

# NEW ZEALAND Reader's Digest

**RD  
TALKS**  
OUR STORIES  
AS PODCASTS

**BONUS READ**

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Became A*

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Read our  
story on pages  
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<sup>^</sup> 4D Sensor technology only available in Oticon Intent 1 & 2.  
Availability, function, and benefit of technology, features and accessories can vary depending on hearing aid style and performance level selected. Always read the label and follow the instructions.





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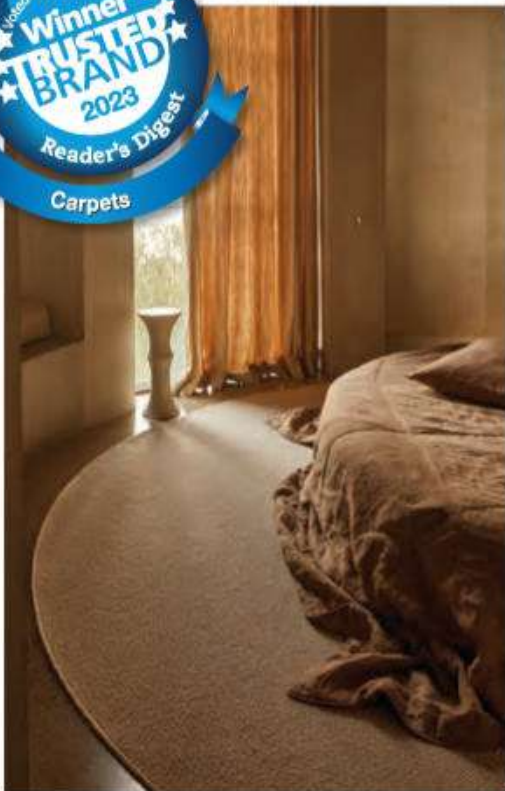
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## LETTERS

### *Reader's Comments And Opinions*



#### **Dangers In The Wild**

**Sincere and committed people like Tony Fitzjohn in 'Locked In The Lion's Jaws' (Dec 23/Jan 24) give their all to help ensure wild**



**animals like Freddie the lion can live their lives under proper care. But one can only imagine how dangerous it must be for humans to live in such places.**

**Tony survived the attack with the help of not only his fellow human beings, but also Freddie who he raised from a cub. Had Freddie not intervened, readers would probably not have had this incredible story to read.**

**VASU DEVAN**

#### **Gardening Guru**

I read 'Language Of Gardening' (My Story, Oct/Nov 23) with keen interest. I work in education and discovered my green thumb after volunteering to re-establish a large vegetable garden at my workplace. Running the garden during breaks has also allowed me to further connect with students. The garden brings so much joy, like

growing a 56cm zucchini that won first place at our local agricultural show. I am fortunate I can inspire another generation of avid gardeners.

**NICOLE HEXT**

#### **Good Work**

I have been a subscriber for many years now. 'Lives In The Balance' (Bonus Read, Feb/Mar 24) left me ➤

**Let us know if you are moved – or provoked – by any item in the magazine, share your thoughts. See page 7 for how to join the discussion.**

## EDITOR'S NOTE

### *Targeted By Scammers*

**WE HEAR A LOT ABOUT SCAMMERS**, about their ever-increasing cunning ways to hook victims and ultimately deceive with often devastating results. Scammers make a living by winning over our trust. This month's Bonus Read, 'A Scammer's Target: My Mother' (page 126), is a powerful account of how an elderly woman's life was turned upside-down by an unscrupulous scammer. It portrays the aftermath, her shattered confidence, her embarrassment and her eventual recovery. It's a clear reminder of how vulnerable we all are to scammers.

Also in this issue, we share the work of celebrated Pakistani architect Yasmeen Lari, who turned her skills to building better homes for natural disaster-prone regions of her home country (page 22), explore the benefits of exercise (page 16) and taking up a hobby (page 40). All these great stories and more.

*Louise*

**LOUISE WATERSON**  
Editor-in-Chief



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## READER'S DIGEST

- crying at the end. I've never enjoyed one issue so much. Thank you. Keep up the good work. **JOAN ESCHBACH**

### Gift To Elephants

I was reading with great interest 'Her Gift To The Elephants' (Bonus Read, Dec 23/Jan 24) when I noted an error – that singer/actor Cher, had died. The author wrote that an elephant named Kaavan, had been chained in a Pakistani zoo and was visited by the 'late' Cher in a sanctuary founded by Lek Chailert and that she had written a song about this elephant's suffering.

**L. LUCAS**

*Editor's Note: We apologise for any concern caused by this error. The singer is, in fact, alive and well at the time of going to press.*

### WIN A PILOT CAPLESS FOUNTAIN PEN

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



### Happy Heels

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

I always get a kick out of birthdays.

**BRIAN THOMPSON**

They told me to have a balanced diet.

**JOHN MORGAN**

Cake is my sole mate.

**FIONA HIGGINS**

Let's shoe in your birthday!

**CHAN JIN MING**

Upside-down cake anyone?

**TERRI PALMA**

Juggling's a piece of cake.

**CLAIRE JOLLIFFE**

**Congratulations to this month's winner, Brian Thompson.**



### CAPTION CONTEST

**Come up with the funniest caption for the above photo and you could win \$100. To enter, email [editor@readersdigest.co.nz](mailto:editor@readersdigest.co.nz) or see details on page 7.**



# NEW ZEALAND Reader's Digest

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### Smart Animals Up To \$100

Share antics of unique pets or wildlife in up to 300 words.

### My Story \$400

Do you have an inspiring or life-changing tale to tell? Submissions must be true.

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MY STORY

# An Arrangement Made In Heaven

*The idea of an arranged marriage attracted disbelief in my adopted country*

BY Dr Nargis Ali

Having spent a good two thirds of my life in New Zealand as a first-generation, Indian-born immigrant, I bought wholeheartedly into the idea of romantic love, where one 'fell' into an effortless love, courtship and then relationship with a de facto component preceding marriage. However, my family roots are middle-class Indian-Muslim, and such a concept is considered the exact opposite of the order in which a relationship should progress.

An arranged marriage works like this: two families with a marriageable son or daughter send out 'feelers' in the wider community through their social networks. This is usually through an *ism navesi*,

which loosely translates to a CV consisting of an eclectic array of information, including qualifications and a subjective opinion about their physical attributes, such as beauty, complexion and height (but not weight!). It gives details about the extended family, names of parents, uncles, aunties and their occupations, qualifications and even the properties they may own. This then forms the basis of the first screening, by which a family selects the most suitable-seeming family to initiate a relationship with. All this is done without the respective families meeting each other in order to avoid a 'loss of face' in case the relationship does not materialise.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Once the screening is done, the elders meet each other and 'size up' the other party and judge whether a marriage would be compatible religiously and socially. The bride-and groom-to-be are then introduced to each other and everything going well, are engaged to each other and married after many meetings and exchanging of gifts.

When I turned 20, my grandmother who lives in India, took on the responsibility of finding me a husband with great enthusiasm. Her decision was a big turning point in my life. Until then my life in New Zealand revolved around work in a government agency and study at university. My New Zealand friends were Indian, European, Maori and Pacific Islander. Most of my girlfriends and I were single and talked openly about relationships and finding the 'right man'. We lived vicariously through friends who were in relationships, offering them advice, believing ourselves to be quite rational and logical and unlikely to find ourselves in relationships that wouldn't work.

As time went on, I started receiving

Nargis Ali completed her doctorate in health science in Auckland – this story was written as part of her doctoral thesis. She now lives in Queensland with her husband and three children.

## HOW COULD I GUESS THESE MEN'S SUITABILITY JUST FROM A PHOTO!

photos of young men and their *ism navesis*. Each one was accompanied by a letter or a phone call from my relatives seeking feedback. At first, I found the whole process humorous, but puzzling. How could I guess these men's virtues, nature or suitability just from a photo! My friends and I used to discuss each photo's merits and demerits before

dismissing each proposal based on both real and imagined incompatibilities. I didn't think the issue would come to any conclusion, given New Zealand being so far away from India, therefore the possibility

of prospective suitors being sent to meet me – an unchaperoned female living by herself in Auckland (my parents were, by then, living in Australia) – was remote.

When I was 24, I was sent a photo of a man aged 27 who had completed a Bachelor's degree in computer programming, ran a computer training institute, measured 1.75 metres and, most importantly, was the son of a distant cousin of my grandmother. The photo showed an attractive, athletic-looking man with an intense expression. For the first time I couldn't point out any reason why I would not find him suitable, so I accepted a phone call from him. One call led to another and then



to an online chat and, within six months I heard that our wedding had been fixed in India. While I should have seen this coming, the news shocked me. Subconsciously, I was still expecting my New Zealand version of romance.

My family started putting pressure on me. If I didn't go through with the wedding, I would bring dishonour to his family and the whole community would be insulted after they had 'given their word'. The other issue they raised was, since I didn't have a problem with this man, why was I opposed to marrying him?

By then I could understand both the Muslim Indian and the secular New Zealand versions of marriage and love. The former understood love and commitment to be the result of marriage and for the latter the inverse was true. Both concepts were right in their own way and both had strengths and weaknesses.

My dilemma was twofold: if I agreed to marry this man I was buying into a lifetime commitment without so much as meeting him in person, trusting that it would work out, despite the big culture gap and the probable differences in our role expectations. But if I refused to marry him, I would be insulting a family who had my best interest at heart.

I travelled to India ten days before my wedding and found my grandparents' sprawling home full of wedding preparations – uncles,

aunts, cousins, cooks, tailors and jewellers were all engaged in various tasks for the upcoming wedding.

The next day I met my husband-to-be. It was a strange meeting. An assortment of his relatives were present and I felt uncomfortable and awkward, like I was on display. The women asked probing questions, like 'Will you work after getting married? Do you cook? How do you like living by yourself? What do you do in your spare time?' So, I didn't get a good look at my husband or meet him alone until after we were married.

The wedding itself was a long and convoluted process of ceremonies that included giving and receiving gifts and a marriage contract – similar to a prenuptial agreement.

All my mental planning had led me up to the wedding day, but not beyond. Fortunately, I needn't have worried because the man I married was articulate, pleasant, well-read, and his ideas about a man and woman's role matched my own.

Despite my misgivings and my friends' certainty that it wouldn't work out, my husband and I have been happily married for 22 years and have had three children together. I now believe that some arrangements are made in heaven!

---

**Do you have a tale to tell? We'll pay cash for any original and unpublished story we print. See page 7 for details on how to contribute.**

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\*Full terms and conditions can be found online. Entries close 26th May, 2024.

## SMART ANIMALS

*Are well worth our time and trouble*



### A Right Galah

BEVERLEY HARRIS

Many years ago, a group of us ladies would hold a meditation night at a friend's home where we would enjoy interesting conversation and, in a light-hearted way, send love and healing out to the universe. The homeowner (who we referred to as 'the Pedantic One') owned a pet pink and grey galah named Cocky. When we arrived at the house, we would stop and chat to the bird, as he liked holding a conversation with us.

On evenings when the planets aligned, the Pedantic One would organise for us to do something special. On one such evening, we

were all standing under a clear sky holding hands and concentrating intently when a voice behind us asked, "What are you doing?"

We tried not to laugh, but when Cocky asked again, "What are you doing?", we lost all control of our composure. The Pedantic One swore at the bird, telling him he'd spoilt everything. By then we were laughing heartily. Unfortunately, our hysterics only added to her irritation.

---

**You could earn cash by telling us about the antics of unique pets or wildlife. Turn to page 7 for details on how to contribute.**

ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTY IMAGES



## Priceless Pooch

FRANCES RANKIN

It was a hot summer day during the millennium drought and the grass on the farm crunched like macaroni under my feet. By the time I had seen my husband go off to work, my children to school and finished my chores, it was midday before I managed to get out to the far paddock to see the cows.

After I loaded the ute with hay to coax the herd through a gate into another paddock, I hopped into the driver's seat only to find Coco, my little red-brown kelpie-cross, lying asleep on the passenger seat. She opened one eye when I got out, leaving the driver's door open.

As I walked across to open the paddock gate, I didn't see what was lurking in the shadows. But just as I unlatched the gate, I saw a blur of rust-red and brown fur race past me and leap onto a brown snake. Seconds later, I looked down to see a long, thin brown body, now headless, wriggling violently around my feet.

The Eastern Brown snake is one of the most venomous snakes on Earth and you do not want to get bitten – but I'd come dangerously close. My heart was pounding as I realised my husband was an hour away at work and I was two kilometres from the nearest phone.

Shaken, I slowly regained my composure and returned to the



ute. I'd driven it into the paddock before I realised that the cattle had already been rounded up by Coco and were ready to come through the gate. Little Coco made it all look so easy.

I dished out the hay and checked the cows over. All were present and accounted for. I called Coco back into the ute and as we drove slowly home, she put her head in my lap and let out a contented sigh. I couldn't help but smile. My 'worthless' dog, free to a good home, had just proved she was priceless.



# WHAT IF THERE WAS A HEARING AID THAT UNDERSTOOD YOUR LISTENING INTENTIONS?

***Introducing Oticon Intent™, the world's first  
hearing aid with 4D user-intent sensors<sup>1</sup>***

**H**earing conversations in noisy environments can be especially hard for people with impaired hearing. Unfortunately, traditional hearing aids adopt a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to processing sounds, regardless of the listening needs of individual users. This may make listening and engaging with others more difficult. Users may also experience a lack of sound clarity and be reluctant to engage in conversations with others.

Hearing aid manufacturer Oticon is taking the next important step on the journey to solve the No.1 challenge for people with hearing loss – hearing speech in noise<sup>2</sup>. With new groundbreaking 4D Sensor technology, Oticon Intent is capable of understanding the user's listening intentions by recognising what they want and need to listen to, in order to deliver truly personalised support.

## **The Brain And Sound**

Our ears gather the sounds around us, but the true hero in sound processing is the brain, as it is constantly working to make sense of sound. Oticon uses their BrainHearing™ philosophy to develop technology that provides the

brain with access to the full sound environment.

The latest BrainHearing™ insights reveal that people's communication behaviour reflects their listening needs and intentions at a given moment via head and body movements. In conversation, users tend to keep their heads still to engage with a single person or move their heads in a group conversation to engage with different people. When struggling to hear what someone is saying, users are likely to lean in to listen.

The technology in Oticon Intent understands and adapts to the user through sensors that monitor head and body movements, conversation activity and the acoustic environment. Oticon Intent helps users move beyond just hearing and listening, helping them to communicate and fully engage in life.

## **Ease Of Communication**

In challenging, noisy environments, Oticon Intent makes it possible to:

- Move through a crowd with seamless awareness, while orienting to the surrounding sounds.
- Begin chatting with a group of people, thanks to heightened access to voices and balanced background



sounds so they are not intrusive, while still accessible.

- Start an intimate conversation with one person, easily hearing the speaker's voice amid the noise all around.

## Engage More In Life

"If you have a hearing loss, you can actually protect your brain from cognitive decline by using active hearing aids which enable you to connect with others and let you engage in life to the fullest," says Thomas Behrens, Vice President of Audiology at Oticon. "You can also enjoy future-proof, next-generation connectivity technology, crafted into the smallest form factor we have designed to date within this category."

**Your hearing matters. Take a step towards better hearing by contacting your nearest hearing care professional.**

**To explore this revolutionary hearing aid that helps users to engage in life like never before, visit <https://www.oticon.co.nz/oticon-intent>**

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Offering easy connection to compatible smart devices through Bluetooth® Low Energy technology, Oticon Intent also enables users to engage in the digital world like never before. It allows a detailed, high-quality sound experience for hands-free calls and delivers direct streaming of music, audio book and much more<sup>3</sup>. With up to 20 hours of battery life, users will never have to worry about running out of battery. When they need a recharge, they'd simply drop the hearing aids into the charger for just 30 minutes for up to 8 hours of battery life<sup>4</sup>.

1. 4D Sensor technology only available in Oticon Intent 1 & 2.

2. Jorgensen, L., & Novak, M. (2020). Factors Influencing Hearing Aid Adoption. *Seminars in hearing*, 41(1), 6–20.

3. Hands-free communication is available on select devices. See which hearing aids and devices are compatible here: [oticon.co.nz/compatibility](https://www.oticon.co.nz/compatibility).

4. Expected use time for rechargeable battery depends on use pattern, active feature set, hearing loss, sound environment, battery age and use of wireless accessories.

For more information and to find your nearest hearing clinic, visit [oticon.co.nz](https://www.oticon.co.nz)

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HEALTH

# A Mental Workout

*Exercise releases 'hope molecules' into the bloodstream*

BY Karen Robock

I've jogged through postpartum depression, relied on Pilates to help me stretch during stressful times and I often go for a walk after a bad day. So it's no surprise to me that there's a link between exercise and mental health. But scientists have now made it official: research has found a direct connection between movement and mood.

Each time you work up a sweat, your body releases feel-good neurotransmitters, or 'happy hormones', including endorphins, dopamine and endocannabinoids, the latter being responsible for the so-called runner's high. Now researchers are also pointing to myokines – dubbed 'hope molecules' – as an important contributor to the mental health benefits of exercise.

When our muscles contract, chains of amino acids called myokines are

ILLUSTRATIONS: KATE TRAYNOR

released into the bloodstream; they help your muscles and organs communicate. Researchers are looking into the effect of myokines on the brain. They think this communication increases resilience to stress, reduces symptoms of anxiety and have a direct effect on depression. A 2021 review in *Neuropharmacology* showed evidence that myokines boost brain function, such as improving memory and mood.

There's also a growing body of research proving that exercise helps build key connections between the networks within the brain, too, improving overall cognitive performance. Studies have shown that physical activity stimulates creativity, sharpens judgement skills and improves mental energy.

It can also help slow age-related cognitive decline, possibly even stalling the onset of Alzheimer's disease. A new study published in the *Journal for Alzheimer's Disease Reports* found that walking regularly (30 minutes a day four times a week) was enough to measurably improve memory, even in people who have already been diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment.

A recent study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* showed that treatment for depression can be much more effective when physical activity is added to the usual care. Participants found benefits after



12 weeks of exercising for 30 to 60 minutes a day.

"While exercise is not a substitute for professional mental health treatment, physical activity can complement and enhance the effects of the treatment," says lead researcher Ben Singh, a research fellow at the University of South Australia. He says regular exercise in a group setting can boost self-esteem and decrease feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Whether you're swimming, walking or doing yoga, getting sweaty is good for your body and mind. But how much activity is enough to maintain brain health? Experts suggest that you aim for a minimum of ten to 30 minutes, three to five days each week.

Just ten minutes of light movement, like gentle laps in the pool or walking your dog, are enough to boost your mood, and the effects increase for every ten extra minutes that you move, for up to an hour. Exercising beyond 60 minutes didn't provide extra mental health benefits, according to Singh's study.

## HEALTH

# All About *Veggie Powders*



*Powdered greens can be a dietary supplement*

BY *Melissa Greer*

**D**ark green vegetables are often considered the healthiest of foods because they're particularly rich in essential minerals like iron, magnesium and calcium, as well as vitamins C, K and many of the Bs. Now an array of products in a variety of brands promise all that goodness in one scoop of powder – just stir it into water. The powders are made of dehydrated veggies

such as spinach and beetroot, or broccoli and sprouts, plus spirulina, a type of algae.

But is drinking your greens as healthy as consuming them whole? The short answer is no. “I consider powdered greens to be a nutritional supplement,” says dietitian and author Maya Feller.

**THEY CAN HELP  
BRIDGE THE GAP  
WHEN YOU'RE NOT  
ABLE TO MEET YOUR  
NUTRITIONAL NEEDS  
FROM FOOD OR  
BEVERAGES**

“Many of these products have added vitamins and minerals or other nutrients that don't naturally occur in green vegetables, so they're similar to a multivitamin,” she says.

The crucial element many are missing is fibre. Fibre is good for your gut, helping to keep food moving through the digestive system. It's found in whole vegetables, but most juices and powdered greens have little to none.

Still, getting your daily servings of vegetables isn't always convenient – and that's where green powders may come in handy. “They can help bridge the gap when you're not able to meet your nutritional needs by food or beverages alone,” says Feller.



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## WORLD OF MEDICINE

### HEARING AIDS MAY HELP PEOPLE LIVE LONGER

Hearing aids can help reduce mortality risk, according to a study in *The Lancet Healthy Longevity* journal. One reason is that hearing aids can help to prevent or slow the progression of dementia.

The researchers said there was nearly a 25 per cent difference in mortality risk between regular hearing aid users and never-users. The scientists followed 1863 participants for ten years to determine their mortality status.

Hearing loss is a common and undertreated health condition in older adults that has been associated with cognitive decline, dementia and poor physical health.

The scientists did not examine why there was a difference in mortality risk. However, the increased longevity may be explained by the possibility that those who wear hearing aids are more likely to avoid social isolation and maintain a higher level of activity.

### WOMEN AND CLOGGED ARTERIES

Thanks in part to oestrogen's protective effects, women who get

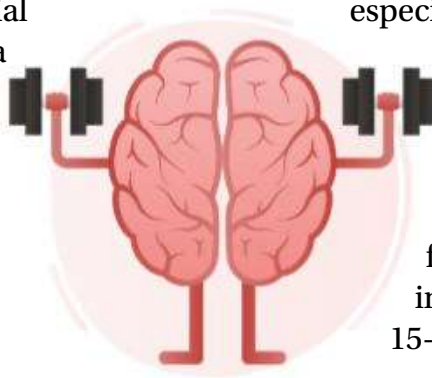
atherosclerosis tend to get it later than men: between ages 64 and 68 (for men, it's 52 to 56). But once a woman does have clogged arteries, concluded a study published in *European Heart Journal - Cardiovascular Imaging*, she may need stronger treatments to avoid a heart attack.

Women's arteries tend to be slightly smaller than men's, and that could explain why the same amount of plaque is a greater threat to their blood flow. That's worth considering when a patient and her doctor are choosing a treatment plan, along with other factors such as age, severity of the atherosclerosis and other cardiovascular risks such as high cholesterol.

### THIS BOOSTS BRAIN POWER

Exercise is good for the brain. But it's especially beneficial when

done in pleasant outdoor surroundings. A Canadian study that compared before and after cognitive function found improved abilities in students after they took 15-minute forest walks.



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*The former 'starchitect' who  
designed gleaming towers for  
Pakistan's corporate elite now  
rebuilds villages devastated by  
natural disasters*

# YASMEEN LARI'S *Change Of Heart*

BY Lisa Murphy

---

As Yasmeen Lari looked out the car window across the Siran Valley in northeastern Pakistan, she grieved for what was no longer a lush vale with rolling green hills, trees and mountains. It was October 2005, and the catastrophic earthquake that had killed some 79,000 people in Pakistan, India and Afghanistan a week earlier had reduced the valley to mud and rubble.

The architect was there to help lead the reconstruction of settlements, but she had never done disaster work before. Lari was filled with anticipation after a two-hour

flight from Karachi to Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, followed by this five-hour drive.

Darkness had fallen before her driver pulled into a dimly lit army camp where the military rescue operation was based; at 1500 metres it was safer from aftershocks and rock slides than lower ground. When she stepped out of the car she was taken to the commanding officer, who talked to her about the villages that needed immediate help. The enormity of the task ahead hit her full force.

Lari, who had become Pakistan's first female architect in 1964, was



## READER'S DIGEST

renowned for designing slick towers of glass and concrete. But here, she'd be drawing plans for earthquake-resistant homes using stone and timber debris. Working from a rough cottage near the camp, she'd spend the next four months working with volunteer architects and engineers from Pakistan and abroad.

She would send her drawings with the volunteers, who walked through difficult terrain to reach mountain hamlets. There, they'd assist displaced families with sorting debris and building new and improved homes, even as temperatures plunged and snow began to fall.

"You can't imagine the desolation," Lari recalls of those early days. Her team members, often the first to arrive on the scene, were greeted with unexpected hospitality, given the circumstances. On one visit, villagers pulled out their best salvaged chairs and table. "They had lost everything," she says. "But they covered this damaged table with a beautiful embroidered cloth. And then they served us their World Food Programme food: biscuits, tea and eggs."

With each passing day, Lari was re-engineering her identity - from 'starchitect' to humanitarian. The profession had been good to her, but she had become disillusioned with projects for corporate elites. And doing disaster-relief work felt deeply right. So she made it her new mission.

OVER THE DECADES, Yasmeen Lari has won many awards and much recognition as an architect, social justice advocate, environmentalist and feminist. While it may seem like an unlikely path for a girl who was born into a well-to-do family in 1941, she had an unconventional upbringing. Her father, Zafarul Ahsan, was a progressive civil service officer working on development projects in Lahore and elsewhere. Her mother, Nabiun Nisa, valued education and took pride in her role as a bureaucrat's wife who could ride a horse and entertain guests with equal aplomb.

Zafarul treated his three daughters no differently from their brother, and Nabiun encouraged them to do well in school. Lari became aware of politics and poverty after Partition in 1947, when Britain ended its rule of India and carved off a portion to create Pakistan. Dividing the subcontinent into Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan resulted in the displacement of millions.

Zafarul was made deputy commissioner of Lahore, which included overseeing refugee camps and creating residential areas. At home, he would talk about impoverished women and the desperate need for housing.

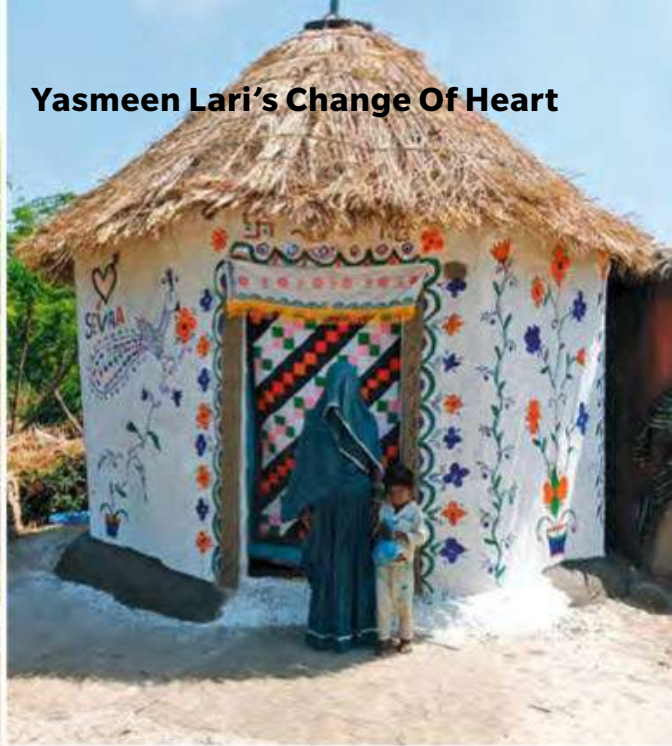
"I understood for the first time that there can be adversity, and that people needed help," says Lari. "My sisters and I were the first post-colonial



ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN



## Yasmeen Lari's Change Of Heart



**Left: Lari outside the women's centre she designed in Sindh province that was built to withstand floods. Right: One of Lari's sustainable shelters**

generation. Many women had played important roles in the struggle for independence. It followed that women should participate in nation-building."

Listening to her father talk about the housing crisis and need for architects made an impression on Lari. On a family visit to London when she was 15, she applied to architecture school at Oxford Brookes University. She laughs as she recalls her boldness. "I was young, and I didn't have a portfolio, so they told me to learn to draw and then come back."

After two years of daytime and evening classes, Lari was admitted to the programme as one of only five women in a class of more than 30.

Protected by her family and her husband, Suhail Zaheer Lari (who passed away in 2020), Yasmeen Lari experienced little sexism or prejudice

in England. Even Karachi, where she started working after returning to Pakistan in 1964, was progressive. Building-site contractors might test her mettle by making her climb wobbly ladders in her sari, but her married status and privileged background kept her mostly insulated from discrimination.

Lari gained inspiration by exploring the historic areas of Pakistan. In Kashmir and Sindh she admired the flood-resistant heritage buildings made with local materials to withstand extreme weather. And she loved the winding streets and beautiful terraces in Lahore and Multan. As architect for a Lahore social housing project in 1973, Lari listened to the local women and ensured that there were safe, open spaces to raise children and chickens alike.

Yet soon she heard the siren call of commercial projects – with their creative freedom, large budgets and luxurious materials. From 1980 to 2000, as her buildings rose across Karachi, including the Taj Mahal Hotel, the Finance and Trade Centre, the Pakistan State Oil House and the ABN AMRO Bank, Lari's renown grew. She held senior positions in national and international architectural groups and was a keynote speaker at conferences. "It was a very heady feeling," she says.

Yet she found ways to stay grounded. Lari and her husband, a historian, created the non-profit Heritage Foundation of Pakistan to celebrate and conserve the country's historic architecture, art and culture. Lari helped save several prominent buildings.

But it wasn't enough to offset her growing discomfort with corporate projects. In 2000, Lari retired.

"I realised I was just working with rich people," she says. She could no longer justify fashioning buildings out of unsustainable materials like polished granite and mirrored glass when corruption was rising and millions had limited access to housing, sanitation and water. "Perhaps with my present work, I am atoning."

**IN 2013, LARI** was giving a tour of a village in the southern province of Sindh that had been rebuilt after monsoon floods so destructive they impacted some 20 million Pakistanis. In a crisp white kameez and printed

headscarf that fluttered in the breeze, she watched as villagers showed off the buildings she had designed. "Our old buildings used to leak when it rained, but these stay dry inside," one villager told Lari.

The new bamboo structures are covered in a mix of sand and lime called limecrete, which holds up well in Pakistan's climate. And women can beautify their new homes by painting designs on them, an aspect Lari loves.

Pakistan's location and melting glaciers place it within the top ten countries most impacted by climate change over the past two decades, even though the country itself emits less than one per cent of global greenhouse gases. Ironically, rebuilding projects funded by government and non-governmental organisations tend to use concrete, burnt brick, metal sheets and other expensive, non-local building supplies.

Lari points out that the creation and transport of these materials contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, with concrete being one of the worst offenders. Furthermore, they don't perform well in severe weather.

In contrast, Lari's shelters, inspired by traditional designs and made with sustainable materials such as reed matting, bamboo, mud and lime that are sourced locally first, can better withstand disasters. Bamboo homes on stilts allow water to flow through, while cross-bracing







**The Zero Carbon Cultural Centre in Makli, Pakistan's biggest bamboo structure, was built by Lari's Heritage Foundation**

provides strength and flexibility during earthquakes. Lari's insistence on low-cost, zero-waste and zero-carbon buildings reflects her commitment to the planet.

While her passion for sustainability has grown over the years, her faith in traditional relief funding and charity models has withered. Over two decades she has learned that the approach typically used by government and non-governmental organisations alike doesn't work well. Locals are treated like helpless victims, and megaprojects are developed using outside labour. Also, funds are often siphoned away via administrative fees. "I have seen too much mismanagement when intermediaries

are involved," says Lari, who favours working at the community level. "These are the people who need me."

Lari says this local, cost-effective, participatory and zero-carbon approach is helping create an ecosystem of 'barefoot entrepreneurs'. For example, she has created a programme that teaches impoverished people in Sindh province to construct buildings, and to create and sell mud bricks, bamboo panels, terracotta tiles and other building materials.

Anyone can learn by watching DIY videos on Lari's Zero Carbon Channel on YouTube. Also, workshops led by local experts and artisans are held at a training centre in Pono Markaz and at the beautiful, airy Zero Carbon





**Left: Building a Pakistan Chulah (smokeless cookstove). Right: The final result**

Cultural Centre in Makli. Built by locals and Lari's Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, the latter is the biggest bamboo structure in the country.

The town of Makli is located about 100 kilometres east of Karachi. Almost half the people in the region live in poverty, and many beg at the nearby Makli Necropolis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site with its nearly half a million tombs and graves. A day's worth of alms might be 100 Pakistani rupees – equivalent to 57 New Zealand cents and not enough to feed a family. But when locals learn to create and sell tiles, organic soap and other products at the Zero Carbon Cultural Centre, they make at least four times that much. Workers share their knowledge, creating more prosperity.

Women and youth gather at the centre to socialise and learn. "The

women are uppermost in my mind," says Lari. "They are the ones who really suffer."

This feminist inspiration has fuelled many of Lari's designs, which now include household innovations. For instance, more than 80,000 of her limecrete and smokeless cookstoves fuelled with agricultural waste and called Pakistan Chulahs, have been built and decorated by villagers.

The stoves, which won a UN World Habitat Prize in 2018, stand higher than flood levels, making them safer than smoky, open cooking fires on the ground; they literally and figuratively lift women up.

Another one of Lari's designs is a composting private eco-toilet shelter. About ten per cent of Pakistanis lack a toilet or latrine and must seek privacy outside. The eco-toilet provides better



## Yasmeen Lari's Change Of Heart

sanitation and hygiene, and more dignity. Lari's Holistic Villages project builds on all these advances to help villages become self-sufficient. At a cost of about NZ\$325 per household, villagers can build disaster-resilient bamboo houses, Chulah stoves and shared eco-toilets. They have access to solar-powered lights, assistance to produce their own food and training to start their own businesses.

Lari says about 60,000 zero-carbon holistic houses have been built since 2010. Next, she wants to scale up and rehabilitate one million households.

**IN 2022, FLOODS** struck again, displacing about 33 million people, many of them already below the poverty line. Lari and the Heritage Foundation organised artisans to supply another of her innovations: prefabricated bamboo walls for 3.5-by-3.5-metre quick-assembly shelters.

Lari now travels regularly from her base in Karachi to Makli, to events around the globe and to the UK, where she holds a visiting professorship at Cambridge University's department of architecture.

Last year she created three stunning bamboo mosques that can be dismantled and reassembled for the Islamic

Arts Biennale in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Also last year, she won the coveted Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Gold Medal. Even King Charles is a fan; one of her shelters can be found on his Highgrove estate.

Lari insists that anyone who wants to help the impoverished and flood-affected in Pakistan should connect with village leaders to help fund things like water pumps, solar panels and school computers. "It's no longer a matter of giving money and cleaning your conscience – you need to create connections," says Lari. "We need to believe in people's capacity to bring about change. I treat displaced people as partners, not victims. They know what to do."

At age 83, Yasmeen Lari is still fizzing with ideas about zero-carbon designs, flood mitigation, skills building and self-sustaining villages. When she accepted the RIBA medal, she said, the honour "has strengthened my mission".

Many young architects have told her that they find her work inspiring, which gratifies her. "Architects can no longer work for just the one per cent," she says. "That doesn't allow them to serve humanity as much as they could." **R**



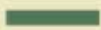
### Plural Number

More English words begin with the letter 's' than  
any other letter. [ENGLISHCLUB.COM](http://ENGLISHCLUB.COM)





*Reader's Digest Editors share their best no-effort  
tips to make the most of every day*



# 75 *Easy Ways* *To Have A* *Happier* *Life*



1. Put a bottle of water by your bed when you turn in. In the morning, drink what's left for a good start to hydration for the day.

---

2. Each day, spend at least ten minutes of dedicated one-on-one time with the loved ones you live with.

---

3. Make your to-do list specific. It's easier to get started when the item says 'Make outline for report' than when it says 'Write report'.

---

4. Print photos that you have on your phone as birthday gifts. Printed photos are a rare treat these days.

---

5. Call your parents; they want to hear from you. One day you won't be able to.

---

## 6. LIFE IS TOO SHORT FOR UNCOMFORTABLE SHOES.



7. Keep cut-up fruit and vegetables in the fridge so there's an easy, healthy snack when you're hungry.

---

8. Make sure to do the things that bring you the most joy at least once a week.

---

9. Pay your bills as soon as they come in.

---

10. After answering your friend's question about yourself, always follow up with a question about them.

---

11. Do a few rounds of 'square breathing' at the start or end of the day and whenever you're stressed: breathe in for four counts, hold for four, exhale for four and hold for four.

---

12. Set up automatic transfers to your savings account on your payday. Any amount will do.

---

13. Work in an office? At 3pm, stop and have an informal stand-around chat with your colleagues – it's a good energy boost.

---

14. Any exercise is good. A five-minute walk is better than no walk at all.

---

15. Smell the roses – or any other flower that's close by.

---

16. Strike up a conversation with the supermarket checkout assistant.

---

17. Buy a sunscreen you will use; it's money well spent.

---



### 18. SEIZE THE WEEKDAY: DON'T SAVE YOUR BEST CHINA FOR WEEKENDS OR SPECIAL OCCASIONS.

**19.** Exercise first thing in the morning, because even if you achieve nothing else for the rest of the day, you've accomplished that.

**20.** Keep a pot of rosemary on your windowsill. It's delicious in potato dishes.

**21.** Don't go shopping when you're bored or hungry.

**22.** Find a community outside of work and family.

**23.** Wear that Speedo or bikini if you want to. Who cares?

**24.** The next time you're tempted by an amazing bargain, ask yourself, "Do I really need this?"

**25.** Smile at people you pass on the street.

**26.** Not sleeping great? Cut out caffeine after 12 noon.

**27.** Spend an afternoon at an outdoor café and watch the world go by.

**28.** Travelling? Take only carry-on luggage. You can do it.

**29.** Spend a little time outside every day, no matter what the weather.

**30.** Make your bed before you leave the house for the day.

**31.** Choose your battles. They're not all worth fighting.

**32.** Follow social media? Take a day off every once in a while.

**33.** For an afternoon pick-me-up, tea with a little sugar can't be beat.

**34.** Call a friend you haven't spoken with lately.

**35.** Learn to say hello in at least three other languages.

**36.** Take the time to relax and enjoy your meals.

**37.** Take your kids to museums, art exhibitions and concerts, even if they're adults.



## 38. DON'T LET BAD WEATHER STOP YOU FROM ENJOYING THE OUTDOORS; JUST WEAR THE RIGHT CLOTHING.

**39.** Pick up some books from your local library to read over the holidays.

---

**40.** Try cold-water swimming, or a cold shower, for a natural high.

---

**41.** Cook something from another culture.

---

**42.** Write a letter. With a pen. On paper.

---

**43.** Turn off your phone at around 9pm for a better night's sleep.

---

**44.** Got a large box of mixed leafy greens? Use the red leaves first. They deteriorate fastest.

---

**45.** For just a few minutes each day, try learning a new skill, like juggling, drawing, doing Sudoku or playing the guitar.

---

**46.** If you like to cook, try a new recipe once a week. If you don't cook, try a new restaurant.

---

**47.** If you have the outdoor space, dry your laundry in the sun.

---

**48.** Doing something repetitive, like sweeping the floor, can be therapeutic and help take your mind off of stressful thoughts.

---

**49.** Don't forget about your old boxes of photos; drag them out, dig in and relive the memories.

---

**50.** Fuel your car when you are not in a hurry to get somewhere. You'll avoid having to do it on a day when you're in a rush.

---

**51.** If worries are keeping you awake at night, try slowly counting backwards from 100.

---

**52.** For a healthy start to the day, do ten minutes of simple yoga exercises, such as downward dog or cat-cow stretches.

---

**53.** Celebrate and encourage other people's talents, even if they're better at something than you are.

---

**54.** Have a nap after lunch. You'll be more alert all afternoon.

---

**55.** Read poetry. And when you find a poem you love, send it to a friend.

---



**56.** In a political discussion with friends or family, don't try to be right at all costs; listen and learn from other points of view.

---

**57.** Hug your children every time you see them.

---

**58.** Visiting another country? Don't be afraid to step off the tourist path. Most people in the world are good, like you.

---

**59.** Honesty is the best policy (and be true to yourself, too).

---

**60.** Don't just read the news headlines; take the time to read the whole article.

---

**61.** Get to know your neighbour by inviting them over for a drink.

---

**62. FEELING BLUE IN SUMMER? TREAT YOURSELF TO AN ICE-CREAM CONE. AND IN WINTER? A BOWL OF NOODLES WILL DO THE TRICK.**



**63.** If you have a choice, take your bicycle rather than your car.

---

**64.** When faced with a hard decision, don't overthink it; the right choice is often what's in your heart.

---

**65.** When you're wrong, admit it.

---

**66.** Cook a good meal for someone.

---

**67.** Even after an argument, try to part with a smile.

---

**68.** Give your partner a massage.

---

**69.** Always buy quality cookware (and wait for the sales).

---

**70.** Explore a street, a square or a hill you've never been to before.

---

**71.** Don't hesitate to decline an invitation if you just don't feel like going. It's OK to say no.

---

**72.** Always keep reusable shopping bags and an umbrella in the car.

---

**73.** Pamper yourself: get a manicure, spa treatment or luxury shave.

---

**74.** When in an argument, ask yourself if you're hungry, tired, hot or cold. Resolve that first, then your disagreement might not seem so bad.

---

**75.** Take your shoes off and walk barefoot in the surf. **R**

---

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## LIFE'S LIKE THAT

### *Seeing The Funny Side*



**"Sir, did you order the 'special meal'?"**

### **Turning Over An Old Leaf**

Every autumn my brother's neighbour would rake up his leaves and pile them in the bed of his ute. Unable to wrap his mind around why the guy would do this, my brother finally found the courage to ask, "Why don't you bag your leaves instead?"

"My way's better," said the neighbour. "I just drive around town until they're all gone."

SUBMITTED BY PATRICK BRYAN

### **Getting The Picture**

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 colours. 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."

SUBMITTED BY ROSE JAKUBASZE

## Posh Pooch

Our dog knows way too many phrases now, so my husband and I have resorted to talking like Victorian nobility to get anything by him. "Have you taken the dog on a brisk adventure recently? Would you escort the canine to the backyard, forthwith? Has he supped yet?"

@AWRITESINGER

## Worthy Of The Name

I never thought I would change my name when I got married. I was the first Dr Newton in my family and I'm very proud of that. But, when presented with the opportunity to say, "Hi, I'm Dr Sleeper and I'll be your anaesthetist," I just couldn't pass it up!

@LINDSAYPNEWTON

## SECURITY BREACH

This woman on the bus was so chatty with my daughter. She got her name, favourite colour, and our pets' names in under five minutes. I got off early before she could get any more of my passwords.

ABBI CRUTCHFIELD, COMEDIAN



## THE GREAT TWEET OFF: FRIENDSHIP EDITION

Fun tweets to share with your friends.



My mum only remembers my childhood friends based on the perceived slights they committed against her 15 years ago. I'll mention a name and she'll just be like "ah yes, the one with the MUDDY SHOES."

@ROBERTSCHULTZ

**Her:** I know making friends as an adult is hard. Just try asking questions.

**Me (who has not tried to make friends since Year 3):** My favourite dinosaur is triceratops. What's yours?

@ANDREW NADEAU

**20s** – Friends talk about best happy hours in town.

**30s** – Friends talk about best mortgage lender in town.

**40s** – Friends talk about best gastroenterologist in town, and then go on to enlighten each other about the gory details of colonoscopy prep.

@WHINECHEEZITS

Liking the same stuff is one thing. But hating the same stuff? True friendship.

@THISISJENDOLL

We are best friends. Always remember that when you fall, I'll pick you up after I finish laughing. @GIRLETWEETS



INSPIRATION

# FIND YOUR NEW FAVOURITE HOBBY

*Have more fun. Learn new things.  
Here's how to get started*



---

BY *Angela Haupt*  
FROM **TIME**



**K**ate Hanselman's home is a shrine to hobbies past and present. Fencing gear sits beside multiple pairs of rock-climbing shoes. "I find yarn everywhere because I love knitting, and I have a whole set of embroidery stuff," she says. Plus, stacks of puzzles, her partner's golf clubs, and equipment from his flying lessons.

"Our house is like a full hobby station," she says with a laugh. Challenging, fun and engaging hobbies have the power to make us happier and healthier, says Hanselman, who is a nurse. Such pursuits help us grow in creative, physical and intellectual ways, and can boost self-esteem. Plus, they often foster a connection with others. Hobbies lead to better physical health, more sleep, lower stress, greater life satisfaction, a larger social network and improved work performance.

"Hobbies live in the pleasure world, not necessarily the mastery world," Hanselman says. "We're not trying to impress the board, we're not going for a pay cheque, there's no ulterior motive. Hobbies are like dessert – and as a baker myself, dessert is the most important part."

That resonates with Chris Johnson, recreational woodworker, motorcyclist, gardener, cook and runner. He has accepted that he'll never be a master surfer, but that doesn't dampen his enjoyment of riding waves.

And he's so taken with beekeeping that his backyard is now home to 20,000 honeybees.

"I really love learning and figuring things out, and developing an understanding of how things tick," says Johnson. His hobbies tend to evolve out of curiosity, boredom or need. Take the bees: after moving into a new home with a barren yard, he was concerned about a lack of pollinators, so he planted a garden and became a beekeeper.

"If you derive joy from your hobby – it doesn't matter if it's a board game or beekeeping – I'm confident it will make you a better person in every aspect of your life," he says.

But where do you start? We asked experts how to discover the hobbies you don't yet know you'll love.

### ASK YOURSELF: HOW DO I WANT TO FEEL?

Hobbies present an escape – they can help you get out of your head and calm down, says Matthew J. Zawadzki, an associate professor of health psychology who has researched the connection between leisure and wellbeing. He suggests asking yourself how you want an activity to make you feel. Mentally engaged? Distracted? Relaxed? Socially connected?

It's also helpful to consider what your life is missing, like creativity or physical activity.

"Recognise that you have different

REVISIT  
ACTIVITIES  
YOU LOVED  
WHEN YOU  
WERE  
YOUNG

---

PHOTO: OLGA NIKIFOROVA/GETTY IMAGES

needs at different moments, and that's OK," he says. There's no such thing as one perfect hobby.

### START SMALL

Don't invest a ton of time and money in a new hobby immediately. Ease in to figure out if it's right for you, advises Rebecca Weiler, a mental health counsellor specialising in career counselling. "You can always do more later," she says. If you're wondering if paintballing might be a good fit, join an outing or two with a local Meetup group. Or sign up to do a one-time pottery class rather than a set of eight.

It's also smart to resist the pressure to overcommit. Hanselman enjoyed learning to fence, but the next step was competing, and she didn't want to do that, so she stopped. "You spend enough of your day pushing yourself," she says. "Hobbies are supposed to be fun."

### BE OPEN

Keeping an open mind and not dismissing potential hobbies – even if they seem out of your wheelhouse – is key, says Katina Bajaj, a clinical psychology researcher and co-founder of a company that helps adults tap into their imagination, creativity and curiosity. She and her

husband recently went hiking close to where they live, and someone handed them a pamphlet of plants to look for along the trail, such as miner's lettuce. Instead of tossing it, they paid attention, and now they have a new hobby – foraging.

"We're wired as humans to be curious and open, but in a very burned-out world, we forget that," she says. "It's the first thing to go." So next time someone hands you a flyer or invites you to tag along to an event, seize the opportunity. It could introduce you to something you never guessed you'd love.

### TAKE A TRIP BACK IN TIME

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? The answer could point you towards an appealing hobby, Weiler says. For example, if you wanted to be a professional soccer player growing up,







**IF A HOBBY  
MAKES YOU  
HEALTHIER  
AND HAPPIER,  
EVERYONE  
AROUND YOU  
WILL BENEFIT**

joining a local team or coaching some neighbourhood kids could reignite a long dormant passion.

The nostalgia doesn't have to stop there. Revisit activities you loved when you were young, Bajaj suggests, like drawing, putting together model kits, collecting things or building clay figures. "It's a really helpful place to start, and it allows you to feel comfortable," she says.

Childhood delights can easily evolve into adult hobbies.

Also, consider going back to school. Check out classes at university or technical college, or sign up for a lesson at a local community

centre to learn more about a potential hobby, Weiler advises.

Always dreamed of writing a novel? Join a fiction writers group. Fascinated by family history? Take a genealogy class.

## **TAKE AN ASSESSMENT**

Lots of universities offer career assessments to help students determine what to major in and how to navigate their professional lives. You can also use these tools to glean insights about potential hobbies, especially for those where you're starting from square one, Weiler says.

If you're a university graduate, connect with your university's alumni centre; sometimes they make these assessments available for free. Or you can pay a careers' counsellor for access.

### KEEP A LIST

Hanselman and her partner keep a running list on their fridge of all the things that strike them as interesting. "Maybe a month from now I'll be like, *Butterfly garden? Why did I think that was a good idea?*". Log potential interests as they come to you, and you'll have no shortage of options to explore when you're ready.

### REMOVE GUILT FROM THE EQUATION

"Give yourself permission to do something that you like," Zawadzki urges – and keep in mind that if a hobby makes you healthier and happier, and reduces stress, everyone around you will benefit. Think of discovering new hobbies as an adventure that will add fulfilling new dimensions to your life, and enjoy the process.

"I sneakily suspect that we have more leisure and hobbies in us than we realise," he says. **R**

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## Are These The Oddest World Records Ever?

**Guinness World Records** has a database of more than 40,000 amazing achievements and record-breaking feats. But there are also some truly odd ones, too, as a selection from 2023 proves.

**Most skips by a cat in one minute:** Talented tabby Kit Kat from Missouri jumped over a skipping rope nine times in a minute.

**Loudest burp (female):** Maryland woman Kimberly Winter belted out a belch that was measured at 107 decibels – about as loud as a motorcycle at full throttle.

**Longest tongue on a living dog:** Rocky, a boxer from Illinois, had his tongue measured at 13.8 centimetres.

**Most spoons balanced on the body:** Abolfazl Saber Mokhtari of Iran bested his own previous title of 85 when he managed to balance 88 spoons in various locations around his body. UPI.COM









**SEE THE WORLD...**

Turn the page »





## ...DIFFERENTLY

### **Train Yard**

From a bird's eye view or in the light of sunset, marshalling yards display a beauty all of their own. When they are in operation, they tend to be noisy as well as dangerous places for unauthorised persons, as they are used to assemble wagons weighing tonnes into trains. This marshalling yard in Maschen near Hamburg is the largest in Europe. Up to 4000 carriages are shunted here every day.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES







PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES






ART OF LIVING




*You Can*  
**ADD,**  
*But You Can't*  
**SUBTRACT**

BY *Mat Lindsay* WITH *Pat Nourse*  
FROM **ESTER**



*An approach to seasoning and  
cooking – and possibly life itself.  
Just keep tasting*

At the end of the day, taste is what we're looking for when we cook. Texture, body and that ever-unsettling word, 'mouthfeel', each have their own importance, but ultimately, it's all about flavour.



The simple instruction 'season to taste' can open up a considerable gap in understanding. It's completely essential, but hard to translate in words alone – it's that little pinch of salt or squeeze of lemon or splash of oil that takes a plate of food to a different level. Even the most carefully written recipe can't account for variations in produce, in the sharpness of your knives, the size of your pans, the minerals in your water or the altitude of your kitchen. Has that tomato been refrigerated for a month or plucked straight from the backyard? Then there's the human element; a recipe can call for a pinch of salt, but my pinch isn't the same as your pinch, my slug might be more generous than yours.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES





## You Can Add, But You Can't Subtract

Recipes are guidelines at best. Learn to use and trust your own taste.

When I say, 'use' it, too, I don't just mean right at the end. Taste the food while you're cooking, from the moment the thing lands on the chopping block, through to just as the dish hits the plate.

Taste your ingredients raw first to see your starting point and use that flavour as a reference when seasoning. Taste a leaf while you're making its dressing and see how they behave together.

When you're seasoning a sauce or a dressing, once you've introduced the ingredients to each other, let them sit for a moment, let the flavours interact. The ingredients will contribute their own personality (bitterness,

sweetness, saltiness), each affecting the balance of flavour. Allow time for this.

I always find a sauce or dressing will change significantly over an hour at room temperature, and more dramatically overnight. Taste it again: the onion may have brought in a sweetness that wasn't there before, the vinegar is perhaps less pronounced. Is it balanced as it is? Maybe it's a little flat and could use a bit of encouragement.

Adjust the sauce a little at a time, tasting as you go to see how the flavour reacts to each addition. Acid brightens flavours while restraining bitter ones. Sugar enhances the flavour of salt, just as a little salt will do the same for sweet flavours.

It's better to season gradually across the whole process of cooking than to lay on the salt or the sugar all in one hit. Adding smaller quantities at a time

gives you a bigger margin for error and reduces the chance of spoiling a dish with too much salt, say, or too much sugar. You can add but you can't subtract.

If you're making something that will reduce as it cooks (stocks and soups for example), season relatively lightly at the beginning – the salt and acid and sweetness will all become concentrated as the water cooks out.

### IT'S BETTER TO SEASON GRADUALLY ACROSS THE WHOLE PROCESS

Add delicate flavours – lime juice, for example, or soft herbs – at the very end of the process so their brightness is preserved.

Season condiments more generously: their purpose is, in turn, to season and reinforce, support, or energise the food they partner; used in smaller quantities, they need to be assertive.

If you're not confident in your next move, pour off or remove a portion of what you're cooking to a bowl or plate and add a bit of the salt or acid or sugar that you think it might need. Give it a try. Is it improved? Or did it tip it over the edge?

Sometimes what might seem to be slightly too little of a



### SEASON COLD FOODS A LITTLE MORE AGGRESSIVELY. COLD DULLS FLAVOURS

key ingredient in a dish makes it more compelling or intriguing to eat – a scant hand with the capers in a parsley and shallot salad, say, or a background hum of chilli so gentle it's almost subliminal. Your mantra at all times being 'You can add but you can't subtract'. Second opinions are very useful, too.

I know I've hit the right spot when I get the mouth sweats, with my mouth watering at just the thought of another taste.

If you're making things in advance – like the day before – time will have its own effect. You'll need to re-season the dish, bringing it back to the temperature you intend to serve it at, and then giving it the attention it needs. Season cold foods a little more aggressively. Cold dulls flavours. Here it's best to season, let the







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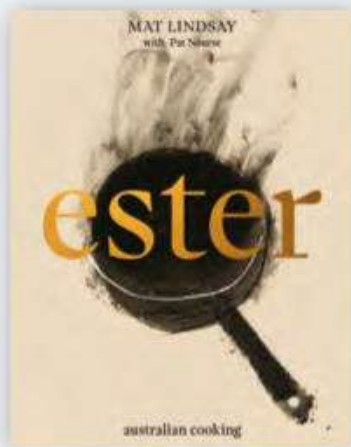


food cool, then taste, adding whatever may now be missing.

When a quantity is listed for salt in recipes, do take the time to measure it out, but add it with your fingers to get the feel of the thing. Seasoning takes practice, and with trial and error, you'll get a feel for how much is

too much or when there is call for a little more – and in time you will find you have less need for the written measurements.

Don't be afraid of mistakes. Mistakes are good, only adding to your understanding, narrowing the playing field for the next time. **R**



### About Chef Mat Lindsay

Working part-time for Neil Perry and Kylie Kwong, two of Australia's most celebrated chefs, while studying graphic design more than 20 years ago, Mat Lindsay learnt about produce and technique, how to taste, how to build and balance flavour, and how to work beyond the idea of Western and Eastern cuisines. Putting his studies aside, in 2013 Mat opened his restaurant Ester in Sydney.

COVER IMAGE AND TEXT FROM *ESTER* BY MAT LINDSAY WITH PAT NOURSE, PHOTOGRAPHY BY PATRICIA NIVEN. HARDCOVER. MURDOCH BOOKS RRP \$60.00.



## Italy's Tilting Towers

It might not be Italy's most famous leaning tower, but the Garisenda Tower in Bologna has got the world's attention after scientists have found it is at risk of collapsing. The streets surrounding the 900-year-old tower have been closed after unusual shifts in the stonework. Standing 48 metres high, the Garisenda Tower has a lean of four degrees – just shy of the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa's five-degree tilt. Italy has at least ten leaning towers, of which two more are located in Pisa. Venice, with its unstable soil, also counts three leaning towers. Other tilting towers can be found in Caorle, Burano and Rome. Wealthy families originally built the towers during medieval times as displays of wealth and power. [THE GUARDIAN.COM](http://THEGUARDIAN.COM), [SLOWITALY.COM](http://SLOWITALY.COM)

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# PLANTUS STINKYUS

*Time to take a walk around the world's  
least fragrant gardens*

BY Helen Foster

*The world's  
biggest flower,  
the Rafflesia*

**N**ormally the smell of blooming flowers is a pleasant one, but some plants haven't got that memo. Emitting scents of sulphur, bad eggs and rotting bodies, the stinkier members of the plant kingdom might never make it into a bouquet, but for those who care for them, they're both a source of fascination – and some fun stories.

"Spoiler alert. Plants can't walk," says Paul Nicholson, senior

horticulturist at the Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney. "They can't move to reproduce or escape from predators so the scents they produce are either to attract pollinators or repel those who want to eat them."

And with descriptions like 'smells like mouldy elephants' being bandied around, you might be surprised to discover that you might have eaten some of them, too. Here's six stinky plants to know about.



## *Amorphophallus titanum*

### AKA THE CORPSE FLOWER

With leaves up to three metres high, this plant is already hard to ignore, but, when the tuber from which *Amorphophallus titanum*, the titan arum, grows reaches around 15-20 kilograms, it's mature enough to flower – and that's when the fun really starts.

“The flowers smell like a mix of week-old football socks, cat food left out in the sun and a side of vomit,” says Paul Nicholson. And if that wasn't bad enough, “the flower emits heat which makes the smell even stronger.”

To the flies that *Amorphophallus titanum* needs for pollination, the odour is like catnip, which is helpful as they only flower every couple of years, and for just for 24-36 hours, so “they need to attract flies from a large distance to ensure survival,” says Paul.

And outside of Western Sumatra where it naturally grows, a blooming corpse flower also attracts humans – with queues of curious people forming outside any botanic garden lucky enough to have one.



**The foul-smelling *Amorphophallus titanum* (titan arum) lures flies to pollinate**

## *Bulbophyllum fletcherianum*

### AKA THE TONGUE ORCHID

You have to feel for the poor guy charged with collecting samples of *Bulbophyllum fletcherianum*, the tongue orchid, for Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden. Because the plants grow in the mountainous regions of Papua New Guinea, he was hoisted off the side of a cliff, and upon landing he fell face down into the plant bed.



**Bulbophyllum fletcherianum,  
the tongue orchid**

“When they lifted him back up he immediately lost his lunch and no-one is quite sure if it was the shock of being thrown off a cliff or the smell of the plants that did it,” says Paul. Admittedly, the latter is a hot contender as the scent of the tongue orchid has been described as ‘like a herd of rotting elephants’. The plant gets its name from the strips of purple that make up the flower, which flies confuse for spoiled meat. “The thing that fascinates me about these plants is how quickly they bloom,” says Clare Shearman, plant collections manager



for Wellington County Council in New Zealand. “They’ll be doing nothing and then we’ll walk back into the same greenhouse three hours later and it will have unfurled and the whole place smells.”

## ***Parkia speciosa*** **AKA THE STINK BEAN**

Also known as petai, these beans that grow in 60-90-centimetre-long green pods will be very familiar to those living in Singapore, Malaysia or Thailand as, despite the smell of sulphur they emit, they can be eaten.

“Many people believe they clean the kidneys, and if you eat them your urine does smell for at least half a day,” says horticulturist Lilian Kwok



**The *Parkia speciosa* is an edible bean**

PHOTO: (BULBOPHYLLUM FLETCHERIANUM) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE, HANNELE LAHTI.  
ALL OTHER PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTY IMAGES



from the National Parks Board in Singapore.

The strong scent of the bean is designed to attract animals. The chewed seed pods they leave behind grow into new trees, while seeds they pass out after digestion germinate elsewhere.

Petai trees can grow to 45 metres tall so bats and monkeys can reach the strong-smelling seeds in the tree tops, but most animals feast on the beans on the ground.

“The seed pods fall during heavy rain and the farmers, or people who collect them to sell in the villages have to be very quick when this happens as the animals get to them so fast it can leave them with nothing,” says Lilian.

“And it’s actually quite an expensive vegetable, about six [Singapore] dollars for 200 grams.”

### ***Amorphophallus konjac*** **AKA VODOO LILIES**

One day a panic hit Sydney’s Royal Botanic Gardens. The greenhouse staff could smell gas. Fearing that one of the boilers that heat the houses was leaking, the gardens were closed and emergency services called – but nothing could be found. And then



***Amorphophallus konjac* emit a strong, unpleasant odour**



someone realised that the voodoo lilies were in bloom. These striking purple plants emit a gas-like scent of rotting eggs – and they were planted just above the system that pumps air through the greenhouses.

“We’ve moved them now,” says Paul Nicholson. The good news is that, while it might be strong, the scent doesn’t last long.

“As soon as the plant has been pollinated the smell disappears,” says Clare Shearman. “It’s just one



more example of how clever plants are. Once it's done its thing it stops wasting energy-creating scent." Considering rotten eggs aren't normally a delicacy, it might surprise you to hear that the tuber from which the flower grows is the basis of shirataki noodles used in Japanese cooking.

### *Alstonia scholaris*

#### AKA THE DEVIL TREE

A medium-sized tree, the *Alstonia scholaris* produces small light-green flowers. When they bloom in Singapore's national parks, the perfume, which is described as smelling a bit like burnt sugar, gently scents the

neighbourhood – but then it gets stronger and stronger. "By days two and three we start to get phone calls from people who live nearby asking what the awful smell is," says Lilian Kwok.

The good news for anyone living in the area is that it takes a very particular set of circumstances for the trees to flower – a period of rain followed by a long period of dry weather, "so in Singapore it only happens once or twice a year," says Lilian. "But during that time the locals have to shut their windows."



***The overpowering scent of the Alstonia scholaris travels through neighbourhoods***



At least in Singapore the only concern is the scent. In India, *Alstonia* are said to be the home of demonesses called *yakshini*, hence the name of the devil tree, and children will go out of their way to avoid them.

## **Rafflesia** THE WORLD'S LARGEST FLOWER



You wouldn't think that a plant that produces flowers spanning close to a metre in diameter would need to use smell to grab attention, but, some species of *Rafflesia*, the world's biggest flower, can also be one of its stinkiest.

"In the Philippines you really have to put your nose inside the flower to smell it, but in, say Indonesia, the smell is much stronger – and described as smelling like a cross between dead lamb and dead chicken," says Adriane Tobias, who studies the plants at the University of the Philippines.

Yet neither the size nor smell are what's the most fascinating thing about *Rafflesia*; that prize goes to the



### **Rafflesia smells like decaying meat**

fact that the flower has no leaves, no stem and no roots. Instead it's completely parasitic, living in the vines of another plant from which they receive all their water and nutrients until, once a year, they burst into a malodorous bloom that stinks out the surrounding area for about a week.

And you thought your neighbours could be annoying. **R**



## **Giving It A Good Run**

The word *run* is considered to have the most senses of any English word – over 600. Examples include different things such as running a race or checking to see if your fridge is running. [THESAURUS.COM](http://thesaurus.com)

# LAUGHTER

## *The Best Medicine*



**"I'll have the spaghetti with meatballs but don't let the meat, sauce or noodles touch."**

### **Tools Of The Trade**

A farmer's wife becomes ill, and her husband sends for the doctor, who hurries over with his black medical bag in hand. After examining the patient, he steps outside the sick room and asks the farmer for a pair of pliers. A few minutes later, the door opens and he asks for a hammer and chisel.

"Doctor, what's wrong with her?"

asks the distraught husband.

"I don't know yet," replies the frustrated doctor. "I can't get my instrument bag open."

MEDINDIA.NET

### **Wait For it**

I just burned 2000 kilojoules. That's the last time I leave brownies in the oven while I nap.

SUBMITTED BY MATT COOPER



## Body Of Art

I read that Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel on his back. It must have been difficult reaching the bit between his shoulders.

@GLENNYRODGE

## Number Crunching

When you hear a statistic, always ask about the other side of the statistic. For example, 44% of marriages end in divorce. Now, that's a scary number.

But it's not so scary if you look at it from a different perspective. If 44% of marriages end in divorce, that means 56% of marriages end in death.

DON MCMILLAN, COMEDIAN

## Remember When You...

Siblings are important because they're like external hard drives for your memories and personality.

@JZUX

## Laughing Stock

A born and bred city slicker is in the country when he sees a field of animals and says to the farmer, "What a strange-looking cow. Why doesn't it have horns?"

"There are several reasons," the farmer replies. "Some cows get their horns late, others have their horns cut off, and still others never grow horns."

"And this particular cow?" the city slicker asks.

"Well, the reason this cow doesn't have any horns is because it's a horse."

LANCASTERFARMING.COM

## FESTIVAL FUNNIES

*The yearly Edinburgh Festival attracts some of the world's best standup comedians. Here's a choice of their 2023 one-liners.*

**I started dating a zookeeper, but it turned out he was a cheetah.**

LORNA ROSE TREEN

**When women gossip we get called bitchy; but when men do it's called a podcast.**

SIKISA

**Getting mythology wrong is my Hercules ankle.**

OLAF FALAFEL

**I have an unconscious bias. I'm biased firmly towards being unconscious.**

LEILA NAVABI

**The UK is so small, they've got to keep all their lakes in one district.**

LIZ GUTERBOCK

**Everyone says your 20s are all about finding yourself. If that's true, your 30s are about wishing you'd found somebody else.**

GINNY HOGAN

**What does Kylie sing while counting sheep? I can't get ewe out of my head.**

ALISON SPITTLE

**My relationship with my mum is like the evolution of payment technology – we went from physical contact to electronic only, then it was contactless.**

KUAN-WEN HUANG

**Last year, I had a great joke about inflation. But it's hardly worth it now.**

AMOS GILL

13 THINGS

# About The Magical World Of *Disney*

BY Courtney Shea

**1** Disney turned 100 in 2023, and today looks a lot different from the tiny animation studio it once was. Americans Walter Elias Disney and his brother Roy originally launched the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio with a series of short films about a girl and her cat. Today, the Walt Disney Company is, after Apple, the world's second-largest multinational mass-media and entertainment conglomerate. In the century that it's been making films, Disney has earned 135 Oscars. Walt Disney himself holds the record for the most Academy Awards earned by an individual – 22.

**2** Mickey Mouse, created in 1928, was not the first Disney character (that distinction belongs to Oswald the Lucky Rabbit), but he is certainly the most popular. Minnie Mouse followed in 1930. In 1978, Mickey, who celebrated his 50th birthday that year, was the first animated character to earn a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame, and according to market researchers, he is more famous among children globally than Santa Claus. The iconic 'mouse ears' remain Disney's most popular piece of merchandise, with annual sales of NZ\$4.8 million.

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

**3** In a case of life imitating art, the voice actors behind Mickey and Minnie met and fell in love while on the job. Wayne Allwine voiced Mickey from 1977 to 2009 – a record 32 years in the role. He met Russi Taylor, the voice behind Minnie, in 1988, and the two were married from 1991 until Allwine's death in 2009.

**4** *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which hit theatres in 1937, was Disney's first full-length film and the first ever animated feature made in full colour and with sound. It took three years to produce and was three times over budget, eventually costing NZ\$2.4 million. Insiders even nicknamed the project 'Disney's Folly'. But it paid off: the film earned more than NZ\$13 million during its initial release.

**5** Fresh off this success at age 37, Walt purchased a new home for his parents in 1938, but tragically, faulty wiring led to the death of his mother, Flora, from carbon monoxide poisoning. One popular fan theory is that this intense loss is the reason for the 'dead mother phenomenon' in films such as *Bambi*, *The Jungle Book*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast* and many others.

**6** According to lore, the body of Walt Disney was cryogenically frozen following his death in 1966 at the age of 65. The rumour, first

reported in a tabloid, even spawned a related conspiracy theory that the 2013 hit *Frozen* was so named to redirect internet searches about Disney's final resting place. Plenty of people, including Disney's daughter, have confirmed that Walt was cremated, but the internet just won't 'Let It Go'.

**7** The Marvel Universe is one of Disney's highest-profile acquisitions, purchased in 2009 for the equivalent of NZ\$6.5 billion and now worth more than NZ\$96.1 billion. Surprisingly, movies account for just 11 per cent of Disney's total revenue. Television and media networks are the biggest money-makers at 35 per cent, followed by theme parks and merchandise at 33 per cent. Streaming services (Disney+) account for 21 per cent.

**8** The idea for a theme park was conceived as 'Mickey Mouse Park' on a 3.2 hectare property, but when Disneyland opened in 1955 it stretched over 64 hectares. Collectively, Disney theme parks – with international locations in Tokyo, Paris, Hong Kong and Shanghai – welcome more than 115 million visitors each year.

**9** Beneath many Disney parks is a network of interconnected tunnels for the transportation of staff and merchandise. The idea came from Walt, who was irked after



## READER'S DIGEST

spotting costumed characters in the wrong themed areas while making their way to their intended location. The largest system of these tunnels exists at the Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Florida, extending across 3.6 hectares and costing more to build than the theme park itself.

**10** The success of 2003's *Finding Nemo* produced a less than picture-perfect side effect when kids started 'freeing' their pet fish by flushing them down the toilet – and leading to emergency plumbing calls. Other unwelcome trends? There was amphibian kissing – and a spike in child salmonella cases – following 2009's *The Princess and the Frog*.

**11** Disneyland's Space Mountain in California, which was constructed in 1975, was designed in consultation with a NASA astronaut. And if you were among the first visitors to ride Pirates of the Caribbean in 1967, those skeletons and skulls weren't just props but real human remains acquired

from the medical centre at a nearby university. Once fake skeleton technology improved, the remains were replaced (and given a proper burial).

**12** Working at Disneyland in California has been a launching pad for many celebrities. Steve Martin honed his sleight-of-hand skills at Merlin's Magic Shop in Fantasyland, Kevin Costner worked as a skipper on the Jungle Cruise and Robin Williams performed as a mime on Main Street.

**13** Disney characters have often been inspired by real people: Jessica Rabbit was a tribute to 1960s pin-up Rita Hayworth. Illustrators looked at photos of then-teenaged actress Alyssa Milano to create Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*. The vultures in *The Jungle Book* were inspired by another fab four: the Beatles. *Aladdin*'s toothy grin comes direct from Tom Cruise. And the titular garbage compactor in *Wall-E* is rumoured to be named in honour of Walter Elias Disney himself. **R**

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### Eggs-hausted Penguins

It's a challenge for all new parents: getting enough sleep while keeping a close eye on their newborns. For chinstrap penguins in Antarctica it means thousands of mini-catnaps a day, researchers report in *Science*. To guard their eggs and chicks, the penguins nod off – but only for about four seconds at a time. AP NEWS

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*We can be  
pretty hard on  
our feet, so  
let's show them  
some love*

—  
BY Sydney Loney

# Be Nice To Your Feet

ILLUSTRATIONS: ELISE CONLIN





# Walking. Hiking. Jogging. Biking.

Unaided, we can't do any of these things without our feet. So why, when our quality of life is directly related to being active, do many of us ignore these two vital parts of our body?

Spanish scientists expressed concern in their 2021 study (of participants from 15 to 69 years) over a rise in foot issues and how poor foot health affects everything from physical activity to the overall health of able-bodied people.

"Foot problems can reduce quality of life, lead to loss of balance, make it difficult to put on shoes and increase the risk of falling," the authors wrote in the journal *Scientific Reports*. "All of this can affect activities of daily living, including the desire to go outside."

Meanwhile, a 2017 study, also in Spain, of able-bodied university students found that poor foot health not only prevented them from being physically active but also increased their risk of becoming socially isolated as a result.

## THE BUNION BLUES, AND OTHER WOES

If foot pain limits your activity and lasts more than a week, says Paul Langer, a sports-medicine podiatrist, it's time to see a podiatrist or an orthopaedic surgeon. If feet – the body's foundation – aren't performing properly, they throw everything else off, adds fellow podiatrist Hartley Miltchin. "They're like the base of the Tower of Pisa. When they're off, the tower leans."

Bunions are one of the most common foot problems preventing people from being active. Almost a third of us have one. It's the bony bump that can form when the big toe becomes misaligned; that causes the tip of the toe to move inwards and the joint at the base to stick out sideways. Bunions don't go away on their own.

Troy Gubb had always been active, but about a decade ago, in his early 40s, he developed a bunion on his left foot. When the manager for a communications and media company removed his skates after playing ice hockey, his foot was red and inflamed. After a round of golf, it throbbed. Eventually, he had to give up hockey, then golf, then running. He couldn't even take Carl, the family bulldog, for a walk.

"The end of the line was last autumn," he says. "I was limping around with a cane and I couldn't put pressure on my foot." He began looking into how to deal with bunions.

The condition is generally caused by a combination of genetic predisposition and footwear, says Dr Kathleen Gartke, an orthopaedic surgeon who has performed many bunion-removal procedures. “Fashion is not kind to feet,” she says, adding that wearing tight or narrow-toed shoes, high heels or shoes with no support is OK now and again, but “not all day, every day.”

If you notice a bony bump forming at the base of your big toe, try spending more time in shoes that don’t crowd your toes. Dr Gartke also recommends wearing a toe spacer (available at most pharmacies) between your first and second toe to help keep them straight. It can also help you identify shoes that you shouldn’t wear – any that feel tight when you are wearing the toe spacer.

Bunions tend to worsen over time. If they become so painful that they interfere with your daily life, consider having them surgically removed. “All bunions are not created equal and so there are dozens of different procedures available,” Dr Gartke says. “An X-ray will help your doctor decide on the one that best addresses your problem.”

The most common are exostectomy (or bunionectomy) and osteotomy, and they’re usually done in tandem. The surgery takes from 45 minutes to an hour. Exostectomy involves shaving off the bump of the toe joint. Then an osteotomy is done to solve the underlying issue. A

surgeon makes cuts along the bone to realign the joint and inserts pins or screws to hold the bone in place. Sometimes a small piece of the big toe’s bone might need to be removed to help straighten the toe.

The good news is that the procedures often require only a local anaesthetic. And what was once a painful recovery can be better managed with a continuous nerve block: that’s when an anaesthetist puts a small tube into the back of the knee that delivers local anaesthetic into the nerve that connects to the foot in the bunion area.

## **HAVING STRONG MUSCLES IN OUR FEET AND ANKLES REDUCES OUR RISK OF FALLING**

“The tube can remain in place for a few days and provides excellent pain control,” says Dr Gartke. Full recovery – when there is no more swelling or tenderness – takes from four to six months, depending on the procedure and the severity of the bunion.

Gubb had surgery to bring the big toe back into alignment. He trains other podiatrists, as well as orthopaedic surgeons, in the procedure, during which he uses precision instruments to make small cuts in the bones to bring the big toe back into alignment.



Six weeks after his surgery in April 2022, Gubb was golfing again. He only wishes he'd addressed his foot pain ten years earlier.

### OTHER CAUSES OF PAIN

Apart from bunions, Langer says, the other common causes of foot pain that drive people to his clinic include plantar fasciitis, Achilles tendinitis and osteoarthritis.

Plantar fasciitis is a stabbing heel pain common in runners and dancers. It is caused by inflammation of a band of tissue – the plantar fascia – that runs along the bottom of your foot, connecting your heel to your toes. It's not a muscle, tendon or ligament, so it's rigid and can't stretch.

Over time, microtears develop on the tissue, causing pain. In people who overpronate (roll their heel inwards when they walk) it's worse because that creates even more tugging. Langer says that an off-the-shelf insole may help to relieve strain on the plantar fascia. If that fails, orthotics may be considered. Stretching, physiotherapy and icing the area can also help relieve symptoms.

Achilles tendinitis is an overuse injury that causes pain in the Achilles tendon, which connects your calf muscles to your heel bone. Resting and over-the-counter pain medications help, as do physio stretching and strengthening exercises. Orthotics that elevate the heel can also relieve strain on the tendon.

Another common culprit for foot pain is osteoarthritis, which is typically attributed to wear and tear. "One in six people over the age of 50 have arthritis in their feet and, with 33 joints in each foot, that can be an issue that limits activity," Langer says. Treatment includes medications (such as acetaminophen and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), physical therapy, cortisone injections or even joint replacement.

### KEEP YOUR FEET HAPPY

Sometimes, taking care of your feet and preventing problems begins elsewhere in your body. Dahlia Fahmy, a physiotherapist, describes the body as 'a kinetic chain'. Every move we make creates a chain reaction in our muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints.

"The foot is the driver of all movement," Fahmy says. "When the foot hits the ground, everything else in the body changes, and if a foot is dysfunctional, it can drive everything up the chain to be dysfunctional, too." The key to a healthy, stable foot, says Fahmy, is strength in the glutes and mobility through the hips and calves. "Our feet need help from their friends above to keep them working properly."

Langer agrees, and frequently sends his podiatry patients exercise information and referrals to a physiotherapist to work on strength-training calf muscles, quads, hamstrings and glutes, as well as the upper body. He points out how important it is to

strengthen the muscles of the foot and ankle. “Numerous studies show that having strong feet reduces our risk of falling and helps offset the natural deterioration of muscle that starts around age 50.”

Scientists at the University of São Paulo in Brazil concluded that strong feet can reduce your risk of running-related injuries by more than 50 per cent.

To keep his own feet fit, Langer trains the large muscles in his legs and the small muscles in his feet with hill running and something called toe yoga. “The idea is to first activate the muscles of the foot, then progressively integrate the muscle activation into more challenging movements, like going from sitting to standing, then standing on one foot, then hopping, then running.”

A good pose to start with: stand so your weight is evenly distributed between your big toe, pinky and heel. Then lift all five toes off the floor, spread them as far apart as you can, and then lay them back down, one toe at a time.

Langer, who has run more than 25 marathons, has long been fascinated by how our feet carry us

through the world. “We don’t often think of our feet as sensory organs, but they send a tremendous amount of information to our brains to help us maintain balance, adapt to different surfaces and move efficiently.”

He compares what happens when we walk on a soft, sandy beach versus a concrete footpath: sand is unstable and requires much more energy to move over than a firm, flat surface, such as concrete. He says that our feet provide the sensory input that allows our brains to change the limb stiffness of our legs, helping us optimise our movement patterns for various surfaces.

Walking outdoors has several health benefits for our feet, one of



the most important of which, says Langer, is the variety of terrain. "Uneven terrain forces our joints to bend and flex to adapt, and it requires our muscles and neurologic system to work harder to provide power and balance." All of this helps us maintain our range of motion, strength and balance.

Regardless of the surface you do it on, walking offers a myriad of health benefits. Canadian researchers found it's one of the best – and most preferred – forms of exercise for people with osteoporosis. Plus, a study published in September 2022 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine* analysed activity-tracker data from 78,500 people and found that brisk walking for 30 minutes a day led to a reduced risk of heart disease and cancer.

### THE RIGHT SHOES

Despite research touting the benefits of extra cushioning, Langer says there is no magic shoe that is ideal for most people. One of the biggest mistakes people make, he says, is relying on reviews or salespeople for recommendations on the 'best' shoes.

"Comfort is extremely important, but comfort is complex and can't be quantified," he says. "For example, I like a cushy – but not too cushy – forefoot and a wide, round toe box." Trial and error, and gut instinct, are his secrets to successful shoe shopping.

Helen Branthwaite of the Royal

College of Podiatry is a senior lecturer in clinical biomechanics at Staffordshire University in the UK. She has based much of her research on her own passion for shoes and her interest in the impact they have on foot mechanics (sneakers are her favourite, though she does own a pair of heels or two).

### IF SHOES AREN'T COMFORTABLE AS SOON AS YOU PUT THEM ON, THEY'RE BEST LEFT ON THE SHELF

"Research shows that shoes affect how we function," Branthwaite says, "and influence our movement and how much pressure we put on our feet."

If shoes aren't comfortable the moment you put them on, they're best left on the shelf. "The concept that you can wear a shoe in, or that it will stretch, is nonsense," she adds.

Branthwaite, who also has a podiatry practice, recommends that shoes match the shape of your foot. So if you have a square-ish foot, for example, look for similar-shaped shoes. And arch support is key. Some brands are developing styles to accommodate common foot issues, such as bunions.

Branthwaite also advises patients on what to wear to solve foot problems, whether it's more cushioning



for heel pain or smooth inside seams for bunion sufferers. “Sometimes the shoe becomes the treatment,” she says.

One of Branthwaite’s patients was suffering from such severe arch pain that she could no longer walk her dog, so Branthwaite had her replace her flimsy ballet flats with sturdy, supportive boots.

In 2021, French researchers studied the use of shoes specifically designed to improve balance and stability in everyone from athletes in training to people over 65. They noted that more than 30 per cent of people older than 65 fall each year, and falls account for 90 per cent of hip fractures. The researchers concluded that the shoes not only improved balance but made people feel safer and more stable when walking.

Gillian Parkinson, a retired speech and language pathologist, can attest to the difference a change in footwear can make. Parkinson recently

turned 70 and was finding walking increasingly difficult. She had developed Achilles tendinitis and was also rolling over on her ankles.

After a few unnerving falls, she went to Branthwaite for help. The first thing the podiatrist did was have Parkinson change her shoes (replacing slip-on flats with shoes that had a Velcro fastening and a sole with more contact area to help with stability). Then she added a heel-raising insert so Parkinson would be better balanced.

Not only did her Achilles tendinitis disappear, but Parkinson began walking outside again, even tackling the occasional hill. “Within about 50 metres of our home, my husband and I can access a country lane. Or we drive to a historic site where we can walk for a couple of kilometres and reward ourselves at a little café at the end,” she says. “Therapeutically and psychologically, walking does me good.” **R**


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### Snakes On A Plate

Hong Kong’s Pizza Hut recently set internet tongues hissing with the launch of one of the wackiest toppings yet – a unique snake soup pizza. It was created in collaboration with the famous family-owned snake soup restaurant Ser Wong Fun. Steeped in tradition, snake soup, known as seh gung in Cantonese, has a broth of chicken and pork and uses the flesh of two to five snake breeds. The pizza combines shredded snake meat, black mushrooms and Chinese dried ham and was greeted with mixed reactions from customers. [SCMP.COM](http://SCMP.COM)





▲ **A sea of cranberries.** October is harvest time in the cranberry fields of Massachusetts, USA. Strictly speaking, these are bogs because the plants only thrive on peat soils with a good water supply. But they are very persistent and continue to produce berries even after decades.



An aerial photograph of a vibrant red carpet, likely at a major event. A large, dark circular track or boundary is visible, with several people walking along it. The scene is captured from a high angle, showing the texture of the carpet and the shadows of the people.

PHOTO FEATURE

# *In Abundance*

*A rich harvest is usually the reward of hard work*

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BY *Doris Kochanek*

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/DIGITAL VISION





▲ **Unexpectedly gentle.** When the grapes are ripe, things have to happen quickly. In the past, crowds of harvesters cut the delicate grapes from the vines. Today they are replacing so-called full harvesters in many places, like here at a Spanish winery. The machines supplant 30 to 40 workers.

▼ **Pretty heavy!** Did the blond kid make a good choice with his pumpkin? That depends on what it is used for. The specimen may be perfect as a decorative object. However, when it comes to pumpkins for consumption, it is best to choose relatively small ones – but they have to be ripe.





PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

▼ **There is something in the air.** These lavender fields are in India. Since around 2010, farmers there have been cultivating the fragrant plant, which is traditionally grown in the Mediterranean region. Climate change has made the cultivation of traditional crops unprofitable in many places.

▲ **In a nutshell.** Before machines were available, people relied on animals to work in the fields and to help with harvesting. This is still the case in some countries today. Some farmers in Thailand have monkeys bring down the nuts that grow high in coconut trees – a practice criticised by animal activists.





◀ **Every grain counts.** In Jiangsu Province in eastern China, a farmer spreads out harvested rice to dry. The People's Republic grows and consumes the most rice in the world. In many families, *mifàn* – cooked rice – is served at every meal. Like other nations, China is striving to increase harvest volumes and is relying, among other things, on the know-how of its National Rice Research Institute.

▶ **Harvest without sowing.** Almost nothing tastes better with pancakes than maple syrup. The lion's share of the aromatic delicacy, with a taste reminiscent of caramel, comes from Canada and the US. The harvest doesn't take much effort: tree sap oozes all by itself from a tap drilled into the bark of the sugar maple tree. All you have to do is catch it. The juice is then heated and filtered, and the syrup is ready.

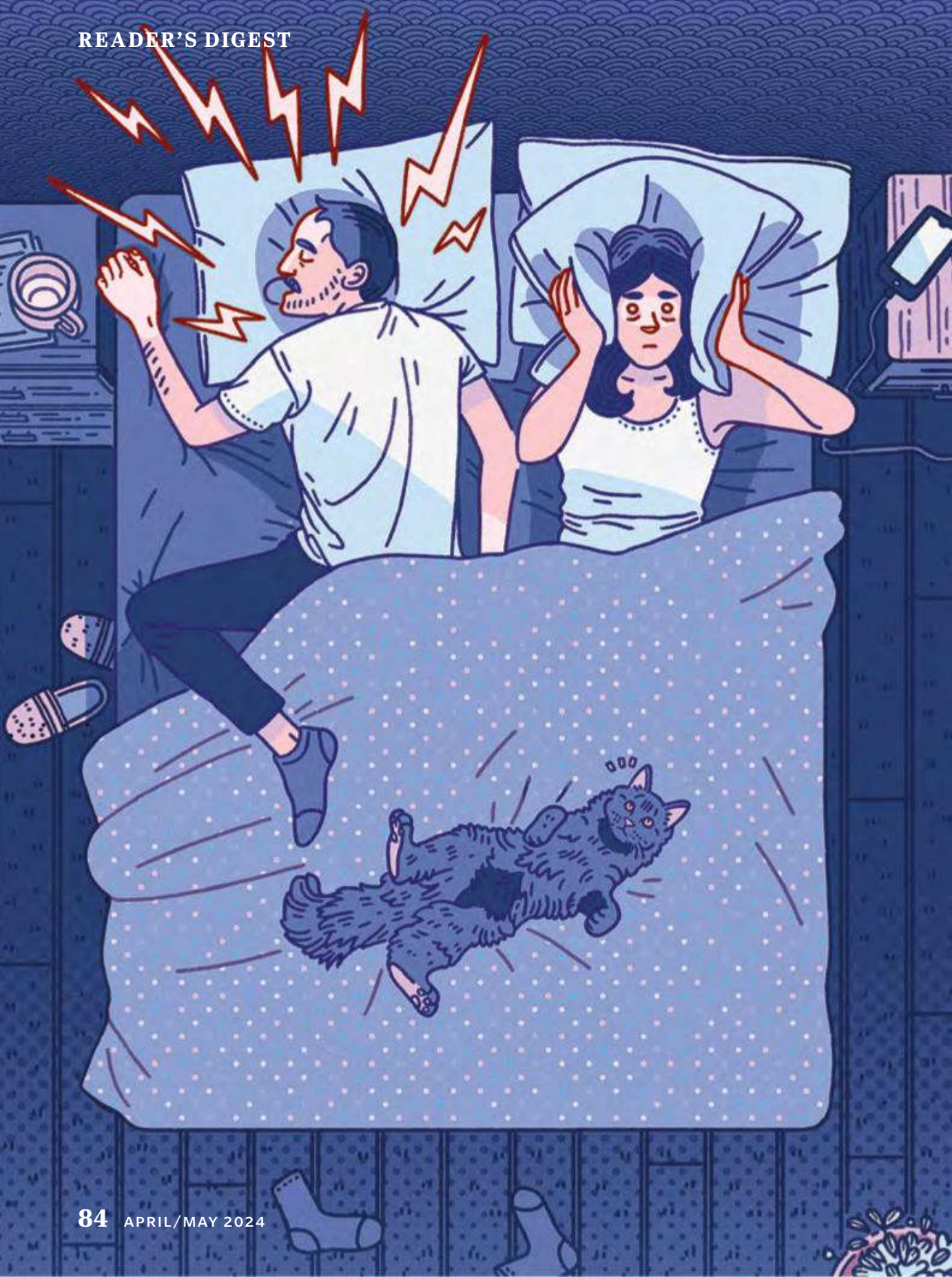
◀ **Perfect for newbies.** Radishes are easy to care for and usually reward even novice gardeners with a bountiful harvest. They are therefore particularly suitable for introducing children to the joys of growing and harvesting. The fact that you can dig in the earth makes things even better.

▶ **Salad from the shelf.** The production of food is essential for humanity. But it also consumes valuable resources such as water and requires huge areas. New types of cultivation could provide a solution. Like these vertically arranged salad beds that provide the plants with a nutrient solution.











# How I Tried to Stop Snoring

*I wanted a quick fix to my wheezing inhalations  
punctuated by loud and erratic noises*

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BY *Jordan Foisy*  
FROM **THE WALRUS**





**I** think of myself as a good sleeper. Give me a large book and a horizontal position, and I could fall asleep strapped to the top of a bullet train. Sleep has been a constant ally, a friend. When I was a teen, it was a refuge. I used to pray for sleep; its temporary oblivion was a welcome respite from anxiety and obsessive thoughts. It was a pause, not a death, but close enough to it. Every time I fell asleep, there was a chance of resurrection, to wake up new.

My girlfriend, Allison, however, does not think I'm a good sleeper. She knows the truth. At night, I thrash around and scream. Occasionally, it sounds like my breathing stops. Worst of all for her, I snore. Badly. She's shown me a video of it, and it's horrifying: my thin, wheezing inhalations are interrupted by a wrenching tear of a noise, like someone ripping a carpet inside a cave.

We sometimes get into little fights when I wake up. She's had a terrible sleep and is justifiably annoyed. She can't stay mad for long, though, because who is she mad at? Certainly, it was my body, not me, that was

snoring; my lungs moving the air, my soft tissues. Those are the guilty parties. When Allison is flipping my sleeping body over and plugging its nose, or occasionally smothering my face with a pillow, who is she smothering? How unimportant is the self to our life when we are sleeping – something we spend a third of our life doing – that it can be completely absent?

I tried treating my snoring with the junk-drawer solution of buying every anti-snoring device I could: nose strips, mouth guards, nasal spray – anything that promised snoring absolution. Nothing

worked. Every time there would be a glimmer of hope, when we would try to convince ourselves my snoring wasn't as bad. But, every time, it soon became clear the only difference was that the top of my mouth was now shredded from the cheap plastic of a so-called snore guard.

Allison wanted me to see a doctor, but it's hard to take snoring seriously as a health problem. It seems more like a joke, like a problem that a sitcom dad would have after getting electrocuted by Christmas decorations. It seems less like a health issue and more like a personality defect.

According to Nick van den Berg, a researcher in experimental psychology at the University of Ottawa, "Snoring occurs as our muscles in the upper airway relax so much that they narrow the airway." This is why snoring gets worse as we age, as our once taut and virile inner neck muscles become flabby and weak.

The real threat of bad snoring is that it could be a sign of obstructive sleep apnoea, when a blockage in your airway causes you to wake up constantly. The lack of sleep – for you or your partner – can be a serious health risk, as insufficient sleep has been linked to heart disease, type 2 diabetes and Alzheimer's.

More than all of that, sleep is essential to your functioning as a human being. "Sleep is key to memory consolidation," says van den Berg. When we sleep, our brain organises,

processes and saves our memories. It also enhances our memories. Van den Berg told me about studies in which the subjects are taught a basic skill before bed, and when they wake up, they not only remember the skill but have actually improved upon it.

### MY HEALTH CARE SUBSISTED ON FAITH THAT A PROBLEM DOESN'T EXIST UNTIL YOU DEAL WITH IT

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Sleep, then, is where we are forged. Every night, we throw our day-to-day experiences, memories and lessons into the kiln of sleep, let them bake for hopefully eight hours, and emerge a better, stronger, fuller version of ourselves in the morning.

So my girlfriend was right to insist I deal with the problem, but I was resistant. I'm in my mid-30s and haven't had a doctor since I was a kid. My health care subsisted on walk-in clinic visits and youthful hubris – a faith that things will work out and a belief that a problem doesn't really exist until you deal with it. But what really scared me off was that going to a doctor about my snoring would force me to confront how I live and its repercussions, and that my body has limits.

It had been a tough year. A friend passed away suddenly and tragically.

Then my grandmother followed. My chronic knee problem turned into a full-blown meniscus tear. My eyesight became distorted, and a visit to the eye doctor revealed I had fluid under my retina, a condition called central serous chorioretinopathy. It's caused by stress. Also, I started seeing a therapist again and within minutes, over Zoom, he told me I looked depressed.

## THE TECH WANTS TO KNOW WHAT POSITION I SLEEP IN. OVERALL I'D DESCRIBE IT AS MAXIMUM OBNOXIOUS

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It was a year of the space capsule of my youthful fantasy breaking up on contact with an atmosphere of reality and repercussions, all soundtracked by some of the worst snoring you've ever heard.

But there are other things to be afraid of besides ageing and so, fearing a breakup or an unexplained disappearance (mine), I tried what Allison had been asking me to do. I went to a doctor.

The doctor asked how much I drank a week. I gave him a number high enough that he should factor it into his diagnosis but low enough that I could say it without being embarrassed. He figured I had sleep

apnoea and said I should drink less and lose weight. He referred me to a sleep study to confirm the diagnosis so I could get a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine for the apnoea.

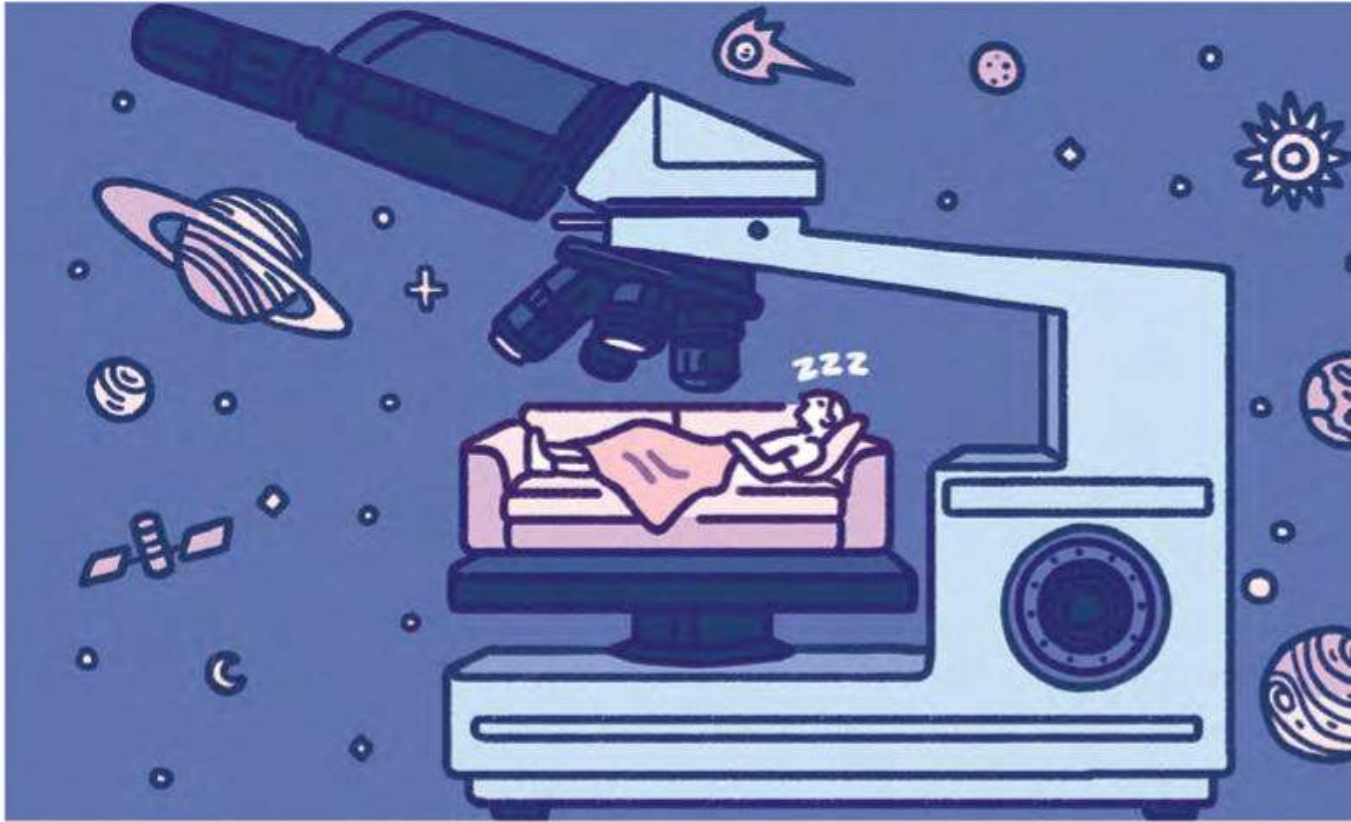
A CPAP machine is a device that shoots a steady flow of pressurised air into your nose and mouth. It involves a hose, a mask that covers either your nose or mouth or both, and a head harness, resulting in the wearer looking like a cosy fighter pilot, like *Top Gun*'s Maverick if the undisclosed enemy country were your dreams.

I entered the sleep clinic feeling nervous, excited and blisteringly sober. I had successfully adhered to the guidelines sent out by the clinic: no alcohol in the past 12 hours, no coffee in the last two, and no naps. Free from its usual coating of hangover, too-late coffee and post-nap delirium, my mind was unadorned and hungry for answers.

Next, a technician came and asked me a couple of questions, the most provocative being: what position do you sleep in? I'm mostly a mix of side and stomach, with one leg pitched like I'm doing a hurdle. Overall, though, I would describe my sleeping position as maximum obnoxious. My limbs are splayed as far as they can reach, and I continually thrash and roll from side to side in erratic and irregular movements.

I sat on my assigned bed, waiting for the sleep lab to begin its work.





'Lab' was a misnomer. There were no beakers or mad scientists or stainless-steel tanks with anonymous figures floating in green fluid. Just a generic hospital room: infinite white walls; a thin, hard bed that made me feel like I was lying on an H&M clothing shelf; and a pillow that had all the comfort and support of a bag of napkins. Worst of all, something was dripping in the air conditioning unit, producing a sharp, arrhythmic, metallic smack.

At 10.45pm, the technician began sticking electrodes to my body for the electroencephalogram, or EEG. Created in 1924, this test measures brain waves without any need for

your head to be cut open. It is still the gold standard for sleep studies. The technician also placed sensors on my arms and legs to measure my movement, a sensor below my nose and a harness around my chest to measure my breathing.

I don't know what it says about my self-esteem, but I found being a specimen thrilling. The thrill quickly passed as I proceeded to have the worst sleep of my life.

**THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF SLEEP:** NREM and REM. Both are required for memory consolidation. NREM, or non-rapid eye movement, sleep has three stages. Stage one is drifting off:



those five to ten minutes of drowsiness where it is hard to tell if you are asleep or not. Once you are out, the second stage begins. It is marked by slower brain waves and short, fast bursts of brain activity called spindles. The third stage of NREM is slow-wave sleep. Your brain waves are now deep, long curves, similar at times to those seen in people under anaesthesia. It is in these last two stages of NREM sleep that the majority of restoration – in which the body repairs itself on a cellular level from the wear and tear of the day – happens.

Suddenly, the second act of sleep occurs: REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. The brain explodes with

activity; it appears to be awake. This is when most dreaming occurs, especially the intense, emotional genre of dreams – the ones that are like ‘I’m on a date with a book report I didn’t finish’. Beneath the eyelids your eyes dart around wildly, and your heart races.

It’s not entirely clear why this happens. Van den Berg’s favourite theory is that it is preparatory. “If NREM is recovery from the day before, REM seems to be preparation for the day ahead.”

When you have a good night’s sleep, these different stages are a harmonious cycle. Of course, many things can disrupt this harmony: electric light, caffeine, a late night out



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† Reader's Digest Trusted Brands survey 2011-2023.



or – as I found out – being covered in wires that precariously cling to your body with every toss and turn. Many thoughts can keep you up at night, and in the lab I discovered a new one: “I sure hope that when I turned over, I didn’t ruin this experiment being performed on me.”

Another pressure point in the delicate dance of the sleep stages is if there is an unceasing arrhythmic drip of an air conditioning unit the entire night.

I was woken up at 5.30am after maybe two hours of gruel-thin snoozing. The wires were removed, and I strolled home in the dawn light, feeling like my sleep-wake cycle and circadian rhythms were utterly and completely ruined.

After two months, the results of the study came in. There was no sleep apnoea. I have what the report called ‘mild primary snoring’. As far as the study could tell, there is no particular reason for it. Ageing, drinking too much, and rapidly deteriorating neck muscles are all it takes. The snoring was simply the sound of time catching up to me.

These were not the results I was looking for. I had been hoping for a condition, a disorder, something to

point to whenever I indulged in a self-pity wallow. I had wanted a quick fix, even if that meant strapping a glorified bike pump to my face. Instead, what I got were consequences, which coalesce and compound and reverberate, like a snore off the inner walls of your throat. There is no guarantee things will just work out: injuries worsen, tragedy happens, your girlfriend gets fed up with your snoring. When you don’t sleep, it takes days to recover.

My snoring has gotten worse since the study. Louder, more frequent. Thankfully, Allison and I have figured out a staggered sleep schedule that seems to work. Also, I’m exercising more, eating better and drinking less, because from this study, I learned that you are an accumulation of everything you did before. Things aren’t just going to get better on their own. You have to take care of yourself and others. When you ate, what you learned, how you slept: these things matter. The person you are today builds from the person you were the day before. **R**

FROM ‘HOW I TRIED TO STOP SNORING, FIX MY SLEEP HABITS, AND CONFRONT MY MORTALITY’, BY JORDAN FOISY, FROM THE WALRUS (MARCH 15, 2023), © 2023, THE WALRUS. THEWALRUS.CA

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### Hair Raising

**A New Zealand woman got an unexpected call from the police after she was seen driving with a clump of hair hanging out of the boot of her car. Fortunately the hair belonged to a mannequin. UPI.COM**

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**These friends regularly  
explore the banks of the  
Thames together**





HISTORY



*In London, amateur archaeologists and collectors dig through the mudbanks of its famous river for historical objects and valuable artefacts*



# *A Treasure Hunt* **On The Thames**

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BY *Cyril Hofstein* FROM **LE FIGARO**

**S**imon Bourne looks at the clock impatiently. The East London graphic artist is best known for his YouTube channel, where he shows videos of his treasure hunts in the UK's most amazing places. Now he is waiting to climb down the banks of the Thames. According to today's tide table, low tide is at 4.45pm. Thirty minutes to go.

Waiting with him at the table are Nicola White, an artist who has been searching the river for years for unusual objects; Anna Borzello, a former BBC journalist; Monika Buttlng-Smith, a tireless coastal hiker; Alessio, a palaeontologist; Kevin, a lover of old coins; and Steve, an experienced collector of antique objects. They, too, are waiting patiently for the tide to subside.

They are all mudlarks\*, holders of an official licence that is issued very sparingly by the Port of London Authority. Without this paid permit, the collecting of objects on the banks of the Thames is strictly prohibited, with violations resulting in heavy fines and the confiscation of any items found. This group of treasure hunters don't take their permits for granted, and report valuable finds to the Museum of London.

The passionate collectors continue a tradition that dates back to the 18th century. They arrange to meet in the Mayflower, a centuries-old pub located about two kilometres from the Tower of London in East London, and

the spot where the ship of the same name set off for North America in July 1620 with 65 passengers on board.

"In the 19th century, the poorest people searched for valuables in the mud or for coins that were thrown to them from the decks of ships. There were children, young women and old people among them, and they all lived in very difficult conditions," says Nicola White. "These first mudlarks sought to survive in a time when society was ruthless towards its weakest members. You only have to read Charles Dickens to know how harsh society was in the Victorian era."

**TODAY'S MUDLARKS** are interested in everything related to the city's history. Nicola is fascinated by the diversity of the countless clay pipes that are uncovered at low tide. Mass-produced between the 16th and 19th centuries, they provide valuable information about the history of tobacco consumption, English society and the development of craft techniques.

Steve, on the other hand, specialises in the Neolithic period. And as incredible as it may sound, he finds quite a few flints and axes that were filed and polished by the first inhabitants of London around 10,000 years ago. Anna Borzello has an extensive collection of colourful glass beads and pins.

*\*mudlark: a person who scavenges in the river mud at low tide for objects of value.*

## A Treasure Hunt On The Thames



### To mudlark on the Thames you need a paid licence

The time has finally arrived to descend onto the riverbank. Monika Buttling-Smith is the first on the bank. In the mud, littered with shards of clay and glass, broken bricks, coal and all kinds of pieces of metal, she discovers a large block of white coral splitting the planking of a ship's hull. "The corals come from the Caribbean," explains Monika. "Since the 16th century they have been used as ballast to ensure the stability of large ships. The beach we are on was used as a ship-scraping yard."

Also a slaughterhouse, judging by the countless animal bones scattered across the mudflats.

"Some are over 300 years old," says Alessio as he tries to pull what looks like an old leather shoe out of the mud. "The mud from the Thames prevents organic substances from decomposing, like this shoe here."

According to the shape, it could come from the Tudor period, so from 1485 to 1603," says the palaeontologist.

The metal detector is going crazy. Anna discovers a tiny metal pin right on the quay wall. Then a second and a third, on which a small, weathered glass bead glitters – a masterpiece in this jumble of odds and ends. The expression 'finding a needle in a haystack' is quite literal here.

"Most of these pins come from the 15th or 16th century," explains Anna. "They were used to hold items of clothing together." You can find thousands of them in the mud, but they are an absolute rarity on land.

A little further on, Simon works with a metal detector, but soon gives up. "There are so many nails and metal parts here that my equipment is going crazy," he says, before scraping away a fine layer of mud and gravel



with a trowel. In no time, Simon uncovers several pottery shards, some with detailed decoration. "These are Roman potsherds from the first or second century, typical of Sigillata pottery, which was produced when London was still called Londinium."

Then Nicola White makes the find of the day. She was about to move on when she noticed a shimmering round shape. When she turns the piece over, a coat of arms appears with a bishop's mitre framed by the letters W and P. "A glass seal from the 17th century. An absolutely extraordinary piece!" says Nicola happily.

"At that time, bottles from large retailers were given such seals. Only a few are still so well preserved. The letters are the initials of William Proctor, the famous wine merchant who ran the Mitre Tavern on Wood Street. This is something very special, I definitely have to report it to the museum."

The search continues. Kevin finds a few more coins, including a coin from the 17th century. After more than an hour in the mud, Alessio unearths a well-preserved shoe from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and a caulking iron that must have been lost by a sailor in the 18th century.

The water level rises again and the treasure hunters have to return to land. Within a few hours they have collected around 40 artefacts, some of which had lain dormant in the Thames for hundreds of years,

including some of great historical value. This is all the more astonishing when you consider that the site of their discoveries is almost in the centre of the British capital. City skyscrapers are only a few hundred metres away.

**TED SANDLING, AUTHOR OF THE BOOK *Mudlark's Treasures***, says: "No other major European city has a river flowing through it that is connected to the sea via such a close estuary. The phenomenon of tides is unique to London: the water level varies by up to seven metres between high and low tide. This reveals much of London's history.

"The discoveries date back several millennia, and some are famous, such as the Celtic shield found during the construction of Battersea Bridge in 1857, and the Waterloo Helmet, an Iron Age bronze helmet with two conical horns that was recovered from the mud near Waterloo Bridge in 1868.

"Every mudlark conveys the history of the city in their own way, and every find is a missing piece of a gigantic puzzle."

In her studio, located in a building that was used as a hospital during Queen Victoria's reign, Nicola White tries to classify historically the objects she's found. She works her way through the archives with great patience and looks for records that could help her further. Like the strange fragment of a pewter cross

that no one else would have picked up but we now know belonged to an extremely rare pilgrim amulet with the image of Thomas Becket – Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 to 1170.

“Diving into London’s past is always something very special for me. These moments are fleeting because

anything not picked up at low tide is lost forever. Treasures disappear every day. Luckily, sometimes we are in the right place at the right time. And these few seconds are magical and unforgettable.” **R**

FROM: *LE FIGARO* MAGAZINE (NOVEMBER 4, 2022);  
© SOCIÉTÉ DU FIGARO

### RICH RUBBISH DUMP

According to the Thames Festival Trust, the “River Thames is the longest continuous archaeological site in Britain – the cumulative rubbish dump of thousands of years of habitation.”

Stretching for 18 kilometres on both sides of the river were docks, wharfs, warehouses, shipbuilding yards, ship-scraping yards, fish markets, factories, breweries, slaughterhouses, municipal buildings, offices, pubs and houses. The river was home to thriving communities of watermen, lightermen, stevedores,

dockworkers, sailors, merchants, fishermen, fishmongers, oyster wives, shipbuilders, ship-breakers and local mudlarks.

The objects found in the mud range from Neolithic flint tools to Roman detritus (coins, bottles, gaming pieces, colourful pottery and glassware), as well as relics of war (daggers, knives, chainmail), animal bones, human teeth, religious curios, children’s toys and yesteryear’s fashions, such as pins, jewels, buckles, buttons, cufflinks, wig curlers, gemstones, rings, brooches, shoes, leather and cloth.

[thamesfestivaltrust.org](http://thamesfestivaltrust.org)



**Objects found by mudlarks on the banks of the River Thames. From left: medieval dress pins; pottery sherds, toy model of a London double-decker bus and necklace made of pipe stems; pottery sherd**

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

PLEASE  
REMEMBER  
THAT *LIFE IS  
PRECIOUS*,  
AND YOU ARE  
PRECIOUS  
AND *TREAT  
YOURSELF  
ACCORDINGLY*.

DR LIBBY WEAVER,  
NUTRITIONAL BIOCHEMIST



**Make sure  
you know  
what you  
really want  
to do and  
do it.**

LISA [LALISA MANOBAL], SINGER

*Art is not what you see, but what  
you make others see.*

EDGAR DEGAS, ARTIST



*Books  
help kids to  
explore the  
world. They  
are the real  
ambassadors.*

GENE LUEN YANG,  
CARTOONIST

There cannot  
be a one-  
size-fits-all  
for modern  
relationships.  
They are  
stories, with  
characters, roles,  
protagonists,  
auxiliaries,  
beginnings,  
middles, ends.

ESTHER PEREL, AUTHOR AND  
PSYCHOTHERAPIST



**True  
intelligence  
requires  
fabulous  
imagination.**

IAN MCEWAN, AUTHOR

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES



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\*As voted by consumers 2011–2023 in the Reader's Digest Trusted Brands survey. For more information visit [aainsurance.co.nz/awards](https://aainsurance.co.nz/awards)



QUIZ

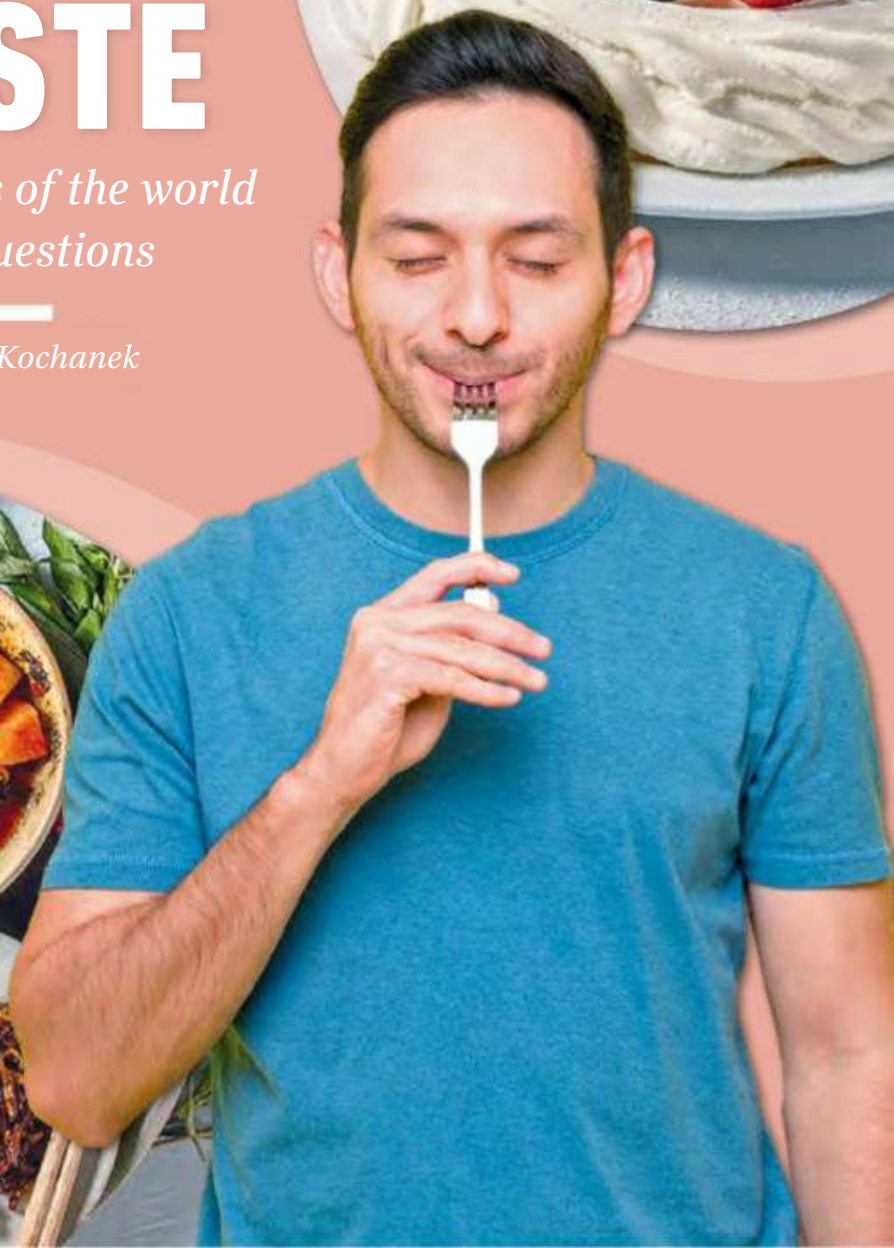


# TASTE

*The cuisines of the world  
in 12 questions*

---

BY Doris Kochanek





## QUESTIONS

**1** What we eat doesn't just depend on individual taste and budget; religious dietary regulations also play a role, some of which date back thousands of years. The regulations of which world religion prohibits the consumption of rabbits?

- a) Hinduism
- b) Islam
- c) Christianity
- d) Judaism

**2** On the Korean peninsula you can't ignore kimchi. Fermented cabbage adds extra flavour to almost every dish in North and South Korea. Many families make it themselves. Wearing gloves prevents...

- a) discolouration of the cabbage
- b) burning the skin
- c) impurities in the cabbage
- d) discolouration of the hands

**3** Cured meat, matje herring, beetroot and potatoes are the main ingredients in the traditional northern German dish *labskaus*. This mixture supposedly helps prevent...

- a) a hangover
- b) athlete's foot
- c) stomach pain
- d) constipation

**4** Every amateur and home cook in Poland can prepare *bigos*. This 'unofficial' national dish is essentially what?

- a) a mushroom pie
- b) a sauerkraut stew
- c) a sausage in beer batter
- d) potato salad

**5** Using up leftovers is a tradition in many kitchens around the world. French toast and shepherd's pie are good examples of this. Chilaquiles from Mexico also falls into this category. At which daily meal, consisting of tortillas, red or green tomato sauce and cheese, would you enjoy this dish?

- a) breakfast
- b) lunch
- c) dinner
- d) supper

**6** In Japan, a five-course meal sometimes consists of five different fish dishes. The following four delicacies also often include seafood among their ingredients. One of them, however, does not originate from Japan. What dish was introduced by Portuguese Catholic missionaries in the 16th century?

- a) ramen
- b) gyoza
- c) tempura
- d) sushi

**7** Several countries in West Africa claim jollof rice as a part of their local cuisine, and should not be missing from any celebration. In Nigeria or Senegal, certain ingredients are indispensable. Are they...?



## READER'S DIGEST

- a) peanuts and okra
- b) tomatoes and onions
- c) warthog and hippopotamus meat
- d) chillies and lime

8 In East Africa, *sukuma* is considered particularly nutritious and healthy. The green-leafed vegetable is similar to spinach and is often referred to as *sukuma wiki*. Some Kenyans suspect their traditional diet is the secret behind the success of their country's long-distance runners. Sukuma wiki is Swahili and means...

- a) grows wings
- b) makes feet quick
- c) extends the week
- d) strong will

9 Whipped cream, fruit, meringue – if the thought of that makes your mouth water, you should definitely try a pavlova. Both Australia and New Zealand claim to have invented this dessert. One thing is certain, this dessert is named in honour of Anna Pavlova, who visited both countries in the 1920s. Who was she?

- a) the wife of the last tsar
- b) a prima ballerina
- c) Lenin's girlfriend
- d) a Russian chef

10 In this country, sweet cinnamon bread rolls in the shape of snails are an integral part of everyday life. Since 1999 there has even been a holiday dedicated to them. Which nation celebrates Cinnamon Roll Day on October 4th?

- a) Malaysia
- b) Türkiye
- c) Singapore
- d) Sweden

11 You can eat them all over Italy, but the best cannoli are definitely found in Sicily, where the fried dough rolls are filled with flavoured ricotta. The milk of what animal is used to make the creamy Sicilian ricotta?

- a) buffalo
- b) sheep
- c) goat
- d) camel

12 Strolling through Taipei's famous night market will definitely make you hungry. The Taiwanese like to fortify themselves with *zhu xie gao*. What is this local specialty?

- a) fried scorpions
- b) sticky rice dumpling
- c) pork blood cake on a stick
- d) fermented tofu



**Flavoured ricotta in fried rolls of dough:  
the best cannoli are eaten in Sicily**

# ANSWERS

**1d)** The dietary regulations in Judaism prohibit the consumption of mammals that do not chew their cud nor have four feet with cloven hooves. For these reasons, rabbits have no place in kosher cuisine.

**2b)** When making kimchi, salted cabbage is mixed with fish sauce and chili paste. The latter can burn the skin.

**3a)** Labskaus consists of corned beef, potatoes and onion, and is said to help a hangover by alleviating the unpleasant physical symptoms that drinking too much alcohol causes.

**4b)** Bigos, a stew with sauerkraut, is the unofficial Polish national dish. There is no official one.

**5a)** Chilaquiles is usually eaten for breakfast in Mexico.

**6c)** The preparation of tempura – snacks fried in batter, goes back to Jesuit missionaries from Portugal who settled in Nagasaki in the 16th century. During Lent they were forbidden to eat meat, so they feasted on fried fish.

**7b)** As with many other dishes around the globe, jollof rice varies in preparation from region to region and from family to family. Yet tomatoes and onions are essential ingredients everywhere.

**8c)** Translated from Swahili, sukuma wiki means 'ex-tends the week'. The vegetable is a staple food in East Africa and is affordable for everyone.

**9b)** The sweet dessert is named after Anna Pavlova, a famous Russian prima ballerina. Almost 100 years after her death in 1931, the dancer is still remembered in the world of ballet.

**10d)** Like many dishes, the cinnamon roll has many different forms. In Sweden, however, it has its own holiday: October 4th is Kanelbullens Day.

**11b)** Real Sicilian cannoli are filled with ricotta made from sheep's milk.

**12c)** Zhu xie gao is pork blood cake on a stick. If you shudder, you should remember that the kitchens of many countries have dishes containing animal blood such as Germany's blood sausage and England's black pudding.

## ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

### *Humour On The Job*



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

### **Accidental Master Chef**

During my army training, 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?"

SUBMITTED BY RICHARD T. FLOERSHEIMER

### **Twinkle Toes**

A woman named Silver Saundors Friedman was a co-founder of The Improv, a famed New York 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 mum



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!"

### Keeping Close Watch

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 smartwatch. It thinks you've fallen and need help."

SUBMITTED BY JOHN TIERNEY

### Last Legs

My uncle was in his 90s when he saw a doctor about his sore leg. After examining him, the doctor said with a shrug, "You know, Mr Whitney, at your age you have to expect things like this."

Uncle Charlie wasn't buying it. "Doc," he said, "my other leg is the same age, and it don't hurt."

SUBMITTED BY LINDA PERKINS

### How Not To Get Arrested

A thief walked into a Walmart in St Cloud, Florida, and, being a thief, pocketed a few items. He might have

got away with it had he only turned around to see the 40 uniformed police officers milling about as part of their annual Shop with a Cop event with the children of the community.

NYPOST.COM

## GREAT RÉSUMÉS

*that got job applicants to the next step.*

I once saw under Achievements on a CV: **"former world's youngest person."** It made me laugh so much I gave the person an interview.

On a job application, my roommate wrote, **"Can make three-minute ramen in 2:50."** He got the interview.

In response to our posting for a software developer job, a candidate wrote under Summary of

Qualifications:

**"22 years of experience as web developer; BA in organisational management; spent too much time on the computer during childhood."**

He was hired within the week.

SOURCE: REDDIT.COM



# ***YOUR JOB IS WHAT?***

*Looking for a career change?  
Check out these unconventional gigs*



BY *Susannah Hickling*



PHOTOS: OMOMOM  
PHOTO: IMGORTHAND/GETTY IMAGES



INSPIRATION







**Just another day in the office for Guillaume Pop**

## THE WATERSLIDE TESTER

When the pool where he worked as a lifeguard near Paris was closed during COVID-19, Guillaume Pop took jobs at various other pools that were virtually deserted. At one pool there was a small waterslide, which gave the 22-year-old former competitive swimmer an idea: he would make a TikTok video in which he pretended to be a 'professional waterslide tester'.

Shooting down a slide in hard hat and hi-viz vest or smiling broadly in

cool shades and Speedos to a groovy soundtrack, Pop soon became a social-media sensation. He was hired to 'test' slides and other facilities at water parks, swimming pools and campsites all over France. Today, he has more than half a million followers on TikTok and his own real-life waterslide-testing business. No longer working as a lifeguard, he travels the country checking the condition of waterslides, trying them out to determine how fun they are and creating amusing videos to attract customers.

"First of all, I check it without water, to make sure it's in an acceptable

PHOTO: COURTESY GUILLAUME POP

state,” explains Pop, who must keep up-to-date on water-park regulations. If he finds a waterslide needs work – for example, if there are bumpy joints, which can hurt sliders – management will bring in a specialist repairer. “After that, I test it with water,” Pop says.

Then he moves on to the fun, promotional aspect. Sometimes he takes over a leisure park and invites social-media influencers to enjoy it too. In 2022, he took 25 influencers to O’Gliss Park, an enormous water park on the Atlantic coast.

Pop estimates he’s tested around 700 French waterslides and is now eyeing water parks abroad, such as Switzerland, Portugal and Spain, where he has been testing slides during the winter. “It’s the best job in the world,” declares Pop, whose videos have received 80 million views. “I’m not behind a desk. I’m active and outside in the sun. And I have a great rapport with customers. In fact, all the children tell me they want to be a waterslide tester!”



## **THE REINDEER HERDER**

Finnish Lapland, in the far north of Europe, is home to some 180,000 people – and around 200,000 reindeer. The animals live wild but each one has an owner, identified by a tag on its ear. Anne Ollila, one of 4000 such owners, works in the Finnish part of this harsh but beautiful region with

her husband and two adult sons and their families. She has Sami roots, as do many of Finland’s reindeer herders. They farm the animals principally for meat, which is considered both healthy and ethical, but reindeer tourism has also become an important source of revenue.

“My family have been reindeer herders for at least nine generations,” says Ollila, 50. She started helping out when she was a young child, and her father-in-law only stopped herding at the age of 82, shortly before his death.

Ollila lives 80 kilometres inside the Arctic Circle, an hour from Lapland’s capital city, Rovaniemi, and seven kilometres from her nearest neighbour. Summer days – when the reindeer herders earmark newborn calves – are long and in June the sun never sets. At that time Ollila sleeps during the day and walks up to 20 kilometres a night through marsh and forest, making the most of the cooler temperatures to do her work but having to endure swarms of insects along the way.

In deepest winter there is little daylight, though Ollila insists it’s not dark. “The snow reflects the starlight,” she says. Many pastures are frozen and the reindeer move into the forest for protection against predators, including wolves, lynx, wolverines and golden eagles – the birds can kill an adult reindeer. “Life is not easy here, but it’s how nature works,” says





**Reindeer herder Anne Ollila with Rocky, who is famous for his curiosity**

Ollila. In winter she trains reindeer to pull sleighs.

Her busiest times are early summer, when earmarking takes place, and autumn, when she rounds up the animals to vaccinate them and select some for slaughter. "Reindeer are part of the ecosystem," explains Ollila, who is also director of the Reindeer Herders' Association. "They keep nature in balance, but if there are too many, there isn't enough food for them. We have to control herds. Earlier generations have taught us this."

Ollila and her family, like many herders, offer tourists reindeer experiences via their company Reindeer

Journey. Visitors can get close to the animals in the wild or at their farm, watch them being trained to pull sledges or take a sleigh ride.

"Reindeer are very smart animals," Ollila says. "They have different personalities, and some are very funny." One of her favourites is Rocky, named after the movie boxing legend. "He's very curious and always in trouble," she says. He once got himself wedged in a pile of hay bales and had to be lifted out, and he has been known to walk off with the laundry rack on his antlers – complete with his owners' drying underwear.

Ollila gave up her job as a sociology

PHOTO: COURTESY ANNE OLLILA



researcher at the University of Lapland in 2010 to devote herself to reindeer herding full time and has no regrets. "I love the environment, the animals and the freedom," she says. "Also, I have a sense of belonging to something bigger than me, to the chain of life through the generations."

### THE STATUE DRESSER

Around 160 times a year, come rain, shine or frost, Nicolas Edelman, 43, climbs a ladder to dress a bronze statue of a little boy peeing into a fountain in Brussels. Located on the corner of Rue de l'Etuve and Rue du Chêne, the 58-centimetre-tall Manneken-Pis, which literally means 'the peeing boy' in the local Dutch dialect, is a major tourist attraction in the Belgian capital. Edelman is thought to be the statue's 13th official dresser since records began in the 18th century.

Manneken-Pis, which 'peed' fresh drinking water until 2019, was recorded as a public drinking fountain as long ago as the 14th century and is meant to represent the spirit of resistance of the people of Brussels. One story has it that it's modelled on a boy who urinated on a burning

fuse, preventing gunpowder planted by the city's enemies from going off.

The statue is dressed to mark special occasions such as national days, international events, anniversaries and even important matches of Belgium's national football team, when Manneken-Pis wears the Red Devils' team colours. The statue's outfits are housed in the Manneken-Pis Wardrobe, a museum open to the public. The oldest costume is a brocaded blue gentlemen's suit complete with embroidered leggings and white gloves – a gift from France's King Louis XV in 1747. It was presented to the city by the king himself to make amends after his soldiers had stolen the statue.

**Nicolas Edelman is the official dresser for the 'peeing boy' statue**





**Centuries of tradition dictate the rules for outfitting the Brussels landmark**

"The official collection currently holds 1129 costumes," says Edelman, a former cook who has been the statue's dresser since 2014. And the collection is growing: foreign organisations and governments continue to donate specially made infant-sized costumes.

"Around half of the clothes in the collection are from overseas," says Edelman. "Many are gifts offered as part of diplomatic friendships."

When a country or an organisation wishes to offer a costume, it must get approval from an official Brussels committee. After the finished costume is delivered, it is tried on a replica of the statue and any necessary alterations are made. Once the formal ceremony is underway at City Hall, Edelman hurries

to dress the actual statue behind a curtain – with the 'pee' turned off, of course. By the time the official delegation arrives and a crowd of passersby has gathered, Edelman draws the curtain to reveal the Manneken-Pis – back in full stream – in all his sartorial glory.

Edelman's favourite costumes include St Nicholas, which adorns the statue on December 6, St Nicholas' Day. "Picture a great saint doing a wee!" he says with a laugh.

"My job is to make people happy," Edelman says.

"Manneken-Pis is part of the folk tradition of Brussels. Dressing and looking after this symbol of the city I'm from is a great honour."



**THE PROFESSIONAL CUDDLER**

Elisa Meyer, 37, was studying philosophy and German literature in Austria in 2016 when she read an article about an emerging therapy in the United States – cuddling. Cuddle therapy uses platonic touch, which "can reduce anxiety and stress levels and improve confidence and self-esteem," according to Cuddle Professionals International, the training, certification and membership body for practitioners. Meyer, who is originally from Luxembourg, was intrigued, having always envisaged a career involving some kind of therapy. "My first thought

was, ‘Wow, this is the perfect job because I can relax at the same time!’” she says with a laugh.

But after doing two online courses, Meyer realised cuddle therapy was a serious profession. She came away with two pages of strict rules that establish boundaries, including the fact that cuddle therapy has no sexual element. And, while she was aware cuddle therapy can’t replace medication or psychotherapy for people who have a serious mental health issue, she saw how it could bring benefits when used alongside those treatments.

Meyer started practising in Vienna as a sideline to her PhD studies and university teaching and is now a full-time cuddle therapist based in Leipzig, Germany. She welcomes clients to her studio where she talks to them for about ten minutes about what they want from the session. Many are lonely, such as men with social anxiety who are ill at ease with women; some are busy women who simply want to relax.

The rest of the session is spent in close contact on a bed or sofa. Meyer might start by hugging a client from behind and stroking their hair, sometimes massaging their neck if they are tense. The pair usually change position once or twice during the 50- or 80-minute cuddling session.

Cuddling releases oxytocin in the body, she explains. “Your body feels very relaxed and a bit like you are floating. People have the feeling that everything is and will be okay. They smile a lot afterwards. Oxytocin is known as the ‘love’ hormone.”

Meyer recalls one client who couldn’t speak because of a problem with his vocal cords. His voice came back softly during a cuddle session. “He was so happy, he was glowing,” she says. Just knowing he could still use his voice to communicate and break out of his isolation was very special for him.

She also takes cuddle therapy into

### **Elisa Meyer’s work harnesses the healing benefits of touch**





a home for adults with learning and physical challenges. People with physical disabilities are often keen to talk about the pain they experience.

"They talk, I listen," she says.

Besides being a good listener, what makes a successful cuddle therapist? "You have to like humans and be a trusting and positive person," says Meyer. "You have to read body language and be able to recognise what people want and adjust the way you touch accordingly."

Meyer has written two books about cuddle therapy and now trains other aspiring practitioners. "Sometimes people have lost all joy in life and may be suicidal," she says. "When I see they have hope again, that is the biggest reward."



### THE ZOMBIE TRAINER

Stevie Douglas estimates he's trained at least 1000 zombies over the past ten years. The 52-year-old Scot has taught people how to behave like all varieties of the undead. That includes the slow, shambling zombies typical of films such as *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and the truly terrifying, screaming ones who chase you as you run for your life.

Fortunately, Douglas, a co-director of the Glasgow-based Scare Scotland Talent Agency, is very much alive, as are all his pupils. He started out as a 'scare actor', using his 1.9-metre

frame to frighten people in interactive scare mazes across the UK. "Before I knew it I was being hired to play various characters, from serial killers to chainsaw-wielding maniacs," says Douglas. "Zombies came up a lot too."

A big fan of horror movies, Douglas noticed that the zombies he saw in films were often unconvincing. "Their movement was poor," he says. "I thought I could do better." So, in 2012, he and a friend formed Scare Scotland to provide zombies for films, television and events such as horror conventions.

A year later they started a training programme for aspiring zombies. It took off when they received a request for 300 zombies for *The Generation of Z*, a huge interactive production that ran for three weeks in an underground car park at the world-famous Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The show was a hit.

Undead Academy classes are held in the upstairs room of a Glasgow theatre, where Douglas instructs students in different aspects of zombie behaviour. He asks each one to stand up, bend one leg inwards and drag their heel, then lift their head up as if it were attached to a piece of string and – voilà – you have a zombie who can lurch forward. "The noise part is easier," says Douglas.

Typical zombie sounds include screams, wails, puffing and panting. He impresses on students the



**Stevie Douglas in his Zombie days; (right) Douglas training students at the Undead Academy**

importance of safety when frightening people; imagine there's a 1.2-metre box around you, he tells them, and always stay at arm's length from a member of the public.

Among the Academy's alumni are a couple of wrestlers and a heavily built, 2.1-metre-tall zombie. "When Big Ross scuttles from the corner, you can see the fear in people's eyes," jokes Douglas, who has worked on film sets teaching professional

actors how to play zombies. He insists Academy 'graduates' are not extras. "They're skilled actors," he says. "What they do is very specific."

They certainly have an effect. Douglas recalls an event in a park when a woman was so terror-stricken on encountering a group of 'zombies' that she ran into a pond.

But many people enjoy being petrified, says Douglas – and he's happy to oblige them. **R**

PHOTOS: (LEFT) COURTESY SCARE SCOTLAND; (RIGHT) BARRY DOUGLAS PHOTOGRAPHY

## Puking Bird Wins Title

New Zealanders turned out in force to vote in its Bird of the Year competition, in response to perceived US interference. The 'bird of the century' title was won by the puteketeke, a bird that pukes, grunts, growls and has bizarre mating rituals. REUTERS



*The native language and culture of Ireland  
are alive and well in the country's Gaeltacht regions*

**The Irish Gaelic  
language is  
thriving on the  
Dingle Peninsula**





TRAVEL

# IRISH MELODY

BY *J.R. Patterson* FROM **HEMISPHERES**

# LANGUAGE IS MUSIC.

Each tongue has its particular cadence, rhythm and tone, and finds a natural partner in one musical form or another. German is a march. Italian carries the trills of baroque chamber music. The Irish language, when I first overhear it in a pub in western Ireland, reaches my ears like an old hymnal, its chordal tang ancient and elegiac.

The men upon whom I'm eavesdropping are bent forward, as though discussing mortality – until they burst out laughing and drain their pints. It leaves me feeling, in the words of Irish writer Maurice O'Sullivan, "like a dog listening to music".

I see this as *tús maith* – a good beginning, a chance to see a familiar place anew. Ireland has become part of the global community, but the Gaeltacht regions, or An Ghaeltacht, are the root from which the shamrock has bloomed; deeper, darker and full of *ortha an dul amú* – the charm of concealment.

My ancestors were forced from the country by famine and land reforms during the 19th century, when the Gaeilge language (also known as Irish Gaelic) was at its nadir. The lingual tie to their homeland was severed, but in Ireland a steadfast few still hold their end of the link.

Wanting to know what I might glean from hearing that ancestral sound, I've come to the shredded western coast, from Dingle to Connemara to Donegal, where one can still catch those hymns in the air.

It's no coincidence that the coast is where the Irish language retains its strongest hold. While the English language became dominant among both emigrants to the New World and the Irish who lived closer to Dublin, in the western part of the country the native language remained the connection to Gaelic culture.

Today, a coordinated effort among governments, schools, historians and enthusiasts safeguard these social and linguistic traditions. While almost two million Irish now claim to speak some aspect of the language, only about 70,000 speak it daily outside the education system. The majority are found in the counties of Galway, Monaghan, Donegal and Kerry, where I start my journey.

My first stop is the Dingle peninsula, a finger of land sticking out into the Atlantic. The town of Dingle was once a parochial fishing village, its crooked lanes stacked with lobster pots and gillnets. It has been given a wash and a touch-up of late; between the bright façades of knitted garment shops and art galleries hang gilded signs advertising the catch of the day with colcannon (a traditional dish comprising mashed potatoes and cabbage) and curry chips. "We're the last of the



**Irish Melody**

**Clockwise from left: The town of Dingle; sheep on Ireland's west coast; Kylemore Abbey in County Galway**

Mohicans out here," a man tells me in the Dingle Pub, the cream of his Guinness spilling over the lip of the glass.

There's a feeling of the end of things, but also one of hope: the belief that newfound enthusiasm for the language – and quality restaurants, bookshops and festivals – will keep the area alive. On this early autumn day, the town bustles with walkers and window shoppers who move to the drone of an Irish dirge that streams from the pub until well into the night.

The next morning, I awake in my room at An Capall Dubh (The Black Horse), a guesthouse in Dingle. For breakfast, owner Helena Curran serves me eggs laid by her own chickens, cursing the *madra rua* (red fox) that stole away with one of the flock in the night. Curran was raised

speaking Irish, and her use of Gaeilge is intrinsic to her stern charisma. "The language is alive here," she says.

She has certainly made it a part of life at her inn. Moving briskly between the tables, she pours coffee and serves plates while giving guests tumbling language lessons. I ask what phrase will best serve me during my time in Ireland. "All you'll need for now," she says, "*is míle buíochas.*" A thousand thanks.

When I tell Curran of my plans to hike out to Dún Chaoin, the westernmost point of the peninsula, she gives me a *gáire glic*, a sly smile. "The whales are in, so keep a good lookout," she says. "The water's like a sheet of glass today." It is distant and beautiful. Reaches of azure stripped with white extend in a flush expanse towards the





**Wool-maker Carina Coyne has strong *tírghrá* – love for her country**

green rise of the Blasket Islands and, beyond, the spectral form of the Skellig Islands. Now abandoned, the Blasquets were once home to a thriving literary community; the Irish-language canon was bolstered by islanders Tomás Ó Criomhain, Maurice O'Sullivan and Peig Sayers, whose autobiography, *Peig*, was once the bane of Irish schoolchildren.

After a pint in Dún Chaoin, I take the Mám Clasach Road to the village of Baile an Fheirtéaraigh, the roadside hedged with fuchsia, loosestrife and quaking-grass with trilobite-like petals shaking in the wind. The sloping hills are like the bumps of a rumpled bed, the fields laid down like the patchwork of an uneven quilt.

Walking through the countryside gives good perspective, but the weather makes it impractical. The blue skies are often overtaken by sudden squalls, the wind bringing blocks of rain that

flatten the land and leave me cold and drenched. Because public transport in rural Ireland moves at a pre-industrial pace, I switch to a car and drive north. The Gaeltachts are vague geographical areas, generally delineated by where Irish remains the predominant language. They are deeply rural, with advertisements for horse cutting (a job that entails horseback riders isolating livestock from herds) and tractor repair tacked onto telephone poles. For years, their remoteness meant they leaked muscle and brain power, with youth leaving for better opportunities in Dublin or overseas. Today, though, the Gaeltachts are using their language as a strength, to sustain a resurgence that prior generations would have found unthinkable.

On the seaside promenade in Galway city, I stop to chat with a man I hear speaking Irish into his phone. "Twenty years ago, I would've had to emigrate," he says. "Now, there's work here. People are building homes, raising their children and sending them to Irish schools." He pauses and smiles. "It's not contrived, if you catch my meaning. The language, it's not a conscious thing. It's just who we are."

There is a feeling among the people who speak Irish that the language is something priceless, like a precious stone kept in the pocket. It's wonderfully exact. There is a word for the roof of a dog's mouth (*carball*) and the clacking of pebbles moved by lapping seawater (*súitú*). *Muirleadh* is the act

of chewing up small crabs and spitting them into the sea for bait. It also imparts the true character of the landscape. During the 19th century, when Irish was systematically replaced with English, the knowledge and legends contained within place names became confused. There's no circular rock at County Galway's Roundstone village, but there are seals, as conveyed by the original name, *Cloch na Rón*, or 'Rock of the Seals.' Nearby *An Cheathrú Rua* – 'The Red Quarter' for the local population – was anglicised into Carraroe, a nonsense word.

After a night in the city of Galway, I drive west into Connemara, the largest of the Gaeltacht regions. At the Ionad Cultúrtha an Phiarsaigh cultural centre in Ros Muc ('Peninsula of Rounded Hills'), my guide, Daíre Óh Ainmhire, shows me a map made by Tim Robinson, an English cartographer who travelled to western Ireland in the 1970s and '80s to document the Irish names of places. "Here's the real Ireland," he says.

The communities where Irish is still strong, such as Leitir Mealláin and Carna, largely depend on fishing, but stocks have declined. The solution has been technology: the internet, far from disrupting life, has allowed people who left to find work in the city

to return. Co-working spaces known as 'gteic digital hubs' have sprung up in small towns around the Gaeltacht. At the gteic in Carna, Mairín Ní Choisdealbha-Seoige, a local development officer, tells me that "‘blow-backs’ – people returning to live in the Gaeltacht – have become as common as ‘blow-ins,’ people moving here for the first time."

History weighs heavily on the Gaeltacht, and I visit the Emigrants Commemorative Centre in Carna to explore my own. The centre gives descendants of Irish emigrants a place to reconnect with ancestors

through thousands of documents, records and photographs.

Over ham-and-salad sandwiches in the cafeteria, the likes of which I haven't tasted since my grandmother's kitchen, I sit with a group and discuss Ireland's connection with the US – the packages of clothes and money that were sent east from those resettled relatives, the slivers of peat that were sent west like pieces of totemic incense.

At some point, I realise those around me are speaking English for my benefit. Language can be a concealer of secrets, but it's more often used to include. Whenever I let my attention waver, they slip in a phrase

## THE RISING ENROLMENTS OF STUDENTS PROVES THAT THE GAELIC LANGUAGE HAS A FUTURE



Road signs on Ireland's west coast are in both Irish Gaelic and English

or two in Irish, careful not to exclude me but finding comfort in their cradle-tongue.

The comfort of custom is an inherent part of maintaining traditions. The next day, driving through the low hills of north County Galway, I turn at a sign for Joyce Country Wool. Here, at a small holding on the fringe of Loch Na Fooey, Carina Coyne teaches visitors how to process wool the traditional way, from the raw fleece of her sheep.

"My ancestors lived on eggs and socks, just over there," she says, pointing out the window to a small lime-mortar cottage. Beyond that, a flock of sheep moves across the hillside, elongated and squeezed by border collies.

As with most Irish speakers I meet, Coyne has strong *tírghrá*, or love for her country. She cards and spins fleece as her forebears did and walks the hills of Connemara to collect ingredients with which to dye her

handspun wool. Strung around her shop are skeins tinted red with meadow-sweet, ochre with onion skins, yellow with gorse, green with nettle. "Nothing bright," Coyne says, handing me a burly sweater. "Put this on, and you melt into the land."

Northern Connemara presents landscapes grander than I thought Ireland could hold. Dry-stone walls snake

up hillsides like geoglyphs waiting to be translated. The Twelve Bens and Maumturks ranges rise from green leas to rocky tops, the valleys between strung with lakes and ponds. Country manors such as Screebe House, Ballynahinch Castle and Lough Inagh Lodge maintain airs of antiquated grandeur, with hunting dogs snoring on the carpets and grand paintings hung over soot-stained hearths.

At dusk, I stop at the Inagh Valley Lodge. Lit by the falling sun, the slopes of Binn Bhriocáin blush like a golden pyramid. That night, over my duck in port and plum sauce, I read Manchán Magan's *Thirty-Two Words for Field*. From the next table, a man leans over and asks me to explain my *breacadh*, my scribbling notes. He doesn't quite ask it that way, though, as he's lost his Irish. "It's not quite Chinese," he says, "but I'm terrible with language."

Growing up in Dublin, he'd maintained a certain level of schoolboy



Irish, but it was like a rusty bicycle. "I can remember how to ride, but it's better I don't get on the thing." Being in the Gaeltacht fills him with *díláthair*, the feeling of something missing. "Hearing it spoken so beautifully makes me wish I could."

Many of those I meet who have lost the language confide such laments. Educational facilities are trying to curb that loss. Students from across the country can study in the Gaeltacht at schools such as Carna's Coláiste Sheosaimh, where they can immerse themselves in the language. Along with a youthful vigour, the students, with their rising enrolment, prove that Irish has a future.

In Donegal, many of the bilingual road signs have the English place names struck out with red paint. At An Bun Beag, I meet up with friends, and together we drive north into a sylvan landscape touched with clouds. The hillsides are scarred with peat cuttings, the white bags of earthen bricks like flocks of swans.

Here and there, ruins of stone houses poke through the moss and heather. These carcasses of history heighten the silence. As Irish poet Seamus Heaney wrote, "*When you have nothing more to say, just drive/For a day all round the peninsula.*"

That is just what we do: to Dún Fionnachaidh, we tip freshly shucked oysters to our lips. To the promontory of Horn Head, where the deceptively smooth land rises to meet the sea

with sheer cliffs. And to Lough Beagh, where the bright sunshine makes sparkling tinsel of the slips of water that trickle down the granite slopes of the Glendowan Mountains.

That night at the Teach Hiúdaí Beag pub, we listen to the sound of Irish rising from the tables. As the bartender, Magnus, pulls me a pint, he speaks about his childhood in the village. He is only in his early 20s, but Irish is his first language. I tell him I've heard the concern across Ireland that children raised primarily in Irish have trouble adapting to English, that it slows their education and cognition. Magnus scoffs. "It was no bother at all," he says. "I was like a sponge."



Around one table, we sense the growing promise of music. First, two boys with a guitar and an accordion arrive. Then two women draw out their flutes. There's a man with a drum, and a girl appears with a fiddle. Soon, there are a dozen musicians.

Each tune begins tentatively, a fiddler quietly drawing her bow until others join in turn. The songs swell, the players urging each other on, in competition with the rowdy crowd. Then, a lone woman's voice breaks through the cacophony.

Her words are strange and mournful. The lamenting tune carried by her flat alto spreads through the room, which has hushed to listen to this rare and beautiful hymn. **R**

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BONUS READ

# A SCAMMER'S TARGET: MY MOTHER

*The caller told her she was in  
trouble but he could help.  
She fell for it. It took us  
months to recoup her money  
— and her dignity*

BY Becca Andrews

FROM **WIRED**  
PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
**KLAWE RZECZY**





Hello?

Someone has access  
to your bank accounts  
through Amazon, and they  
can take all your money.  
I'm calling to help.

One December morning, my mother's phone rang. She tugged the phone from the holster she kept clipped to the waist of her jeans and wondered who might be calling. Perhaps someone from church was checking in on her recovery from COVID-19. "Hello?" she said.

The voice that greeted her was masculine. The caller sounded concerned, and he told her something was wrong with her Amazon account. "Someone has access to your bank accounts through Amazon, and they can take all your money," he told her. "I'm calling to help."

Her mind raced. The voice was warm and reassuring, and my mum tried to focus closely on his words. My dad was driving to work, and she was home alone. She had been cooped up in the house for weeks

with COVID-19, isolated from her community, and she missed the sound of a friendly voice.

She tried to steady herself. The man said he needed information to make sure the money was safe. He transferred her to a different male voice – again soothing, reassuring, calm. She promised not to hang up.

A brain injury decades earlier made it hard for her to follow his instructions, but she tried. The voice explained slowly, carefully, how to swipe and tap on her phone until she had installed an app that allowed him to see what was happening on her screen. Now he followed her every move.

After some hours, she mentioned she had to relieve herself. "It's OK. I'll stay on the line," he said. She put down the phone outside the bathroom and picked it back up when she

## A Scammer's Target: My Mother

was done. As noon approached, she told him, "I have to eat."

"I'll wait. It's OK. Don't hang up, or we'll lose all our progress."

She set the phone down on the counter to make a sandwich, then pulled some chips from a cupboard and padded over to the kitchen table.

The phone buzzed with a text – it was my father, checking in. She typed back that there was a problem but that she was fixing it; she had it all taken care of. She tapped the tiny white arrow next to the message field to send her reply, and then she heard the voice on the phone, its volume elevated. It sounded angry.

"Why would you do that? You can't tell anyone! What if he's in on it?" She felt confused. That didn't make any sense. But she also didn't fully trust herself. She was worn out from her slow recovery, and the steroids she was taking as treatment gave her a hollow buzz of energy.

A 20-minute drive away, my dad sat at his desk in the office of a car manufacturing plant. Reading her message, he felt a prickle of anxiety. But he, too, was on the mend from COVID-19, and his mind felt foggy. He had recently started a new job as a manager at the factory, and he was still figuring out his colleagues



PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS: ALL GETTY IMAGES



and their processes. He got another message, this one from a co-worker, and he forgot about his wife's text. He adjusted his mask and switched to composing an email he had been meaning to send.

**AT HOME, MY MOTHER DUG OUT** her worn, printed-out packet of passwords from a pile of books and old church bulletins on a side table and flipped through its curling pages. She returned to her chair in the kitchen and followed along as the man told her where to enter them. She tapped to install Cash App, a mobile payment service. She opened up PayPal.

She downloaded Coinbase, a cryptocurrency exchange platform. She set up Zelle, another payment app, so she could easily send money directly from her bank account.

She didn't recognise all the names, but she wrote down her new passwords in the margins of her document. As the afternoon wore on, she wished for a nap. "We're almost done," the man assured her.

"He's going to be home soon, my husband will be home soon," my mother said.

She just wanted to be finished and then to never think about it again. The technology made her feel as if



she were fumbling in the dark, and she was reluctant to ask more questions. Outside, the sun had dipped below the wooden fence surrounding the backyard, and the house had fallen into a gloom when the man finally ended the call.

That night, when my father got home, he noticed right away that something was off. My mother was jittery and kept fussing with gadgets on the kitchen counters. Food sat out on the stove, and he was hungry, but he suddenly remembered the text from earlier. "What happened today?" he asked.

She shook her head. "You don't need to do anything. I got it all taken care of," she said.

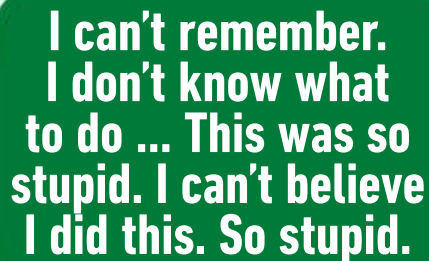
"Got what taken care of?"

"I'm not supposed to tell you."

My mother thought she had laboured for hours doing what was necessary to protect herself and her family. Instead, the scammer had siphoned away all her personal information – her Social Security number, date of birth, driver's licence number – and about US\$11,000 (about NZ\$18,000). The new financial apps she'd installed were all portals through which more of my parents' money could flow into strangers' hands.

In the next months, my father and I tried the best we could to undo the damage. It was a frustrating journey. Getting scammed was dehumanising on its own, but so were the hours

spent begging customer service people for help. I pleaded. I raged. I started to wish the app companies could take a page from our scammer. While he had come across as friendly and reassuring, I got chilly half-replies or, just as often, silence. By the end, all I wanted was for someone to show some empathy – to say, perhaps, "I'm calling to help. It's OK. We're almost done. I'll stay with you until we're done."



**I can't remember.  
I don't know what  
to do ... This was so  
stupid. I can't believe  
I did this. So stupid.**

**AT THE TIME MY PARENTS MET**, my mother was recovering from a traumatic car crash that left her with frequent partial seizures, which made it harder for her to concentrate. But she managed to become one of the rare women to graduate with a civil engineering degree. A year later, my dad graduated and joined the US Navy as a mechanical engineer, and they got married.

After that, my mother's seizures began to worsen. When they moved to a military base, the state denied

her a driver's licence, and she was devastated. She visited doctors and underwent extensive testing. Doctors gave her two choices. She could take medication to help control the seizures, but she would still be unable to drive. Or she could undergo a risky surgery to remove the scar tissue on her brain and, with luck, end the seizures. Once my little sister and I were born, she realised she needed to be able to drive. She got the surgery.

**Now they have your address. Make sure Mum knows not to open the door for anyone she doesn't know.**

Her recovery was tough. She ping-ponged between unspeakable fury and unstoppable tears. Her short-term memory was unreliable, and she had a hard time reading text. At bedtime she liked to read to me, but she often stumbled on the words and glared at them in frustration. When she got stuck on a page, I would pick up where she had left off and tell the tale from memory, hoping to soothe her.

After about a year, she recovered, and her life went back to normal. But as more time passed, I again noticed her struggling with basic tasks. She became overwhelmed fixing meals

that once were routine, and she got angry when she forgot where she had placed her keys. Ever since then, I have felt a responsibility to protect my mother from what my dad calls 'two-legged monsters' – people who sniff out weakness and prey on her friendly, open nature.

**THE EVENING OF THE PHONE CALL**, my father again asked my mother about her text message, and the story spilled out. His stomach in knots, he swept past the food on the stove to the living room to grab his iPad. He sank into his creaky recliner and pulled up their bank accounts. He could see the withdrawals: US\$10,000 to Coinbase, US\$999 to Zelle, US\$70 to Cash App. For some reason – perhaps to cause confusion – US\$2,000 had been moved from their savings account to a credit union they used. He felt queasy.

He phoned their bank and spent the next few hours on the line. My mother, agitated, perched on the armrest beside him, trying to recall her conversations with the scammers. "I can't remember. I don't know what to do," she said repeatedly. The bank representative helped them deactivate Zelle but did nothing about the \$999 transferred through it.

When the call ended, my parents huddled around her phone and thumbed through the unfamiliar payment apps. They eventually zeroed in on changing their passwords.



They turned to the printed list of passwords, but neither of my parents could decipher my mother's notes. "This was so stupid. I can't believe I did this. So stupid," she said, again and again. When my dad finally sat down to eat, he lifted his fork to his mouth without tasting much. That night, they barely slept.

**THE NEXT DAY, MY FATHER DID** what many parents with tech problems do. He called one of his children – me. I was on a work trip that kept me frantically busy, and I had just given in to the urge to take a short

nap. I had barely closed my eyes when the phone rang.

"Hello!" he said, his voice uncannily chipper.

"Hi," I answered cautiously. "What's wrong?"

"I just need to talk something through and figure out how to handle it," my dad said. His voice dropped a half-octave as he abandoned his cheery tone and gave me the basic outline. His lunch break was ending soon, so we agreed to continue the conversation later. Feeling antsy, I poured myself a glass of water and paced around my room, thinking.





Then I sat down at my laptop and started to type.

"Some privacy thoughts," I wrote to my dad. "Now they have your address. Make sure she knows not to open the door for anyone she doesn't know." I ticked off more items: contact Experian, a credit monitoring agency; shut down the accounts for the apps she'd installed; contact the tax office in case of identity theft.

That night, after work, my dad called back, and together, we set up fraud alerts through Experian. My father texted me the password to my mother's PayPal account, and I managed to shut it down. He got back on

the line with their bank, and that night – fortunately – learned he could recoup nearly US\$10,000.

The next day, I called my mother to ask for her version of the events. Her reply was simple, and the pain behind her words was clear. "I did a stupid thing," she said. "I'm so stupid."

Her words rang in my head. Right then my mother needed a daughter, not a technical assistant. My mind jumped to skipping my flight home to California, renting a car and driving to their home in Tennessee to reassure her in person. But I was due back at work, and I headed to the airport instead.

That day has become a clear demarcation in time for me. Sure, we got most of the money back. But I no longer trust that my parents are safe. That's why, in the following year, I moved so that I could live closer to them.

For weeks and months after the phone call, I sank into deeper and deeper levels of customer service hell as I tried to close the remaining accounts. The worst experience was trying to close my mother's Cash App account, which we feared the scammers might still access. For a while, my correspondent at Cash App kept addressing me in emails as "Jenith," which is neither my name nor my mother's.

No matter what I did, I couldn't seem to get clear guidance. I emailed. I called. I was transferred to several agents, all of whom had different thoughts on the matter. One suggested I send documentation declaring my mother dead. Another advised gaining legal guardianship over her.

Cash App, for the record, is owned by Block, which is worth roughly \$55 billion and is clearly not short on resources. I understand why they were reluctant to help – I was not, after all, my mother – but I grew increasingly frustrated at what seemed a superhuman lack of empathy.

Finally, I tagged the company in an exasperated tweet. Such measures have always seemed tacky to me, like throwing a tantrum in public. But it

worked – the company told me to send a message with more details. That day I messaged back and forth with Cash App 'support,' and I rehashed all the things I'd already tried or been told to try. I was fully caffeinated and at the end of my tether, which meant my messages had some... personality.

"I know this is not your fault," I typed, "but it is really frustrating that there is not a better way to resolve this – I cannot be the first person to experience this." Indeed, I was not: in the first year of the pandemic, fraud-related complaints to the Federal Trade Commission, the US government's consumer protection agency, against Cash App ballooned 427 per cent. (A company spokesperson says Cash App has since improved its fraud-detection capabilities.)

To my surprise, I got an acknowledgment: "We totally hear you, and we will do everything we can to help out here. If those steps don't work, just let us know, and we'll try other options here." I felt a flicker of optimism – what a curious, enchanting thing, this glint of humanity on the other end.

That conversation guided me to do something I probably should have done months earlier, but didn't think of in the anxiety of it all: download the app and sign in as my mother.

The reason I couldn't easily close the account, I came to realise, was that the scammer had left my mother with a negative balance of \$20 and had

also bought a small amount in bitcoin, which was still sitting in her account.

The Cash App representative suggested I sell the bitcoin to pay off the negative balance and send whatever was left back to my mother's bank. Then I could be free of the company. Sitting at my desk, I tapped the button to sell the bitcoin and used the proceeds to escape the Cash App universe.

"I cannot tell you what a relief this is," I typed into my message thread. "AHH! So happy to hear this, Becca!" my Cash App Support friend typed back. "Apologies for the stressful start there, but we're so glad this has finally been resolved for you."

Seated at my desk, I pushed back from my keyboard, and let out a guttural sigh of long-simmering anxiety leaving my body. It had taken three months to close the account.

**MY FATHER IS PETRIFIED OF THE FUTURE.** He has sweaty, terrifying nightmares in which he loses everything he has worked so hard to put away. He reads articles about hackers and digital security, but he doesn't understand all of it, so he sends the links to me. When he was told to buy shirts for his work uniform through PayPal, he couldn't bring himself to do it, so I bought them for him. My dad, the bravest, smartest man I know, is now scared of the internet.

"It's as if they took my time and

money just because they could," he said to me. "They'll never be held accountable, ever." (He's right. Most scammers never get caught.)

It's very likely that my mother's brain injury made her more vulnerable to predation. Studies have shown that people with mild cognitive impairment may be more susceptible to scams, particularly if they struggle with episodic memory and perception speed. But that doesn't make her as exemplary as you might think. The ageing process is not kind to most brains – shrinking the prefrontal cortex that helps orchestrate thoughts and weakening neural connections.

It's a fact that older adults, who have had more time to accumulate assets, lose the most money to scammers. In this respect, my mother is very normal.

But it's the mental and emotional fallout that worries me now. Recently, I spoke with Carrie Kerskie, a private investigator who works on internet fraud cases. Kerskie says she's seen clients who, like my mother, blame themselves, and that the internalised shame can twist into something more sinister – paranoia, broken relationships, even suicide.

"Everyone thinks it's just money," she says. "It's huge psychologically, because people think *How did I fall for this?*" Kerskie says victims worry obsessively that the bad guys will show up at their door and try to hurt them. They can't sleep. They stop



eating. "A lot of times, they have to take time off work to try to recover from this, and then they lose their jobs. It's a horrible downward spiral."

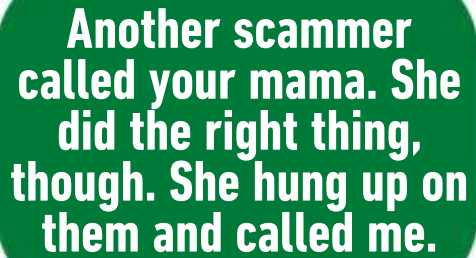
I flash back to my mother's haunting words: "I did a stupid thing. I'm so stupid." Like so many of us, she assumed a scam is something aimed at the gullible, something to 'fall for' rather than a crime with a victim and a perpetrator.

"She didn't 'fall for it,'" Kerskie says firmly. "She was manipulated."

**AFTER I MOVED INTO AN APARTMENT** a two-hour drive from my parents' home, I made a quick trip out to see them. I was helping them sort through the affairs of my recently deceased uncle, precisely the sort of thing I had come back to do. While we were digging through stacks of his papers, my dad mentioned, "You know, another scammer called your mama." My head snapped up.

"She did the right thing, though," he said. "She hung up on them and called me."

I turned to look at my mother, who was at the kitchen table, updating



**Another scammer called your mama. She did the right thing, though. She hung up on them and called me.**

the to-do list she uses to shore up her memory. She looked at me and we smiled. These days, our conversations tend to be short. We rely on different languages to express our love.

I don't know that she'll hang up the next time a perpetrator calls. But as I watched her dig through a pile of paperwork, I felt deep in my bones that the only way forward was together. **R**

BECCA ANDREWS, WIRED (FEBRUARY 3, 2022)  
© CONDÉ NAST

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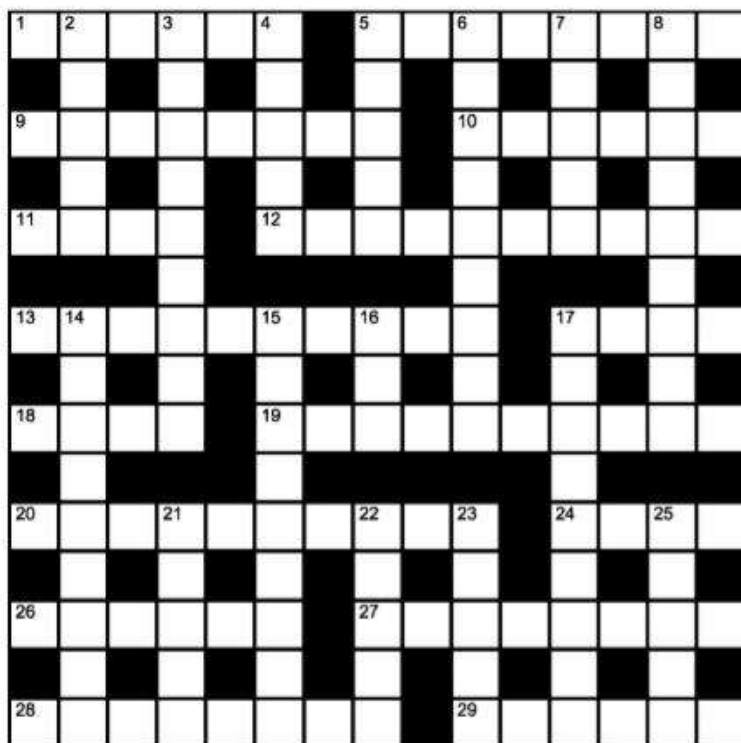


### Love Language

Couples are saying *adios* to dating apps in favour of searching for romance on Duolingo – a language learning app that allows you to connect with more than nine million daily users. Among the recent matches: Rob Ciesielski, 43, from the US, who was learning Spanish and Amanda Lopez, 38, of the Philippines, studying Mandarin. After Lopez excelled, Ciesielski started congratulating her on her stellar advances – and love bloomed. NEW YORK POST

# PUZZLES

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



## Crossword

Test your general knowledge.

### DOWN

- 2** Residence (5)
- 3** Sheers off (5,4)
- 4** Often bought with emulsion (5)
- 5** Communicator before texts and smartphones (5)
- 6** Recall past experiences (9)
- 7** Within the rules (5)
- 8** Inner city, perhaps (5,4)
- 14** Like Gabriel, for example (9)
- 15** Dry run (9)
- 16** And so on (3)
- 17** Scholar to sort out where to learn to paint (3,6)
- 21** Bluff (5)
- 22** Bakers? (5)
- 23** Mawkish (5)
- 25** Right of ownership (5)

### ACROSS

- 1** Not well organised (6)
- 5** Fraught with danger (8)
- 9** Like most lunch breaks (4-4)
- 10** Longtime Zimbabwean leader (6)
- 11** Sticky snares (4)
- 12** Sparsely distributed amount (10)
- 13** Female flight attendant (10)
- 17** Imperial field measure (4)
- 18** In the proper manner (4)
- 19** Group who stick it to the ball (6,4)
- 20** Grandstanders (10)
- 24** Pet that's often aloof (4)
- 26** Landing places (6)
- 27** Develops and utilises (8)
- 28** Character sketches (8)
- 29** Called loudly (6)

## Puzzle Answers

PAGE 142

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

### Sudoku

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

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

### IF YOU SOLVE IT WITHIN:

**15** minutes, you're a true expert

**30** minutes, you're no slouch

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

**BRAIN POWER**  
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**"Write, Erase, Rewrite"**



# FAMILY FUN

## Puzzle Answers

PAGE 142

### Spot The Difference

There are 14 differences. Can you find them?



### Balancing Act

How many flowers are needed to balance scale C?

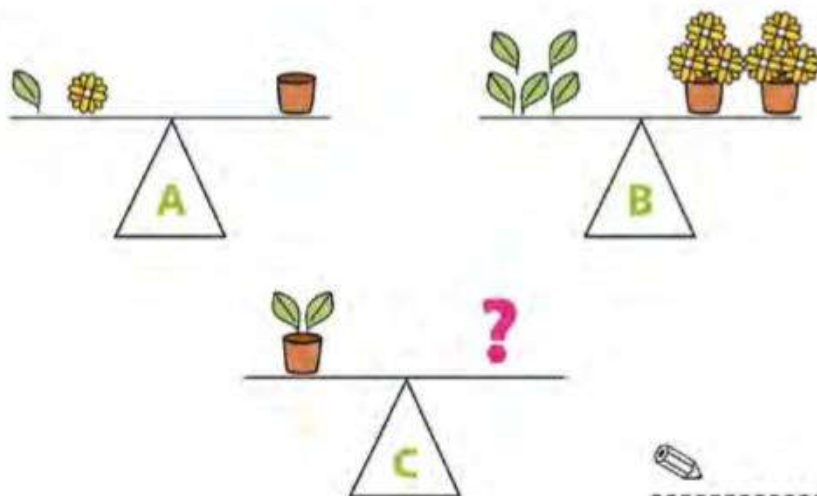


ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

# TRIVIA

## Test Your General Knowledge

- 1.** Pumpkins are berries. True or false? *1 point*
- 2.** What nocturnal bird found in South and Central America is nicknamed the 'ghost bird' due to its large eyes and haunting call? *2 points*
- 3.** Which Australian city briefly held the names Batmania and Bearbrass before settling on its current name in 1837? *2 points*
- 4.** In which Central Asian country is the Darvaza gas crater, a geological formation also known as the 'Gates of Hell', discovered in the 1970s? *2 points*
- 5.** For security reasons, baristas who work at a Starbucks located in Langley, Virginia, do not take customers' names with an order. In what US federal building is it located? *1 point*
- 6.** The Indian subcontinent moves northward about five centimetres a year, causing what landmark to grow even taller? *1 point*
- 7.** How many time zones exist in China? *1 point*
- 8.** In Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and elsewhere in Asia, *pencak silat* is a popular type of martial art. True or false? *1 point*
- 9.** What historical figure is said to have posted an influential statement on a church door in Germany on October 31, 1571, now known as Reformation Day? *2 points*
- 10.** Among what famous wreckage was the rust-eating bacteria *Halomonas titanicae* discovered in 2010? *1 point*
- 11.** What term, which today describes a person averse to new technology, was inspired by the likely fictional leader of a group of textile workers who revolted against industrialisation in early 1800s England? *2 points*
- 12.** What chemical element within a star's core gradually decreases, causing the star to appear brighter and increase in size, and become what is known as a red giant? *2 points*
- 13.** Popular dishes *puto* (Philippines, above), *chin som mok* (Thailand) and *natto* (Japan) have what preparation technique in common? *2 points*



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

**ANSWERS:** 1. True. 2. The great potato. 3. Melbourne. 4. Turkmenistan. 5. CIA HQ. 6. Mount Everest. 7. One. 8. True. 9. Martin Luther. 10. RMS *Titanic*. 11. Luddite (after Ned Ludd). 12. Hydrogen. 13. Fermentation.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

From Page 138

Crossword



Sudoku

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

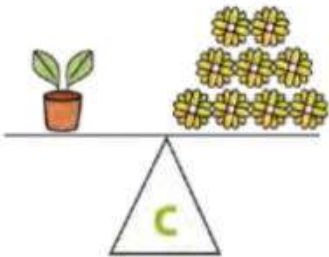
Spot The Difference



Balancing Act

Answer: 9

Each leaf has a value of 8, each pot a value of 11 and each flower a value of 3, so 9 flowers are needed to balance scale C.





# WORD POWER

## *For Short*

*We're all about keeping it brief with a round-up of useful acronyms from the worlds of HR, IT and others*

BY *Samantha Rideout*

- 1. TBD** – A: to be determined.  
B: terribly bad day. C: tactical business development.
- 2. ESL** – A: earnings, savings and loans. B: elementary-school level.  
C: English as a second language.
- 3. DOE** – A: date of event.  
B: depends on experience.  
C: day off due to exhaustion.
- 4. P&L** – A: parsley and lemon.  
B: position and location.  
C: profit and loss.
- 5. GMO** – A: genetically modified organism. B: give me one.  
C: guaranteed mail order.
- 6. SEP** – A: someone else's problem.  
B: solar energy production.  
C: seismic event prediction.
- 7. PS** – A: print supplement.  
B: postscript. C: parting statement.
- 8. ABC** – A: against book censorship.  
B: airway, breathing and circulation.  
C: access to basic care.
- 9. URL** – A: uniform resource locator. B: underground racing league. C: upper range limit.
- 10. ROM** – A: royal order of merit.  
B: rate of mortality.  
C: range of motion.
- 11. SPF** – A: sensor pixel format.  
B: sun-protection factor.  
C: single-parent family.
- 12. SFPF** – A: system for physical fitness. B: salty, fast or processed food. C: smoke-free, pet-free.
- 13. TMI** – A: test of machine intelligence. B: too much information. C: toxic materials index.
- 14. LCD** – A: low-cholesterol diet.  
B: liquid-crystal display.  
C: local courier delivery.
- 15. JGI** – A: just Google it.  
B: junior-grade infantry.  
C: judgement of guilt or innocence.

## Answers

**1. TBD** – (A) to be determined.

The band's exact dates and venues for their summer tour to Australia, New Zealand and Japan are TBD.

**2. ESL** – (C) English as a second language. Mr Jacobs read through the exercise slowly to help his ESL students follow along.

**3. DOE** – (B) depends on experience. Andréanne felt hesitant to apply for jobs that listed the salary as DOE.

**4. P&L** – (C) profit and loss. Every publicly traded company must issue P&L financial statements regularly.

**5. GMO** – (A) genetically modified organism. GMO foods currently available on the international market have passed safety assessments and are not likely to present risks for human health.

**6. SEP** – (A) someone else's problem. Malcolm dismissed the fallen stop sign as SEP and kept walking.

**7. PS** – (B) postscript. Sara added a hasty PS to her email after realising she'd left out a key piece of information.

**8. ABC** – (B) airway, breathing and circulation. The paramedic checked Lev's ABCs and concluded he wouldn't need cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

**9. URL** – (A) uniform resource locator.

After his new TV stopped working, Ravneet typed in the URL of the store's website to check the return policy.

**10. ROM** – (C) range of motion. Debbie worried about losing the ROM in her arthritic shoulder.

**11. SPF** – (B) sun-protection factor. Bill's skin burned easily, so he always chose a high-SPF sunscreen.

**12. SFPP** – (C) smoke-free, pet-free. Used furniture sells more easily when it's advertised as coming from an SFPP home.

**13. TMI** – (B) too much information. Nellie wondered if some of the details in the funny family story she shared with her workmates were TMI.

**14. LCD** – (B) liquid-crystal display. The salesperson rattled on about the advantages of LCD TV screens such as vibrant colour and energy efficiency.

**15. JGI** – (A) just Google it. When his older brother texted him asking how to boil an egg, Pranjal told him: JGI.

---

### VOCABULARY RATINGS

**5–9:** Fair

**10–12:** Good

**13–15:** Word Power Wizard

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