

NOVEMBER 2023

Reader's Digest

**GOOD
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SAVES COP**
EVERYDAY
HEROES

DEADLY FLOOD. PARACHUTE FAIL. SNOWNADO.

I SURVIVED!

A DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

**HOW TO GET
ALONG WITH
ANYONE**

AN RD ORIGINAL

**MY BEST
MISTAKE**

By RD READERS

**The Surprise
in the Mailbox**

From THE WASHINGTON POST

**LIFE ADVICE FROM
1,000 STRANGERS**

By TOM HALLMAN JR.

**DEMENTIA
BREAKTHROUGHS**

By VANESSA MILNE



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Reader's Digest

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Flipping Out

BREAKFAST IS SAVED. A few months ago, I wrote here about how my poor pancake-making skills have doomed me to a life of eating the burned and broken ones my kids won't touch. I was thrilled by the number of you who sent me tips, recipes and encouragement. Here are a few of my favorites:

"Don't flip the pancake till there are 21 holes in the pancake." —SUSIE REBECK, *Helena, Montana*

"For perfect pancakes, try the 'sneak a peek' technique: Use a spatula to lift the pancake a little, sneak a peek and continue." —ANDY ROULEAU, *Graniteville, Vermont*

Many of you had delicious advice on what to add to the pancake batter, including fruit, sparkling water and even bacon flavoring.

"I used to add vanilla to the pancake batter until I found a maple bacon extract ... Oh, yum!" —JEANNINE KLEC-ZEWSKI, *Rockford, Illinois*

"Replace the water in the recipe with strawberry-flavored sparkling water. It adds just enough flavor to enhance your



Testing out your pancake tips

pancakes, and it helps make them light and fluffy. Top them with freshly sliced strawberries and a dusting of powdered sugar, and you will be father of the year." —ROBERT JONES, *Kentwood, Michigan*

I'm also happy we can agree that pancakes bring people together.

"I love waffles and the togetherness that pancakes and waffles bring families, so I always buy new brides a waffle iron, mixes and real maple syrup as an additional wedding gift." —JOAN RIDLER, *Langhorne, Pennsylvania*

I've already started putting these tips to the test. If none of this works, at least I'm not alone.

"I'm with you. I make a big hot mess, especially trying to flip them over. Luckily my son will take over." —CATHY CHARETTE, *Meriden, Connecticut*

If everything else fails, I can always try that.

Jason Buhmester,
CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

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MAKING MEMORIES

15 ways to have fun
with your grandkids

This moment could be cut short by
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St. Jude patient **Luna**
pictured with her dad



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World of
GOOD
REASONS TO SMILE

Look Down!

JAPAN IS HOME to iconic landmarks such as the ancient temples of Kyoto and the neon-lit skyscrapers of Tokyo. But what's underfoot also wows: Since the 1980s, Japan has taken a creative approach to beautifying its manhole covers. Roughly 6,000 of these metal plates also serve as canvases depicting cultural symbols and events and the regions in which they're found. British-Australian photographer Remo Camerota, who documented them for his book *Drainspotting*, says, "Finding them is the best part. It feels like a treasure hunt." **R**





Lending a Well-Trained Hand

*A martial artist who has a troubled history
with cops stops to save one*

BY *Eric Raskin*

WHEN MARK ANTHONY Gonzales saw a police officer in need of assistance, every element of the moral code instilled in him through his Brazilian jiu-jitsu training—morality, courage, benevolence—told him to stop his car and lend a hand. Even though he was out on bond following an arrest three months earlier for possession of a firearm, a charge that he had disputed and that would later be dropped. Even though he was on his way to work and had his wife, Rachel Ortiz, his four kids, ages 6 and under, and three other extended family members in the car. He saw an officer struggling with a

suspect and knew what he had to do.

As Gonzales was driving to open up the martial arts gym where he trains and volunteers, he saw what looked like a police pursuit. A balding man of medium build, dressed in camouflage shorts, a black T-shirt and work boots, was running from a police officer at an intersection in San Antonio, Texas. Gonzales slowed down. So did the man being chased—to avoid running into Gonzales's minivan. That hesitation allowed the muscular officer to catch up and take the suspect to the ground.

Gonzales, now 37, quickly realized that the officer did not have control



Mark Anthony
Gonzales's
training came
in handy while
defending a
police officer.

of the situation. "The officer was straddling him and the suspect was, what we call in the gym, rocking the boat—rocking him back and forth," he recalled. The man appeared a threat, about to tip the police officer over and assume a position of control.

"That was my cue," Gonzales said.

Gonzales put his vehicle in park and jumped out, as did Ortiz, her phone trained on the two men on the ground. The first thing Gonzales did was identify himself and spell out his intention to make it two-on-one in Officer Nathaniel Linville's favor

THE SUSPECT QUICKLY REACHED AND GOT HIS RIGHT HAND ON THE GUN.



and not the other way around. Then, with the man on his back and Linville struggling to control the man's upper body, Gonzales put his weight on the man's legs. The suspect, 44-year-old Jack Evans, who was wanted for unauthorized use of a vehicle, managed to roll to his right, onto his stomach.

With the suspect's left arm behind his back, Linville tried to handcuff him. But the officer's positioning, perpendicular to Evans, his chest pressed against Evans's right rib cage, left him vulnerable. More precisely, it left his gun, holstered on his right hip, vulnerable, inches from the suspect's nose.

Evans quickly reached and got his right hand on the gun. In an instant, Gonzales dug his fingers under Evans's fingers and pried them away, and the firearm was released.

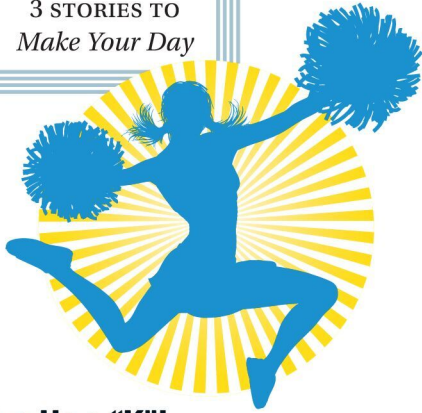
The scuffle wasn't over, though. Evans, on his stomach again, continued to resist, to wriggle. Gonzales used techniques he'd learned in the gym: digging his knee into Evans's elbow, pulling the suspect's head toward him to maintain control from a position on the side, while Linville continued to straddle Evans's hips. Linville got Evans's right wrist in the cuffs, but the wanted man buried his left arm under his body, out of reach. So Gonzales applied an underhook—a jiu-jitsu move where the hands are placed under the opponent's arm to control the shoulder and upper body—and tugged until, after a few seconds, Evans's shoulder gave out. And just like that, Linville clicked on the second handcuff and the threat was over.

But for Gonzales, the ride was just beginning. He'd asked his wife to record everything to protect him, as an ex-convict, just in case anything was called into question. But Ortiz posted the video on Facebook, where it attracted over 56 million views.

Among those awed by the video was Brazilian jiu-jitsu instructor Renner Gracie, a fourth-degree black belt, who stated: "The combination of Gonzales's technique and his calm communication with both the officer and suspect is the stuff of legends!" **R**

GLAD TO HEAR IT

3 STORIES TO
Make Your Day



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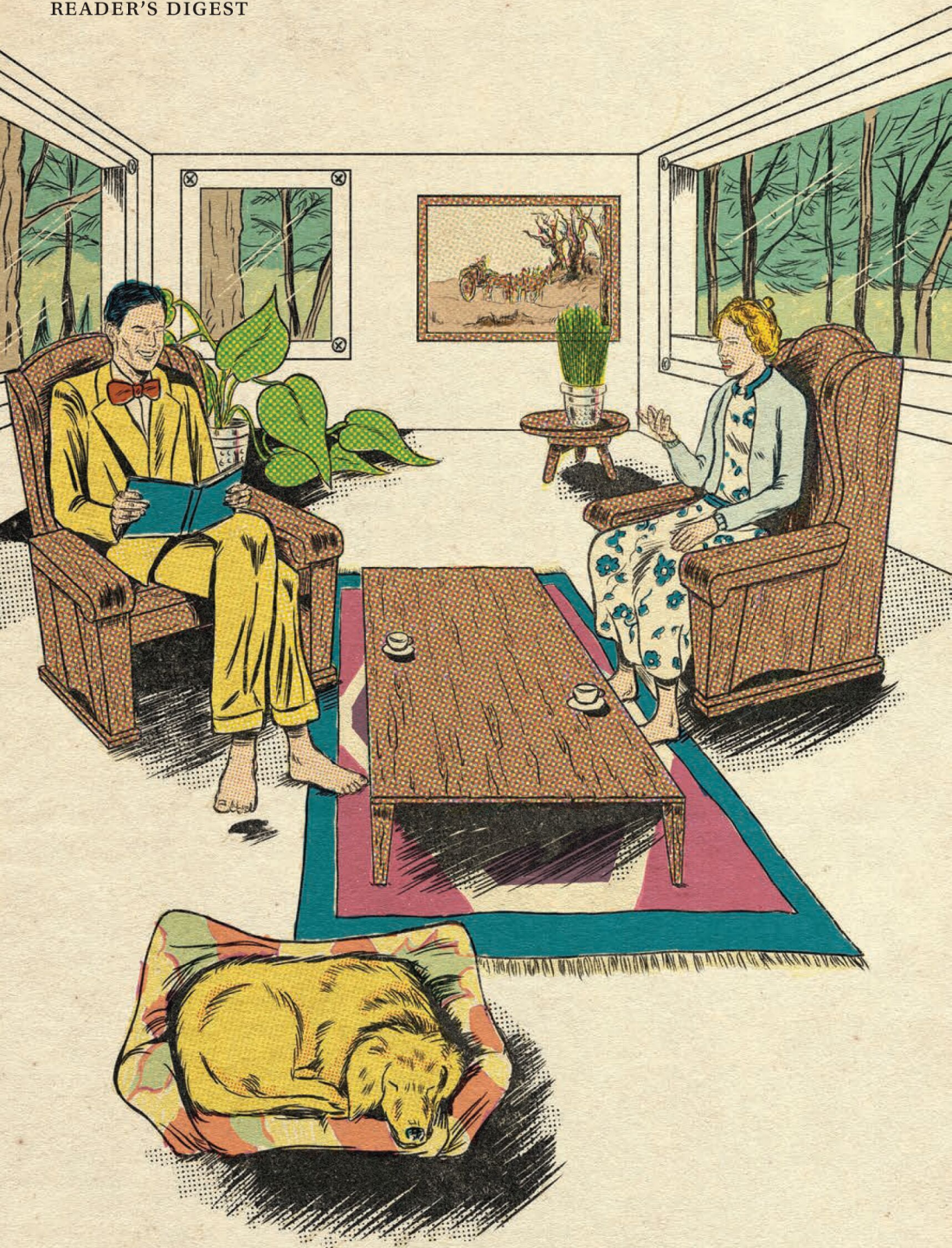
When three of the four cheerleaders from Morrill High School, in Morrill, Nebraska, quit, it seemed as though the Lions would have to skip the state cheerleading tournament. But the remaining member, senior Katrina Kohel, was determined to go. “I’ll cheer by myself,” she told her coach, according to omaha.com. In February, Kohel nervously stepped onto the gym floor alone, repeating her mantra, “Even if I mess up ... it’s going to be OK.” And it was. Rhythmic clapping accompanied her every move. Cheers punctuated each scissor kick. Kohel even got the crowd, including her competition, to chant “Let’s go, Lions!” Team Kohel ended up placing eighth out of 12 squads—and even so, it was the highest the Lions had landed in the past three years.

Going the Extra Mile

Uber driver DaVante Williams was 20 miles into the 2½-hour trip from Washington, D.C., to Williamsburg, Virginia, when a winter storm brought traffic to a halt. In the back was his passenger—an emotional, exhausted teen wanting to get home. After five hours of little progress, Williams returned to D.C. and booked the teen into a hotel, paying with his own money and promising he’d drive her to Williamsburg once the roads cleared. A family friend would eventually drive the girl home, but Williams’s kindness didn’t go unnoticed. As Uber tweeted: “Not all heroes wear capes.”

A Cut Above

Barber Chuck Sallows learned early on that a hair salon or barbershop can prove complex for clients in wheelchairs. Having one’s hair washed or getting a close shave often means being physically lifted out of the wheelchair and into a salon chair that tilts back—an experience that is both difficult and humiliating. So Sallows, of DuBois, Pennsylvania, with help from the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, created the Tranquilift, a hydraulic jack that lifts and tilts a wheelchair back safely and comfortably. Customer Curtis Markle told WTAJ in Altoona he’s glad to know “there are many other people in the world like Chuck that want to make this world more inclusive.” **R**



EVERYDAY MIRACLES

Tiny New Neighbors

A couple were astonished to see who had taken up residence in their mailbox

BY *Cathy Free*

FROM THE WASHINGTON POST

DON POWELL WAS pulling the usual assortment of envelopes from the mailbox outside his home in Orchard Lake Village, Michigan, when he noticed something out of the ordinary: A tiny doll couple were sitting on a love seat inside the mailbox. A small sticky note was also tucked inside.

“We’ve decided to live here,” the message read. It was signed from Mary and Shelley.

Powell, 72, says he initially figured that somebody must have left the wooden dolls inside his mailbox back in August 2022 by mistake.

He and his wife, Nancy Powell, had a custom-designed mailbox resembling their contemporary white house installed about four years ago.

“We could understand why dolls would want to move into such a nice mailbox, but we were still perplexed,” Don says.

“I asked the neighbors whether anybody had left dolls in their mailboxes, and everyone told me no,” he says. “So I thought, *This must just be a joke, and whoever left them here will come back to get them.* I moved them to the back of the mailbox to see what would happen.”

A few days passed and nobody retrieved the dolls, he says, noting that he and his wife soon discovered that the small couple had acquired an end table, a throw rug and a pillow.

“I also have a sense of humor, so I left a note of my own, saying that what the home really needed was a



Don Powell next to his mailbox where a set of dolls mysteriously appeared

refrigerator stocked with food," he says.

The fridge was never delivered. But over the next several months, additional items mysteriously showed up: a four-poster bed, a painting and a wood-burning stove, to name a few.

More than a year later, Mary and Shelley are still living rent-free in the mailbox, to the delight of neighbors who now follow Don's updates on Orchard Lake Village's Nextdoor page.

Don first posted about the tiny squatters on Aug. 21, 2022, hoping that might help solve the mystery.

"A homeless couple has taken up residence inside our mailbox. I have included photos of what it all looks like, so you don't think I'm making any of this up," he wrote on Nextdoor.

"Some people initially thought that I had planted the dolls myself, but that is definitely not the case," Don says.

"All I did was provide a mailbox. Somebody else decided to make it into a home for Mary and Shelley."

Nancy Powell says she can vouch for her husband.

"It was honestly a surprise to us," she says. "Don is the kind of person, though, to play along with it."

The Powells' next-door neighbor, Terry Falahee, says he believes that Don did not move the dolls into the mailbox himself.

"It's just somebody out there who is having some fun, giving us all a little community humor," Falahee says.

"Whoever is doing this is obviously somebody who is incredibly artistic and clever," he says. "Don has a lot of skill sets, but doing something this detailed with dolls isn't his forte."

After Don and Nancy moved into their home in Orchard Lake Village about five years ago, they decided to pay a local craftsman \$250 to design a mailbox resembling their house, with lots of windows on the top and sides to let the light in.

The interior is roomy, measuring 26 inches long, 15 inches wide and 10 inches high. It has solar-powered ceiling lights to illuminate the mailbox at night.

Although a person can be fined up to \$5,000 for putting items without

postage inside somebody else's mailbox, Don says he could not imagine alerting the authorities and evicting the dolls.

"I asked our mail carrier if there would be a problem delivering our mail with the dolls in there, and he told me no—there was plenty of room," Don says. "He also said he got a kick out of seeing what was going on inside my mailbox."

Every month or two, particularly around holidays, the Powells find something new tucked inside the box for Mary and Shelley.

For Halloween 2022, the doll couple temporarily disappeared and were replaced by two small skeletons, he says, and at Christmastime, a decorated

tree was left with tiny presents. Don says whoever left the gifts took them back right after Christmas, before he could open the boxes to see if anything was inside.

The doll couple have also acquired a cat, he says.

"It's getting a little crowded, especially because their cousin Shirley has also moved in, along with a service dog named Maggie," Don says.

"The note left in the mailbox said they were all grateful to find a one-story house because they'd previously lived in a Dutch-style dollhouse," he says. "I'm assuming that place had more stairs."

After packages were left for the holidays, Don says he added a tiny addition of his own outside the mailbox: a miniature letterbox.

"I decided it made sense to give them one, since their tiny letters were getting mixed up with ours and could get lost in the mail," he says.

Don says he now doesn't want to know who is responsible for the mailbox saga because he's hoping it will continue.

"People in the neighborhood are enjoying it and stop by sometimes to ask questions," he says. "They want to know what we're charging for rent and who mows the lawn. Some people ask if I've thought about installing an outdoor camera, but personally, I like the mystery of it." **R**



The dolls, named Mary and Shelley, even celebrate the holidays.

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Can your pup's tale top this?
 See terms and submit your story at rd.com/petpals.



Fox red Labradors like Loki are actually a darker shade of yellow Lab.

BEST PET PALS

Loki the Lab

MCMURRAY, PA

ALMOST NINE YEARS ago, Loki came from his mother into my waiting hands. He was one of 11 Labrador puppies—and the only one that was fox red (his siblings numbered six black, three chocolate and one yellow). I knew I had to keep him.

His favorite thing to do is cruise with me in my truck, sticking his head out the window to catch some wind and watch other motorists. A few years ago, after we had just moved into a new home, we had to go out for a bit, so we secured Loki

in the family room. Or so we thought.

Imagine my surprise when we returned home and pulled into the garage to park next to my truck, and there was Loki, sitting happily in the driver's seat. Somehow he'd moved the blockade we'd set up inside, explored the house and opened the door to the garage.

He must've seen the only thing he recognized—his dad's truck—and jumped the tailgate into the bed, then somehow managed to open the sliding glass window to get inside the cab.

Safe to say we replaced all our lever door handles after his Houdini act. **R**
 —Nominated by VINCE LILJA

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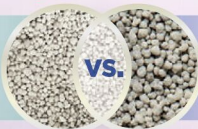
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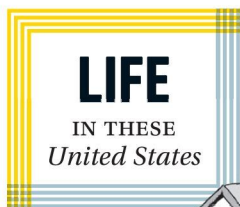
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"Maybe if you stopped calling us little pigs, we'd let you in."

My annual physical includes a memory test. It begins with the nurse giving me three words to remember later in the appointment. The words sounded familiar. "Aren't these the same three words you gave me last year?" I asked.

"Yes," she said. "I like to use the same ones so I don't forget them."

—BRENDA ERICKSON
Urbandale, IA

No one is more panicked than me when I call customer service

with a complex issue and the automated rep asks me to describe what I'm calling about "in a few words."

—[@COPYMAMA](#)

My 9-year-old, Lennox, no longer wanted to play basketball. "I'm no good," he insisted.

"It's your first year," I said. "You don't just start something new and expect to be good at it right away. Derek Jeter didn't just start playing baseball one day and instantly

become great. He put in the time and the work and stuck with it."

"Yeah, and then he quit."

"He did not quit. He retired. There's a big difference."

"OK then," said Lennox. "I retire."

—KRISTIN CASTLE
Valatie, NY

How to write a classified ad:

◆ Be mindful of specifics before posting an ad on Facebook. I came across one that read: "Looking for an outdoor heated cat/doghouse for my mother." I really hope the mother has a pet.

—JULIA TILSON
Gravenhurst, ON

◆ This ad under Farm Equipment in the *Lyon County News Leader* proves that spelling counts: "Looking for pastor for 20 to 50 pairs of cows."

—LURA WEAVER
Smith, NV

◆ This classified ad from the automotive section of the *East Bay Times* of Walnut Creek,

Marriage is your spouse saying
“I don’t like this show anymore,” and then
you never find out how it ends.

—@MCDADSTUFF

California, proves successful sellers are optimists: “Honda: 1999 Civic. Not running, but was.”

—L.S.
Vallejo, CA

For my 50th birthday, my artist friend, Susan, gave me one of her paintings of a winding path through a forest. It’s an abstract style, with the trees twisted into all kinds of shapes, painted in saturated shades of green, blue,

purple and yellow, and the path cutting through in the same colors. It was stunning, and I oohed and aahed as I gazed at it. Until, that is, Susan gently took the painting out of my hand, turned it 180 degrees and said, “You’re looking at it upside down.”

—ROSE JAKUBASZEK
San Francisco, CA

The first grade teacher asked each of her pupils if they knew their

parents’ names. My nephew did. “My mom is Paula,” he said. “And my dad is Honey.”

—GLORIA PALMER
Lilburn, GA

It’s a Sunday morning and our preacher is giving his sermon. He’s animated, waving his arms and slapping the lectern. Suddenly, he stops.

“I’m sorry,” he says. “I have to do this.” As he monkeys around with his watch, he advises, “Never slap the pulpit wearing a smart-watch. It thinks you’ve fallen and need help.”

—JOHN TIERNEY
Boynton Beach, FL

AGING DISGRACEFULLY

Relaxing in my bathrobe, toeing the fine line between looking like “60-year-old divorcee at her best” and “Tony Soprano at his worst.”

—@BROTIGUPTA



20s me at a concert:
“Woohoo!”

40s me at a concert: “I’m surprised there’s grass on this field at all. All this

beer spillage can’t be good for the turf. Must be fescue. I don’t think Bermuda could take this abuse.”

—@BENBOVEN1

Now that I’m in my 50s, some stuff takes me three or four fell swoops.

—JEFFREY ANBINDER,
on top5list.com



BEWARE
RSV IS
A HIGHLY
CONTAGIOUS
VIRUS

**NOT ALL DANGERS
COME WITH
WARNING LABELS**

If you're 60 or older, talk to a pharmacist or doctor about getting vaccinated against RSV today.

Art of
LIVING
 FOOD, FACTS & FUN

World, Meet Poutine

*This Canadian fave
could be the biggest new
comfort-food trend*

BY *Leila El Shennawy*

AT ANY TIME, in almost any eatery north of the border, diners are digging in to plates piled with poutine. Born in Quebec, this artery-clogging comfort food—crispy fries topped with cheddar cheese curds and doused with beef gravy—is finding fans far from home.

The word *poutine* likely comes from a Quebecois slang word for a “mess”—an admittedly apt description. Poutine superfan Sylvain Charlebois, a food economist and the author of *Poutine Nation*, confirms that the earliest version of the dish was invented in 1957 in Warwick, a small dairy town in southern Quebec, where cheese curds are sold in

bags as a snack. A hungry takeout customer named Eddy Lainesse asked restaurateur Fernand Lachance to put cheese curds and fries together in a brown paper bag because he was in a hurry, to which Lachance replied, "*Ça va faire une maudite poutine!*" Translation: "That'll make an unholy mess!"

The combination became a hit in *casse-croûtes* (snack shacks) across the province, but poutine first boarded the gravy train in 1964 in the nearby town

IN MOSCOW, POUTINE HAS BEEN CALLED RASPOUTINE.



of Drummondville, when the young owner of Le Roy Jucep diner, Jean-Paul Roy—who just so happened to be a trained saucier—was the first to douse the fries and curds with gravy.

Poutine is now a symbol of pride in Quebec, and the rest of Canada has fully embraced it too. Most of the big fast-food chains in the country, including McDonald's and KFC, have it on their menus. Plus the chain Smoke's Poutinerie offers more than 20 variations, including "country style," with bacon, mushrooms and green peas, and even a "Philly cheesesteak" poutine, featuring slices of flat iron steak, cheese sauce and red peppers.

In the United States, eateries have come up with their own versions.

Duckfat, a sandwich shop in Portland, Maine, serves it slathered in gravy made with roasted duck bones. New York City's Desi Galli, a street food joint, drenches it in curry sauce and paneer. Some places specialize in the dish, such as Maudite Poutine in Burlington, Vermont.

In some states, you might come across cousins of poutine such as disco fries (named for the discogooers of the 1970s and '80s who ordered them as a late-night snack after a long night of dancing). Sometimes called Elvis fries, this diner favorite is made with shredded mozzarella instead of curds and a thicker, darker gravy. Fast-food fans can have a poutine-like experience with cheese sauce–topped Baconator fries at Wendy's, Taco Bell's nacho fries, and a West Coast favorite: In-N-Out Burger's animal-style fries, featuring American cheese and caramelized onions.

But anyone wanting the real deal can search online for the best local poutine spots in London, Paris, Shanghai, Tokyo, Moscow (where it has been called raspoutine) and elsewhere.

Charlebois compares the story of poutine to the glorious rise of pizza, another unfussy combo of carbs, cheese and sauce, something unsophisticated but so tasty it became a global sensation.

Whether poutine is ever going to be as universally popular as pizza is anyone's guess. But if you haven't yet, give it a chance. You may just find that the unpretentious dish is so much more than the sum of its parts. **R**





13 THINGS

High-Flying Facts About Drones

BY *Marc Saltzman*

1 UNMANNED AERIAL vehicles may seem like recent technology, but the earliest version took flight back in 1849, during the First Italian War of Independence. An Austrian artillery lieutenant, Franz von Uchatius, used pilotless balloons packed with explosives to attack Venice. He was

mostly unsuccessful; some balloons even blew back to Austria.

2 ABRAHAM KAREM (also known as The Dronefather), built the first modern drone in the 1970s. He went on to design the MQ-1 Predator drone for the United States military, which fired

its first missile over Afghanistan in October 2001. Today, drones are being used in the Russia-Ukraine war for surveillance and recon. Combat drones have struck both Moscow and Kyiv, but drones have also dropped food and supplies to Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine.

3 MILITARY DRONES resemble small airplanes and can cost more than \$15 million apiece, but mini versions (sometimes called quadcopters) look more like tiny helicopters and are available for anyone to buy for as little as \$40. Most are remotely operated via either a controller or a smartphone app, but some models can fly autonomously thanks to GPS, sensors and cameras that help them avoid obstacles.

4 YOU'LL NEED to be at least 16 years old and register your drone with the Federal Aviation Administration before your aircraft can join the roughly 1 million drones in the U.S. One exception: toy drones weighing less than half a pound. The FAA also requires users to maintain sightline—typically 1½ miles with binoculars. Night flying requires a waiver and FAA approval. It's the

top request among recreational drone fliers, usually to capture shots of cities lit up against the dark sky.

5 GPS TRACKING prevents drones from entering no-fly zones like airports and government facilities. When a drone reaches the boundary of such an area, it will either turn around and go back to its user or it will automatically land itself. If a drone has been illegally modified to enter no-fly zones, authorities can shoot it down or electronically jam it so that it falls out of the sky. Its user could face a hefty fine or even imprisonment.

6 WHEN IT comes to flying a drone over private property, state laws vary, but the property's residents always have a right to privacy. If you believe you're being recorded by a drone, contact police: It's a felony to shoot down a drone, even if it's

hovering over your property. In 2020, Prince Harry and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, filed a lawsuit against paparazzi for flying a drone above their California backyard and capturing photos of their son. The agency responsible agreed to turn over the photos and never again traffic in photos of the family taken by similar means.

7 THE NATIONAL Association of Realtors reports that adding drone footage to your real estate listing could help sell your home 68% faster, perhaps because aerial shots allow prospective buyers to see not just the home itself but also the surrounding neighborhood.

8 PEOPLE NOW race drones as they do cars—but at far faster speeds. Some can go from 0 to 90 mph in less than one second. The first World Drone

Prix was held in Dubai in 2016. A teen from the U.K. grabbed the \$250,000 grand prize after maneuvering his drone through 12 laps of the nearly half-mile-long course the fastest.

9 USING CAMERAS, along with sensors that detect body heat, search-and-rescue drones can help locate missing people and animals trapped in hard-to-reach areas such as under rubble in the aftermath of a natural disaster, as was the case in Turkey following the magnitude 7.8 earthquake earlier this year. Conservationists and researchers are also now using drones to monitor endangered species and to catch poachers of elephants and rhinoceroses in Botswana, Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

10 SOMETIMES, **THOUGH**, it's the crooks who are flying the drones: Last year, 20 people were arrested in a scheme that involved using drones to smuggle drugs, weapons, cash and cellphones into Lee Correctional Institution in Bishopville, South Carolina.

11 ONE DAY soon, a drone may deliver your online order. Last November, the FAA approved its first-ever delivery drone for urban areas. Amazon is one of the biggest companies to test drone deliveries, but there are others, too, such as DHL, Google, UPS and Walmart. In fact, Walmart made 6,000 drone drops last year in seven states for those who signed up to beta-test the service.

12 NOT ONLY are drones an environmentally friendly delivery method—most small drones are powered by batteries—but they can help the planet in other ways too. A Canadian startup called Flash Forest is helping to reforest areas of the country that have been devastated by wildfires by deploying drones that drop tree seedpods across landscapes too dangerous for humans to traverse.

13 COULD DRONES that fly *us* be next? The first passenger drone was unveiled in 2016 by EHang, a Chinese company, but is still going through rigorous testing. Perhaps one day we'll take one to work and fly over rush-hour traffic—without needing a pilot's license! **R**



Downward-Facing Pachyderm

Trainers at the Houston Zoo have taught elephants there to do various stretches and yoga poses. One member of the hefty herd can even do a handstand.

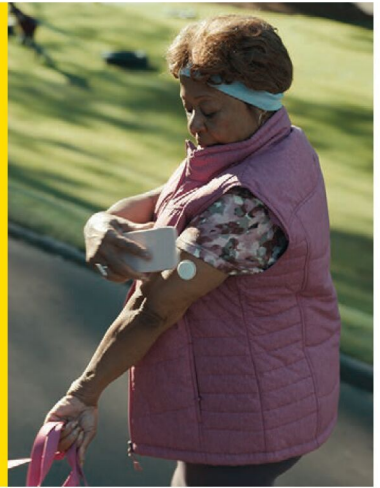
THE WASHINGTON POST



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The FreeStyle Libre 2 system is indicated for use in people with diabetes age 4 and older.

For more information about mobile device compatibility, visit [FreeStyleLibre.us](https://www.FreeStyleLibre.us)

* Data from this study was collected with the outside US version of the FreeStyle Libre 14 day system. FreeStyle Libre 2 has the same features as FreeStyle Libre 14 day system with optional, real-time glucose alarms. Therefore the study data is applicable to both products. † Fingersticks are required if your glucose alarms and readings do not match symptoms or when you see Check Blood Glucose symbol during the first 12 hours. ‡ Data based on total active Medicare patients with CGM readers. § Patients must meet Medicare eligibility coverage criteria.

References: 1. Fokkert, M. *BMJ Open Diabetes Res Care* (2019): <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjdr-2019-000809> 2. Evans, M. *Diabetes Ther* (2022): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13300-022-01253-9> 3. Kroeger, J. *Diabetes Ther* (2020): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13300-019-00741-9> 4. Haak, T. *Diabetes Ther* (2017): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13300-016-0223-6> 5. Data on file. Abbott Diabetes Care. 6. Local Coverage Determination (LCD) L33822, Glucose Monitors, <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/lcd.aspx?LCDId=33822>.

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HUMOR *in*
UNIFORM

As a judge advocate, I taught military justice to new second lieutenants at Fort Sam Houston. I suppose it wasn't the most scintillating topic, because one day a student dozed off. I stopped my lecture, stood in front of him and bellowed, "Lieutenant! How much are they paying you to sleep in this class?"

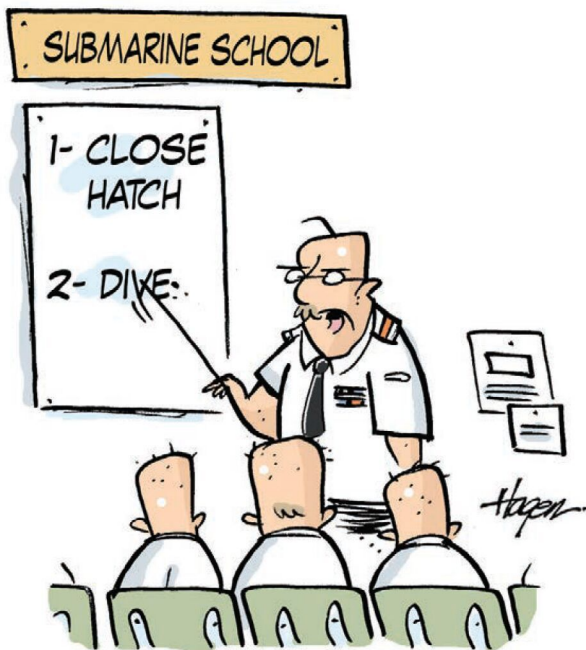
The lieutenant stirred and responded sleepily, "Sir, clearly not enough."

—RICHARD HUFF
Rockville, MD

My dad said he joined the Marines out of high school for one reason: He was tired of people telling him what to do.

—RANDY MATTHEWS
Woodland Park, CO

At the end of World War II, I did my basic training at Camp Blanding,



"Now I cannot overstress the importance of order here!"

Florida. During KP duty, I worked beside our company mess sergeant as he prepared that evening's supper. After seasoning the meat and letting it slowly cook, he retired to his quarters for a nap. Army chow is decidedly not fine cuisine. But when he came back two hours later, he paused and inhaled the aromas emanating

from the stove. "Whoa, something smells good!" he said. "What did I do wrong?"

—RICHARD T. FLOERSHEIMER
Florham Park, NJ

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

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WHERE, OH WHERE?

BOARDWALKS EVOKE THE beach, but this bucolic walk—in a national forest comprising 921,000 acres of the country's most ecologically diverse areas—is more a country road, heading to a hiking trail that crosses the Allegheny Front plateau. One of this forest's trees will be the 2023 U.S. Capitol Christmas tree. Where is it? (*Answer on* PAGE 111.)

- A** Rutland, Vermont
- B** Petersburg, West Virginia
- C** Elizabethton, Tennessee
- D** Bryson City, North Carolina



ALL
in a Day's
WORK

The day after Thanksgiving, I took a call from a customer who was paying his bill. The moment I finished entering his credit card information, he yelled, "I know it's Black Friday! Don't you dare try anything!" I was stunned, unsure what I was being accused of. Suddenly, his tone changed. "Sorry," he said. "I was talking to my wife, not you."

—CALLEN HARTY
Monona, WI

Our tour guide in Hawaii shared a story about a previous client who was totally



"Yep, all the big supermarkets have a room for people caught tasting grapes."

confounded by the Polynesian language. He helped her out with a few pronunciations of words they came upon, then she decided to try one out on her own. She noticed a sign and slowly sounded out

the word: *oo-ha-ool*.

"Close," our guide told her. "It's U-Haul."
—SHELLY BUTLER
Citrus Heights, CA

If you like to eavesdrop on your co-workers, these are the sorts of conversations you might encounter:

- ◆ Employee on phone with customer: "I just need to cross my X's and circle my O's, then I can get back to you."
- ◆ Cube dweller: "Why

33-year-old Amy Poehler playing the mom of 26-year-old Rachel McAdams in *Mean Girls* is the exact dynamic between me and my co-workers at my bartending job.

—[@KIMBERLYDINARO](#)

do things that happen to stupid people always happen to me?"

◆ Project manager, speaking about one of the principals of the firm: "He has been driving around with his windshield wipers on because he can't figure out how to turn them off. Do you really think he'll understand this?"

—OVERHEARDINTHEOFFICE.COM

A woman named Silver Saundors Friedman was a co-founder of The Improv, a famed New York City comedy club. But after her death her daughter told the *New York Times* that early on

her mother had wanted to be a singer. Born Silver Schreck, her mom knew she'd need a new last name. But with a first name like Silver, she had to be careful what she changed it to. She decided that Silver Saundors would be safe. But she was wrong. At her first audition after changing her name, the casting director looked out at the sea of actors and called out, "Silver Sandals! Silver Sandals!"

Teaching remotely during the pandemic, I made a lesson about Thanksgiving and turkeys—specifically, why

turkeys can't fly. The answer: They're too heavy. But no matter how many hints I supplied, my students didn't get it. Finally, I ran into my kitchen, grabbed a frozen turkey and pantomimed a very heavy turkey unable to fly. "Now," I said, "why can't a turkey fly?"

One boy knew: "Because it's dead."
—KAREN TROLAND
Woodbridge, NJ

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

WORKWEEK WRECKS

Three memes that sum up your job ...

What it feels like when you have to repeat yourself three times on the Zoom meeting



POV: It's 4:59 p.m. on a Friday at the office



—BY LUCIE TURKEL IN RD.COM

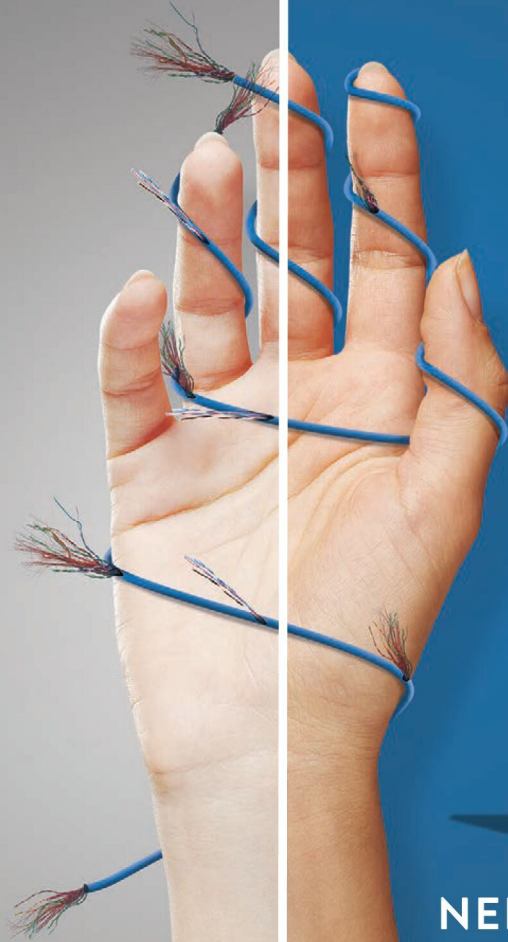
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‡Alpha Lipoic Acid in Nervive helps with occasional nerve discomfort due to aging.



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Where That Color Comes From

*Are warning labels
for food dyes coming soon?*

BY *Debby Waldman*

THAT ARTIFICIAL FOOD dyes are unhealthy is not news. Some of the most common additives—used to give color to everything from M&M's to soup—are known to cause hyperactivity in some children, affecting their ability to learn. But regulatory agencies around the world don't necessarily agree on which food dyes are a problem, or why. That may soon change, thanks in part to increasing consumer pressure. In addition, a comprehensive 2021 peer-reviewed report prepared by

the state of California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) concluded that synthetic food dyes "cause or exacerbate neurobehavioral problems in some children" and that the current levels deemed safe for consumption by the federal government are too high.

In response to the report and a subsequent petition signed by children's advocates, consumer advocacy groups, and health and environmental experts, California is now considering requiring warning labels on food products and dietary supplements containing the seven most commonly used synthetic dyes. Among them are Red 40, Yellow 5 and Yellow 6, which account for more than 90% of food dye certified for use in the United States. Restaurants in California would also have to identify menu items containing the additives.

"The science is clear," says Lisa Leferts, an environmental health consultant and former senior scientist with the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Science in the Public Interest. "These synthetic dyes harm children and are completely unnecessary."

What makes the OEHHA report a game changer is that a regulatory agency is on the same page as scientists and advocacy groups. That's largely because of the quality of the report, says Leferts, one of 10 original signatories to the petition. "It's quite simply the best, most comprehensive, most rigorous assessment on the neurobehavioral effects of synthetic food dyes in children

that has ever been done, bar none," she says.

The warning label requirement would put California on par with the European Union, which since 2010 has required food and beverage products containing certain synthetic food dyes (including Red 40, Yellow 5 and Yellow 6) to carry warning labels about their adverse effect on activity and attention in children.

Synthetic dyes are used in foods for one reason: to make products look prettier. Bill Jeffery, executive director of the Ottawa-based Centre for Health Science and Law, likens the practice to

CHIPOTLE, NESTLÉ AND OTHERS ARE LIMITING FOOD DYES.



"putting cosmetics on food." Bright colors and fun shapes make candies and cereals appealing, especially to kids. But dyes are also in pickles, flavored applesauce, marshmallows, chocolate cake mixes, salad dressings and other products that don't seem to cry out for a color boost.

As more research has emerged, consumer pressure has led companies to reformulate products, most notably Kraft Heinz's iconic macaroni and cheese. In 2016, the company began using turmeric, annatto and paprika instead of Yellow 5 and Yellow 6.

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Around the same time, Chipotle, Nestlé USA and a number of other restaurants and manufacturers announced plans to cut back on or stop using synthetic dyes.

In Europe, it was the 2010 label legislation that triggered companies' decisions to reformulate. "If you're a company, you do not want to put a warning label on your product," says Lefferts.

Warning labels are why European Starburst Fruit Chews are now colored with natural products, not the synthetic dyes that brighten their North American counterparts. One of those dyes, Red 40, was found to exacerbate colitis in mice in a 2022 study at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

Waliul Khan, one of the authors of

that study, says more research is needed to better understand the connection between synthetic dyes and inflammatory bowel disease. But given that artificial food dyes are ultimately superfluous, he and other scientists agree we need to be more cautious.

After all, we don't dye fresh fruits and vegetables, but we do dye candy and sprinkles, points out Joe Schwarcz, a chemistry professor and director of the Office for Science and Society at McGill University in Montreal.

"The foods in which you find food dyes are foods that are nutritional paupers," he says. "If you limit foods that contain food dyes, you automatically make your diet better." **R**

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News FROM THE
**WORLD OF
 MEDICINE**
 BY *Samantha Rideout*



A New Way to Diagnose Parkinson's Sooner

Currently, doctors diagnose Parkinson's disease based on symptoms. That's not ideal because the ailments that often appear first—constipation, depression or sleep issues, for example—are shared by many other medical conditions. Patients may not get a definitive diagnosis until years later, when the signature tremors and stiffness of Parkinson's finally appear. That uncertainty may soon change, thanks to new lab tests that detect abnormalities in a protein called alpha-synuclein. One such test, performed via a spinal tap, was recently validated in a large American trial undertaken by the Michael J. Fox Foundation. It correctly identified 88% of the participants with Parkinson's disease and gave a "false positive" to less than 5% of the people who didn't have it.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM VOORHES, PROP STYLIST: ROBIN FINLAY

A TASTY WAY TO BOOST GUT HEALTH

Instead of sprinkling salt on foods, go for more herbs and spices. Not only will they add more flavor, they're also good for your gut health, according to a study published in November 2022 in the *Journal of Nutrition*. The participants added 24 herbs and spices, including ginger, rosemary, basil and cinnamon, to their diets. After four weeks, those who'd sprinkled even as little as a teaspoon a day on their meals increased the variety of microbes living in their digestive tracts. A diverse gut microbiome is important for overall health and well-being, including immunity.

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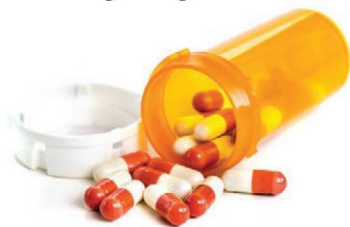
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When Obesity Is Genetic

Diet and inactivity are not the only things that can contribute to obesity. Other factors include age, medications and sleep habits. Also, certain genes increase the likelihood of obesity (defined by a BMI of 30 or higher). According to research led by Sweden's Karolinska Institute, obesity affects your health differently depending on what caused it. Specifically, people with a high BMI and a genetic predisposition to obesity have a lower risk of heart disease compared to people whose extra weight is related to environmental and lifestyle factors alone. Even so, healthy lifestyles are important for everyone, whatever the person's weight or genes.



Outside Exercise Boosts the Brain

Regardless of the setting, exercise is good for brain function. But you can give your brain an extra boost if you work out in pleasant outdoor surroundings. Students at the University of Victoria took cognitive function tests before and after 15-minute walks. On one day, they did the walking inside, and on another day, the students followed a forested path around campus. Their test performance was better after the outdoor stroll, suggesting that kind of setting boosts brainpower.

Insights into Midlife Libido

Menopause plays a role in women's lower sex drives at midlife, but so do the pressures of daily life. Investigators at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and at the University of Glasgow analyzed information from 2,133 women and



interviewed some who were in the 45-to-59 age range. The women were most likely to blame a low sex drive and low level of sexual activity on all the pressures they were facing, such as those stemming from their jobs, raising children, caring for aging relatives, dealing with health issues and shouldering most of the housework. People might find it comforting to learn that it's common to be less sexually active at this stage of life, the researchers said, and that frequency isn't the most important influence on a satisfying sex life. For the participants who were the most sexually satisfied, a feeling of closeness and intimacy in the relationship mattered more. And that can come from simply feeling supported—a good reminder to seek help when you are feeling overwhelmed. **R**

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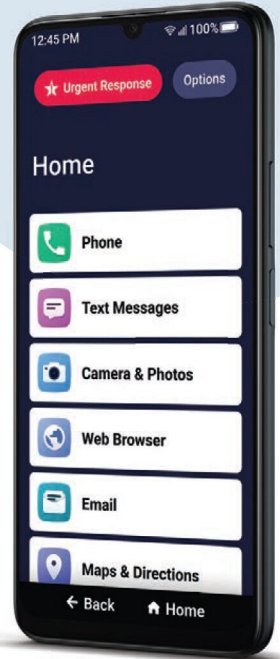


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LAUGHTER

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A man's boat sinks, and he washes up on a deserted island. He's there for weeks and losing hope when a box labeled Rescue Kit floats up onto the beach. He tears it open only to find a deck of cards. "What kind of rescue kit is this?!" he says, sobbing.

Eventually, boredom overtakes him, and he deals out a game of Solitaire. Suddenly, a man appears behind him.

"Hey," the man says, "put the red eight on the black nine."

—JORDAN LETURGEZ
Fort Wayne, IN



Caveman Scrabble

Three conspiracy theorists walk into a bar. You can't tell me that's just a coincidence!

—GARY KATZ
Long Grove, IL

Pat and his two friends are at a bar. His first friend says, "I think my wife's having an affair with the electrician. I found wire cutters under our bed."

His second friend says: "I think my wife's

having an affair with the plumber. The other day I found a wrench under the bed."

Pat nods sympathetically. "I think my wife's having an affair with a horse. The other day I came home and found a jockey under the bed."

—RACEHORSETALK.COM.AU

This Thanksgiving meal, skip the political chatter and go straight to the jokes.

◆ How many cooks does it take to stuff a turkey? Only one, but you have to really squeeze him in there.

◆ What did the obstetrician say when

It's crazy how your siblings actually have their own lives. I literally see them as side characters in mine.

—[@SHARONSN_](#)

Thanksgiving dinner was ready? “The turkey is dilated to 3½ inches. Stuffing is crowning—time to eat, everybody!”

◆ What do you call a turkey’s evil twin? A gobblegänger.

◆ What did the turkey say to the turkey hunter on Thanksgiving Day? “Quack, quack!”

On Nov. 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. Here’s a gag that had East Germans guffawing:

A man in East Germany was sent to work in Siberia. He knew his mail would be read by censors, so he told his friends, “Let’s establish a code. If a letter you receive from me is written in blue ink, what I say is true. But if it is written in red ink, it’s false.”

After a few weeks, his friends receive a letter written in blue ink. It reads: “Everything is wonderful here. Stores

are full of good food, apartments are large and luxurious, movie theaters show films from the West. The only thing you cannot get is red ink!”

—BRIAN RUBINOW
Los Angeles, CA

GOT A FUNNY JOKE?

It could be worth \$\$\$.

For details, go to

RD.COM/SUBMIT.

TIC-TAC-D’OH!

Remember *The Hollywood Squares*? The popular TV game show ran from 1966 to 1980. Celebrities would be asked questions and contestants had to decide if the answers were correct or not. Our friends over at the *Planet Proctor* newsletter shared some of the least correct celebrity answers:

Q: True or false: A pea can last as long as 5,000 years.

George Gobel:

It sure seems that way sometimes.

Real answer: True.

Q: Which of your five senses tends to diminish as you get older?

Charlie Weaver: My sense of decency.

Real answer: Smell.

Q: Do female frogs croak?

Paul Lynde: If you hold their little heads under water long enough.

Real answer: Occasionally, but it’s mostly the male.



Q: You’ve been having trouble going to sleep. Are you probably a man or a woman?

Don Knotts: That’s what’s been keeping me awake.

Real answer: Woman.

Q: Back in the old days, when Great-Grandpa put horseradish on his head, what was he trying to do?

George Gobel: Get it in his mouth.

Real answer: Grow hair.



I SUR

THE PEOPLE IN THESE THREE STORIES HAVE
NOTHING IN COMMON EXCEPT FOR ONE THING:
THEY FACED DEATH AND LIVED TO TELL ABOUT IT

VIVED!

AS TOLD TO *Lisa Fitterman*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Kagan McLeod*

... MY FLOODED APARTMENT

CHRISTIAN FLEISCHMANN, 33

I FINALLY CLIMBED INTO bed at 1:20 in the morning. It was July 15, 2021, and my friends had helped me celebrate my 31st birthday in the basement apartment of my sister's home, where I lived.

Earlier in the day I had prepared for the unlikely event of a flood. We are about a third of a mile from the banks of the Ahr River in Sinzig, Germany. It had been raining buckets that week and authorities had issued a flood warning, though not for where I was. Still, I'd placed sandbags on the floor outside my garden door and piled electronics and clothing on tables and the couch just in case water managed to seep through. Before my friends left, they laughed at me for doing that, but I thought, *Why take a chance?*

As I drifted off to sleep, I was awakened by the sound of rushing water, as if I were lying beside a waterfall instead of in my bedroom. When I swung my legs off the bed, I was shocked by the sensation of cold water lapping against my knees and rising fast.

It has to be from a burst pipe in the bathroom, I thought. Shivering and in darkness, I grabbed my cellphone and turned on the flashlight. When I stepped from the bedroom to the hallway, I saw it wasn't a burst pipe at all. Instead, water was shooting through the gaps of the garden door that leads from my living room to a set of concrete stairs

up to the backyard. The water must have breached the sandbags. All around me, my things began to float by: chairs, bookshelves, pieces of my drum set.

I admit it, I began to panic. The Ahr, usually such a quiet, slow-moving river, had violently burst its banks. And now I had to get out—fast!

Any effects of the celebratory drinks I'd had earlier were now gone; fear sobered me right up. I heard the garden door starting to crack and splinter under the pressure of the flood. The sound was like nothing else—screeching, hissing

THE LAMPS WERE SHATTERING, THE CUPBOARDS WERE BEING TORN APART.

and crashing all at once. It was relentless. And the water was now up to my waist. In bare feet and with my boxer shorts plastered to my body, I started to wade to my only escape: the door that leads upstairs to the rest of the house. All around me things were breaking—the lamps were shattering, the cupboards were being torn apart.

Finally I made it to the door. I tried to pull it open, but the force of the water wouldn't let me. I tried several times to pry it open even just a little bit, but the rushing water slammed it shut again.

I looked around for anything I could use to wedge the door open. There in

the corner were a broom, a coat rack and a huge, heavy sword from a medieval fair. I grabbed them all and, once again, pried open the door, throwing the broom and coat rack between the door and the frame to keep the door from shutting, and using the sword to wedge it open some more.

I managed to make a gap of about a foot, just wide enough to squeeze through and make it into the hallway. In the pitch-black, I leaped onto the stairs leading up to the rest of the house and ran to the third floor, where my sister lived. I knocked on her door, calling for her, trying to see if she was OK, until I remembered that she wasn't home that night.

That's when I went downstairs to the main floor and ran outside. I stood there in the darkness, soaked and panting. What was once a lovely, cozy street was now a waterscape, with floating debris and trees instead of people and cars. The river had drowned the neighborhood—and if I had woken up just a few minutes later, I would have drowned along with it.

We've been assured that something like this happens only once every 100 years. I hope so. More than 180 people died, and parts of villages in the region were entirely washed away.

These days, I'm living at my parents' place in the middle of town and sleeping in my dad's office. I study psychology at a university and work with children in schools, teaching them martial arts. I can never go back to live in that

apartment because I just keep thinking, *What if it does happen again?*

We didn't have flood insurance because the house wasn't considered to be located in a high-risk area, so we're fixing it up on our own. My old apartment, once it's dried out and repaired, will house my martial arts school.

Many of the houses around us were destroyed, including, tragically, a home for the handicapped. Not everyone got out.

I came close to drowning that day. But rather than dwell on that, I prefer to recall what my mother told me afterward: "Christian, don't remember the day when you lost everything. Remember the day you survived."

... A PARACHUTE MALFUNCTION

JORDAN HATMAKER, 36

NOV. 14, 2021, was a perfect day for skydiving: sunny, with little wind. I was a novice solo jumper, having jumped only 14 times—not enough to be licensed. It scared me, for sure, but a little fear always makes you a better risk-taker, right? That's what drew me to skydiving in the first place. I've always liked flirting with danger.

I left my home in Virginia Beach, Virginia, late in the morning and arrived at the hangar in Suffolk, Virginia, 40 minutes later. At around 1:30 p.m., I joined 15 other skydivers for our first

jump of the day. As the plane ascended, I went through the safety protocols with my coach, a ritual you go through for every jump, no matter how much experience you have. This includes pointing from the plane door to the drop zone where you land 13,500 feet below, so you can direct your jump.

After the plane leveled off, we jumped, me first, then my coach, free-falling at about 125 miles an hour, descending about 1,000 feet every five seconds. It was exhilarating and terrifying all at once, with the world opening up before me, coming into focus in mere seconds, even though it felt as if it were happening in slow motion.

The wind eddies carried me for the free fall, and at about 4,000 feet I deployed my pilot chute—the small parachute used to extract the main one. After the main chute was released and inflated, I had about a minute to enjoy the peace and quiet as I floated gently toward the soft grassy meadow. I felt invincible.

We went up again not long after for a second jump. The mood on the plane was light—lots of joking, lots of laughing. My coach and I still made time to go through our prepping routine, then we jumped.

After 30 seconds in the air, at around 5,500 feet, we tracked away from each other because you need lots of empty space to safely deploy your parachute. I looked at my altimeter and realized I was lower than I'd thought. The ground was coming up too fast! I knew I had to

pull the pilot chute at roughly 4,000 feet, as I'd done the last time, but I was caught off guard. As I cruised past that marker, I rushed to pull my chute without taking the time to stabilize my body position. When I pulled it, instead of releasing into the airstream to inflate, the pilot chute wrapped around my right leg.

The chute was pulling my right leg up as if I were a marionette, while the main parachute remained in its bag. *Just get it off*, I told myself calmly. I wasted about seven seconds trying to get untangled but was unsuccessful.

With the ground rapidly getting closer below me, I prepared to crash. I didn't think it would be a catastrophic impact. *Maybe you'll break a leg*, I thought.

I've always been an optimist.

Then, suddenly—and thankfully—the automatic reserve parachute (a backup that releases when the main one isn't working) opened. I managed to gain some control, steering myself toward some grass, which I hoped would make for a softer landing.

I had just a few seconds to feel some relief before the main parachute inexplicably released from its bag. It inflated, and the two parachutes began pulling in opposite directions, causing me to accelerate hard and fast toward the ground, not far from the drop zone.

When my body smashed into the ground, I felt as if my muscles and bones were on fire. I tried to get up because that's what you're supposed to



do if you don't land on your feet. It shows everyone you're OK. But I wasn't OK. I couldn't move anything below my waist. So I lay there, my face in the grass, my arms flung out to either side, and I screamed, "Please, somebody help!" In between calling for help, I prayed out loud. "Please, God, don't let me be paralyzed."

I lay with my face buried in the grass, fully conscious, for about five minutes before people from the skydiving club got there. They quickly surrounded me, eager to help, but there was nothing they could do. It was too risky to move me before the paramedics arrived. So they sat there listening to me swearing and yelling as the shock wore off and the pain really set in.

When the first two paramedics arrived with an ambulance half an hour later, they tried to move me onto a board for transport. It hurt so much, I screamed. Then I heard the helicopter.

The air ambulance crew came equipped with painkillers, which sent me to la-la land, and I was transported to the nearest trauma center.

In the end, my injuries were pretty severe: a shattered ankle, a broken shin and a spinal injury that caused a spinal fluid leak. No one could tell me if I would walk again. But I was determined, and in February 2022, just three months after the crash, I walked again for the first time. I began a heavy course of physical therapy that I'm still doing. And, after being unable to even lift my legs because of the accident, last

November I climbed to the Mount Everest base camp.

Oh, and I plan to skydive again—only I haven't told my parents yet.

... A "SNOWNADO"

SHANNON ST. ONGE, 38

THE SNOWSTORM WAS SUPPOSED to hit the evening of Monday, Jan. 31, 2022. I was working from home but I had to leave that afternoon and go to my office at First Nations University in Regina, Saskatchewan, so I could sign an emergency financial aid check for a student. As director of finance, I wanted to get it to him as soon as possible, snowstorm or not. Besides, I wasn't worried. I figured I had more than enough time to make it to the office and get back home.

The route to the university takes about 30 minutes along the Trans-Canada Highway. When I got there, my colleague came to my office to co-sign the check, then he left for the day. As I was packing up, I noticed he had left his laptop bag in my office.

"Shoot," he said when I called him. "I'm already home."

"I can bring it to you," I assured him. It was just past 4:30 p.m. The snow wasn't supposed to start until later, but just to be safe, I decided to take the country roads to his home instead of the highway, which could fast become a skating rink. On the way to his place, I picked up a new cellphone charger,



filled up my SUV with gas and picked up two stuffed-crust pizzas because I'd promised my 15-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son I'd bring some home for dinner.

It took me about 15 minutes to get to my colleague's house, where I dropped off the laptop case and got right back on the road. Then the snow started—and it was coming down fast. Within

minutes I was in a whiteout. The storm was a “snownado” or what the TV meteorologists call a Saskatchewan screamer, because it comes in fast and so windy that it screams.

The road soon switched from paved to gravel, forcing me to slow down. The windows were fogging up and getting covered with snow, so I rolled down my driver's side window, thinking I could

better follow the edge of the road and keep to a straight line. But really, I didn't have a clue where I was or even which side of the road I was on. At one point, I don't know exactly when, I stopped because I was afraid of driving into a farmer's field, a ditch or worse. I kept the car running to stay warm and called 911. The dispatcher told me to sit tight and wait things out for the night—nobody was coming to get me until morning at the earliest.

GETTING OUT TO WALK IN A WHITEOUT IN 14-DEGREE WEATHER WAS NOT AN OPTION.

Those seconds after the call were agony. Getting out to walk in a whiteout with zero visibility, high winds and a temperature that was hovering around 14 degrees—when I didn't even know where I was—wasn't an option. But I worried other drivers wouldn't see me and would barrel into the car from the front or behind. Or the tailpipe would get clogged with snow and I'd die from carbon monoxide poisoning. Or the storm would continue for longer than predicted and I'd be found too late.

Breathe, I told myself. Panicking won't help.

My kids! It was the first time they would ever be spending a night without me at home. I called and told them

what was happening, forcing myself to sound calm. I didn't tell them I was terrified. That I, a problem solver all my life, couldn't figure out what to do.

It was now about 6 p.m. and dark. What would my black Ford Edge SUV look like in a whiteout at night? Would it appear as a shadow? Or worse, would it be invisible?

Suddenly a truck drove by, barely missing me. It was close. But surprise soon turned to thoughts of salvation. I put the car in drive and followed the truck, desperate, with no idea where we were heading. When it suddenly turned, I didn't know what to do.

"I'm going to the beach," the driver shouted through his open window, his words almost lost in the wind.

I knew the beach wasn't in the direction of my home, but I had no idea where I was. So I stopped the car and texted my colleague whose laptop bag I had just returned. I joked about my good deed ending in disaster. But he had an idea. "Pin your location on Google Maps and send it to me," he said.

I did, and a few minutes later he texted me back a screenshot of the satellite view of where I was. We figured out that I was on a road called Bouvier Lane, in between two farms. It was now 6:30 p.m. I posted this new information to my Facebook community group, pleading for anyone who knew who lived on the farms to help me get rescued.

After that, all I could do was sit in the car and try to stay warm. I was so glad

that I'd just filled it up. I'd done all I could, and no matter what happened, I had to be at peace with that. But even if someone did figure out where I was, would help be able to come through the swirling snow and shrieking wind?

Soon enough, though, people started chiming in on my post. They knew the family who lived there! I got a message from someone who was going to put me in touch with them.

At 8 p.m., my cellphone rang. It was the son of the farmer who owned the land beside the road I was stranded on. He told me that his dad was coming to get me.

Then, about 45 minutes later, I saw a tall figure in a yellow rain slicker striding toward me in the dark, carrying a flashlight. I'd never been more relieved to see someone in my life. It was André Bouvier, who'd walked about 550 yards through the blizzard to come get me, fighting the wind and snow each step of the way, shielding his eyes from the stinging snow with a mittened hand.

"Can you drive?" I asked, shakily. "My nerves are shot." He thrust his face closer to mine. It was then that I noticed the silver hair and wrinkled skin of an elderly man.

"No," he replied, his voice steady. "I want you to follow me in your car. You'll be OK."

He turned around and started to trudge through the snow, sure of the direction. I drove slowly behind him, clutching the wheel, feeling my heart begin to beat more slowly. When we reached the house, I got out of the car and burst into tears, all my fears turning into relief and gratitude.

As his wife, Maryann Bouvier, treated me to hot drinks and applesauce, André, who was 80 years old, said he'd noticed two other cars stranded, too, and he went back out into the storm to get them: a father and his two kids, and a couple with their daughter.

We all spent the night telling stories, the kids ate the pizza I'd bought, and we slept scattered around the house, on sofas and reclining chairs. By 5:30 the next morning, André had cleared the snow from his driveway enough that we could all get out and drive home, which, in my case, was only five minutes away. The storm had turned me around so much, I didn't realize how close I was. Even so, I couldn't have gone any farther without risking my life.

The experience has been a game changer for me. I now approach challenges with a sense of calm I'd not known before.

But best of all, it brought André into my life. We're still in touch, and I know we'll be friends forever. **R**



Not the Faintest Idea

Scared opossums don't "play dead." They become overexcited and pass out.

MENTALFLOSS.COM





How To

GET ALONG




WITH

ANYONE

Whether you get cornered by a chatterbox or embarrassed by a jokester, you can turn things in your favor

BY *Rosemary Counter*



WHILE POLITELY MAKING small talk at a baby shower, my day was ruined in one fell swoop. “Ooh, are you expecting?!” asked a family friend, eyeballing my body up and down. I sheepishly shook my head, instantly

regretting both my party dress and my ample plate of mini-sandwiches. Then, just when I thought this conversation couldn’t get worse, it did: “Well,” she asked earnestly, “why not?”

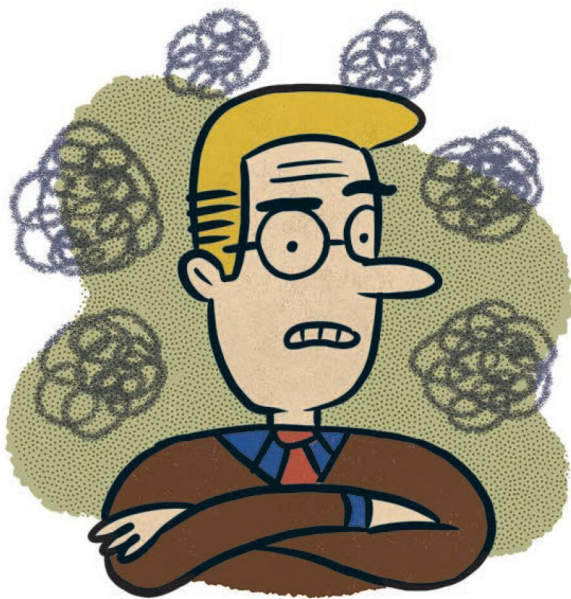
Reasons and retorts flooded my mind—deep-rooted doubts about my maternal capabilities, fear of climate change, “just fat, thanks” or perhaps a well-chosen expletive. Instead, I murmured something about being busy at work and excused myself to mope for the rest of the afternoon.

I’ve since recovered emotionally, though I sometimes daydream of a do-over. What should I have said to such a nosy question from such a rude person? And how about all those other, um, challenging personalities we have to converse with whether we want to or not? Just in time for the holidays, I asked experts about how to deal with the trickiest, tackiest, meanest and most maddening personalities—with nary a single insult hurled.

THE COMPLAINER

You know the type: This restaurant is too expensive, the music is too loud, my burger is overdone and I can hardly taste it anyhow because I’m probably coming down with something. As *Saturday Night Live*’s famous Debbie Downer sketch goes: *Whaa, whaaaaaa*. But the Complainer in real life isn’t so funny.

“This is a person who thinks life’s unfair to them,” says Jody Carrington, a



psychologist and author of *Feeling Seen: Reconnecting in a Disconnected World*. Nobody’s that bummed out by a burger; they’re down about other, bigger things and are letting it out on specific, controllable things like what’s on their plate, not to mention the unfortunate server who dared to deliver it.

How to deal with this good-mood thief? “If you want to interact better with these people, it starts with empathy,” says Carrington. (This sentiment is true for all tricky personalities, but it’s especially hard with a Complainer.)

Start by removing the small stuff from the equation—let them choose their favorite restaurant, for example—so you can both focus on the bigger picture. Get them talking about what’s

really bothering them, if you can, and then challenge their negative narrative wherever possible with questions about what's good, fun and exciting in their lives. The old adage still applies, says Carrington: "You've gotta kill 'em with kindness and hope it rubs off."

THE CONTRARIAN

You say it's a nice day out; they say it's too hot. You read a good book; they thought it was terrible. You mention they contradict everything you say; they say, "No, I don't!"

"A Contrarian is someone who just likes to argue," explains Mónica Guzmán, author of *I Never Thought of It That Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times*. "Sometimes this is fun, but other times it's aggressive and unpleasant. The Contrarian can't always tell the difference." So while you're arguing the issue at hand, they're arguing for the argument itself—so they win every time.

How can you better brave this battle? Since a Contrarian only wants to spar, choose your battles. For anything inconsequential, "the most disarming way to handle a Contrarian is to say you agree with them," says Ian Leslie, argument expert and author of *Conflicted*:

Why Arguments Are Tearing Us Apart and How They Can Bring Us Together. This doesn't mean you need to lie; try "I agree with you on *that*" to something small and specific, or "I can definitely see your point" if you legit don't agree on a single thing. Then change the topic.

When you want to stand your ground, you can move the Contrarian beyond their default defense position by becoming a more nuanced opponent. "You can sometimes get them off the opinion showdown by asking them for their story or experience with a matter," says Guzmán. Asking "How did you come to believe that?" or "Has that ever happened to you?" can move a conversation away from a competition



of opinions and toward a personal perspective. You might learn that you value their opinion after all.

THE CHATTERBOX

If you can't ever seem to finish a story or sentence, chances are you're face to face with a Chatterbox. Despite the adorable moniker, they can be a frustrating bunch, says communication expert Sandy Gerber, author of *Emotional Magnetism: How to Communicate to Ignite Connection in Your Relationships*. "The Chatterbox is a story stealer. They identify with whatever you're saying and then barf out a story about themselves," she says.

It feels as if the Chatterbox is constantly trying to one-up you, but that's not necessarily true. They could be socially anxious, uncomfortable with silence or just extra passionate and excitable. But whatever the reason, they probably don't even notice they do this, nor understand the deeper reason why.

"Particularly in kids, Chatterboxes could just as easily be called connection seekers," says Carrington. "That's all they're after, but they're not giving you the chance to connect back, so they talk even more." And because they're chatting a mile a minute, you might not notice until you're irked on the

drive home, having realized all your stories were hijacked.

Next time, try the phrase you'd least expect: "Tell me more." Says Carrington: "Choose a topic and let them exhaust it. Ask them questions, follow up and really listen."

Once the Chatterbox has run out of things to say, their need to be heard has been met, so now it's your turn. Jump in with something like "I just love all your stories, and I have one for you too." For once, the floor is yours.

THE TECH ADDICT

Socially, few things are more annoying than someone who repeatedly checks their phone in the middle of your conversation. Soon enough, you may be



projecting sulky thoughts their way, says Carrington, like: *I'm boring you. You're more concerned with whatever's on that phone than me. You don't care about me.*

Ouch.

Just remember, the Tech Addict's annoying habits aren't about you.

"It's rude, for sure, but sometimes we mistake the behavior for more than what it is," says Leslie. "It's very possible they're just nervous or anxious." It's also possible their partner is stranded with a flat tire or their kid is sick. The point is, you don't know.

So before you hastily rage at the Tech Addict's blatant rudeness, focus instead on building a better conversation than whatever is going down on Instagram. But you might never get there, given the power of today's clickbait, so if you're close enough to a person, Carrington advises you to cheekily ask: "What's on that thing that's so alluring?" Chances are they'll apologize and sheepishly tuck the phone away. And if the answer is something real, talk about it.

Better yet, avoid the situation in advance by saying something like "I'm so interested in catching up properly, how about we leave our phones in the car?" If they indeed have that flat tire or sick kid, you won't have to assume it's because your stories are boring.



THE POLITICAL ANTAGONIST

Oh boy. This person's ideology is fundamentally different from yours. They've read the news (and/or the dark web) and, as usual, they're ready and eager to rumble.

No family is immune to political differences, though Guzmán has a particularly complicated case: She's the liberal daughter of Mexican immigrants who voted for Donald Trump twice, and naturally they want to discuss differing politics over dessert.

Like the Contrarian, the Political Antagonist loves to argue, only they've got a great big endgame of changing your mind. They can't, and won't, change theirs, and neither will you, because you're both passionate about

your politics—which is exactly why they've singled you out for a fight. *Sigh.*

Turn that bad thought good, however, by remembering that they chose you because they consider you a worthy intellectual opponent and cannot operate without you.

"If they're your adversary, you're probably theirs too," Guzmán says.

Politics and religion used to be hard no-go zones of polite conversation, but not so anymore—and that's a good thing. "Heat in a conversation is good," says Guzmán. "It means you're exposing yourself to different points of view, and you're learning and challenging each other."

How can you avoid a pointless squabble? "The line is personal hostility, and don't cross it," says Leslie. If you're even nearing that boundary, turn down the dial. If your sparring partner is getting angry or aggressive, try Guzmán's suggestion to de-escalate: "I'm sorry, I didn't realize that this mattered so much to you."

You could continue with "Tell me more," if and only if a more productive conversation feels possible. But if it's just too heated, a distraction makes for an excellent exit strategy. Try "Time for pie! Apple or pumpkin?" (Because we can all agree on pie.)



THE INAPPROPRIATE JOKESTER

Every family has one, so let's call him Uncle Bob: He's loud and brash, his opinions haven't changed since the '80s, and just as you're happily passing the sweet potatoes around the dinner table, he decides now's a good time to drop a totally inappropriate joke.

There are three possible explanations for the faux pas. "Inappropriate jokers are either blind to their prejudices, trying to be controversial, or intolerant of other points of view," says Chuck Wisner, author of *The Art of Conscious Conversations: Transforming How We Talk, Listen and Interact*. None justify discrimination.

Now, this is awkward. Should you feign a chuckle to keep the peace or

make a scene and confront Uncle Bob for his (racist, sexist, classist, homophobic) “joke”? Naturally, it depends.

“If a person who represents that particular group is present, you probably need to intervene because it’s the right thing to do,” says Guzmán. You should say something both for that person’s dignity and to avoid your eternal guilt from being a silent bystander—a situation that often hurts the offended person as much as the joke does.

But you don’t have to declare Uncle Bob a despicable racist and insist he change his ways this instant (he won’t). “Saying ‘Uncle Bob, that’s not OK,’” as Guzmán suggests, says in few words everything that everyone is thinking. Or try Wisner’s phrasing: “That sounds racist to me. I know you don’t mean that.” The jokester is unlikely to double down with “I do, actually, as I’m very racist.”

If the comment is so inflammatory that it sparks further conversation, be careful to critique the joke, not the person, and to frame your criticism as your own. Wisner suggests saying, “To me, that joke is offensive, and let me tell you why.” This could be a good chat for later, when Uncle Bob is calm and alone, when there’s time for a deeper but nonconfrontational conversation about what’s really going on.

“There’s something in every bad joke that says ‘I’m frustrated but I can’t say it,’” says Guzmán. If you can get Uncle Bob to let it out, hopefully he’ll do better next year.

THE DRAMA QUEEN

“The Chatterbox on steroids,” in Carrington’s words, the Drama Queen (or King) is someone who similarly dominates the conversation, chatting your ear off about all the wild things you will never believe are happening in the “Worst. Week. Ever!” The boring details of your week, meanwhile, can’t possibly compare, so don’t even try.

Why do some people love drama? “This person’s always exaggerating because they want to be the center of attention,” says Gerber. The more they do this, the more we pull away from the over-the-top emotions of a life in constant crisis.

“We tend to avoid them because keeping up with the drama is an energy sucker,” says Carrington. “But this only means they’ll turn it up. They’ve often exhausted the people in their lives and are therefore coming on even stronger.”

The Drama Queen desperately wants your attention and she’s also terrified she’ll lose it, hence the show she’s putting on in hopes you’ll never look away.

Resist the urge to cut her off and instead set some boundaries you can both stick to. “Be really clear in advance about what you’re willing and not willing to do,” says Carrington. Maybe this means you’ll talk about her ex for 20 minutes but no more. Or maybe it means you reschedule lunch until a “week when you’re feeling better.” She might be mad in the moment, but the Drama Queen secretly loves the regular-person treatment that shows

you're sticking around for the real her—no drama required.

THE FRENEMY

Though all these personalities are difficult, none is more so than the Frenemy—that is, someone equal parts friend and enemy—a relationship phenomenon so subtle, personal and complicated that sometimes you have to be in it to know it's there.

"I call this a seesaw friendship," says Gerber, "because there are highs and lows and you never know what you're going to get." One day your friend is fun and fab and a blast to be with, while the next she is low-key mad or mean—and you have no clue why.

Except really you know exactly why: "The Frenemy is a passive-aggressive person motivated by their perceived lack of value, and they're rolling their eyes at anything that you have or do that feels like it's undervaluing them," says Gerber. To feel better about themselves, the Frenemy is desperate to knock you down a little bit at a time.

When dealing with a Frenemy, you have to protect yourself first. "These people are almost firing arrows at you," says Wisner. "So you can dodge the arrow, you can let the arrow pierce and hurt or offend you, or you can catch the



arrow and stop it." Options A and B are easy in the moment, but C is the brave choice if you want things to change.

To start a difficult conversation, Wisner suggests saying, "That doesn't feel sincere to me. Did you mean that?"

That might address a particular jab, but if you actually want to fix and save the friendship—and maybe you don't—you're going to need to dig deeper.

"These people are highly competitive on the surface, but underneath they're insecure, hurt and highly distrustful," says Gerber. To turn a frenemy into a real friend, you're going to have to open up and talk about it. "Tell them what you're looking for in a friendship and what you're willing to offer," she says. "But if they can't or won't have that conversation, well, that's your answer."

THE OVERSHARER


Unsolicited commentary about someone's sex life, their recurring rash, their BFF's messy divorce or whatever just happened in the bathroom (yuck) are all clues you've got an Oversharer on your hands. Whether they're telling too much or asking for details you're not comfortable sharing, this all-too-common persona has neither filter nor boundaries.

"The discomfort you feel comes from a difference of standards about what topics of conversation are OK," says Wisner. "What they consider to be acceptable, need-to-know information is different from what it is for you."

At the same awkward time, the Oversharer is only trying to get closer to you by revealing more about themselves—and hoping you'll be similarly forthcoming. "We tend to label these people as nosy, invasive or rude," notes Gerber, "but they really just want to be liked and accepted."

To satisfy the Oversharer, and simultaneously veto endless TMI, consider sharing something else—still personal but less invasive, ideally—that satisfies their urge to connect. When they really cross the line, don't be shy (they're not). Say something that indicates your boundary is being crossed. "OMG, that's private!" says everything, and you'll never have to bring it up again.

A compliment also works wonders with an Oversharer, adds Gerber, because it refocuses the conversation in their direction while subtly resetting your boundary.

To my nosy family friend who commented on the state of my uterus, for example, I could have given this wise response: "You made having kids look so easy! How'd you do it?" Then nod and smile, nod and smile. I won't get my baby shower do-over in this life, but at least next time I'll be ready to face an Oversharer—or any of the challenging people it takes to make a world. 



I Google, Therefore I Am

We have always pondered big questions, but now we can take such matters to a search engine. Here are the top five existential queries Americans ask Google:

Why is the sky blue?

What do dreams mean?

What is the meaning of life?

Why am I so tired?

Who am I?

DIGG.COM

YOUR TRUE STORIES

The BEST Mistake I EVER MADE

BELOVED PAINTER
BOB ROSS WAS RIGHT:
THERE ARE NO MISTAKES,
JUST HAPPY ACCIDENTS

BY *Reader's Digest* Readers

WRONG PERSON, RIGHT TIME

I saw an old high school friend's name pop up on Facebook. The account had no photo, but I was excited and wrote her a message: "Melinda, I'm so happy to find you again!" She replied, "Nice to hear from you, Bonnie. Let's catch up." We went back and forth, updating each another on the years since high school. But something wasn't right. The stories just didn't jibe with my memories. Turned out this was a different Melinda from high school, not the one I had thought. But we were having so much fun, we kept in touch, and she's become a valued friend. I'm quite thankful for the case of mistaken identity.

—BONNIE DRURY *Carmichael, CA*

Old Flame Name Game

Years ago, I called my then-boyfriend by my ex's name. I felt horrible, but then I realized I missed my ex and had never gotten over him. We've been back together ever since.

—NICOLE TREVISAN *Roswell, GA*



DOWN TO A FINE ART

As an elementary art teacher with one classroom sink, I found it challenging to clean 30 pairs of hands at the end of class. I usually stood at the front of the line passing out paper towels. One day I accidentally dropped a full roll into the running sink. Frustrated, I grabbed the soaked roll, gave it a quick squeeze, and passed damp towels down the line. Our routine was forever changed. Cleanup helpers love passing damp paper towels out while students wait at their tables, and everyone's hands are clean in no time. I passed this tip down to the art teacher who succeeded me, and she loved it.

—JEANNE CROSBY
Lexington, KY

MISTAKING THE CAKE

Years ago, I was making a chocolate cheesecake for a potluck. As I mixed ingredients, I was suddenly unsure if I had included the correct amount of chocolate. Overcompensating, I added three times the amount of chocolate that the recipe called for. But my cheesecake was a huge hit and was dubbed Joanne's Chocolate Truffle Cheesecake, much to my delight.

—JOANNE BIRNBERG *Palm Bay, FL*

PARK THAT THOUGHT

I parked my Camaro in a hotel lot while I played in a tennis tournament. I won second place in men's doubles. A group of us, including the cute redhead who had won second place in women's doubles, were heading out to celebrate when I realized my Camaro had been towed. I recovered it quickly and was still able to meet up with the group. The redhead and I began dating, and we've now been married for 38 years. To this day, she claims my calm reaction to my car being towed helped her realize I was special.

—TIM FERGUSON *Paoli, IN*



SOCIAL MEDIA FTW

A few years ago, my daughter asked me to film her doing a silly dance. The next morning, she screamed in disbelief. She'd mistakenly posted it publicly on TikTok and it had already gone viral. We agreed she could keep the video up if I made my own account to keep an eye on things. I'm a human resources consultant and I began posting industry knowledge of my own. Recently, a follower thanked me because my post helped her realize that her company was underpaying her and she was compensated \$10,000 in back pay. Hard to believe this old gal now has an account with thousands of followers and hundreds of people thanking me for the help I've been able to provide.

—CINDY OPEKA
Sacramento, CA

Making a Splash

During a water fight at camp, I filled a bucket to toss at a fellow counselor. He ducked, and to my horror, I drenched a random visitor who was standing behind him. I ran into my cabin to hide, and when I slunk out, the stranger was waiting on the roof and got me back by dumping his own bucket of water on me. He was the camp bus driver, and to my surprise, he asked me on a date. Ron and I enjoyed 59 years of marriage. I wouldn't trade those years for anything.

—EILENE ROECKER *Fairview, OR*

Burning Out and Starting Up

I realized I was out of Weedwacker fuel. I needed only a bit more and thought it wouldn't matter if I used chain saw fuel. Turns out, it did matter, and I burned up my Weedwacker engine. However, that inspired me to create a tool that could easily mix a small amount of fuel in any ratio.

Thirty years later, we have sold 2.6 million units.

—TIM RICHARDS *Sequim, WA*




A BANG-UP JOB

I left a job at McDonald's to work for a telephone company at a significant pay cut. At first I wondered if I'd made a mistake: McDonald's might've been a dead end, but it paid more. But my new gig turned into a 30-year career during which I utilized the company's tuition assistance program to finish my undergrad and graduate degrees. I also became a manager and worked with wonderful people who are still my friends. Best "mistake" I ever made, for certain.

—JAN CARTER *Durham, NC*

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

My husband and I had just opened a janitorial business. I accidentally priced some cleaning scrapers at \$0.79 instead of \$1.79. I realized my mistake when a customer bought out the entire stock. Turns out that he was the buyer for the county and inquired about prices for several other products. The county has been our best customer since.

—TERRI COSTANZO
Pahrump, NV 

GOT A GOOD CAMPING STORY?

If good campers leave no trace, then bad campers probably leave with hilarious stories. Maybe your tent-pitching ended in tatters, your hiking was hellacious or all you managed to cook up over the campfire was calamity. If you had a great adventure—or misadventure—in the great outdoors, see terms and share your story at rd.com/camping. It might appear in a future issue of *Reader's Digest*.



NATIONAL INTEREST



MY DAY OF NO PLASTIC

*Is that even possible?
One man went to extremes to find out.*

BY A.J. Jacobs
FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES



On the morning of the day I had decided to go without using plastic products—or even touching plastic—I opened my eyes and put my bare feet on the carpet, which is made of nylon, a type of plastic. I was roughly 10 seconds into my experiment, and I had already committed a violation.

Since its invention more than a century ago, plastic has crept into every aspect of our lives. It has made possible thousands of modern conveniences, but it has come with downsides, especially for the environment. In a 24-hour experiment, I tried to live without it altogether in an effort to see what plastic stuff we can't do without and what we may be able to give up. (As a journalist who loves a good lifestyle experiment, I have

written books about some of my endeavors, including *The Year of Living Biblically* and *My Life as an Experiment: One Man's Humble Quest to Improve Himself*.)

At the start of my no-plastic day, I made my way toward the bathroom, only to stop myself before I went in.

"Could you open the door for me?" I asked my wife, Julie. "The doorknob has a plastic coating."

She opened it for me, letting out a "this is going to be a long day" sigh.

My morning hygiene routine needed a total revamp, which had required detailed research and preparations in the days before my experiment. I could not use my regular toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo or liquid soap, all of which were encased in plastic or made

of plastic. Fortunately, there is a huge industry of plastic-free products targeted at eco-conscious consumers, and I had bought an array of them, a haul that included a bamboo toothbrush with bristles made of wild boar hair. Instead of toothpaste, I had a jar of gray mint-charcoal toothpaste pellets. I popped one in, chewed it, sipped water and brushed. It was nice and minty, although the ash-colored spit was unsettling.

I liked my shampoo bar, which is just what it sounds like. Mine was scented pink grapefruit and vanilla, and it lathered up well. According to shampoo bar advocates, it is also cheaper than bottled shampoo on a per-wash basis (one bar can last 80 showers), which is good, because the plastic-free life can be expensive. For example, Package Free sells plastic-free razors for upwards of \$80.

Taking a blogger's advice, I mixed a DIY deodorant out of tea tree oil and baking soda. It left me smelling a little like a medieval cathedral, but in a good way. Making your own stuff is another way to avoid plastic, though it does require another luxury: free time.

Before I was done in the bathroom, I had broken the rules a second time, by using the toilet.

Getting dressed was also a challenge, given that so many clothing items include plastic. I had ordered a pair of wool pants that promised to be plastic free, but they had not arrived. In their stead, I chose a pair of old Banana

Republic chinos. The tag said "100% cotton," but when I checked the day before with a very helpful Banana Republic public relations representative, the full story turned out to be a little more complicated. The main fabric is indeed 100% cotton, but there was plastic lurking in the zipper tape, internal waistband, woven label, pocketing and threads, the representative told me. I cut my thumb trying to slice off the black brand label with an all-metal knife. Instead of a Band-Aid—yes, plastic—I used some gummed paper tape to stop the bleeding.

Happily, my underwear—blue boxers from Cottonique made of 100% organic cotton with a cotton drawstring in place of the elastic (which is often plastic) waistband—did not represent a plastic violation. I had found this item via an internet list of "14 Hot & Sustainable Underwear Brands for Men."

For my upper body, I lucked out. Our friend Kristen had knitted my wife a sweater for a birthday present. It had rectangles of blue and purple, and it was 100% merino wool.

"Could I borrow Kristen's sweater for the day?" I asked Julie.

"You're going to stretch it out," Julie said.

"It's for planet Earth," I reminded her.

THE WORLD PRODUCES about 400 million metric tons of plastic waste each year, according to a United Nations report. About half the plastic we encounter in daily life is tossed out after a single use.

The report noted that “we have become addicted to single-use plastic products—with severe environmental, social, economic and health consequences.”

I'm one of the addicts. I'd estimate that I toss about 800 plastic items in the garbage each year—takeout containers, pens, cups, Amazon packages with foam inside and more.

Before my Day of No Plastic, I immersed myself in a number of no-plastic books, videos and podcasts. One of the books, *Life Without Plastic: The Practical Step-by-Step Guide to Avoiding Plastic to Keep Your Family and the Planet Healthy* by Jay Sinha and Chantal Plamondon, came from Amazon wrapped in clear plastic, like a slice of American cheese. I mentioned this to Sinha, and he promised to look into it.

I also called Gabby Salazar, a social scientist who studies what motivates people to support environmental causes, and asked for her advice as I headed into my plastic-free day.

“It might be better to start small,” Salazar said. “Start by creating a single habit, like always carrying a stainless steel water bottle. After you've got that down, you start another habit, like taking produce bags to the grocery. You build up gradually. That's how you make real change. Otherwise, you'll just be overwhelmed.”

“Maybe being overwhelmed will bring some sort of clarity?” I said.

“That'd be nice,” Salazar said.

Admittedly, living completely without plastic is probably an absurd idea.

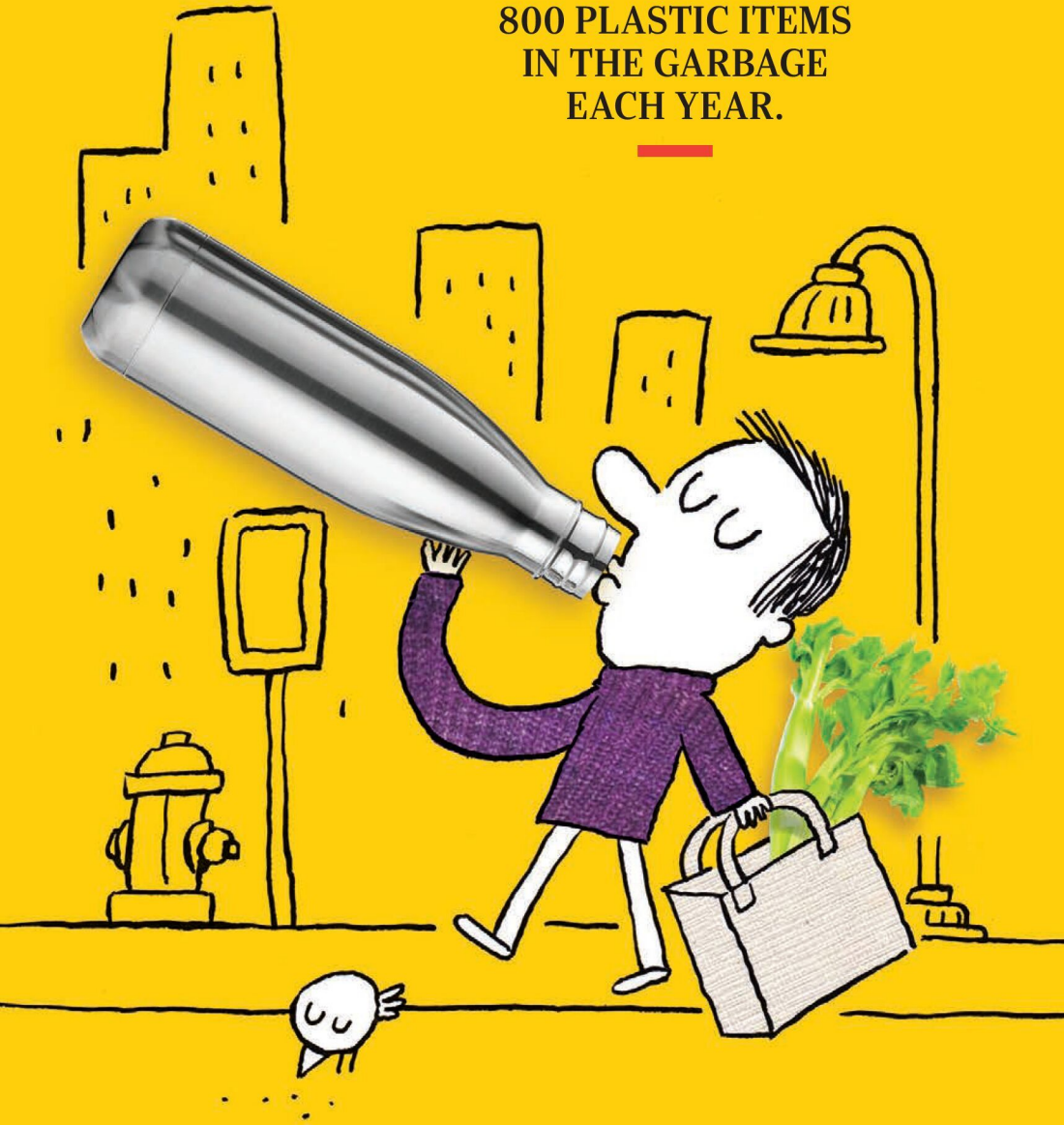
Despite its faults, plastic is a crucial ingredient in medical equipment, smoke alarms and helmets. There's truth to the plastics industry's catchphrase from the 1990s: “Plastics make it possible.”

In many cases, plastic can help the environment: Plastic airplane parts are lighter than metal ones, which means less fuel and lower carbon dioxide emissions. Solar panels and wind turbines have plastic parts. That said, the world is overloaded with the stuff, especially the disposable forms. The Earth Policy Institute estimates that people go through 1 trillion single-use plastic bags each year.

The crisis was a long time coming. There's some debate over when plastic entered the world, but many date it to 1855, when a British metallurgist, Alexander Parkes, patented a thermoplastic material as a waterproof coating for fabrics. He called the substance Parkesine. Over the decades, labs across the world birthed other types, all with a similar chemistry: They are polymer chains, and most are made from petroleum or natural gas. Thanks to chemical additives, plastics vary wildly. They can be opaque or transparent, foamy or hard, stretchy or brittle. They are known by many names, including polyester and Styrofoam, as well as by shorthand abbreviations like PVC and PET.

Plastic manufacturing ramped up for World War II and was crucial to the war effort, providing nylon parachutes and Plexiglas aircraft windows. That was

I TOSS ABOUT
800 PLASTIC ITEMS
IN THE GARBAGE
EACH YEAR.



followed by a postwar boom, said Susan Freinkel, author of *Plastic: A Toxic Love Story*, a book on the history and science of plastic. "Plastic went into things like Formica counters, refrigerator liners, car parts, clothing, shoes, just all sorts of stuff that was designed to be used for a while," she said.

Then things took a turn.

"Where we really started to get into trouble is when it started going into single-use stuff," Freinkel said. "I call it prefab litter."

The outpouring of straws, cups, bags and other ephemera has led to disastrous consequences for the environment. According to a study by the Pew Charitable Trusts, more than 11 million metric tons of plastic enter oceans each year, leaching into the water, disrupting

the food chain and choking marine life.

Close to 20% of plastic waste gets burned, releasing CO₂ into the air, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which also reports that only 9% of plastics are recycled. Some aren't economical to recycle, and other types degrade in quality when they are.

Plastic may also harm our health. Certain plastic additives, such as BPA and phthalates, may disrupt the endocrine system in humans, according to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. Worrying effects may include behavioral problems and lower testosterone levels in boys, and preterm births and lower thyroid hormone levels for women.

"Solving this plastic problem can't



fall entirely on the shoulders of consumers,” Salazar told me. “We need to work on it on all fronts.”

EARLY IN MY no-plastic day, everything looked menacing, as if it might be harboring hidden polymers. The kitchen was particularly fraught. Anything I could use for cooking was off-limits—the toaster, the oven, the microwave. Even leftovers were a no-go. My son waved a plastic baggie filled with French toast. “You want some of this?” Yes, I did.

Instead, I decided to go foraging for raw food items.

I left my building using the stairs, rather than the elevator with its plastic buttons, and walked to a health food store near our Manhattan apartment. I brought along bags of varying sizes, all of them cotton. I also had two glass containers.

At the store, I filled up one of my bags with apples and oranges. Each had a sticker. Another likely violation, but I ignored it.

At the bulk bins, I scooped walnuts and oatmeal into my glass containers using a (washed) steel ladle I had brought from home. The bins themselves were plastic, which I ignored, because I was hungry.

I went to the cashier. It was time to pay, which was a problem. Credit cards were out. So was Apple Pay, as iPhones contain plastic. And although U.S. paper currency is made mainly of cotton and linen, each bill likely contains

synthetic fibers, and the higher denominations have a security thread made of plastic to prevent counterfeiting. To be safe, I had brought along a cotton sack full of coins that I had withdrawn from the bank and my kids’ piggy banks.

At the checkout counter, I started stacking quarters as quickly as I could between nervous glances at the customers behind me.

“I’m really sorry this is taking so long,” I said.

“That’s OK,” the cashier said. “I meditate every morning so I can deal with turmoil like this.”

He added that he appreciated my commitment to the environment. It was the first positive feedback I’d received. I counted out \$19.02—exact change!—and went home to eat my breakfast: nuts and oranges on a metal cookie tray, which I balanced on my lap.

A couple of hours later, in search of a plastic-free lunch, I walked to a sandwich and salad shop, toting my rectangular glass dish and bamboo cutlery.

“Can you make the salad in this glass container?” I asked, holding it up.

“One minute please,” the man behind the counter said tersely.

He called over a manager, who said OK. Victory! But the manager then rejected my follow-up request to use my steel scooper.

After lunch, I headed to Central Park, figuring that this was a spot where I could relax in a plastic-free environment. I took the subway there, which scored me more violations, since the



trains themselves have plastic parts and you need a MetroCard or smart-phone to get through the turnstiles.

At least I didn't sit in one of those plastic orange seats. I brought my own: an unpainted fold-up Nordic-style teak chair, hard and austere. It's what I had been using at the apartment to avoid the plastic-tainted chairs and couches.

I plopped my chair down near a pole in the middle of the car. The other passengers were so buried in their phones that the sight of a man on a wooden chair didn't faze them.

Walking through Central Park, I spotted dental floss picks, a black plastic knife and a plastic bag.

Back home, I recorded some of my impressions. I wrote on paper with an unpainted cedar pencil from a Zero-Waste Pencil Tin Set (regular pencils contain plastic-filled yellow paint). After a while, I went to get a drink of water, which brings up perhaps the most pervasive foe of all: microplastics. These tiny particles are everywhere—in the water we drink, in the air we breathe, in the oceans. They come from, among other things, degraded plastic litter.

Are they harmful to us? I talked with several scientists, and the general answer I got was "We don't know yet." But those who are extra cautious can use products that promise to filter microplastics from water and air.

I had bought a pitcher by LifeStraw that contains a membrane microfilter. Of course the pitcher itself had plastic parts, so I couldn't use it on the Big Day. Instead, the night before, I spent some time at the sink filtering water and filling up Mason jars. Our kitchen looked as though it was ready for the apocalypse. The water tasted particularly pure, which I'm guessing was some sort of a placebo effect.

I wrote for a while. Then I sat there in my wooden chair. Phone-less. Internet-less. Julie took some pity on me and offered to play a game of cards. I shook my head.

"Plastic coating," I said.

At about 9 p.m., I took our dog for her nightly walk. I was using a 100% cotton leash I had bought online. I had ditched the poop bags—even the sustainable ones I'd found were made with recycled or plant-based plastic. Instead, I carried a metal spatula. Thankfully, I didn't have to use it.

At 10:30 p.m., exhausted, I lay down on my makeshift bed—cotton sheets on the wood floor, since my mattress and pillows are plasticity.

I woke up the next morning glad to have survived my ordeal and to be reunited with my phone—but also with a feeling of defeat.

By my count, on my day of no plastic, I had made 164 violations. As Salazar had predicted, I felt overwhelmed. And also uncertain. Is it a good idea to use boar's hair toothbrushes, tea tree deodorant and microplastic-filtering devices, or does the trouble of using those things make everyone so bonkers that they actually end up damaging the cause?

I called Salazar for a pep talk.

"You can drive yourself crazy," she said. "But it's not about perfection, it's about progress." Believe it or not,

individual behavior matters. It adds up.

"Remember," she continued, "it's not about plastic being the enemy. It's about single-use as the enemy. It's the culture of using something once and throwing it away."

I thought back to something that the author Susan Freinkel had told me: "I'm not an absolutist at all. If you came into my kitchen, you would be like, 'You wrote this book and look at how you live!'" Freinkel does make an effort, she said. She avoids single-use bags, cups and packaging, among other things.

I pledge to try, even after my not wholly successful attempt at a one-day ban.

I'll start with small things, building up habits. I liked the shampoo bar. And I can take produce bags to the grocery. I might even start packing my steel water bottle and bamboo cutlery. And from there, who knows?

And I'll proudly wear the "Keep the Sea Plastic Free" T-shirt that I bought online in the days leading up to the experiment. It's just 10% polyester. **R**

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Suspicious Characters

Iowa's official online archive of court records can make for sensational reading. Last year, the Easter Bunny was listed as the legal representative in hundreds of criminal cases. It's not the first time fictional "test cases" have been listed on the court system's website. In 2014, Mickey Mouse filed a small claims case against Donald Duck. And in 1997, Santa Claus was convicted of felony burglary.

IOWACAPITALDISPATCH.COM

Dementia Breakthroughs

After decades of disappointments, new treatments and tests are finally here

BY *Vanessa Milne*

EIGHT YEARS AGO, neurologist Dan Gibbs was sitting in a room with two dozen doctors and researchers. He was getting ready to look at brain scans—not a patient's, but his own. They would definitively answer a question he'd had for years: What was wrong with him?

It started when he was 55 and working in Portland, Oregon. He noticed he couldn't smell certain things, like flowers. Then he began to smell things that weren't there, like perfume, citrus or baking bread. He randomly got a clue as to what might be the cause after doing an at-home DNA test to find out more about his family tree. The results showed he had two copies of a gene, APOE4, that increases the

risk of developing Alzheimer's. He was shocked: Before his genetic test, it had never occurred to him that he might get the disease.

At the time, he had no memory symptoms, but over the next few years, he noticed some mild memory problems, like forgetting his colleagues' names and having difficulty memorizing his new office phone number. That, combined with his background as a researcher, led him to participate in a study at the University of California, San Francisco that was focused on diagnosing Alzheimer's.

And now the results were in.

The researchers pulled up the pictures and showed him beta-amyloid plaques in different parts of his brain,



including his prefrontal cortex and the olfactory area, which controls smell. It was a sign of early-stage Alzheimer's.

Surprisingly, Dr. Gibbs was happy: "When they showed me the scans, it was a relief to have a firm diagnosis," he says.

What Is Dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term for a group of symptoms contributing to a decline in memory, thinking, reasoning and social abilities. It's progressive, and some people with dementia will need around-the-clock help at the end of their lives.

Fifty-five million people around the world have dementia, including 5.8 million in the United States. While only 1% of those ages 65 to 69 have it, the risk of being diagnosed doubles every five years between the ages of 65 and 84. One in four people over age 85 have dementia.

But breakthroughs in treatment and testing this year have given new hope to researchers like Don Weaver, a clinical neurologist and the director and senior scientist at the Krembil Research Institute at the University Health Network in Toronto. "There's genuine room for optimism," he says. "The research is moving at a faster pace than ever before." That has come to fruition with new treatments, plus groundbreaking tests in the pipeline and more to come.

There are about a dozen different causes of dementia. The most common is Alzheimer's disease, which accounts

for 60% to 70% of dementia cases. While the cause of Alzheimer's is not yet fully understood, researchers have been focusing on the malfunctioning of two specific brain proteins. The first, beta-amyloid proteins, are a normal part of the central nervous system, and are usually cleared out of the brain. In a brain with Alzheimer's, however, these proteins are not properly cleared away. The protein clumps together in between neurons, creating deposits called amyloid plaques, which disrupt cell function.

The second type, tau proteins, are primarily found inside neurons. In people with Alzheimer's, this protein, which normally assists in the transportation of nutrients throughout the brain, accumulates and becomes tangled inside the neuron. The buildup of these two proteins affects the ability of brain cells to communicate. Eventually they kill the cells, affecting a person's ability to think and remember.

Other types of dementia include Lewy body dementia, where protein deposits called Lewy bodies build up in the brain, affecting thinking, memory and movement; vascular dementia, which can happen after a stroke or blood vessel damage reduces the flow of blood and oxygen to the brain; and frontotemporal dementia, when the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain shrink. This last kind can happen to people as young as 40; actor Bruce Willis was recently diagnosed with it at age 67.



New Drugs for Alzheimer's

For decades, the treatment of dementia has seemed frustratingly dormant. Two classes of drugs that were introduced three decades ago can improve symptoms: Cholinesterase inhibitors boost acetylcholine, a chemical the brain needs for alertness, memory and judgment; and memantine regulates glutamate, a chemical messenger needed for learning and memory. But neither offers a way to limit the disease's progress. Aducanumab, launched two years ago, can reduce buildup of amyloid plaques in the brains in Alzheimer's patients, but it has not been proved to slow cognitive decline.

Now, thanks to years of research progress, we're on the brink of major advances in treatment and prevention.

"The new drugs are big, exciting breakthroughs," says Gill Livingston, a professor of psychiatry of older people at University College London. However, she adds, it's still early.

In January of this year, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the first drug that slows the progress of

Alzheimer's rather than just treating the symptoms. In clinical trials, people with Alzheimer's who took the drug lecanemab (Leqembi) for 18 months showed their rate of memory and cognition decline was 27% less than in those who took a placebo. But it's not clear what that decline translates to in the real world. And there are downsides to the new drug, which is given by IV. It's expensive, and it can have serious side effects, including bleeding in the brain.

A second drug, donanemab, not yet approved by the FDA, has also shown promise in clinical trials. It slows the rate of cognitive decline from Alzheimer's by about one-third. But, like lecanemab, it can have similar serious side effects.

"So we're not quite there," says Dr. Livingston. "But it's fantastic that we're *beginning* to be there."

Big Leaps Forward in Prevention

In the past few years, our knowledge about preventing dementia has increased dramatically, and we've learned that many issues that cause dementia are treatable.

"We finally sorted out what the risk factors are, and we're paying attention to them," says Dr. Weaver.

According to a 2020 *Lancet* report led by Dr. Livingston, 40% of dementia cases could be avoided. The No. 1 factor was hearing loss, which can affect your ability to talk to other people and can lead to isolation.

"That really surprised us," says



Dr. Livingston. “And it’s a reversible risk, because you can change it by using hearing aids.”

Spending time socializing was another important lifestyle factor. “Talking to other people stimulates your brain and gets it working because you have to engage, you have to think,” Dr. Livingston explains.

Getting 150 minutes of exercise a week can keep your heart in good shape, which translates into a healthier brain. Having a stimulating job also helps, as does having more education earlier in life—it boosts what’s known as your cognitive reserve, so even if you do suffer from a loss of cognitive power, you have some to spare. Treating depression is also important.

And then there are things to avoid: Smoking and air pollution raise the risk of developing dementia. And it’s now

known that traumatic brain injury increases the risk, as does heavy drinking, having high blood pressure or diabetes, and being obese.

“We now know that for many people, dementia is not inevitable,” says Dr. Livingston.

Blood Tests for More Accurate Diagnosis

Just as important as new medications are breakthroughs in diagnosis. Multiple blood tests for Alzheimer’s, which have been used widely in clinical trials, are expected to be available to the public before the end of 2023, according to Gil Rabinovici, a neurologist and the director of the University of California, San Francisco’s Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center.

Currently, Alzheimer’s is diagnosed by doctors through a combination of

means, including physical exams, brain imaging, and reviewing symptoms and family medical history. Doctors will also administer cognitive tests, such as asking people to remember a list of words, draw a clock or name as many animals as they can. What's missing from this evaluation is direct and conclusive biological evidence of Alzheimer's—meaning that the diagnosis relies heavily on the doctor's expertise, says Dr. Rabinovici.

Dr. Weaver agrees. "It's not like rheumatoid arthritis, for which we can do a blood test, or pneumonia, where you can do an X-ray and go, 'Yep, you've got it.'"

That's important because, according to a 2012 study, about 30% of people clinically diagnosed with Alzheimer's were discovered through autopsy to not actually have had it. That study looked at people with mild to moderate dementia. But for those with only mild cognitive impairment, which is harder to diagnose, the accuracy would be even lower, says Dr. Rabinovici.

In some cases, that would mean that instead of having Alzheimer's disease, people might have vascular or Lewy body dementia. However, for others, their symptoms are caused by something reversible, such as sleep disorders like sleep apnea, mood disorders like depression, or hormonal changes. Medications such as those used to treat insomnia, incontinence and even allergies can negatively affect cognitive function, especially in older adults.

With new Alzheimer's drugs now

available, it's even more important that doctors have the right diagnosis before they prescribe anything. An accurate diagnosis allows people to make crucial decisions such as whether to quit their jobs or move into assisted living, and allows their families to plan for caregiving support.

Michelle Mielke, chair of the department of epidemiology and prevention at Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, says an earlier and more accurate diagnosis, which a blood test may provide, could transform health care in the future.

Plaques start developing in the brain about 20 years before symptoms begin, she explains, and not everyone with plaques will develop cognitive impairment. She says that years from now, "just like we screen people for their cholesterol because we know it is a risk factor for heart attack and stroke, we might be able to screen people by a certain age for amyloid and tau brain proteins. And if they are elevated, we could try a treatment plan of medications that will delay or prevent that person from ever developing symptoms."

Finally, a Focus on Caregivers

Caring for a family member with dementia can be incredibly stressful—but for a long time, caregivers' needs have been overlooked. Now their struggles are better known, thanks to research findings. A review published in *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience* in 2022 found that in

developed countries, up to 85% of caregivers developed depression, and up to 45% developed anxiety.

At the same time, however, community support is growing. Initiatives include “memory cafes,” where caregivers can go with their loved one who has dementia to have a coffee, share in activities, find community—and just feel normal for a while. There are more than 700 memory cafes in the U.S. Your local Alzheimer’s organization can help you find one near you (visit alz.org and click the Local Resources tab).

Other public places, such as museums, are also getting on board, running “dementia-friendly days” where people with cognitive issues and their caregivers are welcome. Phoenix, Arizona, is one of the largest of dozens of cities that have become “dementia friendly” under the Dementia Friendly America initiative from USAging. The city has expanded its number of memory cafes, and runs Dementia Friends presentations that educate people about the condition and how to help those who have it.

In addition, the Phoenix airport offers Compassion Cacti lanyards printed with green cactuses to people who have dementia or other invisible disabilities, which indicate passengers who may need more help. Abroad, Wembley in London will become the U.K.’s first dementia-friendly national stadium. The goal is to improve the match-day experience for people living with dementia, who can find sporting

venues disorienting and overwhelming.

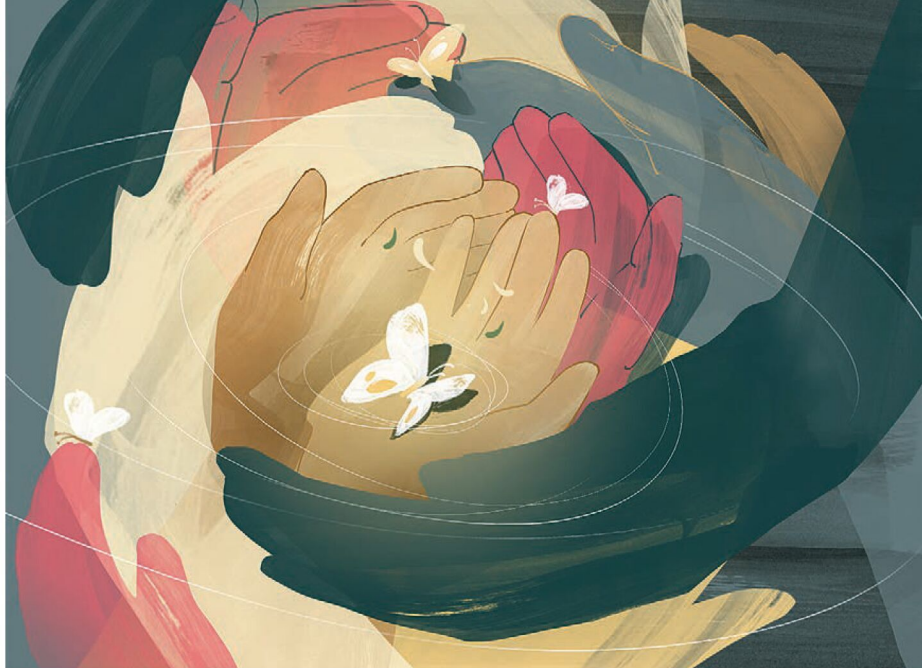
Paula Spencer Scott, the Fort Collins, Colorado, author of *Surviving Alzheimer’s: Practical Tips and Soul-Saving Wisdom for Caregivers*, knows firsthand how hard caregiving is. She cared for her father-in-law, who had dementia. “Truly the most intense emotions I’ve ever experienced have been from being a live-in caregiver,” she says. As a coping mechanism, she and her husband used to say to each other, “It’s not him, it’s the dementia.”

“Intellectually, you know that,” she says. “But emotionally you can just be so frustrated and almost angry with the person, and then you feel guilty.”

Though it’s not a full solution, there’s now a push for caregivers’ work to be financially supported. Many states now allow children, grandchildren and even friends to be paid for caregiving through Medicaid, and more and more are allowing spouses to be paid as well.

“It’s been a breakthrough for caregivers that there’s an increasing emphasis on their emotional and mental health,” says Scott. “Over the last 10, 15 years, there has been a huge groundswell of support.”

This also helps reduce the stigma around people with dementia, says Dr. Gibbs. “I’m very upfront with telling people about my Alzheimer’s. A couple of weeks ago, my wife and I went to our 50th college reunion, and I talked to my classmates about it. Sometimes I think we’re too hesitant to engage people with dementia.”



More Clarity on the Causes

Over the past two decades, there has been a myopic focus on amyloid plaques, says Dr. Weaver. His lab is researching another factor: inflammation. “I think of Alzheimer’s as an autoimmune disease of the brain, where the immune system is turned on by multiple factors, like air pollution, depression or infections,” he says. “Now you have a hopped-up immune system on a search-and-destroy mission in the brain. It’s wandering around inside your skull, and oops, it searches for and destroys a few neurons, which causes inflammation.”

Other researchers, too, are looking in different directions, he says: malfunctioning of the brain’s mitochondria, which produce energy for cells; lipids in the brain becoming distorted; or diseased membranes, damage to


which could kill the cell. Treatments being tested for other possible dementia causes include stem cell therapy and transcranial magnetic stimulation.

DR. WEAVER SAYS HE WILL ALWAYS remember one of his first encounters with a dementia patient, a military veteran. “The poor man was so confused that he was hiding under his hospital bed,” Dr. Weaver recalls. “He was reliving his war experiences. I got down on my hands and knees and looked into this man’s eyes. It was heartbreaking. I thought, ‘We’ve got to do something for these people.’”

After the frustrating decades since then of delivering the news to thousands of patients that they have dementia, he’s more determined than ever to finally be able to tell them, “I have something that can help you.” **R**



**LIFE ADVICE
FROM 1,000
STRANGERS**



**FACED WITH A
QUARTER-LIFE CRISIS,
A YOUNG MAN TRAVELS THE COUNTRY
TO SEEK GUIDANCE**

BY *Tom Hallman Jr.*



Imran Nuri and his camera,
on the road in America



From the time he learned to walk, Imran Nuri heard from his parents time and time again, “You must strive to be the best at everything.” After all, it was that thinking that led them to realize their American dream after moving to the United States from India in 1991.

And Nuri, a dutiful, loving son, followed their advice. Born in Ohio in 1997, he graduated with honors from Ohio State University, then moved to Chicago, where he landed a prime job as a national marketing director for a company connecting health-care professionals with hospitals.

He was young and on the rise, working with power brokers and high-flying investors. His parents were proud. But with each passing month, Nuri realized that his parents’ advice, while well intentioned, grew out of their own hopes and disappointments. It wasn’t necessarily for him.

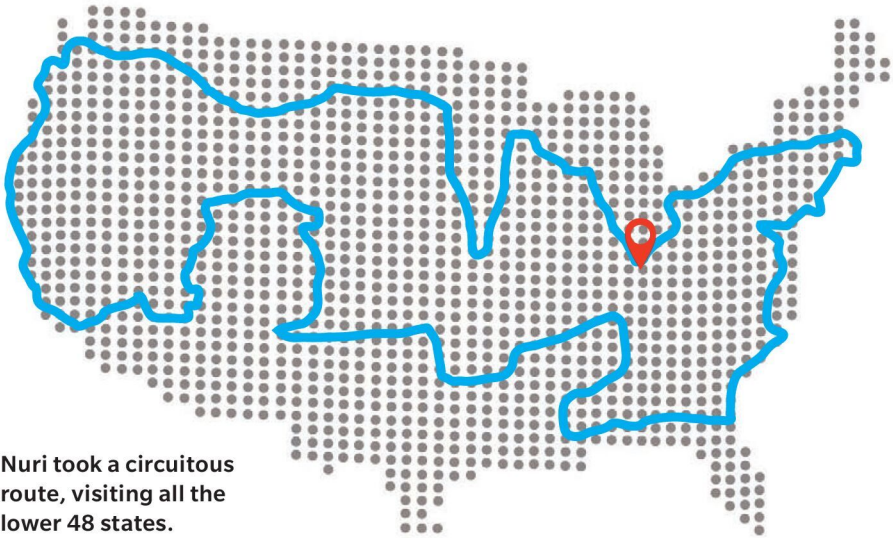
By the time he was 24 years old, Nuri faced the kind of life crisis typically found in people twice his age. Focusing on money, titles and power was leaving him unfulfilled.

In a bold move, he quit his job, emptied his savings account and returned to his childhood home in Columbus to fine-tune an outrageous plan he’d been

hatching. Nuri would drive his 2018 Toyota Camry to every state in the Lower 48 on a 100-day trip to find 1,000 strangers and ask them to share one thing they wish they’d known when they were younger. Nuri was hoping for answers that might help him navigate the rest of his life. He had no other plans, no other agenda except that, to save money, he’d sleep in rest stops, shower in gyms that accepted his gym membership card, and buy food on the cheap.

His parents were mortified. This entire scheme was crazy. Sleeping in his car was too dangerous, simply out of the question, they told him. Instead, they proposed he enroll in graduate school to get an MBA. But Nuri won them over, using his marketing skills to convince his loving parents to give their blessing, by reminding them of their own history.

Nuri knew the stories of their inability to enjoy their 20s and 30s in India.



Nuri took a circuitous route, visiting all the lower 48 states.

They'd worked hard, always focused on the next step up the ladder to a successful life, leaving little time to contemplate what they wanted out of life.

"I am young, healthy and unmarried and have no mortgage. Wouldn't you have wanted this chance when you were my age?" he asked them.

They were sold.

On May 9, 2022, the night before shoving off, Nuri couldn't sleep as he grappled with something about himself, something no one who knew him would believe to be true.

Imran Nuri did not like talking with strangers. Marketing presentations and speeches before a thousand people? A piece of cake. Small talk with a stranger in a coffee shop? He couldn't muster the nerve. He craved random interaction but remained tongue-tied.

Now, this entire trip depended on

Nuri's ability to get strangers to talk with him about ideas more intimate than idle chitchat about the weather. Nuri reached for his personal journal. "I'm about to do something really crazy, and I think it's going to be really transformative," he wrote. "I wonder who I might be when I return."

NURI FOLLOWED AN intricate map he'd created that took him on scenic byways instead of highways. His route took him north into Michigan then east to Pennsylvania, then north again to Maine, before heading all the way south to Florida. From there he'd drive west until he reached the California coast. Next, he'd head up to Washington state, where he'd take a right turn that would eventually lead him back home. He'd zigzag to make sure he visited every state he'd missed along the way to the

West Coast. He had no interest in hitting specific cities, national parks or monuments. His goal was simple: Go where he could find people in settings where they might talk.

As much as he had planned his route, Nuri had also thought strategically about the people he hoped to meet. He drew on what he'd learned during his college business ethics courses. Studies revealed that knowing a person's name, job or profession distorts the way that

person is judged. A CEO seems wiser than a janitor. A person named Williamson illogically seems more credible than someone named Smith.

Nuri didn't believe any of that. And he certainly didn't believe that anyone held a monopoly on the truth. So Nuri decided that he'd get the names of people he chatted with, but only to contact them in the future. He wouldn't even use a name as an identifier in his photos. Nor would he ask what anyone did for a living, unless it came up organically.

He wasn't looking for a résumé, just unfiltered advice from people who would help guide him on his personal journey.

As those first hours on the road passed, along with miles of farmland, Nuri had no idea where or how to begin, how to walk up to a stranger and say "Give me advice." Then he entered Risingsun, an Ohio village with 553 residents. There, just off the road, he spotted a greenhouse and a handwritten sign that read "flowers for sale."

Nuri kept driving, only pulling a U-turn down the road when he realized he could ease into this project of his by talking to what he assumed would be a friendly woman selling flowers. Who else would be out here? He pulled off the road and into a dirt parking lot.

He got out of the car carrying a recording device to capture the stranger's advice. He also had a 50-year-old twin-lens camera. He wanted to photograph each person he spoke with using only old-school black-and-white film.



"Be adventurous and do what you want to do."



He believed the lack of color allowed a stranger's soul to emerge.

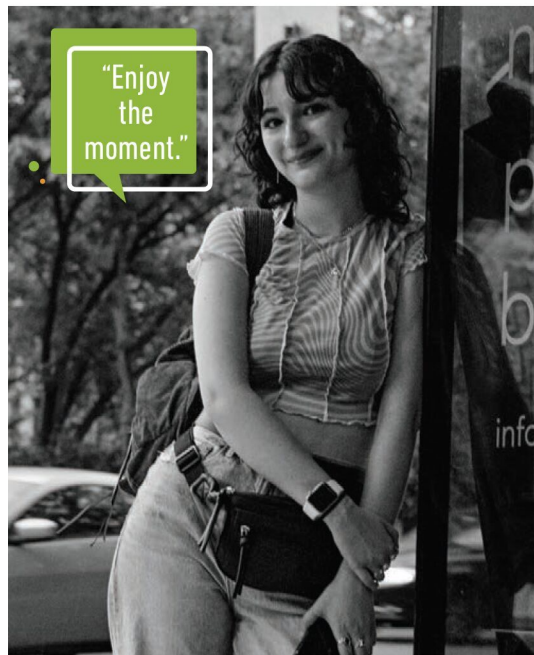
"It was hot and sunny and quiet, the way it is when you truly are in the middle of nowhere," he says. "Then this scraggly guy limps on by me. He doesn't say anything. He just stares at me and keeps going."

Where, Nuri wondered, is that kindly old farm lady?

"I thought I was going to be killed," he says. "I'd chosen the worst possible person for my first conversation. I was tempted to get back in my car and leave."

Then he remembered his last journal entry: "I wonder who I might be when I return."

Nuri followed the man, easily catching up to him. Then, doing the bravest



thing he'd done in decades, he introduced himself and gave the spiel he'd repeat during the weeks to come: "I'm driving around the country to talk to 1,000 strangers. I'm asking them for pieces of life advice about things they wish they knew earlier. If you've got a couple of minutes, I'd love to hear what you think."

The old man remained silent for a minute or so, just staring at Nuri. "I wish I would have spent more time with my parents," he finally said.

"Are they still around?"

The man shook his head. "No."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

And with that, the ice was broken. Unprompted, and without going into

detail, the man said he'd suffered terrible burns earlier in his life, lifting his shirt to reveal scars and explaining that's why he limped. He'd once been a bricklayer who helped build houses. That good life ended after he lost several fingers in a fire. He had to reinvent himself, slowly moving from anger and bitterness to peace and purpose by growing flowers.

They chatted a bit more, then Nuri thanked the man and got back in his car. *Everyone has a story*, he thought as he drove down the road.

That night he pulled into a Michigan rest stop and made himself a sandwich with prepackaged shredded chicken and bread he'd bought at a roadside



market. He rated it the worst sandwich he'd ever tasted, and tossed pieces of chicken to a stray cat.

Nuri had never slept in a car. The backseat was hard, unyielding. He returned to the front seat, covered himself with a blanket and closed his eyes. It was the best sleep he'd had in years.

OVER THE NEXT few months, Nuri approached people of all ages and races. Some kept walking. Others said they had no time, weren't interested or didn't care. One young woman said she'd like to talk but was on her way to a bachelorette party.

But many were happy to open up:

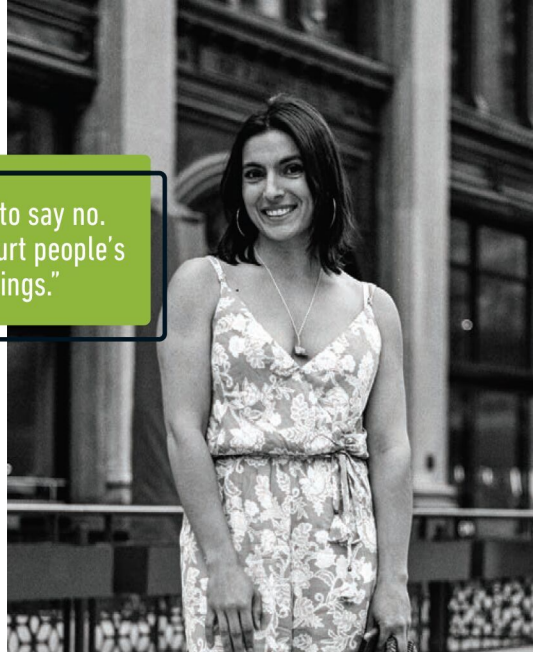
"These days it seems like people who have common sense don't even use it. You look at the sky and it's obviously blue, but someone else will say it's purple. At the end of the day, that's their problem, not yours."
—Erie, Michigan

"It's OK to say no. It won't hurt people's feelings." —Detroit, Michigan

"Everything gets better as time goes on. Just keep pushing forward."
—Hartford, Connecticut

"Enjoy the moment." —New York City, New York

"It's OK to say no. It won't hurt people's feelings."



"Be adventurous and do what you want to do." —Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

"Slow down. As a kid, you don't want to go to sleep, and as an adult, you're like, 'Ugh, I can't wait to go to sleep.'" —Martinsburg, West Virginia

WHEN HE ARRIVED in some areas, Nuri wondered how he would be received because of his brown skin. He had experienced moments of subtle racism while growing up, and he steeled himself for it to happen again. He noticed a few hard looks, but he also discovered people were just as curious about him.

"If I saw somebody looking at me in a particular way, I'd walk over and ask how they were doing," Nuri says. "A stranger would say I looked like I was from out of town, which is one way to



say that I'm not White. That's fine. It didn't offend me."

Strangers told Nuri they'd never met anyone of Indian heritage. And then they would get to chatting.

"I had this awesome opportunity," he says. "They realized I was just like them, only with brown skin, in the same way I realized I made assumptions about people because of where they lived or how

they dressed or looked."

Nuri had his longest conversation on the trip when he noticed a woman in a motorized wheelchair moving across a shopping center parking lot in Wilmington, North Carolina.

"It was hot and humid day," he says. "I was exhausted and hadn't showered for two days. I parked my car and got out to stretch when I saw this woman rolling through the lot with a giant stack of flowers." He grabbed his camera and recording equipment and hustled to catch up with her. "She had a huge smile on her face," he says, "this positive energy."

She told Nuri her story. "I worked my butt off my whole life," she said. "I had this dream that I would live my life once I retired. I'd do art, redo a little house and raise horses. But then I got sick and that dream ended."

As for the advice she would share? "Have more fun, enjoy life, make a family. It's corny, but family is everything. By the way," she added, "don't

you want to know why I have the flowers? I was 5 feet 11 before I was handicapped. I was the cheerleader type. When I walked in the room, I made everyone feel special. When I finally got my electric wheelchair, I went to a strip mall just because I was so stoked to be able to go out on my own. As I passed by a mom and her two kids, she put her hands over their eyes, and she looked away. I couldn't believe my mere existence was making people uncomfortable.

"Later on, as I was crossing a street in my wheelchair, a man in his truck didn't see me, then yelled out his window, 'Get a flag, you so-and-so! You're gonna get hit!' Well, that was just too much. It just so happened there was a store nearby selling big flowers with long stems. So I thought, *I'll get one of those and I'll keep adding more until I get people to look at me and smile.*" She held her large bundle of flowers aloft. "This is how many flowers it took to get people to look at me and smile."

Nuri bade farewell to the woman, jumped back in his car and kept driving. And listening.

"You don't really have control, so just let it go and let it be." —Nashville, Tennessee

"Take your time in finding a life partner. Don't let the sex cloud your judgment, and don't rush into marriage. They should be your best friend over everything." —Purcell, Oklahoma

"It took me a really long time to figure it out, but you don't require anyone else to be happy. You can do it all by yourself." —Grand Canyon, Arizona

IN COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado, Nuri encountered the kind of man who would have once intimidated him. It was inside a small store, and Nuri found himself standing next to a giant with a big beard and a body covered in small tattoos.

Nuri asked about the tattoos and learned that the man, in his 50s, had stage 4 terminal cancer. But he wasn't waiting around until death came to claim him. Instead, he was getting matching tattoos with people in his hometown.

"Life is about the human connection," the man told Nuri. As death approached, possessions were meaningless. In their place he'd make as many memories as possible while still alive.

Touched, Nuri asked the man if he would get a matching tattoo with him. The bearded giant gladly agreed, and the next morning, Nuri got his first ink: a small tattoo of a roll of film, commemorating the portraits he'd been taking.

"My trip was about looking for meaning and purpose," says Nuri. "In a lot of ways, I found it in this man. I carry that stranger's legacy on my arm, and I look at it every day."

In Tillamook, Oregon, weary after a long stretch, Nuri pulled into a drive-thru coffee stand. A waitress—a college



“It took me a really long time to figure it out, but you don’t require anyone else to be happy. You can do it all by yourself.”

student—noticed his Ohio license plate. Nuri explained his project and she agreed to talk. What she’d learned over the course of her short lifespan was that change was good, “whether it’s changing your major or changing your whole life path,” she told him. “You don’t have to fault yourself for taking a step back and reevaluating your past choices.”

With these words, the student had validated Nuri’s decision to reevaluate his own life choices, quit his job and travel around America.

NURI’S JOURNEY CONTINUED through Washington’s craggy Pacific coast, spectacular thunderstorms in Wyoming, Colorado’s massive snow peaks, Montana’s ever-changing landscape.

“There was beauty in every place,” he says, as well as wisdom from the people he met there.

The weeks had turned into months, and now Nuri was headed back to Columbus. On the last 15 minutes on the last day, Aug. 6, 2022—88 days from when he started—Nuri turned down the quiet residential street that led to his childhood home. It was a route he’d taken thousands of times. But now, he was traveling with the spirits of the 1,300 people he’d talked to on his 15,000-mile trip.

“I felt every emotion at once,” he says. “Accomplishment, joy, relief, ecstasy, exhaustion, pride, amazement and disbelief.”

Nearly three months earlier, he’d written, “I wonder who I might be

when I return.” He knew now. He was a better man. It was then that Imran Nuri began to cry.

TODAY, NURI IS BACK in Chicago, employed as a senior marketing director for a new company. But these days, work occupies a smaller place in his life. He’s not the man he once was. He seeks answers to questions, which leads to more questions and more answers, a cycle that provides not certainty, but meaning. He says he will continue to search and learn.

“I now put myself in other people’s shoes,” he says. “Even when a person sees the world differently from me.” He can do that because he can now talk

easily with strangers. He’s no longer that tongue-tied introvert he once was. He recognizes that not all the advice he’d heard was profound, “but hearing it from people from all walks of life made it powerful,” he says.

And what they taught him was that life isn’t to be talked about, but to be lived in all its messy beauty. Joy and sorrow, passion and regret, confidence and doubt, success and failure. Sure, dream of a perfect future but never forget the imperfect past we all share that shapes our present. He hopes the strangers know that they made a difference, that he honors their advice and is grateful for their gifts, which he will draw on for the rest of his life. **R**

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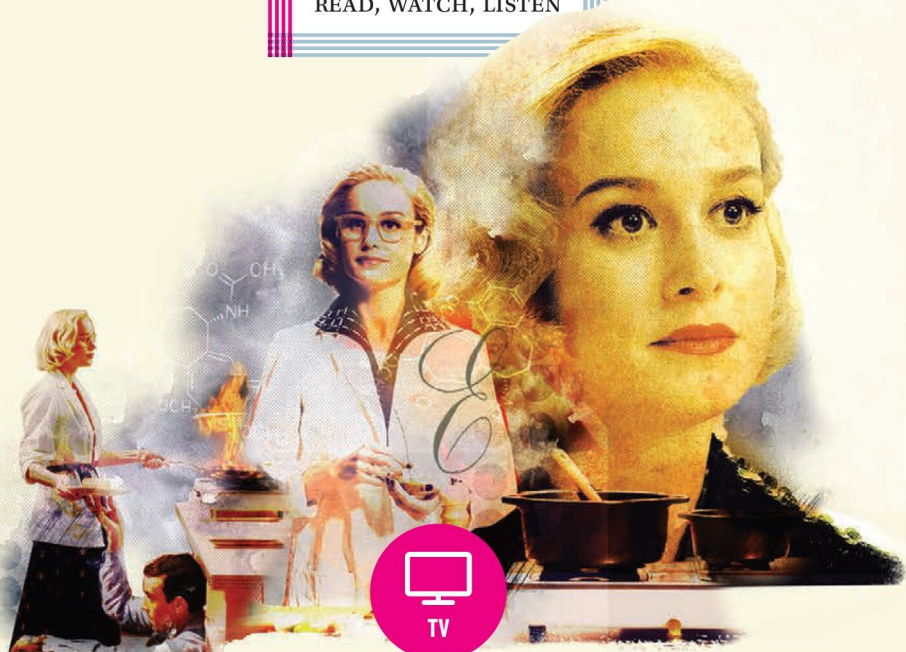
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The RD
LIST
 READ, WATCH, LISTEN



Lessons in Chemistry

Starring Brie Larson

BRIE LARSON IS ELIZABETH ZOTT, a *Happy Days*-era literary heroine for the ages, in this TV adaptation of the novel. Zott, a gifted chemist, is fired from her lab when she finds herself pregnant out of wedlock. With a child to support and little help, Zott reluctantly accepts an offer to host a cooking show, *Supper at Six*. It garners more attention than anyone anticipated, largely because of the scientific sensibilities that

Zott brings to the kitchen, teaching much more than recipes. (“Wait until the butter foams. Foam indicates that the butter’s water content has boiled away. This is critical. Because now the steak can cook in lipids rather than absorb H_2O .”) Suddenly, it’s not only housewives who are watching. It’s women, children, men—and hopefully you. (Premieres Oct. 13 on Apple TV+) —*Caroline Fanning*

COURTESY OF APPLE (3). THE NOUN PROJECT (TV ICON)



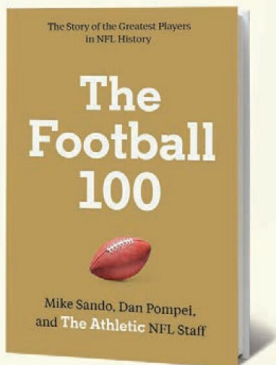
Ordinary Angels

Starring Hilary Swank

In this (almost too good to be) true story, Hilary Swank plays Sharon Stevens, a scrappy, struggling hairdresser and recovering alcoholic who finds purpose upon meeting a widower (Alan Ritchson) desperate to secure a liver transplant for his 3-year-old daughter, Michelle (Emily Mitchell). Stevens raises money for the family, and when a blizzard hits on the night Michelle needs to be transported to the hospital, Stevens rallies the community to help get her there. For Swank, who once took a three-year break from acting to care for her father after his lung transplant, the movie's message resonates especially well—and her performance shows it. “I was drawn to this beautiful true story because it's such a powerful reminder that angels reside everywhere among us,” she told Today. “Faith, hope, grit and positivity are powerful fuel for miracles.” (*In theaters Oct. 13*) —Mara Reinstein

ALLEN FRASER/LIONSGATE (2). THE NOUN PROJECT (FILM ICON)





The Football 100

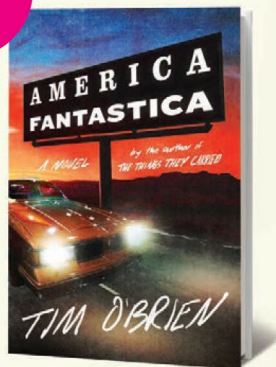
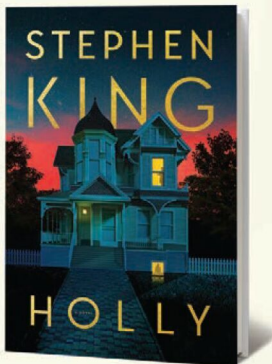
By Mike Sando, Dan Pompei and The Athletic NFL Staff

In its storied history, the NFL has seen more than 27,000 athletes take the field. Now, sports news service The Athletic both asks and answers: Who is the greatest of all time? Stats don't paint a full picture—the game that quarterback Patrick Mahomes plays today barely resembles the one dominated by Otto Graham 70 years ago. Going beyond box scores with hundreds of interviews, *The Football 100* is a ranking of NFL greats. With all the research and experience brought by The Athletic staff, fans can't possibly argue their favorite players' rankings—right? —Cameron Songer

Holly

By Stephen King

Coy-yet-capable sleuth Holly Gibney entered the Stephen King multiverse in 2014's *Mr. Mercedes*—and already stands out among decades of iconic characters. In her stand-alone novel, Gibney is no longer under the wing of *Mr. Mercedes* protagonist Bill Hodges. And while the kids in *It* had Pennywise the clown, Gibney has Professors Rodney and Emily Harris, elderly, semiretired academics who are far from fitting the profile of kid-nappers of the missing girl Gibney is trying to find. But the Harris prove as monstrous as any King boogeyman; Gibney proves as dynamic and enduring. —CF



America Fantastica

By Tim O'Brien

Author Tim O'Brien's first novel in 20 years turns a good old-fashioned heist story on its head. The armed bank robbery executed by Boyd Halverson is the least exciting thing about the book—and by page 6, the job is already done. The excitement is in the runaway, but from what, exactly, is unclear: A variety of pursuers are on Halverson's tail, but never police. Alongside Halverson for the cross-country escape is Angie Bing, a chatty bank teller kid-napped during the stickup. Halverson and Bing press forward as the novel moves backward to unravel Halverson's true motive, which has little to do with loot. —CF

HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS (*THE FOOTBALL 100*), SCRIBNER (*HOLLY*), COURTESY OF MARINER BOOKS (*AMERICA FANTASTICA*), THE NOON PROJECT (BOOK ICON)

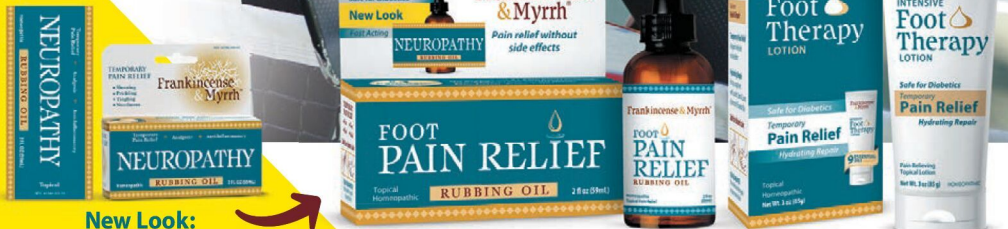
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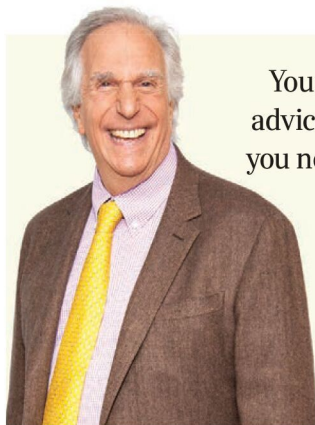
It's OK to come home and go, "I want to quit." As long as you get up the next day and do what you've got to do.

—Leslie Jones,
COMEDIAN,
ON *THE VIEW*



I was never worried when he went into space—though of the two of us, we never could have predicted that I'd be the one with the more dangerous job.

—Gabby Giffords,
FORMER
CONGRESSWOMAN,
MARRIED TO FORMER
ASTRONAUT AND
CURRENT U.S. SEN.
MARK KELLY, IN *ESQUIRE*



You need help, you need advice, you need wisdom, you need the support, you need the joy. And it all comes from one generation to the next.

—Henry Winkler,
ACTOR, IN *THE HEALTHY*

My ultimate goal in life is to read books I like, listen to music I enjoy, play with my cats, drink some semi-decent red wine and watch a live baseball game on TV. Living itself is adventure enough.

—Haruki Murakami, NOVELIST, IN *INTERVIEW MAGAZINE*

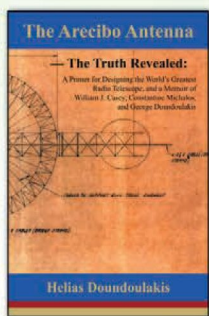
When you're through changing, you're through.

—Martha Stewart,
ENTREPRENEUR,
ON *TODAY*



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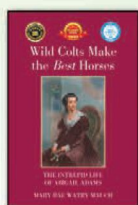
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Brain
GAMES
SHARPEN YOUR MIND

Fact or Fiction?

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

1. A “jiffy” is a real unit of time.

FACT: Q FICTION: M

2. If you touch baby birds, their mothers will abandon them.



FACT: A FICTION: U

3. Virginia Woolf and Charles Dickens wrote while standing up.



FACT: E FICTION: N

4. The World Series has never been played in November.



FACT: I FICTION: B

5. Video game music boosts concentration.



FACT: E FICTION: T

6. Nearly 1 in 6 Alaskans is Native American.

FACT: C FICTION: O

7. Franklin Roosevelt was the first president to have never served in the military.

FACT: B FICTION: O

8. The house depicted in *American Gothic* still stands.

FACT: I FICTION: A

9. Originally, Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade was known as a Christmas parade.

FACT: S FICTION: N

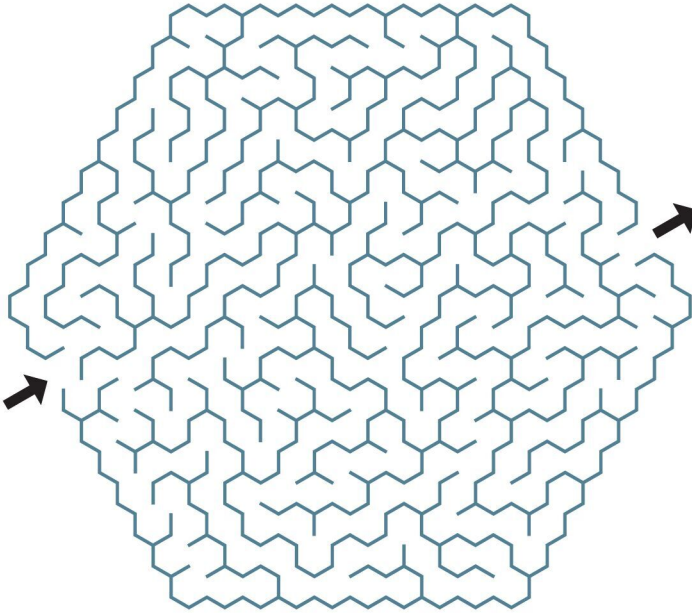
BONUS QUESTION What word describes poutine by indicating the Canadian province it’s from? (Need help? Turn to Food Passport on page 21.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Answers: 1. Fact. 2. Fiction; birds have a limited sense of smell, so they won't abandon babies who "smell" of humans. 3. Fact. 4. Fiction. 5. Fact. 6. Fact; that's the highest proportion of any state. 7. Fiction; John Adams and Thomas Jefferson didn't either (along with nine other presidents between them and FDR). 8. Fact; it's in Eldon, Iowa, and you can visit it. 9. Fact; in spite of its timing, the parade was originally all about Christmas. **Bonus Question:** Quebecois.

Pathfinder

MEDIUM Trace a path through the labyrinth, entering and exiting by the arrows shown.



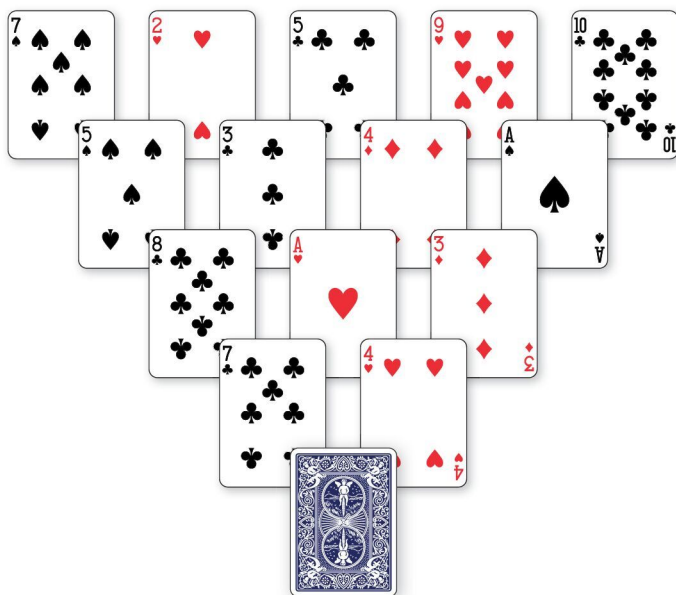
Sweet Treat

EASY The dessert table at a birthday party has 12 cupcakes in three different flavors: chocolate, caramel and vanilla. Nine of the cupcakes are chocolate or caramel, and eight are caramel or vanilla. How many caramel cupcakes are there?



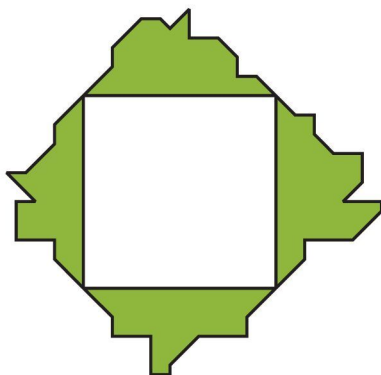
No Big Deal

DIFFICULT The playing cards below were dealt from a single deck. Each card's position depends on the two cards above it. Which card should appear at the bottom?



On the Flip Side

MEDIUM When the four shapes shown are flipped over into the central white space, they form a square ... with a hole in it. What is the shape of the hole?



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

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


WORD POWER

By Zeus! Many tales and figures of Greek mythology live on in everyday words. Consider *echo* (for the nymph doomed to repeat others' words), *erotic* (out of Eros, the god of love) or even *cloth* (Clotho, the Fate who spun the thread of life). Finish this *odyssey*, then turn the page for the answers.

BY *Mary-Liz Shaw*

1. tantalize v.
(*'tan-tuh-lighz*)

- A** dream
- B** tease
- C** inspire

2. zephyr n.
(*'zeh-fr*)

- A** gentle west wind
- B** light touch
- C** quick turn

3. Sisyphean adj.
(*si-suh-'fee-uhn*)

- A** constant and ineffective
- B** difficult
- C** worthwhile

4. halcyon adj.
(*'hal-see-uhn*)

- A** sugary
- B** secretive
- C** idyllically calm

5. heliotropic adj.
(*hee-lee-oh-'troh-pik*)

- A** brightly lit
- B** powerful
- C** sun-following

6. nemesis n.
(*'neh-muh-sis*)

- A** flatterer
- B** archrival
- C** secretary

7. iridescent adj.
(*ihr-ruh-'deh-snt*)

- A** rainbow-hued
- B** uncomplicated
- C** many-sided

8. lethargy n.
(*'leh-thr-jee*)

- A** lack of energy
- B** anxiety
- C** perception

9. labyrinth n.
(*'la-br-inth*)

- A** path
- B** maze
- C** misunderstanding

10. hector v.
(*'hek-tr*)

- A** call
- B** bully
- C** ignore

11. psyche n.
(*'sigh-kee*)

- A** singer
- B** actor
- C** soul

12. stentorian adj.
(*sten-'tor-ee-uhn*)

- A** dictatorial
- B** extremely loud
- C** stretched out

13. mnemonic n.
(*nuh-'mah-nik*)

- A** memory device
- B** confusion
- C** funny anecdote

14. aegis n.
(*'ee-juhss*)

- A** influence
- B** patronage
- C** accident

15. hedonist n.
(*'hee-duh-nist*)

- A** patriot
- B** pursuer of pleasure
- C** athlete

Be Afraid. Be Very Afraid.

From the root *phobia*—associated with Phobos, the god of fear—springs a whole host of Greek-derived terms such as *agoraphobia* (fear of public spaces) and its companion *enochlophobia* (fear of crowds). Critter creepies include *arachnophobia* (fear of spiders), *entomophobia* (fear of insects) and the all-encompassing *zoo-phobia* (fear of animals). Of course, if you suffer from *phobophobia* (fear of phobias), you'll probably avoid plumbing the depths of human fears in the first place.



Word Power ANSWERS

1. **tantalize** (B) *tease*

The fresh pastries in the bakery window tantalized passing joggers.

2. **zephyr**

(A) *gentle west wind*

The desert willow's leaves fluttered in the evening zephyr.

3. **Sisyphean**

(A) *constant and ineffective*

Lawmakers tackled the Sisyphean task of balancing the budget.

4. **halcyon**

(C) *idyllically calm*

Who doesn't long for the halcyon days of childhood?

5. **heliotropic**

(C) *sun-following*

Heliotropic flowers shift position throughout the day to face the sun.

6. **nemesis** (B) *archrival*

At Reichenbach Falls, Sherlock Holmes confronted his nemesis, Professor Moriarty.

7. **iridescent**

(A) *rainbow-hued*

The emerald ash borer, a beetle with iridescent green wings, is native to northeastern Asia.

8. **lethargy**

(A) *lack of energy*

Lucas had a lot of trouble shaking off his lethargy after his long flight.

9. **labyrinth** (B) *maze*

Trying to exit this hospital is like finding your way out of a labyrinth!

10. **hector** (B) *bully*

Abby intervened when she saw teenagers hector the kindergartners.

11. **psyche** (C) *soul*

War takes a toll on the human psyche.

12. **stentorian**

(B) *extremely loud*

Terry celebrated victory with a stentorian *whoop* that echoed throughout the arena.

13. **mnemonic**

(A) *memory device*

HOMES is a helpful mnemonic for the Great Lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior.

14. **aegis** (B) *patronage*

Artists worked under the aegis of the humanities council.

15. **hedonist**

(B) *pursuer of pleasure*

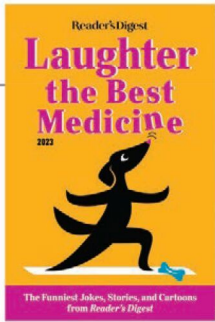
I'm usually disciplined, but I live like a hedonist while on vacation.

Vocabulary Ratings

9 & BELOW: Hero

10-12: Titan

13-15: Olympian



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ANSWERS

WHERE, OH WHERE?

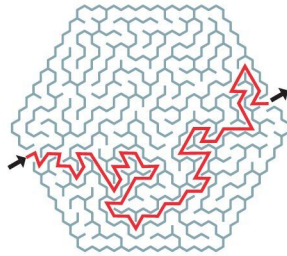
(page 30)

B. Petersburg, West Virginia. The photo was taken in the Roaring Plains West Wilderness area of Monongahela National Forest.

BRAIN GAMES

(pages 107-108)

Pathfinder



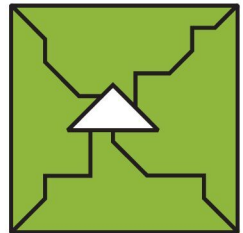
Sweet Treat

5.

No Big Deal

Each card is the sum of the two numbers immediately above it; black cards have a positive value and red cards have a negative value. Therefore, the sum of seven of clubs (+7) and the four of hearts (-4) is +3. The three of clubs has already been laid, so the missing card must be the three of spades.

On the Flip Side



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