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Jordyn Roark:
Life, learning and the art of archery

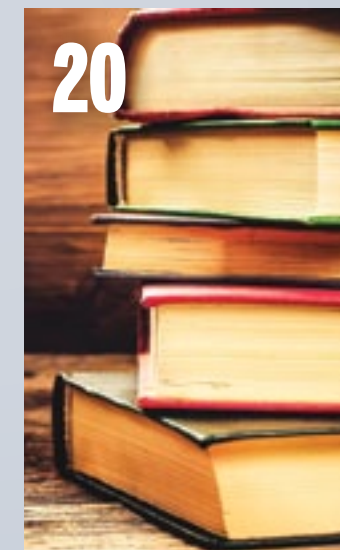


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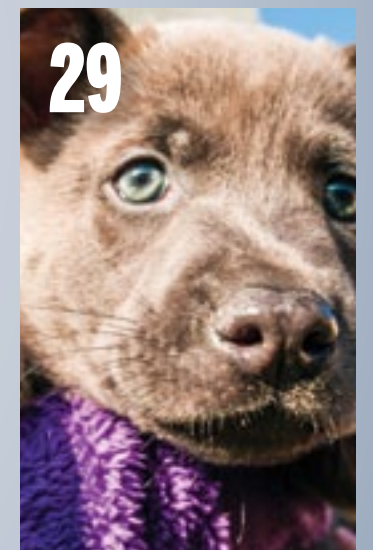


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JORDYN ROARK: LIFE, LEARNING AND THE ART OF ARCHERY



Contributed photo

Jordyn Taylor Roark teaches archery at Skyland Camp in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina, as well as at Camp Rockfish near Parkton.archer at summer camp.

By Scott Bigelow
bigelow@yahoo.com

PEMBROKE — They still teach archery at summer camps, and the sport has reached a new level of popularity thanks to fans like Jordyn Taylor Roark.

Archery’s popularity, especially among teenage girls, was ignited by popular movies like “Hunger Games.” It has transitioned from a fad to becoming a life-changing activity.

Roark, who is a senior at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke, is a certified archery instructor locally at Camp Rockfish and at Skyland Camp in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. Archery has been her passion since she first touched a bow as a teenager.

“The first time shot an arrow, I totally missed the target, but it didn’t matter,” she said. “It felt so powerful, and from that moment on, it was my favorite hobby.

“The classes at camp are always filled,” Roark said. “Archery is on the rise because there is great power in the sport.”

Roark uses a compound bow and the “instinctive” method, meaning she does not use a sight. Knowing how to shoot is one thing, but teaching it is another matter.

“I spent hours researching how to teach the foundational skills of archery and what techniques to use when teaching children,” Roark said. “Teaching children has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.”

However, archery is not just for females or summer campers. She believes the sport is great for people of all ages.

“It’s a lifetime sport, an intergenerational activity,” said Roark, who has instructed students from age 3 to 80. “It’s also inclusive.”

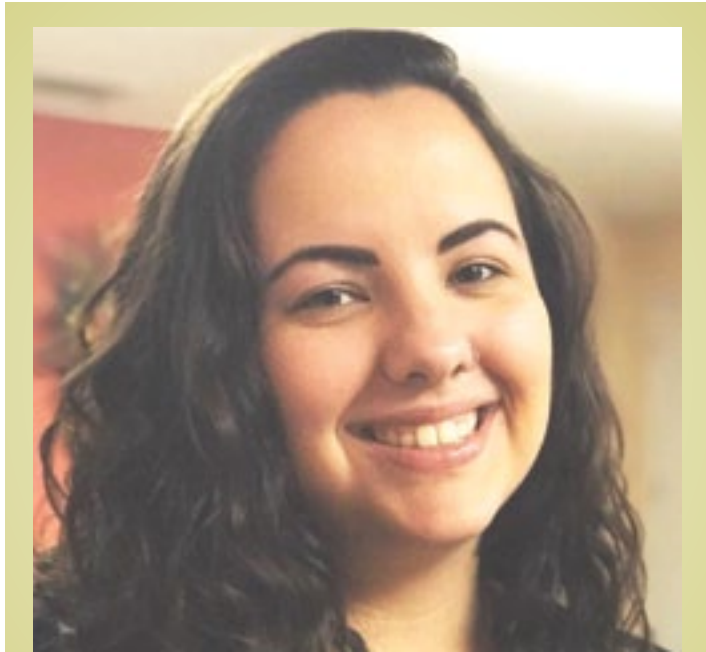
It is also instructive because the lessons learned in mastering a bow and arrow are life lessons, she said.

“It teaches you that the smallest changes can make the biggest difference in the flight of the arrow,” Roark said. “The same is true for attitude and habits. There are concrete ways of teaching us how to make changes in our lives.”

Because Roark’s campers are young, that lesson is especially important.

“It’s like music,” she said. “Many small techniques are used to get control of the arrow,” or a life.

Archery is a solitary sport that requires thoughtful practice and solemn focus.



Contributed photo

Jordyn Taylor Roark, a UNCP student, is an archery instructor.



Contributed photo

Former President Bill Clinton met Roark at the Bill Sapp Center, where she was volunteering after Hurricane Matthew.

“I teach respect and discipline for the sport,” Roark said.

Who is this person who teaches the art of archery as an affirmation of life?

Roark grew up on the Outer Banks of North Carolina and graduated from high school

in Wilmington. When it came to choosing a college, she was looking for an intimate learning environment and a diverse student body. She found that and more at UNCP.

“I found opportunities at UNCP I couldn’t have anywhere else,”



Contributed photo

The slightest adjustments in archery and life make a big difference.



Contributed photo

Jordyn Taylor Roark says her students learn fast as noted by their score here.

Roark said. A social work major who will graduate in May 2018, she has taken full advantage of the opportunities available to help pay for college and to build a career.

For two years, Roark worked in paid positions in the admissions office. She conducted tours for prospective students and managed the department’s social media marketing program. A member of the Honors College, she also tutored fellow students in Math, Sociology and Psychology.

As she began to apply herself more seriously in social work studies, Roark became engaged in volunteering. First, she worked in UNCP food recovery program, which gathers leftover food from the cafeteria and prepares meals for students at the Campus Ministry.

“My biggest project was working with homeless students,” Roark said.

Working with the North Carolina Homeless Education Program, which counsels talented high school students, many of them

who grew up in foster care, to break down barriers to college attendance.

“I’ve spoken at several national conferences about this program, including in Orlando, Los Angeles and Asheville. I will speak in Chicago in October,” Roark said. “I couldn’t have had these experiences at any other school. UNCP even paid for my travel.”

Hurricane Matthew presented another challenge for the social worker in training. Roark volunteered at the Bill Sapp Center, which provided temporary shelter and served meals to refugees in the days after the hurricane.

“I put in 275 volunteer hours; I left the day it closed,” she said. “For that, I won the Pay it Forward Award at UNCP.”

Roark also made a video for a presentation on the effectiveness of service delivery after the hurricane and how the service agencies worked together. She focused on lessons

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Contributed photo

Archery instructor Jordyn Roark gives instruction to a young archer at summer camp.

learned from the post-flood period and lessons that are transferable to other communities.

Working to find temporary housing and solving other problems with the displaced victims of Hurricane Matthew gave Roark hands-on experience in social work, and it landed her a full-time job at the United Way of Robeson County.

“I’ve transitioned into a professional role at the

United Way,” she said. “We are challenged to find the resources to help people recover.”

For the future, career and archery will move forward together in some form. Roark plans to enter UNCP’s Master of Social Work program.

She is looking at two areas of social work, where she has considerable experience — homeless education and research and application of

activities like archery with children and adults in need.

“I would like to replicate the positives I’ve seen people take away from archery,” Roark said. “The attributes that the girls develop through archery can be applied to all aspects of their lives.”

Roark would also like to advance her archery skills by competing competitively. Archery is an Olympic sport, although competitive venues are few. The

sport will go forward with Roark.

“Archery is a grounding sport, a meditative sport,” Roark said. “I become completely focused, and get relief from daily stress.

“When you’re shooting you want to breath and feel every muscle. It’s a peaceful environment and a good workout. It’s the best sport.”



LOVE FOR SUSHI CONTINUES TO GROW



With origins in China and Japan, sushi is an Eastern delicacy. However, there is no denying the popularity of sushi elsewhere in the world, particularly in North America.

As with many ancient foods, sushi’s origins have an element of mystery to them. The original type of sushi is believed to

have first been developed in southeast Asia before spreading to southern China. Sushi was eventually introduced to Japan around the 8th century, where it would evolve into the type of sushi many people enjoy today. According to The History Kitchen, a division of PBS Food, one origin story for sushi involves an ancient Japanese

wives’ tale. According to that tale, an elderly woman began hiding her pots of rice in osprey nests, fearing that thieves would steal them. When she collected her pots, she found the rice had begun to ferment. She also discovered that fish scraps from the osprey’s meal had mixed into the rice. Upon sampling the mixture, she found the rice helped to preserve the fish. She also found that the resulting meal was tasty.

Early Chinese sushi involved fermenting fish on rice to preserve it. The rice was thrown away and the fish was eaten when desired. The Japanese took their own approach to sushi, deciding to eat the rice with the fish. Sushi innovator Matsumoto Yoshiichi began seasoning the sushi rice with rice wine vinegar. This made it possible to eat the sushi immediately, instead of waiting months for it to ferment.

Through the years, enterprising individuals began selling sushi to others. In the 19th century, rather than wrapping the fish in rice, sellers placed it on beds of rice and sometimes other ingredients. This presentation of sushi, credited to a man named Hanaya Yohei, became very popular. This type of sushi is called “nigiri sushi” (finger sushi). After World War II, the sushi style of presenting fish was adopted by western cultures. Sushi preparation and dining is an art form that continues to evolve. New influences have changed sushi even more by marrying traditional recipes with “fusion” styles. Demand for sushi continues to increase.

According to Statistic Brain’s sushi industry statistics, there are 16,000 sushi restaurants outside of Japan, with close to 4,000 in the United States alone. What began as a method of preserving food has transformed into a billion-dollar industry.



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FAMILIES CAN EMBRACE A MEDITERRANEAN DIET



Opting for seafood instead of red meats is one component of the Mediterranean diet, which offers a number of health benefits, including reduced risk of cardiovascular diseases.

Healthy eating is a top priority for many families. The search is always on for foods that taste good, appeal to the masses and provide adequate nutrition.

The benefits of a Mediterranean diet have been touted for years. New information has emerged that reveals the potential of the Mediterranean diet to reduce a person's risk of heart disease, including heart attack and stroke.

According to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, a diet rich in fish, nuts, fruits, vegetables, olive oil, and red wine can significantly reduce a person's risk of developing heart-related ailments. The study was the first large, randomized clinical trial to evaluate the effects of the Mediterranean diet on cardiovascular health.

The research included more than 7,000 participants, each of whom were randomly given one of three different diets. These

included a Mediterranean diet with extra virgin olive oil, a Mediterranean diet including extra nuts and a typical low-fat diet. Some of the findings include:

- * Overall risk for major cardiovascular events were lowered with the Mediterranean diet.
- * A Mediterranean diet that included extra servings of nuts cut stroke risk by 46 percent.
- * Extra servings of extra virgin olive oil reduced stroke risk by 33 percent.
- * Although the low-fat diet was most effective at lowering participants' cholesterol, it was the least effective at preventing heart attack, stroke and deaths from cardiovascular disease. This evidence debunked the common philosophy that cholesterol is the major contributor to heart health risks.

According to the British Medical Journal, a Mediterranean diet does not only provide cardiovascular benefits. It also has been shown to reduce

overall mortality, death from cancer and incidences of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. The Mayo Clinic says that the diet is composed of recipes from regions that border the Mediterranean Sea. There is a heavy emphasis placed on vegetables, lean meats, whole grains, and olive oil. Dairy, red meats and sweets are heavily limited.

Those interested in adopting a Mediterranean diet should realize it is largely a lifestyle change. Start by selecting fish and white meats over red meats. Fish can be enjoyed at least three times per week. Then incorporate more nuts, legumes and omega-rich oils into the diet. Supplementation with olive oil can include up to four tablespoons per day. Aim for eating three servings of fruit and two servings of vegetables daily.

Men and women should consult with a doctor before modifying their diet and their kids' diets.

TRY A TASTE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

In recent years, heightened awareness with regard to the health benefits of a Mediterranean diet have led many people to try it. Many delicious dishes are included in a Mediterranean diet, and for many newcomers, this approach to eating suits their lifestyles and health goals.

Offal might not be the first thing people think of when considering a Mediterranean diet, but it fits in with the Mediterranean way of cooking that uses every part of the animal. Those who want a truly Mediterranean experience can try their hands at the following recipe for "Pan-fried Kidneys with Bacon and Mustard" from Sophie Braimbridge's "Stylish Mediterranean in Minutes" (Kyle Books).

Pan-fried Kidneys with Bacon and Mustard
Serves 4

3/4	ounce dried porcini
14	ounces lamb's or calf's kidneys
1 3/4	ounces smoked bacon
1	tablespoon chopped thyme or rosemary leaves
1	garlic clove
2	tablespoons butter
1	tablespoon olive oil
2	tablespoons brandy
4	tablespoons heavy cream
2	teaspoons good-quality whole grain mustard
	Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1	tablespoon coarsely chopped flatleaf parsley to garnish

Immerse the porcini in just enough hot water to cover them (too much water results in overcooking later) and set aside to soften. Halve the kidneys lengthwise, remove the thin membrane on the outside if necessary and cut out the white fatty core. Cut into 1/2-inch cubes and set aside. Dice the bacon or cut into strips. Chop the thyme and garlic and set aside. Select a large skillet and heat up the oil and butter. When hot, add the kidneys, cooking one side until just brown, then turning to brown the other side. Season with salt and pepper and remove carefully with a slotted spoon, keeping the butter and oil in the pan. Add the bacon and cook briefly. Squeeze out the porcini, reserving the soaking liquid, and add to the pan along with the garlic and thyme. Cook, stirring frequently, until the bacon is just lightly browned. Return the kidneys to the pan along with the reserved porcini liquid, discarding any sediment at the bottom of the bowl. Then add the brandy. Cook for a few minutes to reduce the liquid until it makes a thick sauce. Add the cream and mustard, bring to a boil, and when the sauce just coats the kidneys, remove from the heat. Taste to check the seasoning and serve immediately with a scattering of the parsley, either on thin crispy toast with a small warm brioche, or with boiled rice.

STOP MAKING THESE 8 COMMON GRILLING MISTAKES



Cooking food over an open fire imparts all sorts of flavor. Grilling tends to be quicker, less messy and more convenient than cooking in the kitchen – particularly during the dog days of summer.

Outdoor grills are seemingly everywhere, including many backyards across the country. That grills are so commonplace doesn't mean that everyone grilling is employing the right techniques. Becoming the ultimate grillmaster involves understanding the subtleties of grilling and avoiding common

mistakes so food can look and taste that much better.

- 1. Not prepping the food:** The French culinary term for preparing to cook is "mise en place." This is especially important when grilling, as cooks must deal with faster cooking times than they would otherwise encounter when cooking meals in the stove.
- 2. Dirty grill:** Make sure the grill is cleaned before and after each use. Grease can quickly build up on a grill, leading to flare-ups that can cause foods to char. Frequent cleaning also helps grillmasters avoid a tiresome cleaning process at the start of the season.
- 3. Forgetting to preheat:** Preheating the grill ensures that foods will cook quickly and as evenly as possible. Otherwise, meats can lose moisture and even stick to cooler grates. Reader's Digest suggests

preheating to between 350 F and 450 F depending on the food.

- 4. Overreliance on lighter fluid:** The chemical taste of lighter fluid can transfer to foods even when the fluid is used sparingly. Consider using a chimney starter when grilling with charcoal. And avoid repeated pyrotechnics with fluid, or worse, gasoline.
- 5. Too much direct heat:** Food should not char on the outside before the inside has a chance to cook. A two-zone fire, according to food experts at Serious Eats, enables grillmasters to cook over high heat to sear and then move the food to a lower temperature to continue to cook evenly.
- 6. Playing with food:** Grilling does not require much intervention. Repeatedly flipping and squeezing meat and poultry can cause flavorful juices to leak out. Then you're left with

dried-out food. Resist any urges to prod and poke food. And minimize how many times you lift the grill cover to take a peek, as that can cause temperatures to fluctuate. Use a thermometer to determine when food is done. And don't forget that meat will still cook a bit after it's taken off the grill.

- 7. Improper seasoning:** Basting food with sugar-laden sauces and marinades too early can cause flare-ups and burning. Quick rubs can help lock in flavor, and then reserve the sauce for the last few minutes of grilling, says cookbook author Dave Martin.
- 8. Digging in too soon:** Give meats a chance to rest for between five and 10 minutes to allow the juices to redistribute through the food. This improves flavor and tenderness.

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AVOID CONTRACTION OF FOODBORNE ILLNESSES



A food thermometer helps accurately gauge food doneness to prevent illness from undercooking.

Stomach bugs are rarely pleasant. Such bugs can last several days and result in missed school or work and even turn into something more serious, like dehydration. Many stomach bugs, whether they are the result of a virus or germs brought home from school, may be the result of poorly handled food.

Foodborne illnesses cause about 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,200 deaths nationwide each year, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Under the right conditions, various bacteria can proliferate in food and result in bugs characterized by bouts of nausea or vomiting.

While many food-related

ailments are innocuous, one never knows when something ominous could be lurking in the foods one has eaten. In many cases, preventing food-related illness needs to begin even before food is brought into the home.

At the store
Shop at stores that take proper food handling seriously. Look for clean stores that properly refrigerate foods.

Inspect frozen or refrigerated foods to make sure nothing appears open or tampered with. If food is packed in clear wrapping, check to see that the food does not have a lot of ice crystals, which may mean it thawed out and then was refrozen. Select canned foods

that are in packages without dents or bulges. Dents may compromise the can's seam and let in contaminants, while bulges may indicate improper sealing or processing, contaminating the food inside the can.

Shop for perishable foods last so you minimize the amount of time they are without refrigeration. If you expect that it will take you longer than an hour to get home, consider transporting foods in insulated bags or a cooler to preserve their freshness.

At home
Do not leave foods that need to be chilled sitting out for long periods of time. Refrigerate and freeze foods promptly after unpacking them from the store

or after a meal is over. When defrosting foods, do not do so on the kitchen counter. Instead, use the refrigerator or run frozen packages under water.

All fresh produce should be rinsed thoroughly before use, even if stores say the foods have already been washed. Produce can retain bacteria from the fields where it was grown. Also wash the skins or rinds of foods before peeling or slicing, or you may transfer bacteria to the flesh of the food.

Wash and disinfect hands, utensils, cutting boards, and any other surfaces after handling raw meats and poultry. Try to contain juices from meats so they do not get all over countertops. Always use separate utensils for preparing uncooked meats and produce. Cook foods to the recommended temperature and check with a food thermometer. Keep in mind that some foods may cook unevenly, especially in microwaves. Stir and keep cooking to ensure even heat distribution.

Do not overload the refrigerator and freezer; otherwise they may not chill foods sufficiently. Check that the appliance is working properly.

Avoiding foodborne illnesses requires diligence at the store and at home. With care, members of the household can remain healthy.



DID YOU KNOW?

Many home cooks report washing raw chicken as part of their food preparatory work. Now health officials are urging people to stop this process because it could be contributing to unnecessary illnesses. It is believed that up to 80 percent of food poisoning cases are related to contaminated chicken. Raw chicken may be rife with any number of bacteria, including the harmful campylobacter bacteria, which is known to cause abdominal pain, diarrhea and vomiting. Experts say it can lead to more significant health problems as well. Rinsing chicken in the sink can spread this bacteria to the surface of the sink, nearby dishes, countertops, and other kitchen surfaces. The bacteria can then cross-contaminate other foods. To prevent food poisoning from contaminated raw chicken, always cook chicken to the correct internal food temperature for poultry, which is 165 F. Thoroughly clean and disinfect any surfaces and cookware that has been used to prepare raw chicken. After handling raw chicken, be sure to wash your hands in warm, soapy water.

SIMPLE TRICKS TO SATISFY PICKY EATERS



Experiment with food textures, such as mashing potatoes or pureeing vegetables, if kids are hesitant to eat foods as you first serve them.

Family mealtime can be challenging for a variety of reasons, including the varying taste buds of moms, dads and their kids.

Although there is no consistent definition of picky eating, according to a report published in the journal Frontiers in Pediatrics, the term is generally used to characterize children who eat a limited amount of food, have strong food preferences,

have restricted intake of certain foods, or who are unwilling to try new foods. It's difficult to account statistically for picky eating, but this relatively common behavioral problem tends to peak around age 3.

Picky eating tends to be genetic. A study led by Dr. Lucy Cooke of the department of epidemiology and public health at University College London found genes are largely to blame for picky eaters. According to her research, 78 percent of pickiness is genetic and the other 22 percent is environmental. Picky eating is a temporary part of normal development, and many of the behaviors associated with picky eating can be alleviated by open-minded, patient parents who are willing to try new things themselves.

Experiment with different textures
Sometimes it isn't the food itself but the texture of the food that is

the problem. Therefore, parents shouldn't rule out certain foods just yet. For example, a child might not like the texture of a baked potato, but mashed potatoes are fine. Try presenting the food in a different way. Cauliflower is one food that can be transformed into many different styles, from being grated like rice, to baked into a pizza crust. Don't give up on foods on the first try.

Make meals more hands-on
Many ingredients touching one another can be an overwhelming experience for children getting ready to eat. For example, young kids may not understand that melted yellow stuff on a hamburger is the same type of cheese they eat cubed with crackers for lunch. Rather than create separate meals, make the dinner table look like a fixings bar at a restaurant. Let kids pick and choose what they want to put on their plates. This may compel them to be

more adventurous with their selections.

Find ways to mask nutrition
Choose foods that children regularly eat and enjoy and experiment with ways to dress them up and make them more nutritious. Regular mac-and-cheese can be improved with the use of whole-grain pasta and fresh cheese instead of boxed mixes. Try making chicken nuggets from scratch rather than buying frozen nuggets. Smoothies can be enhanced with fresh fruit and other mix-ins. Even desserts can include pureed vegetables and fruits to increase their amount of vitamins and minerals.

Picky eating is a phase many children will experience. Parents can ride through the mealtime woes by experimenting more in the kitchen.

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General anesthesia may be indicated for children with extensive dental needs who are extremely uncooperative, fearful or anxious or for the very young who do not understand how to cope in a cooperative fashion. General anesthesia also can be helpful for children requiring significant surgical procedures or patients having special health care needs.

What are sealants?
Sealants protect the grooved and pitted surfaces of the teeth, especially the chewing surfaces of back teeth where most cavities in children are found. Made of clear or shaded plastic, sealants are applied to the teeth to help keep them cavity-free.

When should I start cleaning my baby's teeth?
The sooner the better! Starting at birth, clean your child's gums with a soft infant toothbrush or cloth and water. As soon as the teeth begin to appear, start brushing twice daily using fluoridated toothpaste and a soft, age-appropriate sized toothbrush. Use a "smear" of toothpaste to brush the teeth of a child less than 2 years of age. For the 2-5 year old, dispense a "pea-size" amount of toothpaste and perform or assist your child's tooth brushing. Remember that young children do not have the ability to brush their teeth effectively.

When should my child first see a dentist?
"First visit by first birthday" sums it up. Your child should visit a pediatric dentist when the first tooth comes in, usually between 6 and 12 months of age. This visit will establish a dental home for your child. Early examination and preventive care will protect your child's smile now and in the future.

What is fluoride?
Fluoride is a compound that contains fluorine, a natural element. Using small amounts of fluoride on a routine basis can help prevent tooth decay. In areas where fluoride does not occur naturally, it may be added to community water supplies. Research shows that community water fluoridation has lowered decay rate by over 50 percent, which means that fewer children grow up with cavities. Fluoride can be found as an active ingredient in many dental products such as toothpaste, mouth rinses, gels, and varnish.

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS FOR A BETTER NIGHT’S SLEEP



The importance of a good night’s sleep is well-documented. Numerous studies have found that the effects of a good night’s sleep go beyond boosting energy levels and improving alertness. A better sex life, less chronic pain and an improved mood are just a handful of the documented benefits that a good night’s sleep can provide.

As important and beneficial as sleep is, many adults in the United States simply aren’t getting enough rest. A 2016 study from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that more than one-third of American adults are not getting enough sleep on a regular basis. Those findings are based on guidelines from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the Sleep Research Society that recommend adults between the ages of 18 and 60 sleep at least seven hours each night.

Getting a more restful night’s sleep requires concerted efforts on the part of adults who are falling short of seven hours each night. But the following are some simple ways for adults to start getting more rest.

- Stick to a routine seven days a week. People tend to alter their sleep routines based on the day of the week, with many going to bed later at night and sleeping in later in the morning on weekends. But the National Sleep Foundation notes that going to bed at the same time each day, including weekends, helps people feel more sleepy at bedtime and fall asleep quickly.

- Avoid alcohol in the hours before going to bed. Alcohol can make people feel sleepy, but that effect is short-lived. The sleepiness many people feel after consuming alcohol wears off quickly, and that can lead to interruptions in sleep.

- Avoid stimulants in the late afternoon and at night. Alcohol is a depressant that can affect the quality of sleep a person gets. But stimulants can also make it hard to get a good night’s sleep. Nicotine acts as a stimulant in small doses, so smokers should stop smoking that last cigarette before bedtime if they’re not getting decent or adequate sleep. Caffeinated beverages also should be avoided in the late afternoon and at night because

caffeine stimulates the nervous system and can make it difficult to fall asleep, even if it’s been several hours since that last cup of coffee.

- Take short daytime naps. Some people find that daytime naps improve the quality of their nighttime sleep. That might be due to the link between naps and stress. A 2015 study published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism found that short naps can reduce stress. Reduced stress levels can make it easier to fall asleep at night. Limit naps to between 20 and 30 minutes, as naps that stretch on too long may interfere with nighttime sleep.

Sufficient sleep can have a dramatic, positive impact on a person’s quality of life. Developing a good sleep routine and employing additional strategies can help sleep-deprived men and women get more restful nights’ sleep.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the National Sleep Foundation, using a computer or electronic device before bed can make it hard to fall asleep. Studies have shown that even small electronic devices like smartphones can emit enough light to confuse the brain. Photoreceptors in the retina sense light and dark, helping to align circadian rhythms to the external day-night cycle. The signals these receptors send to the brain help people be alert in the morning and fall asleep at night. But using devices such as smartphones, tablets or laptop computers before bed can miscue the brain and promote wakefulness at a time when the body should be falling asleep. Men and women who like to read before going to bed can increase their chances of getting a good night’s sleep by reading print books or print editions of magazines or newspapers rather than e-readers or tablets.

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HOW TO FIND TIME FOR FITNESS



Many adults admit to having little or no time to exercise, and statistics support the notion that men and women simply aren't exercising enough. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, only 21 percent of adults ages 18 and older met the physical activity guidelines for aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity (Note: The World Health Organization recommends that healthy adults between the ages of 18 and 64 should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or do at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week, while also performing muscle-strengthening activities involving the major muscle groups at least two days per week.)

Commitments to work and family can make it hard to find time to visit the gym or exercise at home. But the benefits

of regular exercise are so substantial that even the busiest adults should make concerted efforts to find time to exercise. The following are a handful of ways to do just that.

- Embrace multitasking. Many professionals are adept at multitasking in the office, and those same skills can be applied when trying to find time for exercise. Instead of plopping down on the couch to watch television, bring a tablet to the gym or the basement and stream a favorite show while on the treadmill or the elliptical. When running errands around town, ride a bicycle or walk instead of driving.

- Cut down on screen time. A 2016 report from The Nielsen Company revealed that the

average adult in the United States spent more than 10 hours each day consuming media. That includes time spent using smartphones, tablets, personal computers, and other devices.

By reducing that screen time by just one hour per day, adults can create enough free time to meet the WHO-recommended exercise requirements.

- Make it a group effort. Involving others can make it easier for adults to find time to exercise. Instead of hosting work meetings in a conference room, take the meeting outside, walking around the office complex while discussing projects rather than sitting stationary around a conference table. At home, take the family along to the gym or go for nightly post-dinner walks

In lieu of traditional date nights, couples looking to find time to exercise can enroll in classes at the gym or exercise together when they would otherwise be dining out.

around the neighborhood instead of retiring to the living room to watch television.

- Redefine date night. Adults who can't find time for exercise during the week can redefine date night with their significant others. Instead of patronizing a local restaurant on Friday or Saturday night, enroll in a fitness class together. Parents can still hire babysitters to look after their youngsters while they go burn calories instead of packing them on at local eateries.

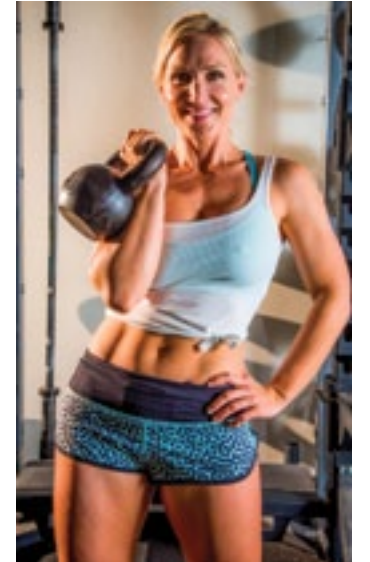
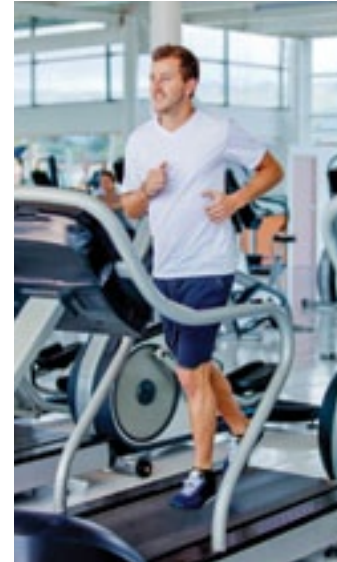
Finding time to exercise can be difficult for busy adults. But those committed to getting healthier can find ways to do so even when their schedules are booked.

DID YOU KNOW?

Outdoor exercise can benefit both the planet and the people doing the exercising. By exercising outdoors instead of at home or at indoor fitness centers, men and women can reduce their carbon footprints. Exercising in the great outdoors does not require the use of energy-consuming fitness machines. In addition, when exercising outdoors during daylight hours, nature provides all the light men and women will need for their workouts, further reducing the average person's energy consumption. And it's not just adults who can benefit from spending more time outdoors. According to the Harvard Medical School, children are likely to get more exercise if they spend time outdoors than they are if they spend time indoors. A study from researchers in England used GPS devices and accelerometers to track the activity of 1,000 children. The children were more than twice as active when they were outside than they were when they were inside. When children spend ample time outdoors, that, too, can benefit the environment. According to the National Institutes of Health, the average youngster spends three hours per day watching television and gets as much as seven hours of screen time each day. When kids are outdoors, they are less likely to be staring at energy-consuming screens and devices than they are when they're indoors.



SIMPLE WAYS TO AVOID INJURIES WHEN WORKING OUT



A desire to live a healthy, active life compels many people to include exercise in their daily routines. Numerous studies have shown that regular workouts that include a combination of strength training and cardiovascular exercise can make bodies less susceptible to injury while reducing a person's risk for conditions such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Exercising is most effective when it's part of a daily routine, but that routine can be derailed if men and women are not taking the appropriate measures to avoid injury while working out. While even professional athletes succumb to injury from time to time, there are steps everyone can take to avoid injury when working out.

- Confirm your technique is the right one. Exercise science is continuously evolving, and that means workouts and fitness machines are evolving as well. When using a piece of equipment for the first time or altering a workout routine, men and women should

consult with a gym employee or personal trainer to learn the correct technique. Incorrect technique can lead to minor and serious injuries because muscles are used in ways they are not intended to be used when exercises are performed properly. Research appropriate techniques, taking advantage of online video tutorials if you don't exercise at a gym, to ensure the exercises you want to perform are done properly. When beginning a new routine, ask a friend or gym employee to observe your workout and let you know if you are doing anything incorrectly.

- Be patient. Lifting too much weight or pushing yourself too hard on the treadmill, exercise bike or elliptical machine will increase your risk of injury. This is especially true for men and women working out for the first time or after lengthy stretches of inactivity. Men and women

who are elderly, inactive and/or overweight are likely to suffer from poor balance because their muscles are weak. Those muscles can be strengthened over time, but remain patient and stick to light weight during initial workouts so lack of balance does not lead to pain or injury. Take the same approach with aerobic exercise to prevent muscle strains and pulls.

Increase weight and the intensity of cardiovascular exercises as muscles gradually strengthen and become accustomed to exercise.

- Allow for adequate time to warm up.

Failure to warm up is another contributor to exercise-related injury. Before diving into a workout routine, spend between five and 10 minutes warming up your body with some low-intensity exercises. This increases blood flow to the muscles and makes them more elastic and pliable than cold

muscles, thereby improving flexibility. Some low-intensity cardiovascular exercise on the stationary bike or treadmill can greatly reduce injury risk during the workout.

- Vary workouts and exercise regularly. Varying workouts is a good idea because doing so can prevent repetitive-use injuries and prevent overuse of muscles. Repetitive-use injuries such as shin splints and tendinitis require extended rest to heal, and that can derail your routine and nullify your progress. Vary workouts so you are not always working the same muscles, and don't mistake varying workouts for varying workout schedules. Working out five days one week and one day the next increases your risk of injury.

Injuries sometimes happen when exercising. But veteran and novice fitness enthusiasts can employ a handful of simple strategies to greatly reduce their risk of injury while working out.



COMMON CAUSES OF CANCER THAT PEOPLE CAN CONTROL



Alcohol is one potential contributor to cancer that men and women can control.

A cancer diagnosis can be shocking. After receiving such news, many people are filled with questions such as, “How did I get this disease?” That question often has no definitive answer, though physicians may be able to work with patients to determine the various factors that contributed to their cancer diagnosis.

Cancer does not discriminate. People from all walks of life are diagnosed with cancer every day. Certain contributors, such as family history of cancer, may be beyond a person’s control. But the American Cancer Society notes that people can avoid some potential cancer contributors by making healthy choices.

Tobacco
Anti-smoking campaigns have done much to impact the number of people who smoke, but tobacco remains one of the leading causes of cancer across the globe. The ACS notes that while cigarettes, cigars and pipe tobacco are made from dried tobacco leaves, in order to make smoking more flavorful and pleasant, tobacco companies

add various substances. As the resulting products burn, the smoke they produce is made up of thousands of chemicals, at least 70 of which are carcinogens.

Some smokers may not give the smoke coming from their cigarettes much thought, but that smoke contains chemicals such as formaldehyde, lead, arsenic, and carbon monoxide. Recognizing that the smoke from their cigarettes is sending formaldehyde into their air may lead some smokers to quit for good.

Alcohol
Alcohol consumption can raise a person’s risk of getting cancer. Alcohol has been linked to cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and breast, among others. The ACS notes that regular, heavy alcohol use can damage the liver and cause inflammation and scarring that might increase a person’s risk of developing liver cancer. Women who consume a few alcoholic beverages may be increasing their risk of developing breast cancer, which the ACS believes



might be a byproduct of alcohol’s affect on estrogen levels in the body.

Evidence suggests that the ethanol found in alcohol is what increases a person’s risk of developing cancer. All alcohol beverages contain ethanol, so drinkers should not assume that one type of alcohol is safer than another.

Diet and sedentary lifestyle
According to the ACS, research has shown that poor diet coupled with a sedentary lifestyle can increase a person’s risk of getting cancer. In fact, the World Cancer Research Fund estimates that roughly 20 percent of all cancer diagnoses in the United States are related to body fatness, physical inactivity, excessive alcohol consumption, and/or poor nutrition. Men and women who can control their weight and maintain a healthy weight throughout their lives can reduce their risk of getting cancer as well as other conditions, including heart disease and diabetes.

Anyone can be diagnosed with cancer. But men and women who make healthy choices can greatly reduce their risk of getting this deadly disease.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the American Cancer Society, certain viruses, bacteria and parasites are now recognized as risk factors for cancer. While the percentage of cancers linked to infections is higher in developing countries than it is in first world countries such as the United States, between 15 and 20 percent of cancers across the globe can be connected to infections. Infections can increase a person’s risk of developing cancer in various ways. In some instances, a virus can insert its own genes into an otherwise healthy cell, causing the cell to grow out of control. In other cases, infections cause long-term inflammation in a particular area of the body, leading to changes in the affected cells and in immune cells that are nearby. Those changes can eventually lead to cancer. Certain infections can compromise the immune system to such a great extent that it is no longer capable of fully protecting the body from some cancers. While infections can increase a person’s risk for cancer, the ACS notes that many people who develop the types of infections that have been linked to cancer do not ultimately receive a cancer diagnosis.

THE RISK FACTORS FOR MELANOMA



Exposure to the sun increases a person's risk of developing melanoma, a potentially deadly form of skin cancer.

A form of cancer that develops in the pigment-making cells of the skin known as the melanocytes, melanoma is a relatively rare form of skin cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, melanoma is more dangerous than basal and squamous cell skin cancers, which are the most common types of the disease, because it is likely to metastasize if not detected early.

No one is invulnerable to the potential threat posed by melanoma, though some people are at greater risk of the disease than others. The following are some of the risk factors for melanoma, courtesy of the Skin Cancer Foundation.

Sun exposure
Exposure to the sun can increase a person’s risk factor for various forms of skin cancer, including melanoma. The SCF notes that blistering sunburns suffered in early childhood especially increase a person’s risk of developing melanoma, though sunburns later in life also can increase that risk. In addition, people who live in places that get substantial sunlight, such

as Florida and Hawaii, tend to develop more skin cancers than people who live in areas with less sunlight. Tanning booths and beds also increase exposure to ultraviolet rays, which increase one’s melanoma risk.

Moles

The more moles a person has on his or her skin, the greater his or her risk for melanoma. There are two types of moles: normal moles and atypical moles. Normal moles are small, brown blemishes or beauty marks that appear in the first few decades of life. Many people develop such moles. Atypical moles known as “dysplastic nevi” can be precursors to melanoma, and people with such moles are at greater risk of developing the disease. It can be difficult to

distinguish between normal and atypical moles, though the SCF notes that atypical moles that itch, bleed, crust, ooze, swell, or are elevated from the skin might be in particular danger of becoming melanomas. Atypical moles that are bluish-black in color or become persisting open sores are also at greater risk of becoming melanomas.

Skin type

People with fair skin are at greater risk of various types of skin cancers, including melanomas. Such is also the case for people with light-colored hair and eyes.

Weakened immune system

People whose immune systems have been compromised are at greater risk of developing melanoma than those whose immune systems are working at full strength. Chemotherapy, organ transplant surgery, excessive exposure to the sun, and diseases such as HIV/AIDS can weaken the immune system.

Family history

The SCF notes that roughly 10 percent of people diagnosed with melanoma have a family member who also has been diagnosed. People whose mother, father, siblings or children have developed melanoma are considered to be in families that are prone to melanoma. In fact, each person with a first-degree relative who has been diagnosed with melanoma has a 50 percent greater chance of developing the disease than someone with no such family connection.

Melanoma is a potentially deadly form of skin cancer. People with a family history of the disease or those who spend substantial time in the sun should be especially vigilant about protecting their skin.

Cancer terms to know

· **Ablation:** Ablation, or ablative therapy, is treatment that removes or destroys all or part of a cancer. Ablation may also refer to removing or stopping the function of an organ, such as when ovaries are removed to prevent them from making hormones.

· **Bilateral:** When cancer is bilateral, it is present on both sides of the body. This term may be used to describe the presence of breast cancer in both breasts.

· **Biopsy:** A biopsy is the removal of a small amount of tissue for examination under a microscope to determine if cancer is present.

· **Carcinoma:** Cancer that begins in the lining layer of organs. The ACS notes that 80 percent of all cancers are carcinomas.

· **Chemotherapy:** A form of cancer treatment that employs drugs to kill cancer cells.

· **Five-year survival rate:** The percentage of people with a particular cancer who are alive five years or longer after diagnosis. Five-year survival rates generally improve the earlier the cancer is detected.

· **Hemoglobin:** The part of a red blood cell that carries oxygen and is often measured in complete blood count. That count can get very low in people who have cancer.

· **In situ:** In situ refers to cancer that has not spread from its point of origin to nearby tissue.

· **Invasive cancer:** Contrary to cancer described as “in situ,” cancer described as “invasive” has spread outside the layer of tissue in which it started and can potentially spread to other parts of the body.

· **Metastasize:** The spread of cancer cells to one or more sites elsewhere in the body, often via the lymph system or bloodstream.

· **Oncologist:** A doctor who specializes in treating patients with cancer. There are various types of oncologists, including surgical oncologists and pediatric oncologists.

· **Precancerous:** Cells described as “precancerous” have the potential to become cancerous.

· **Sarcoma:** Cancer that develops in the tissues that support and connect the body, including fat and muscle.

· **Stage:** A way to describe cancer that may refer to its location, where it has spread and whether or not it is affecting the function of other organs in the body.

HOW TO GET A HANDLE ON WORK-RELATED STRESS



Work-related stress is an all too common problem in workplaces across the globe. According to the American Institute of Stress, 80 percent of workers report feeling stress on the job. Perhaps most troubling, nearly half of those people admit they need help in learning how to manage their stress.

The American Psychological Association notes that stressful work environments can contribute to a host of physical problems, including headache, sleep disturbances and short temper. Chronic stress can produce more serious consequences such as high blood pressure while also weakening sufferers’ immune systems.

Stress at the workplace also can make it difficult to concentrate, which in turn can compromise workers’ abilities to perform at the peak of their abilities. That supports the notion that stress is a problem for both employees and employers. As a result, finding ways to reduce that stress should be a team effort.

Getting a handle on stress can be difficult. Since so many people trace their stress to the jobs they need to get by, they might think it’s impossible to address that stress without derailing their careers. But there are a handful of ways for professionals to get a handle on their stress without negatively affecting their careers.

- Speak up about your stress. As noted, stress at the workplace can affect workers’ performance, which employers are looking to optimize. Workers can speak to their employers if they feel their work environments are conducive to stress. Work in tandem with an employer to develop time-saving strategies that make it easier to get work done on time. Supervisors may encourage employees to delegate more often, freeing up time to get their work done. Employers may also direct employees to wellness resources that can help them more effectively combat stress. The outcomes of such discussions may never be known if workers never take the initiative and speak up about their stress.

- Take more time off. According to the “State of American Vacation 2016” report from Project: Time Off, American workers failed to use 658 million vacation days in 2015. Vacation is not just a time to get away, but a valuable, effective way for workers to recharge. The APA notes that avoiding the negative effects of chronic stress and burnout requires workers to take time away to replenish and return to their pre-stress level of functioning. Taking time off to disconnect from work and avoid thinking about work can be just what workers need to overcome their work-related stress. And plenty of workers have the time to take off; they just need to take it.

- Embrace relaxation methods. The APA recommends professionals coping with workplace stress embrace techniques that can effectively alleviate stress. Such techniques include meditation and deep-breathing exercises and can help workers develop their ability to focus purposefully on a single activity. That improved focus may help workers better navigate hectic working environments without succumbing to the stress such environments can produce. Work-related stress is a significant issue for many professionals. But working in tandem with their employers can help professionals effectively cope with that stress.

DEPRESSION COMMON BUT TREATABLE



It’s normal to experience feelings of sadness and grief from time to time. But when these feelings are prolonged or interfere with daily life, they may be symptomatic of depression.

Depression can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or economic status. The National

Institute of Mental Health says around 350 million people worldwide suffer from depression. Understanding depression can help those dealing with the disorder.

What is depression?
Depression is a mood disorder

that causes persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest. The Mayo Clinic says depression can produce a variety of symptoms and affect the way a person thinks, acts and feels. Symptoms may include changes in sleeping patterns, anxiety, fatigue, weight gain or weight loss, unexplained aches and pains, and difficulty concentrating.

What causes depression?
Although the cause of depression remains a mystery, certain distinguishing factors are common among those who have the condition. People with clinical depression appear to have physical changes in their brains. In addition, naturally occurring brain chemicals known as neurotransmitters likely play a role in depression. The Mayo Clinic states changes in the function and effect of these neurotransmitters and how they interact with neurocircuits involved in maintaining mood stability may play a significant role in depression and its treatment.

In addition to biological factors in the brain, hormones can impact rates of depression or even trigger it. These hormone shifts may be a leading reason why women have higher incidence rates of depression than men. Depression is more common in people whose blood relatives also have the condition. Therefore, those with a family

history of depression may be more likely to get it than those without such a connection.

Different types of depression There are different types of depression. A person may have a single bout of major depression or recurring episodes. Depression that lasts two or more years is called persistent depressive disorder. A less common type of depression is called manic-depressive illness. This involves cycles of depression that alternate with extreme highs, or manias.

Treating depression
Depression is a very treatable condition. Psychotherapy (talk therapy), medications or a combination thereof can be very effective in managing symptoms. Mental health professionals can work with individuals to find the right therapy based on symptoms and severity of the depression. Also, it may take some time to find the right medication or treatment; therefore, people are urged to remain patient and hopeful.

The National Institute of Mental Health says people who suspect they may be suffering from depression should make an appointment to see a doctor or health care provider. The sooner action is taken, the more quickly the condition can be addressed.

The NIMH indicates that women are 70 percent more likely than men to experience depression during the course of their lifetimes, largely due to hormones. Elevated rates of depression among women also may be due to the fact that they tend to be more vocal and proactive in seeking help.

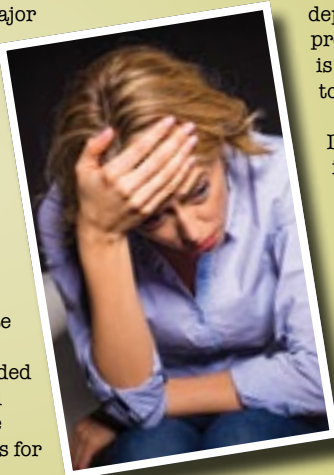
According to Gail Lovallo, LCSW, owner of Peaceful Living Counseling Services, LLC, depression can be linked to any number of factors. Depression may result from a particularly traumatic episode in one’s life and often accompanies post-traumatic stress disorder. Individuals can become depressed when diagnosed with a disease. Women may experience post-partum depression after childbirth. A considerable percentage of people experience depression when seasons change, and that could be caused by the reduction of exposure to natural sunlight when fall gives way to winter. Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is often more

common the farther north one lives. Depression can affect one’s home and work life. In the journal Depression and Anxiety, a study analyzed depression statistics from the Canadian National Population Health Survey and found that major depression doubled a person’s chance of becoming divorced or separated. Others may face job loss thanks to lack of productivity or missed days.

While depression is common, it also is highly treatable. Various therapies exist to mitigate symptoms and restore people to more well-rounded lifestyles. Counseling and medication are two of the more common treatments for

depression. According to Psych Central, the Internet’s largest and oldest independent mental health social network, 60 to 70 percent of depressed patients who are given an antidepressant recover from their depression in three to six weeks, provided that the medication dosage is correct and the patient continues to take the medicine as directed.

Depression can be a devastating illness that seemingly comes out of the blue. However, it’s important for people to realize that depression is common and treatment methods are quite effective. Consult with a primary care doctor or a mental health professional if you believe you are experiencing depression.



PAGE TALK

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THE BENEFITS OF READING



Many people are avid readers, feeling that a good book remains the most entertaining form of escapism. But reading provides more than just an opportunity to leave the daily grind behind.

While many people may read to immerse themselves in something other than a movie or a television show, they may not know about all the additional benefits they are enjoying when cuddling up with a good book.

- Reading can improve brain function. A recent study from researchers at Emory University discovered that reading a novel can improve brain function in various ways. During the study, researchers found that reading fiction improves connectivity in the brain. In addition, reading fiction improved readers' ability to put themselves in other peoples' shoes, which might help

them relate better to people in both the present and future.

- Reading can benefit long-term brain health. While readers engrossed in a great book might only be worried about what's coming on the next page, the benefits to reading are much more long-term than the next chapter. Researchers at the Rush University Medical Center in Chicago found that reading is one of a handful of mentally stimulating activities that can benefit brain health in old age. In their Rush Memory and Aging Project, researchers examined nearly 300 elderly men and women, giving them tests of memory and thinking throughout the final years of their lives. When participants, who were surveyed as to how often they engaged in mentally stimulating activities such as reading, passed away, their

brains were examined for signs of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Researchers discovered that the participants who engaged in mentally challenging activities most often had slower rates of memory decline. In addition, even those who had symptoms of brain damage that are commonly associated with Alzheimer's and dementia seemed to benefit from the stimulation that mentally challenging activities produced.

- Reading can help reduce stress. Another big benefit of reading is its relationship to stress. According to a 2009 study from researchers at the University of Sussex in England, reading can reduce stress by up to 68 percent. In addition, reading might help relieve that stress even faster than other forms of stress relief because it allows for a more immediate

escape from the stress of daily life.

- Reading can help you get a more restful night's sleep. According to the National Sleep Foundation, engaging in a calming activity for an hour before going to bed can help your body wind down and ready itself for sleep. Some people may struggle to fall asleep after reading on an electronic device, such as a tablet or e-reader, as the light that emanates from such devices may be activating the brain. If need be, stick to reading traditional print books and magazines before going to bed.

Reading is not only a favorite activity for many people, but it's also something that can benefit the body in myriad ways.



According to a paper from researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, reading can stimulate the brain to produce more white matter. White matter works together with gray matter and is responsible for sending sensory and motor stimuli to the central nervous system to stimulate a response. Healthy white matter keeps the central nervous system working effectively and may reduce risk of learning disabilities as well as impaired motor functions.

The educational benefits of reading are widely known. But reading also provides a host of other benefits.

Research has shown that reading and engaging the brain in other ways, such as through intellectual games and puzzles, can stave off dementia. These activities stimulate the cells in the brain to grow and connect, increasing the power of brain tissue. According to the Alzheimer's Association, keeping the mind active through reading can strengthen connections between brain cells and build up brain cell reserves. Mental activity might even generate new brain cells. All of these factors can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, obsessive-compulsive disorder, often referred to as "OCD," is a common, chronic and long-lasting disorder. When a person has OCD, he or she has uncontrollable, reoccurring thoughts, or obsessions, and behaviors, or compulsions, that he or she feels an urge to repeat over and over. Common symptoms that a person is suffering from obsessions associated with OCD are a fear of germs or contamination; unwanted forbidden or taboo thoughts involving sex, religion and harm; aggressive thoughts towards others or oneself; and an urge to have things symmetrical or in a perfect order. Examples of compulsions associated with OCD include excessive cleaning and/or handwashing; ordering and arranging things in a particular, precise way; repeatedly checking on things, such as checking to ensure the oven has been turned off; and compulsive counting. While many people experience one or more of these symptoms from time to time, those who cannot control their thoughts and behaviors, even when they are recognized as excessive, may be suffering from OCD. In addition, the amount of time a person spends on these thoughts or behaviors may be indicative of OCD. The NIMH notes that people with OCD generally spend at least one hour per day dealing with obsessions or compulsions.



MUSIC CAN BE BENEFICIAL TO OVERALL HEALTH

Studies have shown that music can have a beneficial impact on both mental and physical health. In a meta-analysis of 400 studies, researchers at McGill University in Montreal found that music can reduce stress and boost the immune system. That's because listening to music increases the body's production of immunoglobulin A, an antibody that plays an critical role in the function of the immune system and cells that attack viruses. A 2013 study even found that music can help children during visits to the emergency room. Researchers at the University of Alberta studied 42 children between the ages of 3 and 11, discovering that those who listened to relaxing music while having an IV inserted reported less pain than children who did not listen to music. In addition, children who listened to music during the administration of the IV exhibited less anguish than the children who did not listen to music. Healthcare workers even noted the ease of administering IVs to children who were listening to music compared to patients who were not listening to music.

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FALL LAWN CARE TIPS



to sit on the ground for extended periods of time can have an adverse effect on grass. Leaves left to sit on the lawn may ultimately suffocate the grass by forming an impenetrable wall that deprives the lawn of sunlight and oxygen. The result is dead grass and possibly even fungal disease. Leaves may not need to be raked every day, but homeowners should periodically rake and remove leaves from their grass, even if there are plenty left to fall still hanging on the trees.

- **Repair bald spots.** Summer exacts a toll on lawns in various ways, and even homeowners with green thumbs may end up with a lawn filled with bald spots come September. Autumn is a great time to repair these bald spots. Lawn repair mixes like Scotts® PatchMaster contain mulch, seed and fertilizer to repair bald spots, which can begin to recover in as little as seven days. Before applying such products, remove dead grass and loosen the top few inches of soil. Follow any additional manufacturer instructions as well.

- **Aerate the turf.** Aerating reduces soil compacting, facilitating the delivery of fertilizer and water to a lawn's roots. While many homeowners, and particularly those who take

pride in tending to their own lawns, can successfully aerate their own turf, it's best to first have soil tested so you know which amendments to add after the ground has been aerated. Gardening centers and home improvement stores sell soil testing kits that measure the pH of soil, but homeowners who want to test for nutrients or heavy metals in their soil may need to send their samples to a lab for further testing.



Fall lawn care provides a great reason to spend some time in the yard before the arrival of winter.

homeowners may wait to pick up a rake until all of the trees on their properties are bare. However, allowing fallen leaves

Spring and summer may be the seasons most often associated with landscaping and lawn care, but tending to lawns and gardens is a year-round job. If lawn and garden responsibilities dip considerably in winter, then fall is the last significant chance before the new year that homeowners will have to address the landscaping around their homes.

more sunlight to reach the grass in the months ahead.

- **Remove leaves as they fall.** Much like apple-picking and foliage, raking leaves is synonymous with fall. Some

Fall lawn care differs from spring and summer lawn care, even if the warm temperatures of summer linger into autumn. Homeowners who want their lawns to thrive year-round can take advantage of the welcoming weather of fall to address any existing or potential issues.

- **Keep mowing,** but adjust how you mow. It's important that homeowners continue to mow their lawns so long as grass is growing. But as fall transitions into winter, lower the blades so the grass is cut shorter while remaining mindful that no blade of grass should ever be trimmed by more than one-third. Lowering the blades will allow

CREATIVE USES FOR FALLEN LEAVES

Millions of leaves fall from tree boughs each fall. Homeowners and landscaping professionals will spend countless hours removing leaves from lawns and driveways so they can be collected and ultimately added to compost piles or removed by local governments.

But leaves do not necessarily have to meet with the same fate each year. In fact, there are many creative ways to use leaves gathered from lawns and gardens.

- **Scarecrow:** Gather a decent pile of leaves and the makings of a scarecrow, which include hay, old clothing, string, and canvas. Use the leaves to help stuff the body of the scarecrow and make him a bit more plump.

- **Vases:** Fill an empty flower vase with different leaves that you have gathered. This makes for an engaging centerpiece when entertaining.

- **Pressings:** Press leaves between two pieces of paper to make a leaf silhouette. Some of the pigment will transfer to the paper, and these natural pieces of artwork can be displayed or shared.

- **Laminate:** Laminate leaves so they can be used as place cards when hosting guests for holiday feasts.

Put these ideas to the test to make fallen leaves part of your unique home decor.



TYPES OF FIREPITS FOR YOUR BACKYARD OASIS



Outdoor entertaining areas are popular among homeowners, and firepits are one of the most sought-after additions to such spaces. In fact, a 2016 survey from the American Society of Landscape Architects found that fireplaces and firepits were the most popular outdoor design element in 2016. Various styles are available to homeowners who want to add firepits to their backyards, and choosing the right type may come down to budget, the amount of yard space available or even personal preference.

- **Wood firepit:** As their name suggests, wood firepits burn wood, which may appeal to homeowners who already have wood-burning fireplaces inside their homes. Because they don't require homeowners to tap into gas lines, wood firepits are generally easy to set up and install, and many homeowners prefer the aesthetic appeal of crackling wood and flames that's synonymous with wood firepits.

- **Gas firepit:** Gas firepits are touted for their convenience, as they don't require homeowners

to carry wood and build fires. Upon being connected to a gas source, gas firepits provide fire at the click of a switch. Gas firepits are also appreciated for their safety, as there is little or no risk that flames from gas firepits will grow too large and become difficult to control.

- **Gas fire tables:** Gas fire tables might be ideal for those homeowners whose sense of decor favors more modern looks. Gas fire tables come in a variety of shapes and sizes and, like gas firepits, there's no need to

struggle with lighting a fire or carrying firewood.

- **Tabletop firepits:** Homeowners, condominium or apartment dwellers with limited backyard space may want to consider the convenience of tabletop firepits. Restaurants may use tabletop firepits in their outdoor seating areas because they provide warmth and ambiance without taking up much space. Tabletop firepits fueled by gas will not need to be connected to a gas source, which may appeal to consumers who want something that's simple as well as small.

- **Fire urns:** While they might not technically qualify as firepits, fire urns provide a similar effect as firepits. Fire urns are typically gas-powered and may be an ideal choice for homeowners who are looking for a unique, awe-inspiring feature for their outdoor entertaining areas.

COLD WEATHER OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING

According to the American Home Furnishings Alliance's 2015 Outdoor Furniture Trend Report, out-of-doors areas on a property are the favored venues for celebrations with family and friends. While outdoor entertaining was once relegated to the warm weather seasons, advancements in technology have now made it more comfortable and enjoyable to entertain outdoors for much of the year. But hosts who want to extend the outdoor party after summer has come and gone should consider a few important entertaining tips.

- **Start the party early.** Summertime backyard barbecues and pool parties benefit from late-evening sunsets that illuminate patios and pool areas well into the evening. In addition, many hosts prefer to start such parties later in the day to avoid the sun during the early afternoon when it is at its most blazing. However, start the

party earlier in the day when hosting in fall or early winter. Temperatures can drop considerably once the sun begins to set, so starting early can save hosts and their guests from cold air.

- **Heat things up.** Summertime hosts might employ canopies to protect themselves and their guests from the heat, and it's important for hosts to take similar steps when the weather is chillier. The AHFA report found that 38 percent of homeowners intended to purchase fire pits for their outdoor entertaining areas, and such fire pits can keep guests warm as the sun goes down and the night air gets chilly. Fire pits have become must-have items for outdoor entertaining areas, and hosts can surely find one that suits their needs.

- **Change the menu.** Grilling hot dogs and hamburgers might still work when entertaining outdoors in fall and winter, but hosts may want to stray from other

summertime fare like watermelon or pasta salad. Embrace the cold weather by roasting some nuts and making s'mores over an open fire. In lieu of summertime beverages like lemonade and beer, serve hot chocolate or wine to keep guests warm.

- **Ensure there is adequate lighting.** Mother Nature won't offer much lighting when you host a party outdoors in late fall and early winter, so make sure your patios and sidewalks are well lit. Guests will want to see one another and what they're eating, and well-lit walkways will reduce the risk that guests take a tumble or turn their ankles when walking to and from the house.

Outdoor entertaining need not end because summer has come and gone. But hosts must take a different approach to hosting when throwing outdoor gatherings in late fall and early winter.



HOME IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS FOR YOUR FALL TO-DO LIST



Autumn is a great time to inspect patios that might have endured some wear and tear during the heavy usage seasons of spring and summer.

Homeowners know that maintaining a home can be a year-round job. No home is immune to wear and tear, and homeowners who want to protect their real estate investments should try to stay two steps ahead to ensure their homes do not succumb to the elements or become outdated and unappealing to prospective buyers.

Fall has become a season that's synonymous with home improvement, but homeowners need not wait until the leaves begin changing colors to start planning their next projects. The following are a few items homeowners can add to their fall home improvement to-do lists.

Roof inspection

Less precipitation tends to fall during the warmer months than during the late fall and winter. As a result, homeowners may not be aware of leaky roofs until autumn has come and gone. But waiting until winter to inspect the roof can prove disastrous, as weather conditions will not

be conducive to inspection and increased precipitation may result in potentially costly damage. Leaky roofs can be easily identified by looking for water stains on interior ceilings. Once you see a stain, you can climb onto the roof to identify the location of the leak and fix it before winter rains and snowfall turn the problem into something much larger. Inspect your ceilings for signs of leaking after a strong rainfall, and then address any leaks immediately.

Gutter cleaning

While some homeowners prefer to delay their gutter cleaning projects until late fall, those whose homes are surrounded by trees may need to schedule two such projects. Gutters clogged with leaves and other debris can cause serious roof damage, and that damage can extend all the way inside a home. In addition, clogged gutters make great nesting areas for insects or critters. Always stand on a ladder when cleaning gutters, wearing gloves to remove items by hand and dropping leaves and

debris into a trash can below. Standing on the roof and leaning over gutters greatly increases your risk of injury. If the gutters are clear when you first examine them in early fall, you can wait until later in the season to give them a complete and thorough cleaning. Once you have finished clearing the gutters, you can use a hose to run water through them and the downspouts to confirm everything is functioning properly.

Window and doorway inspection

Before temperatures start dropping once again, homeowners will want to inspect their windows and doorways for leaks. Over time, cracks can develop around windows and doorways, and while such cracks are rarely noticeable when the weather outside is warm, they can be quite obvious and very costly if they remain unsealed come the start of winter. Cold air can enter a home through cracks around windows and doorways, and many homeowners who don't suspect leaks may respond

by turning up the thermostats in their homes. That can prove quite expensive over a full winter. Choose a windy autumn day to place a hand by windows and external doorways in your home to see if you can feel drafts. If you can, seal these cracks as soon as possible.

Patio cleanup

Patios are popular hangouts during spring and summer, and that can result in a lot of wear and tear. Once you store patio furniture for the winter, inspect your entire patio to determine if it needs any refurbishing. While certain patio projects may be best left for spring, you can still clean any stained areas around the grill and look for cracks in the sidewalk that need to be addressed.

Preparing for fall home improvement projects ahead of time can help homeowners complete projects in a timely manner and ensures they won't be forced to brave the winter elements when refurbishing their homes.

MAXIMIZE FALL AND WINTER ENERGY SAVINGS WITH SIMPLE TIPS



As temperatures decrease during the fall and winter months, energy usage and costs tend to climb. These five energy-saving tips for your home will ensure the comfort of your family and your wallet.

1. Adjust your thermostat. Lower the heat on your thermostat while you are away

from home and before you go to bed. Better yet, invest in a programmable thermostat so you don't have to give it a second thought.

2. Seal gaps around windows and doors. Cracks and gaps around windows and doors can let cold drafts into your home. Weather-stripping or caulking will seal

these problem areas and keep your home warmer, without having to turn up the heat.

3. Insulate well to protect your home from the cold. Add insulation to your basement walls, headers or attic to make a noticeable difference in the temperature of your home and its energy consumption. A mineral wool product specifically designed for thermal performance, such as Roxul Comfortbatt, is ideal. This type of batt insulation will also provide protection from fire, moisture and unwanted noise. Adding insulation is one of the simplest and most-cost effective ways to increase home energy efficiency.

4. Make use of natural sources of heat. Pull back your curtains to let natural light in. The sun can help to warm a room with its rays on a bright fall or winter day. If there are any large windows in your home that don't receive much sunlight, keep the

curtains closed to form a barrier from the cold.

5. Use ceiling fans to your advantage. In the winter, set the fan to rotate clockwise. The blades will pull the air up and around, redirecting warm air that rises back down into the living space. The effect can help you lower your thermostat by two degrees in the winter. While cutting back on energy may seem more challenging as the weather gets colder, it doesn't have to be. There are many no- or low-cost methods to conserve energy that can provide consistent savings over time.

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(MS) — By Scott McGillivray



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THE VARIOUS WAYS TO REPURPOSE DRESSERS



One of the benefits to becoming a skilled do-it-yourselfer is the chance to embrace projects that can breathe new life into objects that others might designate for the trash or donation pile. Renovating such items can save money and provide an entirely different purpose for the object.

After upgrading design styles or moving, there's a good chance the average homeowner has a spare dresser or chest of drawers he or she may no longer use. Repurposing such furniture can make for an enjoyable weekend DIY project.

TIPS FOR STAINING WOOD

Staining wood can transform the look of everything from fencing to decking. While wood can be beautiful in its natural state, staining can protect the wood and complement landscaping and other home design elements.

Staining can seem like a simple project, and that is often true. However, certain woods, such as pine, cherry, maple, and birch, can be difficult to stain. Boards with attractive grain patterns also can absorb stain differently, resulting in blotching and uneven tone.

Before beginning a staining project, it is important for homeowners to test the stain chosen on a sample piece of wood to see how the color and absorption turn out. This gives homeowners the chance to understand what they're dealing with and time to make any

necessary accommodations to achieve a more even look.

Begin by gathering the necessary supplies. A pair of latex or vinyl gloves will protect your hands. Drop cloths will catch any drips or spills. Safety goggles and a dust mask provide protection if sanding is required prior to staining. If sanding is necessary, homeowners will need an orbital sander, hand sander and sandpaper. Start with the coarsest grit sandpaper and move to a higher grit for a smooth finish. Wood that is covered in paint may need to be stripped prior to sanding. Follow the directions carefully when using chemical strippers.

Natural bristle paint brushes are handy for oil-based stain applications. Synthetic paint brushes can apply water-based finishes. Many do-it-yourselfers find that foam brushes or paint pads are the most handy because they provide a smooth finish and there's no need to clean up the brushes afterward.

With a change of color, removal of drawers or a few minor modifications, dressers can be transformed in many different ways. Here are a few ideas to get started.

- **Television stand:** Sand and paint or stain the dresser to match the color scheme of your living room or family room. Remove the top row of drawers from the dresser to have cubby space to house electronics, such as cable boxes or DVD players. The remaining drawers can hold movie collections, spare remote controls, gaming systems, and much more.

- **Serving bar:** Paint the dresser in an eye-catching shade and make sure to seal-coat it with a finish that is impervious to moisture. If time or budget allows, attach a piece of glass or tiles on top of the dresser to create a water-resistant, strong surface area. Store various serving glasses and cocktail accoutrements within the drawers. Place a few bottles of your favorite spirits and a decanter on a decorative tray.

- **Storage shelving:** Remove the drawers from the dresser and turn it into a storage mecca by using stackable plastic containers in spaces once occupied by the drawers. Keep craft supplies, collectibles or anything else you can think of inside.

- **Kitchen island:** Small dressers can be repurposed into kitchen islands with a few modifications. Install casters on the feet so it can be moved around when necessary. Place butcher block wood or stone on top so you'll have a sturdy cutting or preparation surface area. Hooks hung on the side can hold frequently used kitchen utensils.

- **Changing table:** Turn an older dresser into a changing table for a new baby. In addition, add a cushioned pad and some decorative trim to serve as a frame that keeps the pad in place. The drawers will keep wipes, diapers, onesies, and other supplies at the ready.

- **Bench:** Remove the top drawers from the dresser. Add a piece of plywood to make a seat. Use the removed drawer faces on the inside back of the dresser since this area will now be visible. Paint the entire piece or stain it as desired. Fashion a cushion for the seat, and the bench is ready for an entryway or wherever you have space.

Before discarding an old dresser, think of all the ways it can be transformed into another useful piece of furniture.

Many professionals recommend using wood conditioners or pre-treaters so that the stain will not leave blotches on the wood. This is especially important for homeowners who determined their wood is prone to uneven color absorption. Allow the conditioner to dry according to product directions.

Stain should be applied so that it is evenly coated. Wipe off the excess to get the preferred color. Apply more stain as necessary to get the desired color. Many stains only offer color, so you'll need to apply a finishing coat to protect the wood. Otherwise, look for a product that combines stain color and a finish to save time.

Remember to remove knobs, hinges, and handles from a piece before staining, as the stain may affect the color of any metal hardware and damage it.

BABY IS ON THE WAY ... TIME TO SET UP THE NURSERY



Expecting parents eagerly anticipate the arrival of their new bundle of joy. After 9 months of waiting to see what he or she looks like and wanting to cuddle their newborn, the baby's arrival is a momentous event.

As most people know, for such a little person, babies seemingly need a ton of gear and other items. One thing the baby will eventually need is a nursery to call home. Although newborns do spend the first few months of their lives often tucked in at night in a bassinet or co-sleeper cradle in mom's bedroom, chances are the infant will nap or gradually spend increasing amounts of time in his or her own room. Outfitting the nursery with the essentials can mean comfort and convenience. To some parents, every baby product out there is a necessity. But in reality, there are maybe a handful of things to put into the nursery -- at least for the time being -- to adequately provide for the baby.

Crib

At some point in the near future, baby will be doing most of his

or her sleeping exclusively in the crib. Although that can seem like a far-off goal now that your little one prefers to sleep in your arms while watching late-night television, after a few months junior will become comfortable with his or her room and may even enjoy the security the crib provides.

Before selecting a crib, be sure to check for certain recalls and ensure the brand and model are not on the list. The crib should be sturdy and meet guidelines for minimum spacing between spindles. Older, hand-me-down cribs are not recommended. Although drop-side cribs may offer ease of placing baby inside, some of these types of cribs have been recalled in the past for faulty railings that trap the infant. A stationary sided crib is another choice.

Position the crib away from items that can be pulled into the crib by curious hands. Try to keep it away from windows for draft reasons and also to avoid window-fall accidents. Cribs should be free of breathing obstructions, like stuffed animals or puffy side bumpers to reduce the risk of SIDS.

Changing table

Most parents prefer a convenient changing table that also stores diapers and toiletries. Although it may not always be possible to travel to the nursery for every diaper change, you can still equip the nursery with a table or another sturdy place to change your infant. Some dressers double as changing tables in their design. A small loveseat or a guest bed in the nursery can also be a place to change the baby and provide a comfortable place to rest when he or she is waking up in the middle of the night.

It is important never to leave a baby unattended on any surface because you never know the moment when he or she will learn to roll over or move enough to fall off of the changing surface.

Safety devices

Although infants are too young to get into much trouble, babies eventually become very active and curious. Take the time now to babyproof the nursery. Select window coverings that cannot be pulled down or do not feature cords that can present a strangulation hazard.

All outlets should be blocked with a safety plug or some sort of cover to deter little fingers from seeking them out. Secure cords to lamps and other electronic devices in cord keepers.

Latches for drawers, closets and other doors can deter baby from getting into places that can be dangerous. Door knob covers enable adults to open doors but are too tricky for toddlers to figure out.

When selecting furniture, look for items with rounded corners, which are safer should a child fall into the furniture. And use a latch to secure top-heavy dressers or armoires to the wall so they cannot fall on a child.

Mental stimulation

Young children are constantly exploring the world around them. At a very young age their vision is still developing, so large, bold visuals can help stimulate visual comprehension. Some parents opt to have vivid wall murals painted in the nursery. But bold, framed artwork or photos can also draw the eye of your little one and keep him or her engaged.

Research indicates that listening to music can help stimulate the brain and may even benefit a child's intellect. Music can also be soothing to a baby, especially one alone in his or her nursery. You can consider a small radio or CD/mp3 player in the room to create a more soothing atmosphere.

Ceiling fan

New studies have determined that a ceiling fan can help reduce the risk of SIDS. One study out of Kaiser Permanente in Oakland, California found that the risk of SIDS was reduced by 72 percent among babies who slept in a room with a ceiling fan. The theory is that the fan circulates air and prevents the rebreathing of expelled carbon dioxide by the infant.

In addition to possibly making a room safer, a ceiling fan can help maintain a comfortable room temperature. You may also want to purchase a baby monitor to be able to keep tabs on your baby when you're out of his or her room.

Many expecting parents are excited about the prospect of designing and filling the nursery with items that reflect their styles and desires. Although there are many baby things from which to choose, in reality the nursery needs only a few basics at the onset. Eventually, you can add personalized effects as you learn the interests of the child and sort through gifts from family and friends.



CREATE KID-FRIENDLY SPACES AT HOME



Maintaining a home that is welcoming and kid-friendly can be challenging. Kids are full of energy and oftentimes put fun ahead of tidiness. But no matter how energetic their youngsters are, parents can still employ several strategies to ensure their homes are both sophisticated and child-friendly.

- **Consider an open floor plan.** Rooms that flow into one another make it easier to keep tabs on children. Such rooms also allow residents and guests to mingle in separate rooms but not be too far away from one another.
- **Choose washable fabrics.** Upholstery will need to stand up to the abuse kids can dish out. Sofas and chairs with

slipcovers can be advantageous because many slipcovers can be easily removed and laundered. Patterned fabrics will hide some stains, while treated fabrics may resist liquid spills for easier cleanup.

- **Create a catch-all spot.** Special bins or other organizational tools in the entryway can help to cull clutter when children come in the house from school or play. Be sure the keep cubbies, containers and coat hooks at a child-friendly height.

- **Look for high-traffic rugs.** Rugs designed for high-traffic areas will be more forgiving when children march across them several times per day. There are no rules that say you can't bring an outdoor rug inside, and these rugs tend to be easier to clean.

- **Ensure there is plenty of seating.** Sectionals give children ample room to spread out. And

ample seating ensures there is enough room for kids to invite their friends over to hang out.

- **Think outside pink and blue.** For children's rooms, make sure they're colorful, but consider other hues to give the rooms some personality. Focus on a hobby or activity and borrow the color scheme from the accessories used for decorating.

- **Hang whimsical artwork.** Employ framing and lighting to make kids' artwork look like professional pieces. Routinely change the pictures when a new look is desired.

- **Designate a place for play.** Devote an entire room or a nook in a house for imaginative play. Store toys here so these items will not create clutter in individual bedrooms.

Creating child-friendly spaces while ensuring a home maintains a sophisticated feel is easier than parents might think.

WANT HEALTHIER KIDS? GET A PET



Pets can contribute to cognitive, physical and emotional wellness in children.

If youngsters have been eyeing fuzzy kittens or boisterous puppies at nearby shelters or pet stores, parents may want to give in to those cries for a family pet. Pets are added responsibilities, but the health benefits associated with pet ownership may be well worth the investment of time and effort.

more likely to see themselves as important contributors to communities and more likely to take on leadership roles.

Pets also can help children develop into well-rounded individuals. Playing with a pet requires children to engage in physical activity and can help stimulate motor skills. An English study conducted in 2010 and published in the American Journal of Public Health found that children from dog-owning families spent more time in light or moderate to vigorous physical activity and recorded higher levels of activity counts per minute than kids whose families did not own a dog.

Pets may help with allergies and respiratory ailments as well. A 2012 study by the American Academy of Pediatrics discovered that children who have early contact with cats and dogs have fewer respiratory infections and ear infections and need shorter courses of antibiotics than children who have not had contact with pets.

Data from a small study conducted by researchers at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University reported that adolescents who had animal experience were

the children who were exposed to two or more dogs or cats as babies were less than half as likely to develop common allergies as kids who had no pets in the home.

Pets also may foster social interactions, which can benefit children who are shy. Inviting others over to meet pets can help children make friends and find others with similar interests.

Children may also confide in pets and develop their self-esteem. Studies have indicated that the type of pet a family has, whether it's horses, dogs, snakes, etc., does not matter, as all companion animals have the potential to benefit children.

13 QUIRKY FACTS ABOUT COMPANION ANIMALS

Think you know everything there is to know about your favorite furry, finned or feathered friend? Chances are there are some interesting facts that even the most ardent animal-lover may be surprised to learn.

1. Tough tongue: Cats' tongues are covered with little structures called "filiform papillae," which are like tiny hooks pointing toward the throat. These hook-like structures help hold food while a cat is eating. The papillae also help with grooming. Humans can feel these barbs when licked by cats.
2. Seeing spots: Dalmatians are born all white. Their spots will develop within the first few weeks of life and can be black, brown or liver colored.
3. Sleepy time: Cats are born loungers and will spend on average 16 hours of the day snoozing. Only sloths spend more time asleep.
4. Send a message: Fish do not have vocal chords, but they can use low-pitched moans, grunts, hisses, and wails to communicate with one another.
5. Watch the eyes: Pet birds can communicate feelings through their pupils. If pupils are dilated, the bird is calm. Pinprick-sized pupils mean birds are agitated and may bite.
6. Meeooooowww: Cats only meow to communicate with humans, not amongst themselves.
7. Seeing colors: Dogs are not color blind as once presumed. They can see colors, just not as vividly as humans.
8. Kindle . not just for reading: A group of kittens is called a "kindle," while a group of cats is a "clowder."
9. Almost wild: Dogs are so genetically similar to wolves that they can interbreed.
10. Noseprints: Cats' and dogs' noses are unique, just like human fingerprints.
11. Fishy growth rings: Fish do not add new scales as they grow. The scales increase in size and form growth rings that can reveal the age of the fish.
12. Not domesticated: Birds are not domesticated. They're still rather wild and must be taught acceptable pet behavior.
13. Barkless: Many dogs do not actively bark. One dog that rarely ever barks is the Basenji, due to a narrow larynx. It can yodel, however!

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HOW FAMILIES CAN CUT SCREEN TIME



No matter where you look, screens are everywhere. The proliferation of easily portable tablets and smartphones means many people, adults and children alike, are never too far from the nearest screen. While that accessibility has dramatically changed the way many people live their lives, excessive exposure to screen time can produce a host of unwanted side effects.

Steven Gortmaker, a professor of the practice of health sociology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, has studied the negative effects of excessive screen time on children since the 1980s. According to Gortmaker, such effects include higher rates of obesity among kids who watch too much television and difficulty sleeping among youngsters with access to small screens, such as the screens of smartphones. In addition, a 2012 study published in the journal *Psychiatry Research* linked screen time with impaired cognitive function in young males.

But adults are not immune to the effects of excessive screen time, either. Spending significant time being sedentary and staring at screens can increase adults' risk for cardiovascular disease. An Australian study published in the December 2012 issue of the *British Journal of Sports*

Medicine found that, compared with persons who watch no television, those who spend a lifetime average of six hours per day watching television can expect to live 4.8 fewer years. So what can families do to cut back on their screen time? While it likely won't be easy to put down smartphones and tablets and turn off laptops and televisions, the following are a handful of ways for families to spend less time staring at screens.

- Remove televisions from bedrooms. Parents may find it impossible to gauge, much less control, how much time their kids spend watching television when youngsters have TV's in their bedrooms. Though this will likely be met with considerable resistance, remove televisions from bedrooms in your home. Set a positive example for kids by removing your own bedroom television as well. Come kids' bedtimes, make sure all devices, including smartphones and tablets, are left in common areas of the home rather than bedrooms so kids are not tempted to watch videos instead of falling asleep.

- Institute a "no screens" rule during meals. Many parents grew up in households that did not allow televisions to be on during meals, and while the

times might have changed with respect to the technology, similar rules can still prevail today. A "no screens" rule during meals gives parents and their kids time to catch up, bond and foster stronger relationships.

- Do not use the television for background noise. Turn the television off when it's serving as just background noise. If you need background noise, turn on some music instead.

- Log screen time. Logging screen time for each member of the family can provide an estimate of just how much time the whole family spends staring at screens. Encourage each member of the family to spend as much time being physically active as he or she spends staring at screens. Set goals for each member of the family to reduce their screen time, even rewarding those who reach their goals.

Reducing screen time can improve overall health and help family members reconnect with one another.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

Whatever one does online is contributing to an ever-growing portrait of that person online. A digital trail is being left every single day. Not only does this footprint help advertisers target specific consumers, it shows movements across various websites. This can prove problematic to many students and other youngsters, in addition to adults. Now more than ever mistakes or indiscretions are out there for public consumption. Kids are growing up with the potential of being "Googleable."

With this information in mind, everyone who relies on the Internet should exercise caution with regard to their online activities.

- Do not make any comments online that you would not be willing to say in public. Hiding behind the mask of the Internet is no longer possible.

- Recognize that college admissions staff and employers look at social media sites and profile pages. Images you post and comments you make online may give college and university admissions staffers and prospective employers the wrong impression of you.

- Students who work from computers on a school network may have their every move watched by administrators. Cyberbullying, foul language and inappropriate behavior can be discovered.

- Routinely search for yourself online to see if any incorrect or unflattering information comes up.

Being aware of one's digital footprint can guide responsible online behavior.

WHY MAKING TIME FOR FAMILY MEALS IS IMPORTANT



Family meals are about much more than what is served for dinner. Research indicates that spending time together around the table as a family promotes a host of benefits.

Family meals have been linked to improved communication skills, healthier bodies and even academic advantages for school-aged children. Harvard researchers conducted a long-term study to look at the effects of various components of family life to see which had the most

profound impact on children's development. When compared to story time, family events or even playtime, family dinners offered the most benefits.

According to The Family Dinner Project, a nonprofit organization currently operating from the offices of Project Zero at Harvard University, recent studies link regular family meals with the kinds of behaviors that parents desire for their children. These can include

- improved academic performance,
- high self-esteem,
- low risk of substance abuse,
- low risk of depression,
- reduced chances of teen pregnancy,
- low rates of obesity, and
- low likelihood of developing eating disorders.

Even though scheduling conflicts can sometimes make family meals difficult, 59 percent of families report eating dinner together five times a week, according to the Importance of Family Dinner IV report. Including the above benefits, here are some more reasons to gather around the dinner table four or more times a week.

- **Designated family time:** Family meals allow kids to count on spending time with their parents. Consider turning off all electronic devices and make dinner time all about conversation. Such discussions can improve cognitive skills and linguistic development.

- **Decreased food pickiness:** A 2000 survey from the Obesity Epidemiology and Prevention Program at Harvard Medical School found that kids between the ages of nine and 14 who ate dinner with their families ate more fruits and vegetables and therefore consumed higher amounts of many key nutrients. Family meals are a great opportunity to introduce new, healthy foods.

- **Controlled portions:** Eating at home can help curb calories, fat and salt consumption by giving families greater control over the ingredients in their meals.

- **Discussed problems:** Children who routinely eat with their parents may be more inclined to discuss problems that can, if hidden, develop into serious illnesses, such as depression or eating disorders.

- **Curbed dangerous behaviors:** Eating family dinners at least five times a week drastically lowers a teen's chance of smoking, drinking and using drugs, according to Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children.

- **Good grades:** Twenty percent of children who eat with their family fewer than three times a week get C's or lower on their report cards, according to CASA. Only 9 percent of teens who eat frequently with their families do this poorly in school.

- **Relieved stress:** Adults benefit from family dinners, too. Sitting down to a meal can reduce tension and strain among working parents.

Family meals are important for a number of reasons. By understanding the benefits, families can increase their chances of sitting down together for food and conversation.

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POWER OF ATTORNEY PROTECTS LOVED ONES



Power of attorney is a key document to have in an estate plan.

Life is full of the unexpected. But just because the future is unpredictable does not mean adults cannot prepare for what lies ahead. Estate planning is important, and establishing power of attorney can be essential for men and women looking to protect their financial resources and other assets.

What is power of attorney?

A power of attorney, or POA, is a document that enables an individual to appoint a person or organization to manage his or her affairs should this individual become unable to do so. According to the National Caregivers Library, POA is granted to an “attorney-in-fact” or “agent” to give a person the legal authority to make decisions for an incapacitated “principal.” The laws for creating a power of attorney vary depending on where a person lives, but there are some general similarities regardless of geography.

Why is power of attorney needed?

Many people believe their families will be able to step in if an event occurs that leaves them incapacitated and unable to make decisions for themselves. Unfortunately, this is not always true. If a person is not named as an agent or granted legal access to financial, medical and other pertinent information, family members’ hands may be tied. In addition, the government may appoint someone to make certain decisions for an individual if no POA is named.

Just about everyone can benefit from establishing an attorney-in-fact. Doing so does not mean men and women cannot live independently, but it will remove the legal barriers involved should a person no longer be physically or mentally capable of managing certain tasks.

Power of attorney varies

Power of attorney is a broad term that covers various aspects of decision-making. According to the legal resource ‘Lectric Law Library, the main types of POA include general power of attorney, health care power of attorney, durable power of attorney, and special power of attorney. Many of the responsibilities overlap, but there are some subtle legal differences. Durable power of attorney, for example, relates to all the appointments involved in general, special and health care powers of attorney being made “durable.” This means the document will remain in effect or take effect if a person becomes mentally incompetent. Certain powers of attorney may fall within a certain time period.

What is covered?

An agent appointed through POA may be able to handle the following, or more, depending on the verbiage of the document:

- banking transactions
- buying/selling property
- settling claims
- filing tax returns
- managing government-supplied benefits
- maintaining business interests
- making estate-planning decisions
- deciding on medical treatments
- selling personal property
- fulfilling advanced health care directives

Although a power of attorney document can be filled out and an agent appointed on one’s own, working with an estate planning attorney to better understand the intricacies of this vital document is advised.

TREAT KIDS TO LUNCHES THAT MEET ALL NEEDS



The school lunches parents enjoyed are being replaced with fresh ideas that accommodate today’s kids and schools.

School lunch may seem like a relatively easy concept for parents to master. However, day in and day out, enterprising moms and dads grow anxious over what to put into kids’ lunch boxes or bags.

Parents have foods they want their kids to eat, and then there are foods their grade-schoolers will actually consider. Schools may also place limitations on what kids can bring to school due to allergies or school rules on sweets versus healthy foods. Then there’s the packaging itself. Parents may weigh the benefits of everything from clever accessories to eco-friendly materials.

Removing school lunch stress is easy. Once these steps are conquered, sending children

off to school with acceptable meals becomes that much easier.

Foods

Keep a running list of must-have foods to stock the pantry. This will make it easier when it’s time to go shopping. Picky eaters may return again and again to familiar comfort foods. As long as the child is getting enough vitamins and growing, there should be little issue in letting him and her eat the same foods day in and day out. Because parents cannot police what their children eat at school, it’s better to devote time to introducing new foods during breakfast or dinner.

Involve kids in some of the food decisions, especially since they are the ones eating the lunch at school. Certain foods may not keep well or become less appealing



after sitting in backpacks until lunchtime. Respect kids’ input and try to make some changes accordingly.

Restrictions

Researchers have estimated that food allergies affect one in every 13 children under the age of 18 in the United States alone. That equates to two in every classroom. The group Food Allergy Research & Education says eight foods account for the majority of all reactions: peanuts, tree nuts, soy, milk, eggs, wheat, fish and shellfish. Parents should be cognizant of common food allergies and be considerate of other kids in the classroom who may have allergies by limiting some of the most common allergy-associated foods in their children’s lunches.



Packaging

The way foods are presented can improve the dining experience. Just ask professional chefs who go to great lengths on creative “plating” in restaurants. Children who are fussy about foods touching might enjoy one of the economical (and eco-friendly) designs of reusable bento boxes, which separate foods into different sections. They also help parents pack perfect portion sizes for healthier eating habits.

Snack and food containers now come in colorful and clever designs that appeal to the toy-lover in most kids. Also, lunch gear manufacturers are thinking outside the sandwich to offer pouches and baggies that are leak-proof so that smoothies, soups and yogurts can be enjoyed during lunch, too.



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IMPROVE CONCENTRATION IN THE CLASSROOM



The “fidget spinner” and its many knock-offs made big news this year as the device became a must-have trend seemingly overnight. The toy has been touted as a gizmo that can do everything from improve concentration, relieve stress, treat ADHD, reduce nail biting, and even alleviate smartphone addiction.

The growing influence of technology has been a cause for concern in classrooms, prompting the confiscation of gizmos by administrators and compelling teachers to pen reminders to parents about keeping distractions at home. However, in light of the popularity of devices for kids who seem to be natural-born fidgeters, educators must answer tough questions of how to improve concentration and reduce distractions in the classroom - especially for nontraditional learners. These techniques may be equally, if not more, effective than spinners and other toys.

Provide alternative seating options

Flexible seating fosters an environment that helps students

learn based on their needs. Seating can range from the traditional desks and hard chairs to soft cushions, exercise balls and seats with elasticized bands around the legs. Children may also sit on the floor or in camp chairs or use stand-up tables depending on the classroom design. The idea is to avoid pigeonholing children into an environment that is not conducive to learning, especially as many children are prone to moving around and not sitting still for long periods of time.

Although there isn’t yet extensive research into alternative seating, a 2011 study published in the American Journal of Public Health found that first-graders with standing desks chose to stand about two-thirds of the time and burned 17 percent more calories than classmates in traditional seated classrooms, and teachers noted that students at standing desks were more alert and attentive and demonstrated less disruptive behavior than those using traditional desks.

Allow for movement and breaks

Allowing children to get up and

move around from time to time can reset their alertness and mental focus. Get students up by asking them to do things as simple as handing out papers and supplies or cleaning off the whiteboard.

Offer varied instruction

Breaking up the classroom routine is another way to keep kids engaged. Instead of constant lecturing, institute small group work, independent study or cooperative learning.

Minimize noise and other distractions

Some students may work better in quiet environments, while others may need some background noise to concentrate.

Improving concentration in school can benefit students’ performance. Strategies that work in the classroom may work at home as well.

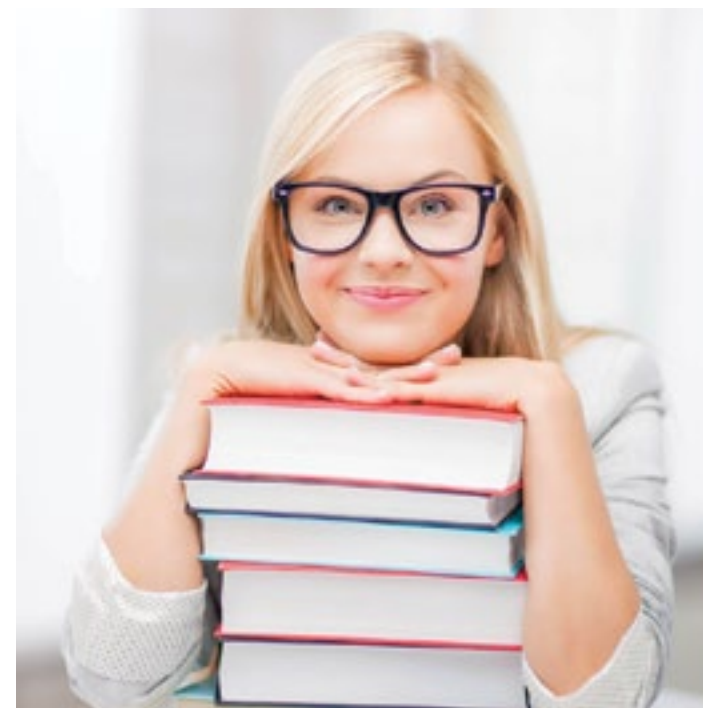
DID YOU KNOW?

Teachers provide many things to their students. In addition to an education, support and guidance, many teachers also feel compelled to enhance their classrooms with supplies they’ve purchased out-of-pocket. According to a poll of 1,500 teachers conducted by the educational resource Edutopia, 93 percent of teachers feel obligated or somewhat obligated to buy school supplies for their classrooms with their own money. The Education Market Association says that virtually all teachers wind up paying out of pocket for supplies. The amounts spent annually can be upwards of \$1,000 per teacher. In addition, not all of the teachers funding supplies work in low-income districts.

A report published in early 2016 by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities found that many states now provide less financial support per student than they did before the recession took hold roughly nine years ago. Districts forced to work under tight budgets are increasingly outsourcing the costs of supplies to parents. When parents fail to provide supplies, teachers are bearing the brunt of the costs to avoid seeing their students go without necessary resources.



TIPS FOR GRADS CONSIDERING STUDYING ABROAD



Study abroad programs give students unique opportunities to experience other cultures while pursuing their degrees. Such programs appeal to students who want to see the world without interrupting their studies, and many students who study abroad develop an affinity for travel that remains with them for the rest of their lives.

When considering studying abroad programs or attending college overseas, recent high school graduates or current high school students should consider a few factors before committing to a program.

Language barrier

Students, particularly those

who are not fluent in a foreign language, may find it easier to live in countries where English is the primary language. While study abroad students can expect to work with professors who speak English regardless of where they go, life outside the classroom can be difficult for young students who do not understand the primary language spoken in the country where they will be studying.

Life overseas

Students who want to attend school full-time overseas may benefit by first studying through a study abroad program before committing to a two- or four-year program in another country. This gives students a chance to get a feel for a country and its culture and lifestyle before making a long-term commitment to living and studying there.

Program size

The safety in numbers philosophy is applicable for all travelers, but it can be especially beneficial for young students studying abroad. Students may feel more safe and comfortable when signing up for programs that include many students as opposed to more exclusive programs that include only a handful of students. Large

programs provide a built-in social network, and students may feel safer exploring foreign cities in large groups made up of fellow students than going it alone or traveling in small groups.

Documentation

Students should speak with program directors about the documentation they may need to make the most of their time overseas. CEA Study Abroad recommends that students bring photocopies of all important documents, including passports, driver’s licenses, airline tickets, health insurance cards, and student identification cards, with them when studying overseas. This protects students should their wallets or backpacks be lost or stolen while they’re overseas. Students also should include a list of any medical conditions or medications they take among their documentation and include their emergency contact information on this list.

Studying abroad can be a very rewarding experience for young students, who must consider a host of factors before committing to a program so they can have the most enjoyable experience possible.

TAKE A COURSE IN DORM SAFETY

College students have a few different living options at their disposal, but many opt for dormitory living, as it is one of the more convenient and popular boarding options, particularly for out-of-town students. Thousands of post-secondary students pack up their belongings and move away from home in the pursuit of an education, and parents want to do what they can to ensure their college-aged kids are safe. For many

students, college represents the first time they will live anywhere other than the homes they grew up in. Dorm life can be an exciting adventure, but it can also be one that may open new college students up to inherently risky situations. While students should look forward to fun and excitement at school, it’s also important

for them to be prepared for what lies ahead at college and in dorm life — and to take the proper safety precautions.

- Fall in with a trustworthy group of dorm friends. Friends can be informed of your schedule for both classes and work, so they are aware of where you are supposed to be at certain times of the day. If something is amiss, these friends can alert authorities or investigate your whereabouts further.

- Lock your dorm room door. Always keep the dorm room door locked, and make sure your roommate is on the same page. Locking the door can deter people from entering without your permission and prevent theft.

- Keep belongings out of sight. When preparing to move into a dorm, leave heirlooms or expensive jewelry at home. Once you move in, store your more valuable belongings out of sight or in a locked box or

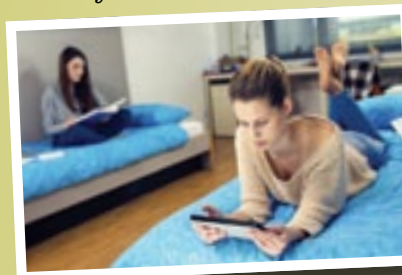
safe. Consider getting insurance for dorm belongings, which will protect you in the event of theft.

- Travel in groups. When attending parties or other functions, always arrive and leave in a group. This offers extra protection, as assaults and other crimes are less likely to occur when criminals are outnumbered.

- Know the evacuation routes. Learn your dorm’s evacuation policies. Know where all exits are and how to get out of the building if exits may be blocked. Find out if fire drills or other safety procedures are practiced, and participate in them.

- Use the elevator. If there’s an elevator, use it. Stairwells are secluded and dark and often provide the perfect opportunity for would-be criminals to take advantage of unsuspecting students.

Use common sense and trust your instincts with regard to dorm safety. Make college memories good ones by emphasizing caution.



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