happiness and experience her own, in turn. "I congratulated her and told her she inspired me," she says.

Finding pleasure in another person's good fortune is what social scientists call *freudenfreude*, a term (inspired by *freude*, the German word for 'joy') that describes the bliss we feel when someone else succeeds, even if it doesn't directly involve us.

Freudenfreude is like social glue, says Catherine Chambliss, a professor of psychology at Ursinus College in Pennsylvania. It makes relationships "more intimate and enjoyable". Erika Weisz, an empathy researcher at Harvard University, says the feeling closely resembles positive empathy – the ability to experience someone else's positive emotions. A study in 2021 examined positive empathy's role in daily life and found that it propelled kind acts, such as helping others. Sharing in someone else's joy can also foster resilience, improve life satisfaction and help people cooperate during a conflict.

While the benefits of freudenfreude are plentiful, it doesn't always come easily. Sometimes, your loss

might really sting, making freudenfreude feel out of reach. If you were raised in a family that paired winning with self-worth, Chambliss says, you might misread someone else's victory as your own personal shortcoming. And factors such as mental health and overall wellbeing can also affect your ability to participate in someone else's joy.

Still, indulging in freudenfreude is worthwhile – and there are ways to encourage the feeling.

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND freudenfreude, it can be helpful to demystify its better-known counterpart, *schadenfreude*: the pleasure we feel when witnessing someone's misfortune.

In a 2012 study, Chambliss and her colleagues examined instances of freudenfreude and schadenfreude among college students, some of whom were experiencing mild depression. Freudenfreude scores were higher, and schadenfreude scores were lower, among those who were not depressed. The mildly depressed college students, however, had a harder time adopting a joy-sharing mindset.

"When you're feeling down, it's natural to puncture positive news with negativity," Chambliss explains.

Even when people aren't experiencing mental distress, moments of schadenfreude – when a movie villain gets what he deserves, for example, or a nemesis faces scrutiny – can



be comforting and serve a purpose. “Schadenfreude is one way we try to cope with jealousy and vulnerability,” says clinical psychologist Emily Anhalt, co-founder of Coa, a mental health app. It’s an ‘ego protector’ that shields people from pain and reinforces social bonds within a group – like when joy erupts among sports fans after their rival team faces a humiliating loss.

Indulging in too much schadenfreude, however, can backfire. One study found that schadenfreude on social media can push empathy aside, making people less

compassionate towards those who differ from them. Other research suggests that delighting in the mishaps of others can lower people’s self-esteem, especially when they are comparing themselves to high achievers.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO EXPERIENCE MORE FREUDENFREUDE?

“Empathy isn’t always an automatic reflex,” Weisz says. “It’s often a motivated process.” To help people strengthen joy-sharing muscles, Chambliss and her colleagues



developed a programme called Freudenfreude Enhancement Training (FET). They found that depressed college students who used the practices for two weeks had an easier time expressing freudenfreude, which enhanced their relationships and improved their mood.

Enjoy more freudenfreude with the tips below.

VIEW INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS AS A COMMUNAL EFFORT

“When we feel happy for others, their joy becomes our joy,” says psychologist Marisa Franco, author of the book *Platonic: How the Science of*

Attachment Can Help You Make – and Keep – Friends. To that end, freudenfreude encourages us to look at success as a community achievement.

“No one gets to the top alone, and when we elevate others, we’re often carried up with them,” Anhalt says.

Jean Grae, an artist and self-identified ‘multipotentialite’, supports friends and colleagues by adopting this mindset. When someone gets a new opportunity or reaches a milestone, she makes sure to celebrate. Grae says she’s especially moved when anyone considered ‘other’ succeeds. “It’s truly inspirational,” she says, “because it lifts us all up and makes us shine.”

SHOW ACTIVE INTEREST IN SOMEONE ELSE'S HAPPINESS

One way to summon good feelings for others is to ask questions. Chambliss and her colleagues call this practice 'shoy' – or sharing joy.

To start, invite the bearer of good news to discuss the experience. Even if your heart isn't in it, research by Sonja Lyubomirsky, a psychology professor at the University of California Riverside, suggests that happiness can flourish when you make a heartfelt effort to engage with a positive activity. So when you speak with your friend, be sure to maintain eye contact and listen attentively. This should motivate you to keep going and make you feel as if your efforts will pay off.

SHARE CREDIT FOR YOUR SUCCESSES WITH OTHERS

Because emotions are contagious, showing appreciation can increase freudenfreude for the gratitude giver and the recipient. In this way, you can think of freudenfreude as something you can spread when you're experiencing personal joy.

To do this, try a FET exercise called bragitude, which involves expressing gratitude when someone else's success or support leads to your own.

Start by sharing your win, then tell the other person how you appreciate

their help. Be specific. If your friend's accountant advised you to squirrel away more money, for instance, you might say: "My savings are growing. Thanks for recommending your great accountant." Practising bragitude is like sharing dessert: both parties enjoy the sweetness of the moment, which enhances freudenfreude for them both.

BECOME A JOY SPECTATOR

"Too often, we think of joy passively," Franco says. "We see it as something that comes to us, instead of something we can generate." But you don't need to wait for someone else's good news to exercise freudenfreude.

Cultivate joy by inviting others to share their victories. You might ask: "What was the bright spot of your day?" or "I could use some good news; what's the best thing that happened to you this week?" Asking about other people's wins turns you into a joy spectator, giving you a chance to witness them at their best.

Experiencing more freudenfreude doesn't mean you'll never cheer against a villain again, but being able to reach for happiness is inherently beneficial. Says Chambliss, "As delicious as it is to delight in our enemy's defeats, celebrating our friends' successes – big and small – helps us all triumph." **R**

THE NEW YORK TIMES (NOV. 28, 2022), © 2022 THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY

13 THINGS



All About Extreme Weather

BY *Caitlin Stall-Paquet*

1 What's in a name? Plenty, when meteorologists assign them to hurricanes and typhoons. It's a practice that began in the 19th century, when a British meteorologist living in Australia started naming storms after Polynesian women and politicians he disliked. Using female names caught on with US meteorologists in the 1950s; weather reports included sexist clichés about 'temperamental' storms 'flirting' with coastlines. Male names were finally included by 1979.

2 The association with destruction tends to make some storm names unpopular baby names, which is what happened to Katrina after a Category 5 storm with that name devastated the US state of Louisiana in 2005. A very damaging storm may have its name retired, and some years there are enough storms to run through the 21 alphabetical names (Q, U, X, Y and Z are not used). The World Meteorological Organization keeps a list of backup names prepared for that eventuality.

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH

3 From cows lying down when rain is on the horizon to birds that fly lower before a storm, there are plenty of theories that animals can predict the weather. One that's proven is that coastal sharks swim deeper during the drop in barometric pressure that precedes tropical storms. Sometimes animals are the weather: waterspouts or tornadoes can pick up critters and carry them long distances, leading to accounts of frogs or fish falling from the sky, like the anchovies that rained down on San Francisco in 2022.

4 When ice forms on trees, the weight of branches can increase 30-fold. In 1998, the freezing rain of a devastating ice storm in North America brought down millions of trees. The ice layers also collapsed enough electrical wires and cables to go around the world three times. Power outages left more than five million people in the dark – some for as long as 30 days.

5 Blizzards can be equally destructive, especially when they happen in unlikely places, like Iran's 1972 blizzard – called the worst in history. Almost eight metres of snow fell over nearly a week, covering 200 villages and killing a reported 4000 people. But 'once-in-a-generation' storms are happening more often as polar winds meet warmer-than-usual winters. Cold snaps

and record daily snowfalls could become more norm than outlier.

6 After bursting onto the scene in the 1970s, the disaster-movie genre – with hits like *The Swarm* and *The Poseidon Adventure* – really hit its stride in the 1990s. (*Twister* grossed nearly US\$500 million in theatres). Since then, disaster movies have stagnated, possibly because we feel ever closer to life imitating fiction. The 2021 film *Don't Look Up* served as an apt commentary on climate change and society's collective reluctance to act.

7 Rising average temperatures are contributing to more heat waves and larger storms. Earlier this year, Cyclone Freddy hit parts of Africa and lasted a record 34 days. Human activity is known to compound the disastrous effects of extreme weather directly, too, like in Canada in 2021 when torrential rains led to deadly mudslides in areas that had been clear-cut. Major flooding in Germany and Belgium in 2021, and Australia's unprecedented bush fires of 2020, were also caused by climate change.

8 When forest fires are followed by drought in the US, bark beetles can make a bad situation even worse by turning wooded areas into fields of tinder. An infestation along the west coast of North

READER'S DIGEST

America, from the Yukon to Mexico, killed more than 102 million trees in California alone. To make matters worse, trees can secrete highly flammable chemicals called terpenes as a defence mechanism against insect invasion.

9 Lightning sprites make the skies glow with jellyfish-like shapes during thunderstorms, from the Chilean Andes to Israel's Negev Desert. The crimson lights are produced by electric discharges in the mesosphere and their name is thought to be inspired by Shakespeare's mischievous fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

10 Intense heatwaves have a way of making society go off the rails. They can melt power lines and buckle railway tracks, which happened during the United Kingdom's 2022 heat wave. People also tend to lose their cool: 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.

11 Sandstorms occur when strong winds sweep across dry desert landscapes. In 2021, Mongolia's southern province of Dornogovi experienced a record 20-hour sandstorm. These storms can sometimes trigger

apocalyptic-seeming 'blood rain', a rare event that occurred in Spanish skies in 2022. This red precipitation was caused by dark sand being carried from the Sahara Desert and mixing with water before falling back to Earth.

12 The United States experiences 75 per cent of the world's tornadoes, with about 1200 reported every year. And 'Tornado Alley', which runs vertically through the middle of the country from South Dakota to Texas, gets the brunt of it. In 2013, a record 4.2-kilometre-wide tornado hit El Reno, Oklahoma, with never-before-seen ground speeds of 476 kilometres per hour!

13 Thanks to computer technology and global data sharing, weather forecasts are improving in accuracy, giving residents more time to seek safety. But some people still run towards danger: amateur and professional storm chasers track high-impact weather and gather invaluable meteorological data – and perhaps a viral video or two. An episode of the 2021 documentary series *Wild Canadian Weather* followed the adventures of Prairie Storm Chasers. And Dutch-TReX, a storm-chasing group based in the Netherlands, travels to the US each year during tornado season in search of the perfect storm. **R**



ANG ORIGINAL NA PLASTIK, PLASTIK NA PLASTIK PA DIN!

Orocan Icebox 30L



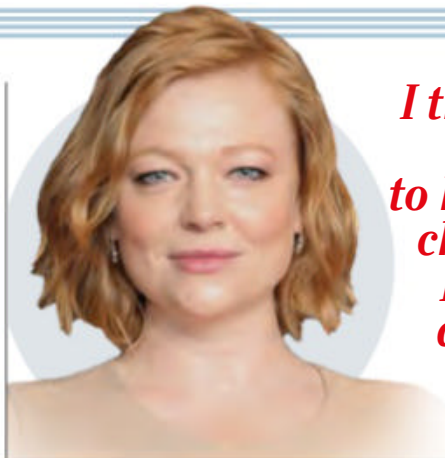
Orocan
Utility Pail 12L



QUOTABLE QUOTES

PEOPLE CAN BE LIKE, "OH, IT [THE UNIVERSE] MAKES ME FEEL SMALL", BUT I THINK FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE IT ACTUALLY MAKES YOU FEEL UNIFIED, CONNECTED, PART OF SOMETHING THAT'S SO GRAND AND SO BEAUTIFUL.

JOE DEPASQUALE,
SPACE IMAGE DEVELOPER
FOR NASA



I think some things are just meant to happen; you can't change your fate. Maybe we have a small amount of control.

SARAH SNOOK, ACTRESS

Kids are really smart. And I think they're underestimated all the time.

R.L. STINE, CREATOR OF THE GOOSEBUMPS SERIES

Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.

SØREN KIERKEGAARD,
PHILOSOPHER



Musicians want to be the loud voice for so many quiet hearts.

BILLY JOEL, MUSICIAN

Keep a little fire burning; however small, however hidden.

CORMAC MCCARTHY, WRITER





All about sleep, and you

Chiro[®] The mattress for REAL back care.



Chiro[®] Mattresses from Dreamland.
The AUTHENTIC back care mattresses. And here's why:



With Miracoil™ - world's most advanced spring system by Leggett & Platt, USA



Miracoil™ - with 'hydraulic-like' shape & closely-coiled centre zone. Only such design offers real back support.



Fully heat-tempered spring system for superior strength & long-lastingness



With head-to-toe helical spring wires for minimal partner disturbance



49% more coil count for extra spinal support



High-density foam cushioning for plush comfort & back support

Remember, if it's not Dreamland Chiro,
it's not REAL back care!



Winner from 2019-2022



Engineered specifically for back care



¹ Reference : Research conducted by Taylor Nelson Sofres



INSPIRATION

A HUMAN HISTORY IN RUST

*In scrap, there's beauty —
and hope for what can
be renewed*

BY *Dorothy
Woodend*

FROM
THE TYEE

Old tractor parts went
into the creation of this
sculpture of an American
bison in South Dakota



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THEIR JUNK IS A CURIOUS ONE.

A 2022 documentary called *Scrap* shows just how oddly intertwined these two things can be.

When the film's director, Stacey Tenenbaum, came across a photo of an aeroplane graveyard just outside Moscow, the place's ghostly quality – seemingly frozen in time – led her to wonder what happens to these kinds of things when they are no longer useful.

The film is chock-a-block with visual pleasure. Viewers float alongside retired trams and peer into the rotting husks of muscle cars spotted with moss and lichen. But a harder message lurks beneath the lilting images: the way back from irrelevance and obsolescence demands work – often the hard, dirty and dangerous kind.

That humans use and then discard endless amounts of stuff isn't exactly news. But how do we interact with what we throw away? The film showcases an alternative approach to the cycle of junking things once they've reached the end of their active life: there is worth in the saddest old hulks of refuse, including a downed plane, a wizened train or an ancient phone booth. In fact, old stuff can be transformed into something not only useful but beautiful.

Take, for example, the iconic red phone booth, an object familiar to any Anglophile. Back in the 1980s, when Tony Inglis, who ran a trucking firm in the United Kingdom at the time, got the contract to remove phone booths that had fallen into ruin, he thought, *We can't just let them go.*

So he started fixing them up. Over time, he purchased more than 2000 of the decommissioned booths and set about resurrecting them: scraping off decades of buckled paint, replacing broken glass, slowly restoring dignity and handsomeness. Now, decades later, the refurbished booths are being put to a variety of new functions – everything from miniature libraries to coffee kiosks to defibrillator stations.

There is something deeply soothing, even redemptive, about watching a person attend to the act of restoration with care and precision. Surely if an ancient discarded thing can be brought back to a state of shining glory, humans can also be returned to a state of wholeness.

The film is as much about objects as it is about the people who love them. Consider Ed Metka of Wisconsin, US. In the 1980s the retired civil

READER'S DIGEST

engineer began buying out-of-service trams from several North American cities with a plan to refurbish and resell the vehicles.

As a child he was enthralled by trams and watched the operators so carefully that by the age of five, he imagined he was fully capable of driving them himself.

"I was fascinated by their appearance and their clickety-clackety sound." Today, some of the tram carriages he bought are back in active service. "It's very satisfying to see these cars running again," says Metka.

The tenacity of metal, which stands long after fragile human bodies are gone, is the subject of South Dakota artist John Lopez's metal sculptures.

He welds old tractor parts, bits of machinery and rusty lengths of chain into larger-than-life figures of bison, tigers and draught horses. In a stunning homage to his late father, he even created an ancient, gnarled tree covered with delicate pink metal petals.

As Lopez explains, part of his inspiration came from an old farming custom in South Dakota: dragging broken pieces of equipment up to the top of hills. "It just brings back all the memories from the old days," says Lopez. "It has meaning, a lot of meaning."

Poised against the landscape, the sculptures stand like dinosaurs, markers of a time and place – and a lifetime of work. His intent was that the relics would take on new life as

Old phone booths were given new life for this art installation in London





In Delhi, India, workers strip parts out of discarded mobile phones

conversation pieces, and so continue to be useful.

In another part of the world, abandoned machines become a home for families and a source of income. Just east of Bangkok, Thailand, Fah Boonsoong and her kids and grandkids live in a hollowed-out jumbo jet airliner – just one of many spread across a field. Tourists pay to take photographs with the derelict planes.

As the kids bounce up and down on the wings of the aircraft, their grandmother talks about being the caretaker of this aeroplane graveyard. But she takes issue with the word ‘graveyard’, insisting this is a vibrant community, alive with laughing, playing kids. “Graveyards are for the dead. We’re living people, not spirits.”

Resurrection is also the focus of architect Tchely Hyung-Chul Shin, who works in South Korea and France. His architectural firm repurposes sections of old tankers and cargo ships into churches and other structures. Freed from rusting turpitude and fashioned into soaring vaulted spaces, ships’ hulls, ribbed like the inside of a whale, become things of airy beauty.

But such startling transformations aren’t easy. Cutting massive ships into their component parts is gritty, rough work. Retired vessels are sourced around the globe, but the reconstruction takes place mainly in Spain, where an international team of shipwrights disassemble the boats.

Scrap shows extraordinary scenes

of the behemoths being dragged out of the water, turned on end and sliced into parts.

As Shin explains, when wiping away decades of accumulated rust from a section of hull he feels connected to these old aquatic warriors. "There is a lot of emotion when I see these pieces and this boat. It's like taking care of a friend or a parent."

Meanwhile in the US, the disintegrating hulks of old cars emerge out of the landscape of White in Georgia like some new type of growth.

Throughout the 14-hectare site - known as Old Car City - more than 4000 vehicles have permanent parking spaces, and curious sights emerge from the gloom. Atop a 1950s sports car heaped with pine needles, an abandoned doll pokes out. Some vehicles have been here so long that trees have grown through them. It's kind of beautiful, and a little eerie.

Proprietor Dean Lewis sees the White junkyard as a kind of a museum. "It's art, nature and history," he says. Lewis inherited the place from his parents, who started it as a used car lot in 1931, but since then it has evolved into something more akin to a kingdom of decay.

From the hand-painted signs that declare 'The Meaning of Life is to

give Life Meaning' to the worn dirt paths carved through the woods, the place is a distinctly rustic venue. The constellations of automotive rust possess great beauty, patterns and colours stippled on the metal exteriors like a modernist painting. It is both lovely and sad: the hopes and ambitions of another age slowly disintegrating into rust and dirt.

In other parts of the world, the scale of disposable culture takes on epic proportions. In Delhi, old phones and TVs are dismantled by

workers who make a living stripping the parts out of junked technology. Photographer Saumya Khandelwal documents the lives of these workers, her images driven by a

need to do something in the midst of a juggernaut of waste. "When there is something that bothers me, the only thing I can do is photograph it."

The intermingling of decay and new life as portrayed in *Scrap* makes for an interesting conjunction of opposing forces. The sheer magnificence of elemental, brutalist scrap remade into functional, beautiful things is a reminder that with care and love, almost anything can be brought back from the brink. **R**

FROM 'HUMAN HISTORY IN RUST', BY DOROTHY WOODEND, THE TYEE (OCTOBER 21, 2022) © 2022, DOROTHY WOODEND, THETEE.CA

**IT IS BOTH LOVELY
AND SAD: THE HOPES
AND AMBITIONS OF
ANOTHER AGE SLOWLY
DISINTEGRATING**



Buong Puso para sa Pilipino

Driven by our passion for creativity and excellence,
we pour our hearts into everything we do - for you, our Kapuso.

With unwavering faith in God and belief in ourselves,
we face each day with optimism, courage, and determination.
Always remaining true to who we are, we endeavor to succeed
for the ones we love with commitment, hard work, and integrity.

We are GMA, and we remain,
Buong Puso para sa Pilipino.





Small Business, Big Heart

*Caring for people is part of the deal
at family-run shops*



BY *Scott Grills*

ILLUSTRATION
BY *Elijah White*

FROM **THE GLOBE AND MAIL**

I GREW UP IN AND AROUND a department store. It was run by my maternal grandmother, Mrs Sharp, and when I was growing up in the 1960s and '70s, I was one of various family members who occasionally worked there.

I learned the difference between nylon and metal zippers, which fabrics should be cut and which needed to be torn, and how to sort patterns and match colours of embroidery floss. I also learned something much more important: the place of a family business in the community.

Mrs Sharp knew her customers. She heard the rumours of domestic violence; of women

who had little money to buy essentials; of families struggling to care for sons who had returned from war suffering with what was then called 'shell shock'; of unplanned pregnancies and the need for the discreet purchase of certain sewing patterns to help prevent gossip.

End-of-the-bolt fabrics and discarded patterns made their way into the hands of mothers whose children needed clothes for the start of the school year. Widows without cash for undergarments bought them on credit, sometimes in tears: "I hate to ask. It has been so hard since Charlie died. You know I am good for it. Thank you. God bless you."

When my partner and I were still in university, we became parents. Our budget was tight – at the time, inflation was more than 11 per cent and interest rates were above 18 per cent. Still, we saved so we could afford the occasional splurge.

We benefited from the kindness of local merchants who understood that treating customers equally did not mean they were treated the same way.

The local fishmonger, who supplied lobster and crab to steak houses and immaculate scallops to a French restaurant, showed incredible thoughtfulness. We were regulars because our

two year old had developed a passion for mussels normally reserved for ice cream and chocolate cake. Without fail, after the mussels were weighed and priced, the scoop went back into the tank – "Just a few extra to make up for the ones that don't open."

On one visit, a staff member asked if we had seen the Scottish salmon that had come in that morning. "Looks beautiful," I said. "Just the mussels, thanks."

He wondered if I could make use of some tails: "The restaurant only wants the best steaks, and I really don't have much of a market for these." Two tails went into the bag, no charge. "Mussels for the little guy and a treat for you and your wife. On the house."

When my wife was expecting our second child, she developed a deep craving for a local Chinese restaurant's version of *tai dop voy*, a mixture of meats, shrimp and vegetables. Even though they rarely saw us, the owners always remembered us. One evening, well into my wife's eighth month, I ordered *tai dop voy* to go. Since he was up, I took our young son with me. It was a chillingly damp night.

The next thing I knew, we were seated at the bar and my son had a soft drink in his hand. Our order

**FACING A
TIGHT BUDGET,
WE WERE THE
BENEFICIARIES
OF THE
KINDNESS
OF LOCAL
BUSINESSES**



came and I settled up. The bag was heavier than normal.

“We are closing soon,” the server said. “There is some fried rice in there that would be thrown out. Enjoy. Have a healthy baby.” When I got home, there was not only fried rice but also an order of chow mein and two orders of tai dop voy.

THAT WAS MANY YEARS AGO. But those small kindnesses from people who ran local businesses made a difference. It wasn't just the savings – though they were appreciated. Customers were seen as more than a source of revenue; we were members of the community that the business served.

These days, I'm not sure many people associate airlines, telcos or supermarkets with 'service' to the community. Their customers are mostly anonymous, and their life circumstances are relevant only to the extent that the apps they use help the companies determine which products to display prominently.

Once again, many of us have been forced to tighten our belts. Fresh fruit? Maybe we'll buy some next week. Bacon or eggs, not both. But the generosity I experienced all those years ago hasn't disappeared.

I witnessed it recently at my local farmers' market. A young family – it could have been my crew years ago – was debating whether to add another zucchini to the order (eavesdropping is an occupational hazard of mine). The farmer serving them said, “Sorry I forgot, I have so many zucchinis this year. If you buy two, you get another for free. Pick out any one you like.”

I like to think the farmer was being ethically flexible: no prices on the produce, but everything is fairly priced. Fair in the sense that community, caring and kindness are all part of the merchant-client relationship.

The kindness of merchants during leaner times is a sign of some-

thing deeper: we are all making our shared way together. For my part, I will continue to support farmers' markets and family-run restaurants. I am happy to pay a 'fair' price, knowing that there may be an extra cob of corn for the widow buying her eggs a half-dozen at a time.

My grandmother would have expected it of me. **R**

**COMMUNITY,
CARING AND
KINDNESS
ARE ALL
PART OF THE
MERCHANT-
CLIENT
RELATIONSHIP**



FROM 'A FAMILY RUN BUSINESS WILL ALWAYS HAVE A SPECIAL PLACE IN MY COMMUNITY', *THE GLOBE AND MAIL* (OCTOBER 27, 2022), © 2022, SCOTT GRILLS. THEGLOBEANDMAIL.COM



Zipline uses drones to distribute medical supplies to health facilities in Ghana

PIE In The SKY

Will widespread drone deliveries ever happen?

BY James O'Malley

WHEN DRONES first became widely available, around 15 years ago now, it wasn't uncommon to find tech people painting dramatic pictures of how they were soon going to change the world.

However, if you look up into the largely empty sky above us, you can quite clearly see that hasn't happened yet.

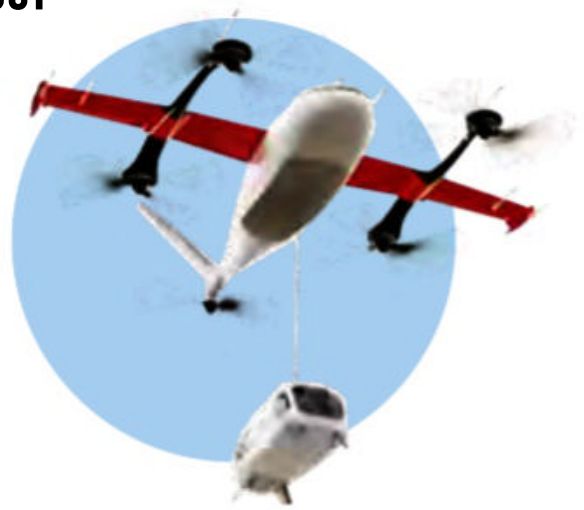
Sure, drones are useful for taking aerial photos, and are a fun hobby for nerds like me – but we're a long way away from aerial superhighways, packed with autonomous drones zipping parcels, medical supplies and perhaps even your pizza order to your front door at speeds that would

PHOTOS (ZIPLINE): JOERG BOETHLING/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

be near-impossible on the ground. And we're seemingly still a very long way away from it. In 2016, in a blaze of publicity, Amazon announced that it had completed its first ever aerial delivery. In a heavily stage-managed video, we saw an Amazon UK 'Prime Air' drone pick up a parcel from the company's Cambridgeshire warehouse and fly it across the countryside, landing in the buyer's garden, dropping the parcel, and then returning back to its home base.

But as far as I can tell, Amazon still has not completed its second ever drone delivery. In fact, since the video was released the company has reportedly downscaled its drone programme, and laid off or redeployed many of the people working on it.

So, will drone delivery ever be a thing? There are some glimmers of a possible drone delivery future, not in Britain or even the US, but in Africa. Because also since 2016, rural hospitals in Ghana and Rwanda have been



receiving regular shipments of blood and other medical supplies by drone, thanks to a company called Zipline. And the service is very much for real.

Like Amazon, Zipline drones are not quadcopters with propellers, but fly more like traditional planes.

After being launched into the air using a catapult system, they fly autonomously to their destination hospital, and once over the hospital grounds, drop their payload via parachute, which doctors can then pick up and take straight to their patients. The drone then flies back to where it started - landing like a plane on an aircraft carrier by catching it with a wire.

It's a hugely impressive system, and one that surely has saved lives thanks to the speed at which blood can be delivered in a country with a poorly developed road network. And since then the company has already expanded its operations to Ghana - and has delivered over a million doses of COVID-19 vaccine by drone. **R**



ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Humour On The Job



“The smarter we make the AI, the less it wants to do our jobs.”

Mister Burger

I work in a large government agency. Occasionally the helpdesk or admin folks will send out an organisation-wide circular to announce something. My coworker thought he was replying to an email to me and said, “Yo, wanna get a burger for lunch?”

Many of the 10,000+ people who received that email never let him live it down. TRAVELLOVE88, METRO.CO.UK

Living The High Life

For no reason I just thought of the time a guy I was dating was hired to dog sit for a famous filmmaker.

My then boyfriend took me with him once to dog sit and I was surprised that the apartment was super nice but also, like, relatively normal.

We later found out that it was the dog’s apartment.

@MELISSAPETRO



Footing The Bar Bill

Remembering that time at university when my adviser, a well-known ornithologist, got a random call:

Drunk guy (*bar noises in background*): IS THIS THE BIRD PROFESSOR?

My adviser: Um ... yes?

Drunk guy: DO HUMMINGBIRDS HAVE FEET?

My adviser: ... Yes.

(Wild cheering over phone from bar)

@NORTHERNSPRW

Do Not Reply

I can't be the only person who says "Please leave me alone!" out loud to her email.

@ASHLEYN1COLE

Email Sign-Offs

Several funny email sign-offs to use at your own risk at work: Hasta la pasta, Anyways, Later sk8r, Meow for now, Your move, Alrighty then.

@WINDOWS

Off To A Poor Start

Me: Click on the start button.

Client: Let me just get my daughter, you've lost me.

CLIENTSFROMHELL.NET

THIS JOB IS A JOKE!

Three well-known comedians describe their earlier gigs.

"I used to work at McDonald's making minimum wage. You know what that means when someone pays you minimum wage? You know what your boss was trying to say? 'Hey, if I could pay you less, I would, but it's against the law.'"

CHRIS ROCK

"I got fired from my last job. It was fair. I had stopped working. When they fired me, they called me into human resources and they were like, 'Michelle, it seems like you're just not doing your job.' And I was like, 'Yeah, but for like nine months. So, I think two of us haven't been doing our jobs.'"

MICHELLE WOLF

"I called a temp agency once. They were like, 'Do you have any phone skills?' I was like, 'I called you, didn't I?'"

ZACH GALIFIANAKIS





These white waving cats are placed in homes and businesses all over Japan for good luck

THE LAND OF THE HAPPY CAT

Japan has an affinity for all things feline: cat cafés, cat shrines, cat islands and even cats with jobs. Here's a few places any cat lover visiting Japan shouldn't miss

BY *Helen Foster*

GOTOKUJI TEMPLE, TOKYO

One of Japan's famous cat symbols is the white waving cat known as a *maneki-neko*. You'll see these in homes and businesses all over the country, but only at Gotokuji in south-west Tokyo will you be surrounded by thousands of them.

Around the 16th century, goes the legend, a feudal lord who was caught in a rainstorm near Gotokuji saw the temple's cat beckoning him in to shelter. Once he was safely inside, lightning struck the point at which he'd been standing. Feeling that the beckoning cat had saved his life, the lord bestowed his patronage on the temple turning the simple place of worship into a temple of great standing.

Today, people place their own waving cat sculptures at Gotokuji for good luck



Maneki-neko, Japan's famous beckoning cats, surround Gotokuji temple

and prosperity in business and to bless their own furry friends. If you want to do the same, you can buy your own cat-themed *ema* (prayer plaques) at the shop inside.

If, however, you'd prefer to bless your relationship, you'll want to head to Tokyo's second waving cat worshipping spot, the Imado Shrine in the historic Asakusa district. This competes with Gotokuji as the original home to the figure – and has its own fun story to boot.

Back in the day, the Imado area was famous for pottery and legend has it that one night, a local resident who couldn't afford to keep her beloved cat, had a dream where the cat told her to make dolls in the shape

of a waving cat. Using local pottery, she created some in the design the cat had shown her, and started selling them at the shrine. They were so popular they raised her out of poverty – and created a Japanese icon.

KISHI STATION, WAKAYAMA

Nitama, the stationmaster at the Kishi station in Wakayama, watches the trains from her stationmaster's office. After a few minutes, she rolls over, licks her feet and goes to sleep. The average stationmaster would probably get sacked at this point, but the average station master isn't a 13-year-old tortoiseshell cat.

PHOTOS: HELEN FOSTER

Nitama is one of the two cat stationmasters that you can visit along the line of the Wakayama Electric Railway, which runs between the city of Wakayama in Japan's Kansai region, and the smaller town of Kishi to the east. A rescue cat, Nitama took over the role, cute hat and medal, in 2016, after the original tortoiseshell stationmaster Tama, a cat that lived in the station when it was being built, passed away after nine years of service.

Pictures of Tama in her stationmaster's hat turned the fortunes of the line around, which was on the verge of closing in 2006. Now, around 2.3 million people a year ride the railway to remember Tama and visit Nitama and her colleague Yontama, who 'looks after' Idakiso station. The day we visited she was being very vocal about it, jumping from her cat tree to her cat tunnels and meowing loudly for a snack.

As you ride the train out to Kishi, the scenery is stunning – traditional houses are surrounded by green fields, rivers, and you can even spot the odd waterfall, but most people aren't looking out of the window, they're snapping pictures of all the cat-themed decor inside the train. Yes, even two of the trains here are Tama-themed.

When we pulled into the station, most people went to visit Nitama, but my guide, Yamaki, led me to a small shrine on the platform dedicated to Tama. The small pile of stones was collected from the river



Nitama, Wakayama Electric Railway's stationmaster, sporting her hat and medal

bed by the president of the train company himself.

TETSUDOKAN CAFÉ, OSAKA

About 90 kilometres away from Kishi, in a residential area of Osaka, I sit in a room full of people intensely watching a cream and red train chug its way around a model train set. Suddenly, a huge cheer goes up – a little black and brown cat nestled in between a valley of green felt-covered mountains has just swiped the train off the track with a quick paw pat. You see, while the cake they serve for afternoon tea in this café is nice,



One of Wakayama Electric Railway's two cat-themed trains

it's the chance to spot cats choosing violence that's really brought everyone here.

The café is called Tetsudokan Café and Rest Bar, and five years ago it was struggling. Their main selling point, a diorama model railway people could watch as they ate steaming bowls of ramen, wasn't bringing in people like it used to and the owners weren't sure what to do. Then, they adopted a stray cat family. As cats do, the new family decided the model trains were there for their amusement and the café's owner, Naiko, uploaded pictures of them playing with the engines to the restaurant's Instagram page.

Not surprisingly, in a country that made Godzilla an honorary citizen of Tokyo, the sight of 'giant' cats wandering through a backdrop of tiny trees and miniature houses, occasionally batting the odd train into oblivion, became a huge hit on social media (76k followers and counting)

and now, Tetsudoken is so popular you have to book a seat to visit the café. (To make a reservation in English message them via their twitter feed at @official86839977).

To say thank you, the café has now turned into a fully-fledged cat rescue and rehoming centre, with proceeds from the café funding their mission.

TASHIROJIMA, SENDAI

The aforementioned destinations can easily be included in a normal tourist trip to Japan, which commonly takes in Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka, however true feline fanciers might want to go out of their way and visit one of Japan's cat islands where the cat populations equal – if not outnumber – that of people.

If you're travelling south, visit Ainoshima, a short train and ferry ride from Hakata in Fukuoka. Here you'll

A stray cat family transformed the Tetsudokan Café into a social media hit



PHOTOS: HELEN FOSTER

find around 230 cats – and 280 residents – living happily side-by-side in a small fishing port. Or, from Tokyo, take the 90-minute bullet train north to Sendai where a 90-minute train and ferry ride away will take you to the cat-filled island of Tashirojima.



Cats on the island of Tashirojima now outnumber humans

Cats were originally brought to Tashirojima to protect silkworms used by textile workers on the island, but fisherman also used them to predict their catch, one Tashirojima local told me. “They would look at the cats’ eyes and if they felt they looked bigger than normal, it was a sign that the catch was going to be good.”

The ancestors of those fortune-telling cats now outnumber human residents around two to one. You’ll find cats lounging all over the island, but the peak kitty-spotting point is the verandah of the café Tashirojima Nyanko Kyowakoko Shimanoeki in the middle of the island. Staff here feed the cats at noon and it seems that half the population arrive for snacks.

If travelling to Tashirojima, be aware that the crossing can be choppy, and check the twitter feed of the Ajishima line (@ajishimaline) before you set off to ensure the waves aren’t too high for them to land at the island.

CAT-THEMED FUN, JAPAN

The ideas I’ve outlined in this story are only a few of the cat-themed things you can do in Japan. There is so much more for feline fanatics to discover.

You’ll also find cat-shaped toast in fashionable Takeshita Street in Harajuku. Towns such as Tokoname, near Nagoya, are filled with cat art. And a museum near Hiroshima was put on the map by two intrepid cats trying to out-smart the security guard and sneak inside each day.

You can even ride a pink and white high-speed bullet train themed around Hello Kitty, the cute cartoon cat with a bow.

No wonder there’s a term for how much money *neko* (cats) bring to the Japanese economy – *nekonomics*. Which begs the question, how much might your trip to Japan contribute to the nekonomy? **R**



BONUS READ



VISION QUEST

This family is travelling the world — before the kids lose their vision to a rare genetic condition

BY Lisa Fitterman



The Pelletier children (pictured in Damaraland, Namibia) travelled to 13 countries over the course of a year

HIS

mouth open in both wonder and horror, Laurent Pelletier stares at the carnivorous armoured bush cricket that has landed in front of him on the picnic table. The boy is camping with his family near Fish River Canyon in Namibia, in southwest Africa. The insect, yellow and light green, has a collar of spikes and six spindly legs planted in a boxer's stance. It's as big as the five year old's hand.

"Can we eat it?" he asks his mother, Edith Lemay.

"I don't think so," she says, laughing.

"Can I take it as a travel companion?"

"No, but you'll meet many more."

And Laurent did, over and over again during the first few months of a year-long trip through Africa, Asia and the Middle East with his parents and three older siblings, Mia, 12, Léo, 10, and Colin, 7. Bush crickets, ground crickets, baby crickets, crickets whose chirping lulled them to sleep at night; they became talismans, part of a panoply of encounters during which the kids experienced the world in technicolour and surround sound. Imprinting memories by horseback riding across the bright green steppes of Mongolia, kayaking on the azure sea off Cambodia, camping under the soaring brick-red

peaks of Namibia, and hot-air ballooning over the brown, lunar-like landscape in Turkiye.

Far from their home in Quebec, Canada, the children's experiences, steeped in colour, shape, touch and smell, are especially important to them. Because unless science makes a breakthrough soon, three of the four siblings – Mia, Colin and Laurent – will become blind, likely in adulthood. They have been diagnosed with a disease that has no effective treatment as it gradually robs them of their sight.

FOR THE CHILDREN'S PARENTS, Edith Lemay and Sébastien Pelletier, the diagnoses came after a four-year search for the reason their eldest child couldn't see at night. Then a toddler, Mia banged into furniture that her parents could make out once their eyes adjusted to the dark.

In 2013, when Mia was three, the family began a frustrating series of visits to doctors, none of whom had an answer for her lack of night vision. In 2015, as a last resort, a paediatric ophthalmologist enrolled the family in a research project in which their entire genome was mapped out. After two interminable years, the mapping was completed.

The family was called into the ophthalmologist's office, where the specialist gave it to them straight. "It's retinitis pigmentosa, a mutation called PDE6B," they were told. The

gene was inherited from both Edith and Sébastien, neither of whom knew they were carriers.

RP, as it is known, is a catch-all term for a group of about 50 inherited genetic mutations that affect the retina, tissue at the back of the eye that interprets images in both black and white and colour. The cells at its edges, called rods, crucial for peripheral and night vision, die first. As the disease progresses, the cells in the middle, called cones, used for seeing in colour and for everyday activities

like reading, writing and driving, die off, too.

“Right now,” the doctor continued, “there is no cure.”

Awash with emotion, Edith stood up, excused herself and walked to the nearest bathroom, where she locked herself in a stall. I can’t cry in front of Mia, she told herself. She wouldn’t understand. There, alone, she cried gasping, heaving sobs.

After a few minutes, Edith splashed cold water on her face before returning to the ophthalmologist’s office,

Sébastien and Edith with Mia and their sons Laurent (far left), Colin and Léo in Walvis Bay, Namibia



where her husband and daughter were waiting, and they talked about next steps.

While it was tempting to seek a second opinion, Edith and Sébastien knew that genetic mapping did not lie: the results were definitive, irreversible and life changing. Soon tests would show that Colin, at the time an infant, and Laurent, yet to be born, had PDE6B, too. Only Léo, the couple's second eldest, didn't have the mutation.

"Everything we hope for our children, for their future, for what they could become, has to change," Edith said as she and her husband embraced one evening, in tears. "How will they cope?" They vacillated over explaining to Mia what her condition meant. Should they let her be a kid, innocent and unaware, for as long as possible?

A few weeks later, it just came out, part of a conversation about disabilities in general while having lunch at their kitchen table. "You know the problem with your eyes?" Edith asked Mia. "You're probably going to be blind when you're an adult." The revelation was more abrupt than Edith had hoped, but at least it was done. Edith held her breath as she waited for Mia to respond.

"Oh, that's not fun," the seven year old said before changing the subject.

Later that week, Mia approached her, saying she needed to keep her bedroom especially clean from then on. "In the future, I'll need to know where things are," Mia explained.

Edith and Sébastien watched as their daughter continued, unprompted, to feel her way around the house with her eyes closed to see what it was like to navigate without sight, up the stairs and down, through the kitchen, living room and basement, memorising shapes with her fingertips. "She is finding solutions on her own," they told each other. "We need to follow her lead."

And so the idea of a year-long trip

BEING BLIND DIDN'T MEAN THE END OF THE WORLD. RATHER, THE WORLD WOULD BE DIFFERENT



was born, one that would show the kids the world, not through two-dimensional picture books and lectures in a classroom, but in person and close-up, from windswept vistas to waterfalls and warthogs. A trip that would show life in all its grandeur and gritty detail - while the kids could still see it.

When Edith and Sébastien first broached the idea in March 2020, the kids didn't understand. A whole year away from school, their grandparents and friends? "It was hard to imagine," says Léo. "I didn't think it was real."

For the next two years, Edith and Sébastien continued to work - she

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READER'S DIGEST

in health logistics and he for a financial start-up. They saved money, researched places to visit and asked their children what they wanted to do on their big trip. Mia wanted to ride a horse. Colin wanted to sleep overnight on a train. Laurent thought it would be fun to drink juice while riding a camel. Léo wanted to tour Pokémon attractions in Japan.

In early 2022, they were ready. Edith and Sébastien quit their jobs, rented out their home for the next year and gathered textbooks so the kids could study French and mathematics a few times a week. The rest of the time, they'd be learning from the world around them – the best teacher of all. Travelling with four children wouldn't be cheap, but they'd save money by camping, staying in hostels, guest houses and even a Mongolian yurt made from goatskins.

On Monday, March 21, they flew out of Montreal, with no set itinerary save for a meandering initial trip from the southwest coast of Africa to the east, through Namibia, Botswana and Tanzania. Once there, they would make plans on the fly. "How we adults see the world and how kids see the world is so different, and we had to respect that," says Edith. "That was clear from the start. It would have to be less about temples and museums and more about whatever caught their eye."

Over the months, that world constantly unveiled itself, sometimes



in a cacophony, sometimes in a whisper. There was the shouting of hawkers selling bananas at each stop of a 24-hour train ride through Tanzania. And then the near-cathedral silence of Namibia's Deadvlei. Once a marsh, it's now bone-dry, with sand dunes rising 400 metres and trees that are black skeletons against a cloudless sky. They played patty cake with uniformed schoolchildren in Botswana, and while in Tanzania they danced with



Maasai tribesmen and stayed on a banana farm. In Borneo, they went parasailing over the South China Sea. In Thailand, Mia touched an elephant, calling out in surprise at how rough it felt. In northern Cambodia, Colin, who had always been more withdrawn than his siblings, dressed like a miniature pirate and brandished the wooden sword a guide had carved for him on the spot from a piece of mahogany they'd found while hiking.

Each day, Edith and Sébastien watched their kids change, physically and emotionally. Mia grew taller and, on the cusp of adolescence, needed more independence. Both Léo and Colin became more confident and outgoing, unafraid to engage with

Clockwise from top left: In Turkiye, an Istanbul mosque; Léo in Cappadocia. In Indonesia, Mia and Laurent in Sulawesi; the rice fields of Flores Island. In Mongolia, the Orkhon River; meeting an eagle



Clockwise from top left: peeling cocoa grains in Indonesia; Laurent in a temple in Laos; Léo in a flower market in Bangkok

strangers, kick around a football with locals and try new food – such as red ants in Laos gathered from under a tree. “They taste like lemons,” the kids chorused.

The family itself grew more tight-knit and protective of each other, which helped when they faced situations that were difficult to explain. One example came when they drove past villages in Cambodia that were the sites of massacres, the ‘killing fields’ during the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s. Their guide told of how he was abandoned as an infant in the nearby

forest, likely hidden by his parents to protect him. Edith and Sébastien held their children close, to make them feel safe.

Other times, the goal was pure fun and adventure, like when the family went up in a hot-air balloon on July 1, in celebration of Laurent’s fifth birthday. Or the visit in January to the Tad Fane waterfall in Laos, when the family ziplined across a gorge.

Rarely did they talk about why they were abroad in the first place, with one exception: while travelling along through Mongolia, Laurent, who had seemed unaware of what was to

come, asked: “What does it mean to be blind? How will I cross the street? Will I be able to drive a car?”

“It’s like when you have your eyes closed,” Edith said. “It won’t happen overnight, but slowly, over years.” Being blind, she continued, didn’t mean the end of the world. Rather, the world would be different. Nothing would prevent them from doing most things, including skiing, swimming or even becoming scientists who worked on cures for their condition. Laurent nodded, then went back to making up his own games to pass the time.

By the time the trip began to wind down early this year, the family had travelled 83,700 kilometres and visited 13 countries. The kids reflected on what they had learned about the world and themselves. “There’s a lot of suffering and poverty, but lots of good and interesting things, too,” says Colin. “Kids are kids everywhere, just like us, but with their own customs and traditions.”

Léo’s take was a bit less philosophical. “I am not fond of durian,” he says, wrinkling his nose in distaste at the thought of the spiky fruit with a pungent smell he tasted in Indonesia. But that hasn’t stopped him from wanting to travel more.

Mia nods her head. “This has been a magic year we’ll remember for the rest of our lives.”

RETINITIS PIGMENTOSA, which affects between one in 3000-4000

people globally, was once considered untreatable. But over the past 20 years, science has seen considerable breakthroughs.

While there is not yet a cure for PDE6B, the mutation the Pelletier kids have, genetic research has resulted in the development of a successful treatment to reverse the effects of another mutation, RPE65. This has given science a clear road map for developing treatments for other forms of RP.

EDITH AND SÉBASTIEN WANT THEIR KIDS TO LEAD FULL LIVES, WHETHER THEY’RE BLIND OR NOT

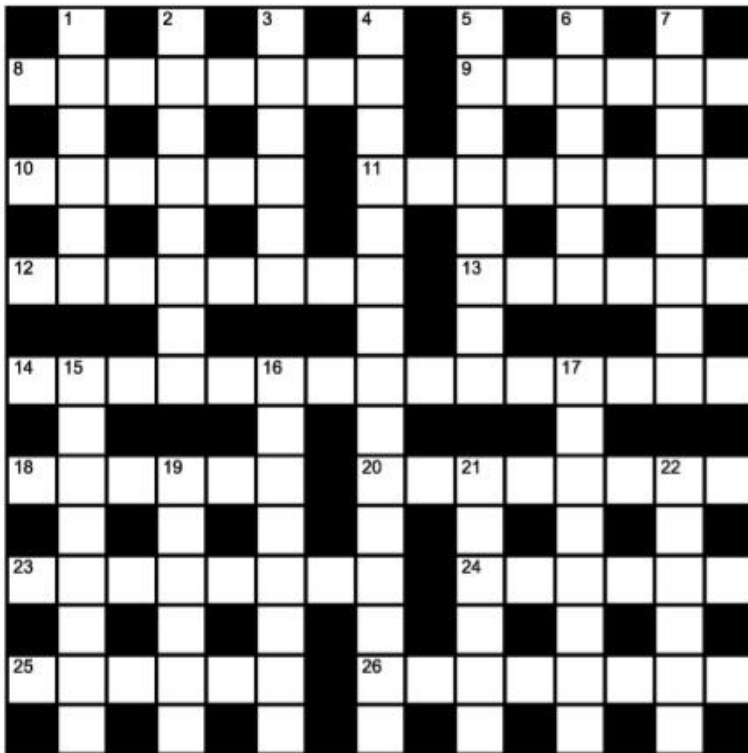


Until then, science has managed to temporarily slow the progress of RP in many cases by injecting antioxidants such as vitamin A and omega-3 fatty acids. Edith and Sébastien know there is some hope but they downplay the possibility because they want their kids to lead full lives, whether they’re blind or not.

The trip has reinforced what Mia showed them all those years ago when she wandered the house with her eyes shut. They will find their way. “Today, my vision is good and I’m going to make the most of it,” says Mia. **R**

PUZZLES

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles and mind stretchers, then check your answers on page 110.



Crossword

Test your general knowledge.

DOWN

ACROSS

- 8** Smallest state down under (8)
- 9** You can't get out this way (2,4)
- 10** Sultanate in Borneo (6)
- 11** Kind of ale (3,5)
- 12** Switch positions (2,3,3)
- 13** Americans who conduct military operations at sea (1,1,4)
- 14** Broad appeal (7,8)
- 18** Knight cap? (6)
- 20** Went south (3,5)
- 23** Fallen angel (3,5)
- 24** North German city on the river Weser (6)
- 25** They are acquired on marriage (2-4)
- 26** Author of 18th century play *The Rivals* (8)

- 1** Sterile (6)
- 2** Lofty place (8)
- 3** Dark blue powder (6)
- 4** An enlarger (10,5)
- 5** To coach (8)
- 6** Impulse transmitter (6)
- 7** Delivery professionals (8)
- 15** Type of seal (8)
- 16** Efforts to change society (8)
- 17** Former name of Zimbabwe (8)
- 19** Dividing line in a triangle (6)
- 21** Turn these to gain an advantage (6)
- 22** Oscillate (3-3)

Puzzle Answers

PAGES 110

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

Sudoku

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

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

IF YOU SOLVE IT WITHIN:

15 minutes, you're a true expert

30 minutes, you're no slouch

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

BRAIN POWER
brought to you by



"Write, Erase, Rewrite"

FAMILY FUN

**Puzzle
Answers**
PAGE 110

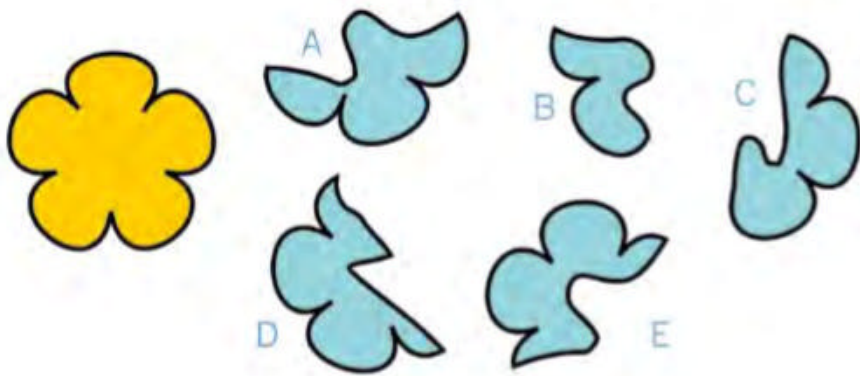
Spot The Difference

There are 13 differences. Can you find them?



Fitting Shapes

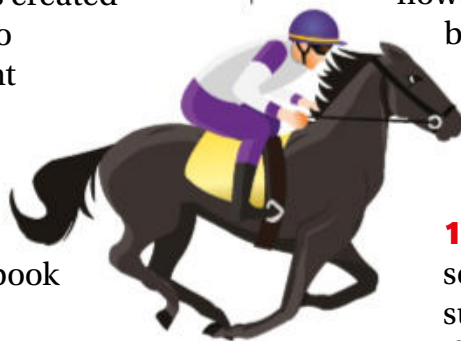
Which are the only two pieces that will fit together perfectly to form a blue flower identical to this yellow flower? Pieces may be rotated, but not flipped over.



TRIVIA

Test Your General Knowledge

- 1.** Which soccer team suffered the worst loss in World Cup history in 2001 by losing 31-0? **1 point**
- 2.** What fruit was Mark Twain referring to when he wrote, "When one has tasted it, he knows what the angels eat"? **2 points**
- 3.** What country pioneered the first F1 night race? **1 point**
- 4.** Who was the first person to be awarded two Nobel Prizes? **1 point**
- 5.** William Moulton Marston, an early polygraph developer, wrote stories about what fictional superhero and her 'Lasso of Truth'? **1 point**
- 6.** At 21 metres, the world's tallest sandcastle was created in Denmark in 2021 to symbolise what recent global event? **2 points**
- 7.** In what country can certain prisoners shave time off their sentences by writing book reviews? **2 points**
- 8.** Which country recently changed its traditional age-counting custom to the international standard, making the entire population one or two years younger? **1 point**
- 9.** What is the outdoor game from Finland that involves throwing logs to knock down blocks of wood in a race to reach 50 points? **1 point**
- 10.** What country designated the yellowfin tuna as its national animal? **2 points**
- 11.** What US city held an official ceremony, complete with eulogies, when it removed one of the last public pay phones from its streets in 2022? **1 point**
- 12.** What do evening primrose flowers do upon hearing bees buzz? **2 points**
- 13.** On which planet in our solar system does summer last 21 years? **1 point**
- 14.** What modern science began with surveys conducted by the Marquis of Pombal after an earthquake destroyed Lisbon in 1755? **1 point**
- 15.** What state in Australia has an annual public holiday dedicated to a horse race? **1 point**



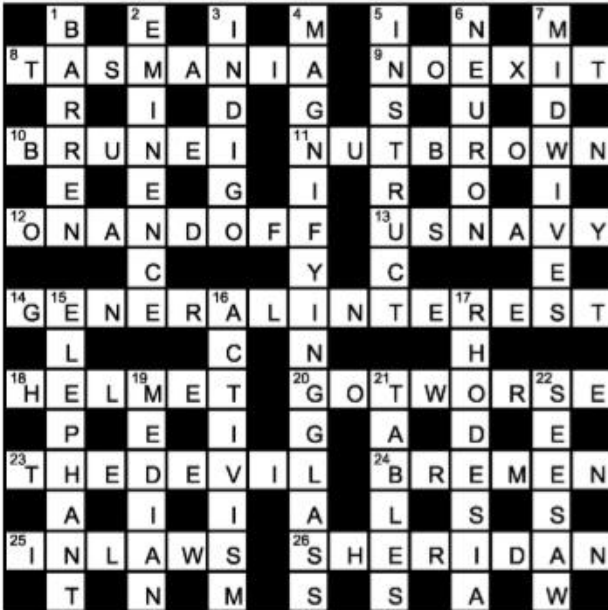
16-20 Gold medal **11-15** Silver medal **6-10** Bronze medal **0-5** Wooden spoon

ANSWERS: 1. American Samoa, they played against Australia. 2. Watermelon. 3. Singapore. 4. Marie Curie. 5. Wonder Woman. 6. COVID-19 pandemic. 7. Brazil. 8. South Korea. 9. Finska. 10. Maldives. 11. New York. 12. Sweeten their nectar. 13. Uranus. 14. Seismology. 15. Victoria.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

From Page 106

Crossword



Sudoku

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

Spot The Difference



Fitting Shapes

Which are the only two pieces that will fit together perfectly to form a blue flower identical to this yellow flower? Pieces may be rotated, but not flipped over.

 A and E





WORD POWER

Let's Head Outside

And camp out virtually with this quiz

BY *Rob Lutes*

- 1. gazebo** – A: shelter with a roof and open sides. B: campsite with full amenities. C: inflatable mattress.
- 2. tinder** – A: rainwater. B: dry, flammable material used for lighting a fire. C: straw used as bedding.
- 3. boondocking** – A: travelling by raft. B: parking a recreational vehicle in a remote area. C: foraging.
- 4. magnetic north** – A: direction in which a compass needle points. B: appeal of winter camping. C: Arctic camping region.
- 5. billy** – A: canteen. B: knife. C: cooking pot.
- 6. potable** – A: suitable for drinking. B: lightweight. C: edible.
- 7. altimeter** – A: GPS. B: instrument that measures elevation using barometric pressure. C: tool for determining flatness of ground.
- 8. bivouac** – A: temporary camp under little or no shelter. B: large cave. C: dish baked over open fire.
- 9. lean-to** – A: simple shelter with a roof sloping in one direction. B: campfire. C: technique used to sleep against a tree.
- 10. leave no trace** – principle of: A: not informing others where you are camping. B: leaving nature unchanged by one's presence. C: camping without gear.
- 11. glamping** – A: camping with celebrities. B: outdoor camping with the comforts of home. C: camping in famous locations.
- 12. blaze** – A: group camping trip. B: portable stove. C: trail marker, such as a painted symbol on a tree.
- 13. mummy bag** – sleeping bag that is: A: tapered at the feet and enclosed around the head. B: wider to accommodate a parent and a child. C: made from rings of fabric.
- 14. haversack** – A: pullover with pockets for hiking. B: animal-proof food-storage device. C: bag carried on the back or over the shoulder.
- 15. bushwhack** – A: clear a path while hiking. B: create a disturbance to scare wildlife. C: cut firewood.

Answers

1. gazebo – A: shelter with a roof and open sides. Gina waited out the downpour under the gazebo.

2. tinder – B: dry, flammable material used for lighting a fire. Nathan gathered dry grass for tinder.

3. boondocking – B: parking a recreational vehicle in a remote area. Ken and Barbie avoided the campground fees by boondocking.

4. magnetic north – A: direction in which a compass needle points. Clem knew the compass indicated magnetic north, not the north pole.

5. billy – C: cooking pot. Carol poured soup into the billy and suspended it over the coals.

6. potable – A: suitable for drinking. Shauna hoped that the remote cabin had running potable water.

7. altimeter – B: instrument that measures elevation using barometric pressure. Lenny's altimeter specified that he was 3500 metres above sea level.

8. bivouac – A: temporary camp under little or no shelter. Mark used a trench in the snow as his bivouac.

9. lean-to – A: simple shelter with a roof sloping in one direction. Aunt Lynn built a lean-to to keep the firewood dry.

10. leave no trace – B: principle of leaving nature unchanged by one's presence. A believer in 'leave no trace', Derek was careful to always stay on established hiking trails.

11. glamping – B: outdoor camping with the comforts of home. When Bonnie pulled out her solar shower bag, Gail realised they were glamping.

12. blaze – C: trail marker, such as a painted symbol on a tree. Stella was relieved to see a blaze on a nearby trunk.

13. mummy bag – A: sleeping bag that is tapered at the feet and enclosed around the head. Brendan loved the cocooning effect of his mummy bag.

14. haversack – C: bag carried on the back or over the shoulder. Alyssa tossed sandwiches in her haversack before hitting the trail.

15. bushwhack – A: clear a path while hiking. Fran used a machete to bushwhack up the mountainside.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

5–9: Fair

10–12: Good

13–15: Word Power Wizard



What's Behind **THE NAME?**

Dependable brands understand the vital role they play – and work tirelessly to protect the trust customers have in their products and services



What's Behind **THE NAME?**

Reliable brands work hard to exceed their customers' expectations

FOR BRANDS EVERYWHERE, having consumer trust means that they are successfully connecting with customers. That's because customer trust is an asset of measurable value. Trust has always been important in brand marketing, but it has become increasingly crucial in the digital age. With social media and online reviews, consumers have more access to information about brands than ever before – and even more

capacity to voice their views, good and bad, about a brand's performance.

According to Adobe's Future of Marketing 2021 research, customer trust is rewarded by more sales, loyalty and positive recommendations. But, the study also revealed that brands need to be particularly careful with how they use their customer's data.

This reality is well documented. If a consumer doesn't trust a brand – or they betray trust through controversy

or disappointment – they are very unlikely to purchase that brand, ever. Some 81 per cent of consumers responding to an Edelman survey said trust is a deal-breaker when it comes to buying from a brand.

However, brands that have their customers' trust enjoy repeat customers, receive positive reviews, and benefit from word-of-mouth marketing. Brands that are able to build and maintain trust with their customers are more likely to succeed in the long run.

Consumers are increasingly wary of marketing tactics that aren't genuine, or are believed to take liberties with the amount of private information they share. The global economy is characterised by sudden and extreme fluctuations and in this climate – just as we've witnessed increased consumer scams and corporate breaches in data privacy – we've also seen the role of social media influencers decline.

Now, once again, user-generated content shared by customers with genuine experience of a brand's products and services has far greater success of drawing a customer's attention than a paid social media influencer does. Customers who are intent on getting the best value for their dollar don't 'buy' into the social media influencers' objectives – which can amount to paid comment. Instead, customers value



USER-GENERATED CONTENT IS POWERFUL IN BUILDING BRAND TRUST

the judgement of other customers, who share their proven and reliable experience of a brand. These personalised customer-generated user recommendations remain powerful in the task of building trust.

Customers who trust a product – and the company behind the product – become repeat buyers, and this loyalty can span years, generations, and even lifetimes.

Congratulations to all the brands and companies that enjoy this level of success in the market. They are valued members of the economy.

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AS A COMPANY FOUNDED ON science, USANA has invested heavily into both research & development and product innovation to ensure it remains a leader in the vitamin and supplement industry. As well as its stringent, world-class pharmaceutical manufacturing processes, extensive research goes into every single USANA formula, giving it high bioavailability and guaranteeing the product's potency.

USANA products have been trusted by professional and Olympic athletes for 30+ years. Since the pandemic, the company has seen substantial growth because consumers are placing a higher priority on supplementation to support their long-term health goals.

In the past year, USANA has

invested in its IT and digital tools to make the shopping experience and enrolling process more user friendly for customers. The company has also invested in expanding the business to grow USANA's footprint around the world and emerge in new and exciting markets.

DR. MYRON WENTZ, USANA'S founder and chairman, is an internationally recognised microbiologist, immunologist and pioneer in the development of human cell culture technology and infectious disease diagnoses. When naming USANA, which means 'true health', Dr. Wentz turned to classical languages, combining the Greek word *eu* for 'true' and the Latin word *sana* for 'health'.

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MAINTAINING A THRIVING BRAND

requires a dynamic approach that resonates with both existing and new customers. Through a multifaceted approach that includes pushing the boundaries of technological advancement while delivering unparalleled elegance and utility to customers, Panasonic aligns with the evolving consumer landscape. Panasonic's unwavering commitment to societal wellbeing and environmental responsibility also ensures it stays relevant, familiar and front-of-mind with customers.

Over the past year, Panasonic's strategic investments have played a pivotal role in elevating and enriching the brand, and positioning it at the forefront of innovation and sophistication. Industry-first breakthrough product-offerings included the convenient Bottom Freezer Refrigerator, the elegant Glass Door Refrigerator, and the energy-efficient DC Inverter



Refrigerator, as well as the industry's first Front Loading Washer with Heater Drying function up to 1kg (Hybrid Dry Lite). By incorporating Panasonic's patented 'nanoe X' technology into products such as air conditioners, air purifiers, hair dryers and refrigerators, Panasonic also provided customers with advanced solutions

for a healthier and cleaner lifestyle.

Beyond its innovative products, Panasonic also invested in enhancing touchpoints to create meaningful interactions with customers. The brand established showrooms and Beauty Displays in prominent locations, while shopfront investments featuring the Prime+ Edition Display Racks and the Care+ Edition Display Racks serve as immersive showcases of its cutting-edge products and invites customers into the world of Panasonic innovation.

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Panasonic

Panasonic

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JC ORGANIC BARLEY

The healing power of natural and organic

THE DEMANDS OF MODERN LIFE often leave us drained, stressed and vulnerable to various health issues. However amidst the chaos, there is a natural remedy that promises to restore balance and vitality to our lives – Organic Barley Grass.



Cultivated in the pristine pastures of New Zealand, this remarkable superfood holds the key to a healthier and more fulfilling lifestyle. One brand that stands out in providing top-quality Organic Barley Grass products is JC Organic Barley.

Barley Grass has been celebrated for its incredible healing properties, and testimonies from individuals across various health conditions further validate its effectiveness.

Selina Alas, who battled against a rare form of cancer, found solace in incorporating JC Organic Barley into her daily routine. "I added this green juice, and I saw the effects. There was evidence and proof in my blood works," she shared. Her HCG levels eventually dropped to a normal range after seven cycles and

supplementing with this green juice, and now she's cancer-free!

Lilia Birayon, 40, who struggled with hypertension, found relief through the consumption of JC Organic Barley Grass. Her triglycerides dropped from 310 to 125 after a month of

incorporating organic barley juice into her daily food intake.

Juan Miguel Delmacio, 21, experienced low platelet count due to dengue fever, but after taking this barley grass for almost a week in the hospital, his platelet count normalized from 24 to 120.

An internationally trusted brand, JC Organic Barley offers a range of products, a refreshing leaf juice drink and convenient capsules. This superfood not only replenishes our bodies with vital nutrients but also helps us reclaim our balance, vitality, and zest for life.

● Visit www.jcpremiere.com

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JC ORGANIC BARLEY



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MAHALAGANG PAALALA: ANG JC ORGANIC BARLEY AY HINDI GAMOT AT HINDI DAPAT GAMITING PANGGAMOT SA ANUMANG URI NG SAKIT.

ASC Ref No.: J0117N032123J

SUNWAY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Prioritising student development in a rapidly evolving global and digital environment



SUNWAY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS (SIS) offer a wide range of quality educational pathways that embrace the different interests and needs of students from kindergarten to pre-university.

SIS places students at the centre of everything they do to prioritise their development and success in a rapidly evolving global and digital space. By providing quality, holistic, international education, the schools' students are empowered to become creative, collaborative, intellectually critical and socially responsible global citizens.

SIS offer three globally recognised school curricula – Canada's

Ontario School Curriculum; Cambridge international programmes; and International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes – and the group is one of only a few private educational facilities in Malaysia to be given a 5-Star rating by the Ministry of Education. SIS have also received numerous accolades, including winning the Malaysian-Canadian Business Council (MCBC) Award for Education twice, and the Reader's Digest Trusted Brand Gold Award seven times.

To understand priorities and remain relevant, SIS engage with parents and school communities. In Malaysia, the origins of SIS's brand include Sunway Education Group (SEG) and The Jeffrey Cheah Foundation (JCF). SEG is home to 18 institutions of Sunway University and Sunway College, which are already household names. All SEG institutions are owned and governed by JCF, Malaysia's largest education focused social enterprise.



● Visit www.sunwayschools.edu.my

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21st CENTURY HEALTHCARE

Bringing quality health supplements to Singapore and Malaysia direct from the manufacturer

MANY PEOPLE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR HELP TO BOOST their general immunity, as well as to manage their health, weight and digestion, post pandemic. Among these aids are 21st Century Healthcare's comprehensive range of probiotics capsules. These high-quality dietary supplements can help to colonise the human gut with 'good' microorganisms to support body health and maintain the health of the digestive system.

Since launching onto the Singapore and Malaysian markets 30-plus years ago, the brand has had its eyes firmly fixed on the future. Indeed, 21st Century's founder's vision proved wise as the dawn of the new century witnessed rapid scientific innovation globally, as well as increased consumer interest in the benefits of dietary and nutritional supplements.

Today 21st Century Healthcare is one of the largest international manufacturers of health supplement products. The company has achieved this strong international position by employing advanced preservation techniques in the manufacture of its live probiotics. With advanced

formulation and packaging technology, these probiotics are protected from external heat and moisture, without the need for storage in the fridge. Plus, all 21st Century products are shipped directly from the USA state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities to Singapore and Malaysia, ensuring customers receive only the highest quality and freshest product at affordable prices. For these reasons, 21st Century customers have long known that they can trust the quality and efficacy of the extensive range of digestive, weight management, immunity booster and wellness range.

"21st Century Healthcare is honoured to have won the Reader's Digest Trusted Brand Gold Award for Health Supplements for Malaysia and Singapore this year – one of the most highly regarded accolades in the industry – and we are humbled and grateful that consumers recognised us to be among Malaysia and Singapore's leading companies in the health and wellness industry," said Director of 21st Century Healthcare, Karen Venetia Marsh.

- **Malaysia:**
www.21stcentury.com.my
- **Singapore:**
www.21stcentury.sg





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GLENEAGLES HOSPITAL

As a leading private hospital, Gleneagles Kuala Lumpur's medical professionals take exemplary care of patients from Malaysia and the Southeast Asian region



Founded in 1996, Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur (GKL) has become one of the leading private hospitals in the capital. As part of IHH Healthcare, GKL has grown into a highly respected and reputable healthcare service provider in Malaysia and the Southeast Asian region, providing professional healthcare to both local and international patients.

GKL provides a wide and diverse range of medical specialties and procedures – from urology, cardiology and paediatrics to adult flu and pneumococcal vaccinations and fitness testing.

To keep pace with medical

research and breakthroughs, GKL constantly upgrades its facilities and invests in cutting-edge technology. Today, GKL is home to some of the most advanced medical technologies and procedures available, such as **Gamma Knife Radiosurgery** – a minimally invasive way of treating brain tumours, vascular malformations and functional disorder – and **Da**

Vinci Si Surgical System – a surgical platform powered by robotic technology and designed to enable complex surgery.

With a vision to becoming the world's most trusted healthcare provider, GKL's committed team of highly qualified and experienced medical professionals, consultants and nurses take exemplary care of patients, and continuously raise the bar in clinical, operational and service excellence.

● gleneagles.com.my/kuala-lumpur



A TRUSTED NAME IN HEALTHCARE

Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur has delivered exceptional patient care since 1996. A part of IHH Healthcare and one of the leading private hospitals in Kuala Lumpur, Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur is highly respected for its excellent clinical outcomes and is a reputable healthcare service provider. Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur has encompassed 40 clinical specialties.

BREAST SURGERY

Our Breast Surgeons work within a Multidisciplinary Breast Cancer Team and are also equipped with the capabilities and in-depth knowledge to treat patients with breast-related diseases. Each case will receive a multidisciplinary review of any breast concerns, who will agree on a plan of action for the patient to ensure the best possible outcome.

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Gleneagles Hospital

KUALA LUMPUR

On your side

CUSTOMER WORD-OF-MOUTH IS POWERFUL

The power of authentic brand experience

90% of people said they'd purchased a product after being influenced by friends or family.

82% of people were more likely to purchase a brand's products or services if genuine customer-generated reviews and comments appeared in their marketing campaigns.



Social media influencers? – No thanks



51% of people admitted they scroll right past influencer posts.

81% of people say a brand's use of influencers has either no impact or a negative impact on their view of a brand.

90% of people prefer to see brands share content from actual customers.

86% of people are more likely to trust a brand that publishes user-generated content as opposed to influencers.

Just 12% of people would purchase a product if promoted by an influencer.

Source: State of User Generated Content Survey by EnTribe (www.entribe.com/resource/the-state-of-ugc-2023) <https://www.entribe.com/news/new-entribe-survey-reveals-user-generated-content-impacts-consumer-purchases-more-than-social-media-influencers>



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Lee Zi Jia
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Source: Omdia. Unit shipments, 2013-2022. Results are not an endorsement of LG Electronics.
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W29

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