

Reader's digest

DECEMBER
2017



Special
Screw-up
Edition!

Smart People Being **(VERY)** **Dumb**

Scientists, Dads, Lawyers,
Politicians—And Of Course, Bosses!

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SUNDAY NIGHT
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MY VERY MUSLIM
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4 stories of
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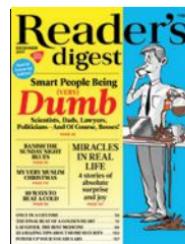
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Dear Reader

Heal with humour

 RECENTLY A HINDI MOVIE STAR, from the '70s and '80s, had a Eureka moment on Twitter. He was amazed to find out that if you added your age to your year of birth, you got 2017! "Strange but true! But how?" he tweeted. He was reacting to one of the countless WhatsApp memes that get forwarded blindly on a daily basis these days. The genius who created it had added that this phenomenon happened only once in 1,000 years. A co-star of the actor, a top heroine once, reacted to it with an equal dose of astonishment, also embarrassing herself in front of legions of fans.



But why judge them alone? Apparently there's an abundance of smart people who say or do dumb things on a routine basis—lawyers, journalists, rocket scientists (yes!) and, of course, bosses who have covered themselves with glory with their bloopers. Not to mention politicians with a chronic foot-in-mouth disease—especially those who like to be seen and heard on prime-time television. We have a good laugh as the year comes to an end with 'Smart People Do the Dumbest Things!' (p 46), a savagely funny collection of facepalm moments.

You don't have to be among the faithful to celebrate festivals in India. You just jump in and have a good time along with everyone else. Christmas season always takes me back to nativity scenes and carol singing in the Catholic school I went to as a girl, the decorations on Calcutta's streets and Christmas puddings, soaked in raisins and brandy that I can smell, as I write to you. 'My Very Muslim Christmas' (p 110) is the story of a Lebanese immigrant boy who grew up in Canada that wholly resonated with us. The spirit of Yuletide brings with it many pleasant surprises and lots of hope. Our bonus read (p 137) this month is a bunch of real-life miracles, gifts in themselves that are quite amazing. Read them, you'll know what I mean.

As we look forward to 2018, here's a prayer for the entire *Reader's Digest* family—all of you reading this, our partners in India and across the world and all our well-wishers. May the world be a better place for all in the coming year.

A merry Christmas and
a very happy New Year!

Sanghamitra

Send an email to
editor.india@rd.com

THE WAY TO WELLNESS

Add a dash of wellness to your life. And you'll find it becoming a whole lot healthier and fuller than you could've ever imagined.

Here are a few simple steps to get you started:

Don't miss your first meal

Clearly the most important meal of your day – it's the wholesome start your day needs. It'll keep you going the whole day without the kind of craving that gets you eating the wrong things.

Hydrate hydrate hydrate

There's a reason why over half our bodies are made up of water. It helps us detox, maintains the right body temperature and keeps our bodies working as well as they can. At least eight glasses of water a day are an absolute must. Add a chilled bottle of Aquafina Vitamin Splash for taste. In a refreshing Raspberry Mint with added anti-oxidants, and a tangy Kiwi Lime that boosts your body's immunity function - it's the perfect supplement for your liquid diet.

Leg it

10,000 steps a day is a healthy number. Don't take the car if you can take your bicycle. Don't take the bicycle if you can walk it. And take the stairs as often as you can.

Socialize - it's good for you

It'll make you happy - which already puts you on the road to a more active lifestyle. Furthermore, people who are known to be more sociable are also seen to participate in outdoor activities and physical exercise a whole lot more than their less extroverted counterparts.

Get the right amount of rest

Eight hours of sleep is the least your body deserves. It helps you heal, recharge and feel like you're full of light when you wake up.

Stretch those long weekends

Take a hike. Head to the beaches. Or trek through your closest natural reserve. A small break from your schedule will go a long way in replenishing your health and wellness.



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Over to You

FEEDBACK ON OUR OCTOBER ISSUE

WRITE
&
WIN!

MEMORY TEST

The cover story reminded me of the mental callis-thenics of *avadhanis* (literary performers). A typical session involves answering questions from multiple fields, relying solely on recall. As a practised skill, *avadhanam* was regarded as an art form, and the *avadhanis* were revered.

Sadly, it is vanishing now, with only a handful of practitioners around today.

SUSHEELA SRINIVAS, Bengaluru

COURTYARD MEMORIES

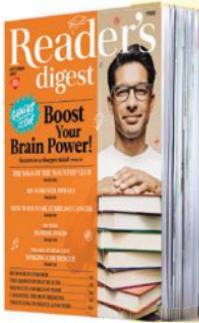
'The Jacaranda Tree' took me back to my childhood. I grew up in a village, playing in a temple courtyard near a banyan tree. When I went back, I found it deserted. Nature is intact in our villages but people have left for the cities. City folks pine for contact with nature, but it is far away, alas.

VENKATA RAMANA, KTTP-Chelpur, Telangana

WHERE THERE IS A WILL ...

I agree with the verdict ('The Case of the Rightful Owner'). Children do not have the legal right to own, co-own or use the self-acquired property of their parents without their consent, and unless their name is on the title deed.

GITA SUBRAMANIAN, Mumbai



CRITICAL THINKING SHOTS NEEDED

'The Saga of the Haunted Press Club' shows how irrational beliefs spread and gain acceptance. In Mewar, for example, widows and Dalits are regularly targeted as witches, for supposedly bringing illness or misfortune. The 'possessed' are subjected to inhuman treatment by *bhopas*, or exorcists, often causing death. This continues in spite of preventive laws. Often, the *bhopas* and relatives usurp the victim's property after their death! It is only by "vaccinating" ourselves with critical thinking can we get rid of superstitions. Unfortunately, those who advocate rational thinking either face life threats or death, as in the case of Dr Dabholkar.

K. NATARAJAN, Madurai

K. Natarajan gets this month's Best Letter prize of ₹1,000.—EDS

HEALTHCARE IS NEGLECTED

Healthcare is not a priority for us [In My Opinion]. If child deaths do not stir our conscience, I don't know what will. Dr Reddy emphasizes the need for improvements at primary and sec-



Where fashion gets personal



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ondary levels to lighten the burden on tertiary care. Easier said than done in an unresponsive system, but there is still hope with stalwarts like him.

DR MANOJ GAMi, *New Delhi*

GO SMART

A vision to promote sustainability and service civic needs through technology is what is needed, funds can only boost these efforts [Quickipedia]. Optimizing the use of natural resources, recycling wastes, relying on renewable energy and making clean drinking water available to all, apart from prudent urban planning—all of these should indispensably characterize the 21st-century city.

C. V. KRISHNA MANOJ, *Hyderabad*

SAFETY SQUADS NEEDED!

BuddyUpTO's Saini and Hans [Everyday Heroes] are saviours for Toronto's minorities, targeted in times of rampant hate crime. There's an immediate need for similar support groups in India too, as the incidences of crimes against the marginalized reach alarming heights. **MANJEET SINGH ISHAR**, *Mohali*

DRIVEN BY EMPATHY

Reading about the children with special needs hits you like a tsunami ('Next Stop School'). You see their tall tales as cries of hope, not mere fabrications. And what a character the driver is, with his patience—hearing their stories, provoking them to shape their aspirations. I was reminded of

Thurber's Walter Mitty as I read the story. **DR N. GOPALAKRISHNAN**, *Bengaluru*

TIME TO WAKE UP

Thanks to Pico Iyer for depicting life in our times, where most of us are engaged in a mindless race ('Silence in the World of Noise'). It was depressing reading about the person dying on a computer terminal at an internet café, while others around him were oblivious for hours. If this is our future then it is disturbing. Technology replacing humans will lead to further isolation.

PROF SATYA PRAKASH, *Tadepalligudem, A. P.*

DIWALI FOR ALL

'My Forever Diwali' is a sparkling account of the festival of lights in the days gone by. Diwali is a blessing in today's world. The positive energy, with all the preparations, meeting and greeting, lingers on. And we are able to spread the joy around us beyond the festivities. **BHUSHAN JINDAL**, *Jamnagar*

GET SCREENED

The increasing prevalence of breast cancer among Indian women is a cause for concern. A society that cannot protect its women is medieval. We must provide for patient-friendly care that encourages regular screening. Early detection and treatment are paramount. **SAIF HUSAIN**, *Lucknow* **R**

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Pamban bridge in Rameswaram



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Pamban Bridge - Rameswaram

The Pamban Bridge on Palk Strait that connects Rameswaram to mainland is India's first sea bridge. At a length of about 2.3kms, it's the second longest sea bridge in India, after Bandra-Worli Sea link.



EVERYDAY HEROES



A boy's bravery saves a little girl
from the unimaginable

Stopping A Kidnapper

BY ALYSSA JUNG

IT WAS A SCENE Norman Rockwell might have painted: three kids laughing as they took turns riding a scooter on their quiet street. Last December, on a crisp Saturday afternoon in Wichita Falls, Texas, 11-year-old TJ Smith had just jumped off the scooter as his neighbour Kim,* age 7, claimed her turn and her sister Julie,* 9, looked on. Kim straddled the scooter and paused to catch her breath. That was when the bearded man with a head of messy curls appeared. The kids didn't see where

he came from, but they know exactly what happened next: Without uttering a word, he picked Kim up off the scooter and calmly strode away.

"He cradled her like a baby and just walked down the street," says TJ. In fact, the composed way the man held Kim led TJ to believe he must have been a relative. But something wasn't right. "I could see her face," TJ said. "She was scared."

Kim's fear escalated into sobs, then pleas for help. She began kicking and flailing, trying to get free of the man's grip. "What are you doing?" Julie shouted. But the man, unfazed,

*Names have been changed to protect privacy.



*Though he admits
he was scared,
TJ says he never
thought about the
danger to himself.*

walked the length of the block until he reached an alley and disappeared.

TJ's first impulse was to chase after them. But what was a four-foot-tall, 30-kilo kid going to do to stop a grown man? "I wanted to help, but I couldn't do it myself," he says. So he ran to his grown-up neighbours' home.

Brad Ware and his wife were relaxing on the couch in their living room when their front door burst open.

"Brad!" yelled TJ. "A man just picked up a little girl and took her into the alley!" And just like that, TJ was gone, back on the street sprinting after his abducted little friend. "I ran back to where I saw him take her to see if they were still there," says TJ. Ware and his wife jumped into their car and trailed close behind.

TJ ran to the end of the street and turned the corner. He had no idea what to expect or who might be waiting for him. But he needed to find Kim. If he lost her, TJ feared, she might never be found alive.

Once TJ hit the alley, he spotted the man a couple of blocks down, standing in front of an abandoned white house—its windows busted, doors boarded up and yard overgrown. He was shoving the panicking girl through a window.

Just then, Ware and his wife pulled up. "Stay here," Ware told TJ as he took off towards the house. With Ware now bearing down on him, the man let go of Kim in the window frame and walked away, almost nonchalantly, before breaking into a run. Ware caught up with him. They struggled. Ware kicked the man in the groin and wrapped him in his arms. The man squirmed free and fled across the street. When he stumbled, Ware lunged and tackled him.

Alerted by Julie and other neighbours, the police and the victim's mother had arrived on the scene. Kim dashed

into the safety of her mother's arms, and the two cried and hugged.

Meanwhile, officers cuffed and arrested Raeshawn Perez, 26. He was charged with aggravated kidnapping and was being held on \$50,000 bond as this issue went to press.

There were a few heroes that day, but Ware insists that the quick-thinking, dogged 11-year-old deserves most of the credit. "You know, he's the one who more or less saved the girl," Ware told news station KFDX.

That news came as no surprise to TJ's mother. "This is exactly his character," says Angie Hess Smith. "His first thought is not of himself. It's always of others."

R

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VOICES & VIEWS

Department of Wit

Almost Ready To Do My Taxes!

BY EMMA RATHBONE FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES



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

WHOOP! First gotta warm my tea.

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

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

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

I'm back. Time to really get my hands dirty here. OK,

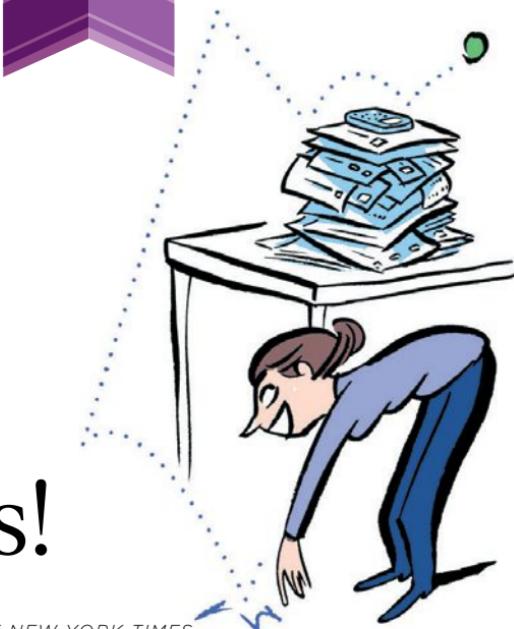


ILLUSTRATION BY NISHANT CHOJKSI;
ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (RATHBONE)

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

OK. I really need to do this. Now. Like, now. Checkmate, taxes!

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

OK, I actually just did that. I just painted my bedroom floor with black-and-white squares, and it took six straight hours, and I hate it. Now I

really, really, really need to get started on these taxes.

And I will. I really will. But here's the thing: I just found a promotional bouncy ball in this drawer, from a veterinarian or something, and it's neon green, and I didn't even know I had it. But, I'm sorry, I have to spend some time with this bouncy ball. I've gotta bounce this ball! Like, when else am I going to do this? There's no. time. like. the. present. when. it. comes. to. randomly. bouncing. some. ball. So that's what I'm going to do. I am living my best life, I am living my best me, and that

involves taking the opportunity of a lifetime during the lifetime of the opportunity and going outside and standing in the driveway with this neon ball like it's the '90s and ... Oh no. Now it's in a gutter. Well, that's what happens when you dream.

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

It's just, I haven't practised my signature in a while.

R



The war on sexual harassment rages

Yes, All Women

BY KAVITA SRIVASTAVA



KAVITA SRIVASTAVA, *national secretary of People's Union for Civil Liberties, Rajasthan, has helmed the fight against gender injustice for more than three decades now. She was a principal campaigner for Bhanwari Devi's justice, which led to the 1997 Vishakha judgement, and continues to be a voice for human rights.*

THE #METOO CAMPAIGN following revelations of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein's grave sexual misconduct paved the way for survivors of sexual harassment to break their silence globally. Social media started buzzing with women's experiences of harassment, starting in early childhood and following them into their workplaces. The ripples were so powerful that women in different parts of the world, from different fields—cinema, media, academics and even the social sector—called out men on social media, through lists. Often they were names of alleged sexual harassers without details of the complaint.

As heated discussions ensued, one thing became clear: The 'name and shame' lists exposing violators, usually in positions of power, were not just a cathartic exercise. The survivors had not been heard within their institutional frameworks.

The debate on due process and lack of a responsive mechanism versus unleashing one's agency to speak out helps us look at how deep the malaise is. It also raises some very important questions. *Do we need to rethink our approach of accountability? How can the corrective mechanisms, introduced through the struggles of the women's movement, be improved?* It also opened up a whole new window on the nature of justice and a fair methodology of arriving at it.

Let us first examine briefly the history of these mechanisms and the discourse around sexual harassment.

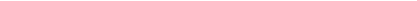
The year was 1992. Bhanwari Devi, an honorary worker and a *sathin* (friend-mobilizer) of the Rajasthan government, was gang-raped by five landed, dominant men from the Bhateri village, near Jaipur. The rape, carried out in front of her husband, was to teach her a lesson for campaigning against the marriage of a one-year-old girl, on behalf of the state

government's women's development programme. Upon pressing charges, the entire establishment, barring a few individuals, believed her to be a liar. *Can there be justice if the premise of any police investigation is that the complainant is a liar?* The mobilization on the streets for fair investigation led to the case being handed over to the CBI. Bhanwari stood like a rock—she would settle for nothing short of justice.

As the government of Rajasthan refused to come out in support of Bhanwari Devi, the larger question of employer's responsibility was taken up very seriously. Five feminist organizations moved the Supreme Court in 1992 with a public interest litigation (PIL), asking the court to monitor the investigation, and praying for guidelines for the enforcement of a sexual harassment free workplace for all women.

All the accused were acquitted in the rape case in 1995, on grounds of age and caste. Twenty years on, Bhanwari still awaits the appeal challenging the acquittal to come on board the Rajasthan High Court, Jaipur bench. Twenty-five years since she was gang-raped, justice for her seems a far cry.

The 1992 PIL resulted in a judgement in 1997, popularly called the Vishakha judgement. It radically changed the discourse on sexual harassment in India, holding a workplace free of sexual violence was a woman's human right. It defined sexual harassment, bringing verbal and non-verbal abuse within the framework of violence,



in addition to physical violence. It also held that it was the employer's responsibility to provide a safe workplace, instructing all institutions, public or private, to set up committees for the prevention and redressal of sexual harassment. These committees would be chaired by women, with more than 50 per cent women members and at least one member from a non-profit. The guidelines also talked of preventing sexual harassment through actions like raising awareness against such abuse to encourage a work culture based on respect and dignity.

Implementing the court orders has been difficult. The National Commission for Women took the initiative, the central and state governments amended their conduct rules. However, the private sector and the judiciary resisted. The Supreme Court itself took 15 years to set up these committees. Of course it was not enforceable in the unorganized sector in the absence of a defined workplace. Several universities put into place democratically elected committees with student representatives, called gender sensitization committees against sexual harassment (GSCASH).

It was only in the backdrop of the Nirbhaya case that Parliament passed a law on the prevention, redressal and protection of women from sexual

harassment at the workplace in 2013. The definition of employee, employer and workplace were widened.

This law mandated the formation of internal complaints committees (ICC) in workplaces with more than 10 employees and the setting up of local complaints committees (LCC) with eminent women and men in every district, for institutions with fewer than 10. However, it also brought in the concept of malicious complaint, introducing punitive measures where complaints were filed with intent to harm, making the law almost counter-productive in an environment where breaking the silence on harassment is mostly met with denial. It also put the onus on the head of the institution to make these committees effective, and introduced fines if the law was not followed.

While there has been some effort to implement the law, these committees are hardly autonomous or unbiased. The role of the district LCCs need to be evaluated urgently. But mostly, these committees in the formal structures remain in control of the institution heads, in particular ICC members. Often they do not know the law; there is little training; many a times, these committees become instruments of harassment, and confidentiality is also defied. *Yet, what is the alternative?*

It is very important to take this debate to its logical conclusion—of evolving, formulating and establishing newer platforms for justice—platforms

with which marginalized women can build organic relationships.

Historically, formal platforms have emerged from the struggles of women's groups. To start with, let us begin with public hearings or tribunals with a cross section of women from the movement, outside institutions or in common public spaces where violated women can speak without fear of repercussion or condemnation. This would at least bring together women and help them speak out in public, and perhaps force the institutions to take cognizance of specific cases. Most importantly, it will enable a dialogue on more effective modes of seeking justice. (Of course those who wish to remain anonymous should be respected and alternative ways of sharing their experience should be explored.)

Should the various commissions—the national and state human rights, women, children, and scheduled castes and tribes commissions—not be compelled to intervene? Or have we given up on them too? We urgently need to bring out sector-wise evaluation reports on these committees 2013 onwards, examining whether ordinary women workers got justice.

The fight is far from over: Two decades since we won the first battle on sexual harassment, it is now time to think afresh and arrive at new approaches to challenge the power dynamics at the workplace in fighting sexual violence against women. R

Humour in Uniform



"I had all my medals made into one big medal."

MILITARY AUTHORITIES have a penchant for naming (and renaming) everything around them on war heroes. So, though I live on Ponappa Road, the street is now called Captain Vikram Batra Road. But the gate to our house opens into Akbar Road, which has been rechristened Manekshaw Road.

No wonder the pizza delivery man refuses to take our orders.

TRIPTI NANDAKUMARAN, Allahabad

MY SIX-YEAR-OLD was playing with his toy soldiers, using a different voice for each one.

Soldier No. 1: I have a bazooka, and I make a big boom.

Soldier No. 2: I have a pistol that goes bang.

Soldier No. 3: I have a Swiffer [cleaning product], and I can make your house really clean.

The last soldier caught my attention. On further examination, I discovered Soldier No. 3 was holding a mine detector.

DONNA LAWRENCE

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our jokes sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com



Should the court's authority extend to deciding what one wears?

The Case Of the Appropriate Attire

BY NAOREM ANUJA

SPOONAM KUMARI, a junior engineer with the irrigation and public health department of Himachal Pradesh, was due for a court appearance at the high court in Shimla. That morning she dressed like she did for work every day, putting comfort first. She pulled on a pair of jeans, and picked a multicoloured chequered shirt to go with it and was all set for the day.

But court proceedings came to a halt when the division bench comprising Justices Tarlok Singh Chauhan and Ajay Mohan Goyal proceeded to haul her up for "not being appropriately dressed".



According to them, her choice of clothes was unfit for a court appearance. "What is more appalling is when she informed the court that she even discharges her official duties wearing only these kinds of dresses," they noted.

The 17 July 2017 high court order subsequently led to the Himachal Pradesh government prescribing a dress code for government employees attending court hearings and office. Himachal Pradesh chief secretary, V. C. Pharka, on 3 August, stipulated in an advisory that all government employees should be attired in appropriate "formal, modest clothes" in

“sober colours” and not look “gaudy”. Its mandate was that “[c]asual and party attire should be strictly avoided during appearance in court and while attending office. The mannerism, conduct and dress of a government servant should reflect a sense of decorum, decency, professionalism and seriousness of purpose at the workplace as well as during appearance in Hon’ble Courts.”

Did the high court extend its constitutional authority in reprimanding an adult for her choice of clothes? Does one’s manner of dress impinge upon the perceived sanctity of the workplace? Can the court assume the moral role of telling men and women what is appropriate to wear? Does this in any way infringe upon the sphere of personal freedom? You be the judge.



THE VERDICT

Justices Tarlok Singh Chauhan and Ajay Mohan Goyal in their order stated: “The Judges and Magistrates play a pivotal role in the administration of justice and that is why they wear specific dress prescribed by the Rules framed by the High Court. This dress is worn compulsorily in order to maintain the dignity and decorum of the court and, therefore, we see no reason why any litigant, more particularly, Government officers and officials should be improperly or inappropriately dressed while appearing before the Court. After all being appropriately dressed only induces a seriousness of purpose and a sense of decorum which is highly conducive for the dispensation of justice.”

The court also noted that “... of late there has been lamentable slackness in matters of litigants attire, more particularly, Government officers and officials appearing before this Court and this only (to borrow the words of Allahabad High Court in *Prayag Das vs Civil Judge, Bulandshahr AIR 1974 Allahabad 133*) precipitates sartorial inelegance and judicial indecorum and undermines the majesty of law.” The court then reiterated that “litigants appearing before this Court, more particularly, Government officers and officials should be dressed, if not formally at least appropriately or else they may start dressing more indiscreetly”. The court cited Jharkhand’s example, which, through its Personnel Administrative Reforms and Rajbhasha Department, asked all its officers and staff not to appear before the court in casual dresses in May this year. This decision was arrived at after the Jharkhand High Court reprimanded the chief secretary for the state, for wearing a colourful printed sari during her appearance in court.

R

Agree? Disagree? Sound off at editor.india@rd.com.

Points to Ponder

... THE INTERNET—I am getting pretty sick of it, actually. I notice that my mind 'on internet' is snarkier, more aggressive, shallower, less kind ... The real world is so beautiful and we are here for so short a time. The 'virtual' world is just that—not real—and our manners in that realm are not so good. So why spend any more time there than is necessary?

GEORGE SAUNDERS,
author and 2017 Man Booker
Prize winner in *The Huffington Post*

FEMINISM HAS NOT FAILED. Not at all. We have done very well. So many of us have agency today. But I really think this is the last straw. I believe what we are seeing is the last battle and the ground will be taken away from under their [men] feet.

NALINI MALANI,
feminist artist, in *The Wire*

I LOVE THE FEELING of being part of a collective spirit. One of my all-time favourite quotes is: "When 'I' is replaced with 'we', even illness becomes wellness."

JENNIFER PODEMSKI,
actor and producer, in *The Globe and Mail*



Can I just say,
bring women to
the front of their
own stories, and
make them the
hero of their
own stories.

REESE WITHERSPOON,
actor, at the 69th Primetime Emmy Awards

"FOLLOW YOUR HEART," they say, "and you'll never work a day in your life." I don't know who it is that feels this way, but it's certainly not me. The way I see it, following your heart is the hardest thing you can do.

MONIQUE SULLIVAN,
Olympic cyclist, on CBC Sports

IT IS TIME TO REMIND ourselves why we developed such a passionate and, we thought, unshakable commitment to democracy and human rights, to remember the three lessons we were supposed to have learnt from the concentration camps of Europe: Indifference is injustice's incubator; it's not just what you stand for, it's what you stand up for; and we can never forget how the world looks to those who are vulnerable.

ROSALIE ABELLA,
Canadian Supreme Court Justice, in a commencement speech at Brandeis University

... THE TRUTH IS SO amorphous and difficult to nail down. That's a feeling shared by not only women but men. It is hard to risk a great deal to tell the truth ... The key is knowing when we are being lied to or worse when we are being diverted from looking in the direction where we might learn something.

MERYL STREEP,
actor, in an interview with Anna Wintour, *Vogue*

IF YOU HAVE a song to sing, sing it.

SUDARSHAN SHETTY,
artist, while interpreting his art installation

I DON'T THINK any political party is without blemishes, but I do think some ideas are more defendable than others. As a patriot, I stand by only one holy book: our Constitution, which had the foresight and wisdom to see all Indians as equal.

HUMANS OF HINDUTVA FOUNDER,
in *The Wire*

WHEN I WAS teaching at a university, a fellow faculty member shot a question at me during a staff meeting: When did I plan on getting pregnant? On other occasions, I was asked how I wanted to be treated: as a woman or as a scientist. Later, when I asked a university official why I was being paid in the bottom 10th percentile, I was told it was because I was a woman.

KIRSTY DUNCAN,
Canadian Minister of Science, on the gender gap in science, in *The Globe and Mail*

THESE CONFLICTS ARE not about religion, not about borders. They are about who has and who doesn't. Don't let anybody tell you different.

ROGER WATERS,
Pink Floyd co-founder, in support of Palestinian rights during a concert in Vancouver, Canada



SOME POSITIVE STORIES THAT CAME OUR WAY

Good News

BY TIM HULSE AND AYUSHI THAPLIYAL

Free to be

ANIMALS The Central Zoo Authority of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has banned the training, exhibition and use of elephants for circus tricks. *The Hindu* stated that the order was based on a year-long evaluation by an expert committee which found that circus "companies neglected the welfare of elephants, and the animals were subjected to torture". The MoEFCC also directed state governments to rehabilitate the pachyderms used in circuses. Training and performance of certain wild animals was banned in 1991. Then, in 1998, the central government barred bears, monkeys, tigers, panthers and lions from performing.

Each one, feed one

COMMUNITY Dr Issa Fathima Jasmine always donated leftover food to a lady who would sit outside her

Elephants will no longer be subjected to such torture.



house, but shied away from giving it to others. She was afraid it would embarrass them. In August, she came up with Ayyamittu Unn, a community fridge and donation counter outside Besant Nagar Tennis Club, Chennai. Every day from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., people bring fruits, biscuits, water, cooked meals and clothing items for the homeless. Since then, she and a group of volunteers have distributed non-perishable food bundles to the



"What a pleasure to see a child able to choose, and to give him what he wants. Thank you, world."

Facebook post by the Ageop Ricerca association in Bologna, Italy, after an appeal for Lego for children in the Sant'Orsola Hospital resulted in donations of 500 boxes of the toy bricks.

INDIAPICTURE(TOP) HARVEY HOOK (RIGHT)

needy via their #HappyPlateChennai campaign. They also helped feed people stranded due to the rains in Chennai.

Star footballer's charity move

SPORT Professional footballers are known for their often exorbitant salaries, but not so much for their charitable endeavours. Manchester United's Spanish player, Juan Mata, is hoping to change all that.

He has committed to donating a portion of his salary to a collective fund called Common Goal, a group of 120 charities in 80 countries run by streetfootballworld. "Football generates a lot of money, but there has to be a social responsibility that goes with that," says Mata.

Mata hopes other players and

administrators will join in. The first to get on board was Mats Hummels, the Bayern Munich defender, who says, "As soon as I heard of Common Goal, I knew this was a chance for football to improve our world, and I wanted to be a part of it."

Bringing books to refugees

SOCIETY A minivan carrying a library of more than a thousand books now tours Athens. The new initiative aims to alleviate the boredom and creeping despair of refugees waiting to be relocated elsewhere in Europe. The goal is to "make culture accessible to all", according to Esther ten Zijthoff, the Dutch-American coordinator of the project. The most popular books are dictionaries and the detective novels of Agatha Christie.



HEROES: SOLDIER SELLS MEDALS TO HELP SICK CHILD

FORMER SOLDIER Matthew Goodman, who served with the British army in the 2003 Iraq War, was moved to take action when he read about a small child's struggle with cancer. Despite never having met Lottie Woods-John (*left*), the ex-Royal Marine put his three service medals up for sale to help fund her treatment. "I couldn't imagine seeing my own baby daughter suffering like that," he says. "My medals were sitting in the drawer, and I thought they could be used for something worthwhile." The proceeds will go towards the £200,000 needed to send Lottie to the US to be given a new vaccine. "When Matt contacted me, I was speechless," says Lottie's mother, Charlotte. "He risked his life for those medals and the fact he's not even met Lottie, but wants to help, is mind-blowing."

R



£1 was ₹82.61 at the time of going to press.

Sources: Animals: thehindu.com, 31 October 2017. Community, indianexpress.com, 28 August 2017. Sport, *The Guardian*, 17 August 2017. Society: goodnewsnetwork.org, 21 August, 2017. Heroes, *The Sun*, 21 August 2017.



Things that make me smile are ...



... reading my
old diaries.

E. SURESH KUMAR, Madurai



... travelling back home

on the old familiar road.

NOORI HUSSAIN, Guwahati

... the pages of my old slam book
which remind me how
innocent we used to be.

LIMO KLAHNA,
Millo Ankha, Arunachal Pradesh

... when I see
old people happy.

SAMINA RADIWAALA, Mumbai

... standing on the seashore,
gazing at the sea

and then a cool breeze ruffles my hair.
FENEESHAH THANASLAS,
Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu

... glow-worms shining
through the night.

LEELA MURALIDHARAN, Mumbai



... snapshots of my
**adorable
grandchildren.**

REITA MIR,
North Lakhimpur, Assam



... butterflies hovering
over me while I read a good book in my garden.

DR GEETIKA KASHYAP, Yamunanagar, Haryana

ART *of* LIVING

Banish the Sunday Night Blues

10 ways to take back your weekend

BY CATHERINE PERREAULT-LESSARD



INDIAPICTURE

COME SUNDAY EVENING, many of us are filled with dread at the prospect of a new week; somehow, our two-day respite never seems quite long enough. Here, Canadian psychologist Julie Ménard and Belgian neurocognitive behaviourist Brigitte Durruty weigh in on how we can have happier Mondays.

ON SUNDAYS, FOCUS ON THE GOOD

In the evening, take a long bath, share a meal with loved ones or phone a friend. Whatever you do, make sure it's enjoyable.

PUT A STOP TO SELF-JUDGEMENT ...

Accept that you're more likely to spend a Sunday in pyjamas than scaling Kilimanjaro. Ease up and give yourself permission to relax. Life is long and full of ebbs and flows—you can climb a mountain next year.

... AND LOWER YOUR EXPECTATIONS

You want to spend time with friends, get enough exercise, be fulfilled professionally, keep a spotless home and have an exciting love life—all in a two-day window. It's time to ask yourself if it is indeed possible to have it all. Why not settle on one must-do activity per weekend?

MOVE, WALK, RUN

Physical activity is a great way to get out of a funk. Working out during the day will help lower your anxiety, boost your energy levels and keep you thinking positively come evening.

TAKE MINI-BREAKS TO BREATHE

Each time you inhale and exhale with mindfulness, you lower your heart rate and begin to relax. Setting aside a minute to breathe can also shake the cobwebs from your brain and help you gain clarity, ease mounting frustration and force

you to pause before reacting to a situation.

*Ease up and
give yourself
permission
to relax. Why
not settle on
one must-
do activity
per weekend?*

SEE THE GLASS AS HALF FULL

Train yourself to be a positive thinker. Rather than zero in on what has gone pear-shaped, reflect on your successes. For instance, if you have developed a strained relationship with a friend, remember that there are many people

who appreciate your company.

DEAL WITH THE 24-HOUR DAY

Seven or eight hours are devoted to sleeping, one or two to meals, one to getting ready and one to chores. So don't bother planning 36 hours' worth of activities when you only have 12 hours left in your day.



ENJOY EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK

Happy people don't wait for Saturday or Sunday to roll around to do what they like best. It's important to set aside time for yourself, no matter the day. Bonus: it will take the pressure off your weekends.

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Rather than view the Sunday night blues as your enemy, consider them a sign. Take a step back and ask your-

self what your anxiety is all about. Do you need to sleep more, for example? Have you overloaded your upcoming week with personal and professional commitments? Maybe it's time to slow things down a little.

START MONDAY ON A HIGH NOTE

Kick off your week by telling colleagues about something great that you did over the weekend and ask to hear about their best moments. **R**



CHOCOLATE FACTS

These are bound to make your mouth water (well, mostly):

The world's largest chocolate bar weighed 5,790 kg.

Eating dark chocolate every day reduces the risk of heart disease by one third. But ...

... a lethal dose of chocolate for a human is about 9.5 kg—or 222 bars of Cadbury's Dairy Milk.

Sources: Guinnessworldrecords.com; Livescience.com; Telegraph.co.uk



Pleasurable Health Hacks That Actually Work

BY TERESA DUMAIN

Cracking up with friends increases pain tolerance

Genuine, feel-it-in-your-gut laughter triggers the release of mood-boosting endorphins, which leads to a higher tolerance for pain. Researchers at Oxford University put frozen wine-chiller sleeves around volunteers' arms both before and after having them watch funny sitcoms, stand-up comedy routines or serious documentaries. Those who laughed could withstand pain longer, and laughing along with others relieved pain better than did chuckling alone.

Singing prevents a cold

The catch: You have to belt it out with other people. Group singing increases levels of SIgA, or secretory immunoglobulin A—the fancy name for an antibody that serves as the first line of defence against bacterial and viral infections. Studies found that choir singers have lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol and better moods overall, which probably plays a role in the immune system boost. "There's something about having to coordinate your actions with those of others that brings particular health benefits," says Daniel Levitin,

PhD, a professor of psychology, neuroscience, and music at McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

Chewing gum sharpens your wits

The same habit that irritates etiquette sticklers may help you concentrate better. British researchers had two groups of people listen to random lists of numbers and remember certain sequences; gum chewers had higher accuracy rates and faster reaction times than did non-gum chewers, especially towards the end. Other research suggests gum chewing may improve a variety of cognitive functions, including memory, alertness and attention, and enhance performance on intelligence and maths tests.

Watching reruns restores mental energy

You know that little voice in your head that makes you feel bad for getting sucked into *Friends* again? Ignore it. According to scientists at the University of Buffalo, USA, reruns can jump-start your energy. Test subjects who watched a rerun of their favourite television show after completing an exhausting cognitive task felt more energized. The reason: reruns don't require much mental effort (since you already know the plotline) and offer indirect social time with beloved characters without the energy-draining effects of interacting with a real person. This com-

bination, researchers speculate, allows mental resources to build back up so you feel replenished.

Sipping on ice water defuses a fight

In two experiments, scientists found that participants who literally cooled down by holding a cold drink were more inclined to see someone else's point of view. Physical coldness is associated with "social distance"—or seeing yourself as different from others. Psychology experts think feeling chilly helps you see the person you're sparring with as unique from you, which prevents you from projecting your own biases and opinions, and helps you better appreciate his or her perspective. Slushies, smoothies and frozen coffee concoctions work too.

Using a cafeteria tray encourages healthier eating

Some colleges and workplaces have removed trays from their lunchrooms in an effort to reduce food waste, but if those convenient carriers are still stacked at your favourite eatery, pick one up: Diners who do are more inclined to take a salad, an entrée and a dessert, according to Cornell University researchers. A trayless trip through the food stations, however, probably forces you to leave one or more of these items behind—and guess which one it is? Study results showed more diners skipped the salad and kept the dessert. R



NEWS FROM THE

World of Medicine

Broken sleep may increase risk for Alzheimer's

If you keep waking up in the middle of the night, your brain may be in trouble. Three recent studies have shown that breathing disorders that interrupt sleep are linked to higher levels of the beta-amyloid protein, which is associated with Alzheimer's. This was true both for people who have been diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment and for those with no symptoms. It's not clear yet if sleep disruptions actually cause dementia, but addressing them will help your brain work better in any case. If you're tired all the time, get tested by a sleep specialist.

Air pollution kills

India ranks fifth on the list of countries with the highest deaths related to pollution, revealed *The Lancet's* Commission on Pollution and Health (2017). According to the study, the loss of five lakh Indian lives, in 2015, was attributed to one pollutant alone—PM2.5. This is emitted by crop residue burn-

ing, vehicular exhaust, power plants and combustion of solid fuel. Much smaller than the width of a strand of human hair, it can sneak past the

body's natural barriers, lodge itself in the lungs and attack the immune system. Check the air quality index in your area and if the levels of PM2.5 exceed 25 µg/m³ (24-hour mean), experts recommend staying indoors, keeping windows closed and wearing a mask when outdoors.

Moderate drinking may reduce diabetes risk

While alcohol can raise your blood sugar levels, a new study of more than 70,000 healthy adults found that men who knocked back an average of 14 drinks per week reduced their risk of developing diabetes by 43 per cent; women who enjoyed an average of nine drinks per week, by 58 per cent. What they drank also mattered. Choosing wine significantly reduced risk for both men and women. But women who drank spirits increased their diabetes risk by



83 per cent. Before you pour yourself a drink, do seek your doctor's counsel.

Embrace negative emotions to be happy

Turns out that unpleasant emotions (like anger, hostility and contempt) are essential to experience a "well-rounded" and happy life. "All emotions can be positive in some contexts and negative in others, regardless of whether they are pleasant or unpleasant," lead researcher Maya Tamir, a psychology professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, told *Time* magazine. It is all about feeling the "right" emotions at the opportune moment. The research published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* found that of the 2,324 university students polled across eight countries, those whose desired emotions matched the actual emotions experienced reported fewer depressive symptoms and greater life satisfaction. So, the next time you blow your fuse, don't beat yourself up too much. You are doing it right!

Just one workout boosts women's body image

Need a pick-me-up? In a new study, women who completed a 30-minute workout felt stronger and thinner, and the feel-good buzz lasted for at least 20 minutes. Yes, participants in the study were all regular gym goers. But what's surprising is that

DIGEST THIS

STAT ALERT!

51.4%

of Indian women (15–49 years) are anaemic. Speak to your doctor if you feel fatigue easily, have frequent headaches and dizzy spells.

Source: *Global Nutrition Report 2017*

they got this mental boost after just one short, discrete period of exercising. The study's author believes that the quick psychological pay-off could help women feel better about their bodies and embrace the power of exercise even in small amounts.

A game-changing flu vaccine

A new vaccine that boosts the production of flu-fighting immune cells may herald a change by providing stronger protection against a range of flu viruses. Globally, the flu burden is immense as the influenza virus is notorious for its seasonal mutation. Data from the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme shows that as of 5 November this year, over 38,000 individuals in India suffered from H1N1 flu while over 2,100 succumbed to it. Let's hope for a speedy roll-out to the public.

—WITH INPUTS BY GAGAN DHILLON R

Root Cause

Warm up to the therapeutic benefits of this aromatic rhizome in winter

BY SALILA TEWARI

A STAPLE IN KITCHENS across the country—ginger originated in South East Asia and India. China is the biggest producer of this fragrant root, followed by India; the Malabar Coast is known for its high-quality ginger. Used liberally as a household remedy for improving digestion and fighting colds, Ayurvedic texts credit ginger as a great food with healing properties.

The multi-tasker

Used fresh or dried in Indian and other Asian curries, ginger is also a popular ingredient in pickles and salads. A well-known flavouring agent in tea and other beverages like ginger ale and ginger brandy, it is recommended by health experts for treating loss of appetite, nausea, stomach ache, colic pain in children, and morning sickness in pregnant women. Many studies have also given this pungent root a thumbs up as an effective remedy for nausea caused by chemotherapy in cancer.



Flu fighter

An immunity booster, ginger is your answer to cold, respiratory infections and seasonal allergies, thanks to its anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties. Here's a delicious ginger and lemon recipe that will keep you safe from sniffles and hay fever: Cut fresh ginger in long strips and soak in lemon juice with just a pinch of salt and a few whole green chillies (lasts for two to three days). Have it with your meals in winter and you will be able to brave the cold better than ever. For those prone to allergies and sinusitis, try this: Mix a tablespoon of ginger juice with a tablespoon of fresh *amla* (Indian gooseberry) juice and organic honey. Store this syrup in a jar and have it twice a day. R

Salila Tewari is a naturopath and yoga expert. She's also the founder chairperson of the Nature Cure and Yog Foundation, Uttarakhand, vice president of the International Naturopathy Organisation and founder of Swasth Bachao Andolan.

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Stay Heart Plus

Did You Know

India is witnessing nearly two million heart attacks a year and a majority of the victims are youngsters. Men living in cities are three times more prone to heart attacks than people living in villages. As for women, the risk rises significantly after menopause.*

Have a jolly good heart with this four-pack lipids controller



LIPID CARE

- A natural cardio-protective offering total cholesterol control without adverse side effects
- It is made with well-known and safe lipid controlling herbs such as Arjuna (*Terminalia arjuna*), Harjor Amalaki and Vana Tulsi'
- Helps to lower harmful LDL & triglycerides, while promoting HDL in the blood.
- A mild blood-thinner, it helps reduce cardiac work load even as its antioxidants protect the heart tissue.



FLAXSEED OIL

- It's abundant in heart-friendly Omega-3 fatty acid called alpha-Linoleic acid (ALA) which promotes good cholesterol.
- Plays a role in burning body fat & supports a healthy cardiovascular system.
- It is rich in antioxidants that help reduce the damage from stress & daily intake of this healthy oil offers a lot of goodness.



LKC

- It supports healthy liver function and leads to better and faster fat metabolism, which in turn leads to healthier cholesterol level, thus a healthier heart.
- Enriched with medicinal property of Bhumyamalaki (*Phyllanthus niruri*), Punarnava (*Baerhaavia diffusa*) and Katuki (*Picrorrhiza kurroa*).
- Helps to repair damaged liver and kidneys by reducing toxicity and regenerating damaged cells.



TULSI GREEN TEA LEMON GINGER

- A blend of Tulsi, Premium Green Tea, ginger and lemongrass, this is a delicious blend that helps in fat-fighting.
- An energising blend that awakens the senses
- Refreshing aroma with a zing of lemon grass



A vet shares how he cares
for his pet dog

How I Keep Leo Healthy

BY DR NARENDRA GANDHI

WE ADOPTED LEO, A SHIH-TZU, about eight months ago. For my children, aged 19 and 13, it was like the arrival of a new sibling; and I must say that they look after him really well. I have taught them to spot signs (dry nose, change in behaviour) that indicate illnesses. Identifying them early ensures prompt action and a speedy recovery. He rules our hearts and is lovingly called King Leo. The entire family works as a team to make sure he stays well groomed and in good health. These are what we focus on.

His hygiene

We brush his coat every day and check for bumps, irritation spots and bugs like fleas and ticks. Leo gets a tick control treatment once a month. We ensure never to neglect the dirt in the pads, and clip his nails and paw hair regularly. His eyes are wiped and kept lubricated with drops. We clean his ears daily with ready-made wipes

that are easily available. We massage his gums every day with clove oil; eventually we will brush his teeth with dog toothpaste once he gets permanent teeth—remember those meant for humans are toxic for our furry friends. Baths, however, are a twice-a-month affair, as excessive bathing deprives his skin of essential oils and weakens hair follicles.

His vaccines

Proper vaccination is a must to protect your pet from a large spectrum of illnesses like distemper, parvoviral enteritis, hepatitis, leptospirosis, coronavirus infection, rabies, tetanus and kennel cough. Since Leo has the luxury of having an in-house vet at his disposal, all his inoculations are done at home. The initial vaccinations will

be followed by annual boosters, which need to be administered through the entire life of the pet. (Leptospirosis is a biannual vaccine that should be given once every six months after the initial vaccinations). Finally, we deworm our pet once in three months. This protocol is essential for us as well because worms can easily be transmitted from pets to human beings. Do check with your GP for the right meds.

His food

Our pet lives on pre-packaged food that is both nutritious and balanced. We choose brands that are fortified with natural preservatives and free of chemicals. Pre-packaged foods also reduce the need for supplements. Another advantage of packaged food is that it produces dry and a small poop volume, which is easy to clean up in case there is a 'mishap' indoors.

MY TOP TIPS

- » We clean Leo's ears, eyes, paws and under-tail area every day.
- » We brush his coat regularly and check for bumps and bugs.
- » We make sure that he gets daily exercise and stays active.



We make sure never to feed Leo table scraps or leftovers. His treats are always the ones meant for dogs. We make him earn his treats and toys. He is rewarded for good behaviour or tricks, such as fetching games and obeying basic commands. Clean water is made available to him throughout the day (the same water we drink). It is replaced every two to three hours if not finished.

His grooming

Grooming our shih-tzu is a favourite family ritual. I must admit that it is de-stressing. It makes Leo look good and helps us bond. We brush his coat before taking him for walks or play. It's a delight to see his excitement at the sight of the brush and grooming glove! In fact, he fetches them before us, in case we are too slow!

His exercise

It's very important for our pets, especially the growing ones, to dissipate their energy. Pent-up energy causes destructive behaviours such as chewing on furniture or carpets, digging floors, garden or walls and at times licking themselves out of boredom. This can lead to lick dermatitis. Exercise keeps them healthy. Our pet is excited about his daily dose of exercise and looks forward to his playtime. He enjoys playing Frisbee and fetching ball much more than a simple walk. **R**

Dr Narendra Gandhi is an experienced veterinary surgeon based out of New Delhi.



SMART PEO Dum THIN

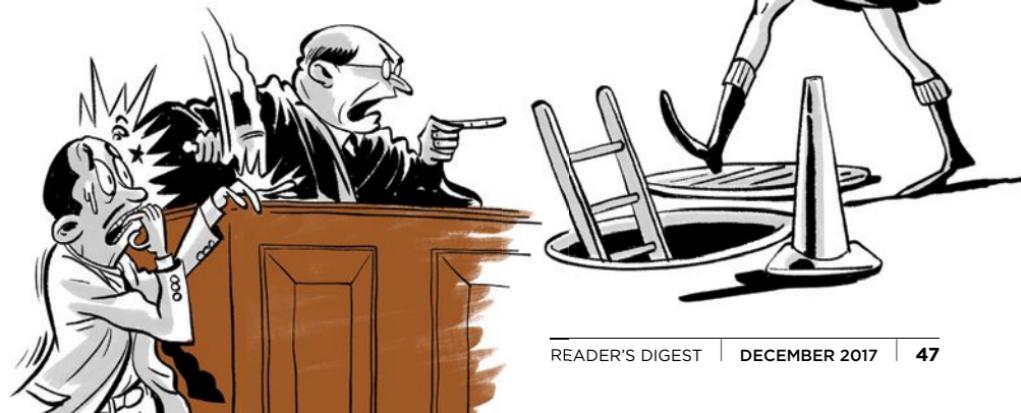




PEOPLE DO THE **best** **GS!**

Special
Screw-up
Edition!

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ZOHAR LAZAR



JOURNALISTS

Every so often, the wordsmiths who suss out the news are subject to a very public form of execution: the corrections page. Here are some of the better goof-ups.



■ This post originally quoted photographer Tom Sanders as saying it takes him five years to get on the dance floor. It takes him five beers.

Source: slate.com

BOSSES

As the business magazine *Inc.* discovered, all that the following company-wide emails from executives accomplished was ticking off their employees.

Subject: COMPUTER COURSE

After much consideration, we have decided to cancel the training for our new computer system on the grounds that once people learn the system, they usually leave.

Subject: SYSTEM FAILURES

It has come to my attention that the email system was down yesterday. From now on, I have requested that the system manager send a group message to everyone next time the system goes down.

Subject: COMPANY PICNIC

We will have our first company picnic next week, which we have dubbed 'Morale Builder'. The picnic will feature carnival rides and all-you-can-eat hot dogs and beans. A menu of steak and lobster is available for executives.

Subject: RECOGNIZING EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS

After several strong sales months, we have decided to print Employee Appreciation T-shirts! These shirts will go on sale next Monday.



■ Correction to the article 'In the chamber of literary echoes' in the *Literary Review*: The sentence "Bolaño largely restricted himself to the 'lost poets', men—always men—of extreme talent" should have read "Bolaño largely restricted himself to the 'lost poets', men and women of extreme talent." The printer's devil here seems to be a man.

Source: *The Hindu*

■ [We] wish to apologize for our apology to Mark Steyn. In correcting the incorrect statements, we incorrectly published the incorrect correction.

Source: *Ottawa Citizen*

GAME SHOW CONTESTANTS

Jeopardy! is the game show for the brainy set. As you'll recall, the show supplies the answer, and the contestants respond in question form. In these cases from the past several years, they responded in questionable form.



ANSWER: By the fourth century AD, Rome had 28 public ones stacked with rolls of papyrus.

CONTESTANT'S RESPONSE: What are public toilets?

CORRECT RESPONSE: What are libraries?

ANSWER: A Christian hymn and a Jewish holiday hymn are both titled this, also the name of a 2009 Tony-nominated musical.

CONTESTANT'S RESPONSE: What is *Kinky Boots*?

CORRECT RESPONSE: What is *Rock of Ages*?

ANSWER: Paul III roared at him, "I have waited 30 years for your services. Now I'm Pope, can't I satisfy my desire?"

CONTESTANT'S RESPONSE: Who is Lady Godiva?

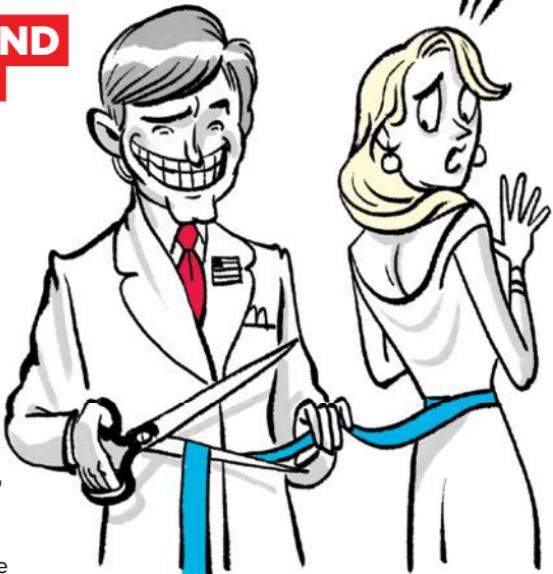
CORRECT RESPONSE: Who is Michelangelo?

POLITICIANS AND BUREAUCRATS

Government has never been accused of being a well-oiled machine, as this headline from the *Independent* suggests: 'US government memo on the danger of leaking to media has been leaked.' Here are examples of the bureaucracy running mighty creakily.

1 File these recent US National Institutes of Health (NIH) expenditures under "Did we really need to study these?"

- **\$230,000:** The money an NIH-supported group spent to find out that the colour red made female monkeys amorous.
- **\$5,000,000:** Amount granted to Brown University researchers for a study that reported, in part, on whether fraternity and sorority members like to drink more than the average undergraduate.
(Answer: They do!)



- **\$150,000:** Sum that went to the National Science Foundation to investigate why we're so stressed out by politics, when most every American would have gladly supplied the answer for free.

Sources: 2017 *Wastebasket* by Arizona senator Jeff Flake; *National Review*

LAWYERS

Lawyers may have gone to graduate school, but their rigorous education hasn't stopped them from asking these bizarre questions of witnesses in court.

How many times have you committed suicide?

Was it you or your brother who was killed?

Do you have any children or anything of that kind?

Without saying anything, tell the jury what you did next.

Was that the same nose you broke as a child?

2 Not to be outdone by the NIH, the US Department of Defense bought camouflage uniforms for members of the Afghan army to help them blend in with dense forests. One problem: only 2 per cent of Afghanistan is covered in trees. Second problem: the uniforms were up to \$28 million more expensive than the desert camouflage best suited for Afghanistan's arid terrain.

3 Indian politicians have often suffered from the dreaded foot-in-mouth disease, especially under the spotlight, on live television or over social media. Here are some that were just too good to pass up.

■ When the Kerala sports minister mourned boxer Muhammad Ali's passing ... live on television: "I just heard that Muhammad Ali died in the US. He was a prominent personality in sports in Kerala. He has won gold medal and made Kerala famous in the world of sports." A moment's silence for the Malayali Muhammad Ali, then.

Source: hindustantimes.com

■ A BJP spokesperson was goaded into singing 'Vande Mataram' during a debate on television (albeit with the in-

ternet's help). That priceless moment has forever been enshrined in memes and on YouTube. Some massacred words include: *pulkistan*, *suhasin*, *sumandara* and the haunting *bhusmaani*. He was probably trying to sing this line: *Suhasnim sumadhura bhashinim / Sukhad adam varadam, Mataram!* Source: *Zee Salam*

■ In an online interview, a TDP politician said he studied B. Com because he was interested in maths and physics. The befuddled interviewer wondered aloud if these subjects were included. Of course, they were, he insisted, following it up with this classic line: "Who said they are not taught in B. Com ... Accounts means physics and maths, no? Perhaps, you've forgotten."

Source: *iDreammedia.com*

■ This statement by a chief minister is self-explanatory, we think: "The streets of Madhya Pradesh are better than the United States."

Source: *India Today*

4 It's not just Indian politicians who mess up. A foreign leader had his private email hacked because he used 12345 as his computer password. One would think that dictator Bashar al-Assad of Syria would have known better.

Source: *mashable.com*

Now,
Doctor, isn't it true
that when a person
dies in his sleep, he
doesn't know about it
until the next
morning?

Were you
alone or by
yourself?

Source: *The Dumb Book*
(Reader's Digest Books)



NUTTY PROFESSORS

The Ig Nobel Prize is a tongue-in-cheek honour bestowed by the periodical Annals of Improbable Research—at an event at Harvard, no less!—for research that is incredibly trivial. Here is how they toasted the winners.



PSYCHOLOGY PRIZE

To researchers in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada and the United States for asking a thousand liars how often they lie, and for deciding whether to believe those answers.



LITERATURE PRIZE

To the etymologists in the Netherlands, the United States, Spain, Belgium, Australia and Canada who discovered that the expression *Huh?* (or its equivalent) seems to exist in every language—and weren't completely sure why.



ECONOMICS PRIZE

To the Bangkok Metropolitan Police for offering to pay police officers extra cash if they refused to take bribes.



PERCEPTION PRIZE

To two Japanese researchers who investigated whether things look different when you bend over and view them from between your legs.



DIAGNOSTIC MEDICINE PRIZE

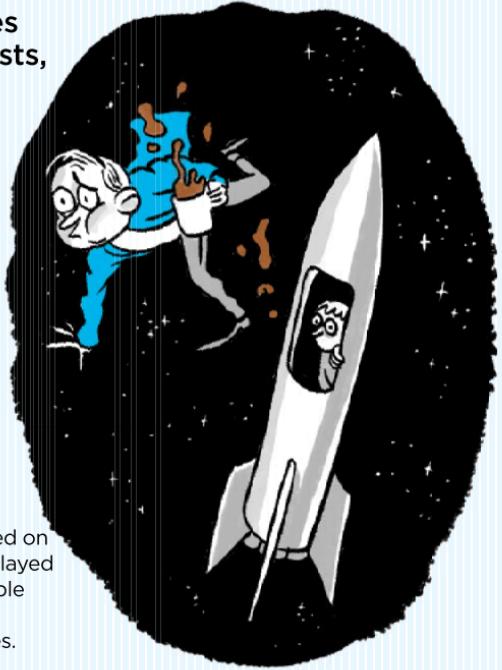
To academics from 11 countries who determined that acute appendicitis can be accurately diagnosed by the amount of pain evident when a patient is driven over speed bumps.

ROCKET SCIENTISTS

While most dummies aren't rocket scientists, these are!

■ David Atkinson devoted years of his life to designing an experiment to measure the winds on Titan, Saturn's largest moon. In 1997, the probe was launched by the European Space Agency. Eight years later, on 14 January 2005, Atkinson and his team waited anxiously for the first data to arrive. And then waited and waited some more, to no avail. An investigation revealed that a receiver for the measuring equipment hadn't been turned on before take-off. The glitch delayed analysis of the data by a couple of days; much of it was later recovered by radio telescopes.

■ In 2004, a NASA probe was returning to Earth after collecting solar particles. As it re-entered the upper atmosphere, rapid deceleration was supposed to trigger the deployment of two parachutes, allowing the probe to gently float back to terra firma. Instead, the capsule slammed into the Utah desert in the US, after the parachutes failed to open. It turned out the deceleration sensors had been installed upside down.



■ Astronomers using an Australian radio telescope believed they might have discovered evidence of alien life when they picked up a distinctive signal at the same time every day. Seventeen years later, in 2015, they learnt its source: The signal was coming from a microwave oven used by staff members to heat up their lunches.

Excerpted from *1,000 Unforgettable Senior Moments: Of Which We Could Remember Only 254* by Tom Friedman (Workman Publishing), © 2017.

CORNER-OFFICE WANNABES

Over the years, the American human resources consulting firm Robert Half has collected résumés and cover letters from job hunters who were just a little too smart for their own good—and for their hiring prospects. Check out these examples of tortured verbosity from aspiring employees.



THE CRIMINAL “MASTERMIND”

Folks who break the law and think they can talk themselves out of trouble sit very close to the confluence of smart and stupid. Behold people bedevilled by their own silver-tongued excuses.

THE ISSUE: A Missouri heroin dealer appealed his conviction, insisting he should never have been arrested.

THE EXCUSE: His rights were violated because he was a student of mysticism and the founder of his own religion. As part of his religious duty, he distributed heroin to the “sick, lost, blind, lame, deaf and dead members of God’s kingdom”.

Source: *The Washington Post*

THE ISSUE: Robbers stole ₹9.5 lakh from an ATM cash van but refused to spend a single paisa.

THE EXCUSE: They believed the

stories that the new 2016 notes were embedded with GPS chips and did not want to get caught spending the money. They never thought, for a second, that the same GPS could lead the cops to their hideout. Source: outlookindia.com

THE ISSUE: A man was pulled over for driving 16 kilometres per hour over the speed limit in Australia.

THE EXCUSE: “The wind was pushing me.”

Source: metro.co.uk

THE ISSUE: A California driver was fined \$478 for driving alone in the carpool lane.

“ Able to remedy posterity and proficiency to the desired cumulus within the work arena. Once expounding upon these various constitutional elements, affinity is achieved, and I sequester the cultivation essential for yielded efficiencies.”

“ [My goal is to] find a career that will allocate dexterity from preceding experiences to perform a job to superiority. In addendum to facile and ardent task force will alleviate the work environment of unethical work habits.”



THE EXCUSE: He wasn't alone. He had the articles of incorporation for his business with him. Since the US Supreme Court regards corporations as people in First Amendment cases, so should the traffic court.

Source: [rd.com](#)

THE ISSUE: A Wyoming college student was arrested on charges of shoplifting.

THE EXCUSE: It was a homework assignment—she was researching a term paper on kleptomania.

Source: Associated Press

THE ISSUE: A Canadian woman was pulled over for driving nearly double the speed limit.

THE EXCUSE: She told the officer she was speeding in order to make it to her nearby cottage in time for sunset. It was 8:20 in the morning.

Source: [CTV News](#)

WHY DOES DUMBNESS STRIKE?

WE TAKE LIFE TOO SERIOUSLY

A few years ago, China's *People's Daily* cited an article proclaiming North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un the Sexiest Man Alive. The article stated, "With his devastatingly handsome, round face, [and] boyish charm, this Pyongyang-bred heartthrob is every woman's dream come true." What the *Daily* didn't grasp was that the article was the brainchild of the satirical website theonion.com. The site's mockery often makes credulous readers cry out in shock, as these comments indicate.



HEADLINE: Red Cross installs blood drop-off bins for donors' convenience

RESPONSE: "That is absolutely ridiculous. I would hate to see how they draw their own blood, let alone the containers they put it in. It's not like a pair of shoes, just can't throw them in there."

HEADLINE: Maybelline introduces line of injectable make-up to enhance ap-

pearance of internal organs

RESPONSE: "They don't get it. I don't care what a woman's innards look like. It speaks to me of massive vanity."

HEADLINE: Engineers unveil new driverless car capable of committing hit-and-run

RESPONSE: "So, our time is spent building cars that commit crimes on their own? Great job, world."

HEADLINE: Busch Gardens unveils new 9,600-mile-long endurance coaster

RESPONSE: "Is this for real? I'm sooooo doing this."

HEADLINE: 42 million dead in bloodiest Black Friday weekend on record

RESPONSE: "How sad. What is wrong with people. So sad and all they were doing is shopping."



WHAT WERE THEY THINKING

Sometimes there is nothing left to do, but send the universe a silent, befuddled cry for help.

■ Kush Chaurasia was sitting down for a cup of tea when the Agra police arrived at his home, with news of his death. He had earlier been admitted to the S. N. Medical College for a snake bite and discharged after a few hours. But a mistake

OUR NERVES GET THE BETTER OF US

A sense of helplessness and giddiness explains why the IQs of expectant fathers plummet once they enter the delivery room. *Popsugar.com* asked mothers for the mind-boggling things their husbands uttered as their children were born.

I asked him to talk to me while I was getting a C-section (to distract me from that fact). The first thing he says to me is, "OK, they just cut you open."

SARAH CONNOR,
California, USA

When I asked my husband who our newborn baby looked like, he said, "Kinda reminds me of the dog."

STEPHANIE ELSNER,
Connecticut,
USA

Husband: Are you going to seduce my wife?
Doctor: Not in her current condition.
Me: Induce, honey, induce!

BRENDA MOAR,
Queensland,
Australia

"It's missing parts!" We were told the whole time that we were having a boy, but then the doctor pulled *her* out!

CHARLENE KIDD,
British Columbia,
Canada



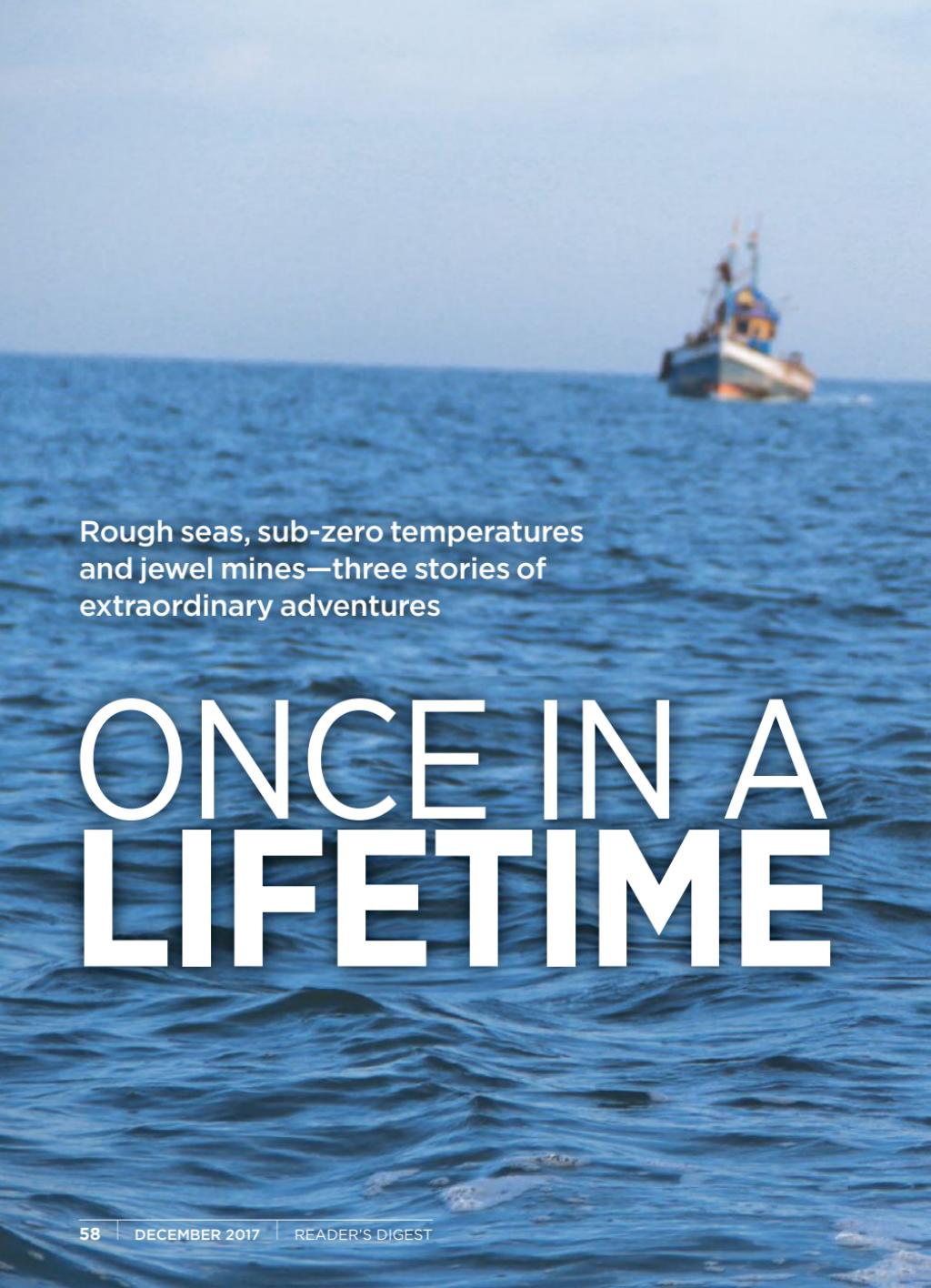
was made. The college officials hastily explained: "We believe it was a clerical mistake. The doctor might have wrongly written the name of another patient instead of the actual deceased one."

Source: *The Times of India*

- The 1962 Indo-China war got a whitewash courtesy *Sukritika*, a Sanskrit textbook taught to class VIII students in Madhya Pradesh schools. A chapter on Jawaharlal Nehru described how "with efforts of Nehru, India defeated China". The publishers attributed the "mistake" to "human error".

Source: *India Today*

R

A photograph of a small, colorful fishing boat with a blue hull and yellow trim, sailing on a vast, calm blue ocean under a clear sky.

Rough seas, sub-zero temperatures
and jewel mines—three stories of
extraordinary adventures

ONCE IN A LIFETIME



Kaustubh Khade
*traverses the sea, from
Kutch to Kanyakumari.*

Open Waters

KAUSTUBH KHADE, 30, Mumbai

THE NOONDAY SUN was beating down on the grey, turbulent sea. The jagged coastline was a haze in the distance. Over the roar of the angry waves around me, I could hear my thumping heart. I was caught in an eddy, roughly three kilometres off the Arabian Sea coast, between Diu and Rajpara. Panic-stricken, I rowed furiously, but the mighty whirlpool below was determined to consume me. My 18-foot kayak bobbed precariously, as the rising waves lashed against it. It was only a matter of time before it would keel over and I'd be sucked deep into the waters.

No, I wasn't marooned—I was on a solo kayaking expedition along the western coast of India, from Kutch to Kanyakumari. That morning the sea had welcomed me with a golden sunrise, but soon it turned into a hostile adversary. I had no idea how I had drifted into the eddy.

Suddenly, I spotted a fishing boat. They were too far away to notice me. I'd have to accelerate to the point where I was out of the eddy. Eventually, I gained enough speed to stabilize the kayak, turning it towards land. By then the blue fishing trawler was moving in my direction. It was a miracle that they had spotted me.

Watching the vessel battle the waves put my predicament in perspective. I paddled away to a safe spot until they arrived. The crew offered to tug me to land but I declined politely. I asked them the best way to get to Rajpara and then we went our separate ways.

I had set off from Gomti Ghat, Dwarka on a sunny day—17 November 2016—crossing the waters of six states and two union territories. I paddled for six to nine hours every day, at speeds of 5–6.5 km/hr. On average I would cover between 35–45 kilometres every day. I started out at sunrise and



INFOGRAPHIC: KESHAV KAPIL

called it a day at dusk. Every four to five days, I'd take a day off.

While I felt a rush of joy riding the waves, at times it was physically exhausting. The sun left me parched, my body hurting from the hectic paddling. But all of it was worth it. I would gaze at the serene beauty of the sea often.

Near Ratnagiri, I noticed a large orange plastic packet floating by. As I reached for it to clean up the sea, my eye caught another white one and then another. Within minutes, I was surrounded by plastic. Then I realized these were jellyfish! One sting could be lethal. In the nick of time, I pulled my hand out and quickly steered away.

Out at sea, there is never a dull moment—like the time when my paddle hit a venomous snake. I freaked out, convinced it had leapt on to the kayak to retaliate. Another

time, I spotted a tail fin in the water. For a moment I stopped breathing: The chilling scenes from the shark thriller *Jaws* flashed in my mind. I was relieved to find it was actually a harmless dugong.

In Devgad, I learnt that dolphins are real exhibitionists. They chased fishing vessels, diving, spinning and flaunting their acrobatic skills. One of my fondest memories was a curious pod of seven dolphins racing in front of my kayak for two kilometres—the best performance I have witnessed at sea.

At last, on 7 February 2017, I paddled into Kanyakumari, past the southernmost tip of India to the east coast. This made me the first Indian to have covered the entire west coast of India kayaking. On my journey I met many kind souls—people who warned me about storms, took me into their homes, fed me when I was cold, wet and defeated. That, with the unparalleled beauty of the Indian coast was the greatest gift I got from my expedition.

—AS TOLD TO GAGAN DHILLON

PHOTOS COURTESY: KAUSTUBH KHADÉ



Solo in Siberia

NIDHI TIWARI, 36, Bengaluru

I AM IN THE MIDST of a frosty desert. The temperature gauge in my rented Toyota Prado can only read up to -40°C . My phone weather app, however, says it's -59°C ! What does that even mean? I get out of the car to find out. A gust of bone-chilling air hits



my face. I clench my chattering teeth, involuntarily rubbing my hands for a bit of warmth. I can't believe the moisture on my eyelashes has frozen. My nose is numb and my fingertips take on a blackish hue. I can't feel my ears or lips anymore. Thinking about Samik, 13, and Avik, 11, my children back at home, I quickly jump back into the heated car.

I am headed towards Oymyakon, the coldest inhabited town on Earth. Even though the sun shines bright at an oblique angle, I feel no warmth. The cold claims everything in Siberia, I discovered this on my 17-day Russian road trip. Covering 5,080 kilometres on this beautiful, harsh terrain, I pass picture-perfect, desolate landscapes awash in soft hues of greys, pinks and oranges. On a lucky day, I spot a herd of caribou passing through the clusters of gangly birch, pine and spruce trees. It's straight out of the long-lost Russian fairy tales.

Earlier in 2015 I drove from Delhi to London. But last year I was chasing a bigger adventure: experiencing December, the coldest time of the year, in the Siberian tundra. I took a flight from Moscow to Yakutsk, a city built on



permafrost, and then drove solo across Oymyakon, or the Pole of Cold, to the port town of Magadan and back.

Memories of those two weeks flicker into life: flashes of drama through long stretches of utter stillness. Like the time I spent in Kadykchan. A former coal town where over a 1,000 people lived, I was told Kadykchan lost many of its people in a fire that ravaged the mines. I wandered through this ghost town alone. It was like being in a post-apocalyptic landscape. Doors of long-deserted homes creaked as the wind whistled through the frozen town. I walked into a building where books lay abandoned. Perhaps this was a school once.

With three and half hours of daylight each day, I drove from one settlement to another, sometimes for



Clockwise from top: Nidhi Tiwari's rented Toyota Prado on an ice track in Siberia; she braves the cold

14 hours at a stretch. With the temperature ranging between -50°C and -55°C, most of this terrain is unforgiving, where the road is an icy track on permafrost and the frozen Lena River. There are no asphalt highways or roadside stores: just an unbelievable Nat Geo panorama.

Reaching each destination, I would park the car in a heated garage (turning the engine off outdoors would freeze the engine and the fuel tank)

and walk to my hotel for dinner. Conversations with the locals were impossible despite Google, though their curiosity on seeing a brown woman driving alone was evident. The local diet of raw fish, horsemeat and caribou meat is not for the faint-hearted, but nothing about Siberia is.

Oymyakon may be the world's coldest town, but my memories are warm. My hostess, historian Tamara Yegorovna, in her 70s, has been documenting and sharing data on life in the Pole of Cold with Russian observatories for years. The town has no hotels—Tamara is the only one authorized to host travellers. Even though we communicated with the help of Google Translate, I will always remember her hospitality. She invited me to the centenary celebrations of Oymyakon's primary school. They said they had never seen a woman drive to the Pole of Cold, and certainly no Indian.

Some of the other memories induce chills that have nothing to do with temperature. Like the Road of Bones built by Gulag prisoners during Stalin's era. The remains of these prisoners are supposed to rest beneath the road.

On my journey through the Siberian tundra I witnessed the power of the human will and resilience to survive the harshest of conditions. It tested the very limits of my own endurance. It takes a while to sink in—the feeling of living up to your own expectations. When it does, the feeling is incredible.

—AS TOLD TO GAGAN DHILLON

E

Emerald Fields

VARUN RANA, 33, New Delhi

TO MOST OF US the word mining would flash images of dark underground tunnels and hard hats, flash-lights and pickaxes, suffocating caves and horrible accidents. And while this was true about a century ago, modern advances in mining technology have changed the game completely. Still, the actual extraction of gemstones in the pits is done by hand, and the feeling of finding one is unparalleled.

I got to do this in Zambia in June this year, at the Kagem mine—owned in part and run by London-based gemstone producer Gemfields—in central Zambia's Copperbelt Province. I went on a trip no ordinary traveller would usually experience. For four days, I stayed in the mining camp, learning about security protocols (everyone, from the miners to Kagem mine's CEO, had to go through body checks when entering and leaving the camp) and how to walk in the heavy boots that miners wear.

While I was there, I had

From top: Uncut emeralds; Number Seven, Kagem's pet croc; an open-pit emerald mine; the author, Varun Rana



three distinct wow moments. One was when I got to witness an explosion that sheared off an entire cliff-side with explosive charges. While I stood safe on a hilltop about three kilometres away, the entire mound opposite me lit up in a sequence of flashes. A second later, sound caught up with light, and I heard an enormous boom, followed by a mini earthquake. But this was nothing compared to my second experience.

The day after the explosion, I went down into the pit to see the miners working. They were busy attacking a seam of dark mineral—found between talc-magnetite schist and pegmatite, the ore in which emeralds are formed—with shovels and pick-axes. These weren't ordinary workmen, but trained specialists who, while shovelling the ore, have to be sensitive enough not to harm any rocks that could turn out to be precious emeralds. I went down on my knees and worked with my hands,

finally picking up a dark, cuboid rock that looked like, well, a rock. But as I turned it towards the sunlight in my palm, it revealed a vivid green facet. Timidly, I asked one of the workers if this was an emerald. A cursory glance and he said, "Yes, it is. Well done!" Well done? I had just found an emerald! Temples needed to be erected in my honour! Where, in fact, was my Nobel already?

Back at the camp, I had joined the mining officers for a drink (or three) at the Lakehouse, Kagem's watering hole, built on stilts on the edge of a small lake. As I made my way across the deck to talk with one of my new friends, I was told to look out over the lake. Gliding silently on the still waters was a crocodile, emanating danger like only crocodiles that glide silently can. And a round of cheers went up all around. This croc, a baby not even a metre-and-a-half long, was Kagem's pet, named Number Seven. He (or she, nobody knows) had six predecessors with befitting names like Lakehouse (obviously), Scarface, Butch, and ... ahem, Fluffy.

As we fed Number Seven scraps from the barbecue (did I mention we would get the grill going almost every evening at the Lakehouse?), I reflected on my short stay in a place no tourist could ever access. Zambia's emerald mines—and living with the miners—had taught me so much more than a holiday with its beautiful safaris ever could. R

PHOTOS COURTESY: VARUN RANA





Handy tips for those times when you're already sick

10 Ways to Fight a Cold

BY LISA FIELDS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOCELYN MICHEL

WHEN DAYS GET SHORTER and temperatures drop, we begin to brace ourselves for the aptly named common cold. With good reason: adults usually contract between one and three colds each year, while young children catch about six. And for every person who is coughing and sneezing, there could be two or three people asymptotically harbouring a cold virus.

But hacking and sniffling aren't foregone conclusions. You can strengthen your body's defences against viruses by taking certain simple steps, and if you're already sick, you can minimize your symptoms. Here's how:

1. Wash your hands often

Many products and practices claim to help prevent colds, but cleaning your hands remains the most effective measure. For best results, wash with soap for a minimum of 15 seconds.

When sick people cough or sneeze, tiny droplets sprinkle the surfaces surrounding them with cold viruses. According to Chuck Gerba, a microbiology professor at the University of Arizona, USA, we catch a lot of colds from touching those surfaces. The virus enters our body when we touch our eyes, nose and mouth. "Covering the nose and mouth while coughing or sneezing prevents spreading of germs," says Dr Jyoti Parikh, a general physician from Mumbai. Remember to wash your hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer to kill germs.

Don't rely only on sanitizer before you're about to eat; use it when you've touched the coffee machine at work or a metro handrail. "Viruses spread like lightning through office buildings, homes and mass transit," says Gerba. "In fact, you may want to discourage your little one from sharing books and stationery during this season,"

suggests Dr Anupam Sibal, a prominent Delhi-based paediatrician.

2. Choose meds wisely

Doctors often joke that a cold treated without medicines takes seven days to go away and with medicines it takes a week. "The common cold is self-limiting, usually the body recovers in three to five days," says Sibal. "However in cases of viral infections, medication can offer relief from symptoms like fever and body pain."

Also possibly effective: nasal sprays containing decongestants such as xylometazoline or oxymetazoline, which can relieve stuffy noses for 10 to 12 hours. Don't give these sprays to children, though, and don't rely on them for more than seven to 10 days, since overuse can cause chronic inflammation. "Sometimes a cold is an allergic reaction. Avoiding triggers such as pollen, fragrances and certain foods can help. Else ask your doctor about an antihistamine," says Parikh.

Avoid antibiotics for cold symptoms, unless your doctor is worried you might actually have a bacterial infection, warns Sibal. While antibiotics can kill bacteria, they are useless against viruses. Taking them unnecessarily contributes to the evolution of bacteria that are resistant to them—a growing international health emergency.

3. Get some rest

Nothing compromises your immunity like poor sleep. A 2015 study

published in *Sleep* found that participants who slept for six hours or less a night were more likely to catch a cold when exposed to the virus than those who slept longer than seven hours. If a cold is keeping you up, go old school. "Try steam inhalation and vapour rub to decongest a stuffy nasal passage. Soothe a scratchy throat with salt water gargles," suggests Parikh. You might be inclined to avoid getting intimate when one of you is sick, but studies conducted over several decades have shown that kissing does not transmit cold viruses. Although they're present in the tiny droplets that leave the nose and mouth during sneezes and coughs, your mouth doesn't harbour viruses when you aren't forcefully coughing. His or her mouth is safer than pecking the cheek. As Gerba explains, "You have to kiss on the lips because the other person may have touched their face with cold viruses on their hands."

4. Give zinc and vit C a go

One dietary supplement that shows some promise in treating a cold is zinc (although further research would be helpful in tracking its effects with more certainty). "It should be in the form of a lozenge or a powder that dissolves in liquid, allowing you to swish and rub it around the inside of your mouth, as it directly binds to virus particles and inactivates them," says Richard Nahas, medical director of Seekers Pain Centre in Ottawa,

Canada, and an assistant professor in the department of family medicine at the University of Ottawa. "A dose of 30 to 200 milligrams a day is safe for short-term use."

Numerous studies also show that a diet rich in vitamin C can help reduce the severity and duration of a common cold. Bolster your diet with oranges, kiwis, lemons and pineapple. Do not forget broccoli and cauliflower.

5. Keep your toes toasty

In addition to protecting your head and neck against the chill when you venture outside, make sure your footwear is warm and leak-free. Researchers at the Common Cold Centre at Cardiff University, UK, divided seemingly healthy people into two groups, believing that some would be harbouring cold viruses. Half had their feet dipped into frigid water, and that group developed significantly more colds within a three- to five-day period.

"Chilling of any part of the body can do this, but the feet seem to be particularly sensitive," says Ron Eccles, director of the Common Cold Centre at Cardiff University. "It's weakening our defences and letting the virus trigger symptoms."

6. Scoop up yogurt

You may know people who consume yogurt containing probiotics to improve their digestive function. Probiotics—live microorganisms, including specific beneficial bacteria—have

also been shown to help boost immune function. A recent review of 10 studies by researchers in South Korea found that eating yogurt that includes probiotics for up to three months can make it easier to ward off colds.

7. Call in sick

The cold virus is contagious in the first few days. It is best you stay indoors if you suffer from a runny nose and an irritated throat. The same goes for your child. "If you know he/she can't breathe comfortably or that the cold will hamper concentration in class, it is best to let the little one rest. Remember it is all a part of growing up and will eventually help strengthen his/her immunity," says Sibal.

8. Tempt your taste buds

When you've got a scratchy throat and a cough, fight back with hot, tasty soups or ginger tea or a warm honey and lemon drink. "They'll provide relief for your sore throat and cough by promoting the production of saliva," says Eccles.

Honey has the added bonus of being safe for children between one and six years old—an age group that should avoid cough medications, according to a Health Canada advisory. "Don't give honey to infants younger than one because there's a risk of botulism," says Michael Allan, a family-medicine professor at the University of Alberta, Canada. "But otherwise,

a spoonful in the evening can help kids to sleep by reducing nighttime coughs."

9. Go green

An amino acid in green tea has been linked to cold prevention. In a 2007 study published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* researchers found that the compound called L-theanine helped to prevent the incidence of colds and made symptoms less severe among sufferers. "It is unusual for a dietary supplement to reduce the incidence of cold and flu," says author Susan S. Percival, professor and chair of the food science and human nutrition department at the University of Florida. Granted, "this was a fairly high amount, equivalent to eight to 10 cups of tea a day".

10. Clean mildly

Don't engage in an all-out assault on germs during cold season, even if a member of your household is down for the count. When wiping surfaces, use plain liquid soap; antibacterial soaps are unnecessarily aggressive. "Cleaning with a neutral detergent and a cloth will be sufficient to stop any spread," says Nuala O'Connor, lead adviser on antibiotic resistance for the Irish College of General Practitioners, Ireland. Furthermore, "if we use too many disinfectants, we're going to encourage the development of resistant organisms".

—WITH INPUTS BY GAGAN DHILLON R



ALL IN

A Day's Work



"We have to move out—I just sold a painting."

JOHN KLOSSNER/THE NEW YORKER COLLECTION/© CONDÉ NAST

MANUFACTURERS often give shower curtains ethereal names such as Anastasia, Summer Mist, and even Cambridge. One day, a customer walked into our home-furnishings store while I was inputting an order for shower curtains. "Excuse me," he said. "Do you have Sunday Hours?"

I looked up from my computer and said, "Can you tell me what the pattern looks like?"

"Let me rephrase," he said. "Are you open on Sundays?"

PETE HOELSCHER

MY ULTRASOUND technician told me about a colleague's patient.

Her doctor had told her she might be having twins, and the young mother-to-be seemed anxious.

But at the exam, the technician assured her, "You're not having twins. There's only one baby in there."

The young woman sighed with relief. "Oh, thank God," she said. "I really don't think I could have stood being pregnant for 18 months." KAREN PELHAM O'STEEN

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our jokes sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com



We have no regrets about the
decision we took in 1994

Final Beat *of a* Golden Heart

BY REG GREEN

FROM THE LA TIMES

THE BOY WHO RECEIVED MY SON'S heart died on 7 February this year, although he wasn't really a boy any longer. He was 37 years old. But when my 7-year-old son, Nicholas, was shot in an attempted carjacking on a family vacation in Italy, Andrea Mongiardo was just 15.

At the hospital in Sicily, my wife, Maggie, and I decided to donate Nicholas's organs and corneas for transplant. They went to seven very sick Italians, four of them teenagers.

Andrea, who lived in Rome, had been in and out of hospitals because of a defective heart. Several operations had failed to help, and at the time of Nicholas's death in 1994, he was receiving transfusions of blood products twice a week. In the words of his physician, Andrea was "struggling to survive". His parents were in despair, knowing that a transplant was not only his best hope, it was his only hope.

to help total strangers.

When Maggie and I were told that Nicholas had no brain activity, it was she who said, in her usual thoughtful way, "Shouldn't we donate his organs?" We had no sense of what the outcome would be, who could be saved, what they would be like. But we realized we could squeeze some good from what was otherwise just a meaningless act of violence.

What we couldn't have guessed was how much good: News of our decision spread like wildfire and so galvanized Italy that in the next 10 years organ donation rates there tripled, an increase no other country came close

We don't feel as if Nicholas died all over again, as some doctors fear will happen to donor families.

In those days, the rate of organ donations in Italy was among the lowest in Western Europe. Andrea's chances of getting a new heart in time to save his life were slim to none.

Perhaps the most agonizing feature of being on a transplant waiting list is that patients can do nothing at all to influence if and when a new organ becomes available. Their future depends entirely on whether a family they have never met is willing to put its own mourning aside

to. As a result, thousands of people are alive who would have died.

Some of Nicholas's recipients were very close to death. One was a diabetic who was almost blind, couldn't walk without help and was dependent on others. After receiving Nicholas's pancreas cells, she moved into an apartment of her own for the first time in her life.

A 19-year-old got Nicholas's liver. The day he died, she was in a coma. She bounced back to health, married



Nicholas Green at the Matterhorn, not long before his death.

her childhood sweetheart a year later, and a year after that they had a baby boy, whom they named Nicholas. He is now a tall, handsome young man with no trace of the liver weakness that has dogged his family.

Andrea took longer to heal. He had been sick for so long that his strength was undermined and, whereas the other six were soon back in circulation, he only slowly came back to full health. But when he did, it was for real.

He got a job, played soccer, lived more normally than he had ever been able to growing up.

And that is how things stood until we got an email on Tuesday. "His heart was still functioning," Andrea's longtime doctor told us, "but the lungs were fibrotic because of drug toxicity related to chemotherapy treatment received three years ago after diagnosis of lymphoma. The final cause of death was respiratory failure."

It was deflating, like the loss of a young nephew you never dreamt would go before you did. But we don't feel as if Nicholas died all over again, as some doctors fear will happen to donor families. And, of course, we still have no regrets about the decision we took in 1994.

When the Italian media first asked Maggie how she felt about our son's heart being transplanted into another boy's chest, she said: "I always hoped Nicholas would have a long life. Now I hope his heart has a long life."

Sadly, Nicholas's heart didn't reach old age. It did, however, perform nobly for three decades. I'm not surprised: I always knew it was pure gold. R

FROM THE LA TIMES (13 FEBRUARY 2017). COPYRIGHT © REG GREEN, LATIMES.COM



SO THEY SAY

The barber's hands were trembling and so he nicked my father's cheek while giving him a shave. "See what too much liquor does," my father snapped.

"Yes sir," the barber replied with a shrug, "it makes your skin tender."

S. APARAJITHA, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu

For young and old alike, visiting the Christmas tree in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius in 2015 was quite literally like entering a fairy tale—visitors could enjoy a unique story-time experience inside the tree itself! While the outside was decked out with fir branches, the inside comprised a cosy 65 square-metre cottage where well-known Lithuanian personalities read Christmas tales to their enchanted audiences.

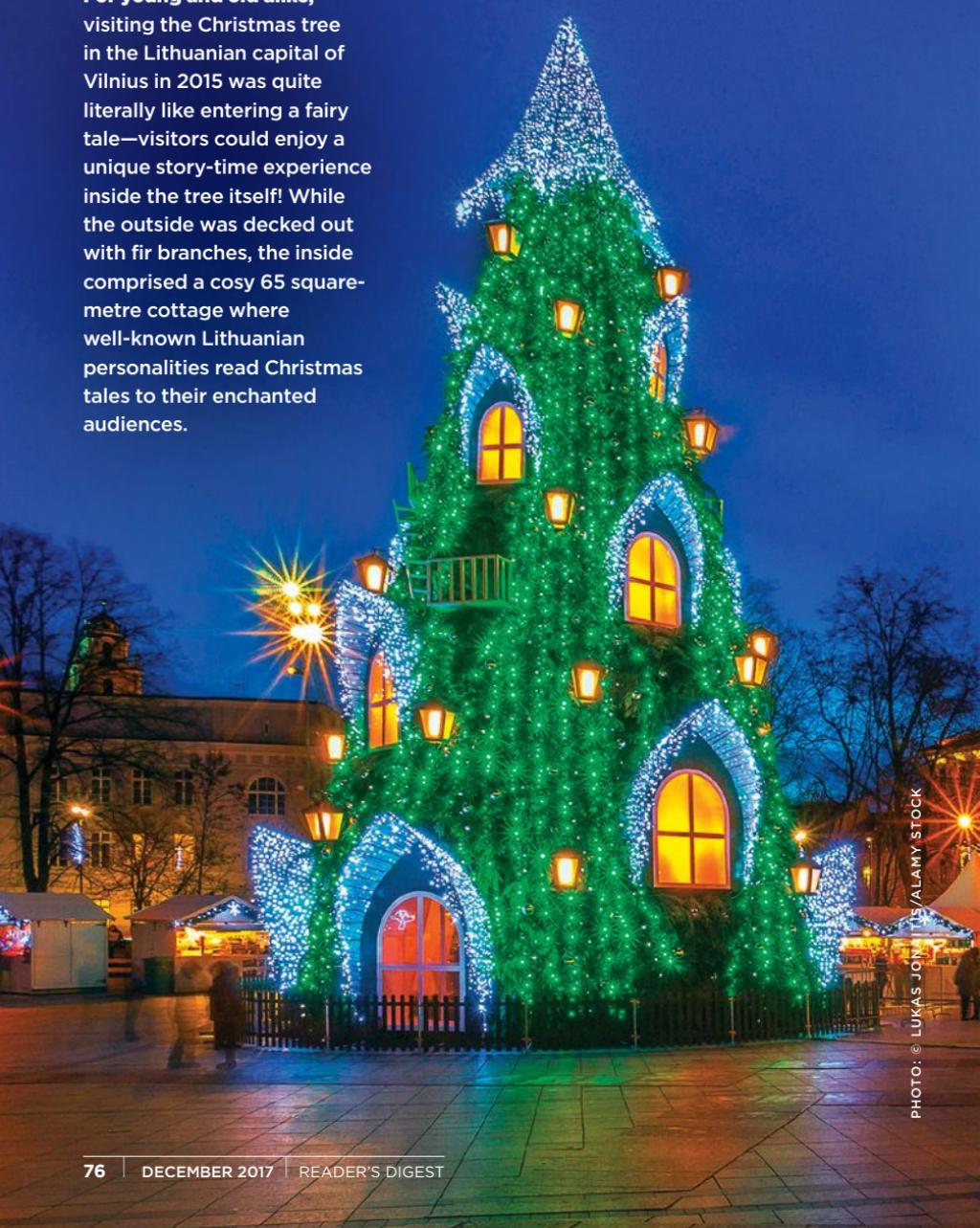


PHOTO: © LUKAS JONA / GETTY IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK

Oh Christmas Tree!

Join us on a tour
of Europe's
most remarkable
festive trees

BY CORNELIA KUMFERT





◀ **The height of festive consumerism?** That may be the first impression conveyed by this London Christmas tree. In fact nothing could be further from the truth. The 2,000 toys used to build the 14-metre-high tree were all donated to a children's charity.

▶ **The world's largest** Christmas tree is made entirely of light! On 7 December every year, the *albero di Natale* (translated the 'tree of Christmas') lights up the Italian town of Gubbio. More than 250 green lights trace the outline of a 650-metre-high tree on the slopes of Mount Ingino.

▼ **You might have thought** that this 30-metre Russian tree at the entrance to Moscow's famous Gorky Park had been blown over by the wind. But as well as lying on its side, Russia's tallest Christmas tree was also suspended in mid-air.

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT TO LEFT) © ESCAPE THE OFFICE/JOB/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; © ACTION PRESS/SERGEI SAVOSTYANOV/TASS; © IMAGO STOCK&PEOPLE







◀ **There can have been** few Christmas trees more colourful than the one that lit up the town of Rakvere in Estonia two years ago. This tree's highly contemporary appearance was created using 121 illuminated coloured windows recycled from old houses in the town.

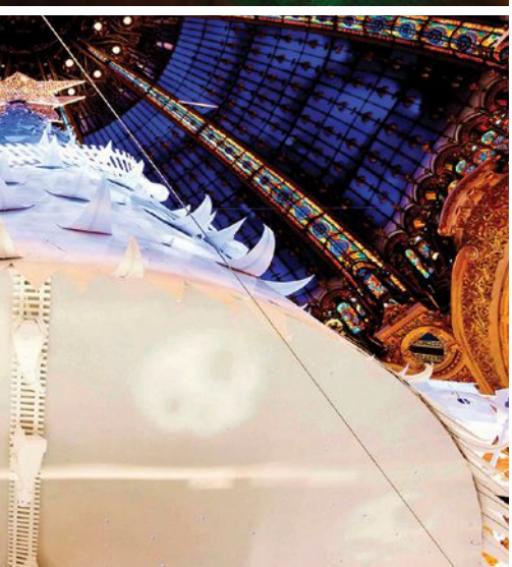
▶ **Wherever would they think** of building a Christmas tree out of cubes? In Brussels, that's where! However, this light installation didn't go down well with the public and this year the Belgian capital's Grand Place will once again be graced by a traditional fir tree.

►► **It takes them** four weeks to put their Christmas tree up in Dortmund. But then, this 45-metre-high colossus is no ordinary tree—it is actually made of 1,700 individual Norway spruce trees!

▼ **Galeries Lafayette** in Paris sought to draw attention to climate change by transforming itself into an Arctic wonderland. In 2016, all of the decorations, including the more than four-floor-high tree, were made of white paper. **R**

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT) © SANDER DE WILDE/GETTY IMAGES; © IMAGO STOCK&PEOPLE; © PSTR KOVALENKO/AFF/GETTY IMAGES PHOTO; © RAIGO PAJULA/AFF/GETTY IMAGES





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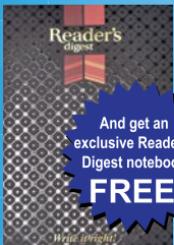
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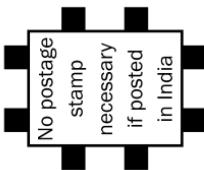
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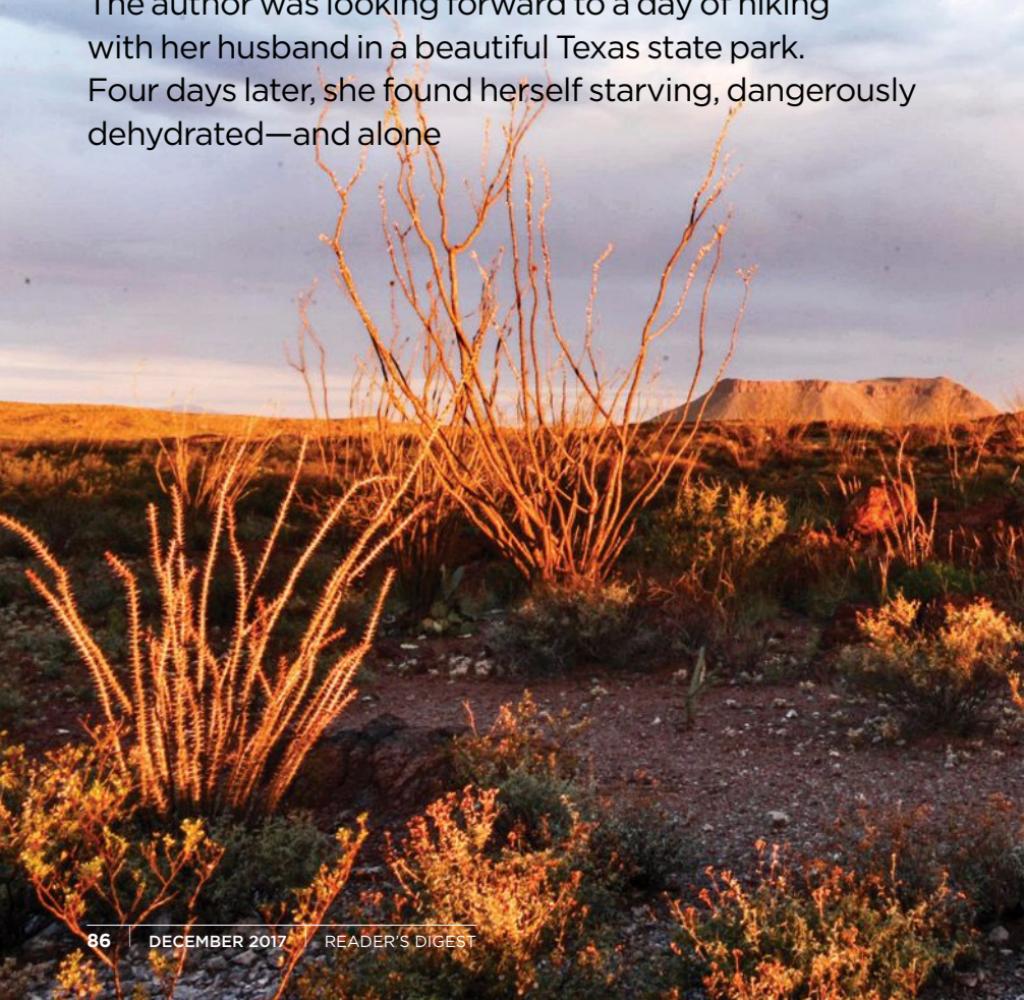
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LOST IN

The author was looking forward to a day of hiking with her husband in a beautiful Texas state park. Four days later, she found herself starving, dangerously dehydrated—and alone



BIG BEND

BY CATHY FRYE FROM THE
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE



MY LOVE AFFAIR with the Chihuahuan Desert of western Texas, USA, began in 1996, during my time as a reporter at the *Odessa American*. The Big Bend—named for a sharp turn in the Rio Grande [a North-American river]—was part of my coverage area. I loved the silence, the night sky so dark and clear, the constant surprise of finding small, brilliant blooms scattered along the desert floor. My husband, Rick McFarland, a photographer, loved the area as much as I did—we were married in 2001 on a trail in Big Bend National Park.

Twelve years later, we returned to the area for a hike on the trails of the Fresno West Rim in neighbouring Big Bend Ranch State Park, nicknamed ‘The Other Side of Nowhere’. The eight-kilometre round-trip to the West Rim Overlook was supposed to offer beautiful views of the Solitario flatirons, steeply inclined and inverted V-shaped rocks. If you hike past the overlook, the trail, which passes an abandoned ranch and eventually loops back to the Puerta Chilicote



Cathy, an experienced hiker, knew the area well.

Trailhead, should take a full day. As Rick and I prepared for our trek, we were excited. The desert was a place that offered solitude and peace.

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY, 2 OCTOBER

At 10:15 a.m., Rick and I pulled in to the parking area, which was more than a kilometre away from the trailhead. The temperature was 23 and would peak at around 33 degrees Celsius. We grabbed two canteens and eight bottles of water from the cooler, and we stuffed granola bars and bananas into my fanny pack. Bees buzzed around patches of yellow flowers. Pink blooms dotted the desert floor. *This might become my new favourite trail, I thought.*



When we began the descent into Fresno Canyon, the trail turned steep and rocky. Each step required me to plant my wooden hiking stick in front of me to brace myself. I skidded and slid, cussing all the way down.

At the bottom of the canyon, we followed a Jeep trail alongside the dry bed of Fresno Creek. At one point, a second creek bed intersected it. We weren't sure whether to stay on the Fresno Creek bed to the left or follow the branch to the right. We tried the right side first. There were no signs or cairns (piles of stones used as trail markers) indicating where the ranch might be. "Let's go the other way," Rick said.

We did, and found the ranch. We were back on our trail. A Jeep was parked out front, and we collapsed in its shade. We'd each guzzled three bottles of water already. Then we drank deeply from our canteens.

"I think we should wait for these people to come back and ask for a ride," I said. "I don't think I can climb back up what we just came down. And we're running out of water."

It was nearly 1:30 p.m., almost the hottest part of the day. It had taken us a long time to descend into the canyon. Going up would take longer. We might run out of daylight before

getting back to the trailhead. Rick studied our map. "It looks like we've made it almost halfway around the loop," he said. "We could just keep going."

Over the next several hours, the sun beat down unmercifully. We stopped frequently, often sprawled on our backs and turning the canteens up and shaking them to get the last drops. We stuck our tongues inside the bottles and licked the interiors.

It seemed we were walking forever. The cairns kept disappearing, obscured by vegetation. Backtracking and searching for the trail burnt time and energy. It also required us to forge

our own paths through cacti.

And then we came to a dead end: the edge of a canyon. "Oh my God," I said. It was 8 p.m. We'd hiked nearly 13 kilometres and gotten nowhere.

"Help!" Rick yelled, startling me.

I joined him. "Help! We're lost! We need water!"

There was no answer but our own voices echoing off the canyon walls.

Rick took out his phone. No signal. The phone, however, did provide enough light to scan the overlook. Rick worried about wildlife. Mountain lions. Snakes. Coyotes. He found a rocky patch of ground, and we lay down.

“
WHEN WE
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TRAIL TURNED
STEEP AND
ROCKY. I
SKIDDED AND
SLID ALL THE
WAY DOWN.

"It's going to get cold," he said. Shorts and light shirts were all that we had on, so we entwined our legs and lay chest to chest to share body heat. I closed my eyes and tried to sleep.

DAY 2: HOPE

Dawn. It had been 13 hours since we had drunk the last of our water. Rick and I trekked about 450 metres to the last rock cairn we'd seen the night before, which led to the Mexicano Falls Overlook. "So that's what happened," he said. "We followed the markers to the overlook instead of staying on the trail." According to the map, we had eight kilometres to go to get back to our pickup near the trailhead.

We hiked steadily for a while, and I began to feel a little more upbeat—until we lost the trail markers again. We backtracked and crisscrossed our path countless times in search of hidden cairns. This portion of the desert undulated mercilessly. Dozens of arroyos, or small ravines, forced us to clamber up steep hills only to skid down and face yet another ascent.

"When will this stop?" I shouted.

"Never," Rick muttered, plowing through yet another prickly bush.

"We've got to get back to the kids," we told each other, our voices hoarse

from lack of water. Amanda, ten, and Ethan, eight, were at home in North Little Rock, Arkansas, with my parents. I pictured their sweet faces and imagined how scared they would have been if they'd known of our increasingly dire situation.

We hiked for another four hours.

At 2 p.m. and 33 degrees, I insisted that we find shade.

As it happens, I'd once read a book called *Death in Big Bend* in which a woman survived the desert heat because she took shade in the afternoon and walked at night. I saw a rock formation that offered a patch of shade big enough for both of us. Cooler air flowed

through a hole at the bottom of the rock. I sat down next to it, revelling in the funnelled breeze. A moment later, a bright green prickly pear cactus caught my eye. *They put cactus juice in margaritas. Surely there'd be something to drink in there.*

After wresting away two cactus pads, I used Rick's knife to slice the bottom off one and sucked liquid out of it. Then I pulled it apart and ate the pulp. Its tiny, hairlike needles embedded in my tongue, cheeks and lips. I didn't care. A mouthful of needles couldn't compete with my thirst.

“HELP! WE'RE
LOST! WE
NEED WATER!”
THE ONLY
ANSWER WAS
OUR VOICES
ECHOING OFF
THE CANYON
WALLS.

"That's disgusting," Rick said, spitting out the pulp.

"Don't spit! We need all the water that's still in us."

We lay down in the rock's shade. Every so often, I pinched my skin and it stayed folded, a sign of severe dehydration. My lips were cracked and swollen, and my tongue felt thick and useless.

"Babe, I'm worried that we're not going to make it," I said, hoping he would contradict me.

"Me too," Rick mumbled.

Hours later, when the sun began its slow descent, Rick stood. "We need to get going," he said.

As we staggered along the trail, Rick spotted something in the canyon below: cottonwood trees. In a desert, cottonwoods mean water. He took off at a near run.

"Water!" Rick yelled. He crossed a dry streambed and disappeared into the cluster of cottonwoods.

"Bring it to me!" I begged, struggling over a rock.

I found Rick crouched over a tiny triangular spring hidden beneath a large limestone rock. He filled my canteen with water, and I guzzled it.

Darkness descended. We would have to spend another cold night on the ground. But we were too giddy over the water to care.



A cairn on the trail. Dense vegetation covered many of these markers, making the trail difficult to follow.

DAY 3: SEPARATION

"We have to get back on the trail," Rick said after we'd woken up.

Though the spring had undoubtedly saved our lives, I knew he was right. It was too small to provide enough water for the two of us, and we felt weak from hunger. No one knew we were out here. No one was looking for us. We had to keep going.

We refilled our canteens, then climbed out of the canyon. As we did, we found the trail. And then, just as on the previous two days, we lost it.

"Damn it!" Rick shouted. "I know the way! My truck"—he pointed with his hiking stick—"is THAT WAY! We are done with the damn markers."

And with that, we abandoned the trail for good. Rick knew if we headed

that way, we would eventually stumble across the trail we had set out on two days earlier. And he was right. We did reach the trail. But neither of us recognized it. We crossed it and kept going.

Rick kept a close eye on the time. We had until 2 p.m. to find the trailhead. Otherwise, we would have to stop and take shelter from the sun.

At 12:30 p.m., I spotted a small mesquite tree in a narrow ravine. I dragged myself over and sat in its shade. "I'm done," I said. "I'm just holding you back."

Rick wrestled with his choices. He couldn't imagine leaving me behind to fend for myself. At the same time, he believed he could make it back and summon help.

"I will wait for you," I told him. "I can hang on."

Rick had two swallows of water left in his canteen, and he poured one into mine.

"I love you," he said, clasping my hands.

"I love you too."

"Want anything when I come back?" he joked.

"Yeah, two waters and a beer."

Soon after he left, I drank the last of my water.

IT WAS EVENING—several hours since Rick had left me—and the oppressive heat had lessened a bit. Even so, Rick, as I would learn later, was near the end of his endurance. He hadn't eaten for days. He'd hiked all day with only one swallow of water in his canteen to keep him going.

And still, there was no indication that he was even headed in the right direction. It would be so easy to give up, so easy to welcome death rather than keep fighting it. He could just stay right where he was and go to sleep. But then Rick thought of me lying helplessly underneath a mesquite tree. If he died, I died too.

Then a glimmer in the distance caught his eye. A truck. It was parked at a parking area next to the trailhead. That meant our SUV waited just a mile down the road.

An hour and a half later, Rick roared up to the park's headquarters, blaring his horn and yelling. His erratic driving caught the eye of the assistant park superintendent, David Dotter.

"My wife and I were lost in the desert," Rick yelled. "She's still out there."

Dotter drove Rick to the trailhead. Too weak to be of any help, Rick let the ranger attempt to find me without him. But when Dotter returned nearly two hours later, he was alone. The first thing

“
IT WOULD BE
SO EASY TO
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SO EASY
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”

he did was call the Texas Department of Public Safety to request help.

THE THRUM OF A helicopter roused me from a fitful sleep. A searchlight blazed from the chopper, cutting through the darkness. A wave of euphoria swept over me.

"Rick!" I yelled. Then, inexplicably: "Mommy! Daddy! Please, help me!"

The helicopter flew slowly and methodically back and forth across the horizon. Too weak to stand, I used my hands and feet to crab-walk up a small incline. "I'm here!" I yelled. "I'm here!"

In the end, it didn't matter. The helicopter's spotlight never illuminated the deep ravine in which I lay.

DAY 4: ALONE

When my wedding ring fell off my shrivelled finger, I listlessly groped the twigs and rocks within reach. Nothing. The desert had already taken so much from me. Now it had my ring too. And as the heat intensified, so did the hallucinations. One cast me in the role of babysitter. Our neighbours asked me to take care of their son, who had developed a physical disability. In reality, the son was me, struggling to move arms and legs that no longer worked.

My physical condition continued to deteriorate. Fluid leaked from my body as my kidneys, heart, liver and lungs suffered from the varying extremes of heat and cold, as well as from exertion and severe

dehydration. Organ by organ, my body was shutting down.

Rick, now rested, was back on the trail with two dozen rescuers. As he plowed through thickets of cacti, park superintendent Barrett Durst had to jog just to keep up with him. "Wait! Wait!" he called to Rick.

Rick kept going. "I'm going to find her. I'm going to bring her back."

They spent the day trying to retrace the path back to where we had separated the day before. Rick looked for landmarks, in particular a pair of boulders near the mesquite tree where he had left me. But nothing looked familiar, and Rick grew increasingly frustrated. *Where is she? Why can't I remember?*

DAY 5: THE LAST DAY

By 6 a.m. on Sunday, the number of searchers had grown to nearly 40. Most feared this would be a body recovery, not a rescue. No one wanted Rick to see my remains. So when the teams left for the trailhead, Dotter persuaded him to stay at HQ with him.

As the searchers wended their way through the desert, volunteers Shawn Hohnstreiter and Andy Anthony repeatedly called out for me. Meanwhile, state park police officer Fernie Rincon and game warden Isaac Ruiz scrambled down into a deep valley. In the distance, they could hear Hohnstreiter and his team shouting, "Cathy, can you hear us?"



Soon after being found, Cathy was carried by volunteers to a rescue helicopter. Right: Cathy, the day after she returned home from the hospital.



COURTESY ANDY ANTHONY. COURTESY MARY FRYE (INSET)

"Help!" I yelled out.
Rincon turned to Ruiz.
"Help me!"

Following my cries, Rincon and Ruiz ran to a precipice and peered into the ravine. "We've got her!" Rincon hollered as they clambered down. "She's alive!"

When they reached me, I was shivering, feral-looking and babbling about how Rick and I had gotten married at Big Bend National Park 12 years earlier. Rincon managed to interrupt. "Do you know your name?"

His question brought me to my senses.

"Cathy," I croaked. "Is my husband OK?"

"He's why we're here."

AT UNIVERSITY Medical Center of El Paso, doctors told me I was only a few hours from death when the searchers found me. I was in acute renal failure. My heart, lungs and liver

were damaged. I was diagnosed with rhabdomyolysis, a condition in which muscle fibres disintegrate and dump cell contents into the bloodstream, often causing kidney damage. My temperature fluctuated wildly. Cactus spines protruded from all over my body.

I was a mess. But I felt a wave of relief the moment Rick arrived at the hospital. He was really OK. We talked about the children and how the search had unfolded. When Rick prepared to leave for the night, a nurse asked if he wanted to take any of my valuables with him.

"Maybe her wedding

ring," Rick said. Then he noticed my stricken expression.

"It fell off my finger, and I couldn't find it," I told him.

Rick clasped my hands long and hard, just as he had in the desert when I'd told him to leave me. The desert had taken my ring. But it hadn't claimed us. R

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* * *

RISE AND WHINE

I love waking up to the sound of birds arguing with their spouses.

 @CONANOBRIEN



Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE

THE ABDOMINAL SNOWMAN



A WOMAN IS in an exclusive pet store looking to buy a sweater for her dog. After witnessing much hemming and hawing and the scrutinizing of the size of each item, the salesperson finally pipes in.

"Why don't you bring the dog in for a fitting?" he says.

"I can't do that," the customer says. "The sweater is a surprise."

GEORGE KLOSS

ON THE 13TH DAY of Christmas, my true love said to me, "I think I might be a hoarder."

✓@JENSTATSKY

A TURTLE IS CROSSING the road when he's mugged by two snails. When the police show up to investigate, they ask him what happened. The shaken turtle replies, "I don't know. It all happened so fast."

Source: beinghuman.com

LATE SHOW HOST Stephen Colbert has a few things he'd like to confess ...

■ Sometimes when I'm out to dinner with my wife, I'll propose so we'll get free dessert.

■ I like being an adult, but I wish all my shoes were Velcro.

■ When I go into a McDonald's that has the calories printed on the menu, I pretend they're points and I'm going to win.

■ Sometimes I lie awake at night, afraid I'll die before I get to use all my Forever [postage] stamps.

■ Sometimes I wish I had more health problems because the people in pharmaceutical ads have more picnics than I do.

From *Stephen Colbert's Midnight Confessions*
by Stephen Colbert (Simon & Schuster)

AN ELDERLY WOMAN lived in Canada, near the North Dakota border. One day, her son ran into the house holding a letter. "Mom," he said, "the government has decided that our land is really part of the United States. We can choose whether we're Americans or Canadians!"

"We'll say we're Americans," his mother said. "I couldn't stand another one of those Canadian winters."

Source: jerrymabbott.com

PRINCE PHILIP looks out the window on Christmas Eve. "That's some reindeer," he says.

The queen replies, "Sixty-three years. Yes, that is a lot." Source: express.co.uk



NOW WE'RE COOKIN'

■ Billion-dollar idea. A smoke detector that shuts off when you yell, "I'm just cooking!"

Twitter: @LEMMYWINKLER

■ I never realized how much of parenthood would involve competing with the dog for my kids' leftover fries.

Twitter: @LURKATHOMEMOM

■ A lady posted her grandmother's brownie recipe, so I tried making them. Turns out her grandma was a terrible baker.

Twitter: @DDSMIDT

■ Relationship status: My wife asked me what I wanted for dinner and then told me I was wrong.

Twitter: @XPLODINGUNICORN

■ I wanted to go out tonight, but the avocado I bought this week will finally be ripe enough to eat between 8 p.m. and 8:15 p.m., so I can't.

Twitter: @TANISHALOVE
(TANISHA L. RAMIREZ)

■ Just ate a burrito so big that I had to forget algebra to make room.

Alison Agosti, comedian

■ Cheese. The adult form of milk.

Richard Condon, novelist

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our jokes sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com



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

The Nature Cure

BY FLORENCE WILLIAMS
FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

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



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

On the third day of a camping trip in the canyons near Bluff, Utah, Strayer, sporting a rumpled T-shirt and a slight sunburn, is mixing an enormous iron pot of chicken enchilada pie while explaining the “three-day effect” to 22 psychology students. Our brains, he says, aren’t tireless three-pound [1.3 kg] machines; they’re easily fatigued by our fast-paced, increasingly digital lives. But when we slow down, stop the busywork and seek out natural surroundings, we not only feel restored but also improve our mental performance. Strayer has demonstrated as much with a group of Outward Bound [an international NGO that conducts outdoor education programmes] participants, who scored 50 per cent higher on creative problem-solving tasks after three days of wilderness backpacking.

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

Strayer’s hypothesis is that being in nature allows the prefrontal cortex, the brain’s command centre, to rest and

recover, like an overused muscle. If he’s right, when he hooks his research subjects—in this case, his students and me—to a portable EEG device, our brain waves will show calmer “midline frontal theta waves”, a measure of conceptual thinking and sustained attention, compared with the same waves in volunteers hanging out in a Salt Lake City parking lot.

Strayer has his students tuck my head into a sort of bathing cap with 12 electrodes embedded in it. They adhere another six electrodes to my face. Wires sprouting from them will send my brain’s electrical signals

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

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



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



contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character ... is favourable to the health and vigour of men."

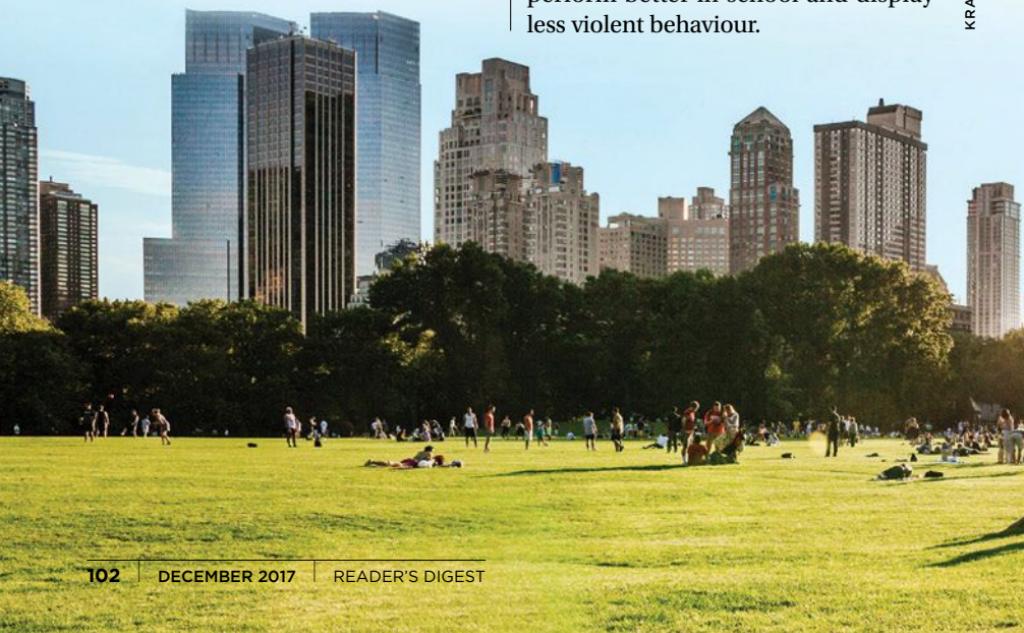
Olmsted's claim had a long history, going back at least to Cyrus the Great, who some 2,500 years ago built gardens for relaxation in the busy capital of Persia [modern-day Iran]. Paracelsus, the 16th-century German-Swiss physician, wrote, "The art of healing comes from nature, not from the physician."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

There is now.

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

and found that those living near more green space reported less mental distress, even after adjusting for income, marital status and employment (all of which are correlated with health). In 2009, Dutch researchers found a lower incidence of 15 diseases—including depression, anxiety and migraines—in people who lived within about a half mile [800 metres] of green space. Richard Mitchell, an epidemiologist and a geographer at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, found fewer deaths and less disease in people who lived near green spaces, even if they didn't use them. "Our own studies plus others show these restorative effects whether you've gone for walks or not," Mitchell says. People who have window views of trees and grass have been shown to recover faster in hospitals, perform better in school and display less violent behaviour.

KRAKOZAWR/GETTY IMAGES



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

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

And yet less than a quarter of American adults say they spend 30 minutes or more outside every day. "People underestimate the happiness effect" of being outdoors, says Lisa Nisbet, an assistant professor of psychology at Canada's Trent

University. "We don't think of it as a way to increase happiness. We think other things will, like shopping or TV," she adds. "We evolved in nature. It's strange we'd be so disconnected."


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



NOOSHIN RAZANI at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in Oakland, California, is one of several doctors around the world starting to counter this disconnection as a means to heal the anxious and depressed. As part of a pilot project, she's training paediatricians in the outpatient clinic to write prescriptions for young patients and their families to regularly visit verdant parks nearby, with transportation provided in partnership with the East Bay Regional Parks District. To guide physicians and patients into a mindset where this makes sense as treatment, she says,

"We have transformed the clinical space so nature is everywhere. There are maps on the wall, so it's easy to talk about where to go, and pictures of local wilderness."

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

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

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

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

IN INDUSTRIAL DAEJEON, the South Korean forest minister, Shin Won-Sop, a social scientist who has studied the effects of forest therapy on alcoholics, tells me that human well-being is now a formal



"A 40- to 50-minute walk seems to be enough for physiological changes."

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

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

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

His research, which centres on how

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

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

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

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EYE-POPPING FACTS

- Goldfish can't close their eyes, as they have no eyelids.
- We spend about 10 per cent of our waking hours with our eyes closed, blinking.

Source: factslides.com



(Clockwise from top)
*Volunteering at a school
for the underprivileged in
Kanchipuram; en route
Triund, Himachal Pradesh;
with a friend at Street Cafe,
one of my favourite breakfast
places in Dharamsala*





The Road Less Travelled

I ran away from home, only to find myself

BY SRIKARAN MASABATHULA

I WAS THE ONLY ONE at the deserted bus stop. I looked at my watch, it was 3.15 a.m. Lighting a cigarette, I waited—the bus would arrive in 15 minutes. I had no idea where my life was headed; what my parents would make of the letter I had left behind for them. All I knew was that I was going to travel down the east coast and up to Goa. Just a few hours earlier, I had shoved some clothes into a backpack, along with a couple of notebooks, a little money and a thick bedsheets. Just in case. Then, I walked out of my home in Perraju Peta, Kakinada [Andhra Pradesh].

I had returned home for the summer from the US, where I was doing an undergraduate degree. My grades had been poor and my family was convinced I was not working hard enough. They wanted me to pursue a career in software; I wanted to find my passion. They expected answers, long-term plans, where I had none.

The possibility of spending decades attached to a desk doing something I hated was as scary as the thought of failing my loving parents. I was on antidepressants, but they don't make you happy, they just make you numb. I knew that if I wanted things to change, I had to do something. You can't walk the same path every day and expect different results. I had two options: either listen to my parents and be discontented for the rest of my life, or take a shot at what I really wanted to do. I chose the open road.

I reached Panaji late at night after two and half days of travelling. I could not afford a room, so I found myself a fishing boat by the beach. Next morning, I walked three hours to Vagator and found work at Dreams Hostel the next day. We agreed that I would write online content for them in exchange for food and shelter. I also found a paid job as a waiter at a restobar nearby. At night, I would

As I learnt to immerse myself in the present, the cobwebs in my head cleared.

I realized my external journey was reflective of my internal one.



play games, listen to music and talk to boarders about why we were doing what we were doing. One of them told me, "If you don't want to be a part of the rat race, then you aren't." It made sense. I later emailed my parents. I knew I was doing the wrong thing, I told them. But for the right reasons.

Two weeks later I arrived in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu, where I stayed with my maternal grandfather, while volunteering at a non-profit. I could not have asked for a better experience. I met villagers, especially women, who ran self-help groups, and attended workshops and panchayats. My parents visited me during this time; they were obviously upset that I left home but happy to see me. For the rest of the trip, I would call them from a local phone booth once a week. While my grandad did not say anything, his disapproval was evident. As I left his home, he told me the internet had turned me crazy.

At Tiruvannamalai, I studied vipassana [a rigorous meditation technique involving intense concen-

tration and silence]—it had always fascinated me. Despite the gruelling first two days, I did not give up. In those moments of concentration and introspection, I found peace in my own company. As I learnt to immerse myself in the present, the cobwebs in my head cleared. I realized that my external journey was reflective of my internal one, so I left the south and travelled northwards. There was only one rule that I followed: I never stayed in one place for more than 15 days (I broke this rule twice: at Goa and McLeod Ganj, I admit).

Along the way, I cleared waste in McLeod Ganj's trekking routes, wrote online promotional content for hotels and hostels and taught English to young Tibetan refugees in Dharamsala. Working at restaurants—taking orders and serving food—I would have deep discussions with cooks and cleaners, perched on gas cylinders and crates. I met strangers who gave me food and shelter and helped me when I got robbed. I sought refuge in mosques

and temples, gurdwaras, churches and monasteries. I attended a music concert in Hyderabad, went to Ajmer Sharif and the Brahma temple in Pushkar. I experienced the flight of my freedom paragliding in Bir Billing, and trekked for days across Himachal Pradesh, lost in my thoughts, forgetting I was even walking. I met some very special people along the way and had conversations that helped me gain clarity. I missed the comfort and security of my home and at times I felt a bit lonely. Sometimes you just want to talk to someone you know.

Yet this was my new classroom. All I had was a backpack, about ₹24,000 and hope in my heart. I visited a browsing centre every two-three days to check email and look up my next destination. I stayed focused on my needs rather than comfort. I never took an AC bus or train. Instead, I spent nights on the bus, got off, enquired about the next bus and then explored the town or had a nice meal. I travelled about 8,500 km in all

across nine states. While on the trip I turned 21.

Finally, it was time to go home in November 2016. In the three months of my wandering, I had a lot more clarity on what I wanted from life and how I looked at success. Truth be told, home felt strange. I got to eat my favourite food but something had changed. My parents had called my journey "wandering aimlessly", and my extended family considered me a rebel, a bit crazy, someone who had ruined his family name. But I did not regret it one bit. Besides, my sister and some cousins supported me and a few friends said this was the happiest they had ever seen me. My parents and I had many conversations, as I tried to explain my side of the story. They didn't fully understand it, but I think they got a sense. We were able to understand each other better. Sitting in my room, I was surprised at my material possessions—I had way more than I needed.

Now, I am back in the US studying economics and business at Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois. I am also the founder-CEO of a start-up, Tapestrify, an online retail business, currently in its pre-launch stages, which I wish to run full-time with a friend after my graduation. Today, my parents value my opinion and have a lot more confidence in me. I can't say I have it all figured out, but I know giving up on one's self is a crime. I had put everything on the line and now life doesn't seem that hard anymore. R



Volunteering to pick up plastic waste en route Triund, Himachal Pradesh



My Very *Muslim* *Christmas*

A Santa-deprived Canadian
embraces the spirit of the season

BY OMAR MOUALLEM FROM SWERVE

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY KESHAV KAPIL





PICTURE MY FAMILY, THE MOUALEMS, through the bay window of our home as we erect our Christmas tree. It's 1997 in northern Alberta, Canada. Snow piles up across the front lawn like arctic dunes.

My brother, Ali, the tallest, has just crowned the tree with a star when, on the count of three, our mother plugs in the lights. Our effervescent smiles radiate almost as brightly. It would be the perfect holiday postcard if not for a few key details.

For one, there are no young children present. At 11, I'm the youngest by three years, which wouldn't be peculiar if not for the fact that it's our first Christmas tree. Oh, and it's not a tree—it's the most robust houseplant we could adorn without having it slouch under the weight.

Also, it's not Christmas. It's Ramzan, Islam's holiest month, a time for fasting, contemplation and prayer, not tinsel and jubilation. Further, it's not even December. In 2015, Ramzan began in June, but because the Islamic calendar moves back 11 days each year, it was late January in 1997 when we put up our decorations.

Another thing you can't see is that it's a secret. My dad is on a trip to his homeland, Lebanon, and is unaware of this brief brush with the Christian holiday. In our household, we celebrated Halloween and birthdays like everyone else. These got a pass. But not Christmas. It was too pervasive, too powerful, too Christian.

Once you let it in through your front door, it turned your Qurans to Bibles, your water to wine, your halal meats into regular meats and your children white. But with Dad away, my sister, Janine, convinced our mom that it would be totally halal if we crossed party lines—*just this once*.

NINETY-TWO PER CENT of Canadians celebrate Christmas, according to a 2011 Abacus Data poll. The other eight per cent, like my family, are often immigrants with strong religious backgrounds. But there were certain cultural pressures my parents couldn't avoid. You can't run a business without a holiday party, for example. So Mom and Dad were sure to keep a Christmas tree in the family restaurant's storage room. The school's annual concert was encouraged, too, so long as we didn't play the role of Joseph or Mary. Christmas carollers were copacetic, as long as they didn't step through the doorway.

And so, like countless other children of the eight per cent, we grew up with a distorted concept of Christmas. While most Canadian kids probably encounter Santa Claus within the first year of their lives—at a parade,

in a mall or in their living room—I was four the first time I met him. My mom, perhaps noticing my sense of exclusion, or to better integrate into her community, took me to the town library, where families lined up to snap photos of their children on the jolly man's lap.

I'm not sure what went through her head as Santa began to ask his stock question, "And what do you want for Christmas, little boy?" thereby raising my mother's commitment to an impossible level. But to me, it was a simple question. I began to list off a bunch of things, real and imaginary: a Ninja Turtles toy, skates, a glove that turns into a sword, a sword that turns

blacklisting: I yanked him by the scruff of his beard and let it snap back into place. This was met with a gasp from onlookers and an unjolly yowl from St Nick himself. My parents were undoubtedly relieved to now have a permanent excuse for why Santa never dropped by.

CHILDREN OF A LESSER Santa grow up to have a different outlook. They may, for example, become petty around the holidays. I once threw a tantrum because McDonald's wasn't open on Christmas Day. Even after the curtain is pulled and Santa is revealed to be little more than a credit card, it becomes no easier. Forgoing Christmas becomes a choice—a decision *not* to indulge in what is the best holiday of the year, bar none.

Some children may overcompensate for this absence, as I did. That meant playing up for my friends of the 92 per cent—which, in rural High Prairie, Alberta, was more like 99.9 per cent—the joy of "Muslim Christmas".

This holiday is better known as Eid ul-Fitr and marks a new lunar cycle at the end of Ramzan. For the first few years of my life, Eid meant going to mosque and maybe getting a new sweater—not exactly reasons for a five-year-old to leap from bed at 6 a.m. But upon reaching the age where one gains a concept of money, I was deemed ready for the traditional gift of cold, hard cash.

It came from aunties and uncles,



I COMPENSATED FOR SANTA'S ABSENCE BY PLAYING UP FOR MY FRIENDS THE JOY OF "MUSLIM CHRISTMAS".

into a snack. As he reached into his big red bag, I assumed he was responding to my requests. Instead he handed me a tissue-wrapped mandarin orange.

You're probably too old to remember what you got for your first Christmas, but I'm willing to bet it wasn't miniature fruit. So I did the one thing that leads to Christmas

in bills of blue, purple and green. All we kids had to do in return was kiss the elder on each cheek and recite an Arabic phrase: "May every year find you in good health." I relished going to mosque on Eid morning because it meant more cheeks and more money.



GIFT GIVING MAY BE STEEPED IN CONSUMERISM AND CAPITALISM, BUT IT IS NEVERTHELESS THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE.

The imam ponied up, too—and I didn't have to sit on his lap. Plus his beard was real.

There was even a second Eid—Eid ul-Adha, sometimes called the 'Greater Eid,' though to be honest, it wasn't that great. A few bucks in my pocket, but nothing like the windfall Eid ul-Fitr brought at the end of Ramzan. I talked it up anyway, back at school following Christmas break. "Oh, you got a new bike? What? That's a new hat? Well, we have two Christmases!"

When these Eids were exactly, I couldn't say: Keeping time by the moon is an esoteric science. Not only does the Muslim calendar move back 11 days every year, but the specific day of Eid ul-Fitr is determined with

just 24 hours' notice, based on a religious authority's observation of a new moon. I described this gentleman to my friends as a turbaned St Nick peering through his telescope and then, upon affirming the new moon, pulling the lever that would shower me with cash.

As I grew older, the differences became more marked. In Islam, when one reaches puberty, one is compelled to fast during Ramzan, from sun-up to sundown. No food or drink during daylight hours for a month. Even a fourth grader knows a bait and switch when he sees one.

Ramzan and the Eid celebrations that followed had become 29 or 30 days of hunger followed by a spike in my piggy-bank savings. My morale waned. Relatives tried to up the ante with pinker bills, but it didn't always work. I overheard a cautionary tale about my cousin getting caught in the linen closet with a mouthful of bubble gum. God knows I had my own secrets.

By the time I was 11, Eid didn't arrive with the same level of glee as before. What's worse, Dad was gone all month on his trip to Lebanon, meaning Mom was working more at the family restaurant, and the nightly dinners became my 17-year-old sister's responsibility. Sensing our declining enthusiasm—and perhaps to compensate for her inedible chilli [stew]—Janine hatched a plan with our mother. "We will be doing Ramzan

differently this year," she told Ali and me. "We will be having a Christmas Ramzan."

A FEW DAYS BEFORE the Eid of 1997, my mother walked into my bedroom as I was doing something private: wrapping her presents. I shoved everything under the bed, like a junkie in a drug raid. She started interrogating me. "What are you hiding? Are you keeping secrets from *your mother?*" I showed her the half-wrapped bottle of perfume. She had forgotten about Christmas Ramzan.

Obviously, it wasn't her thing, but she went along with it anyway, feigning surprise on the morning of Eid ul-Fitr and spraying on her neck a scent so cheap and strong I'm surprised it didn't tranquilize her. This came just after unpacking the stockings—bulky knee-high socks from my sister's closet. The Mouallems re-enacted the TV Christmas specials the 92 percenters had broadcast into our living rooms for years. Sitting on the floor, in our pyjamas, surrounded by piles of wrapping paper and a very special houseplant, we passed around presents and followed each surprise with a hug. My auntie, who was living with us, gave us all socks, thereby authenticating the occasion.

Maybe my body was just coping with 30 days of starvation and dehydration, but I was overcome with that fabled holiday warmth and fuzziness. It was kind of my relatives to dish out

money throughout my childhood, but cash gifts are about generosity, not understanding. Presents, done well, really make you think of the people in your life. Gift giving may be steeped in consumerism and capitalism, but it is nevertheless the language of love.

The next morning, I descended the stairs in my new socks, entered the living room and rubbed my eyes. The plant was naked; the only trace that remained were the tiny tinsel threads caught in the carpet.

MORE THAN A DECADE would pass before I would have another Christmas, in any month, in any fashion, and the effect was embitterment. *Crass, vulgar, cosmetic, a commercial racket*—I called the yuletide season all of these things. Eventually, I also stopped observing Ramzan and Eid. I became a man without a meaningful holiday.

Until I met my wife, Janae.

Seven years ago, I had my first *real* Christmas. And not just any Christmas, but a Jamieson family Christmas.

The Jamiesons are the focus group for the holidays. Lights, wreath, eggnog—their home in December is a checklist of Christmas classics. There's a nativity scene set out in the living room, but it's not so big as to overshadow the presents. Then again, if there were a life-sized animatronic baby Jesus wailing in the corner of the living room, it still wouldn't deflect attention from the presents.

On my first Christmas morning with them, I entered to find 30 presents piled around the tree, despite there being just four Jamiesons. And 11 stockings! "Are we expecting more family?" I asked. No, my future mother-in-law explained. Two were for the living cats, three were in memory of the deceased cats, one was for my own cat at home. And the last one? "It's for you," she said.

I have felt the softness of a real stocking around my arm now. I have sat around a tree and opened a mystery gift from 'Santa.' I have gulped rummy eggnog while Mariah Carey's Christmas album plays in the background. It is hokey, and it is wonderful. The holiday spirit has infected me and spread to my extremities. It's evident in my wintry cheer, my presents for the neighbours. I now erect my own tree a full month before my in-laws raise theirs. I am seven in Christmas years, and it shows.

However, until recently, my love of the season was my deepest, darkest family secret. I have broken a great deal of sensitive news to my parents, but the hardest was

coming out of the Christmas closet.

A few Decembers ago, I invited them over. Against the backdrop of our glittering tree and stockings dangling above the crackling fire, I confessed to them that the holiday they'd taught their children to believe was a 'them/not us' thing was now a 'me' thing. I explained to them that Christmas belongs to all of us—Christians, Muslims, atheists, *Canadians*.

Eight percenters can still cherish Ramzan, Hanukkah or their cultural holidays of choice, but the modern Christmas is non-denominational (sorry, Christians). And we, the eight percenters and 92 percenters alike, can all partake in it.

The decked-out street lamps and office parties. The cashier with the Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer schnozz. The 'White Christmas' piano instrumental on the grocery-store speakers. I freely admit the Christmas I love is a consulting-firm holiday, with PR people, interior decorators and CEOs at the heart of the machine, paid to maintain and grow it. But it makes me feel great, so why fight it?

R

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ALL GONE TO CROCK-POT

Making dinner in a slow cooker involves two of my favorite things: food and panicking that I've left an appliance on for seven hours.

 @LIZHACKETT



Shocking Notes

BOTTOMS UP!

IF YOU DISLIKE drinking alone but your best friend is your cat, good news! There's now wine available with the feline barfly in mind. Your tabby can enjoy a fine Pinot Meow or White Kittendel from Colorado-based Apollo Peak. Or, if kitty has a refined palate, perhaps some Meow & Chandon from the Pet Winery in Fort Myers, Florida. The kitty hooch is essentially non-alcoholic watered-down catnip because, let's face it, cats can be bad drunks.

Source: *The New York Times*

FOR THOSE WHO love books but hate to read, take a page from the Columbia Room in Washington, DC. As part of a recent tasting menu, the bar served a libation made from old texts. Century-old tomes were vacuum-sealed in grape-seed oil, and the infusion was washed with a neutral high-proof spirit. The tincture was then combined with Armagnac, sherry, a porcini cordial and eucalyptus. The result, said the chief bartender, had "that musty, fusty, old library quality to it."

Source: *Washingtonian*



SPEAKING OF literary mixology, book titles, it turns out, lend themselves to quirky-sounding cocktails. *Tequila Mockingbird* by Tim Federle is devoted to such concoctions. Among the more tortured entries: The Pitcher of Dorian Grey Goose (Grey Goose vodka, lemonade, mint), Are You There God? It's Me, Margarita (tequila, lime juice, triple sec) and Bridget Jones's Daiquiri (strawberries, champagne, lemon juice and granulated sugar).

IF YOU CAN SURVIVE the harsh Yukon winters in Canada, chances are you can stomach anything, including a Sourtoe Cocktail. It's a shot of your favourite liquor garnished with a petrified human toe. You read that right: Hard liquor is involved ... and a human toe, one of more than 10 that the Sourdough Saloon in Dawson City has been gifted by unfortunates who lost them to frostbite or accident. Apparently, in the Great White North, this is how they while away the winters—more than 1,000,000 brave souls have ordered these toetails.

Source: dawsoncity.ca

R

Young and old living side by side
is improving the lives of everyone

At Home Together

BY LISA FITTERMAN



Student Sores Duman lives in an apartment next door to Marty Weulink, at a seniors' residence in Deventer, a city in the Netherlands.



TAIMI TASKINEN SETTLED IN HER WHEELCHAIR, preparing for a day that promised to be different from all the others in her 10 years living at the Rudolf Seniors' Home in Helsinki, Finland. During breakfast in the cafeteria that morning in January 2016, residents were told that several young people were moving in as part of a pilot project by the city.

How is that going to work? Taimi asked herself.

At 82, confined to the wheelchair since a stroke in 2001 paralyzed her left side, she couldn't imagine what she'd have in common with a youngster who wasn't family. Her reverie was interrupted when a slim young man with dark hair and a tentative smile appeared in her doorway. She'd left it open, as she always did in the morning.

"Hi! I'm your new neighbour across the hall," the young man said. "My name's Jona, short for Jonatan. Mind if I come in?"

"Please," she replied, at once curious and wary.

"I'll make coffee," he announced, going into her kitchenette. "Why don't you tell me about yourself?"

Startling herself a bit, she did. She spoke of growing up in a mid-size lakeside town in eastern Finland and of her husband who died in 1970 from a heart attack, leaving her to raise four kids. Of toiling as a cleaning lady before getting a job in a factory that produced margarine; of the terrible death of a son—her second eldest—

on his 45th birthday back in 2002. Of her pleasant, uneventful life in the residence; of her love of drawing and painting, hobbies she'd picked up after the stroke.

"Thank God I'm right-handed!" she said, nodding to the left one resting on her lap, curled into a claw.

In turn, Jonatan Shaya, now 20, told

“
WITH HIGH-COST
HOUSING AND HEALTH-
CARE SPENDING CUTS,
INTERGENERATIONAL
HOMES ARE HELPING
TO FILL THE GAP.
”

Taimi he'd been born in Tel Aviv of an Israeli father and a Finnish mother and had been living in Helsinki with his mum and younger brother until they moved to another town.

"I couldn't go with them because I'm in the middle of a course to become



At Rudolf Seniors' residence in Helsinki, Finland, friends and housemates Jonatan and Taimi have a shared passion for painting—and cinnamon buns.

a pastry chef," Jonatan explained. "I needed to find somewhere to live, practically immediately."

It wasn't easy. Helsinki is one of the most expensive cities to live in the world. Then he heard about a new city programme called Oman Muotoinen Koti, or 'A Home that Fits.'

"It's the most genius idea, youngsters and older people living together," he continued. "We can help each other!"

And so began a friendship between the elderly woman who'd spent 10 years watching the seasons pass outside her window and the young man who

brought the outside in—sometimes with home-made cinnamon buns.

"I like cinnamon buns," said Taimi.

WITH HOUSING COSTS climbing out of reach for those without a deep purse across Europe and North America, and with governments cutting healthcare spending, inter-generational retirement homes in various forms are starting to spring up to help fill the gap.

One of the first people to have that "genius idea" was Gea Sijpkens, director of Humanitas, a low-rise yellow brick

seniors' residence in Deventer, a city of fewer than 1,00,000 in the heart of the Netherlands. Back in December 2012 Gea was looking for a cost-effective way to both enhance the residents' lives and fill rooms empty due to fewer government subsidies. She was well aware of numerous studies in the European Union, Canada and the US that found evidence linking isolation and

I USED TO FEEL SORRY
FOR THE ELDERLY
BECAUSE THEY AREN'T
ABLE TO DO A LOT.
NOW I SEE WHAT
THEY CAN DO."

SORES DUMAN, Student

loneliness to physical illness and cognitive decline. A 2014 report by the National Seniors Council in Canada, for example, found that up to 44 per cent of seniors living in residential care had been diagnosed with depression or showed symptoms of it, while men over the age of 80 had the highest suicide rate of all age groups.

"Social isolation isn't just an individual issue," says Tamara Sussman, an associate professor of social work at McGill University in Montreal, who was a consultant for the NSC report. "Seniors often

don't have opportunities to show themselves outside of their illness and something like living models provide an opportunity not only to socialize but to change attitudes and ideas—to pass their experience and knowledge to a new generation."

Gea already knew that seniors enjoy health benefits when they are with younger people, from fighting off dementia to regulating blood pressure, and it struck her that she was constantly reading stories about students struggling to make ends meet while at college.

She thought, why not marry the two? She was in the business of happiness so why not create a rich environment here at Humanitas with the seniors and students who had been interviewed and thoroughly screened?

When she proposed it to the residence's board members, they thought she had gone mad. "To them, the very idea of students, with their sex, drugs and rock and roll, living among seniors was crazy," she said.

But Gea persevered, finally persuading the board to agree to one student living in the residence on a trial basis for half a year before it rejected the proposal outright. In return for free room and board, the student would have to be a "good neighbour" at all times and interact with the residents for at least 30 hours each month, from serving meals to helping with computers or just opening a bottle of



Student Anneloes Olothof shares lunch with other residents at Humanitas in the Netherlands.

wine—a seemingly simple task unless you have arthritic fingers.

"If it doesn't work, I'll kick the student out myself," Gea promised.

It did work—and the programme has been going strong ever since. No more than six students live in Humanitas at a time with the 160 elderly residents. New ones are screened first by their peers and then by Gea. These young people gain more than just free accommodation, according to Sores Duman, 27, a communications student at the HAN University of Applied Sciences in Arnhem. He has been at Humanitas since March 2016, in a studio apartment next door to 92-year-old Marty Weulink.

"We're all friends on an equal basis with something to offer each other, be it the wisdom of experience or how to do something technical," Sores says.

Marty is at once practical and sentimental. "Sores helps me navigate on my iPad so I can contact my family," she says. "When he stops by we talk, eat and drink and tell lots of stories. I'm not sure if I've taught him anything but I do consider him my grandson!"

Sores laughs. "Marty has taught me how she experienced World War II," he says. "What living here has taught me is how to be more patient because everything slows down when you walk in here. I used to feel sorry for

the elderly because they aren't able to do a lot of things. Now, I look at them and see what they *can* do."

WHEN MIKI MIELONEN, a project manager in Helsinki's youth department, heard of the Humanitas programme, he thought, why not here? For him, youth homelessness was the immediate problem. The numbers told the story: In 2015, more



"I'M MORE OPEN. JONA HAS INSPIRED ME TO GET OUT OF MY ROOM AND TALK TO PEOPLE, YOUNG AND OLD."

TAIMI TASKINEN, Senior

than 1,000 people between the ages of 18 and 25 were without a permanent home in the city, drifting from one couch to another, trying to study or work. Why not take some of the empty apartments in retirement homes and charge a small rent to young people in return for them spending time with the seniors? "We can tweak the idea to suit our needs," he told his colleagues. "We needn't limit it to students."

It was a win-win, he said. The young people would pay a modest rent for a studio apartment with a kitchenette and bathroom. In turn, they would

bring their vitality and different perspectives to seniors who could be marginalized by their health conditions and living situations. There would be no hard and fast rules but rather an undertaking that the young people spend time with their neighbours, no matter if it was over a cup of coffee or an outing in a nearby park.

And Rudolf House—a series of white concrete, low-rise buildings surrounded by trees in the east end of the city—was the perfect place to start because the physical structure, with lots of stairs and long hallways, was difficult for some seniors to navigate, thus leaving a number of apartments vacant.

At first, his colleagues, too, were skeptical. Wasn't such a programme asking for trouble? How would the young people deal with things such as finding a senior unconscious, or dead? What about parties, loud music and smoking?

"Let's try it—just a few students at first who are interested in bridging that gap," Miki suggested. "We have nothing to lose."

In November 2015, a Facebook post asking for applications resulted in 312 responses. Miki and a panel of experts that included a seniors' representative from Rudolf House whittled down the applicants to 22 young people who went through in-depth interviews and wrote short essays about why they wanted—and needed—to live in a seniors'

residence. By December, three of them, including Jonatan, were chosen.

BACK IN TAIMI TASKINEN'S room in Rudolf House, she wheels her chair to the little round table covered with a plastic cloth and opens her sketchbook. Leafing through the pages, she considers studies she has done of a barn from various perspectives, simple black-and-white sketches that bring the wooden structure to life, surrounded by trees that appear to move in an unseen wind.

Jonatan and Taimi have sat countless times at that little table, talking and drawing as if they've known each other forever. On her wall

is his drawing of a sensuous woman in an early 20th century evening dress; caught in the yellow light of a street lamp, she wears a long striped gown, a stole and an elaborate feathered hat. And besides the barn studies, Taimi's paintings include birds taking flight, black shadows against a blue sky.

"I'm more open," she said. "Jona has inspired me to get out of my room and talk to people, young and old."

For his part, Jonatan, who now has a full-time job as a pastry chef, loves having someone living across the hall who he is friends with. "In Finnish culture, there is not usually a lot of contact with neighbours," he said. "This is really special." **R**

* * *

A COMIC TURN

Actor (and father) Ryan Reynolds delights his Twitter followers with his sardonic statements:

"On our 6 a.m. walk, my daughter asked where the moon goes each morning. I let her know it's in heaven, visiting Daddy's freedom."

"People in LA are deathly afraid of gluten. I swear to God, you could rob a liquor store in this city with a bagel."

"I'd walk through fire for my daughter. Well not FIRE, because it's dangerous. But a super humid room. But not too humid, because my hair."

Source: twitter.com



Life's Like That



NINETY PER CENT of being married is just shouting, "What?" from other rooms.

• @KEEPTATO

ON A WINTRY DAY, my 90-year-old father was in the supermarket trying to pay for his groceries. Bundled up, his gloved hands were having trouble retrieving and counting the change. The transaction evidently took too long for the man behind him in line,

who cursed. Dad stopped counting, turned around and warned, "Be quiet or I'll write a cheque."

JOHN SHOUSE

A CLASSMATE AND I were walking past a poster in our school hallway. It featured a photo of Einstein with the words *Even Einstein Read Books*.

My friend was amazed: "I didn't know Einstein's first name was Evan."

Source: reddit.com

FIVE-YEAR-OLD: Just one more question before I go to bed.

Me: What?

Five-year-old: What are the lines on your forehead for?

Me: ...

Five-year-old: Now they look angry.

•@PAIGEKELLERMAN

PERFORMANCE IN "I'm so sad I can't make it to your Christmas party" is already generating Oscar buzz.

•@ROBINMCCAULEY

AT A RECENT WEDDING I attended, the groom and groomsmen stood at the altar in anticipation of the bride's arrival. My three-year-old niece,

sitting next to me, was also filled with anticipation. Pointing to the men, she shouted, "I wonder which one she'll pick?"

RUTH MUCHEMORE

WHEN I TOLD my daughter's boyfriend I didn't own a TV set, he was shocked. "If you don't have a TV," he asked, "how do you know how to arrange your furniture?" MEL VANNICE

HURRYING TO CATCH a bus, I stopped another rushing pedestrian to ask for the time. Visibly irritated, he snapped, "At 9:30 in the morning you want the time?! I am not telling you!"

With that he shot past ... and I had the last laugh.

P. MANILAL, Kannur

WHAT A LONG, STRANGE TRIP IT WAS

Holiday travels not living up to expectations? Borrow one of these complaints collected by travel agents.

- "There was no sign telling you that you shouldn't get on the hot-air balloon ride if you're afraid of heights."
- "I compared the size of our one-bedroom apartment with our friends' three-bedroom apartment, and ours was significantly smaller."
- "We could not enjoy the

tour, as our guide was too ugly. You can't be expected to admire a beautiful view when you're staring at a face like his."

- "The street signs weren't in English. I don't understand how anyone can get around."
- "You said the town was next to a volcano, but we went, and there was no lava. I'm pretty sure it was just a mountain."

Source: telegraph.co.uk



Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our jokes sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

Time *in a* Bottle

BY BRUCE SCHOENFELD FROM TRAVEL & LEISURE





In the picturesque valleys outside Vienna—a land
of renowned Rieslings and Grüners—the
next generation of winemakers is bringing
the Old World into the future

*View from the famous Ried Klaus
vineyard to Weissenkirchen,
in the Wachau region in Austria.*

I WAS SITTING in an ornate dining room eating a breakfast out of the Hapsburg Empire: cheeses, meats, smoked fish, black bread with apricot jam. Chandeliers hung from the ceiling. Framed landscapes adorned the walls. Outside, the Danube flashed in the morning sun.

Schloss Dürnstein was built in 1630 and is now a Relais & Châteaux property. Like the rest of the Wachau region—a rural region some 80 kilometres west of Vienna that stretches for 35 kilometres along the Danube—the castle and Dürnstein village look like they belong in the middle of the last millennium. With 47 rooms, Schloss Dürnstein is the largest, most luxurious hotel in a valley of inns and guest houses set along narrow streets that slope up from the river.

Otti, a server who has been working at the hotel for nearly four decades, appeared holding a slim stack of newspapers. “Is that today’s *International New York Times*?” I asked, having recognized the typeface from across the room.

She confirmed that it was, gently putting a copy on my table. I glanced at the date. “But this is from yesterday,” I said.

“For us,” she replied, “today is yesterday.”

The day before, I’d accompanied Toni Bodenstein through the neighbouring village of Weissenkirchen, where he is owner of the renowned Prager winery. When he was Bürger-

meister (mayor), Bodenstein supervised the installation of the handsome new Wachau Museum in a 16th-century building. He showed me historical paintings of Weissenkirchen, then pointed out the same houses when we walked around the town. “If you take a photo today and compare, things look the same,” he explained. “Nothing has changed.”

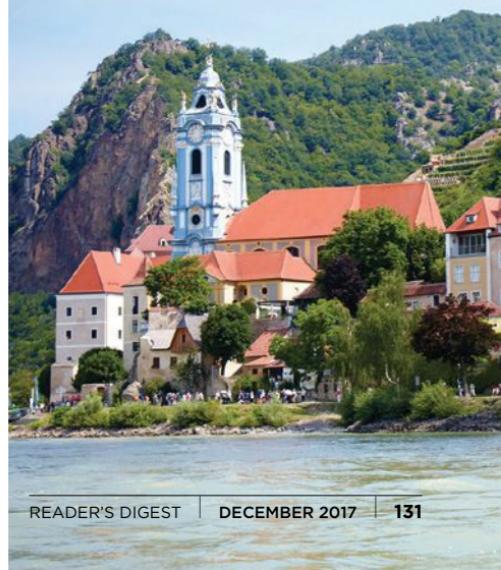
The Wachau valley was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000, and it, along with the nearby Kamptal and Kremstal, has been famous since the 1950s for producing some of the world’s most compelling white wines—dry, refreshing Rieslings that are as focused and precise as the trim on the shutters of the area’s painstakingly maintained buildings.

The soaring popularity of Grüner Veltliner, now the country’s signature grape, has shone a new light on the region and given people a fresh reason to visit. Today’s winemakers, chefs and hoteliers are dedicated to preserving the old-world feel of the valley.

AT LANDHAUS BACHER, in Mautern an der Donau, Lisl Wagner-Bacher has run one of Austria’s most famous kitchens for three decades. Seven years ago, her son-in-law Thomas Dorfer took control and revamped the restaurant’s recipes. “The Wachau is slow-moving,” Dorfer admitted. “But to stay at this level, you have to keep reinventing what you do, even if it’s



Clockwise from top left: breakfast at Schloss Dürnstein; Loisium Wine Museum; Schloss Dürnstein; dining at Pulker's Heuriger



subtle." Landhaus Bacher still serves food that is unreservedly Austrian. For dinner, I had a terrine of duck liver with rhubarb jelly and a salad from the garden, followed by local pike perch in parsley sauce: classic dishes that Emperor Franz Josef would have recognized. The cuisine was airy, refreshing and intensely local.

"We're in wine country, not in a big city like Vienna," Dorfer reminded me. "We want you to take your time, and forget life around you."

Another evening I visited Nikolaihof, a winery, restaurant and inn just a few streets away. In 1971, it became one of the first producers to embrace biodynamic viticulture. This process involves organic agricultural practices, like growing grapes without chemical treatments, but also more mystical ones, among them burying a manure-stuffed cow's horn in the soil.

Nikolaihof's wines have always been formidable, but 38-year-old Nikolaus Saahs Jr, the older of the owners' two sons, has lifted them even higher. One Riesling was the first Austrian bottling to earn 100 points from leading US wine critic Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate*.

The property itself is arranged around a Celtic holy site, and the main building was mentioned in the *Nibelungenlied*, the medieval German epic. A deconsecrated 12th-century church has been converted into offices for the family, which lives nearby in the Nikolaihof section.

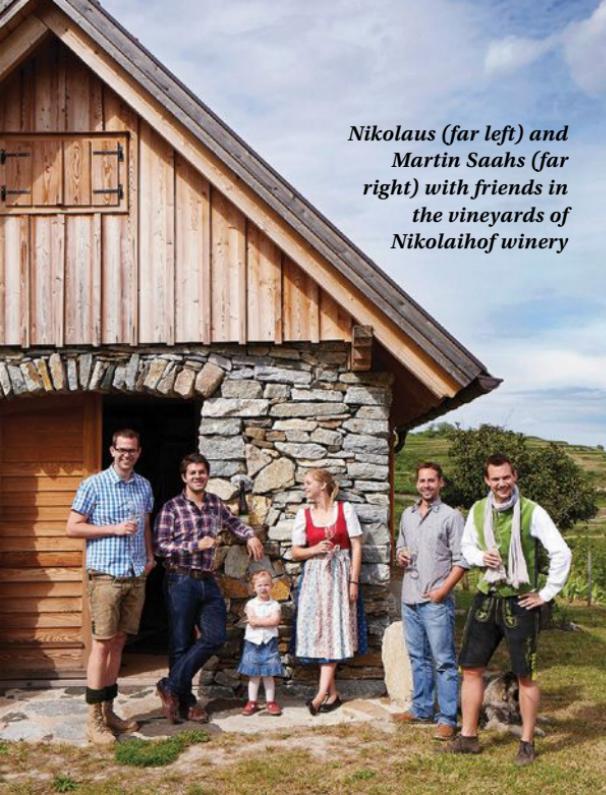
I sat down for dinner under a majestic linden tree, and fell into conversation with Nikolaus Jr and his brother, Martin. Their friends arrived from Vienna for the night. Before I could order, we all piled into a car and headed to the family's terraced vineyard, perched above the Danube, where they've built a small wooden hut. Martin ducked inside and emerged with seven bottles, dark bread, and a plate of hams and cheeses. Girlfriends, daughters and various in-laws joined our group.

We drank crisp Grüner Veltliners and a Klausberg Riesling, made from grapes grown where we were standing, that tasted of pear and orange peel. I could see the evening settling over the streets of Stein and the lights from the outskirts of Mautern.

This impromptu gathering was such a simple yet delightful way to spend a few hours, I couldn't imagine why anyone would do anything else. "This is nightlife here," Martin said. "We go to a beautiful spot, we eat and drink some wine, and make a party."

THE WACHAU'S traditional feel is even more striking when set against Langenlois, some 16 kilometres north in the Kamptal. Though it has its share of historic churches and homes, many of its buildings are surprising, witty and just plain cool. Acute-angled terraces jut from glass-and-steel cubes. Undulating roofs and diagonal lines impose themselves on

Nikolaus (far left) and Martin Saahs (far right) with friends in the vineyards of Nikolaihof winery



the landscape. Works of art line a five-and-a-half kilometre public path that threads through world-renowned vineyards. It includes sculptures of a giant earthworm, a pair of scissors and steel grapes designed to oxidize and streak with each rainfall.

Some of the area's wineries and hotels also revel in this contemporary aesthetic. The starkly geometric Weingut Loimer, set on the site of a former World War II aeroplane factory, consists of four black boxes scattered across the vineyard like giant pieces of stereo equipment. Loisium Langenlois, where I stayed, looked

like it was constructed out of Lego blocks by a creative nine-year-old.

Fifteen of its rooms are dedicated to wineries, which stock the minibar with their bottlings. Mine was filled with Riesling and Grüner Veltliner from Bründlmayer, one of my favourite producers.

That night, I dined with the owner, Willi Bründlmayer, at his ambitious *Heuriger*. This is a type of local tavern found in and around Vienna that specializes in robust lunch fare and house-made wine.

As we drank a fresh, young Grüner full of minerality and lime, and then a remarkable 2002 Riesling that had somehow gained intensity over the years, he explained

the cultural geography at work. Unlike the Wachau, the Kamptal looks northward, towards Prague. In design and mindset, the Slavic influence is palpable. "The Wachau is close by, but the countryside is wilder here," Bründlmayer said. "There's more sense of risk and adventure."

That's also true in terms of viticulture. The region grows Grüner Veltliner and Riesling, but also Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay and Neuburger—more than 30 grape varieties in all. Bründlmayer, whose wife is French, even produces credible sparkling wine to satisfy

Bernd Pulker runs Pulker's Heuriger, an informal roadhouse in Rossatz.



her love of champagne. It was one of the many small choices the town and its residents made with no direct correlation to commerce. Rather, their decisions were aesthetic, emotional, even whimsical.

KREMS AN DER DONAU, a university town of some 24,000 people and the centre of the Kremstal region, serves as a middle ground between the more traditional Wachau and the forward-thinking Kamptal. It's just 11 kilometres down the highway from Langenlois. Its young, progressive outlook is an appealing contrast to the town's breathtaking old buildings, imposing

churches and charming storefronts.

I had planned to spend all day exploring it. But what had been only mist in Langenlois became a downpour in Krems, so I drove across the river towards the town of Rührsdorf until I saw Pulker's Heuriger, an informal roadhouse run by Bernd Pulker, a former server at Landhaus Bacher.

Back home in the States, I'd have dismissed this spot as a biker bar. It had a row of deer skulls along one wall, a tired Christmas wreath and empty wine bottles everywhere. Yet there wasn't a biker in sight. Instead, the place was filled with families. Children sat at picnic tables, laughing and talking as loudly as they wanted, while adults ate and drank heartily around them.

Pulker emerged from the kitchen. A tall man in his 30s with a heavy beard, he was wearing black-rimmed glasses, a white shirt and ornate lederhosen. He balanced six or seven plates in his arms, and distributed them with ease. Eventually, he brought me two kinds of sliced sausage, a salad of yellow potatoes in vinegar and plump Austrian beans, each the size of a postage stamp, served cold with chives.

I devoured every bite, along with hunks of dense bread. I'd heard stories of Pulker's enthusiasm for wine, and they proved to be, if anything, understated. Every few moments, he'd appear with a fresh glass and a bottle, and pour me something invariably compelling.

TRAVEL TIPS

SIP **Franz Hirtzberger**, a 13th-century winery that turns out rich Grüners, hirtzberger.com; **F.X. Pichler**, a futuristic winery where traditional Grüners rank with the region's best, fx-pichler.at; **Loimer**, known for intense Rieslings, loimer.at; **Nigl**, supremely balanced Rieslings with 50-year life spans, weingutnigl.at; **Nikolaihof**, pinpoint-precise wines are almost as memorable as dinner in the courtyard, nikolaihof.at; **Prager**, complex wines, weingutprager.at

STAY **Loisium Wine & Spa Resort**
Lan-genlois, doubles from 160 euros, loisium.com; **Schloss Dürnstein**, doubles from 209 euros, schloss.at

EAT **Heurigenhof Bründlmayer**, Walterstrasse 14, Langenlois, speciality is deep-fried chicken with potato salad, 16.50 euros; **Landhaus Bacher**, Suedtirolerplatz 2, Mautern, speciality is deep-fried caviar (59 euros);

Pulker's Heuriger, Ruehrsdorfer Kellergasse, Ruehrsdorf, speciality is roast pork, 12.50 euros

These were wines made for the Heuriger, low in alcohol and thirst-quenching, perfect for a Sunday afternoon. But Pulker is also a collector, and his cellar of 3,500 bottles is renowned in the community. "Guests say, 'Make me some food and give me a little Henri Jayer Burgundy' or whatever it might be," he said. "And they sit here in shorts and T-shirts and have an unforgettable meal."

I'd had plenty of fine lunches and dinners over the course of my trip, but he was right: this was the one I won't soon forget. What set it apart, more than anything, was Pulker himself, an oversized presence who embodied the enthusiasm and hospitality of the region.

I can see him now emerging from the kitchen. He's roaring with laughter, looking slightly preposterous yet altogether fitting in his traditional costume, striding toward my table, weaving between a runaway toddler and a stack of dishes, holding up a bottle he's eager for me to try. I'm pretty sure it's a Riesling. R

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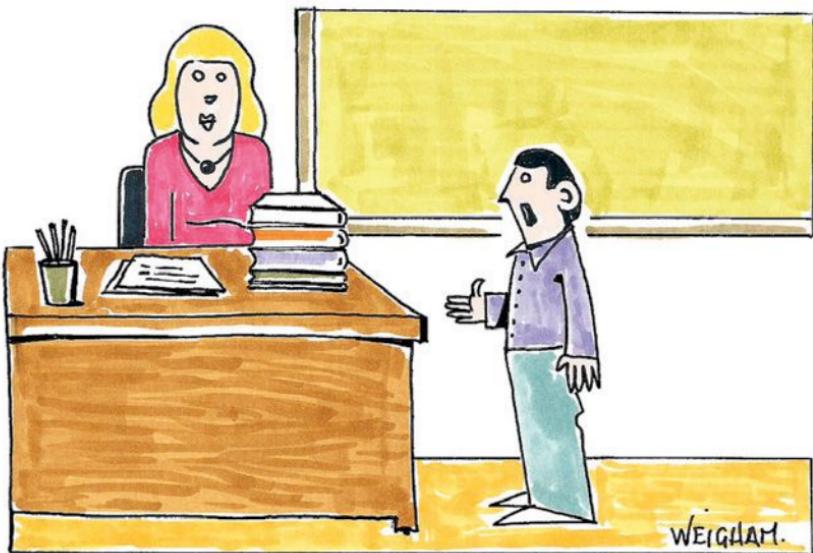
BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

I never made a mistake in my life. I thought I did once,
but I was wrong.

CHARLES M. SCHULZ



As Kids See It



WEIGHAM.

"I don't know the answer. Can I text it to you later?"

AS I WAS DRAWING with my six-year-old grandson, Jonah, I mentioned that we should enlist his grandpa's help, since he has a really good eye for art. Jonah looked at me, puzzled, and asked, "Which one of his eyes is it?"

SABINE COULSON

HAROON, MY FIVE-YEAR-OLD grandson, saw me lying in bed one afternoon. Concerned, he asked what was wrong. I told him that I had a headache.

"Wait, I will bring you some 'you keep this oil,'" he said and disap-

peared. I waited, puzzled. A minute later, he walked into the room with a bottle of eucalyptus oil.

C. KAMAKSHI, Coimbatore

"I'M SO BORED. There's nothing to do," my son says as he longingly stares out the back window at our playground, trampoline and bicycles.

Twitter @CHEESEBOY22

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DAVID WEIGHAM



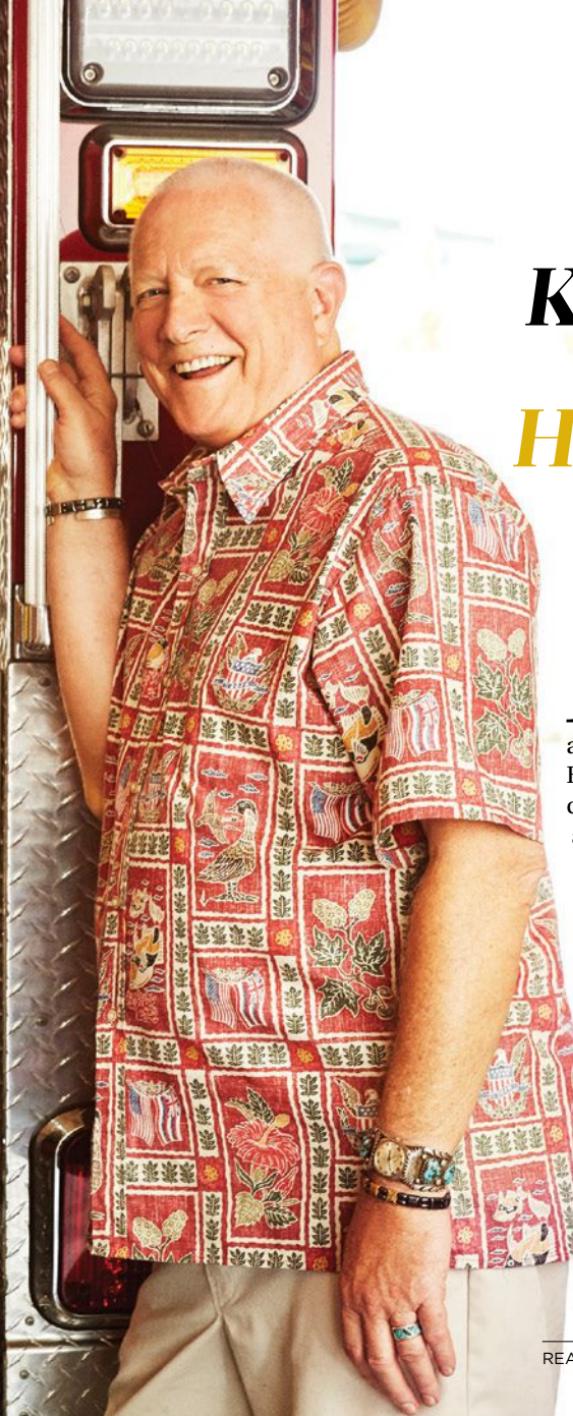
Miracles in Real Life

LIKE *LOVE*, THE WORD *miracle* gets overused. We trot it out to describe an amazing sports play or a particularly effective detergent. But a genuine miracle produces something precious and rare. It raises goosebumps, inspires awe and, most of all, touches the heart. We think these four stories—about families who discovered joy when they least expected it—do that and more. And what better time to celebrate joy than during the Christmas season?

Paramedic Chris Trokey (left) helped save the life of Michael Shannon, MD (right), before recognizing Shannon from his childhood.



PHOTOGRAPH BY AMANDA FRIEDMAN



"I Don't Know if He Knows How Lucky He Was"

BY LISA MILLER

IT WAS 5:45 A.M. in March 2011, and as paediatrician Michael Shannon, MD, drove along California's Pacific Coast Highway towards the beach, he could smell the sea. He was taking a route he knew well to meet a friend for their regular Tuesday walk. As he headed towards Dana Point Harbor, a blanket of white suddenly interrupted his vision. A truck had pulled on to the road in front of him. The physician had no time to react.

"I probably said a few expletives in my mind," he recalls. "I remember the wham and the sound of breaking glass, and then everything stopped. I was sitting still."

Shannon remained conscious during the collision.

In the quiet afterwards, his first thought was that he was alive. His second thought was that he had to get out—fast. He sensed something burning. His legs and feet, wedged beneath the crumpled dashboard, felt hot. But he was pinned.

Help arrived almost instantly; a unit from the Orange County Fire Department was on the scene in less than two minutes. Four men work on Engine 29—two are paramedics—and that morning, they were returning to their fire station when they got the call. The guys were exhausted from working all night, but the timing was better than good. They were already in the truck and ready to go.

MY MIRACLE

Our daughter was \$2,500 short for tuition her freshman year, and we had no more resources to pay for it. My husband said a prayer, played the lottery, and won exactly \$2,500.

MARILYN CERNIGLIA CHEW, New York

Arriving at the scene, paramedic Chris Trokey could immediately see how urgent it was. At 30, Trokey had been on the job for eight years, and this accident was a nine out of ten in severity. The whole front end of the SUV was tucked under the body of the truck. He could see that the engine was smouldering—now only a small red flame like a campfire—but he

knew it could explode within minutes. The man inside the vehicle appeared remarkably calm. “He wasn’t freaking out. He wasn’t yelling,” recalls Trokey. “He was saying, ‘Get me out of here.’”

Meanwhile, Shannon’s lower extremities were getting hotter. He could feel the nylon mesh of his running shoes melting on to his toes. The crew acted fast. “Someone handed me a fire extinguisher through the window, and I think I used another expletive and said, ‘I need a hose!’” Shannon says. He was given a fire hose and used it to put out the flames inside his vehicle.

The firemen doused the engine fire and called for backup: They needed stronger tools to pry open the SUV. As they waited, Trokey phoned Mission Hospital in Laguna Beach to alert the medical trauma team. After 20 minutes, with a second crew’s help, the Chevy Suburban was opened with the Jaws of Life [a trademarked hydraulic apparatus], and Trokey put the man on a backboard and a gurney within seconds. As he sat with him in the back of the ambulance with the siren blaring, Trokey began to meditate on the crash victim’s name: Michael Shannon.

The paramedic wondered, could this be the same man who had saved his own life 30 years ago, when he was a preemie, and arrived at the very same ER they were headed to with panicked parents and a perilously high temperature? The doctor who slept by Trokey’s side in the hospital until he was well enough to go home? As

Trokey sat with Shannon, the feeling of recognition grew stronger. But he didn't say anything—not then. "I wanted to focus on what was going on."

IN JUNE 1986, Chris Trokey entered the world 10 weeks early. His father, Mike, likes to joke that his son loves ambulances because he was almost born in one. Mike and his wife, Dee, went to Mission Hospital after her water broke. There, they were rushed by ambulance to the hospital at the University of California, Irvine, 40 km away. UCI had the region's only neonatal intensive care unit (NICU); their baby, the Trokeys were informed, had a 50-50 chance of survival.

Weighing 1.4 kilos at birth, the baby could fit in the palm of Mike's hand. But Chris was tough, breathing on his own within hours. While he was in the NICU, his parents commuted between Irvine and their home in Dana Point. During those anxious first weeks, Mike and Dee searched for a local paediatrician who was skilled enough to cope with the health problems that premature babies often face. Mike worked as an educator in the Saddleback Valley school district, coordinating programmes. As he looked through student files, he noticed one name again and again: Dr Michael Shannon. When the Trokeys went for a meeting, they liked Shannon right away, from his capable manner to his shoulder-length hair, denim shirt and turquoise belt buckle. "He was the type

of guy you could talk to as if he was your brother," Dee remembers, "but you had confidence that he could do anything."

After seven weeks, Chris was discharged, and his parents drove to Shannon's office so he could check

MY MIRACLE

I was walking to the petrol station and heard crying behind a dumpster.

I saw a young girl in labour and helped her deliver triplets.

JAMES OPAL, North Carolina

the baby out. Chris was fine. However, within two weeks, he spiked what Shannon coolly calls "a pretty good-sized fever"—dangerous for a newborn but exponentially more so for a preemie. The Trokeys were in touch with Shannon as the fever soared, and the doctor soon suggested the family meet him at Mission Hospital.

Dee was a wreck. Having already faced the possibility that her newborn might not survive and then living apart from him for nearly two months, a life-threatening fever felt like the last straw. At the hospital, Shannon was waiting for the Trokeys. Utterly calm, he took the entire family into his care. There was no infant ICU at Mission at the time, so "paediatricians took care of their own intensive problems", says Shannon. He took Chris's blood and sent it to the lab and did a spinal tap

to rule out meningitis. Then he put the infant on an IV antibiotic drip and had the parents go home to sleep. Shannon would watch over their son, he told them. The paediatrician stayed with Chris for two nights, and on the third day, the boy went home.

Chris grew up with the family legend of the time that Shannon slept in the hospital with him until he was safe. His parents told the story again and again as the happiest resolution to the most desperate period of their lives. Chris continued to be Shannon's patient until he was in his teens.

AFTER THE CAR WRECK, in an echo of what had happened 30 years before, Chris Trokey stayed by Shannon's side in

MY MIRACLE

I landed an aeroplane with engine failure that had shaken all but one bolt out of its engine mount.

GENIE SMITH BERNSTEIN, Georgia

the trauma room for a few minutes. "I asked, 'Do you remember me at all? You stayed with me when I was really little,'" says Trokey. Shannon had suffered a perforated small intestine. He had second- and third-degree burns on his feet, and part of a toe had to be amputated. Shards of glass were embedded in his skin.

Shannon recognized Chris's name at once. Although he has treated more children than he can remember, it's the ones who need him most who stick. Yet if they'd passed each other on the street, neither man would have placed the other: At 72, Shannon had cut his hair short. And at six feet three inches tall and 90 kilos, Chris looked nothing like the fragile baby he had once been.

The day after Shannon's surgery, Trokey and the crew from Engine 29 went to visit Shannon in the ICU. This was unusual. As firefighters and paramedics, they save lives as a matter of course. But this case was different, because it was such a close call—"I don't know if he knows how lucky he was," says Trokey—and such a coincidence. Both men still marvel at the connection. Neither Shannon nor Trokey is a churchgoer, but each says this feeling—of having someone enter your life at a critical time and watch over you until you are well, of giving a gift without expectations and then getting it back when you need it most—has given him faith in a higher power.

Shannon and Trokey are busy people—Shannon sees patients four days a week, and Trokey works three 24-hour shifts a week. But every year on the anniversary of the car accident, the two men meet for a meal. And in 2015, Trokey himself became the father of a baby boy. His name is Porter, and he has had no major health problems so far. Dr Michael Shannon is his paediatrician.



Reunited on the job: sisters Meagan Hughes (left) and Holly O'Brien

Miracle
in
Real Life

"I Knew She Was Out There"

BY MARC PEYSER

HOLLY O'BRIEN'S patient was just being nice. She probably didn't realize that South Korea has more than 50 million people or that there are over 1.7 million Korean Americans living in the United States. She just thought it was interesting

that O'Brien didn't know Meagan Hughes, another Korean American nurse working on the same floor—and the same shift—at Doctors Hospital of Sarasota, Florida. "You should talk to her," the patient told O'Brien, according to the Sarasota *Herald-Tribune*. "Maybe you're from the same town."

After O'Brien and Hughes finally met, they did begin to notice parallels in their lives. They were both certified nursing assistants. They were both orphans who had been adopted by American families. And their reasons for ending up at the orphanage were the same: abandonment. "So I said to her, 'I know this is crazy, but what is your last name in Korean?'" recalls Hughes, now 45. "And as soon as she told me Shin, I said, 'No way. That's

my [Korean] last name too."

Suddenly, the coincidences seemed more than merely interesting. In fact, for years, O'Brien, 47, sensed that she'd had a half sister back in Korea. Though her mother had disappeared when she was an infant and she was only five when her father was killed by a train, she had a memory of her and her father living, briefly, with his second wife and a baby girl. O'Brien was ultimately adopted by a loving family from Alexandria, Virginia, but her Korean childhood never left her. She remembers

blanks. A year ago, the nurses decided to take at-home DNA tests and mailed the samples away to be analyzed. Less than two weeks later, O'Brien got an email. Their DNA matched—they were half sisters. "I was like, 'Oh my God, is this really happening?'" says Hughes. O'Brien was shocked but also relieved. "In my heart, I knew," she says. "I knew she was out there somewhere." After more than 12,000 km and four long decades, O'Brien had finally found the missing piece of her past, working just a few feet away from her.

MY MIRACLE

My autistic son graduated from college with a degree in Bible ministry. KEN DILLMAN, Texas

one night, when she was about nine years old, waking up from a dream and screaming, "My daddy died. I have a sister. We need to find her." O'Brien's adoptive family contacted the orphanage in Korea for information, but there was no record of a sibling.

Hughes wasn't haunted by lingering memories; instead, she was haunted because she didn't have any. Adopted when she was four by a family in Kingston, New York, she couldn't remember either of her biological parents. "My whole life has been a question in my mind, and an emptiness," she says.

Now the coincidence of meeting O'Brien offered the chance to fill in the

TO DAY, THE SISTERS wear special necklaces, each with a heart-shaped charm, as a symbol of their bond. "I got her the silver one, and I got the gold one for myself," says O'Brien. "She will always be my heart."

Divorced twice and remarried with no children of her own, O'Brien has found the reunion with her younger sister to be especially sweet. In an instant, she has become an aunt to Hughes's two daughters. As much as she loves the family that raised her in Virginia—O'Brien has eight adoptive brothers and sisters—making a biological connection at this stage of her life has been extraordinary. "I have this very strong belief that God must be—" For a moment, her tears overwhelm her words, as if washing away the sisters' 40-year separation. "Like, whatever I've done, I must have done something good in my life." ■

*Finally, mother
and child:
Jeanne Kerr (left)
and the author*



Miracle
in
Real Life

“I Want to Make You My Daughter”

BY REGINA LOUISE
FROM NARRATIVE.LY

“**M**AY I SPEAK WITH Jeanne Kerr?” I said, crossing my fingers. “Who’s asking?” the voice cracked.

COURTESY REGINA LOUISE

“It’s Regina Louise. I think we may’ve met a—”

“I don’t believe so,” she said. The line went dead.

I crossed out another Jeanne on my long list. The last time I’d seen the Jeanne I was looking for was in 1977, when I was 15. That day, I’d stood in a juvenile courtroom prepared to speak about what it would mean to me for Jeanne Kerr, my beloved counsellor from the Edgar Children’s Shelter in Martinez, California, to adopt me.

I’d met Jeanne when I’d arrived at the shelter on 1 May 1975—a day before I turned 13. I was confused by her excitement regarding my pending birthday. Then came balloons, cake and strangers singing to me as if I were a big deal. In no time, it felt good to be where

Jeanne was. I'd grown up without a lick of kin, so I had taken my cues from Donna Reed [American film actor] and June Cleaver [fictional TV character]. I loved how they treated children, their soft-spoken ways. I prayed to meet someone like them who could see I was worth the trouble I was born into.

In court, my social worker presented evidence of my "escalating" behaviours: running away, telling lies, sabotaging foster care placements so I could return to the shelter, to Jeanne. "It's unnatural, Your Honor, how much she loves this woman," she said.

The judge agreed, and Jeanne's petition to adopt was denied. I believe my social worker objected because Jeanne was white and I was black. The National

MY MIRACLE

I walked into the room, and my mother, who had dementia, raised her arm, waved and said, "Hi, Karen," with her eyes shining bright!

KAREN RASMUSSEN, Connecticut

Association of Black Social Workers had issued a statement against transracial adoption, seeing it as an attack on black families. I was put in a residential treatment centre for severely emotionally disturbed girls. From there, I'd go through 30 placements before landing in a group home in San Francisco. I stayed there until the age of emancipation, after which I flailed through

life. Then I became a mother, and everything changed. Now I had someone else to love and to think about.

BY 2002, I CO-OWNED and operated two hair salons, and my teenage son was a thriving scholar-athlete. I decided to write a book about my life from ages 13 to 15, a journey that included meeting Jeanne and losing her.

"Your memoir claims abuse and neglect, so you need someone to verify what you've written," my editor said. I had two weeks to locate that person.

My writing coach suggested I find Jeanne. I couldn't bear to tell her that I'd spent years ordering phone books from Nova Scotia to Hawaii, the number of times I'd been hung up on, the dead ends I'd followed. But now I could scour the internet, and I began searching on countless sites. Marriage licence? Nothing. Certificate of birth of child? Nothing. Death certificate? Hesitantly, I punched in her name. That, too, came back with nothing.

Had I made Jeanne up? But there was the blue corduroy dress she'd hand-sewn for me, with rainbows in my favourite colours. I'd lost it many years ago. There was the way she called me "sweetheart" or "punkin," the way she smelt of Cream of Wheat [a type of breakfast porridge], warmed milk, vanilla and brown sugar.

Then I remembered that, as a child, I had been warned that everything I

said and did was put in a file so anyone who wanted to could learn what an awful person I was. I called the county and asked for my file. When the package arrived, I nuzzled it to my bosom like it was a newborn. Inside was a stack of papers filled with legal jargon, incident reports and letters from one institutional director to another about my need to be "terminated". But there was no road map to Jeanne.

With two days left to corroborate my story, I asked Jules, a friend and correspondent at a magazine that had access to research databases, for help. My deadline passed before she finished her search, so I changed the names of my characters. 'Jeanne Kerr' became 'Claire Kennedy'.

JULES SENT ME the search results a week later: She had an address! I wrote Jeanne a letter and sealed it with a kiss in red lipstick. The day before I left on my book tour, I received an envelope in the mail—it was my letter, stamped with the words *Addressee Unknown*.

In Los Angeles, I was interviewed by radio talk show host Tavis Smiley. He asked: "You have it all: You're a spokesperson for foster care, have a thriving salon business, a well-adjusted child. What more would you like?"

I replied without hesitating. "Someone to say they are proud of me."

Afterwards, back in my hotel room, I checked my email and saw a message

with the subject line: "I am so proud of you, sweetheart!"

My heart stopped. I opened the email, and it was from Jeanne. My breath caught in my throat. *Was someone playing a joke on me?* Only later I'd learn that a former co-worker

MY MIRACLE

We were so poor, we had not planned to have Christmas that year. Then a stranger dropped off the makings for Christmas dinner.

I still don't know who did it!

JANET WILT, Florida

of hers had read an article about my book in which the reporter revealed the real name of Claire Kennedy, and the ex-colleague told Jeanne, "Your Regina is looking for you."

In her email, Jeanne wrote, "Please reach out to me once your tour is done. I don't want to be a bother." I couldn't wait—I immediately dialled the number she had given.

"Hello?" The voice at the other end sounded hushed, just as I remembered Jeanne's timbre; she had a particular way of saying "hello" that softened me from the inside out.

"I can't believe it's you," I said through my absolute bewilderment. "I never stopped thinking of you."

"You were my first child," she told me. "I never stopped loving you." Her words reverberated, and all I could do



*The author (centre),
Jeanne Kerr (arms raised),
and family celebrate in court.*

was listen. "They said I was the wrong colour and that I wasn't allowed to love you," Jeanne continued. "I have something I want to give you. It is your birthright."

I held my breath.

"I want to make you my daughter."

From the moment I had lost Jeanne, I had known she was the mother I was meant to have in this life. I went on to live as if she'd never left, as if she were there to guide my actions. I believed that one day I'd have the chance to tell her "thank you". On the phone with her, I knew my deepest wish was on the verge of coming true.

Three weeks later, I sat for six hours at LaGuardia Airport in New York City, waiting out a storm that had delayed Jeanne's plane. I paced and smoothed my skirt. Finally, a woman rushed towards me, her long grey-white ponytail swinging from beneath a baseball cap. She wore an oversized sweater splattered with gigantic multicoloured peonies, green polka-dot capri pants, and kitty-cat ankle socks paired with a

well-worn pair of running shoes. I looked at her, head tilted like a curious puppy. I would not have worn those pieces together if God himself had ordered me to, and I flushed with mortification. It was then that I knew I was not only a daughter but her daughter. I earned a

full adolescence of stripes in that one moment. It had been nearly three decades since I had felt her fingertips lift my chin through the weight of my grief of having to leave her, the only person who'd ever told me "I love you".

"Hi ... Mommy," I said. I felt electrified saying the word for the first time. My entire life I had guarded it, my body a safe-deposit box, holding it until I could give it its rightful place.

IN NOVEMBER 2003, I stood in the same juvenile courtroom in California where Jeanne's adoption request had been denied in 1977. I was 41, and I was with my son; Jeanne, her husband and her son; and my partner, Stevie Anne, and her family. After the judge swore me and Jeanne to honour and love each other as mother and daughter for the rest of our lives, I turned to Jeanne, cupped my hand around her ear and whispered, "Thank you—Mommy—for loving me when no one else could." ■

Miracle
in
Real Life

“This Cat Is Meant to Be Here”

BY ASHLEY LEWIS

ONA CHILLY MARCH evening in 2014 in Lucedale, Mississippi, USA, Ann Bosche, then 53, stood on her front steps while her mini dachshund, Gracie, took a bathroom break. Gracie sniffed an unwelcome visitor under the camellia bush and barked. Ann bent and saw a pair of green eyes.

“Hello, there,” Ann said, and heard a meow in reply. Ann, who had two resident cats, Bosco and Junior, went inside. She returned with a bowl of cat food and slid it beneath the bush.

The next night, the cat returned. Ann fed him again, moving the bowl closer to the house. After a week, the mystery cat showed himself. He was long-haired, with a plume of tail punctuated by a white tip. Ann called him Mr Fancy, or Fancy for short.

Soon, Mr Fancy was strutting in and out of the cat door. However, Ann’s husband, Gene, argued that Fancy should find a new home. “We don’t need another mouth to feed,



Mr Fancy,
home at last

and vet bills are expensive,” he said. Reluctantly, Ann agreed.

The drive to the shelter was heart-breaking. Ann cried. Fancy cried. She consoled herself by thinking, “He’s so beautiful and lovable. Somebody will want him.”

A month later, Ann woke to the sound of Gene’s voice. She went to see which animal he was talking to—and saw a white-tipped tail. A thinner Fancy ran across the room to her.

When she asked the shelter what had happened, she learnt that Fancy had escaped 20 minutes after she had left, when a worker opened the cage to feed him. Somehow, over the next month, he’d navigated the five kilometres—traversing railroad tracks, busy streets and sketchy neighbourhoods—back to the Bosches. “This cat is meant to be here,” Ann says. Even Gene agrees. “Whatever time I have with Fancy,” Ann says, “they’re going to be the best years of his life.” R

WHO ? KNEW

13 Things You Should Know About Home Security

BY GARIMA GUPTA
WITH SUCHISMITA UKIL

1 Doors and windows are the most vulnerable parts of your home, be it an apartment or a standalone house. "Video door phones (VDP) can be installed to screen visitors at the main door—Wi-Fi VDPs allow users to have video calls with visitors even when no one's at home—and CCTV cameras that monitor the entrances and perimeter of the house. Burglar alarm systems can detect any kind of unauthorized entry in the major entry points that are equipped with sensors," says Mehernosh Pithawalla, vice president and global head at Godrej Security Solutions, Mumbai. For



apartments, he recommends a "multi-apartment video door phone, as it offers three tiers of security—at the gate, in the lobby and in front of the flat". A low-tech solution: an iron grille and a wooden door with a spyhole through which you can observe your callers. Install sturdy, close-built iron grilles on all windows, ventilators and skylights.

ILLUSTRATION BY SERGE BLOCH

2 Don't keep valuables, important documents and large amounts of cash at home. This is what secured bank lockers are for. But if it's unavoidable, invest in lockers with double-walled construction and foolproof locking systems and always insist on safety certifications, especially for bolts and locks, says Pithawalla. Its best not to operate your home lockers in front of visitors.

3 A sign worth posting: BEWARE OF DOG. Burglars hate dogs, not only because they bite but also because they bark, attracting attention. True, Spot can't call the cops, but he can persuade a crook to move on.

4 Never hide the spare key in what you consider discreet hiding spaces—above the door frame, in the post box or under the mat outside your door. Instead, leave them with a trusted friend or neighbour.

5 The elderly are particularly vulnerable. Many city police departments run special programmes for seniors, especially those who live on their own. "You can sign up for regular police visits, and the cops will do a security assessment of the house, ensure regular patrolling of your area and keep an eye out for suspicious elements. This will also ensure a speedy response in case of an emergency," informs additional DCP (south) Chinmoy Biswal, of Delhi Police.

6 Log on to your city police's website for important emergency numbers such as fire service, police and helplines for senior citizens, women and children. Display this prominently, along with other emergency numbers, next to your landline for easy access.

7 Most city police departments recommend maintaining friendly relations with your neighbours and immediate community. Your neighbours are most likely to notice suspicious activity in and around your house, and report it to the police.

8 Get police verification—with photographs and address details—for household help and tenants. "It is the most effective way of screening people and also acts as deterrent. In case of any criminal activity, the police have a starting point for their investigation. Ask for at least two references, verify these independently and call them for a character reference," advises Biswal.

9 If living in an isolated area, make sure all electricity and telephone cables are installed underground. Burglars are most likely to cut these connections before targeting your house.

10 If leaving on a trip, cancel newspaper and grocery deliveries; turn down the telephone's volume; and leave the outside light on.

If possible, install a timer that switches on the outside lights in the evenings. Also, inform your neighbours of your absence so they know to keep an eye out. Invest in home cameras that allow live feed of your home to your smartphone, letting you watch over your loved ones remotely.

11 "Install glass break detectors, which raise an alarm when glass is broken, and magnetic reed contacts that show if your door and windows are open or closed. CCTV monitoring systems can both record and send the feed to your mobile phone, tablet or internet browser directly," informs Poneri Amit, who runs a security services company.

12 "When travelling, turn on motion sensors, along with GSM, or global system for mobile communications, controlled hooter.

If someone breaks in, the hooter raises an alarm and the controller sends an automated voice response to pre-designated phone numbers. The entire system can be easily armed and disarmed by the owner on the go," advises Amit.

13 "Resident welfare associations should train security guards to maintain records of all visitors and keep an eye out for vehicles that do not belong to residents but are parked inside the compound for longer periods. Install CCTV cameras at all entry points, lifts, parking areas and vulnerable spots of the residential complex, and install intercom lines for quick communication," says Biswal. R

Sources: delhipolice.nic.in, mumbai.police.maharashtra.gov.in, bcp.gov.in, kolkatapolice.gov.in

—ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN READER'S DIGEST, USA, BY MICHELLE CROUCH



CLASSIC POEMS AS INTERNET HEADLINES

- "This Man Stops By Woods on a Snowy Eve ... You Won't BELIEVE What Happens Next!" by Robert Frost
- "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud—Until This Dog's Instagram Gave My Life Meaning!" by William Wordsworth
- "First I Was like, 'Who Cares About a Grecian Urn?' But by the End, I Was in TEARS!" by John Keats

GRAHAM BARNHART AND PAIGE QUINONES from mcsweeney.net



Laugh Lines

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

"Just because you can't dance doesn't mean you shouldn't dance."
—Alcohol

Twitter @YOYOHAA
(JOSH HARA)

My cat just walked up to the paper shredder and said, "Teach me everything you know."

Twitter @NICCAGEMATCH

"Um."
—First horse that got ridden
Twitter @RORYNOTROY

A sign said, "Do not allow your dog to chase, injure or worry wildlife." How is a dog going to "worry" wildlife? Run up to a bird: "Hey, I think you've got something on your beak. It could be a tumour."

ANDY KINDLER

"Don't worry; I'll hold your stuff. You just worry about making friends."
—Cargo shorts

Twitter @DEARANYONE
(ARTIE JOHANN)

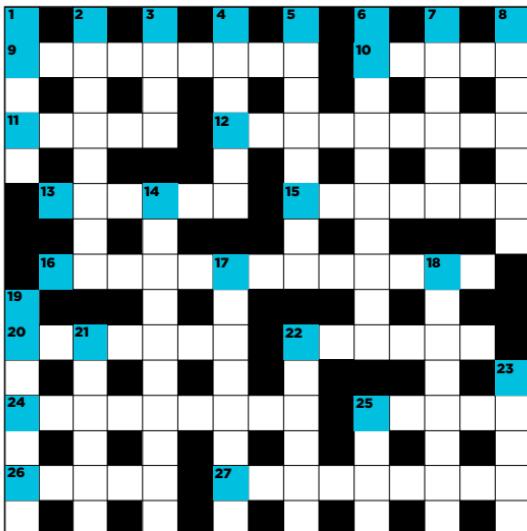


My girlfriend told me to take a spider out instead of killing it. We went and had some drinks. Cool guy. Wants to be a lawyer.

Twitter @FATTMERNANDEZ (MATT FERNANDEZ)



Crossword



ACROSS

- 9 Short-legged dog (9)
- 10 Tough cotton used for jeans (5)
- 11 Fall guy (5)
- 12 Guiding instance (9)
- 13 Covered with heavenly bodies (6)
- 15 Vanished (species) (7)
- 16 Tending to have mishaps (8-5)
- 20 Authorise (7)
- 22 Green vegetable or young shoot (6)
- 24 Renovate (9)
- 25 Plant life of a region (5)
- 26 Common synthetic fibre (5)
- 27 Costly (7)

DOWN

- 1 Change appropriately (5)
- 2 Wildly happy (8)
- 3 Briefly notice (4)
- 4 Amount of goods provided (6)
- 5 Partisan, follower (8)
- 6 Bold pioneer (10)
- 7 US resident physician (6)
- 8 Mimic, copy (7)
- 14 Revelling loudly (10)
- 17 Make-up item (8)
- 18 Over-anxious (8)
- 19 Portion (7)
- 21 Walk like an infant (6)
- 22 Drowsy (6)
- 23 Provide food and drink (5)
- 25 Specific size and style of type (4)

ANSWERS

- ACROSS:
 - 9 Dachshund
 - 10 Dernim ¹¹ Party
 - 12 Precedent
 - 13 Starry
 - 14 Excitement
 - 15 Modelise
 - 20 Sproout
 - 21 Accident-Prone
 - 22 Sprout
 - 23 Nylon
 - 24 Flora
 - 25 Flock
 - 26 Espy
 - 27 Adaptive
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brought to India by

Luxottica

FRICTION^{ball}

I'VE GOT THE
POWER
TO RECREATE

**100% INK ERASED.
NO IMPRESSIONS LEFT.**



#POWERWRITING

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IT PAYS TO ENRICH YOUR

Word Power



Just in time for the last month of the year, we bring you some zippy words starting with the last letter of the alphabet. Proceed with zeal and zest, and when you need to check your answers, zoom over to the next page.

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

1. zabaglione (zah-buh-lo-nee)

n.—A: canvas sack. B: stage villain. C: whipped dessert served in a glass.

2. zaftig ('zahf-tihg) *adj.*—

A: charmingly witty. B: pleasingly plump. C: completely famished.

3. zax (zacks) *n.*—A: roofing tool.

B: music synthesizer. C: caffeine pill.

4. zephyr ('zeh-fer) *n.*—A: ancient

lute. B: gentle breeze. C: crown prince.

5. zeta ('zee-tuh) *n.*—A: prototype.

B: sixth letter of the Greek alphabet. C: great beauty.

6. zetetic (zee-'tet-ik) *adj.*—

A: arid. B: investigative. C: made of hemp.

7. ziggurat ('zih-guh-rat) *n.*—

A: lightning bolt. B: pyramidal tower. C: flying squirrel.

8. zinfandel ('zin-fan-del) *n.*—

A: narrow valley. B: heretic. C: red wine.

9. zircon ('zer-kuhn) *n.*—

A: gas-powered blimp. B: gemstone. C: traffic cone.

10. zloty ('zloh-tee) *n.*—

A: airhead. B: Polish currency. C: earphone jack.

11. zoetrope ('zoh-ee-trohp) *n.*—

A: optical spinning toy. B: sun-loving flower. C: exaggeration.

12. zori ('zohr-ee) *n.*—

A: antelope. B: flat sandal. C: seaweed wrap.

13. zydeco ('zy-deh-koh) *n.*—

A: music of southern Louisiana. B: magnifying glass. C: secret password.

14. zygomatic (zy-guh-'mat-ik)

adj.—A: related to the cheekbone. B: mysterious. C: of pond life.

15. zyzyva ('ziz-uh-vuh) *n.*—

A: type of weevil. B: tricky situation. C: fertilized cell.

Answers

- 1. zabaglione**—[C] whipped dessert served in a glass. I hate to waste a good *zabaglione*, but I'm on a diet.
- 2. zaftig**—[B] pleasingly plump. The character in that film was a bit *zaftig*, thanks to her chocolate habit.
- 3. zax**—[A] roofing tool. Kamal built this entire cabin himself, from laying every floorboard to trimming every roof tile with a *zax*.
- 4. zephyr**—[B] gentle breeze. On stressful days, I like to fantasize I'm on a tropical beach with a cool *zephyr* blowing through my hair.
- 5. zeta**—[B] sixth letter of the Greek alphabet. The up-and-coming tech firm uses a *zeta* as its logo.
- 6. zetetic**—[B] investigative. “My *zetetic* methods,” said Sherlock Holmes, “are quite elementary, my dear Watson.”
- 7. ziggurat**—[B] pyramidal tower. The king ordered his subjects to build a great *ziggurat* in his honour.
- 8. zinfandel**—[C] red wine. “Do you think *zinfandel* pairs well with nachos?” Sana asked with a smirk.
- 9. zircon**—[B] gemstone. She thought he gave her a diamond engagement ring, but those gems were just *zircons*.
- 10. złoty**—[B] Polish currency. How's the *złoty* holding up against the euro?
- 11. zoetrope**—[A] optical spinning toy. Before there were movies, people could get the illusion of motion from a *zoetrope*'s whirling images.
- 12. zori**—[B] flat sandal. After the strap on her *zori* snapped, Jaya had to go barefoot for the rest of the day.
- 13. zydeco**—[A] music of southern Louisiana. Dev became a big fan of *zydeco* on his last trip to New Orleans.
- 14. zygomatic**—[A] related to the cheekbone. Many football players use a *zygomatic* strip of greasepaint to reduce glare.
- 15. zizzzyva**—[A] type of weevil. “I cannot believe this—there are *zyzzyvas* in the organic quinoa I just bought!” Manohar Lal exclaimed.

WHAT'S FUNNY ABOUT JOHNNY?

In Italian comedies of the 16th to 18th centuries, a clown named Giovanni was a stock figure. Typically a servant who cleverly mocked the other characters, this clown became known by the nickname Zanni. Eventually Zanni became the adjective *zany*, which we use today to mean kooky and madcap, like a screwball comedy.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

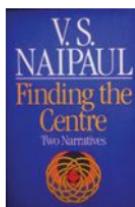
9 & below: zonked
10-12: in the zone
13-15: at the zenith



Me & My Shelf

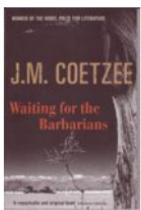
AMITAVA KUMAR'S FAVOURITE 10

Amitava Kumar is the author of several works of non-fiction and two novels. His forthcoming book *Immigrant, Montana: A Novel* (Knopf, US, and Faber, UK) was recently published in India as *The Lovers* (Aleph). His essay 'Pyre', published in *Granta*, was selected for *Best American Essays 2016*. Kumar's writing has appeared in *Harper's* magazine, *The Guardian*, *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair* and *The New York Times*. He teaches English at Vassar College, New York.



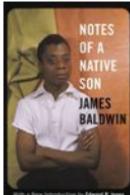
FINDING THE CENTRE: TWO NARRATIVES, V. S. Naipaul, HarperCollins, ₹350. I'm guilty of reading the less popular books by writers justly famous for their wide body of work. Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas* is a masterpiece of 20th-century fiction but a book of his I've read many more times is *Finding the Centre*. The latter is a mix of travel writing and memoir. I keep going back to it because it introduced me to the drama or the act of becoming a writer. ("Such anxiety; such ambition.")

WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS, J. M. Coetzee, Random House UK, ₹780. I read Coetzee as a graduate student 30 years ago. Coetzee was writing when the brutal apartheid regime in South Africa hadn't yet come to an end but his novel reads more like a parable about another, unnamed place, or maybe, more accurately, a universal story that would hold true as much in Pretoria as in, say, Patna.



BELOVED, Toni Morrison, Random House UK, ₹499. **THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS**, Arundhati Roy, Penguin India, ₹450.

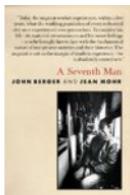
The iron in the soul is a way of seeing the world for what it is. I find it also in Morrison and Roy but these two writers have an additional quality I envy. Both show their skill in these novels at spinning out the vernacular or common speech while, on other pages, letting their language take flight into the furthest reaches of lyricism.

**NOTES OF A NATIVE SON**, James Baldwin, Beacon Press, ₹1,173.

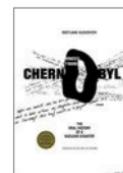
Written during the 1940s and 1950s, these essays on black life and black thought, life in Harlem, the protest novel as a tool of resistance, form the voice of African American assertion, of an artist, author and social commentator, in the American society on the brink of the civil rights movement.

**ON PHOTOGRAPHY**, Susan Sontag, Penguin UK, ₹450.

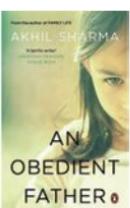
This is a collection of six essays published in *The New York Review of Books*, between 1973 and 1977, on photography, the photographing eye and manufacturing a sense of reality, among others, that critically examines the art form.

**A SEVENTH MAN**, John Berger and Jean Mohr, Verso, ₹1,035.

I admire John Berger's *G.*, a novel about a young man's sexual journey in early 20th-century Europe that won the Booker Prize, but what I really love is his 1975 non-fiction report on migration and migrant labourers.

**VOICES FROM CHERNOBYL**, Svetlana Alexievich, Picador, ₹1,133.

I teach the fiction of Jennifer Egan, Tessa Hadley, or the truly great Alice Munro, but what makes me breathless is the non-fiction of journalist Svetlana Alexievich. This 1997 book is a compilation of hard-hitting, in-depth interviews with survivors of the nuclear reactor accident. She won the Nobel Prize in literature for her investigative, "polyphonic writings" in 2015. To read her is to know that the ordinary words of ordinary people can attain the stature of undying literature.

**SAMSKARA: A RITE FOR A DEAD MAN**,

U. R. Ananthamurthy, Oxford India, ₹225.

AN OBEDIENT FATHER, Akhil Sharma,

Penguin Books, ₹399.

I want to end by talking of dreams. These are two works of Indian fiction writing. The former is a classic, and the latter more contemporary; both put the reader in touch with the deep corruption present in our souls. The stories are built around a flawed individual but what they reveal is the rot in the system. It is a thought that any Indian writer can contemplate, and I confess that I often do, the challenge of producing work that can be mentioned in the same breath as those novels.

-COMPILED BY SUCHISMITA UKIL

Book prices are subject to change. All book details are as seen on Amazon.in.



Entertainment

OUR TOP PICKS OF THE MONTH

Films

The Force is strong this winter with a heady dose of controversial queens, blacklisted Indian spies, the ultimate battle between the Jedi and Sith, and a dangerous, ancient board game.

Keep an eye on *Padmavati*, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's visually sumptuous story on the queen of Chittor. The Deepika Padukone-Ranveer Singh starrer has been on the wrong side of the news lately, with its release date

Clockwise from top: Star Wars: The Last Jedi, Tiger Zinda Hai and Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle



looking uncertain. Then there is Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif who return as spies in *Tiger Zinda Hai*. Nawazuddin Siddiqui makes an appearance as a menacing killer in the crime thriller *Monsoon Shootout*.



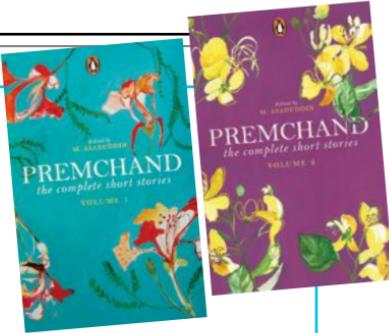
The Last Jedi, the second chapter in Star Wars' Skywalker saga, focuses on Rey's Jedi training even as the Resistance gears up to battle the First Order (Daisy Ridley, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Adam Driver). The fantasy adventure film *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* promises to be as exciting as the 1995 starrer (Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black, Karen Gillan). Netflix brings the Will Smith-starrer *Bright*. Don't miss Anna Kendrick in *Pitch Perfect 3* and Hugh Jackman in the musical *The Greatest Showman*.



BOOKS

From the politically charged *Shatranj ke Khiladi* to the heart-warming *Idgah*, Munshi Premchand's short stories are evergreen and remain unmatched. They are now available in an exclusive box set (*The Complete Short Stories*, Penguin Random House). Adventure isn't far behind when Hari Majestic is around. This time, the former tout and head detective of Diamond and Majestic Investigations Private Limited gets embroiled in

a complicated case involving a stolen ATM (*Tropical Detective* by Zac O'Yeah, Pan Macmillan). Then there is *A Time of Madness* (Aleph), Pakistani travel writer Salman Rashid's memoir of redemption that harks back to the Partition. We also recommend *Dancing With the Nation: Courtesans in Bombay Cinema* by Ruth Vanita (Speaking Tiger) and a collection of witty personal essays by actor Soha Ali Khan



(*The Perils of Being Moderately Famous*, Penguin Random House). Thriller fans can look forward to a brand new Jack Reacher novel with Lee Child's *The Midnight Line* and *Artemis* (Penguin Random House) by *The Martian* author Andy Weir, a heist caper set on the colonized moon.

BOOK COVER COURTESY: PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

Television

Our favourite Time Lord returns, regenerating into his 13th incarnation in the Doctor Who Christmas special. There will be new companions and a refurbished TARDIS next season. This is the first time in its 54-year history that a woman (Jodie Whittaker) has been chosen to play the Doctor.

The award-winning show *The Crown* returns for its second season. There's also Guillermo del Toro's offering for kids *Trollhunters* and the creepy German saga *Dark*, all available on Netflix.

—COMPILED BY CHITRA SUBRAMANYAM R

All release dates are subject to change.



A still from The Crown



Studio



**HIMALAYAS, BY NICHOLAS ROERICH
TEMPERA ON CANVAS, 18.25 × 30.75 INCHES, 1940**

"Wizard of eastern landscapes, who sublimates realistic scenes to the dizzy heights of divine dreamlands," noted art scholar O. C. Gangoly in *The Pioneer*, and "a master of the mountains", Russian-born painter Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947) found a home

in India in the second half of his life in 1928, in the Kullu valley in the western Himalayas. His cottage estate in the sleepy town of Naggar, now converted into an art gallery, houses a huge portion of his paintings and should be open for a visit.

Drawn to spirituality since an early age, his art, captivating landscapes of the Himalayan magnificence in the last two decades, many say, was the articulation of his philosophical beliefs. The striking mountain peaks, the icy tips glistening in the sun, masterfully painted in different hues of blue, speak of the subtle, yet unshakeable might of the Himalayas.

In the artist's own words (*Shambala*, p 41), "Where can one have such joy as when the sun is upon the Himalayas; when the blue is more intense than sapphires; when from the far distance, the glaciers glitter as incomparable gems. All religions, all teachings, are synthesized in the Himalayas ... All great symbols, all heroes, seem to be brought close to the Himalayas as if to the highest altar, where the human spirit comes closest to divinity."

—SUCHISMITA UKIL R



Quotable Quotes



**“BEING POOR
HELPED ME
BE MORE
CREATIVE.
IT WAS MY
SUPERPOWER.”**

JANELLE MONÁE,
singer and actor

**“ALL DADS COME
ARMED WITH UIFS
(UNIVERSALLY
INOFFENSIVE
FACTOIDS).”**

CLAY SKIPPER, *writer*

THE FOUR MOST BEAUTIFUL WORDS IN OUR COMMON LANGUAGE: I TOLD YOU SO.

GORE VIDAL, *writer and public intellectual*

I started feeling secure once I began to accept myself the way I was.

VIDYA BALAN, *actor*

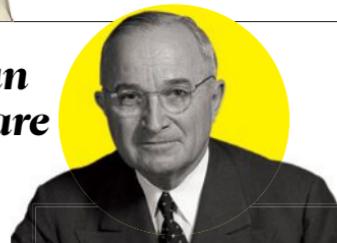


Each person must live their life as a model for others.

ROSA PARKS, *civil rights activist*

It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.

HARRY S. TRUMAN, *33rd US President*



Time exists in order that everything doesn't happen all at once ... and space exists so that it doesn't all happen to you.

SUSAN SONTAG, *writer, teacher and political activist*



SMART AND BRIGHT KIDS KA SECRET HAI DHA

Why does it rain in June?
Where does rain water come from?
Where does all the water go?

Your little one probably asks you these, and a hundred other questions just like them. That's because kids are naturally curious. And as a parent, not only do you need to answer all the questions, but also make sure your child is getting the best nutrition to help him/her keep growing, both mentally and physically.

One such nutrient that is vital for your child's health is DHA.

What is DHA?

DHA (which stands for "docosahexaenoic acid") is an "omega 3 fatty acid". Omega 3 fatty acids are required by the body for good health, growth and development and brain function.²

DHA is vital for the brain and eyes.³ It makes up about 97% of all Omega 3 fatty acids in the brain³ and accumulates in the regions that are linked to memory and learning.⁴

In the retina of the eye, it accounts for 93% of all Omega 3 fatty acids.³



DHA provides a number of important health benefits to children

DHA is important in brain function all through life. DHA may enhance cognitive performance related to:

- Learning
- Cognitive development
- Memory
- Speed of performing cognitive tasks⁴

Why is it important to provide DHA to your children?

The human body can only produce a limited amount of DHA by itself and its consumption through diet is important.⁴

Children can be fussy eaters, when it comes to fish. Moreover, unbalanced meals and allergies can make it even harder to give them the right nutrition.

Seven Seas® contains Cod Liver Oil, a rich, natural source for Omega 3 fatty acids (DHA, EPA) and Vitamins A & D

- DHA helps in healthy brain development and maintaining healthy brain function
- Vitamin A helps to maintain growth, vision and tissue development
- Vitamin D is essential for healthy bones, teeth and muscles
- Vitamin A, D and Omega 3 fatty acids are essential for a healthy immune system



Add Seven Seas to
your kid's diet today!

1. Horowitz LB et al. Health benefits of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). *Pharmacol Rev*. 1999 Sep;50(3):211-25. 2. University of Maryland Medical Center. Omega-3 Fatty acids. <http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/supplement/omega3-fatty-acids> 3. Grevengard B et al. Omega-3 Fatty Acid supplementation during pregnancy. *Rev Obstet Gynecol*. 2008 Feb;10(1):182-8. 4. Stoehrhaasen M. Does consumption of LC omega-3 PUFA enhance cognitive performance in healthy school-aged children and teenagers? Evidence from clinical trials. *Nutrients*. 2014 Jul;6(7):2730-58. doi: 10.3390/nu6072730. 5. Arterburn DM et al. Distribution, interconversion, and dose response of n-3 fatty acids in humans. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2006 Jun;83(6 Suppl):1467S-1475S-1475S.

Cod liver oil is a fish oil—not recommended for people allergic to fish.

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Hamdard Roghan Badam

The goodness of 100% pure almonds

