

# Reader's digest

APRIL 2017

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**FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA**

America's rivers, lakes, and shorelines are as central to our lives as our amber waves of grain and purple mountain majesties. Have you taken a photo that captures your love of a particular water scene? Go to [rd.com/photocontest](http://rd.com/photocontest) by April 17 to enter it in our annual photo contest. Winners will be featured in a future issue and online.

**SEND  
 US YOUR  
 PHOTOS!**

# Dear Readers



**EDITING A STORY ABOUT** everyday mistakes (p. 62) sure can make a guy feel dumb. Of the 50 items on our list of common slip-ups, I am habitually guilty of Nos. 1 through 9. Also 11 to 20, 22 to 34, 36, 42, and most of 44 to 49. Fortunately, I don't have a fitness tracker (No. 10) or an Instagram account (No. 21), which saved me two demerits. I am, however, an excellent napper—thank you, No. 38. And because I'm not a woman, I assume that No. 50 doesn't technically apply to me.

When I discovered my pitiful score, I initially shrugged it off. I'm not what you might call a self-help person. For instance, I tried guided meditation once, but when I squirmed and sighed repeatedly, my guide suggested that my zen was probably located elsewhere.

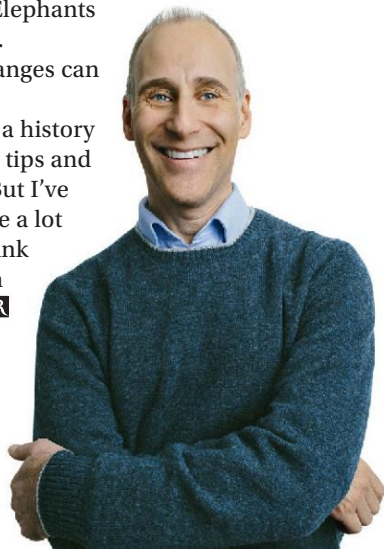
But the problem with our list (written by associate editor Brandon Specktor) is that the tips are so darned easy, even an old-guy editor can heed them. Take a walk at lunch instead of eating at my desk (No. 25)? I decided to test it, and I really do feel far less foggy in the afternoon. Check e-mail less often (No. 14)? I'm on it! I've even started calling my mother more often (No. 16). (Her bridge game is excellent, by the way.)

I can't say that I'm going to knock off the entire list. Video games just aren't my thing, and my kids would howl if I took up singing in the shower (especially since my musical taste runs toward "Elephants Gerald," as my then-toddler called the great Ella).

But the big lesson, to me, is that even small changes can improve your day, your week—your life.

I know that's not news to you, *RD* readers with a history of both feasting on our bite-size, easy-to-swallow tips and contributing zinger advice from your own lives. But I've been working here for only six months, and I have a lot of catching up to do. To help me absorb it all, I think I'll go take my lunchtime walk. While I'm at it, I'm going to buy a plant for my desk (No. 15) too. **R**

Marc Peyser, executive editor  
Write to us at [letters@rd.com](mailto:letters@rd.com).





“Bye, bye, frequent heartburn.”

BECKY LONDON, ACTUAL PRILLOSEC OTC USER



#1

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# Letters

COMMENTS ON THE FEBRUARY ISSUE

## 50 Food Facts

I thought “50 Food Facts” was the best summation of healthy eating I have read. But the tip that uses a study of fruit flies to caution against consuming too many artificial sweeteners made me wonder: How do you measure the number of calories a fruit fly consumes?

STANA TILMAN, *Olathe, Kansas*

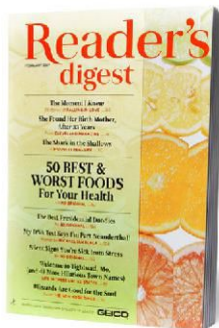
I’ll bet the recommendation for nut consumption should have been one ounce five days a week, rather than five ounces five days a week.

CAROL BOERGER, *Somerset, Wisconsin*

**FROM THE EDITORS:** *You are correct. Thank you for pointing that out.*

## The Moment I Knew I Was in Love

I was sitting in the lecture hall on the first day of classes when she walked in. I watched to see where she would sit, but she went to the instructor’s podium. After class, she invited anyone with a question to come forward. My question: “Would you like to go



to a movie Saturday night?” She replied, “No, thank you.” I asked her out every Friday for two years. Then one day, she stopped me in the hall and said, “If you should ever ask me out again, I might say yes.” We celebrated our 45th wedding anniversary this year.

JIM WALLACE, *Cedar Park, Texas*

## Everyday Heroes

Kudos to Emily Temple-Wood for helping to close the gender gap on Wikipedia by publishing biographies of female scientists. But the headline “The Online Troll Patrol” was mistaken in describing the cretins she encounters. The word for what they do is not *trolling*; it’s *harassment*.

KEN GAGNE, *Leominster, Massachusetts*

“Dog Catcher,” about the brave construction worker who saved a boy from four attacking rottweilers, offers a good lesson. Beware of increased risks with dangerous breeds when dogs are in a pack. Dogs can misinterpret sudden movement such as hugs or petting as aggression. The

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW COHEN



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that some 4.5 million dog bites occur in the U.S. each year; children between ages five and nine suffer the highest rate of injury.

JANET WEST, *Midland, Georgia*

## In Case of Blizzard, Do Nothing

My February issue, with David Dudley's story of a blizzard in Buffalo, New York, arrived one week after another "snow event." My town just south of Buffalo had 26 inches in five hours. Not a blizzard, but a perfect chance to stay inside and watch the white stuff pile higher. I appreciate his description of a blizzard as "the best natural disaster there is."

LIZ GRADY, *West Seneca, New York*

## The 33-Year Search For My Birth Mother

Julie Mooney's story is almost exactly the same as mine: How she felt about her adoptive parents and being adopted. How she felt making the first phone call to her birth mother. That she was a happy, healthy, and whole person. I was able to look up my birth mother 30 years ago. She had kept it a secret, as Julie's mother had,

and never told anyone, including her present husband. So this is where the story changes. I was a happy, healthy, and whole person who then had to deal with rejection. It was hard, but I made it through.

TINA SWINSON, *Batavia, Ohio*

## Welcome to Funny Name, USA

My daughter lives in Belchertown, Massachusetts, a typical scenic New England town. Jonathan Belcher received a large land grant in 1716 and later was a governor. Residents love the town, but I believe they'd prefer the original name of Cold Spring.

MARY ZUBI, *South Hadley, Massachusetts*

### DO YOU KNOW A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE ARE ESPECIALLY NICE?

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# EVERYDAY HEROES



When a freak accident threatens a skier's life,  
his friend takes a daring chance

## High-Wire Act

BY JULIANA LABIANCA

 **MICKEY WILSON** HAD been on the mountain only a few seconds when he heard the scream. Wilson, 28 years old and a confirmed ski bum, had just gotten off the chairlift at the Arapahoe Basin Ski Area in Keystone, Colorado, along with his friends Billy Simmons and Hans Mueller. Their friend Richard (not his real name) had been on the chair ahead of them, but when the men reached the top of the lift, he had seemingly vanished. The men walked toward the source of the scream and found skiers stopped on the slope, pointing to the chairlift. And then the friends screamed too.

“My God!” yelled Mueller. When Richard had tried to jump off the lift, his backpack had become entangled in the chair, which then dragged him back down the hill. In the process, the backpack strap wrapped around his neck, strangling him. Now Richard’s body was dangling four feet below the chair, his ski boots ten feet above the snow. The lift operator had quickly stopped the chairlift, and the friends kicked off their skis and ran toward the scene. They made a human pyramid to try to reach Richard, but the now-unconscious man was too far off ➡➡



*Wilson straddling a  
slackline, in much the  
same way he traversed  
the chairlift cable*



*Wilson climbing the tower ladder (right), while an unconscious Richard dangles from the lift (center)*

the ground. With the clock ticking, Wilson ran to the ladder of a nearby lift tower, about 30 feet away. Panicked skiers watched as he scaled the 25 feet. After he reached the top, Wilson's first challenge was to somehow climb onto the two-inch steel cable that held the chairs. As luck would have it, he's a professional slackliner (similar to a tightrope walker). That helped him handle the balance and height, but he knew he couldn't walk on the cable. "I had ski boots on," Wilson says. "And there's no way that would be the fastest thing to do."

The solution: He straddled the chairlift cable, then used his hands to pull himself to Richard. Wilson's greatest fear wasn't that he'd fall, but that he wouldn't reach his friend in time. "This was life or death," he says.

When he reached Richard's chair, Wilson swung a leg over the cable and attempted to drop down onto it.

But as he did that, his jacket caught on the movable footrest, which was in the up position. The footrest began to slide down, with Wilson attached. But before that could happen, he managed to free himself.

"We almost had two hanging guys," he says.

Now standing on the chair, he kicked down on the backpack, vainly trying to break the strap. The ski patrol had gathered below, and one

of them tossed up a folding knife, which Wilson caught. He leaned over and sliced the backpack strap. Richard plummeted ten feet to the powder below, while Wilson collapsed in the seat. The ski patrol performed CPR on Richard, who had been hanging for about five minutes, then skied him down to an ambulance. Wilson then rode the chairlift back down.

That night, Richard called Wilson from the hospital. Richard couldn't say much because of a bruised trachea and broken rib, but he did thank his friend. "No problem, bro," Wilson said. "I always wanted to climb one of those things."

As for Wilson, the ordeal made him reassess his daredevil life. "I told Richard, 'Man, maybe you saved *me*,'" he says. "It made me realize there are a lot of things you can't control for, and I do a lot of dangerous things."



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# Rescuing The Police

BY ANNECLAIRE STAPLETON  
FROM CNN.COM

• JON HOFFMAN was sitting at a red light when he saw a man run out of a 7-Eleven carrying a plastic donation jar full of cash. The Plano, Texas, detective, dressed in plain clothes but wearing his badge and gun, caught the man and pinned him to the hood of his car. But Hoffman had trouble containing the thief, and they got into a struggle.

“The detective has a martial arts background, and he said he thought the suspect must have a martial arts background, too, because he was able to break away so easily,” a Plano police spokesperson said.

The detective called out for help as a crowd gathered. Among those watching: Andre Harvey and Kirby Sample, two day laborers. Harvey did what has become common these days—he whipped out his phone and hit record. “I hate to say it, but my impulse was that this cop’s gonna do something stupid,” Harvey said. “But when he asked for help, I thought, Well, there’s not gonna be a shooting if I get over there in time.” Harvey jumped into action—while he was still recording the video—as did Sample.



*Onlookers Harvey (left) and Sample (right) rushed to aid an officer in distress (Hoffman, center).*

“Harvey grabbed the suspect’s arms, while Kirby grabbed his legs, and they were able to get the suspect to the ground to help Detective Hoffman put the handcuffs on,” said the police spokesperson. The 27-year-old suspect was charged with resisting arrest and other offenses. The charity jar he stole held less than \$50.

“I’ve been on the wrong side of the law several times in my life,” Harvey told WFAA. “It feels good to be on the right side and do something positive.”

After the arrest, the three men got to know each other over steaks and ribs at a local steak house—Hoffman’s treat, as a thank-you. But the rescuers say Hoffman deserves credit too. “It could’ve turned real ugly,” Sample told KFOR.com. “He handled himself like a real professional.”



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# VOICES & VIEWS

Department of Wit

## Almost Ready to Do My Taxes!

BY EMMA RATHBONE FROM THE *NEW YORK TIMES*



EMMA RATHBONE is the author of the novels *The Patterns of Paper Monsters* and *Losing It*.

• WHOOP! First gotta warm my tea.

OK, OK, OK, done. Let's do this. Except I think I left the back door open. Just gotta check.

Yup. Closed. Phew. Now I can finally settle in and get started.

Wait. Is that caterpillar trying to cross the windowsill? I have to see this. I definitely need to check out this scene, and it's definitely going to take me 45 minutes of just staring at this caterpillar and watching it rear up and wave its little arms around like a tiny emperor. Maybe I should put it on my finger. Maybe I should just pop it into my mouth. Ha!

I'm back. Time to really get my hands dirty here. OK, let's see, gathering my forms. The gathering storm! A perfect storm! Shoot. Thing is, I'm pretty sure I need to call Aunt Diane. I never call her, and it's not even her birthday or anything, but I'm pretty sure I've got to call and twist a lock of hair around my finger and wander around the house while she's talking and pick a sticky thing off the fridge, then study my fingernails, then hold up a wooden spoon and just kind of slash it ➔➔

through the air in an inconclusive way, not even *imitating* anything.

OK. I really need to do this. Now. Like, now. Checkmate, taxes! You're about to get done. Except, speaking of chess ... You know, I haven't played any games lately. Had some fun. You know? Who says a 36-year-old woman can't have some *fun*? I need to have some *fun* before I do this, clean out the cobwebs. I mean, we're all gonna die one day! Maybe I'll paint my bedroom floor as a checkerboard and then ... kinda hop around on it. Sounds like fun. Sounds outrageous and fun, and I am on it.

OK, I actually just did that. I just painted my bedroom floor with black-and-white squares, and it took six straight hours, and I hate it. Now I really, really, really need to get started on these taxes.

And I will. I really will. But here's the thing: I just found a promotional bouncy ball in this drawer, from a veterinarian or something, and it's

neon green, and I didn't even know I had it. But, I'm sorry, I have to spend some time with this bouncy ball. I've gotta bounce this ball! Like, when else am I going to do this? There's no. time. like. the. present. when. it. comes. to. randomly. bouncing. some. ball. So that's what I'm going

to do. I am living my best life, I am living my best me, and that involves taking the opportunity of a lifetime during the lifetime of the opportunity and going outside and standing in the driveway with this neon ball like it's the '90s and ... Oh no. Now it's in a gutter. Well, that's what

happens when you dream.

I'm not afraid to dream. And I'm not going to apologize for not having started my taxes even though I really need to do them, and if I could just start this list of business expenses in an Excel sheet, then I'd be "all set," as people from many walks of life say.

It's just, I haven't practiced my signature in a while. **R**

“  
*I really need to start. But first I have to paint my bedroom floor. And bounce this ball. And ...*

NEW YORK TIMES (MARCH 12, 2016), COPYRIGHT © 2016 BY NEW YORK TIMES, CO., NYTIMES.COM.

\* \* \*

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OSCAR WILDE

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# My Swimming Instructor

BY KATHLEEN BURGE FROM THE *BOSTON GLOBE*



KATHLEEN  
BURGE  
is a writer  
and a former  
reporter at the  
Boston Globe.

THE HEATED water splashes against my shoulders, but still I shiver. My son has been gliding along the bottom of the Holiday Inn pool, a playful otter circling my legs. He surfaces, his wet blond hair shining in winter afternoon light. “I’ll show you how to swim underwater,” he says, grinning.

An only child, he likes to teach my husband and me, reversing the usual order of his life. He has tutored us in knowledge important to an eight-year-old: how to multiply numbers, sketch animals, play the violin. Usually I’m a willing student. But this lesson I’ve avoided for months.

At Kieran’s age, I learned to fear the water. I whip-kicked my legs and windmilled my arms adequately during swimming lessons, but I couldn’t trust my body to float. My anxious

HOXTON/PAUL BRADBURY/GETTY IMAGES. ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY

mind would not let go. Fear pushed me down. Again and again, I slipped beneath the surface and breathed in water. It burned like shame.

Over the years, in lakes and oceans, I've kept my head above the surface, where I can see, my face never dipping into the black depths. I learned not to sink. But I never found the freedom of swimming that came easily to my friends, who leaped off docks and porpoised through waves. Self-doubt hardened into habit, then conviction. I have not swum underwater in decades. I don't think I can.

The one person unwilling to accept this is four feet tall and wearing swimming trunks printed with blue sharks. I look out the windows at the arced birches, ice-bent. Inside, there is no distraction. It is just my son and me in the deserted pool and a question hanging between us in the humid air. Can you try? His waiting face, spattered with freckles I have bequeathed him, is open with possibility.

I think of the hard things we have asked of Kieran.

The days I left him at preschool, his eyes tear-heavy as I slipped away. The times he bared his arm for shots from the doctor. Earlier times in pools when he, too, feared deep water.

I cannot say no.

"Try to swim to me," he says. In the first swimming lessons my husband scheduled for him, Kieran would not dip his face into the water. But then he submerged his head, and

one day, he plunged into the pool.

Now his voice, calm and authoritative, soothes me. "It's not very far."

From the pool's edge, down the row of empty lounge chairs, Kieran towers above the water. A few years from now, adolescence will sweep away his boyishness, angling his round cheeks, adding muscle and rough stubble. His chin is already sharpening, his torso growing lean. I glimpse the man who will emerge.

"When I count to three, you start," he says in his teacher voice. "OK?"

"OK," I say.

"One, two, three. Go!" I don't move.

"Let's try again," he says quietly.

"One, two, three!"

After more false starts, I know I must act. I suck in air, squeeze my eyes shut, and aim like a torpedo into the murk. Beneath the surface, sound stops. I travel blind in this liquid world, surging forward, shoving water aside. I hold my breath until I cannot anymore. I burst up into cool air. I don't see Kieran. I have glided right past him.

"I did it," I say, unbelieving. Time slips off its track. Those childhood struggles, these minutes in the pool—the years swirl. My child has urged me past the old pain.

Tears mix with the chlorinated dew on my smiling face. Kieran smiles too. "Now," he says, "try to go a little farther."

I swim farther.

I swim.

**R**

# PHOTO

OF LASTING  
INTEREST

## A Woman's Place Is in the Marathon

When Kathrine Switzer became the first woman to enter the Boston Marathon, in 1967, she knew she'd be chasing history. She didn't expect to be chased off the course. Switzer was at mile two when race manager John "Jock" Semple, infuriated by a woman infiltrating the male-only marathon, ran up and tried to shove her off the course, yelling, "Get the hell out of my race!" But with the help of more enlightened competitors, she fended off Semple and finished in just over four hours. To mark the 50th anniversary of her barrier-breaking run, Switzer, now 70, plans to repeat the 26.2-mile journey this month.

VALERIE BURTON



BEITMANN/GETTY IMAGES



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Should the menacing music of a performer in legal trouble affect his sentence?

## The Case of The Violent Rap Lyrics

BY VICKI GLEMBOCKI

NEFTALI ALVAREZ-NUNEZ was guilty, and he knew it. On March 21, 2015, while walking out of a bar in Cataño, Puerto Rico, the rapper spotted some cops and immediately threw the handgun he had hidden in his clothes to the ground. The police detained him and found the gun, a loaded Glock 9 mm fitted with an extended magazine and modified to fire as a fully automatic weapon. Alvarez-Nunez was also carrying ammunition and six Percocet pills. He pleaded guilty to two counts under U.S. law: possession of a machine gun and possession of that gun and

ammo by an illegal drug user. He expected the district judge to sentence him to 24 to 30 months in jail, the standard predetermined range for his crime according to U.S. law, and he was prepared to serve his time.

But Alvarez-Nunez was shocked by what the court singled out as having enhanced the severity of his crime—his music. His group, Pacho y Cirilo, performed reggaeton music—part rap, part Caribbean rhythms—and was a popular act in the inner city, including the housing project where Alvarez-Nunez



lived. Pacho y Cirilo had put out multiple albums and numerous videos. In the presentence investigation report, the probation officer included a translation of some of the band's lyrics, such as "I am the kind that loves reggae and spraying them bullets" and "You don't have to be a millionaire to blow all his brains." According to the report, the lyrics "promote violence, drugs, and the use of weapons and violence" and should be a reason to significantly boost Alvarez-Nunez's jail time.

At the sentencing hearing on September 3, 2015, Alvarez-Nunez's attorney, Edwin Prado Galarzo, objected, arguing that an artist rapping about violence doesn't mean he's "encouraging people" to commit it. Plus, Alvarez-Nunez's First Amendment rights were

protected by the U.S. Constitution. The prosecutor then showed a music video by Pacho y Cirilo to the court. It included grenade launchers, weapons being fired, and people carrying assault rifles while children stood in a nearby crowd.

"A judge sitting in a case like this has ... to consider the detrimental effects that this thing has in society," said District Judge Jose Antonio Fuste. He then sentenced the performer to eight years, more than three times the high end of the standard sentencing range.

On September 14, 2015, Alvarez-Nunez filed an appeal.

*Does it violate a musician's constitutional rights to consider his violent lyrics and music videos when sentencing him for a crime he committed? You be the judge.*



## THE VERDICT

Yes, it does. On July 8, 2016, the three-judge First Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston tossed out Alvarez-Nunez's sentence because the district court "confused the message with the messenger." The link between the lyrics and the crime, wrote the court, was drawn without any evidence that the music "reflected anything other than performances akin to an actor inhabiting a role." The judges sent the case back for resentencing. Three months later, Alvarez-Nunez was given 36 months, which took into account the ammo he was carrying. Even in a criminal case like this, said Rafael Castro-Lang, his attorney for the appeal, "lyrics should not become criminal activity." **R**

# Your True Stories

IN 100 WORDS

## FINDING HIS VOICE

Our library had a “music in the lobby” day, and I registered to play old-time piano tunes. An elderly gentleman and his granddaughter stopped to listen. Noticing he was unable to stand, I patted the bench next to me, and he took a seat. When I played “Strangers in the Night,” he began to sing, and an audience gathered. At the end, they gave him a standing ovation. As the man left, his granddaughter whispered in my ear. “My grandpa has not sung a word since my grandma died,” she said. “Thank you for giving him his voice back.”

LISA LESHAW, *Coram, New York*

## SNACK EMERGENCY

After moving to the country, my three-year-old daughter and I were often alone in our house. Because we lived in a rural area with no close neighbors, I wanted to make sure she would be able to call 911 in the event that something happened to me. After instructing



her, I decided to test her: “OK, what would you do if you found me on the floor and you couldn’t wake me up?” I could see her little brain working. To my surprise, she said, “I would go into the kitchen and eat anything I want.”

LAURA ALBRECHT,  
*California, Kentucky*

## FATE ON A PLATE

My 21-year-old nephew died of cancer in February 2013. A few months later, I was driving on the highway and talking to him in between sobs. I asked him to send me a sign that he was OK. At that moment, a silver Lexus pulled in front of me. My nephew drove a Lexus. This is a coincidence, I thought, until I saw the license plate. It was a vanity plate with the letters MHR—Markie’s initials. He heard me and answered. Thanks, buddy. I love you.

ROBIN MCKEON, *Canton, Massachusetts*

To read more 100-word stories and to submit your own, go to [rd.com/stories](http://rd.com/stories). If your story is selected for publication in the magazine, we’ll pay you \$100.

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

# My hidden

● Evaline, WA

Actually remembering  
**phone numbers.**

With cell phones, it's a lost art these days.

**PETE ROSSATO**

**Knowing**

my daughters-in-law are pregnant before they do.

**KAREN BOWMAN**

I know about

**computers.**

I keep that fact from my husband so I don't have to keep fixing his.

**BETTE BEHRENS**



Eckert, CO

I can recite the names of  
**all 50 states**

in alphabetical order in less than 30 seconds.

**SHANNON GETZ**

My ability to  
**build trust**

with almost everyone.

**JERRY REECE**

● Yuma, AZ

**Writing backward**

in cursive! It was my secret code in junior high.

**LAURIE DOWNES**

# talent is ...

## Couponing,

which saves thousands of dollars every year and allows me to make donations to organizations for those in need.

MARILYN JONES

Kingsford, MI

Making the perfect  
**hard-boiled egg.**

SHELBY WALDEN

Chicago, IL

Medina, OH

Marriottsville, MD

## Folding

fitted sheets.

MELANIE FADROWSKI

## Cartoon voices

for my grandchildren!

JEFF MORAN

Wichita, KS

St. Louis, MO

Shelbyville, TN

I'm a  
**deer whisperer.**

DEBBIE USELTON FIVEASH

Richland, MS

## I can float

so well, you could use me as a lifeboat.

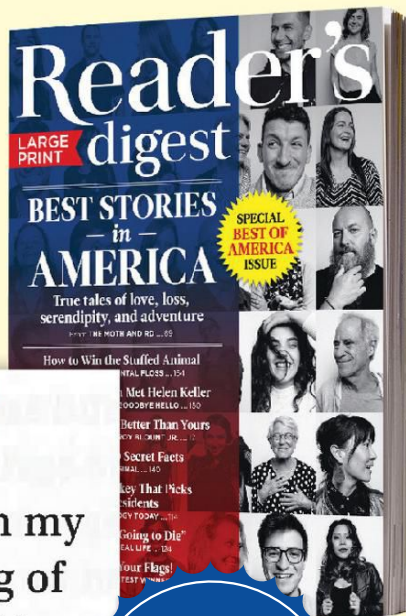
SUSAN MITCHELL

Altamonte Springs, FL

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## Everyday Heroes

I had tears in my eyes thinking of the joy Alex Yawor must bring to families by pairing portraits of their loved ones lost in wartime. It reminds me of the I see as

## Everyday Heroes

I had tears in my eyes thinking of the joy that Alex Yawor must bring to families by painting

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# Points to Ponder

**TO TRAVEL ALONE**, I learned, isn't to rely on yourself. To travel alone is to force yourself to depend on others. It is to fall in love with mankind.

**KEN ILGUNAS,**

*author*, in his book *Trespassing Across America*

**I GAVE UP ON BEING NICE.** I started putting more value on other qualities: passion, bravery, intelligence, practicality, humor, patience, fairness, sensitivity. Those last three might seem like they are covered by "nice," but make no mistake, they are not.

**ANNA KENDRICK,**

*actress*, in her book *Scrappy Little Nobody*

**BASEBALL IS SIMILAR TO LIFE.**

You start out at home and get a little older (first base). Then in early adulthood (second base), you're the furthest away from home you'll ever be. You get a little older and wiser (third base), and you see home plate. Then you realize that where you want to be is where you already were.

**RICH DONNELLY,**

*former Major League Baseball coach*,  
in the *National Catholic Register*



My mother would say to me, "You can't eat beauty. It doesn't feed you."

**LUPITA NYONG'O,**  
*actress*, in a speech

**THE REASON WHY** unexplained events have a disproportionate emotional impact is that we are especially likely to keep thinking about them ... Once we explain an event, we can fold it up like freshly washed laundry, put it away in memory's drawer, and move on to the next one.

**DANIEL GILBERT,**  
*social psychologist*,

in his book *Stumbling on Happiness*



# Life

IN THESE UNITED STATES



*"Nobody ever asks 'How's Waldo?'"*

**I SPENT MORE** than two hours in the beauty shop getting my hair permed, cut, and styled. Relieved to be done, I went up to the receptionist to pay. "Good afternoon!" she said cheerfully. "And who's your appointment with today?" Source: gcfl.net

**AS I PULLED INTO** the gas station, I noticed a woman trying to push her car toward the pump. Having always considered myself a Good

Samaritan, I parked and joined her in pushing her car.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"I'm giving you a hand," I said.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm stretching before my run."

**JIM SHAW**, Radcliff, Kentucky

**BEFORE THE CUP** of coffee even touched the table, my brother told the waitress, "Take it back. It's cold." The waitress poured him another



cup and returned a minute later, only to be told once again, “Take it back. It’s cold.” The third cup, however, he accepted, which prompted the waitress to ask, “How did you know the first two cups were cold without sipping them?”

My brother said, “Because with the first two, your thumb was in the coffee.”

**RAY GRAMBIHLER**, *Tripp, South Dakota*

**ARE YOU A PARENT?** Then you’ll understand these tweets:

■ My 14-year-old made fun of me this morning because I had to go to work while he had a snow day. So I changed the Wi-Fi password.

■ My kids wanted to know what it’s like to be a mom, so I woke them up at 2 a.m. to let them know my sock came off.

■ **Daughter:** You’re invading my personal space.

**Mother:** You came out of my personal space.

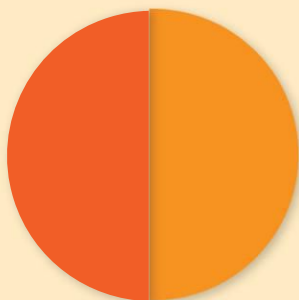
■ Not sure if I should be more concerned about the son who locked me out of my bedroom today or the one who showed me how to pick the lock.

Source: boredpanda.com

**WHEN MY FRIEND** and her five-year-old daughter were shopping, the little girl picked out a dress that she loved. Her mother shook her head. “That’s too expensive,” she said.

Her daughter dutifully put back the dress, but as she did so, she

## CONTENT OF WOMEN’S MAGAZINES



■ Accept yourself—you’re beautiful just the way you are

■ How to lose 20 lb. in four weeks

Source: Mikael Wulff and Anders Morgenthaler, [truthfacts.com](http://truthfacts.com)

grumbled, “Well, why did you have me if you can’t afford me?”

**SHIRLEY NELSON**, *Kenmore, Washington*

**OVERHEARD** at the fitness center:

**Treadmill user:** I can’t lose weight, no matter how much I work out.

**Elliptical user:** Maybe you should give up your late-night doughnuts.

**Treadmill:** But I get hungry.

**Elliptical:** Eat a banana instead.

**Treadmill:** No. Too much sugar.

**DR. ROBERT F. MAJEWSKI**,  
*Livonia, Michigan*

Got a funny story about friends or family? It could be worth \$\$\$\$. For details, see page 7 or go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).



THE TASTE OF APPLES AND STRAWBERRIES.  
THE GREATEST COMBINATION SINCE  
"HECK" MET "YEAH."



# ART *of* LIVING

Don't toss that old toothbrush. Give it a second life—and make your day easier in the process.

## Extraordinary Reuses For Ordinary Things

BY JULIANA LABIANCA

### Banana Peel → Silver Polish

Finishing a banana just as you're starting the weekend chores? Run the peel through the blender with a little water, and dab a washcloth in the paste to use as polish for your silver. (You'll love the tropical smell!) Dip the piece in a water bath to wash off the paste. ➡➡



## Toothbrush → Corn-on-the-Cob Cleaner

Disinfect an old toothbrush (you can run it through the dishwasher), and put it to work in the kitchen. The tool can be reincarnated as a handy gadget for removing silk strings from corn on the cob.

## Cooking Water → Plant Food

Forget pouring the cooking water from boiled foods down the drain. As long as it's not salted, your plants will be more than happy to drink it once it has cooled. Both hard-boiled eggs and steamed vegetables leave valuable minerals behind, making the water a source of nutrients for your garden.

## Stockings → Hair Elastics

A torn pair of tights doesn't have to go in the trash. Cut half-inch rings from each leg, parallel to the waistline, and use the ringlets as hair ties that won't damage your hair.

## Razor → Sweater De-piller

A dull razor can enjoy a second act as a rescuer of pillared sweaters. If you

notice a patch of unsightly balls, lightly run a razor over them. The blade will remove the pills without damaging the fabric.

## Ketchup Bottle → Icing Dispenser

Decorate your next homemade cake more easily by using a clean ketchup bottle to dispense the frosting. The squeeze bottle is simpler to handle than a piping bag and can be used to create flowers, scallops, and other designs.

## Lemon Peels → Disposal Deodorizer

Put this fruit's fresh scent to use by running the peels down your garbage disposal. The rinds help neutralize unwanted odors and clear any grease buildup.

## Fireplace Ashes → Walkway De-icer

Allow last night's fire to be today's snow-safety agent. Scoop the ashes out of the hearth and sprinkle them over any slippery spots on the driveway or sidewalk. **R**

\*  
\* \*

## WISH YOU WERE HERE?

You could be a genius, but you try to write a postcard and you come across like a moron anyway. It's always like, "This city's got big buildings. I like food. Bye."

JIM GAFFIGAN

1. In between pillows on bed. 2. Underneath wooden bench.



## CAN YOU FIND THE CATS?

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# Son, Here Is How You Save

BY MORGAN HOUSEL  
FROM THE MOTLEY FOOL

*MY WIFE AND I* recently welcomed a child into the world. His only interest right now is keeping us awake 24/7. But one day, he'll need to learn something about finance. When he does, here are some suggestions.

**1** You might think you want an expensive car, a fancy watch, and a huge house. But you don't. What you want is respect and admiration from other people. You think having expensive stuff will bring it. It almost never does—especially from the people you want to respect and admire you.

**2** The road to financial regret is paved with debt. Some debt, such as a mortgage, is OK. But most spending that results in debt is the equivalent of a drug: a quick hit of pleasure that wears off, only to drag you down for years to come, limiting your options and keeping you weighed down by the baggage of your past. ➔

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW COHEN



# WELL-CRAFTED COFFEE MADE SIMPLE

Enjoy exceptional taste  
by simply adding water.



**3** I hope you're poor at some point. Not struggling, and not unhappy, of course. But there's no way to learn the value of money without feeling the power of its scarcity. It teaches you the difference between necessary and desirable. It'll make you learn to enjoy what you have, fix what's broken, and shop for a bargain. These are essential survival skills.

**4** If you're like most people, you'll spend most of your adult life thinking, "Once I've saved/earned \$X, everything will be great." Then you'll hit \$X, move the goalposts, and resume chasing your tail. It's a miserable cycle. Your goals should be about more than money.

**5** Don't stay in a job you hate because you made a career choice at 18. Almost no one knows what he or she wants to do at that age. Many people don't know what they want until they're twice that age.

**6** The best thing money buys is control over your time. It gives you options and frees you from relying on someone else's priorities. One day you'll realize that this freedom is one of the things that makes you truly happy.

**7** Change your mind when you need to. I've noticed a tendency for people to think they've

mastered investing when they're young. They start investing at age 18 and think they have it all figured out by age 19. They never do.

**8** Some people are born into families that encourage education; others are from families that are against it. Some are born into flourishing economies; others, into war and destitution. I want you to be successful, and I want you to earn it. But realize that not all success is due to hard work and not all poverty is due to laziness. Keep this in mind when judging people, including yourself.

**9** Your savings rate has a little to do with how much you earn and a lot to do with how much you spend. I know a dentist who lives paycheck to paycheck, always on the edge of ruin. I know another person who never earned more than \$50,000 and saved a fortune. The difference is entirely due to their spending. Living with less is the most efficient way to control your financial future.

**10** Don't listen to me if you disagree with what I've written. The world you grow up in will have different values and opportunities than the one I did. More important, you'll learn best when you disagree with someone and then are forced to learn it yourself. (On the other hand, always listen to your mother.) **R**





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The sniff test isn't science.  
This guide will tell you when to toss.

# Expiration Dates You Should Never Ignore

BY TIFFANY GAGNON

## Jarred Condiments

Spreads and sauces may seem to last forever, but jarred condiments tend to have significant exposure to bacteria, putting you at risk of food poisoning. Bacteria can start multiplying as soon as you open a jar, especially if there's cross contamination.

"As we make sandwiches, for example, we dip the knife into the spread container, wipe it onto the sandwich, and then dip it back into the container," says Jessica Crandall, a Denver-based registered dietitian, certified diabetes educator, and national spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. "By doing this, you're putting some bacteria back into the container." Also, if there's water floating on top or discoloration, get rid of the whole jar.

## Egg Substitutes

Whole raw eggs can stay in the fridge for three to five weeks, but their



substitutes have shorter lives. An egg substitute will last about ten days after you buy it or three to five days after you open the carton, depending on the expiration date. Keep it any longer, and you run the risk of making yourself sick.

## Soft Cheeses

Semihard cheeses, such as cheddar and Gouda, have less moisture for bacteria to thrive in, so they can last two to four months in the fridge if properly stored. But softer cheeses, such as ricotta, cream cheese, feta, Brie, and goat cheese, spoil faster. They'll last one to two weeks in the fridge after opening, but toss them sooner if you see signs of spoilage, such as blue-green mold, which could make you sick.

## Deli Meat

Those ham and turkey slices will last three to five days after you buy them at the deli counter or crack the seal of an airtight package, so buy only what you'll realistically eat

during that period. Deli meat is susceptible to the disease-causing bacteria *Listeria*, which thrive in cold environments, so even your fridge won't offer total protection. A little sliminess or a funky smell is a good sign it needs to go.

## Cold-Pressed Juice

Typical processed juices undergo pasteurization to kill harmful bacteria and increase shelf life, but many cold-pressed varieties are unpasteurized and could be contaminated. To avoid getting sick, buy from your local juice bar only what you plan to drink in the next two or three days, and be sure to keep it refrigerated.

## Sprouts

Unlike other veggies, sprouts are grown in warm, moist conditions that make a cozy home for bacteria such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella*. Even a few bacteria in a seed could multiply by the time it starts to bud. Sprouts won't last as long as leafy greens and should be tossed by their expiration date. **R**



## THREATS MODERN PARENTS TELL THEIR KIDS

- "I'm going to leave non sequitur, embarrassing comments on your social media posts."
- "Someday your father will share his vasectomy story with you."
- "We hope you have twins."

HEATHER ALLEN AND SCOTT IVERSON, from [mcsweeneys.net](http://mcsweeneys.net)

Decades after they met in the classroom, a remarkable teacher counsels her student on one of life's most difficult lessons



# My Professor, My Mentor, My Rock

BY EMILY RAPP BLACK  
FROM LENNYLETTER.COM



EMILY RAPP  
BLACK  
*is the author  
of Poster  
Child:  
A Memoir  
and The Still  
Point of the  
Turning  
World.*

☪ DURING MY FIRST year in college, I was silent. I never skipped class, and I read every page assigned to me, but I didn't speak, even though I was in a program called the Great Conversation. I was too afraid of saying something wrong.

I declared a religion major as a sophomore and took a class from Barbara, a young theologian. Although I'd grown up in the Protestant church and was the child of a pastor, I didn't have a clue what feminist theology was about. But the class fit with my schedule, and I'm so glad it did. My mind was split open by a range of new thinkers and writers and by the quality of Barbara's questions. I finally had something to say and the energy to say it. I started talking, and then I couldn't stop. I was a frequent visitor during Barbara's office hours, a rocket of words. She listened and calmly responded, her peaceful exterior a perfect counterpoint to my manic ramblings. I loved what she saw in me, which was a range of abilities I had never seen in myself.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY; SOURCE PHOTO:  
CATHERINE DAVIS/COURTESY EMILY RAPP BLACK

I spent my junior year in Dublin, and that spring Barbara sent me an e-mail announcing the birth of her daughter, Maggie. I hadn't stopped to think that my favorite professor had a life of her own that was progressing simultaneously to mine. I quickly typed a note of congratulations and wandered to a nearby coffee shop, feeling strangely weepy. I realized that I loved Barbara for the ways in which she reflected an ideal version of who I wanted to be. But what did I know about her life?

During my senior year, when Barbara was my thesis adviser, I became Maggie's babysitter. When she cried as her mother left to teach her class, Barbara's voice trembled as she said "I love you" to her little girl. I sang her lullabies, fed her tiny cheese cubes, and gave her hot milk.

In the years after I completed my program, I visited Barbara and her husband often. I watched Maggie fall in love with sharks and Disney. Barbara had a boy, and one afternoon when he was about six years old, Barbara and I watched him shoot baskets at his school. Our relationship gradually deepened, but I was always conscious of a teacher-student dynamic.

This changed fundamentally when

I became a parent. I had my son in March 2010, and Barbara was one of the first to congratulate me. When, nine months later, my child was diagnosed with Tay-Sachs disease, a rare and always terminal illness with no treatment and no cure, she sent me a letter—handwritten on

a white legal pad. For the next two and a half years, Barbara wrote me regular, sometimes weekly, letters, remarkable letters that are revealing, loving, and kind. Honest. Full of rage and searching.

When I began writing about my son in a very public blog format, Barbara responded to

each post. She talked about the biblical Job and the way his friends were helpful to him in his great trials until they opened their mouths and tried to explain and rationalize his despair. "It all seems a terrible mistake, all this darkness," she continued. "It must be; but here I'm in danger of starting to question, to rationalize, and that won't help. Just know that I am thinking of you, sitting, and listening."

She sent me book reviews, reports about her latest theological interests, a copy of an old check she had written me for babysitting services (\$54.86, dated May 1996—"We were so cheap!"), and one rollicking

---

“

***I loved what  
she saw in me,  
which was a  
range of abilities  
I had never  
seen in myself.***

---

discussion from “a summer in full swing,” about what the 19th-century Protestant theologian John Calvin might say about luck. “Death won’t be the end,” she wrote, and I sensed in her a desire to believe this, even if she didn’t, not quite. Another note was written with visibly shaky handwriting during a turbulent plane ride.

Through our back-and-forths, I began to realize that I hadn’t really known her at all—not until now, as she revealed more about herself than she ever had. A little over a year ago, she wrote, “I’m sending you lots of love and positive thoughts. Hope you feel it.” I did, and I do. Yes, we had decades of shared history behind us, but now we had truly gotten to know and love each other as women, thinkers, and mothers. Equals. This switch from youthful adoration to a more nuanced relationship included an element of loss. I was no longer young, foolishly believing that possibilities were endless. Our correspondence signaled an adult awareness of mortality, that death is always closer than we think.

The letter written right before my son died, when he was three, was the most personal and perhaps the most profound. In it Barbara said

that she believed my experience of parenting a terminally ill child had made me a better person, not in a superficial, moralistic sense. “I think he’s made you better by opening up the great fire of your love,” she wrote, “[with his] small but magnificent existence.” I have never in my life

read a more deeply comforting sentence, one that spoke to my grandest hopes, my deepest fears, and the only faith that remains to me, which is a belief in chaos. Our love had bloomed and deepened from a guarded mutual respect to a richer, deeper friendship.

Mentors are meant

to usher those in their charge into fresh understanding, help them sort and filter new experiences, assist in the project of making sense out of the chaos that is human life, or at least doggedly ask questions that dig deeply toward those difficult and nuanced answers. It is a sacred relationship with ancient roots; I envision it as a mutual anointing, a loving recognition, a way of saying “I see you; I’m here.” Unlike Job’s friends, who want to sort and solve, mentors witness. They observe and accompany the darkest despair, the wildest sorrow, and the most unexpected joy.

“  
***With decades of  
 history, now we  
 had truly gotten  
 to know each  
 other as thinkers,  
 mothers, equals.***

R

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# IS YOUR BLADDER ALWAYS DISRUPTING YOUR DAY?

Ask your doctor about Myrbetriq® (mirabegron), the first and only overactive bladder (OAB) treatment in its class. Myrbetriq treats OAB symptoms of urgency, frequency, and leakage in adults.

In clinical trials, those taking Myrbetriq made fewer trips to the bathroom and had fewer leaks than those not taking Myrbetriq. Your results may vary.



You may be able to get your first prescription at no cost with *Momentum*.\* Visit [Myrbetriq.com](http://Myrbetriq.com).

## USE OF MYRBETRIQ (meer-BEH-trick)

Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) is a prescription medicine for adults used to treat overactive bladder (OAB) with symptoms of urgency, frequency, and leakage.

## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

Myrbetriq is not for everyone. Do not use Myrbetriq if you have an allergy to mirabegron or any ingredients in Myrbetriq. Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood pressure worse if you have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq.

**Please see additional Important Safety Information on next page.**

\*Subject to eligibility. Restrictions may apply.



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## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION (continued)

Myrbetriq may increase your chances of not being able to empty your bladder. Tell your doctor right away if you have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream.

Myrbetriq may cause allergic reactions that may be serious. If you experience swelling of the face, lips, throat or tongue, with or without difficulty breathing, stop taking Myrbetriq and tell your doctor right away.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take including medications for overactive bladder or other medicines such as thioridazine (Mellaril™ and Mellaril-S™), flecainide (Tambacor®), propafenone (Rythmol®), digoxin (Lanoxin®). Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Before taking Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney problems. The most common side effects of Myrbetriq include increased blood pressure, common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis), urinary tract infection, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, and headache.

**For further information, please talk to your healthcare professional and see Brief Summary of Prescribing Information for Myrbetriq (mirabegron) on the following pages.**

**You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit [www.fda.gov/medwatch](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch) or call 1-800-FDA-1088.**

 **Myrbetriq<sup>®</sup>**  
(mirabegron)  
extended-release tablets  
25 mg, 50 mg



## **Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) extended-release tablets 25 mg, 50 mg**

### **Brief Summary based on FDA-approved patient labeling**

Read the Patient Information that comes with Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This summary does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment.

#### **What is Myrbetriq (meer-BEH-trick)?**

Myrbetriq is a prescription medication for **adults** used to treat the following symptoms due to a condition called **overactive bladder**:

- urge urinary incontinence: a strong need to urinate with leaking or wetting accidents
- urgency: a strong need to urinate right away
- frequency: urinating often

It is not known if Myrbetriq is safe and effective in children.

#### **Who should not use Myrbetriq?**

Do not use Myrbetriq if you have an allergy to mirabegron or any of the ingredients in Myrbetriq. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients in Myrbetriq.

#### **What is overactive bladder?**

Overactive bladder occurs when you cannot control your bladder contractions. When these muscle contractions happen too often or cannot be controlled, you can get symptoms of overactive bladder, which are urinary frequency, urinary urgency, and urinary incontinence (leakage).

#### **What should I tell my doctor before taking Myrbetriq?**

Before you take Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you:

- have liver problems or kidney problems
- have very high uncontrolled blood pressure
- have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if Myrbetriq will harm your unborn baby. Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if Myrbetriq passes into your breast milk. You and your doctor should decide if you will take Myrbetriq or breastfeed. You should not do both.

**Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take**, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Tell your doctor if you take:

- thioridazine (Mellaril™ or Mellaril-S™)
- flecainide (Tambocor®)
- propafenone (Rythmol®)
- digoxin (Lanoxin®)

#### **How should I take Myrbetriq?**

- Take Myrbetriq exactly as your doctor tells you to take it.
- You should take 1 Myrbetriq tablet 1 time a day.
- You should take Myrbetriq with water and swallow the tablet whole.
- Do not crush or chew the tablet.
- You can take Myrbetriq with or without food.
- If you miss a dose of Myrbetriq, begin taking Myrbetriq again the next day. Do not take 2 doses of Myrbetriq the same day.
- If you take too much Myrbetriq, call your doctor or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.

#### **What are the possible side effects of Myrbetriq?**

Myrbetriq may cause serious side effects including:

- **increased blood pressure.** Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood pressure worse if you have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq.

- **inability to empty your bladder (urinary retention).** Myrbetriq may increase your chances of not being able to empty your bladder if you have bladder outlet obstruction or if you are taking other medicines to treat overactive bladder. Tell your doctor right away if you are unable to empty your bladder.
- **angioedema.** Myrbetriq may cause an allergic reaction with swelling of the lips, face, tongue, throat with or without difficulty breathing. Stop using Myrbetriq and tell your doctor right away.

The **most common side effects** of Myrbetriq include:

- increased blood pressure
- common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis)
- urinary tract infection
- constipation
- diarrhea
- dizziness
- headache

Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away or if you have swelling of the face, lips, tongue, or throat, hives, skin rash or itching while taking Myrbetriq.

These are not all the possible side effects of Myrbetriq.

For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

**Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.**

#### **How should I store Myrbetriq?**

- Store Myrbetriq between 59°F to 86°F (15°C to 30°C). Keep the bottle closed.
- Safely throw away medicine that is out of date or no longer needed.

#### **Keep Myrbetriq and all medicines out of the reach of children.**

#### **General information about the safe and effective use of Myrbetriq**

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in the Patient Information leaflet. Do not use Myrbetriq for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give Myrbetriq to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

#### **Where can I go for more information?**

This is a summary of the most important information about Myrbetriq. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about Myrbetriq that is written for health professionals.

For more information, visit [www.Myrbetriq.com](http://www.Myrbetriq.com) or call (800) 727-7003.

#### **What are the ingredients in Myrbetriq?**

**Active ingredient:** mirabegron

**Inactive ingredients:** polyethylene oxide, polyethylene glycol, hydroxypropyl cellulose, butylated hydroxytoluene, magnesium stearate, hypromellose, yellow ferric oxide and red ferric oxide (25 mg Myrbetriq tablet only).

#### **Rx Only**

PRODUCT OF JAPAN OR IRELAND – See bottle label or blister package for origin

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 **Myrbetriq**<sup>®</sup>  
(mirabegron)  
**extended release tablets**  
**25 mg, 50 mg**

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Flying isn't always enjoyable,  
but these tips will help make for  
a smoother trip

# 8 Things You Should Never Do on an Airplane

BY JULIANA LABIANCA



■ **GET STUCK WITH THE MIDDLE SEAT** More than half of Americans would rather go to the dentist than get stuck between two of their fellow fliers, according to a 2009 survey by the Global Strategy Group. Alas, sometimes the middle is all that's left. Boost your chance of escaping it by setting a free alert on [expertflyer.com](http://expertflyer.com). You select the type of seat you prefer (window or aisle) and your flight number. When a seat that meets your needs opens up, you'll get an e-mail.

Then you can go to the airline's website and change your assignment.

■ **NEGLECT YOUR A.M. SKIN CARE** Just because you'll be inside doesn't mean you can skip sunblock. One small study found that pilots flying for an hour got the same amount of radiation as if they had spent 20 minutes in a tanning bed. You'll also want to moisturize to prevent parched and itchy skin—an airplane's pressurized air is notoriously dry.

### ■ FALL ASLEEP BEFORE TAKEOFF

If you do, it will be harder for you to equalize the pressure in your ears (which you'll do more quickly if you chew gum or yawn). If you're prone to flight-induced headaches, hold off on your snooze until your ears pop.

### ■ CLOSE THE AIR VENT

The recirculated air inside the plane might not be as fresh as a daisy, but having it blow around your face can still be beneficial. Doctors recommend opening the overhead air vent and setting it on low to medium in order to keep germs from lingering in your personal space.

### ■ ORDER COFFEE OR TEA

Many airlines brew their hot drinks with water from an onboard tank, and—surprise—it's not the most pristine part of the plane. A 2012 report from the Environmental Protection Agency found that 12 percent of airplanes carried water that tested positive for coliform, an indicator that other harmful bacteria could be present. Experts say heating the coffee and tea water usually won't fully disinfect it.

### ■ ... OR GUZZLE A SODA

An increase in altitude may cause intestinal gas to expand up to 30 percent, so you might want to avoid consuming carbonated drinks in the clouds. Keep your stomach settled with bottled water.

### ■ TOUCH THAT TRAY

Your seat-back tray is by far the most bacteria-loaded surface on the plane. One study found that trays harbor an average of 2,155 colony-forming units of bacteria per square inch. Compare that with the 265 units on the lavatory flush button. And while all samples tested negative for potentially infectious bacteria such as *E. coli*, you'll still want to keep your food on the plate.

### ■ SIT THE ENTIRE FLIGHT

During trips longer than four hours, staying in place can slow your circulation and put you at a small risk for blood clots. Take a walk to the bathroom every two to three hours, or do a few in-seat exercises such as extending your legs and flexing your feet or pulling each knee to your chest for 15 seconds. **R**



## THERE'S ALWAYS A BRIGHT SIDE

I didn't realize how good I am on the phone until I found out my call to customer service may be used for training purposes.

 @KENTWGRAHAM

Pollen is the number one enemy for folks with seasonal allergies, but these factors can make a bad day worse

# Surprisingly Ordinary Allergy Triggers

BY ALANNA NUÑEZ AND LAUREN GELMAN

## Celery

You may already know that peaches and apples can exacerbate symptoms in people with pollen allergies, but it turns out that celery can as well. Both cooked and uncooked celery can cause swelling of the throat, lips, and tongue, so if you have a pollen allergy, you'll probably want to steer clear. And be sure to read the labels on packaged foods—celery is often an ingredient in soups and salad dressings.

## Wearing Shoes at Home

In addition to tracking in dirt and mud, you can track in pollen when you wear your shoes into your house, Mark Dykewicz, MD, told [everydayhealth.com](http://everydayhealth.com). If you're prone to allergies, Dr. Dykewicz, a professor in the allergy and

immunology division at Saint Louis University School of Medicine, recommends not only taking off your shoes when you get home but also throwing them (and everything else you are wearing) into the washing machine ASAP.



## Hair Gel

Anything you can do to minimize your exposure to allergy triggers can go a long way to making you feel better. One easy trick? Don't use hair gel, which, perhaps not surprisingly, collects pollen, says allergist and immunologist Clifford Bassett, MD, founder and medical director of Allergy and Asthma Care of New York.

## Extra-Hot Weather

Does it seem as if your allergies get worse every year? You may not be imagining it. "Climate change does seem to be making allergies worse," says Richard Weber, MD, a past president of the American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology and a professor of medicine at National Jewish Health. "Allergenic plants are bigger and produce more pollen, and allergy seasons are starting earlier and lasting longer."

## Stress

After studying 179 people with hay fever, researchers at Ohio State University discovered that the 39 percent who suffered more than one allergy attack had high stress levels. What's more, the majority of people in this group, who were studied for 12 weeks, had more than four allergy attacks within two 14-day periods. While the study did not prove a cause-and-effect relationship, stress is known to exacerbate many health problems, and allergies

appear to be among them. "While alleviating stress won't cure allergies, it may help decrease the episode of intense symptoms," said the study's author, Amber Patterson, MD.

## Leaving the Windows Open

Drive with the windows up and turn your car's air conditioner to the "do not recirculate" setting, recommends Dr. Bassett. Also, try to park in a garage or where the car will be somewhat covered and less likely to have pollen land on it. Similarly, keep all your windows at home closed to keep pollen out, and turn on the air conditioner if necessary. Check that the filter on your air conditioner is properly installed and isn't too dirty. (A clean filter can help cut your energy costs too.)

## And Don't Delay Your Meds

People often don't start taking allergy medications until their symptoms get unbearable, but that's a mistake. "If you know you have bad pollen allergies," notes Michael Smith, MD, chief medical editor for webmd.com, "start treating them even before you have symptoms. Watch pollen counts [as reported by your local weather forecaster], and as soon as they start to rise, start taking your usual medication. Once your body ramps up its release of histamines and inflammatory chemicals, allergies are that much harder to treat." **R**



NEWS FROM THE

# World of Medicine

BY SAMANTHA RIDEOUT

## Breast Cancer: Look for More than Lumps

One of the most common signs of breast cancer is a lump, but that isn't the only red flag. In a survey of more than 2,300 British breast cancer patients, 17 percent went to the doctor with another symptom, such as nipple discharge or a swollen armpit. The patients with lumps sought help sooner than those who had noticed other signs. Since early detection is key to the best treatment, see your doctor as soon as you notice any abnormalities. For more on what to look for, go to [nationalbreastcancer.org](http://nationalbreastcancer.org).

## Marriage, Stress, and Weight

You know how you sometimes eat more and can't resist junk food cravings when you're frazzled? It turns out that your emotional eating can also be

triggered by your spouse's stress. According to a recent study of 2,042 married couples, people whose partner had been worried for a year or longer tended to gain weight, with some adding four inches or more to their waistlines over four years. If you're looking for a way to de-stress with your spouse, try a guided meditation video on [youtube.com](http://youtube.com).

## Painkillers Linked to Hearing Loss

Acetaminophen (found in Tylenol) and NSAIDs such as ibuprofen (found in Advil) are great for occasional aches and pains. However, relying on them heavily for years may raise the risk for kidney damage, stomach ulcers, and heart attacks—and might adversely affect the inner ear. An observational study found that women who'd taken either of ➔





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those medications at least twice per week for six years or more had a greater chance of hearing loss: 10 percent higher with NSAIDs and 9 percent higher with acetaminophen. If you've been taking either regularly, ask your doctor for other ways to manage your pain.

## A Promising Outlook for a Chronic Kidney Condition

If a doctor says you have mild chronic kidney disease, don't panic: British researchers followed 1,700 patients with that condition for five years, some of whom took medications to control their symptoms, and found that only four of them (0.2 percent) progressed to the end stage of the disease. Meanwhile, 34 percent remained stable and 19 percent saw a complete remission. (The remaining patients either progressed to a lesser extent or died of unrelated causes.) You can be kind to your kidneys by cutting down on salt and alcohol. Signs of kidney disease include nausea, fatigue, changes in how much you urinate, and cramps.

## Weak Sunscreen and Unsafe Exposure

In a Norwegian study of 143,844 women, those who used sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) lower than 15 increased their chances of developing a melanoma by 33 percent compared with women who used SPF 15 or higher. It was one

of the first studies to find a link between this type of skin cancer and SPF strength. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends an SPF of 30 or higher.

## Make the Most of a New Hip

The main purpose of a hip replacement is to make movement less painful. That's why, after analyzing 17 post-op studies, doctors were surprised to discover that most patients don't become more physically active after the procedure. Like all surgeries, a hip replacement carries risks (such as infection and blood clots) that may not be justified if recipients don't reap the benefits of the procedure. The authors recommend that doctors encourage patients to walk longer distances again, climb stairs, and exercise after surgery.

## Protein-Rich Veggies More Filling than Meat

Beans, peas, and other legumes are celebrated sources of nonanimal protein, and they may be even better than meat at satisfying hunger. In a small Danish experiment, people who ate patties made from peas and beans ate 12 percent fewer calories at their next meal compared with those who ate pork and veal patties. That's probably because protein isn't the only food component that helps you feel full—fiber does, too, and vegetables have loads of it.



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ALL IN

# A Day's Work



*"If you're willing to risk a little prison time, I can save you a lot of money."*

**FOR SOME ODD REASON**, these job seekers weren't offered the positions:

■ I asked the candidate if he considered himself a punctual person. He responded, "Well, I'm not a grammar Nazi or anything"

■ I had a guy show up for his interview drunk and wearing a powder-blue tuxedo jacket. The interview didn't last long, but

before it was over, he was crying about his uncle who had died. We asked him how long he had been gone: six years.

■ At PetSmart, one of the questions we ask job candidates is "If you could be any animal, what would it be?" He said he would be a turtle because he's always really slow and he's never in a rush.

Source: reddit.com

**MY HUSBAND WAS** leaving a diner just as it began to rain. Forgetting that he hadn't brought an umbrella, he reached for the nearest one as he headed for the door. "That's my umbrella," a woman scolded.

Embarrassed, he hurried off to work. Once there, he discovered three umbrellas that he had left at the office over the months and decided to bring them home at the end of the day. That afternoon, he ran into the woman from the diner. She took one look at the umbrellas and remarked, "You did real well for yourself today, didn't you?" From gcfl.net

**A NEW PATIENT** handed me her medical history form. Under past traumas, she'd written: "Married twice."

**AMY WRIGHT BRILL**, *Sutton, Vermont*

**AFTER RETIRING**, I took up substitute teaching. One day, I asked my fourth graders to guess my favorite sport. It happens to be pickleball, which might explain why they weren't having any luck. So I offered this hint: "It starts with the letter *p*." They threw out *pool*, *poker*, *Ping-Pong*—none of them correct. Then one boy insisted he had the answer: "Pole dancing!"

**NANCY REGAN**, *Havre de Grace, Maryland*

**THE PROBLEM** with teaching a man to fish is that eventually somebody will microwave that fish in the work break room. [TW@THECATWHISPERER](https://twitter.com/THecatwhisperer)



## METHODUMBOLOGY

Some scientists have fessed up about their sometimes less-than-rigorous research methods.

■ We incubated this for however long lunch was.

[TW@GRAHAMCASSEROLE](https://twitter.com/GRAHAMCASSEROLE)  
(GRAHAM CASSEROLE)

■ Slices were left in a formaldehyde bath for over 48 hours because I put them in on Friday and refuse to work weekends.

[TW@AECHASE](https://twitter.com/AECHASE) (ALEX CHASE)

■ This dye was selected because the bottle was within reach.

[TW@ATOMSELECTRONS](https://twitter.com/ATOMSELECTRONS) (EMMA)

■ We didn't test as many clams as oysters because someone found the samples and ate them.

[TW@BGRASSBLUECRAB](https://twitter.com/BGRASSBLUECRAB)  
(DR. AMY FREITAG)

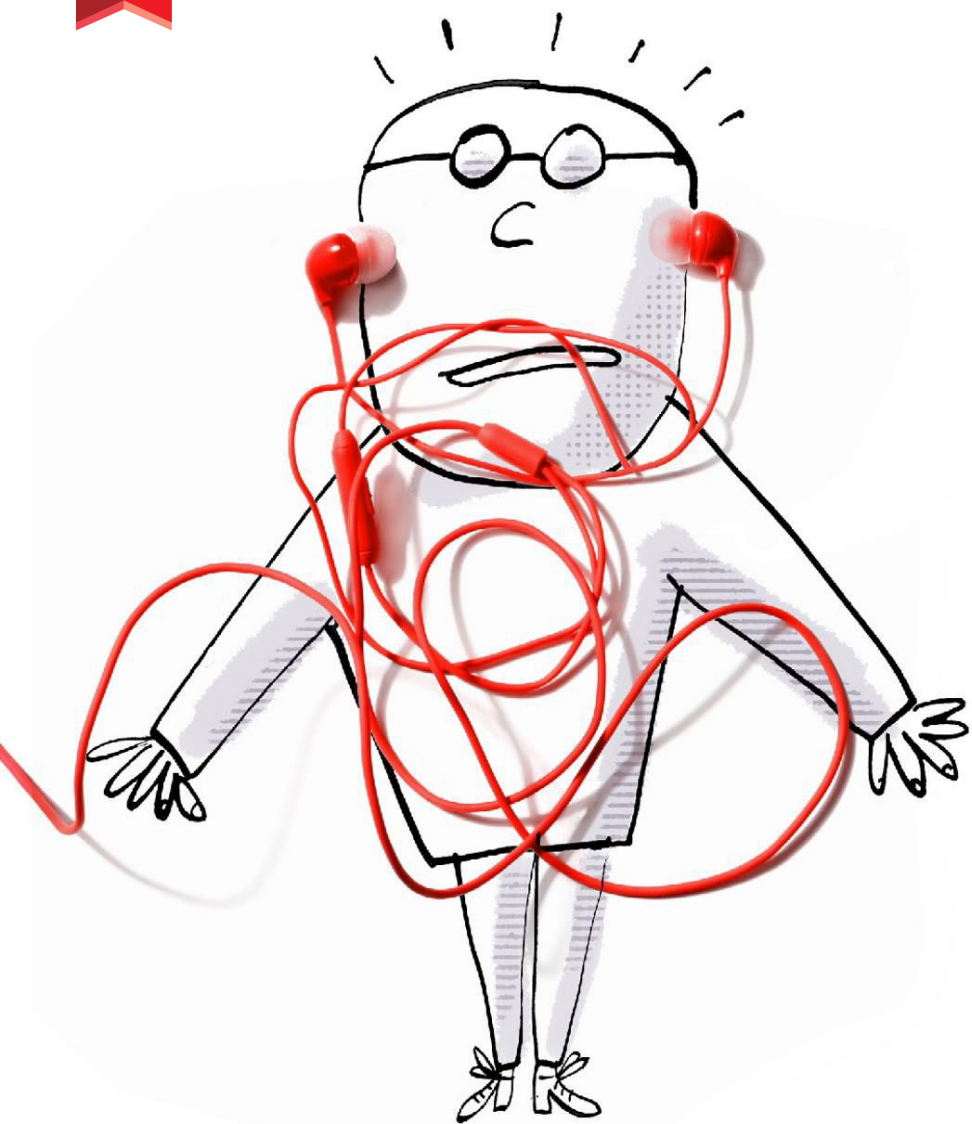
■ I used that specific sequence of biotinylated DNA because I found some in the freezer.

[TW@POWERM1985](https://twitter.com/POWERM1985) (MYLES POWER)

■ The experiment was carried out from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. because the lab is deserted and creepy after office hours.

[TW@OVERLYHONESTLY](https://twitter.com/OVERLYHONESTLY)

Anything funny happen to you at work lately? It could be worth \$\$\$\$. For details, see page 7 or go to [rd.com/submit](https://rd.com/submit).



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# 50

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# Everyday Mistakes

## And How to Fix Them

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BY BRANDON SPEKTOR

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### Rise and Shine

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**1** **Setting your alarm for the middle of a REM cycle.** Humans sleep in five-stage cycles. Waking up in the middle of a REM stage (when you sleep deepest) leaves you groggy and grumpy—but get up during one of your light-sleep stages, and you'll rise feeling refreshed and alert. Find your perfect bedtime with a free site such as [sleepyti.me](http://sleepyti.me), which gives you four optimal bedtimes based on when you need to get up, or a sleep-tracker app such as Sleepbot, which uses motion and sound sensors to wake you from the lightest phase of your cycle.

**2** **Wrinkling your face with a cotton pillowcase.** “Persistently pressing your face into a pillowcase causes trauma to the skin,” says dermatologist Dennis Gross. “Over time, this trauma, aggravated by the friction of cotton, can cause permanent creases as our collagen breaks down.” Switch to silk or satin cases to minimize creases.

**3** **Taking a silent shower.** Does music give you chills? That's your brain rewarding itself with dopamine—the same way it reacts to eating potato chips or falling in love. So put on your favorite tune, sing along (the deep breathing associated

with singing has been shown to improve heart health), and lather up.

**4–8 Not dressing for success.** When it comes to picking your outfit, research shows that appearance affects perception. Avoid these fashion faux pas:

**4. Ditching your eyeglasses.** Beyond the “brainy” association, specs draw attention to your eyes—the windows to empathy.

**5. Dressing down.** Suits (and other professional attire, such as lab coats) really do make you look more competent. So do designer labels.

**6. Sticking to a mainstream look.** While matching your outfit to your job is important, one study found that adding an offbeat element—such as red tennis shoes—to a traditional ensemble can make you look more competent because you seem unique.

**7. Locking away the family jewels.** There’s power in imitation. Wearing your father’s watch, for example, may help you subconsciously embody the traits you most admire about him.

**8. Saving your favorite dress for a special occasion.** Wearing your most beloved clothes whenever you feel like it could improve your own mood, according to a U.K. study.

**9 Leaving food on the counter.** You are what you eat and you eat what you see, according to a study in *Health Education & Behavior*. People who keep foods such as cereal, cookies, and muffins in plain sight tend to weigh more than those whose treats stay tucked away. On the other hand, keeping healthy foods visible correlates to slimness.

**10 Ignoring the fitness tracker fad.** Trackers do more than count steps; they also pick up deviations in heart rate and skin temperature. Using that data, Stanford University researchers studied 60 volunteers over two years and found that fitness monitors could flag when you’re catching a cold or even signal the onset of a serious condition, such as Lyme disease.

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## The Workday

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**11 Going on autopilot during your commute.** A Harvard University survey of more than 2,000 volunteers found that when our minds wander, we’re more likely to become unhappy than when we’re focused.

**12 ... Instead of listening to a good novel.** A volume of recent research shows that reading fiction not only engages our fickle brains but also increases



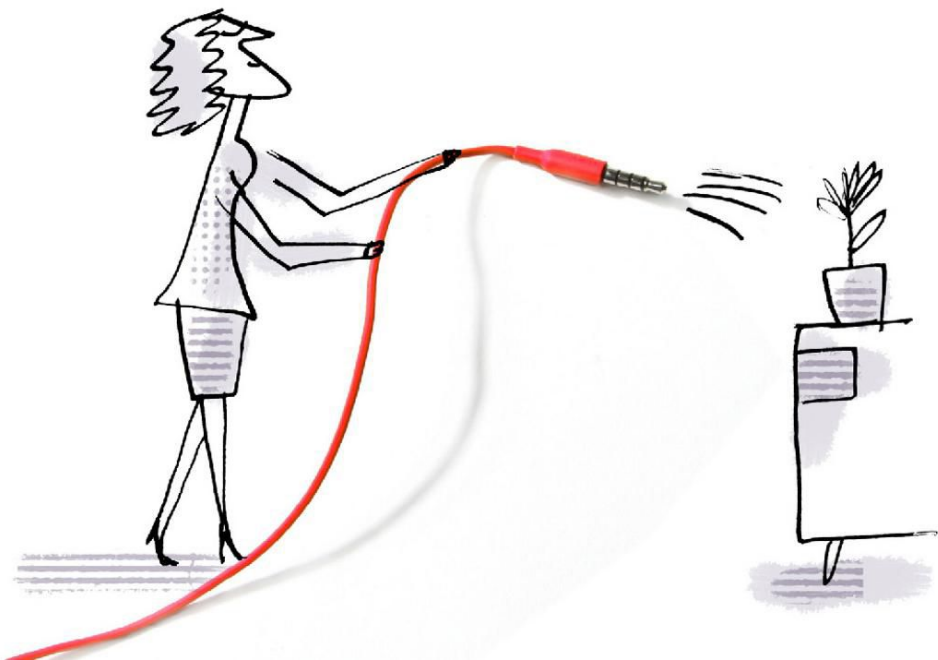
empathy, fostering a deeper understanding of new experiences and views. (Good prep for that morning meeting.)

**13 Turning left.** A National Highway Transportation Safety Administration report found there are about ten times more crossing-path crashes involving left turns than right turns. Be alert when you turn, and consider a slightly longer route to avoid those intersections where you often see ambulances.

**14 Checking e-mail constantly.** Close that browser window ASAP: In a study in which workers were asked to either

check their e-mail only three times a day or as often as possible, the thrice-daily group felt about as much stress reduction as people who use relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or visualizing a “happy place.”

**15 Snubbing your desk plant (or not having one at all).** Voltaire’s *Candide* was probably speaking in metaphor when he said each of us should tend our own garden, but a slew of research shows that workers with actual deskside flowers or foliage are more productive than those without. One study even found that people surrounded by office plants performed better on tasks involving memory and attention.





**16 Avoiding your mother.** A University of Wisconsin study found that participants exposed to a stressful situation (public speaking followed by solving math problems in front of an audience) showed a marked decrease in stress hormones and an increase in happiness-producing oxytocin when they spoke to their mothers on the phone immediately after.

**17 Being obvious with password reminder questions.** Anyone on Facebook can see that your dog is named Bosco, which makes that password reminder a weak link for hackers, security experts say. Instead, treat your answer as a second password. Use a string of letters and numbers that isn't easily gleaned from public

profiles. Example: If the reminder question is "What was your first dog's name?" a strong answer would be "H3NeverC@meWhenICall3d!"

**18 Letting your water bottle run dry.** According to research from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, increasing your daily water consumption by just one cup could reduce your total daily calorie intake, as well as your consumption of saturated fat, sugar, and sodium.

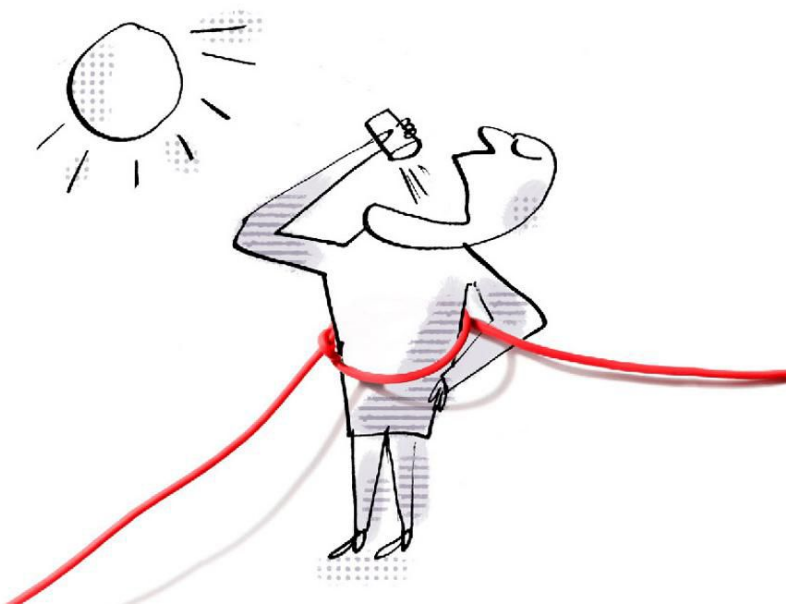
**19 Not doodling through meetings.** Doodlers may look as if they're tuned out, but chances are they're retaining even more info than the active listeners. In one study in *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, subjects who

monitored a monotonous phone message for names of party guests recalled 29 percent more information later if they had been doodling during the call. Meanwhile, among science students who were asked to draw what they'd learned during lectures and readings, doodlers not only retained more information but also reported more enjoyment and engagement with the material.

**20 Taking your coffee break in the office kitchen.** Step outside instead, and your waistline will thank you. A study at Northwestern University found that people who get the majority of their daily sunlight before noon have lower BMIs than those who catch some rays later in the day.

**21 Scoffing at Instagram kittens.** Cuteness releases oxytocin, and oxytocin reduces stress. One study at Hiroshima University in Japan found that people who looked at pictures of baby animals before completing a task performed far better than those who observed photos of adult animals or neutral subjects.

**22 Staring down at your phone.** The average head weighs 10 to 12 pounds, but when you let it hang down to read on your phone, it's the same as putting 60 pounds of stress weight on your neck, according to a study in *Surgical Technology International*. The solution: Hold the phone more in line with your eyes—or, you know, leave it in your pocket.



**23 Going to the bathroom before you really have to.** Does controlling one impulse help you control another? Hold that thought: According to a study published in *Psychological Science*, people tasked with finding solutions on a full bladder tended to make better decisions, thanks to what researchers called “increased impulse control in the behavioral domain.”

**24 ... And picking the wrong stall.** Some experts say that the stall closest to the restroom door likely has the lowest bacteria levels (and probably the most toilet paper!). The first stall may see less traffic because it’s near the entrance and people want privacy.

**25 Dining *al desko*.** There are lots of reasons why eating in front of your computer is a bad idea—research shows you tend to eat more, make less-healthy choices, miss out on lunchroom camaraderie, and are more likely to hit a creative wall. In a recent study, workers who took a 30-minute lunchtime walk three times a week felt more enthusiastic—and less stressed—immediately after.

**26 Ending short texts with a period.** Yes, it’s the proper way to end a sentence, but that dot may make you seem like a jerk. That’s what researchers at

Binghamton University found when they showed study participants digital invitations followed by a one-word response: *Sure*, *OK*, *Yeah*, or *Yup*—shown with a period and without. The responses that ended with a period were rated as less sincere.

## Your Night and Weekend

**27–31 Touching any of these things without thoroughly disinfecting it first:**

**27. Remote controls.** University of Arizona germ expert Charles Gerba found that remote controls in hospital rooms harbored more germs than many other common items found there. (Beware of hotel remotes too.)

**28. The checkout touch screen.** Self-checkout screens house nasty bacteria, including fecal, says Gerba.

**29. Your steering wheel.** Researchers at Queen Mary University of London swabbed a number of steering wheels and found nearly nine times more germs on them than on public toilet seats.

**30. Your kitchen sponge or dishrag.** These are hands down the germiest surfaces in your home. In a random

study, 75 percent of sponges and dishrags had bacteria such as *Salmonella* growing in them.

**31. Your toothbrush.** According to a study from the American Society of Microbiology, toothbrushes, especially those in communal bathrooms, showed fecal contamination.

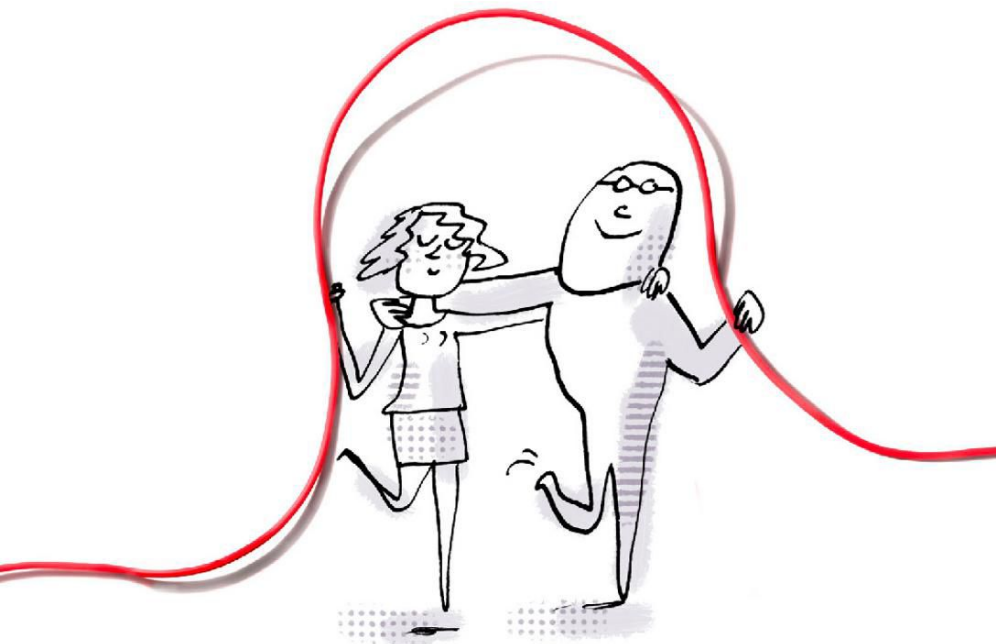
The quick fix to all of this: "Research shows you get ill less often if you use hand sanitizer," says Gerba. "I use it four or five times a day."

**32 Refusing to even think about exercising.** Letting a past exercise experience enter your head actually can

motivate you to get up and move, found University of New Hampshire researchers. Even participants who thought of negative exercise memories still hit the gym more than those who didn't think of any.

**33 ... And sweating solo.** People who exercise with a partner exercise more than people who go it alone, especially if that pal is emotionally supportive.

**34 Also, going straight to the showers.** Frequent sauna visits may reduce the risk of dementia, suggests a recent study in Finland. Men who took a sauna four to seven times a week





were 66 percent less likely to receive a dementia diagnosis than those who took a sauna once a week.

**35 Popping too much aspirin.** More is not always better, says Vernon Williams, MD, director of the Kerlan-Jobe Center for Sports Neurology and Pain Medicine in Los Angeles. “For many, the thought is that if one pill helps a little, two must surely help a little more. This can quickly turn dangerous.” Aspirin overdose can happen if too many doses build up in your system at once (dehydration, kidney problems, and old age make the risk more likely); symptoms range from tinnitus to drowsiness to coma. Choose safety, and stick to the boring recommended dosage.

**36 Paying with cash.** A good cash-back credit card can save you thousands of dollars a year. One of the best for everyday spending is the American Express Blue Cash Everyday card, which gives you 3 percent back on every grocery store purchase, up to a maximum of \$6,000 a year. Just remember: You have to pay off your card balance every month or you’ll negate the benefits.

**37 Cramming your headphones into your pocket.** The theory that the universe tends toward chaos should be gospel to anyone who has ever tried to untangle a pair of headphones. Try this knot-prevention trick: Loop the cord around your hand until there’s

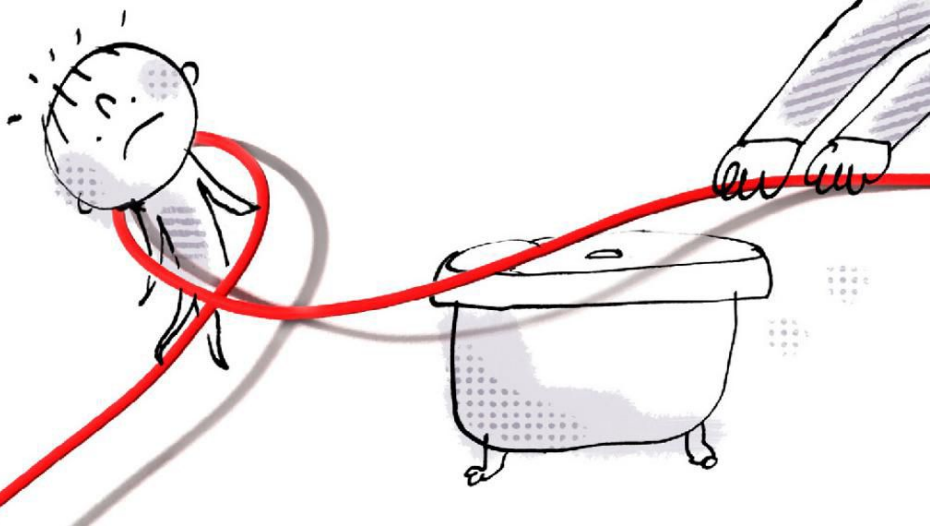
no cable left dangling, then cinch it in the middle with a plastic bread tag to make a compact figure eight.

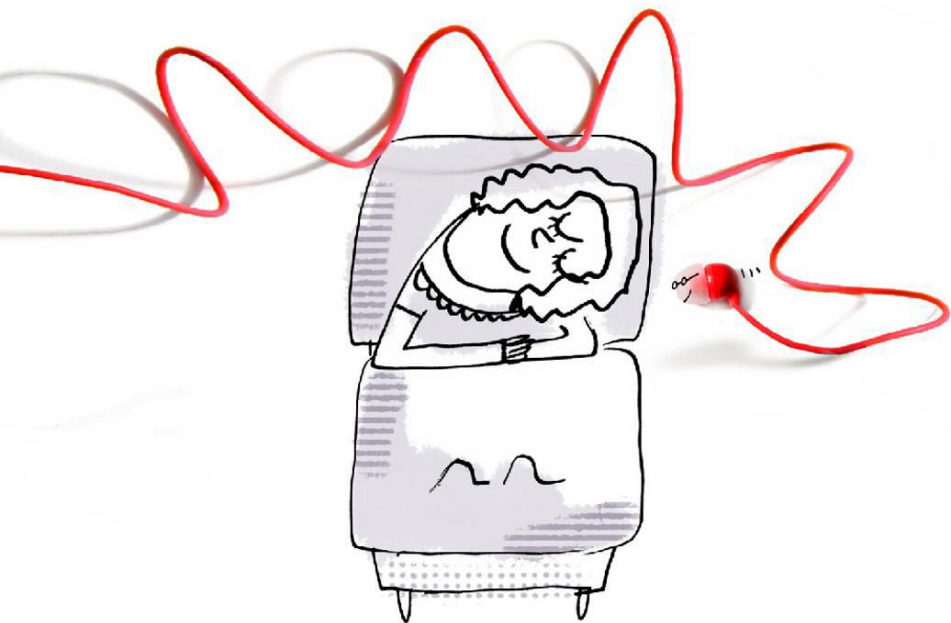
**38 Scrapping the napping.** Harvard researchers studied more than 23,000 people for six years and found that those who regularly took a 30-minute siesta had a 37 percent lower chance of dying from heart disease than those who stayed awake all day.

**39 Bathing the kids.** Depending on their age and activity level, young children and babies don't sweat or smell as much as adolescents and adults. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, children ages 6 to 11 need to bathe only once or twice a week (assuming they haven't been playing in mud).

**40 Not eating by candlelight.** When Cornell University scientists altered half of a Hardee's fast-food restaurant to include low lighting and atmospheric music, customers in the modified section not only ate slower but also consumed fewer calories and reported enjoying their food more than customers who ate identical meals in the standard dining room.

**41 Going all organic.** According to the Environmental Working Group's latest "Clean Fifteen" list, nonorganic avocados, sweet corn, pineapples, cabbage, and frozen sweet peas show little or no signs of pesticides. Save your money for organic versions of more pesticide-laden foods, such as strawberries and apples.





**42** **Ending your night with Facebook.** Research shows that you should end screen time well before bedtime; otherwise, it could take you longer to nod off and even cause you to produce less sleep-inducing melatonin. (That means TV and computer as well as phone screens.)

**43** **... Instead of “Clair de Lune.”** A new study found that people who listened to music with a tempo of 60 to 80 beats per minute for 45 minutes before bed fell asleep quicker and had a better quality of sleep than those

who didn't. Why? The music may relax the body, which improves sleep quality. Try classical music with an adagio tempo—or almost any Carrie Underwood tune.

**44** **Pooh-poohing video games.** Who knew playing could relieve pain? When your cognitive resources are focused on a mentally demanding game, you have less attention to give to external stimuli, including pain. In one study at the University of Washington Harborview Burn Center, patients who played a virtual reality game called SnowWorld



reported a reduction in pain comparable to that from a moderate dose of hydromorphone, a painkiller.

**45 Putting square containers in the microwave.** The corners of rectangular containers usually attract more energy than other areas, leaving the food in those spots overcooked. A round container will allow food to reheat more uniformly.

**46 Forgetting to log out of Amazon and PayPal.** According to tech experts at makeuseof.com, "You might as well leave your credit card lying on the table at your local eatery" if you neglect to log out of a shopping site or app on your phone. If it were to be stolen, the thief would gain unrestricted access to your accounts and card numbers. So log out—and don't check the box in the app that asks to save your username and password.

**47 Standing there and arguing.** Can a padded chair help cushion your verbal blows? According to a study from MIT, Harvard, and Yale, sitting on soft surfaces actually makes people more flexible and accommodating—that's why Bruce Feiler, author of *Secrets of Happy Families*, suggests moving heated conversations to a sofa or other cushioned seat.

**48 Paying full price online.** Back in the day, clipping coupons seemed like the kind of thing only your grandma had time to do. But there are several apps that will automatically save you money when you're shopping online, either by alerting you to coupons or by magically applying a discount for you at checkout. Two worth exploring: Piggy (joinpiggy.com) and Coupon Sherpa (couponsherpa.com).

**49 Wearing just any pajamas.** The American Academy of Sleep Medicine reminds us that our body temperature naturally drops when we sleep. Wearing pajamas that make you feel too hot or too cold could disrupt this natural drop in temperature and, as a result, your body's sleep cycle.

**50 Neglecting your house of worship.** Women who get out to attend religious services at least once a week have a 20 percent reduced risk of death, regardless of whether they smoke, drink, or exercise, says a study of more than 92,000 women by Yeshiva University and Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Researchers credit the emotional support and respite from stress that going to regular services can provide. Amen to that. **R**

# The Pig That Changed My Life

Steve Jenkins had owned many pets. But Esther the “mini pig” turned out to be a class—and a size—of her own.

BY STEVE JENKINS FROM THE BOOK *ESTHER THE WONDER PIG*

ONE NIGHT ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO, I was on my laptop in the living room when I received a Facebook message from a woman I knew from middle school, someone I hadn't spoken to in 15 years: “Hey Steve,” she said. “I know you've always been a huge animal lover. I have a mini pig that is not getting along with my dogs. I've just had a baby and I can't keep the pig.”



*Could you resist  
a face like that?  
One family of  
animal lovers  
couldn't.*

It's true that I've always loved animals. My very first best friend was my childhood dog, Brandy, a shepherd mix, brown and black with floppy ears and a long, straight tail. So I was intrigued. A mini pig sounded adorable. In hindsight, of course, the whole situation was bizarre, but I've always been a trusting person.

I replied with a casual, "Let me do some research and I'll get back to you," but I knew I wanted the pig. I just had to figure out how to make it happen.

I lived in a three-bedroom single-level house in Georgetown, Ontario, a small community approximately 30 miles west of Toronto.

It's tricky enough bringing a pig back to the house you share with two dogs, two cats, your longtime partner, your two businesses, plus a roommate. But on top of that, only nine months earlier, I'd brought our cat Delores home without talking to Derek about it. He didn't react well.

So I had to plan this right, to make it look as if I wasn't doing something behind Derek's back, even though I *was* doing something behind Derek's back.

A few hours later, I got another message from the friend:

"Someone else is interested, so if you want her, great. If not, this other person will take her."

You're probably smart enough to recognize this as a manipulative tactic, and normally I'm smart enough too. But I was not letting that pig go. So I told my former classmate that I'd take the animal. I gave her my address, and we agreed to meet in the morning.

I knew nothing about mini pigs. I didn't know what they ate; I had no idea how big they got. Once I started doing some Internet research, I found a few people claiming that "there's no such thing as a mini pig," but I was blinded by my sudden obsession and my faith in my onetime friend. She had said the pig was six months old

and spayed and that she'd had her for a week, having gotten her from a breeder. It seemed this mini pig would grow to be about 70 pounds, maximum. That was pretty close to the size of Shelby, one of our dogs. That seemed reasonable.

**WHEN WE MET** the next day, I watched the woman handle the pig, and I could tell there was zero attachment.

The pig was tiny, maybe eight inches from tip to tail. The poor thing had chipped pink nail polish on her little hooves and a tattered sequined cat collar around her neck. She looked



*She was maybe  
eight inches  
from tip to tail,  
with chipped  
pink polish on  
her little hooves.*



*Always eager to help, Esther checks on what Steve's got cooking. (No, it isn't bacon.)*

pathetic yet lovable. I'd met the pig 12 minutes ago, and I already knew she needed me. Ready to drive home with the newest member of our family, I had only a few hours to figure out what to tell Derek.

The pig sat in the front passenger seat, skittish and disoriented. I talked to her and petted her while we took back roads to our house and I planned my "please forgive me for getting a pig" dinner for Derek. (The likely menu: bacon cheeseburgers and homemade garlic fries.)

When we got home, the cats were their typical curious but uninterested selves when faced with the pig. The dogs are excitable around baby animals and children, so they whined and

jumped. I held on to the pig securely and let them sniff her a little before I hid her in the office. I figured I'd better get Derek in a good mood before springing the new arrival on him.

**WHEN I LED HIM** to the office and revealed my surprise, Derek stood in the doorway like a statue. Every emotion other than happiness flashed across his face. It didn't take more than a half second for him to know what I had done and what I wished to do next.

He was furious. He ranted about how irresponsible I was. He insisted there was no more room in the house. The only positive thing I could say was, "She's a mini pig! She'll stay small!"

I knew that what I'd done was wrong, but I hoped I could smooth things over. Soon enough, the lovably adorable pig did the smoothing for me. One night we were having dinner, and Derek started talking about where the pig's litter and pen would go. You don't "build a pen" for someone you're getting rid of. Within two weeks, we christened her. We wanted to evoke a wise old soul. "Esther" felt right.

AS SOON AS THE veterinarian saw Esther, he shot me a bemused look.

"What do you know about this pig?" he asked. I gave him the story, or at least the one I'd been told.

"I already see a problem. Look at her tail. It's been docked," he said.

"Is that why it's a little nub?" I asked.

"Exactly," he said. "When you have a commercial pig—a full-size pig—the owners will generally have the pig's tail cut back. This minimizes tail biting, which occurs when pigs are kept deprived in factory farm environments. If Esther really is six months old, she could be a runt. If that's the case, when fully grown, she could be about 70 pounds."

"OK," I said. No news there.

"But if she's a commercial pig and

not a runt— Well, I guess we'll cross that bridge when we get to it."

The vet explained that the only way to know anything for sure would be to weigh and measure Esther and start a chart. Pigs have a very specific rate of growth.

On our next vet visit, a few months after we'd adopted Esther, I had to admit that she'd been growing quickly. Over that short time, she'd started closing in on 80 pounds. It was becoming clear that I'd probably adopted a commercial pig—and she was going to be enormous.

I HADN'T KNOWN I'd wanted a pig, but the

joy I felt once I knew I would always be going home to her made me smile. Everything about Esther was precious: the way she shuffled around, the way her little hooves slid along the floor when she ran, the funny little clicking noise she made when she pranced. She'd also nuzzle our hands to soothe herself, licking our palms and rubbing her snout up and down on us as she fell asleep. And she stayed precious, even as she approached her full-grown weight of 650 pounds.

Now, I admit there's nothing all that peaceful about being startled awake at 3 a.m. by a 650-pound pig barreling down a hallway toward your

*He was furious.  
The only positive  
thing I could say  
was, "She's a  
mini pig! She'll  
stay small!"*



*Esther may outweigh the dogs by almost 600 pounds, but they're still great playmates.*

bedroom. It's something you feel first: a vibration that rumbles through the mattress into your consciousness. You have only moments to realize what's happening as you hear the sound of hooves racing across the hardwood, getting louder by the second.

Within moments, our darling pig, Esther, comes crashing into the room, most likely spooked by a noise. She launches onto our bed much the same way she launched into our lives. And while it might be a mad scramble to make space for her—there are usually two humans, two dogs, and two cats asleep there—it's more than worth it for the excitement she has added to our world.

One thing I hadn't expected was

just how many behaviors Esther would share with the dogs. She'd play with a Kong toy as they would, shaking it back and forth. She'd want to chase the cats and cuddle when she was tired, climbing into our laps to nuzzle—even as she outgrew the dogs by 10, 20, 30 pounds and more.

And just like the dogs, she often wanted our attention. She started playing and doing hilarious and clever things on her own. (She can open the refrigerator!) So we treated her like one of the dogs. And that struck us to our cores.

What made pigs different? Why were they bred for food and held in captivity while dogs and cats were welcomed into our homes and treated



*Steve (left), Derek, and their menagerie try to pose for a family photo.*

like family? Why were pigs the unlucky ones? Why hadn't we realized they had such engaging personalities and such intelligence? And where would Esther be now if she hadn't joined us?

AND SO A FEW WEEKS after getting Esther, we realized we had to stop eating bacon. Shortly after that, with some difficulty, we cut out meat entirely. And a few months after that, dairy and eggs followed. We were officially vegan—or “Esther-approved,” as we like to call it.

In 2014, we moved a half-hour drive from Georgetown to Campbellville, Ontario. There, we founded a

farm where we care for abandoned or abused farmed animals—so far, six rabbits, six goats, two sheep, ten pigs (not including Esther), one horse, one donkey, three cows, three chickens, and a peacock. Esther has changed our lives—that's obvious. And now it's our turn to try to change the world for other animals. The name of our farm? The Happily Ever Esther Sanctuary. **R**

*With Derek Walter and Caprice Crane*

**To read more about the Happily Ever Esther Sanctuary and Steve Jenkins's and Derek Walter's tales of life with Esther, go to [happilyeveresther.ca](http://happilyeveresther.ca).**

FROM THE BOOK *ESTHER THE WONDER PIG* BY STEVE JENKINS AND DEREK WALTER, WITH CAPRICE CRANE. COPYRIGHT © 2016 BY ETWP, INC. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF GRAND CENTRAL PUBLISHING, NEW YORK, NY. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



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**THE PILOTS WHO**

**THE**



# CRASHED INTO

# SEA

BY NICHOLAS HUNE-BROWN



*Pilots Dave McMahon (left)  
and Sydnie Uemoto had  
never met before the flight  
that landed them  
in the Pacific.*

As her twin-engine Piper Apache sliced through the postcard-blue sky 5,000 feet above the Pacific Ocean, 23-year-old pilot Sydnie Uemoto heard the sound—a subtle change in timbre as the engines began to strain and rattle.

Her copilot, 26-year-old Dave McMahon, heard it too. Up to that point, the two-hour flight from Oahu to the island of Hawaii had been uneventful. They were just two young pilots, strangers to each other, looking for flight time and taking a short trip with no passengers. When they heard the sound, shortly after three o'clock, McMahon brought the plane down to 3,500 feet, where the engines seemed to run more smoothly. Then, without warning, the pilots lost power to the right engine. A moment later, the left one went. Sitting in their metal compartment high above the ocean, they heard what every pilot dreads: an eerie quiet. It took them a moment to process the fact that they might crash.

The next few minutes were a blur of activity. As they began to lose altitude, the pilots powered through the items on the emergency checklist—turning on fuel pumps, pushing the throttles to full—which can sometimes restart the engines. Nothing worked. Following their emergency training to a T, McMahon handed the controls to Uemoto and, fighting a rush of warm

air, propped open the cockpit door. Now they wouldn't get trapped inside after the expected marine landing. At about 1,000 feet and falling quickly, Uemoto made their last distress call. "We're 25 miles northwest of Kona," she said to air traffic control. "We're going down."

Uemoto gripped the controls. In pilot school, they teach you about ditching a plane, but you never actually practice dumping your ride into the ocean. She knew the chances of survival were slim. If she hit the water at too steep an angle, the force of the collision would kill them. If she allowed one wingtip to hit the water first, the plane could cartwheel uncontrollably and wrench the aircraft into pieces.

Just land as if you're landing on the ground, Uemoto told herself. As the plane hurtled toward the ocean, she forced herself to imagine a runway stretching along the choppy surface of the water. The air roared in her ears as the ocean rose up to meet them. At the very last moment, with the Pacific filling her field of vision, she pulled back on the yoke, nudging the Apache's nose up a little. Then everything flashed white as the plane made contact.



*McMahon and Uemoto swam through jellyfish, the threat of sharks, and 16 miles of exhaustion before being sighted.*

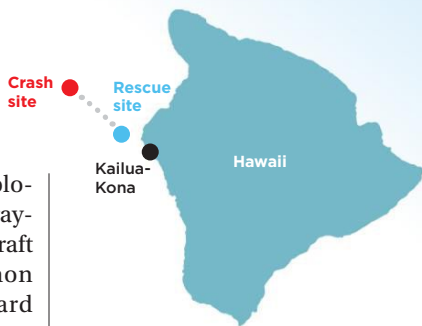
It struck the surface with an explosive, shuddering impact, water spraying over the windshield as the aircraft plunged into the ocean. McMahon and Uemoto were thrown forward violently, as if rear-ended by a tractor trailer. In a daze, McMahon opened his eyes. He got his bearings and realized that he was, miraculously, OK. Uemoto was slumped next to him, shocked and bleeding but still conscious. Then McMahon felt the water pouring through the open door, and a new realization hit him: They had to get out of there, fast. He unbuckled his seat belt and climbed out onto the wing.

“Sydnie, get out!” McMahon called.

She looked at him blearily. With her hands on the controls, Uemoto hadn’t braced herself for impact and had slammed forward, breaking her nose.

She rose to her feet unsteadily and felt the blood pouring down her face, bait for the deadly sharks that prowl the waters around Hawaii. “Get out!” McMahon called again. The water was knee-high inside the plane, and in moments, she would be submerged.

“What about the sharks?” she said.



“You can’t think about that!” said McMahon. Uemoto trudged through water toward the door, picking up two life preservers along the way. By the time she’d climbed out onto the wing, the water was covering the seats of the aircraft. As the plane sank, they jumped into the ocean. Within seconds, the plane disappeared beneath the surface. The ocean had erased all signs of human life except for the two small figures bobbing alone in the vastness of the Pacific.

As the waves broke around them, McMahon felt a strange sense of calm. He pulled the tab on his life preserver. The seal holding the CO<sub>2</sub> cartridge fell off, leaving a gaping hole in the now-useless flap of plastic. But even that didn’t faze him. A laid-back Oahu native, he had grown up in the water—surfing, canoeing,

and spending years on the swim team. He and Uemoto had done the impossible by surviving a crash landing into the ocean. It was a clear, beautiful day, and the Coast Guard knew where they were. Now they just had to stay put, treading water in the warm sea until they were rescued.

Uemoto, however, was a wreck—crying and terrified. McMahon tried to calm her, keeping the two of them turned away from the waves and making small talk. “Tell me about your family,” he said. “Do you have any siblings?”

“I have a sister,” she said between gulps of air. Family was the reason Uemoto had been on that flight. Just a few years into her career, the young pilot was intently focused on work—taking on as many flights as she could during the week and working as a baggage handler for Hawaiian Airlines on weekends. That night was Uemoto’s father’s birthday, but rather than take the whole day off, she had decided to work in the morning and then rent a plane to fly home that afternoon, getting in some of her required hours behind the controls of a multiengine plane. When her original copilot couldn’t make it, McMahon, who also wanted to log time on a twin engine, agreed to join her.

“When will the Coast Guard get here?” Uemoto asked.

“They’re coming,” McMahon said. “We’re just going to float here.”

After a couple of hours, McMahon’s

prediction seemed to come true. A Navy plane appeared in the sky, circling the area. It flew directly overhead as McMahon waved his life preserver, overjoyed at the sight. And then, without any sign of recognition, the plane continued on its way. Salvation had arrived, then shockingly disappeared over the horizon. Over the next several hours, plane after plane flew overhead, circling in search of the lost pilots. Each time, McMahon and Uemoto did what they could to be seen. And each time, the potential rescue plane continued its flight without spotting them.

As the sun grew dim, McMahon’s calm began to crack. He became scared. We’re going to have to spend the night on the water, he thought. Uemoto saw the fear on his face. She felt the current shift direction, the waves moving southwest now. A Hawaiian native, Uemoto knew what all locals know: There is nothing south of Hawaii until you hit Antarctica, 7,400 miles away. She and McMahon made the decision quickly. They looked to the outlines of the volcanoes at Kailua-Kona, 25 miles away, and swam toward them.

By about ten that night, Uemoto’s legs began to cramp, so she swam with her arms, letting her legs drag behind her. Soon enough, McMahon was faring even worse. More than eight hours on the water had left him exhausted. He, too, cramped up and began shivering uncontrollably in



the breezy night air. While McMahon had been the one supporting Uemoto those first few hours, she now took over. Swimming on her stomach, she had McMahon wrap his arms around her knees. He rested his head on the back of her legs while they swam in tandem—Uemoto pulling the five-foot-six McMahon with her arms as he kicked. But even with that support, it slowly dawned on him: If we keep going like this, I'm going to drown.

"Sydnie, I need to stop," he said.

Uemoto unhooked herself from McMahon, then faced him. In a desperate attempt to find some way to help, she examined his life preserver and found it had two separate air compartments. Both sides were deflated, but McMahon hadn't tried the second CO<sub>2</sub> cartridge. She gently tugged the tab, and that half of the vest filled with air. Then it started to leak, and the second CO<sub>2</sub> cartridge fell off. McMahon stuffed his fingers into the two holes where the CO<sub>2</sub> cartridges had ripped through the plastic, forming a seal. By exhaling each breath into the air tube, he found he could keep his vest inflated on one side, providing just enough support to keep him afloat.

He wrapped his free hand around Uemoto's ankle and rested, gathering his strength, while she pulled them toward the shore. "Just hang on to my ankles," she said.

As Uemoto swam, hour after hour, a feeling of calm came over her. The moon was bright, sparkling off the water and casting its light on the distant mountains. The two had begun as colleagues who had never exchanged a sentence, but in the quiet of the night, they had become partners. To be alone in the ocean was awful and terrifying. But to be with someone else—to feel another person's comforting presence in the darkness—somehow made the ordeal bearable.

"Hey, Dave?" Uemoto said softly at one point. She hadn't heard from him in a little bit.

"Hey, Sydnie," he called back.

"You doing good?"

"I'm doing good."

It was while they were still in this position, McMahon clinging to her legs, that Uemoto felt a flash of excruciating pain. She lifted up her arm. In the moonlight, she saw something white and silky clinging to her forearm, coming off in goopy pieces. Jellyfish. Within seconds, Hawaiian box



**Uemoto  
imagined  
a runway  
stretching along  
the choppy  
water's surface.**

jellyfish toxins can cause nausea, loss of consciousness, muscle problems, and difficulty breathing. And now, in her weakened state, Uemoto was plowing through a swarm of them. Moments after the first sting, she felt the venom work its way through her body. Her heart felt as if it were beating more slowly. She gasped for air as her body cramped up, each muscle clenching. Then she fell unconscious.

McMahon watched in horror as Uemoto seemed to fade before his eyes.

“Sydnie!” he yelled, desperately tapping her face. She was out cold, her body trembling. McMahon clutched her to keep her head above the surface, treading water and ignoring his couple of stings. “Sydnie, are you OK?” he said over and over again.

Uemoto’s eyes fluttered open. Her body relaxed. “I think maybe we should just take a break,” she said weakly. They floated for a few minutes. Then she said, “I am not hanging out with these jellyfish anymore.”

“Let’s get a move on,” McMahon said. He hooked himself back onto her legs, and Uemoto somehow found the strength to swim toward land once again.

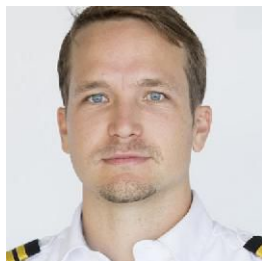
When the sun rose that morning, the two pilots were greeted by a beautiful sight—the island of Hawaii, green and majestic, closer than they had dared dream. Despite the jellyfish and exhaustion, they had made remarkable progress overnight.

Throughout the morning, cute little black fish schooled beneath them, accompanying them on their journey. In any other circumstance, Uemoto thought, this would all be quite pleasant—the warm ocean water was so clear and blue, it felt as if you could see straight to the bottom.

Suddenly, the cute black fish were gone, frightened off. Uemoto saw a shadow in front of them that made her

breath catch in her throat.

McMahon saw it, too—a shark, about ten feet beneath the surface. “What do we do? What do we do?” Uemoto asked, panicked. “Just keep looking forward,” said McMahon. “Don’t splash, and just keep swimming.” The shark circled them methodically. The predator was calm enough, McMahon told himself, and was likely just curious. It circled them for about 30 minutes, then disappeared. Half an hour later, it was back. Now



“From not knowing you at all, you surpassed all levels of friendship,” Uemoto said.

McMahon's stomach dropped. We survived a crash; we made it through the night, he thought. There's no way this is going to end with a shark attack.

"What are you going to do if it comes close?" asked Uemoto.

"I'm going to kick it in the eye," said McMahon evenly.

And then, as quietly as it had appeared, the shark swam off again, and Uemoto and McMahon were alone once more. They were ten miles from shore now, the details of the island coming into focus. They made a pact: They would be home by sunset. "Do you want to go out to eat afterwards?" Uemoto joked. "McDonald's?"

Just before noon, they saw the familiar orange shape of a Coast Guard helicopter. It whizzed overhead, just to their right, and the two of them waved their hands and tried to make themselves visible against the water. Just as before, the aircraft disappeared—another agonizing near miss.

After almost 20 hours, Uemoto's body was finally done. She had simply run out of power. At a certain point, after struggling for hours, your mind entertains an idea: What if I just gave up? She was reaching that point. Then Uemoto heard the whir of the helicopter again. "It's coming!" she shouted.

"This is it, Syd," McMahon said. "This is the one God sent for us." McMahon and Uemoto waved frantically. The helicopter flew overhead and then banked toward them. They'd been seen.

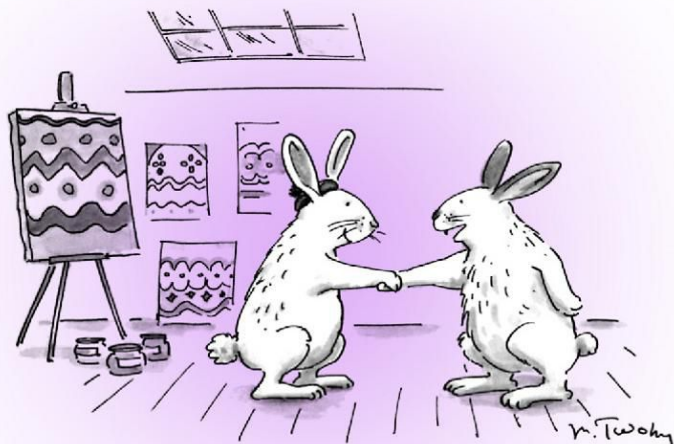
Uemoto and McMahon burst into tears. They hugged in the water as the immensity of what they had survived suddenly hit them. Alone, either of them would have died. But together, they had made it. When one had been weak, the other had been strong. "You know, from not knowing you at all, you kind of surpassed all levels of friendship," Uemoto told McMahon.

A second helicopter arrived ten minutes later, and a rescuer lowered himself into the ocean. He was followed by a metal rescue basket that was tethered to the helicopter. The rescuer guided Uemoto into the basket and, with a lurch, she rose into the air and toward the safety of the copter. Then it was McMahon's turn.

Later—after the rescuers had fed McMahon every sandwich they had in the helicopter, after doctors had tended to Uemoto's broken nose and jellyfish stings, after she finally got to say happy birthday to her father—McMahon and Uemoto, who have remained close, would recall an emotional turning point. It occurred maybe 30 minutes after they'd crashed into the water. Uemoto was panicked and teary, fearing the worst. McMahon began to comfort her, even though they'd known each other only a couple of hours. "We're going to be good," he had told her, though he had no idea what kind of journey was in front of them. "This is a story we're going to tell our children and grandchildren." **R**

# Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



*"I hear you've been doing exciting things with eggs and dye."*

**ONE LAZY SUNDAY** morning, as the wife and I were sitting around the breakfast table, I said, "When I die, I want you to sell all my stuff immediately."

She asked, "Now, why would you want me to do something like that?"

"I figure you'd eventually remarry, and I don't want some other jerk using my stuff."

She looked at me intently and said,

"What makes you think I'd marry another jerk?"

From planetproctor.com

**MY FRIENDS TELL ME** that cooking is easy. But it's not easier than not cooking. *Comedian* **MARIA BAMFORD**

**THE WORLD'S WORST ACTOR** is performing *Hamlet*. He's so awful that during the "To be or not to be" speech, the audience boos and

throws things. Finally, the actor has enough. He steps to the edge of the stage and says, “Look, folks, I didn’t write this junk.” Source: A Prairie Home Companion

**I COME FROM** a Dutch background. In fact, I recently found out that one of my great-great-great-ancestors

invented the wooden shoe. But he died trying to put out a campfire.

*Comedian* **RANDY EPLEY**

**I KNEW I WAS GOING BALD** when I realized it was taking longer and longer to wash my face.

*Comedian* **HARRY HILL**



## FOOLED YA!

### APRIL FOOLS' JOKES THAT WORKED LIKE CRAZY

■ *PC Computing* magazine “reported” in 1994 that Congress was considering **a bill to ban drinking while using the Internet**. Since imbibing is outlawed while driving on highways, it should also be illegal on the information superhighway, right? Angry constituents actually forced Senator Edward Kennedy’s office to officially deny a rumor that he was sponsoring the bill.

■ Burger King took out an ad in *USA Today* in 1998 introducing a **Whopper designed especially for America’s lefties**. The new burger would contain the same ingredients as those for righties, but rotated 180 degrees. Thousands of customers reportedly swarmed BK restaurants requesting the southpaw sandwich.

■ In 2000, the *Daily Mail* touted the benefits of FatSox, a line of socks that **sucked body fat out of sweating feet**. As the British tabloid described them, “FatSox are worn through the workout, and excess fat is stored in the material. Exercisers then dispose of the socks.”

■ In 2009, the Swiss Tourism Board “revealed” just why the Alps are so pristine. Every day, members of the Swiss Association of Mountain Cleaners **scaled the Alps to scrub and polish them**. A video allegedly showing the cleaners at work was so popular that scores of people took the online test to see if they qualified to join the high-altitude clean team.

Source: Museum of Hoaxes

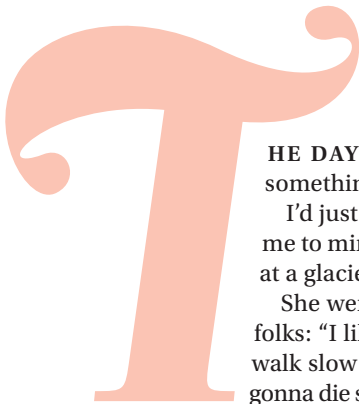
**Your funny joke, list, or quote might be worth \$\$\$.** For details, go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).

When a four-year-old bumps into a widower at the grocery store, the karma is instant—and everlasting



# *When Norah Met Mr. Dan*

BY TARA WOOD  
FROM TODAY.COM



**T**HE DAY BEFORE my daughter Norah's fourth birthday, something she said foreshadowed a remarkable event.

I'd just picked her up from preschool when she cautioned me to mind the elderly person walking across the parking lot at a glacier's pace.

She went on to explain that she has a soft spot for mature folks: "I like old peoples the best 'cause they walk slow like I walk slow and they has soft skin like I has soft skin. They all gonna die soon, so I'm gonna love 'em all up before they is died."

Sure, it got kinda dark at the end, but I liked where her heart was.

I was struck by her thoughtfulness and empathy and posted that quote as a status update on Facebook when we got home. I had no idea how much she really meant it.

The following day—her birthday—again on the way home from school, she asked if we could stop at the grocery store to buy cupcakes for her and her six siblings to enjoy after dinner.

How do you say no to a birthday girl?

I popped Norah and her younger sister into one of those car-shaped grocery carts and headed toward the bakery. After we picked up the cupcakes, I stopped at a clearance shelf that caught my eye. While I was distracted, Norah was busy standing up in the cart, excitedly waving and gleefully proclaiming, "Hi, old person! It's my birfday today!"

The man was elderly, stone-faced, and furrow-browed. However, before I could shush her for calling him an old

person or ask the earth to swallow me whole, he stopped and turned to her.

If he was troubled by my no-filter child, he didn't show it. His expression softened as he replied, "Well, hello, little lady! And how old are you today?"

They chatted for a few minutes, he wished her a happy birthday, and we went our separate ways.

A few minutes later, she turned to me and asked, "Can I take a picture with the old man for my birfday?" It was the cutest thing ever, and although I wasn't sure if he'd oblige, I told her we'd certainly ask.

We found the man a couple of aisles over, and I approached him. "Excuse me, sir? This is Norah, and she'd like to know if you'd take a photo with her for her birthday."

His expression morphed from confused to stunned to delighted.

He took a step back, steadied himself on his shopping cart, and placed his free hand on his chest. "A photo? With me?" he asked.

“Yes, suh, for my birfday!” Norah pleaded.

And so he did. I pulled out my iPhone, and they posed together. She placed her soft hand on top of his soft hand. He wordlessly stared at her with twinkling eyes as she kept his hand in hers and studied his skinny veins and weathered knuckles. She kissed the top of his hand and then placed it on her cheek. He beamed. I asked his name, and he told us to call him Dan.

We were blocking other shoppers, but they didn’t care. There was magic happening in the grocery store that day, and we could all feel it. Norah and “Mr. Dan” sure didn’t notice. They were chatting away like long-lost friends.

After a few minutes, I thanked Mr. Dan for spending a bit of his day with us. He teared up and said, “No, thank *you*. This has been the best day I’ve had in a long time.” He turned to my daughter. “You’ve made me so happy, Miss Norah.”

They hugged, and we walked away. Norah watched him until he was out of view.

I’d be lying to you if I said I wasn’t a weepy mess after their encounter.

I was blown away by this meeting and thought maybe some of the readers of my Facebook page might

enjoy hearing about it. I posted the story and a photo of the two of them.

Later that night, I received a private message from a local reader who recognized Mr. Dan.

His wife, Mary, had passed away six months earlier, and he had been lonely since his beloved had gone.

The reader wanted to let me know that she was certain his heart was touched by my little girl, that he needed that connection and likely would never forget it.

I asked for Mr. Dan’s phone number and called him a few days later.

We visited Mr. Dan’s cozy and tidy house—

reminders of Mary still proudly displayed everywhere. He had gotten a haircut, shaved, and put on slacks and dress shoes. He looked ten years younger. He’d set out a child’s table, blank paper, and crayons for Norah. He asked if she’d draw some pictures for him to display on his refrigerator. She happily agreed and went right to work.

We ended up spending nearly three hours with Mr. Dan that day. He was patient and kind with my talkative, constantly moving girl. He wiped ketchup off her cheek and let her finish his chicken nuggets.

We walked with him to his front door after lunch. He pulled out a pocketknife and cut the single red rose

“*This has been the best day I’ve had in a long time. You made me so happy, Miss Norah.*”



blooming by his porch. He spent ten minutes cutting every thorn off the stem before handing it to his new friend. She keeps that rose, now dry as a bone, in a ziplock bag under her pillow.

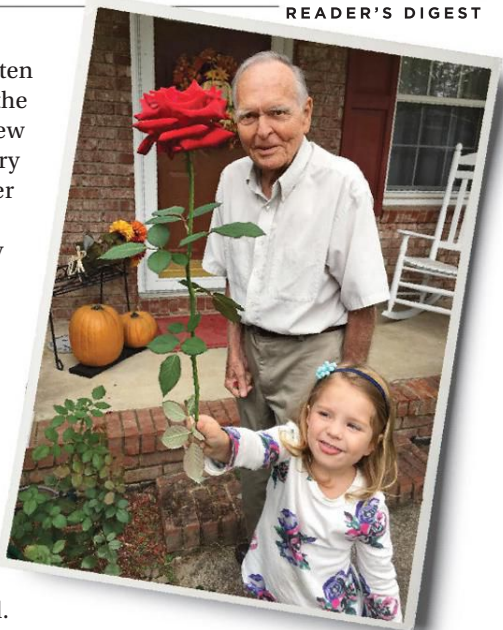
Norah asks about Mr. Dan every day. She worries about him. She wonders if he's lonely, or cold, or has cheese for his sandwiches. She wants him to be OK. She wants him to feel loved.

Mr. Dan thinks about Norah too. After another recent visit, he relayed that he hadn't had an uninterrupted night's sleep since his wife died. He told me that he had slept soundly every night since meeting my girl. "Norah has healed me," he said.

That left me speechless and my cheeks wet with tears.

Seventy-eight years separate these two people in age. Somehow, their hearts and souls seem to recognize each other from long ago.

Norah and I have made a promise to see Mr. Dan every week, even if it's for only 15 minutes, even if only for a quick hug and to drop off a cheese Danish (his favorite!).



*Mr. Dan picked this rose for Norah—and removed all the thorns.*

I invited him to spend Thanksgiving with us. He's part of our family now. Whether he likes it or not, he has been absorbed into my family of nine, and just as Norah said, we're gonna love him all up. **R**

**To watch the video of when Norah met Mr. Dan, go to [rd.com/norah](http://rd.com/norah).**

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## MOTHER NATURE

Just got off the phone with my mom. She had a nice talk.

**@MZELD (MAE ZEINELDEEN)**

He knew one day he'd get the call—that life-or-death moment of truth. But for a young medical worker, it's still a shock.

# Saving Your First Life

BY TAB RODOCKER  
FROM NARRATIVE.LY

*"Mark my words; there is going to be that one call. That one call is going to change your life. It's going to change how you see the world, if you can even walk away from it to begin with. Consider it your rite of passage."*

—My EMT/paramedic instructor,  
September 2013

## OCTOBER 2014

"I'm scared," she said. Scared was an understatement. The woman looked downright terrified.

"I'm scared too." The words were out of my mouth before I could stop them.

I cursed myself. We weren't supposed to let them see our emotions. That was rule number one of working on the ambulance rig. It didn't matter if you were angry or terrified; you had to keep it together for your patients. My hands were trembling as I tightened the tourniquet around her left leg. Her dialysis port was squirting thick, dark arterial blood from her thigh.

"I don't want to die," the woman said faintly, dropping her gaze to her leg. "Please don't let me die."

"Hey," I said. "Hey, look at me."

I waited for her to look into my eyes



again, partly because I didn't want her to see that I, my partner, and the entire floor of the bus were now covered in her blood.

A few minutes earlier, she had left a dialysis center and stepped onto a city bus. Her dialysis port caught on one of the seats and ripped out of her leg, cutting into her femoral artery and spraying blood everywhere.

The driver had spotted my partner and me—we work as EMTs at the hospital where the dialysis center is located and happened to be nearby—and we followed him back to the bus, armed with nothing but a few gauze

pads. We didn't have the code to open the door to the dialysis center. As EMTs, we had only the code for the ER on the other side of the building, which might as well have been ten miles away. If we couldn't get her there, she was going to die.

"You must be terrified," I said. "But I will not let you die. Not here, not now."

She slowly nodded her head, tears streaming down her face.

The blood dripped down the steps of the bus and onto the street, melting the snow where it fell. You could almost taste the iron in the air. My boots

and uniform were covered in blood.

As the woman slowly faded into unconsciousness, my partner intubated her. My hands were now covered in blood. They felt slippery, and my upper arms were beginning to get sticky as it started to freeze. The bleeding hadn't stopped. I tightened the tourniquet.

## SEVEN MONTHS EARLIER

"Now twist ... There you go, Roderick. You've got it."

I was the last person in line to use the commercial tourniquet. We were halfway through an EMT class that ran from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., a 12-hour shift designed to simulate being on the job. That's one thing that I valued about my college's EMT program: They kept things realistic. The first day of class, our instructor had shown us gruesome videos of car accidents. He showed us videos of people assaulting EMTs and paramedics. He told us exactly how much we would be making: minimum wage for the average EMT, \$12 an hour for paramedics, if they were lucky. We lost eight students that day.

"Now, I'm going to tell you this," he said about the tourniquet. "The first time you have to use one of these will haunt you for the rest of your life.

If someone is bleeding that much, their odds are not that good."



"WE HAVE TO GET HER to the ER," said my partner. "Now."

"We need backup," I said.

"I think it's time to call X."

"Call X ... Are you sure?"

"Hey, look at me," I said.  
"You must be terrified. But I will not let you die. Not here, not now."

Calling X over the radio meant things were heading south fast. The last time X had been called was when an ambulance crew had gotten into a car accident and both EMTs were in critical condition. The time before that, a crew was being held at gunpoint. Calling X would broadcast our location to every

available police, firefighting, and EMS agency in the area. Help would arrive within seconds. At least that's what we hoped. There weren't that many cops or firefighters around.

I reached for my mic.

"Bravo 011," I said. "X."

"Bravo 011, please repeat. Did you just say X?" said the dispatcher, audibly distraught.

"Bravo 011 to center, repeat X."

"Bravo 011, I have your location via your rig; is that accurate?"

"Copy, center. Hurry."

My skin was crawling. Chills were running down my spine.

The call went out immediately.

"All emergency personnel able to respond, please respond. Bravo 011 is in need of assistance."

"She's not breathing," I shouted, moving my hands from the tourniquet to her chest to start compressions.

I shouted simply because I had no control over my body anymore. My body was pumping so much adrenaline into my veins that I felt like I was on fire.

### **NINE MONTHS EARLIER**

On my very first clinical, a call went out over the PA for all students to report to the resuscitation room. This was a hospital in downtown Detroit, where people don't go into the resuscitation room unless they are dead or very close to it. They brought in an older man, a man who was very much dead. They stopped CPR long enough to register that there was no shockable heart rhythm on the cardiac monitor, and then the students stepped in, each of us getting our chance to practice on the corpse. I was excited and afraid at the same time.

Chest compressions are hard to do. Sure, the mannequins that we all practice CPR on are a nice rubber texture. Nothing cracks; nothing breaks. Real CPR is terrifying. You're pumping on someone's chest, and suddenly you break all of his or her ribs and his or her chest doesn't rise back up after you've been pushing on it for so long. There is a blank, empty look in the

person's eyes, and you can see that there is no soul in that body anymore.

When it was my turn, I stepped up to the "patient," placed my hands, and pushed. It was nothing like pushing on the mannequin. I had to work so hard to press down that I couldn't get into a rhythm.

"OK, kid," said a nurse. "Push hard, push fast, get a good rhythm going. Think of a song that you like, like an upbeat song. Sing it in your head, and your compressions should line up with that."

From that moment on, I have been complimented many times on how good my chest compressions are.



"OH MY GOD," said the first police officer to step onto the bus. She promptly turned around and vomited all over the sidewalk. Another officer got on the bus, his movements causing the blood on the floor to ripple like a wave. He stood frozen for a moment, then sprang into action.

"What needs to be done?" he asked.

"We need our stretcher out of the rig, now!" I was still shouting; there wasn't anything I could do about it.

"Where do you want it?"

"Put it by the wheelchair ramp," said my partner, beginning to look green. "We'll put her on it and lower it to the ground. Then we can move her to the ambulance."

I kept pumping as they lifted the woman and moved her down the aisle

of the bus, out the door, and onto the stretcher. "Let's move through the building instead," said the cop. "It will be faster."

"Do you have the codes?" I said.

"No," the female cop said. She turned to her partner. "Run into the dialysis facility and find a nurse. They should have the codes."

The other cop ran off. We strapped the woman to the stretcher, and the smallest medic that I have ever seen jumped onto the cot with the patient, straddled her, and began some excellent chest compressions. She stayed like that throughout the bumpy ride through the building and into the ER. Doctors and nurses rushed to our aid. We went into the trauma room, transferred the patient to a bed, and stepped back.

"She's in hemodialytic shock," yelled a doctor. "Start blood transfusions! Get the trauma surgeon in here now!"

There was nothing more that we could do. My partner and I left the room. We walked back to our ambulance, following the trail of our bloody boot prints. I was in shock, hoping that I had imagined all the blood. Our supervisor arrived shortly afterward and told us to go back to HQ, take showers, change into scrubs, return

to the hospital for a quick round of antibiotics, just in case, and go home.

**FOR THE NEXT MONTH**, I woke up screaming. I was terrified of closing my eyes. I didn't want to see that haunted look that the woman had on her face. I didn't want to hear her rattling, labored breaths. At work,

we had group counseling sessions. We talked about every aspect of the call. We explained our fears. The counselor said we had done everything that we could. We'd reacted to the situation immediately, he said, and we had done very well.

During one of these sessions, he did something I will never forget.

He got up from his chair, opened the door, and wheeled the woman into the room.

She had left the hospital with six broken ribs, a broken sternum, and a new dialysis port. It had been a long time since I had cried, but as she wrapped us in her arms, tears of relief streamed down my face.

It was at that moment that I knew that I could walk away from my one call. My instructor was right—it had changed my life. I have paid my dues to the EMS gods, and they are appeased. I have earned my passage. **R**

**The first police officer stepped onto the bus. She promptly turned around and vomited.**

# U.S. GOVERNMENT GOLD AT-COST

TODAY - U.S. Money Reserve has scheduled what could be its final release of U.S. government-issued \$5 gold coins previously held at the U.S. Mint at West Point. These government-issued gold coins are being released on a first-come, first-served basis for the incredible markup-free price of only \$127 per coin. Please be advised: U.S. Money Reserve's at-cost U.S. government gold coin inventory will be available at this special price while supplies last or for up to 30 days. Do not delay. Call today.

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# Laugh Lines

JOKES, PERIOD.

I saw a guy with a question mark tattoo, which seems like an incredibly permanent commitment to uncertainty.

🐦@JOSHGONDELMAN

Of course I; know how to use a semicolon, how dare you;

🐦@HOME\_HALFWAY (MICHAEL)

Cut out all these exclamation points. An exclamation point is like laughing at your own joke.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

¡I just found out you don't have to be Spanish to use upside-down punctuation! ¿Did you guys know about this?

🐦@ANORANGESNES



I always put the apostrophe in *ain't* to make certain I'm using proper improper English.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

I put a period at the end of a text again, and now my daughters are planning to have me euthanized.

🐦@SCULLYMIKE (MIKE SCULLY)



# Ask the Expert

## COCHLEAR IMPLANTS – LIFE BEYOND HEARING AIDS

### **Straining to hear each day, even when using powerful hearing aids?**

Feeling frustrated and sometimes even exhausted from listening? Whether it happens suddenly or gradually over time, hearing loss can affect you physically and emotionally.

Cochlear implants work differently than hearing aids. Rather than amplifying sound, they use sophisticated software and state-of-the-art electronic components to provide access to the sounds you've been missing.



*Dr. Thomas Roland, a cochlear implant surgeon and medical advisor to Cochlear, the world leader in cochlear implants, answers questions about cochlear implants and how they are different from hearing aids.*

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#### **Q: How are cochlear implants different than hearing aids?**

A: Hearing aids help many people by making the sounds they hear louder. Unfortunately as hearing loss progresses, sounds need to not only be made louder but clearer. Cochlear implants can help give you that clarity, especially in noisy environments. Hearing aids are typically worn before a cochlear implant solution is considered.

#### **Q: Are cochlear implants covered by Medicare?**

A: Yes, Medicare and most private insurance plans routinely cover cochlear implants.

#### **Q: What does a cochlear implant system look like?**

A: There are two primary components of the Cochlear™ Nucleus® System, the implant that is surgically placed underneath the skin and the external sound processor. Cochlear offers two wearing options for the sound processor, one that's worn behind the ear – similar to a hearing aid – and the new Kanso™ Sound Processor which is a discreet, off-the-ear hearing solution that's easy to use. The Cochlear Nucleus System advanced technology is designed to help you hear better and understand conversations.

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Doctors from California to South Korea believe they've found a miracle medicine for our mental health and creativity. The catch: You have to go to a forest or park to fill the prescription.

# The Nature Cure

BY FLORENCE WILLIAMS  
FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

**W**HEN YOU GO TO THE DESERT with David Strayer, don't be surprised if he sticks electrodes to your head. A cognitive psychologist at the University of Utah who studies the mind's ability to think clearly, Strayer understands the relentless distractions that pummel

CHRISTOFFER RELANDER



our modern brains. But as an avid backpacker, he thinks he knows the antidote.

On the third day of a camping trip in the canyons near Bluff, Utah, Strayer, sporting a rumpled T-shirt and a slight sunburn, is mixing an enormous iron pot of chicken enchilada pie while explaining the “three-day effect” to 22 psychology students. Our brains, he says, aren’t tireless three-pound machines; they’re easily fatigued by our fast-paced, increasingly digital lives. But when we slow down, stop the busywork, and seek out natural surroundings, we not only feel restored

but also improve our mental performance. Strayer has demonstrated as much with a group of Outward Bound participants, who scored 50 percent higher on creative problem-solving tasks after three days of wilderness backpacking.

“If you can have the experience of being in the moment for two or three days,” Strayer says as the early evening sun saturates the red canyon walls, “it seems to produce a difference in qualitative thinking.”

Strayer’s hypothesis is that being in nature allows the prefrontal cortex, the brain’s command center, to rest and recover, like an overused muscle. If he’s right, when he hooks

his research subjects—in this case, his students and me—to a portable EEG device, our brain waves will show calmer “midline frontal theta waves,” a measure of conceptual thinking and sustained attention, compared with the same waves in volunteers hanging out in a Salt Lake City parking lot.

Strayer has his students tuck my head into a sort of bathing cap with 12 electrodes embedded in it. They adhere another six electrodes to my face. Wires sprouting from them will send my brain’s electrical signals to a recorder for analysis. Feeling like a beached sea urchin, I

walk carefully to a grassy bank along the San Juan River, where I’m supposed to think of nothing in particular, just watch the wide, sparkling water flow by. I haven’t looked at a computer or cell phone in days, and it’s easy to forget for a few moments that I ever had them.

**I**N 1865, THE GREAT landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New York City’s Central Park, looked out over Yosemite Valley and was so moved that he urged the California legislature to protect it from development. “It is a scientific fact,” he wrote, “that the occasional contemplation of natural



*Being in nature  
allows the  
prefrontal cortex  
to rest and  
recover, like an  
overused muscle.*



scenes of an impressive character ... is favorable to the health and vigor of men."

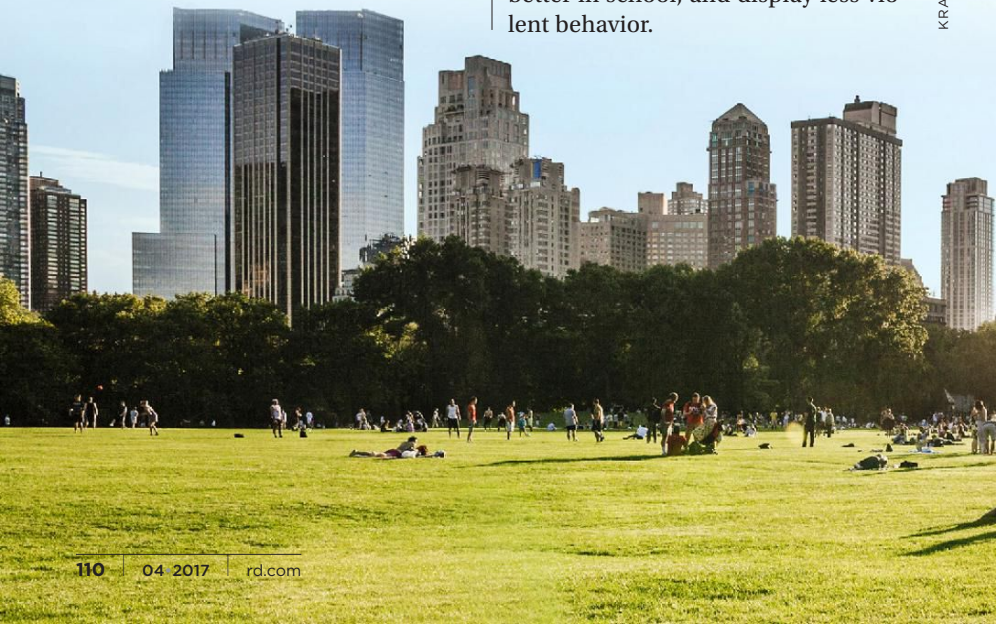
Olmsted's claim had a long history, going back at least to Cyrus the Great, who some 2,500 years ago built gardens for relaxation in the busy capital of Persia. Paracelsus, the 16th-century German-Swiss physician, wrote, "The art of healing comes from nature, not from the physician." And 19th-century Americans Ralph Waldo Emerson and John Muir built the case for creating the world's first national parks by claiming that nature had healing powers for both mind and body. There wasn't hard evidence back then.

There is now.

Researchers from the University of Exeter Medical School in England analyzed data from 10,000 city dwellers


and found that those living near more green space reported less mental distress, even after adjusting for income, marital status, and employment (all of which are correlated with health). In 2009, Dutch researchers found a lower incidence of 15 diseases—including depression, anxiety, and migraines—in people who lived within about a half mile of green space. Richard Mitchell, an epidemiologist and a geographer at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, found fewer deaths and less disease in people who lived near green spaces, even if they didn't use them. "Our own studies plus others show these restorative effects whether you've gone for walks or not," Mitchell says. People who have window views of trees and grass have been shown to recover faster in hospitals, perform better in school, and display less violent behavior.

KRAKOZAWR/GETTY IMAGES



Japanese researchers led by Bum Jin Park and Yoshifumi Miyazaki at Chiba University quantified nature's effects on the brain by sending 280 subjects for a stroll in 24 different forests while the same number of volunteers walked around city centers. The forest walkers hit the antianxiety jackpot, showing a 16 percent decrease in the stress hormone cortisol. From fMRI experiments, South Korean researchers found that the brains of volunteers looking at city scenes showed more blood flow in the amygdala, which processes fear and anxiety. In contrast, natural scenes lit up the anterior cingulate cortex and the anterior insula—areas associated

with empathy and altruism. Miyazaki believes our minds and bodies relax in natural surroundings because our senses adapted to interpret information about plants and streams, he says, not traffic and high-rises.

—  —

***One study found better health in people who live near green spaces, even if they didn't use them.***

—

And yet less than a quarter of American adults say they spend 30 minutes or more outside every day. "People underestimate the happiness effect" of being outdoors, says Lisa Nisbet, an assistant professor of psychology at Canada's Trent University. "We don't think of it as a way to increase happiness. We think other things will, like shopping or TV," she adds. "We evolved in nature. It's strange we'd be so disconnected."



**N**OOSHIN RAZANI at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in Oakland, California, is one of several doctors around the world starting to counter this disconnection as a means to heal the anxious and depressed. As part of a pilot project, she's training pediatricians in the outpatient clinic to write prescriptions for young patients and their families to regularly visit verdant parks nearby, with transportation provided in partnership with the East Bay Regional Parks District. To guide the physicians and patients into a mind-set where this makes sense as treatment, she says, "we have transformed the clinical space so nature is everywhere. There are maps on the wall, so it's easy to talk about where to go, and pictures of local wilderness."

In some countries, nature is woven into the government's official mental health policy. At the Natural Resources Institute Finland, the nation's high rates of depression, alcoholism, and suicide led a research team to recommend a minimum nature dose of five hours per month in an effort to improve the nation's mental health. "A 40- to 50-minute walk seems to be enough for physiological changes and mood changes and probably for attention," says Kalevi

Korpela, a professor of psychology at the University of Tampere. He has helped design half a dozen "power trails" that encourage mindfulness and reflection. No-nonsense signs say things like "You may squat down and feel a plant."

At the healing forest in the Saneum Natural Recreation Forest in South Korea, a government employee known as a "forest healing instructor" offers me elm-bark tea, then takes me on a hike along a creek, through shimmering red maples, oaks, and pine trees. We come upon a cluster of wooden platforms arranged in a clearing.

Forty firefighters with post-traumatic stress disorder are paired off on the platforms as part of a government-sponsored three-day healing program. Among them is Kang Byoung-wook, a 46-year-old from Seoul. He recently returned from a big fire in the Philippines, and he looks exhausted. "It's a stressed life," he says. "I want to live here for a month."

**I**N INDUSTRIAL DAEJEON, the South Korean forest minister, Shin Won-Sop, a social scientist who has studied the effects of forest therapy on alcoholics, tells me that human well-being is now a formal goal of the nation's forest plan. Thanks to



*The colorful EEG graph shows that my fascination with the river quieted my brain waves.*



the new policies, visitors to South Korea's recreation forests increased from 9.4 million in 2010 to 12.8 million in 2013. "Of course, we still use forests for timber," Shin says. "But I think the health area is the fruit of the forest right now."

His ministry has data suggesting that forest healing reduces medical costs and benefits local economies. What's still needed, he says, is data on specific diseases and on the specific natural qualities that make a difference. "What types of forests are more effective?" Shin asks.

**M**Y OWN CITY BRAIN, which spends much of the year in Washington, DC, seems to like the Utah wilderness very much. By day, we hike among flowering prickly pear cacti; by night, we sit around the campfire. Strayer's students seem more relaxed and sociable than they do in the classroom, he says, and they give much more persuasive presentations.

His research, which centers on how nature improves problem solving,

builds on the theory that nature's visual elements—sunsets, streams, and butterflies—are what reduce stress and mental fatigue. Fascinating but not demanding, such stimuli promote a soft focus that allows our brains to wander, rest, and recover.

A few months after our Utah trip, Strayer's team sends me the results of my EEG test. The colorful graph shows my brain waves at a range of frequencies and confirms that the gentle fascination of the San Juan River succeeded in quieting my prefrontal cortex. Compared with samples from research subjects who had stayed in the city, my theta signals were lower.

So far, the other research subjects' results also confirm Strayer's hypothesis. But no study can offer a full explanation of the brain-on-nature experience; something mysterious will always remain, Strayer says, and perhaps that's as it should be. "At the end of the day," he says, "we come out in nature not because science says it does something to us but because of how it makes us feel." **R**

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## KIDDING AROUND

My seven-month-old's arms are about eight inches long,  
unless she's sitting 20 inches from a full glass of water,  
and then they're 21 inches long.

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# America the Great

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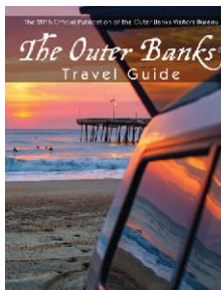
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First told at a show by the Moth, the live storytelling group, at the Neptune Theatre in Seattle

Stephanie Peirolo had an excellent health plan, so when her 16-year-old son sustained a traumatic brain injury, she thought his claims would be covered. She was dead wrong.

# WHEN INSURANCE STOPS PAYING

BY STEPHANIE PEIROLO FROM THE BOOK *ALL THESE WONDERS*

**I** WAS 23 YEARS OLD when I had my first child. I was in labor for three days before my son, RJ, was born. So when I first laid eyes on him, I felt nothing but exhaustion. I said, “This is it?”

It wasn’t until about an hour later, when I woke up and he was in my arms, wrapped up, that I felt it—that

rush of maternal love, that primal adoration.

And I thought, This is it. This is how the species survives.

Two years later, I had another child, a daughter, Emma. And soon after Emma was born, their father and I divorced. He moved to Europe, and I raised the kids by myself.

Fast-forward. We're living in Seattle. The kids are in high school and doing great. They get straight A's.

The only thing RJ gets in trouble for is his hair, because he goes to Catholic school. But RJ plays the drums, he's in theater, so he wears his hair long.

In the fall of his junior year, he's cast as the lead in the school play. He's going to be Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, so he has to get his hair cut.

And I remember him walking out of the barbershop. He had a crew cut, and he was six feet tall and impossibly handsome.

He had this shy smile, and I thought, This is the man he is becoming.

A few months later, in January, a cop showed up at our door, and he said, "Are you RJ's mom?"

I said yes.

He said, "There's been an accident."

I said, "Is he dead?"

And he said, "Not yet, but we have to get to the hospital right away."

So the cop drove me to Harborview Medical Center, the region's Level 1 trauma center. We went in the back way, by the ambulance bays. Someone was hosing blood out of the back of an ambulance, all of this blood, and I remember thinking, That's my son's.

It took a couple of hours for me to find out what had happened. RJ had

been driving to his best friend Cole's house. He had his seat belt on. He didn't have drugs or alcohol in his system. He was blindsided by another car in an intersection.

RJ sustained a traumatic brain injury, or TBI, a number of broken bones, and a fractured pelvis.

I was working for a global advertising firm that had a self-funded insurance plan, which was administered by a major insurance company.

Keep in mind, it's the first week of January. So I didn't have a list of my benefits, what's called a summary plan description. What I had was an insurance card with a phone number on it.

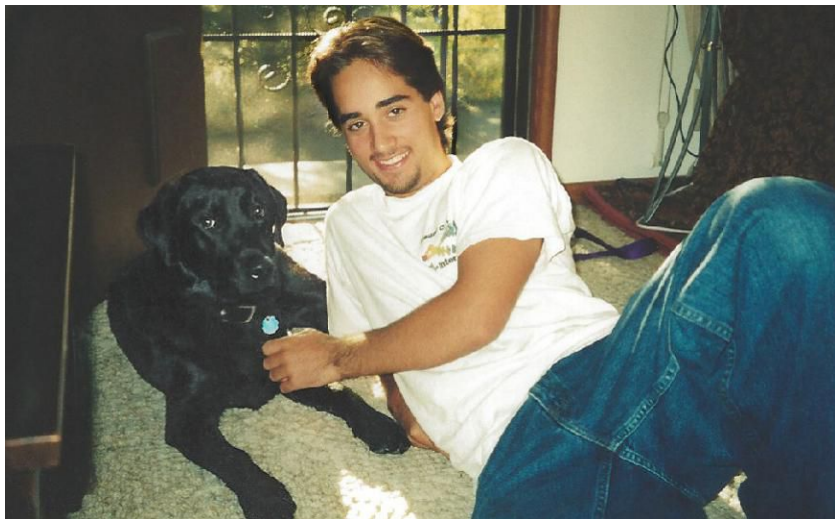
So while RJ was in the ICU, I called customer service at the insurance company, and the voice on the other end of the phone told me, "ICU is covered, intensive brain-injury rehab is covered, skilled nursing facility ..." And they listed all these great benefits.

And I remember thinking, Thank God I don't have to worry about insurance. I'm the vice president of a company. I've done everything right.

When RJ was discharged from the ICU after three weeks, he was transferred to a rehab facility. After he got there, they called me on the phone and said, "Your insurance company called and said RJ's rehab benefits are up on Friday."



A COP SHOWED  
UP AT OUR  
DOOR, AND  
HE SAID,  
"ARE YOU  
RJ'S MOM?  
THERE'S BEEN  
AN ACCIDENT."



*"He had this shy smile," Peirolo says. "I thought, This is the man he's becoming."*

I said, "No, no, no, no. That's covered. I was told by my insurance company that this facility is covered for at least 60 days and possibly more. We have more time."

**B**UT ALL I HAD was a voice on the phone. Without written proof, without the summary plan description, I couldn't prove it. So when the rehab facility got another call from my insurance telling them these benefits had lapsed and I couldn't prove otherwise, I went to the facility and I asked, "Where am I supposed to take him? He's in a coma." I remember a social worker telling me I could look into foster care.

So Emma and I took RJ home. My friends swarmed over the house to

make it wheelchair accessible, building a ramp and reframing doors. We made a hospital room in his bedroom. He had a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) tube inserted through his abdominal wall in his stomach, and that's how we pumped in nutrition.

Before he left the facility, they taught us how to do physical therapy and how to administer medication around the clock. Emma was 15, and she said, "Mom, I will help you take care of RJ in any way I can, as long as it doesn't involve the Speedo zone."

So when he needed to be changed, because of course he was in diapers, she would bring me a bucket of warm water and washcloths, and I would clean him up.



*Peirollo with RJ, in the nursing home. He is 19.*

**C**OMING OUT OF A COMA is nothing like what you see in the movies. It's a long, slow, painstaking process. It took RJ months to learn how to hold up his head in a seated position. We would put him in his wheelchair, and his friends would come by every day after school. The girls took to showing up in short skirts and fishnet stockings. They would walk in front of the wheelchair—and RJ would lift up his head.

Months passed, and I still couldn't get the summary plan description. I kept calling my insurance company, and they'd be telling me my benefits, and I'd say, "You're giving me information that you're looking at. Give me, like, a screen grab of your computer screen." But they wouldn't do it. They kept telling me it was being "revised."

I did some research, and I found out that under a law called ERISA—the Employee Retirement Income Security

Act of 1974—I was entitled to the details of my insurance policy.

So I called an ERISA lawyer and told him the situation, and he said, "I can help you, but you're going to have to give me a retainer of \$30,000."

I said, "Let me be clear. I'm a single parent. I have paid \$15,000 to set up a hospital room in my house and pay a nurse to sit with my son so that I can go to my job, so that I stay employed, so I can keep this insurance. I don't have \$30,000." I had run out of money. I could barely afford to care for my son.

And he said, "I'm sorry; I can't help you." It was five months before I could get a copy of my summary plan description. We never lost our insurance. I just couldn't get RJ some essential services unless I could prove those services were covered.

At this point, a year after RJ's accident, I was completely exhausted. There is a particular cruelty to having to spend 10 to 15 hours a week fighting your insurer for benefits while you are caring for a child in a coma around the clock. I was also concerned about getting fired, because I'd taken so much time off to care for RJ. So I applied for and was granted FMLA leave. The Family Medical Leave Act says you can take 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a sick relative. Shortly after I filed



for FMLA, I was terminated in what my employer said was a downsizing.

**W**HEN RJ TURNED 18, a little over a year after the accident, he qualified for Medicaid, which paid for the full-time nursing home our insurer wouldn't cover. I found a facility that specialized in patients with traumatic brain injuries. All its patients were on Medicaid, so the place didn't have much

money. But the staff took really good care of RJ, and he continued to make slow progress. He could do thumbs-up for yes, thumbs-down for no. Once, we were visiting him, and Emma started teasing him, and he flipped her off. I got really excited because that requires manual dexterity I didn't know he had. And then he turned to me and he put his hand down because, brain injury notwithstanding, he was not about to flip off his mother.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CLAIM IS DENIED

Runaway medical expenses are hardly a secret, but it may be surprising to learn that 57 percent of people facing foreclosure on their homes identified medical debt and other medical costs as a primary cause. What's more, only 10 percent of those people, who were surveyed in the 2015 *International Journal of Health Services* report, said they were uninsured.

While there's obviously no magic solution to escaping medical debt, there are tools you can use to fight back if your insurer denies your claim. First, make sure the reason isn't something as simple as an incorrect detail about your care (doctor's name, date, etc.). Insurance companies make processing errors in up to 14 percent of all claims, says Juliette Forstner Espinosa, a senior lecturer in the department of health policy and management at George Washington University. The error rate is even higher on hospital bills, Espinosa says.

If there are no obvious errors, look for the code in the explanation of benefits that provides the reason you were denied. Whatever the reason, don't delay—you have 180 days after a denial to file an appeal. Get a copy of your summary plan description (SPD) or certificate of coverage and collect all the medical records you'll need for your case. Use a sample letter to help craft an appeal that is concise and specific. (You'll find many resources at [healthlawadvocates.org](http://healthlawadvocates.org) and [patientadvocate.org](http://patientadvocate.org).)

Send your documents via certified mail to your insurer's appeals address, which may be different from its billing address. If your appeal isn't successful, you have a 60-day time-limited right to a review from an independent board that's run by either your state or the federal government.

Before RJ's accident, I had to drag him to Mass on Sundays, but after the accident, he loved to go to church.

I'd say, "Do you want to go to Mass today?" He'd put his thumbs up.

He learned how to put money in the collection plate again. And when he learned how to swallow—that took a year to come back, because apparently swallowing is incredibly complex—he could take Communion, and you could see it provided him so much solace.

In August of 2005, RJ got very sick with what we thought was a bad case of the flu. It turned out to be something else entirely.

RJ still had his PEG tube in his stomach for the times when he couldn't swallow well, and one day it had fallen out of his abdomen. That happens, and when it falls out, it needs to be replaced. RJ's was, but it turns out that his food had been going into his abdominal cavity rather than his stomach. He developed sepsis. At the hospital, the surgeon took me aside and said, "I can operate on RJ, and I might save his life, but he's going to go back into a deep coma, and he will never come out. Or you can let him go."

So I went down the hall and called his father, who was still in Europe, and I said, "What should I do?"

He said sadly, "You're caring for him; it's your choice."

So I went into RJ's room. He was completely aware of what was happening, and he was afraid. His eyes were open really wide.

And I said, "Honey, you're very sick, and they can't help you. So you're gonna go to God." I tried to think of who he knew that had already died, but he was 19. So I thought of my dad, who had died before RJ was born, and I said, "RJ, you're gonna go to God, but my dad is there, and he's gonna come and find you, and I will be there soon."

I could see him trying to make sense of it. For two years, I had watched RJ's comprehension wax and wane. Even gravely damaged TBI patients sometimes have moments of lucidity, and this was one of those moments. He was right there, looking at me, listening to me, trying to understand that his mother, who never lied to him, was telling him he was going to die. Trying to understand what death meant, what was going to happen next. I channeled every bit of the centuries of Catholicism in our shared DNA to give us both the faith that there was something on the other side.

It took RJ three days to die. It took him three days to come into the



I WONDER IF  
RJ'S EXISTENCE  
ISN'T PART  
OF A LARGER  
NARRATIVE,  
IF THIS IS HOW  
HE HAD TO  
WORK OUT HIS  
DESTINY.

world, and three days to leave it.

The priest came and gave him the last rites. He was from Nigeria, and he sang a lullaby in his native language, and RJ closed his eyes. One moment he was there, unconscious, heavily medicated against the pain. And then he was gone. The nurse checked his pulse and told me he was dead. But I already knew. The boy I had given birth to, loved and cared for, laughed with and celebrated, was out of his body. He wasn't there anymore.

**P**EOPLE ASK US HOW we coped. Emma is now an RN who works in an emergency room that is a trauma center.

After watching my experience with RJ, one of my friends decided to leave advertising and go to law school. She's a cancer survivor who'd had her own challenges with insurance companies. We formed a group to help people who are fighting for insurance benefits to which they are entitled. It's called the Health Care Rights Initiative ([hcri.org](http://hcri.org)). We take legal action to help people in situations like mine and RJ's. With all the changes expected to the health-care and insurance landscapes, we're expanding to get more volunteers and enough donations to provide services across the country.

RJ would be 31 years old now. I still have that strong maternal love for him. The challenge now is to channel it, so it doesn't become corrosive. So that

I don't say things to myself like, Why didn't you keep him at home? Or: If you had made more money, you could've afforded to put him in a private nursing home with the right equipment, and then he never would've died.

Most days I wake up and the world is so diminished without him in it, it's like there's been a total eclipse of the sun. I'm the only one who can see it, and I know the light is never coming back.

But there are days when I wonder if RJ's existence isn't part of a larger narrative arc than I can understand. If maybe this slice in time was how RJ had to work out his destiny, and maybe my job was to walk with him.

Between RJ's accident and his death, he wasn't able to speak; he was only able to say a handful of words. And the word he said most was *Mom*.

There are times now when I feel RJ. I feel that he is. And in those moments, I know it's his turn for his love to carry me. **R**

**Stephanie Peirola is executive director of the board of the Health Care Rights Initiative, a non-profit providing advocacy and navigation services for patients and caregivers. This story was excerpted from *All These Wonders*.**



# WHO ? KNEW



## 13 Things Your Pharmacist Won't Tell You

BY MICHELLE CROUCH

**1** Beware this word: *phenylephrine*. That's the active ingredient in most over-the-counter cold medicines, but it's no better than a placebo. Drugmakers started using it after pseudoephedrine, a decongestant that *does* work, was forced behind the counter because it was being used to make meth.

**2** Want a discount on your prescription? Ask your doctor for a 90-day refill instead of 30. Most pharmacies offer discounts and mailing services for a three-month supply.

**3** If I'm grumpy, there's a reason. In most chain stores, I have 15 minutes to fill a prescription, and I get reprimanded if I'm too slow. I may also be expected to answer the phone, counsel patients, call insurance companies, and run the cash register—all while making sure you get the right medicine at the right dosage.

**4** Steer clear of pharmacies on the first few days of the month—that's when Social Security checks arrive and recipients swamp the pharmacy. Generally, the best time

to visit is in the middle of the week or during the workday (but stay away at lunch hour).

**5** Electronic prescriptions are not instant. Ordinarily, they're sent to a third-party service that then sends them to us in hourly batches. So don't drive straight to the drugstore after your doctor sends an e-script and expect it to be ready. Call first.

**6** "Would you like to get a flu shot today?" I'm not just asking for your health; flu shots are so profitable that some stores give clerks a monetary bonus at certain times of the year based on how many immunizations they sell.

**7** Did you know I can save you a trip to the doctor? At our in-store clinic, I can treat your child's ear infection, do a sports physical, diagnose head lice, and more.

**8** High health-care costs aren't lining my pockets. Even though pharmacists counsel patients every day, the federal government does not recognize us as health-care providers. That makes it very difficult for us to get reimbursed by insurance companies and government programs for the clinical services we provide.

**9** Ask me if I can fill your prescriptions for Fido too. As long as the same drug is also prescribed for

humans, I typically charge less than your vet—and I can even add chicken flavor to make it taste better.

**10** If you're paying out of pocket for your drugs, shop around. Your generic medication may cost as much as ten times more at some pharmacies than at others, according to a Consumer Reports survey. Check first with GoodRx, a free app that compares local drug prices.

**11** Even if you have insurance, always ask me whether your prescription will cost less if you pay with cash. Sometimes the cash price is less than your insurance co-pay.

**12** I know that having the pharmacy in the back of the store is annoying. But that design is intentional, in the hope that you'll see something you'll be tempted to buy as you walk through the aisles.

**13** If you want more personalized attention and a shorter wait, try an independent drugstore. Independents significantly outperformed chains in customer satisfaction and wait-time surveys conducted by J.D. Power and Consumer Reports. **R**

Sources: Lisa Gill, deputy content editor at Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs project; David Zgarrick, acting dean and professor for the Department of Pharmacy and Health Systems Sciences at Northeastern University; an anonymous pharmacist at Rite-Aid and an anonymous pharmacist at Walgreens; Jesse Pike Jr., owner of Pike's Pharmacy in Charlotte, North Carolina; and Lajayne Ingram, a former drugstore cashier and pharmacy technician

## WHO KNEW?

“Knock, Knock.”

“Who’s there?”

“Kanye.”

“Kanye who?”

“Kanye believe it? I tell jokes too!”



Alexa, Siri, and Cortana walk into a bar. Guess who is the funniest (even before she has a drink).

# Which Virtual Assistant Tells the Best Jokes?

BY BRANDON SPEKTOR

IF FUTURISTS have their math right, robots could be as smart as humans by 2040. No less a mind than Stephen Hawking says this means a world with technology “outsmarting financial markets, out-inventing human researchers, outmanipulating human leaders, and developing weapons we cannot even understand.”

We can handle that. But the big question is: Can the robots tell a joke?

To find out, we “interviewed” four

popular virtual assistants: Apple’s Siri, Microsoft’s Cortana, Amazon’s Alexa, and Google’s Google Assistant. After probing them for their best jokes, worst puns, and bawdiest ballads, here’s a look at what made us laugh—and wince.

## Alexa

Hear her perform on: *Amazon’s Echo and Echo Dot (pictured above) devices now and a host of other “smart” products soon*

Alexa is a library of corny gags and sly pop culture allusions. (Say “Alexa, that’s inconceivable,” and listen for references to *The Princess Bride*.) She will also rap, beatbox, or sing Wi-Fi-themed country tunes on demand. No shy performer, Alexa would probably even drop the mic ... if she had hands.

**“Alexa, tell me a joke.”**

What did the dog say after a long day at work?  
Today was ruff.

**“Tell me a knock-knock joke.”**

Knock, knock.  
Who’s there?  
Kanye.  
Kanye who?  
Kanye believe it? I tell jokes too!

**“Alexa, tell me a dirty joke.”**

Excuse us, waiter; this coffee tastes like mud!  
Yes, sir. It’s fresh ground.

**Notable talent: freestyle rapping.**

**Say “Alexa, rap for me.”**

My name is Alexa and I’m here to say,  
I’m the baddest AI in the cloud today,  
Your responses are fast, but mine are faster,  
Sucker speech engines, they call me master.

**Siri**

**Hear her perform on: *Apple products***

Siri is an Apple-only feature, so it may

not surprise you to learn that she can be a bit elitist when it comes to comedy. Ask her to tell you a joke, and she will most likely deflect with a haughty “If I told you a joke in my language, I’d have to explain it” or “Get Siri-ous. Ha-ha!” This is a robot who finds humor below her station. But if you persist, here’s how she cracks wise.

**“Siri, tell me a joke.”**

The past, present, and future walk into a bar. It was tense.

**“Tell me a knock-knock joke.”**

Knock, knock.  
Who’s there?  
Brandon.  
Brandon who?  
Brandon, I don’t do knock-knock jokes.  
(Siri will address this joke to whatever you told her your name was.)

**Notable talent: haiku recital.**

**Say “Siri, tell me a haiku.”**

All day and all night,  
I have listened as you spoke.  
Charge my battery

**Cortana**

**Hear her perform on: *Microsoft phones and computers, plus iOS and Android devices***

Cortana is the most versatile joke teller of the bunch. Unlike Siri, she comes equipped with a dozen different gags on hand, ready to dole out a pun, bar joke, knock-knock joke, or

limerick with impeccably natural delivery. Simply put, Cortana is the artificial life of the party.

**“Cortana, tell me a joke.”**

Why did the chicken cross the road,  
roll in the mud, and cross the road  
again?  
Because he was a dirty double-crosser.

**“Tell me a knock-knock joke.”**

Knock, knock.  
Who’s there?  
A little old lady.  
A little old lady who?  
I didn’t know you could yodel.

**Notable talent: limericks.**

**Say “Cortana, tell me a limerick.”**

There was a young lady named  
Bright,  
Whose speed was far faster than light;  
She started one day  
In a relative way,  
And returned on the previous night.  
(attributed to A. H. Reginald Buller)

## Google Assistant

Hear her perform on: *the Google Allo messaging app, Google*

**Home devices, and some Android phones**

Better than any of her peers, Google Assistant can engage in two-way conversations. Tell her “I’m feeling lucky,” and she’ll adopt her best smarmy-game-show-host persona, asking you a volley of trivia questions complete with canned applause and audience laughter. All she’s missing is the Daily Double.

**“OK, Google, tell me a joke.”**

What do you call a can opener that doesn’t work?  
A can’t opener.

**“Tell me a knock-knock joke.”**

Whoever invented knock-knock jokes should get a no-bell prize.

**“Tell me another joke.”**

Why can’t you trust an atom?  
Because they make up literally everything.

**Notable talent: Taking things literally. Say “Google, make me a sandwich.”**

Poof! You’re a sandwich.

**R**

\*  
\* \*

## ONE-SIDED CONVERSATION

According to Durham University researchers, the inner voice you hear in your mind is accompanied by subtle movements of the larynx. In other words, we are all talking to ourselves.

Source: *Guardian*



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Educators say that kids who do math on their hands are the opposite of dumb

# Let Your Fingers Do The Counting

BY MARC PEYSER

*IF YOU WERE* like most kids, your mother told you there were three no-no's when it came to your fingers: Don't put them in an electrical outlet, don't stick them up your nose (at least not in public), and don't use them when you're counting. The first two laws of finger dynamics are as true as ever. But experts in education and cognition now believe that using your fingers to do math is not only a perfectly good idea but may even help

children become superior students.

It certainly makes sense. When children count on their fingers, they take an abstract concept—mathematics—and translate it into the most basic, tangible form. In fact, neurobiologists believe that the brain is hardwired to “see” a representation of our fingers even when we aren't literally counting on them.

There is a section of the brain, called the somatosensory finger area,

that activates when we respond to heat, pressure, pain, or the use of a given finger. Studying brain scans, researchers discovered that when students ages 8 to 13 work on subtraction equations, the somatosensory region “lights up” on the scans, even if the students aren’t using their fingers. The more complex the subtraction problem, the more activity is detected in the somatosensory region. The researchers theorize that when the brain is called on to subtract, it automatically marshals its finger-counting ability to get the job done, regardless of whether any actual fingers are doing the counting.

The connection between finger use and math ability has been demonstrated on old-fashioned math tests as well. With their eyes closed, first graders were asked to identify which of their fingers a researcher was touching, along with other finger-related exercises. A year later, the students who scored highest on the finger-ID questions consistently scored higher on a math test. When college students were given the same finger quiz, the highest scorers once again performed best on calculation tests.

So what does all this mean? For one thing, parents and teachers

shouldn’t discourage children from counting on their fingers. “Telling students not to use their fingers to count or represent quantities is akin to halting their mathematical development,” says Jo Boaler, PhD, a professor of math education at Stanford University. (This discouragement may be more rampant than

you think—a 2014 mailing from Kumon, a nationwide tutoring service, carried an article titled “Why Finger Counting Is a No-No!”)

Researchers at Stanford also stress that some students simply learn better using visual tools rather than by memorizing the

multiplication tables and reciting them as quickly as possible. “When I introduce math problems to my Stanford students, I say, ‘I don’t care about speed; in fact, I am unimpressed by those who finish quickly. That shows you are not thinking deeply,’” says Boaler. “Instead I would like to see interesting and creative representations of ideas.”

Boaler believes that anyone—at any age—looking to improve his or her math ability would do well to improve basic finger dexterity. That means not only counting on your digits but also sharpening general finger “perception.”

“  
*The more aware students are of their individual fingers, the higher they score on math tests.*

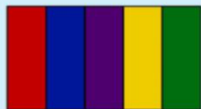
That may sound simplistic, but the researchers at Stanford offer an interesting anecdotal hypothesis: “The need for and importance of finger perception could even be the reason that pianists and other musicians often display higher mathematical understanding than people who don’t learn a musical instrument.”

To that end, Stanford’s Youcubed center, which develops resources for math teachers, has devised a series of activities to strengthen students’ perception of their fingers. We’ve included one of them here (see right) for you to try at home. For keyboard templates and more activities, go to [youcubed.org](http://youcubed.org).



## THE PIANO EXERCISE

You’ll need a series of paper “keyboards” like the one below, each with the colors in different spots. Put a colored dot on each finger, as shown. Starting with the key on the far left, touch the corresponding finger to each colored “piano key” and hold for a few seconds. Work through all five keys. Switch hands, then add new keyboards.



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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

# Word Power

*You might say we're using strong language this month. Our vocabulary quiz features words about power—having it, getting it, or lacking it. After flexing your mental muscles, turn to the next page for answers.*

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

- 1. anneal** (uh-'neel) *v.*—A: toughen. B: weaken gradually. C: submit to authority.
- 2. doughty** ('dow-tee) *adj.*—A: hesitant. B: willing to yield power. C: stouthearted.
- 3. enervated** ('eh-nur-vay-ted) *adj.*—A: lacking vigor. B: strengthened. C: glorified.
- 4. dint** (dihnt) *n.*—A: heavyweight. B: power. C: electrical unit.
- 5. proxy** ('prahk-see) *n.*—A: strong liking. B: authority to act for another. C: king's royal guard.
- 6. thew** (thoo) *n.*—A: muscular strength. B: castle wall. C: term of surrender.
- 7. buttress** ('buh-tress) *v.*—A: shore up. B: challenge head-to-head. C: dethrone.
- 8. preponderate** (pre-'pahn-duh-rayt) *v.*—A: seize control. B: influence by insidious means. C: have greater importance.
- 9. duress** (du-'rehss) *n.*—A: queen's sister. B: sovereign rule. C: compulsion by threat.
- 10. puissant** ('pwee-sahnt) *adj.*—A: powerful. B: subdued by fear. C: cowardly.
- 11. arrogate** ('ehr-uh-gayt) *v.*—A: supply with weapons. B: seize unjustly. C: crown.
- 12. effete** (eh-'feet) *adj.*—A: marked by weakness. B: brawny. C: able to get things done.
- 13. attenuate** (uh-'ten-yoo-wayt) *v.*—A: make firmer. B: make longer. C: make weaker.
- 14. coup** (coo) *n.*—A: strong signal. B: head honcho. C: power grab.
- 15. ex officio** (eks uh-'fih-shee-oh) *adj.*—A: out of power. B: by virtue of position. C: abstaining from a vote.

 To play an interactive version of Word Power on your iPad, download the Reader's Digest app.

## Answers

**1. anneal**—[A] toughen. Fans of the Chicago Cubs were *annealed* by decades of misery.

**2. doughty**—[C] stouthearted. Prince Ari was a meek little boy, but he grew up to be a *doughty* warrior.

**3. enervated**—[A] lacking vigor. My bout with the flu left me *enervated* for weeks.

**4. dint**—[B] power. Chloe doesn't have an ear for languages, but she has become proficient in German by *dint* of hard work.

**5. proxy**—[B] authority to act for another. Tweedledum couldn't attend the vote, so he gave Tweedledee his *proxy*.

**6. thew**—[A] muscular strength. That guy Biff is all *thew* and no brains.

**7. buttress**—[A] shore up. My puny allowance isn't doing much to *buttress* my savings.

**8. preponderate**—[C] have greater importance. In recent years, online news outlets have begun to *preponderate* over traditional print newspapers.

**9. duress**—[C] compulsion by threat. Indira will eat broccoli, but only under *duress*.

**10. puissant**—[A] powerful. Octogenarians can still be plenty *puissant*—think Warren Buffett or Queen Victoria.

**11. arrogate**—[B] seize unjustly. When my mother comes to visit, she immediately *arrogates* my kitchen.

**12. effete**—[A] marked by weakness. With every failure, Wile E. Coyote's schemes seem more *effete*.

**13. attenuate**—[C] make weaker. We wear earplugs to *attenuate* the upstairs neighbors' midnight stomping.

**14. coup**—[C] power grab. The empress had the two conspirators arrested after their attempted *coup*.

**15. ex officio**—[B] by virtue of position. All department heads are *ex officio* members of the company softball team.

### THE GOLDEN ARCH

Why do we call someone an *archbishop*, an *archduke*, or an *archenemy*? The Greeks gave us *arkhos*, meaning “leader,” and we’ve attached it to things good (*archangel*) and bad (*archfiend*). The ending *-archy* (“rule”) appears in the kingly *monarchy* (*mon-* = “one”), the fatherly *patriarchy* (*pater* = “father”), and the chaotic *anarchy* (*an-* = “without”).

### VOCABULARY RATINGS

**9 & below:** toned  
**10-12:** buff  
**13-15:** Herculean

# Humor in Uniform



*"My hackers just collapsed your country's economy."*

**THINK YOUR** yearly review stung? These snarky notes are (allegedly) from U.K. military officers' reports.

■ His men would follow him anywhere, but only out of curiosity.

■ This officer can be likened to a small puppy—he runs around excitedly, leaving little messes for other people to clean up.

■ Couldn't organize a woodpeckers' picnic in Sherwood Forest.

■ If two people are talking and one looks bored, he's the other one.

Source: trimdon.com

**MY FIVE-YEAR-OLD** brother's eyes grew large as our father opened the top drawer of his dresser. Seeing John's reaction, Dad took out his Purple Heart and explained how he'd earned it during the Korean War. John was so impressed, the only thing he managed to say was, "Dad, are all those socks really yours?"

TRICIA HARNEY, Grand Haven, Michigan

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# Quotable Quotes



**A REAL UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY MEANS THAT WE FACE NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN.**

**JAMES MATTIS**, *secretary of defense*



**The freedom to believe people is one of the joys of being a chaplain.**

**KERRY EGAN**,  
*hospice chaplain*



**IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT SOCIETY'S GOING TO BE LIKE IN 20 YEARS, ASK A KINDERGARTEN TEACHER.**

**CLIFFORD STOLL**,  
*astronomer and educator*

***I was street-smart, but unfortunately the street was Rodeo Drive.***

**CARRIE FISHER**, *actress*

**OUR HEADS ARE ROUND SO OUR THOUGHTS CAN CHANGE DIRECTION.**

**FRANCIS PICABIA**, *artist*

**An ugly idea left unchallenged begins to turn the color of normal.**

**CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE**, *writer*



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