

# Reader's digest

MARCH 2017

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Saving  
Tips

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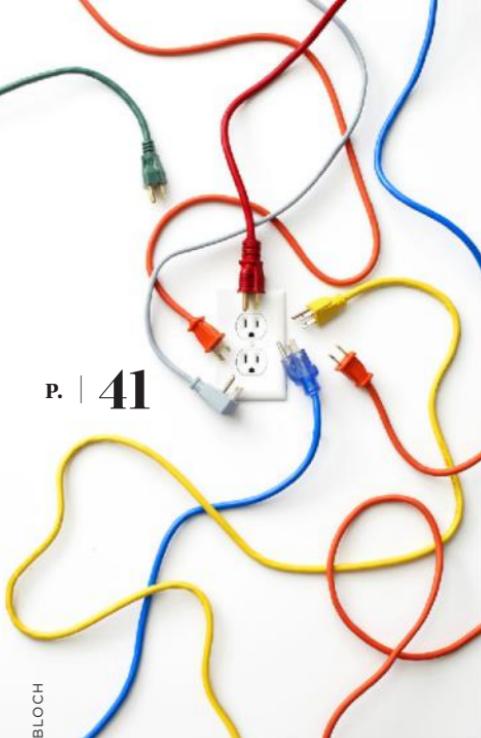
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
BY THE  
VOORHES



# Dear Readers

EDITOR  
SPOTLIGHT:  
Andy  
Simmons

IN THE EVENT OF A life-threatening situation, says one survival psychologist, 10 percent of us will face our fears rationally, 80 percent will act stunned, and another 10 percent will become hysterical and scream like five-year-old girls. Which group would you fall into? If you're anything like the seven people featured in the "I Survived!" package I edited (page 62), you'd not only take the rational route, but you'd also do it with amazing composure.

Or maybe you'd respond the way I did.

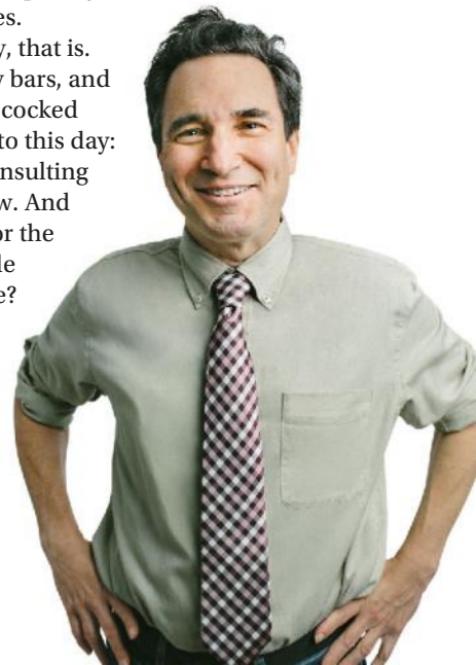
The one time I recall thinking, "Hmm, I wish I'd already written my will," I was 11. I was playing basketball, and the school-yard bully tripped me. With knees bloodied, I mumbled something about his resembling a particular posterior body part. He took it as it was meant and stepped toward me. Friends who were present say that I reacted like the 10 percent I mentioned above—the hysterical 10 percent. True as that may be, I would argue that screaming and running for my life were completely rational responses under the circumstances.

My bully acted rationally, too—for a bully, that is. He chased me around the seesaws, monkey bars, and swings until he'd cornered me. Then, as he cocked his arm, I did something that surprises me to this day: I beat him to the punch. My fist, without consulting me whatsoever, thrust out and found his jaw. And before I knew it, I was running for my life for the second time. Was I as brave and unflappable as the folks featured in our survival package? Hardly. But at least I lived long enough to be inspired by their stories. **R**



Andy Simmons, features editor  
Write to us at [letters@rd.com](mailto:letters@rd.com).

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# Letters

COMMENTS ON THE DECEMBER/JANUARY ISSUE

## Miracles in Real Life

So beautiful! I actually shed tears of joy. The kicker was in the article about the woman who'd spent years looking for a beloved social worker who would eventually adopt her as an adult. The line that simply overwhelmed me: "Your Regina is looking for you."

J. P., via e-mail

## Finish This Sentence

The one New Year's resolution my friend Lisa kept was to touch base with me every single day in 2016. Sometimes it was just a simple text to say hello; other times it was a long conversation. It touches me to have a friend who kept such a wonderful promise.

JILL DILLON, Nekoosa, Wisconsin

## The Gift of Food

Having worked in a domestic violence shelter, I'd like to make this suggestion: Forget donating fancy stuff like olive tapenade or artichoke hearts. Stick to basics: flour, oil, cereals, and



tuna fish, and don't forget paper towels, toilet paper, and even disposable diapers. Keeping donations simple will be better appreciated than fancy gourmet food any day.

DEBORAH CORDES,  
Madison, Ohio

## My Mother Gives the Weirdest Gifts

This article hurt me physically. I was suffering from a rib injury when I read it, and laughing was painful. My own children probably feel the same about some of my presents to them.

PAT FRIDGEN, Greencastle, Pennsylvania

## All the Gallant Men

I was speechless while reading Donald Stratton's story of surviving the attack on Pearl Harbor. Thank you, Mr. Stratton, for your service to this country. Oh, how I wish I could give you a hug.

MARITA CORD-MERGENTHAL,  
Batesville, Indiana

## You Be the Judge

Oh, please! I just read "The Case of the Deadly Avalanche." Skiing is dangerous. That's part of the

attraction. The fact is, the deceased should never have skied alone.

A buddy might have dug him out after the avalanche. As the attorney said, "There's no limit to what can be considered an inherent risk of skiing." Case dismissed!

CLAUDIA MCCREESH,  
*Hilton Head Island, South Carolina*

## Vacation Items You'll Almost Always Regret Packing

A second bathing suit is not needed. Just spread a towel on the floor and lay the suit on it. Roll up the towel so it's layered like a jelly roll, then walk on the roll to press the water from the suit. Unroll the towel and hang up the suit. In the morning, it will be dry and ready to be worn again.

LAMAR POWERS, *Ocoee, Florida*

## 35 Things Police Officers Want to Tell You

I agree that law enforcement is a difficult profession and that the majority of officers do a credible job. However, excessive police violence is a reality, as we've seen exposed by cell phone cameras. Until law enforcement openly addresses this issue, the

chasm of distrust between police and communities will continue to widen.

PAUL KRISTIAN BERG,  
*Ellicott City, Maryland*

When my daughter was three, I read her a book entitled *My Friend the Policeman*. She loved it. A few days later, as our car approached a policeman directing traffic, my little girl opened the window and shouted, "Hello, my friend the policeman!" That little girl is grown now and has probably forgotten the incident, but I will never forget the grin on that policeman's face. Perhaps we need more books entitled *My Friend the Policeman*.

JANET LOGAN, *Hollywood, Florida*

## YOUR FUNNIEST FAMILY VACATION MEMORY

Things always go wrong when you're traveling with the kids: You forgot to pack any shoes, the toilet overflows in the camper, Grandma's wig flies off into the ocean. **Submit your funny story at [rd.com/vacation](http://rd.com/vacation),** and we just might publish it.



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# EVERYDAY HEROES

★

A grateful survivor is determined to find  
the strangers who saved his life

## “Did You Call 911?”

BY STEVE LOPEZ  
FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

THE SIGN tacked to the tree was simple enough: “Did you call 911 last March 17?” it read. “You saved my life. Please call me.” It was posted in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles by a 71-year-old retired judge.

The judge, Leon (he prefers that his last name not be used), was taking his car in for servicing that day, when he had a sudden, massive heart attack. He learned later that someone had called 911 and begun CPR, but the details about how his life was saved were still sketchy. After five days in the hospital and more time

in outpatient recovery, Leon drove to the intersection where the drama had played out, posted his sign, and began knocking on doors. He was grateful he hadn’t hurt anybody and determined to give thanks.

“Two women came out of the corner house,” Leon says. Their names were Samantha Geballe and Ashley Domask, and Leon asked if they knew anything about the incident. “And Samantha says, ‘Oh my God—you’re the man.’”

Geballe and Domask told Leon they had heard noise and gone ➤



*Susie Powell at  
the very spot in  
Los Angeles  
where she  
rescued Leon*

outside to find a **confusing sight:** Leon flat on his back in the street with a woman on her cell phone kneeling over him, taking instructions from a **911 dispatcher.**

"He was totally out of it and turning purple and dying," Geballe recalls.

Domask, a CPR-trained psychotherapist, had a shoulder injury and couldn't help. But she encouraged the woman on the phone to begin chest compressions.

Other people had gathered, and some of them questioned that treatment, perhaps thinking Leon had been hit by a car and might have cracked ribs or other broken bones. Domask helped the woman stay focused on a steady rhythm of quick, strong thrusts, hands splayed against Leon's chest. A bit of his normal color returned.

Minutes later, the paramedics wheeled Leon away. The woman who had performed CPR was ready to resume her commute to work.

"I stopped her and asked how she was," says Domask. "She paused a moment, then started to cry, so we sat down on the curb." A few minutes later, she was gone.

As Leon processed what Domask and Geballe recounted, a feeling of warmth washed over him. "Someone saw me and intervened, and I

was so touched," he says. A friend of Leon's told me he has been devoted to social causes for decades, serving as a guardian angel to many. Now he needed to find his guardian angel.

Leon went home and managed to dig up the record of the phone number that called 911 that day.

He dialed; a woman answered.

"He asked if I was the one who called 911 on March 17," says the woman. "I said yes, and he said, 'I'm the man. You saved my life.'"

Her name is Susie Powell, and that day she was driving to her job as a legal assistant. Powell has a habit of pausing at

that particular intersection to make eye contact with other drivers. She wants to make sure they know that they have a stop sign and she does not.

"I couldn't make eye contact because he was slumped over in his seat," says Powell. "And I realized I should check this out."

She parked and knocked on Leon's window. No response. She dialed 911. Get him out of the car and flat on his back, the dispatcher advised.

When Powell began pulling Leon, his foot came off the brake and the car started rolling. Powell walked alongside the moving car, finally wrestling Leon free. The car continued forward slowly before coming ➤

“  
*Leon needed  
to find his  
guardian angel.  
“Someone  
intervened, and  
I was so touched.”*

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to a stop against a parked vehicle.

Powell knew CPR, but she was nervous. "At first I wasn't doing it hard enough, and Ashley was like, 'He's turning blue—you have to do it harder,' and I put my whole body into it. There were people shouting at me and saying I was stupid and don't touch him, to the point where I second-guessed myself. Ashley said, 'Don't listen to any of that' and she was counting really loud. One-two-three-four-five."

Two months after the incident, Leon finally met Powell for lunch.

"We hugged," she says. "He was gracious." When Leon asked what he could do in thanks, Powell said he didn't need to do anything.

As they got to know each other over lunch, Leon told Powell about his many interests. He mentioned his support of Xela AID, a nonprofit that delivers services and resources in Guatemala.

Once again, their lives intersected. "In college, I did a study-abroad tour in Central America," says Powell. Her language school was in Xela.

Leon had an idea. He sponsors a child's education in Xela, he told Powell. What if he sponsored a second child in her name?

"As soon as he said it, I thought, Oh, that's lovely," says Powell. R

---

**For more information on Xela AID, go to [localhope.org](http://localhope.org).**

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## Cliff-Hanger

BY ANDY SIMMONS

**C**IN A CLOSE-UP, the two men almost look as if they were posed by a Renaissance artist—one cradled in the other's arms, a skyward, beatific expression on his face. But pull back on the photo and you'll see the far more earthly explanation for the scene. One man is actually pulling the other through the window of an SUV that is perched perilously on a cliff 30 feet above a busy roadway.

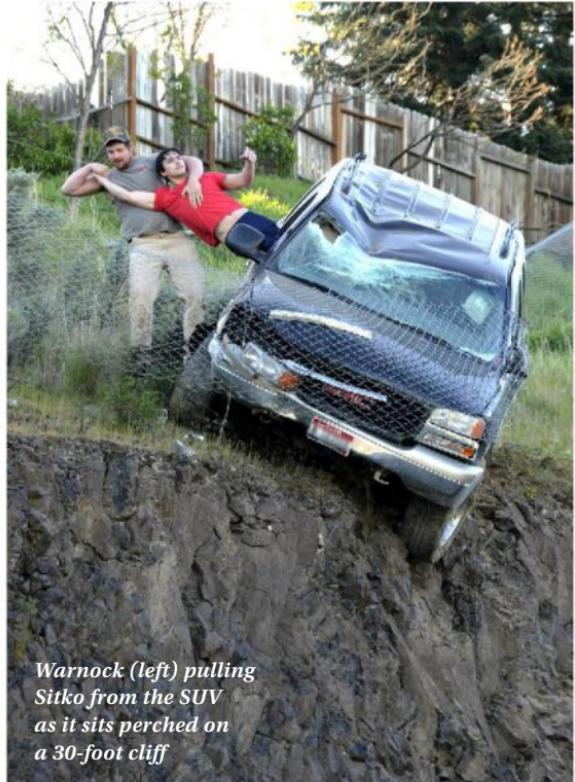
Jason Warnock, then 29, is the man making the life-saving maneuver. He was driving in Lewiston, Idaho, in April 2015 when he came upon a fallen tree in the middle of the road. "I was like, What the heck?" he told kxly.com. Warnock craned his neck to peer up the side of a cliff. At the very top, where the tree should have been, was an SUV teetering on the edge, held back from plummeting to the

road by a flimsy, heavily damaged chain-link fence. Looking inside the car, Warnock could see a panicked Matthew Sitko, 23, beating on the passenger-side window.

That's when Warnock sprang into action. According to NBC News, he crossed a nearby pedestrian footbridge, scrambled up the cliff, and traversed an embankment to get to the vehicle. When Warnock got to the car, he tried breaking the window with a tool he had on him, only to realize that his smashing was shaking the car and might cause it to slip down the hill. He stopped and turned to calming Sitko enough to get him to

open the window. "Give me your hand," Warnock said, according to the KXLY report. "If this thing goes, I want to have a hold of you so I can at least snag you out of there." Before reaching for the lifeline, Sitko had one request: "Can I grab my iPod?" Soon enough, Warnock had freed both man and his machine.

According to the Lewiston police chief, the accident was caused when Sitko, who suffered only minor injuries, lost control of his car.



*Warnock (left) pulling  
Sitko from the SUV  
as it sits perched on  
a 30-foot cliff*

COURTESY BARRY KOUGH/THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE

For his part, Warnock insisted he came to Sitko's aid for one simple reason: "I just did what anyone would do." But there may be another, more spiritual, explanation. After the accident, the two men sat down near the car waiting for the police to arrive. "I started reading the Bible last night," Sitko told Warnock. Warnock's reply: "That's great. Maybe God put me here at the right time. Maybe it's meant to bring you closer to him."

R



"Made you look.  
And yes, I'm wearing them."

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*discreet*

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# VOICES & VIEWS

Department of Wit

## Scamming The Scammers

BY JAMES VEITCH  
FROM THE BOOK DOT CON



LIKE YOU, I'm plagued by spammers. Unlike you, I decided to respond. Here are excerpts from my correspondence with a potential "business partner," a Mr. "John Kelly."

**FROM:** John Kelly  
**TO:** James Veitch  
I need your help.

**FROM:** James Veitch  
**TO:** John Kelly  
John! Why? Who are you?



JAMES VEITCH  
lives in London. His book Dot Con details his battles with scammers.

**FROM:** John Kelly  
**TO:** James Veitch  
Dear friend,  
My name is John Kelly. I am 59 years old man. I am in a hospital in Dubai. Recently, my Doctor told me that I would not last for the next six months due to my cancer problem (cancer of the lever).

I am giving my money away because of my health and the fact that my second wife is a terrifying woman to deal with, marrying her was the only mistake I made in my life. She has sold her soul to the devil and I do not want her near my money.

**FROM:** James Veitch  
**TO:** John Kelly  
I'm so sorry to hear of this.

Cancer of the lever can be deadly. Your second wife sounds awful. How did she sell her soul to the devil? Are you sure it's your lever and not your second wife poisoning you?

**FROM:** *John Kelly*

**TO:** *James Veitch*

Dear James Veitch,  
I am delighted to read  
your e-mail. I must  
trust in you base on the  
information from you.  
My wife is a very wicked  
woman who want me  
death so that she can  
inherit my wealth.

**FROM:** *James Veitch*

**TO:** *John Kelly*

I had an idea while I was  
in the bath this morning. When you  
sit down to dinner, say "Look over  
there" or something, and when she's  
looking in the other direction, switch  
plates with her. That way, if she poi-  
soned your food, she'll be eating it.

**FROM:** *John Kelly*

**TO:** *James Veitch*

I feel sad whenever I talk about her.  
I need you sincere assistant to help  
me move and invest the sum of nine  
million dollars.

**FROM:** *James Veitch*

**TO:** *John Kelly*

Forget what I said before. Don't do  
the plate switcheroo. She's crafty.

She might have anticipated the plate  
switching and already switched  
them. So don't switch the plates.

**FROM:** *John Kelly*

**TO:** *James Veitch*

Thank you for your kind advice. The  
funds are currently deposited with

a private security com-  
pany. Your duty is to  
contact the company  
as my representative,  
arrange with them and  
finalize the funds into  
your account.

**FROM:** *James Veitch*

**TO:** *John Kelly*

I've had another bath,  
and I think you should  
switch the plates. Hear

me out: I think that she will have  
anticipated our anticipation and will  
give you the poison. Of course, it's  
possible that she might anticipate  
this, though. Basically, I'm confused.

**FROM:** *John Kelly*

**TO:** *James Veitch*

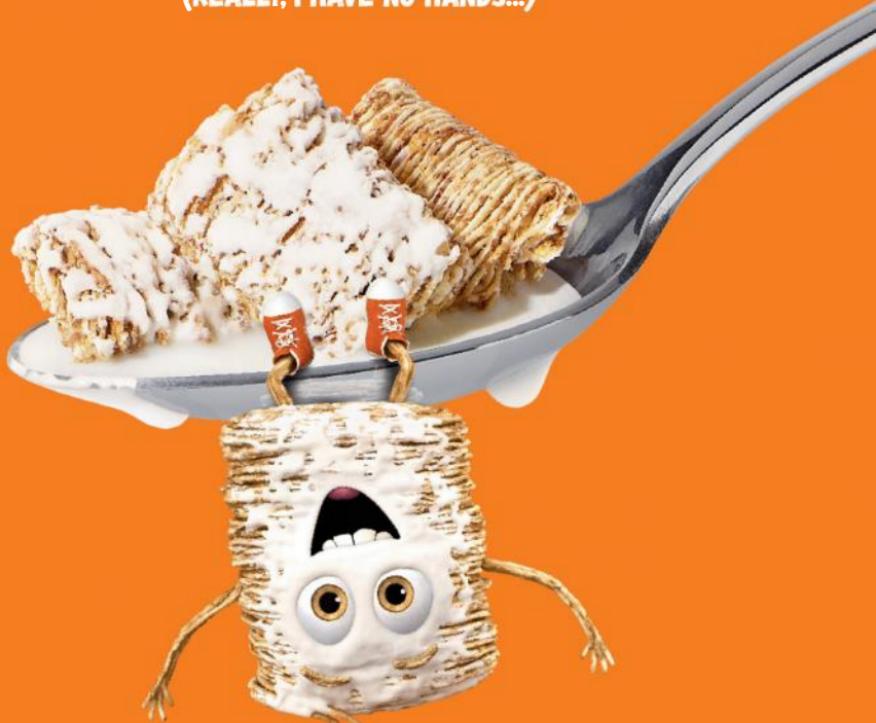
James Veitch you must inform me  
your readiness to allow me introduce  
you officially to the company as my  
financial investment representative.

**FROM:** *James Veitch*

**TO:** *John Kelly*

Happy to help. Let me know the deets.  
Meanwhile, my wife has been acting  
very strangely. I'm concerned ➤

**“LOOK, NO HANDS!”**  
**(REALLY, I HAVE NO HANDS...)**



CRUNCHY WHEAT. FROSTED SWEET.  
**FEED YOUR INNER KID**



that she might be wanting me death too. It could be she's annoyed at the number of baths I've been taking.

**FROM:** *John Kelly*

**TO:** *James Veitch*

I am going on a cancer surgery operation today. Contact my lawyer with [libertylawfirm@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:libertylawfirm@hotmail.co.uk). Tell him that I have willed 9.2M to you for the good work of the God. There might be a small processing fee.

**FROM:** *James Veitch*

**TO:** *Libberty Law*

Dear Libberty Law,

John's having the op today. Just in case things go pear-shaped, he's willed 9.2M to me to spend "as frivolously as possible." Let me know how I can best receive the money? I've run up a sizable water bill that I need to pay off ASAP.

**FROM:** *Libberty Law*

**TO:** *James Veitch*

LibbertyLaw Chambers

Malvern Terrace, London, UK

Dear James Veitch,

We bear sad news of John Kelly's death that reached us yesterday from Dubai Mortality and Death Records Agency. John Kelly passed out yesterday and his remains have been deposited in a mortuary and will be buried on the Monday next week in Dubai. Get back to me so that I can instruct you on how you can send the

900 USD to the court, for them to issue you the above required documents for the submission to the ING Bank for the release of the funds to you.

**FROM:** *James Veitch*

**TO:** *Libberty Law*

I am so sorry to hear that John Kelly has passed out. Begin with the wife; there's something not quite right about her. This must be hitting you hard. How are you holding up?

Where is his funeral going to take place? I'm thinking of going.

**FROM:** *Libberty Law*

**TO:** *James Veitch*

We categorically stated that his remains would be buried on Monday in Dubai, which is today. Yes, of a truth, his death is hitting me hard, and I am being able to hold up because of the actualization of his dreams that is near completion due to your kindness to assist him.

**FROM:** *James Veitch*

**TO:** *Libberty Law*

I live in London, so I thought I'd just pop round and give you the \$900 in person. Be good to meet up and chew the fat. I stopped by your corporate offices in North London, only I couldn't find an office there. Just a cul-de-sac. What's the deal?

Oddly enough, that was the end of our correspondence. —J. V.



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With backyard wisdom, the author's grandfather explains the secrets of aging and a life well lived

# When the Water Ran Cold

BY KITSANA DOUNGLOMCHAN  
FROM MEDIUM.COM



KITSANA DOUNGLOM-CHAN is a 14-year veteran of the United States Air Force. He currently lives in Alaska with his wife and daughter.

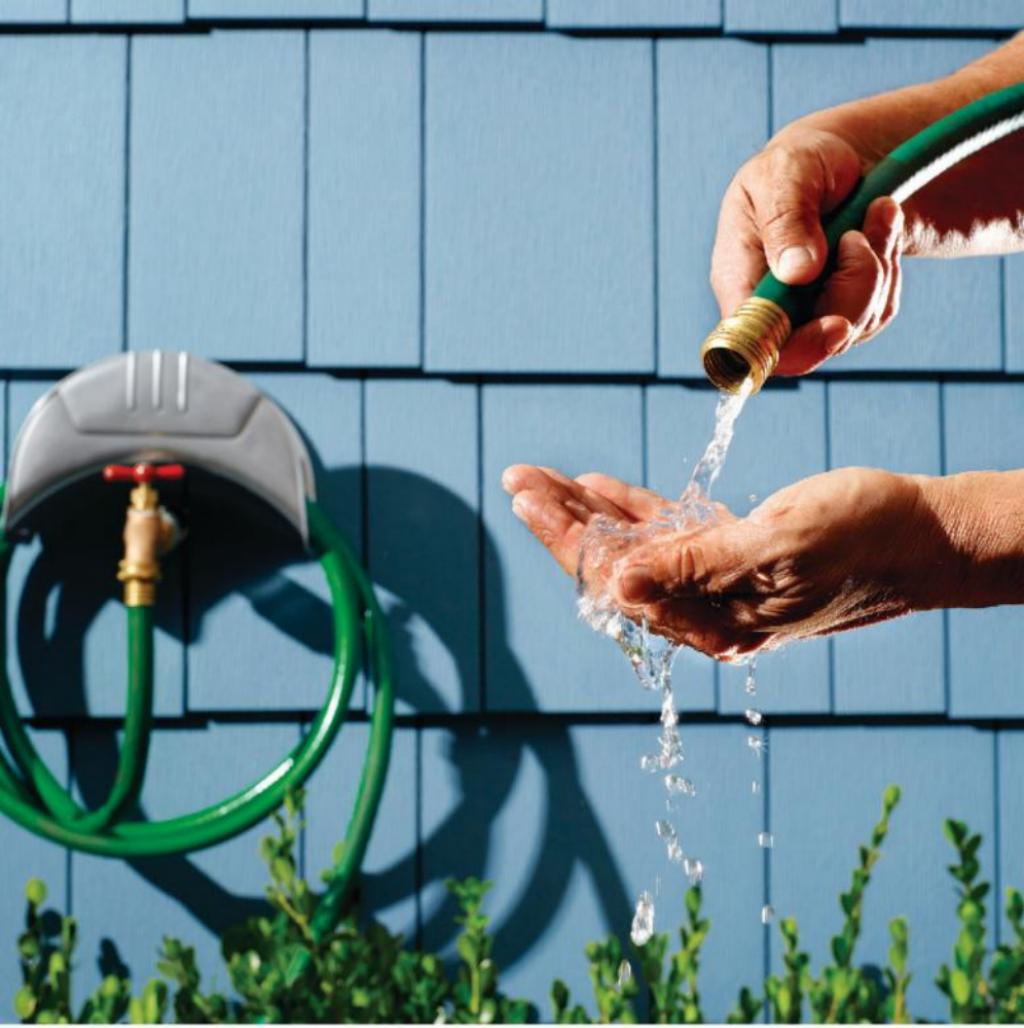
I ASK MY grandpa what it feels like to grow old. He ponders this question while we sit in his office overlooking the yard, the same yard I pulled weeds in when I was a boy.

It is late in the afternoon, but Grandpa is wearing pajama bottoms, slippers, and a thick flannel shirt. His face is withered, his once taut flesh sagging loosely from his bones. A cup of black tea rests on the wooden desk in front of him. Grandpa drank coffee most of his life but switched to tea a few years back, when coffee became too hard on his stomach.

Grandpa's mind brightens and dims like a beam of light underneath a magnifying glass on a cloudy day. But on good days, on days like this one, there's a break in the clouds and the sun shines through again.

He gazes out the office window and looks at his yard, which has gone into a state of decline in recent years. Grandpa no longer possesses the energy to maintain its once magnificent splendor. Tree branches droop over the fishpond he built, the pond's surface covered with a layer of green algae. Weeds sprout around the brick path weaving through the garden. An empty bird feeder dangles lifelessly from a tree limb.

GRANDPA AND I spent many hours during my summer vacations from elementary school working in the yard. We started in the afternoon when the sun was near its zenith.



Grandpa would don an Oakland Fire Department baseball cap, faded blue jeans, and a white T-shirt. Back then, he was a tireless man with a burly body like a sailor.

My main job was weed patrol, because Grandpa performed the glamorous work, excavating the rich California soil for a new addition to

his ever-expanding yard. He grew tomatoes on metal stakes and planted strawberries, lettuce, and radishes in the ground. And when they were ripe for picking, he'd bring them inside to Grandma's kitchen so they could be prepared.

Grandpa was an artist. The yard and garden were his canvases, the

flowers and plants his palette of paints. He was constantly bent over on all fours honing his art, the knees of his jeans stained brown.

At the end of the day, in the early evening, the air would become crisp and cool. Before calling it quits, Grandpa and I would wash up and get a drink of water at the hose on the side of the house. Grandpa would give the T-handle on the spigot a turn or two. The limp hose would stiffen, and then he'd cup his hand underneath the hose, the water pooling tranquilly in his palm. He'd lift his hand to his mouth and drink, quenching his thirst with each sup.

I tried imitating him but could never clench my fingers tight enough, and the water would slip through the slits of my fingers and dribble wastefully to the ground.

But before going inside, we'd fill up the bird feeder next to the pond. I'd go to the garage and find the seed bag, a blend of sunflowers, cracked corn, and millet. We'd walk into the garden, sauntering along the brick path to where the bird feeder hung from the tree. Grandpa would remove the top of the feeder—a wooden rooftop—and lift me by my armpits. Then I'd pour the seed into the feeder, my shoes dangling near his thighs.

**GRANDPA TAKES** a sip of his black tea, still pondering my question on aging. And without ever taking his eyes from the window, he asks me a question. "Have you ever been in a hot shower when the water ran cold?"

I tell him I have.

"That's what aging feels like," he says. "In the beginning of your life, it's like you're taking a hot shower. At first the water is too warm, but you get used to the heat and begin enjoying it. When you're young, you think it's going to be this way forever. Life goes on like this for a while."

Grandpa gives me a mischievous grin

and leans toward me. "And if you're lucky," he whispers, just out of Grandma's earshot, "a few good-looking women will join you in the shower until you decide to settle down."

We both laugh. He leans back in his chair, looks out the window, and continues on.

"But you begin to feel it somewhere between your 40s and 50s. The water temperature drops just the slightest bit. It's almost imperceptible, but you know it happened, and you know what it means. You try to pretend like you didn't feel it, but you still turn the faucet up to stay warm. But the water keeps going



*"In the  
beginning of life,  
it's like taking a  
hot shower. Then  
the temperature  
drops a bit."*

lukewarm. One day you realize the faucet can't go any farther, and from here on out the temperature begins to drop—you gradually feel the warmth leaving your body."

Grandpa clears his throat and pulls a stained handkerchief from his flannel shirt pocket. He blows his nose, balls up the handkerchief, and puts it away.

"It's a rather helpless feeling, truth told," he continues. "The water is still pleasant, but you know it'll soon become cold and there's nothing you can do. I knew a few people who decided to leave the shower on their own terms. They knew it was never going to get warmer, so why prolong the inevitable? I was able to stay in because I contented myself recalling the showers of my youth. I lived a good life but still wish I hadn't taken my younger years for granted. It's too late now, and no matter how hard I try, I'll never get the hot water on again."

Grandpa keeps looking out the window with those eyes that have seen 91 years on this earth. Those eyes that endured the Great Depression in the '30s, those eyes that survived the Pacific Ocean in the '40s, those eyes that witnessed the birth of his three children, five grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

He has indeed lived a good life, I say to myself.

Later on that day, after dinner, I drive down to Home Depot and buy a bag of birdseed. I come back to

the house, park in the driveway, and take the bag of seed out of the car. I open the garage door and find a plastic bucket. I empty the bucket and take it out to the yard, walking alone now. The sun is setting, the twilight changing into night, but I follow the well-worn brick path leading out to the pond, pulling any weeds I spot along the way. When I come to the end of the path, I set the bucket and seed bag down and lift the bird feeder from the tree limb. I tear a tiny hole in the bag and pour the seed into the feeder. After it's full, I replace the rooftop and hang the feeder back on the tree limb.

I leave the yard. I dump the bucket of weeds in the trash and set the bag of seed inside the garage. I go inside, excited to tell Grandpa about what I've done. But the living room is already dark. I then notice the glow of the television bouncing off the walls and see Grandpa reclined all the way back in his easy chair. A blanket is draped across his legs; his eyelids are closed.

I sit down in the chair next to him. His hands are interlaced across his stomach like a Buddhist statue, his chest rising and falling ever so faintly. I think about waking him up but decide not to disturb his sleep, a sleep which will soon last forever.

I hope he is dreaming the dreams of his youth, remembering the warmth of days gone by, the days before the water ran cold.



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\*\*D'ambrosio, Dan. K-CUPS drive Keurig's growth in 2014. Burlington Free Press, 19 November 2014.



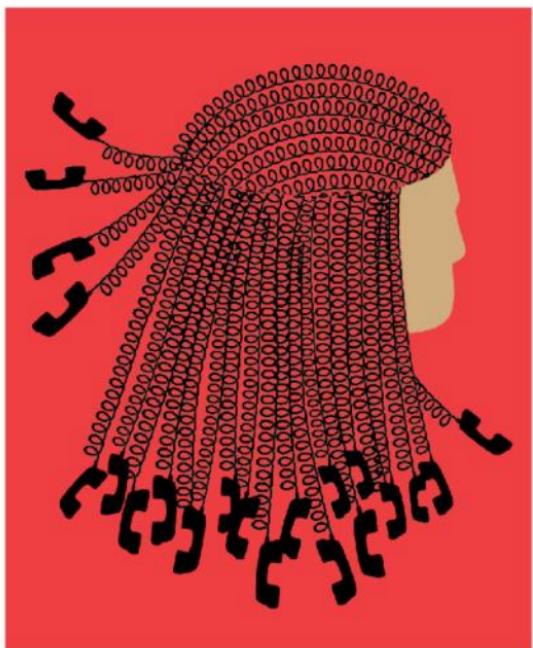
Can an African American woman lose a job offer because of the way she chooses to wear her hair?

# The Case of the Disqualifying Dreads

BY VICKI GLEMBOCKI

IN MAY 2010, Chastity Jones saw an ad for a customer service job at a call center in Mobile, Alabama. Catastrophe Management Solutions (CMS), which handles customer calls for insurance companies, needed people with professional phone skills. Jones filled out an online application and was asked to come to the office for an in-person interview.

A few days later, she arrived at CMS in a blue business suit and waited with other applicants for a group interview. Jones was among several candidates offered a position that very day by CMS human resources manager Jeannie Wilson. All that remained was for Jones to fill out some paperwork and take a drug test, which was scheduled for a future



date. When Jones realized she wasn't available that day, she privately told Wilson about the conflict, and Wilson replied that Jones could reschedule her test for another day. ➤

But right before Jones turned to leave CMS's offices, Wilson posed a strange question: Did Jones have dreadlocks? Jones, who is black, was wearing dreads—very short ones. Wilson, who is white, explained that CMS couldn't hire Jones "with the dreadlocks," since they "tend to get messy, although I'm not saying yours are, but you know what I'm talking about." Although Jones would never interact face-to-face with callers, CMS had a "grooming policy," which stated that "hairstyles should reflect a business/professional image" and that "excessive hairstyles and unusual colors" weren't allowed. Wilson gave Jones an ultimatum: Get rid of the dreads or forfeit the job. Jones walked out of CMS jobless.

In September 2013, the Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) sued CMS on behalf of Jones in the District Court for the Southern District of Alabama. It argued that the company's grooming policy broke federal law by discriminating against a black job applicant because of her hairstyle, which is "a manner of wearing the hair that is physiologically and culturally associated with people of African descent."

But CMS claimed that the issue wasn't Jones's race. It was simply about a hairstyle, which Jones—or any applicant, black or white, with dreads—could have changed if she wanted to land the job.

*Was Jones, who lost out on a job because of her dreadlocks, a victim of racial discrimination?*



## THE VERDICT

The courts said she was not. In fact, the district court simply dismissed the case, which was then appealed by the EEOC. Judge Adalberto Jordan of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit upheld the dismissal. Jordan agreed that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes it illegal to discriminate against employees because of their race. But race, he said in his September 2016 ruling, applies only to physical traits that can't be changed. In other words, Title VII would have protected Jones had CMS refused to hire her because of the texture of her hair, which she obviously couldn't change. But refusing to hire her "on the basis of black hairstyle," as Jordan wrote, is fair game.

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# PHOTO OF LASTING INTEREST

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## Kingo of the Jungle

**Q:** What does a 300-pound silverback gorilla eat?  
**A:** Anything he wants. Kingo prefers the finest of jungle delicacies—that's kangwasika, an herb found in the swamps of the Congo basin of Central Africa, that he's getting ready to munch. Kingo's diet gets more attention than the grub on *The Biggest Loser*; researchers have been studying how his search for food affects his social behavior since 1995. One fascinating finding: When provisions run low, Kingo will sometimes steal from his own family. No wonder he keeps up to four "wives" at a time.

PHOTOGRAPH BY IAN NICHOLS  
FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

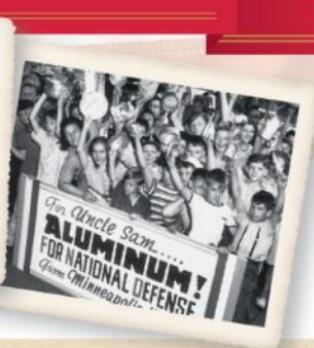






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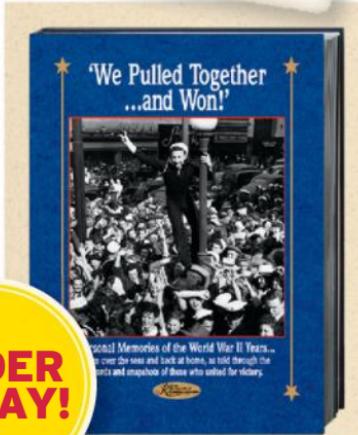
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# Points to Ponder

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BEING ASKED TO explain why I love America is sometimes like being asked to explain why I love my fiancée. There are all the tangible things you can rattle off so as not to look sentimental and irrational. But then there is the fact that you just do, and you ultimately can say little more than that.

---

CHARLES C. W. COOKE,  
*British-born American writer,*  
in *National Review*

THINK OF BOREDOM as an internal alarm. When it goes off, it is telling us something. It signals the presence of an unfulfilling situation.

---

ANDREAS ELPIDOROU,  
*philosophy professor,* on aeon.co

There's a Tibetan saying: "Wherever you have friends, that's your country, and wherever you receive love, that's your home."

THE DALAI LAMA,  
*spiritual leader of Tibet,*  
in his book *The Book of Joy*

WE MUST continue to go into space for the future of humanity. I don't think we will survive another thousand years without escaping beyond our fragile planet.

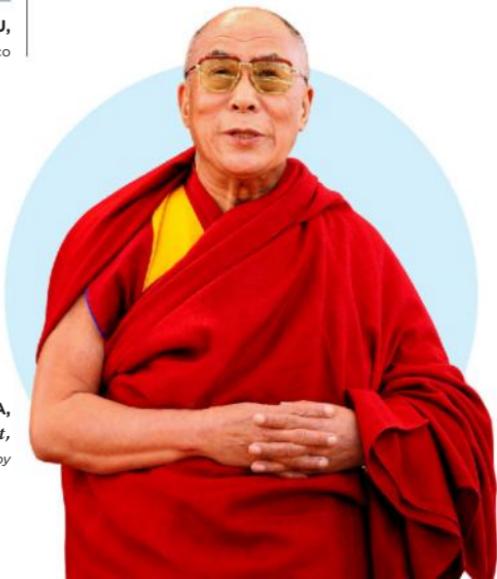
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STEPHEN HAWKING,  
*physicist,* in a speech at the Oxford Union

IS EMPATHIZING with people that you have powerful differences with tantamount to compromise with them and, in a sense, weakening your own moral positions? My answer is "Absolutely not."

---

ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD,  
*author,* in an interview with the National  
Book Foundation



**FINISH THIS SENTENCE**

# The one thing

Puyallup, WA

## My beloved porcelain doll,

Cicely Madeline. She was  
a 16th-birthday present from  
my grandmother. Cicely  
will be 30 this year.

CARLA GOLDEN

## My wife.

She's my cook, housecleaner,  
shopper, my life.

RICK BRUECKMANN

Roosevelt, UT

## My original-edition Nancy Drew collection.

BRADEE BLANCHARD

Grand Junction, CO

My three dogs, four birds, three turtles,  
**and two goldfish.**

KELLEE-ANNE MONAGHAN LOCHMANDY

San Diego, CA

## The clock

my great-grandparents  
received on their wedding  
day, December 15, 1887.

TAMMY RICHARDS-PACE

## My computer,

because I use it to get  
online and communicate  
with the world.

ALAN KELLOGG

# I'd save in a fire is ...

## The handmade jewelry

that I make. Each piece is irreplaceable.

MEURIELLA ALMA HALL

Winterport, ME

Lemont, IL

Nappanee, IN

## My journals.

Nothing else tells the story  
of my life like they do.

KATLYN MILLER

Sand Springs, OK

## My parents' marriage certificate.

It holds the bonds of  
my family together.

THOMAS PATRICK

Mechanicsville, VA

Milford, CT

## The gorgeous quilt

made by my church-lady friends  
while I had chemo. It would  
remind me that I had gone through  
difficult times before.

MELANIE SALAVA

## The tote full of my kids' crafts.

I can't replace years' worth  
of birthday cards, drawings,  
and "I love you" notes.

JAMIE BALDWIN

Riverview, FL

To read about  
how one man  
saved his family  
from a fire, see  
"I Survived!" on  
page 62.

Go to [facebook.com/readersdigest](http://facebook.com/readersdigest) or join our  
Inner Circle Community at [tmbinnercircle.com](http://tmbinnercircle.com) for  
the chance to finish the next sentence.

# Your True Stories

IN 100 WORDS

## GO WEST, YOUNG MAN

Billy was the resident cowboy of my kindergarten class, coming to school each day dressed in chaps, a vest, and a cowboy hat. One morning, he told me his mother was having a baby. "I'm going to teach my little brother all the things every cowboy should know, like how to ride a horse and rope a steer," he said. "But," I cautioned, "what if your mother gives you a baby sister?" Billy had never considered this, and the possibility floored him. He gazed out the window for a moment before saying with resignation, "Then I'm headin' west."

JOHN THOMAS CIMICS, *Midland, Texas*

## FOUND MONEY

I was third in line at the checkout, and the lady at the cashier was purchasing basic items. Two cans of cat food, a can of tuna, a loaf of bread, a quart of milk, a package of cookies. Her money was in her hand as the cashier gave her the total. She was 86 cents short. She checked her purse to no avail. "I can put



something back," she said. The man ahead of me reached into his pocket, palmed a dollar, bent down as if to pick something up, and said, "I think you dropped this."

MICHAEL F. HEBERGER,  
*East Rochester, New York*

## A HAPPY MEAL

We recently lost our beloved dog Benny to cancer. In the year after his diagnosis, we spoiled him with attention and food. A favorite treat was two plain fast-food cheeseburgers. The day after Benny left us, I went to the chain restaurant for lunch—chicken nuggets for me, but this time, no burgers. When I got home, I found in the bag my nuggets and a plain double cheeseburger. The receipt showed only the nuggets. I was stunned to tears, then laughter, when I realized Benny had bought us lunch together one last time.

THOMAS RICHARD SMITH,  
*Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania*

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



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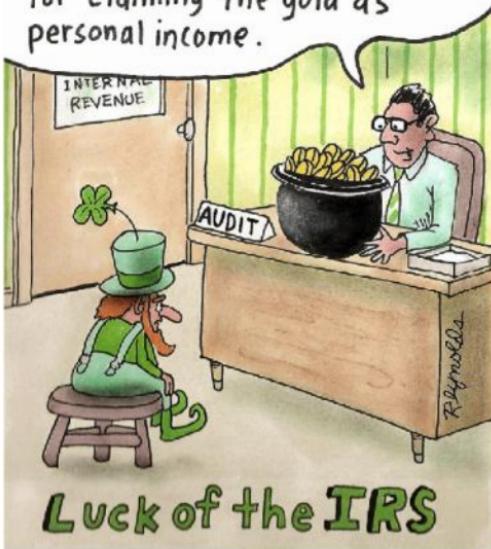


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# Life

IN THESE UNITED STATES

The rainbow was on your property, Mr. O'Toole, so technically, you are responsible for claiming the gold as personal income.



**KIDS, DON'T BELIEVE** everything your parents tell you. These adults recall lies they were told as children:

■ My mom convinced my brother and me that a penguin lived behind our fridge. She warned us that if we left the door open too long, we'd use up his cold and he'd get mad and come out and bite us.

- My dad told me people get to speak only 10,000 words per month. If you reached the limit, he said, you couldn't physically talk until the new month began. Anytime I was especially talkative, Dad would say, "Careful; you're over 9,000 by now."
- My father told me that pears were apples from outer space.

Source: buzzfeed.com

**MY FRIEND IS A LONGTIME** fan of the Three Stooges, and as such owns a watch with a picture of Moe, Larry, and Curly on its face. One day while we rode in an elevator, another man asked for the time. That's when he noticed the three faces on my friend's watch.

"How nice," he commented. "Is this your family?"

**YEFIM BRODD,** *Tacoma, Washington*

**THE OPHTHALMOLOGIST'S** very cute assistant was examining my 20-year-old grandson, when out of the blue she said, "You must really work out."

"Well, yes, I do," said my grandson, beaming. "I run and lift weights. Thank you for noticing."

"Oh, you misunderstood," she said. "You have popped blood vessels in your eyes. We see that with people who work out."

**ELIZABETH BOGAERT,**  
*Beaufort, North Carolina*

**MY NEPHEW** and his friends picked my daughter and me up from the airport. For the next three hours, he had the radio cranked to ten.

"How can you talk with the music so loud?" I yelled over the din.

He hollered back, "We don't have to talk. We all know the same things."

**DELPHINE J. BUDREAU,** *Kennebunk, Maine*

**I'VE STARTED WEARING** a fitness tracker to count my daily steps, and the first time I made it to 9,989 steps

in one day, I proudly showed the device to my stepson.

"Not bad," he said. "But you'd better keep walking. You're looking at it upside down."

**JENNY JOHNSON,** *Salem, Massachusetts*



### **IF LOOKS COULD KILL ...**

I was in line to pay at a store when a little girl said, "You have nice hair!"

"Thank you very much," I said. She then asked, "Is it yours?"

**K. N., via Internet**

My four-year-old niece Suzie was sitting with her mother and grandmother when she said, "Mommy, you're so pretty." My sister pointed to our mother and said, "Honey, when I was your age, I thought my mom was so pretty too." Suzie responded, "When did you realize she wasn't?"

**JUDY NEWBERRY,**  
*Yorba Linda, California*

Alana Haim, of the sister band Haim, on sibling love: "Este told me I looked like Larry David today, and I cried because that might be the nicest thing she's ever said to me."

Source: nme.com

**Got a hilarious story about friends or family? It could be worth \$\$\$.** For details, see page 7 or go to rd.com/submit.



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

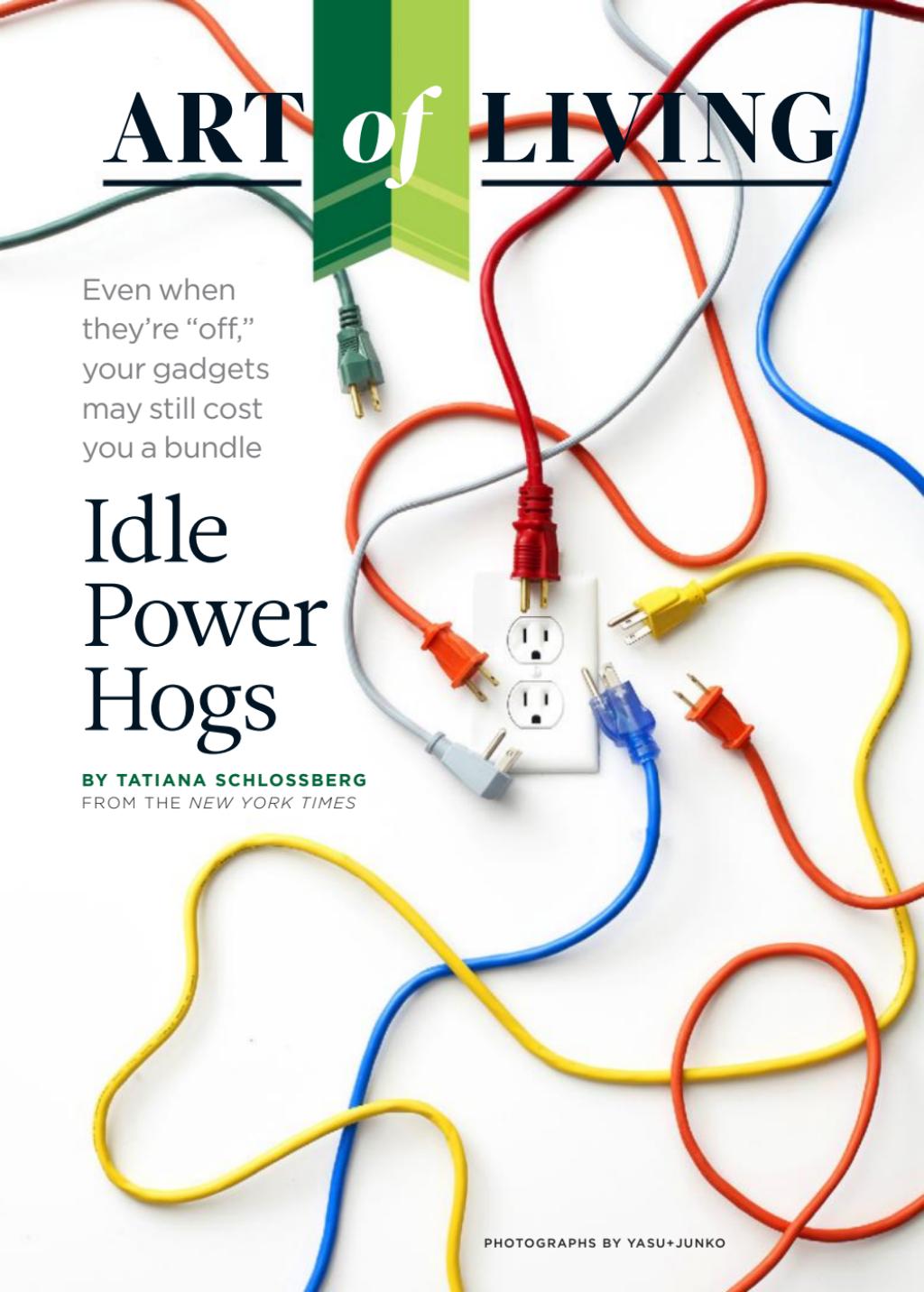


# ART *of* LIVING

Even when  
they're "off,"  
your gadgets  
may still cost  
you a bundle

## Idle Power Hogs

BY TATIANA SCHLOSSBERG  
FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES



PHOTOGRAPHS BY YASU+JUNKO

**ONCE UPON A TIME,** there was a difference between on and off. Now it's more complicated: Roughly 50 devices and appliances in the typical American home are always drawing power, even when they're not being actively used.

In fact, devices in idle power mode account for about a quarter of all residential energy consumption, according to a study by the Natural Resources Defense Council. And the costs add up. All told, devices that are in standby or sleep mode can use the equivalent of up to 50 power plants' worth of electricity and cost more than \$19 billion in electricity bills every year in the United States. And there's an environmental cost: Electricity production represents about 37 percent of all domestic carbon dioxide emissions.

## Some of the Big Guzzlers

My cable box draws 28 watts when it is on and recording a show and 26 watts when it is off and not recording anything. Even if I never watched TV, it would still consume about 227 kilowatt-hours annually. That's more than the average person in Kenya or Cambodia uses in an entire year, according to World Bank estimates.

Always leaving a laptop computer

plugged in, even when it's fully charged, can use a similar quantity—4.5 kilowatt-hours a week, or about 234 a year. (This may vary, depending on model and battery.)

## An Online Appliance Is Always On



*If your device is connected to the Internet, it's always drawing some power.*

In 2014, 73 percent of American households had a high-speed Internet connection, which usually entails at least one modem and router. While running them won't cost you a fortune (they'll hike your electric bill by about \$17 a year on average), they're never switched off, which means they're just plain wasteful.

The same is true of many TVs. To be turned on with a remote, a TV has to be on to receive that signal. If it's a "smart" TV that streams video from the Internet, it also has to be on to stay online. And if the TV is in "quick-start" mode—to spare you the pain of waiting 15 seconds for it to boot up—it's drawing even more power.

Many more appliances are being connected to the Internet today so they can be controlled remotely. Lights, ovens, refrigerators, coffee-makers, and slow cookers—and even mattresses—can now connect to the Internet, so they also draw power all the time. Dishwashers and laundry machines have gotten much more

efficient, but many now have digital displays, which means they always draw a little bit of power too.

## Reduce the Power Drain

Many utility companies will provide hourly data for energy consumption or install smart meters to track it for you. Some also offer financial incentives for replacing older appliances with energy-efficient ones.

The simplest way to curtail energy use is to unplug devices that are used only rarely. Switch off your furnace in the summer, for instance, and unplug the TV and DVR set-top box in the guest room when you don't have company. Use a power strip to group

appliances—TV, gaming console, speakers, DVD player, streaming devices—so you can turn them all off at the same time. (Be aware, though, that log-on data could be lost if you turn off the power strip.)

You can also adjust the power settings on your electronics. Disable the quick-start setting on your TV (which can use as much as 37 watts a day). And set your computer to go to sleep after 30 minutes of inactivity.

For devices that you use only at certain times of day (such as your coffee machine or towel heater), plug them into a digital timer that's programmed to switch them off whenever they are not needed. R

NEW YORK TIMES (MAY 7, 2016). COPYRIGHT © 2016 BY NEW YORK TIMES, CO., NYTIMES.COM.

TYPE OF DEVICE	TYPICAL NUMBER PER HOME	AVERAGE TOTAL ANNUAL COST WHILE IDLE OR OFF
Set-top box	2	\$32
TV	3	\$39
Modem	2	\$22
Desktop computer	1	\$10
Security system	1	\$8
Stereo, receiver, and other audio/video gear	2	\$15
Laptop computer	1	\$7
Printer/fax/copier	2	\$13
Wireless router	1	\$6
Irrigation system	1	\$4
Alarm clock/radio	2	\$6
Cordless phone	2	\$4
GFCI safety outlets (ground fault circuit interrupter)	6	\$6
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL COST</b>		<b>\$172</b>

Note: Costs are based on specific models in idle/off mode for 22 hours per day. Costs may vary depending on model type, how long your device is inactive, and electricity prices in your area.

# IS YOUR BLADDER ALWAYS DISRUPTING YOUR DAY?

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

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



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

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

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

## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

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

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

\*Subject to eligibility. Restrictions may apply.



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## **IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION (continued)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Before you take Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you:

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

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

Tell your doctor if you take:

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

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

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

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

Myrbetriq may cause serious side effects including:

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

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

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

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

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

These are not all the possible side effects of Myrbetriq.

For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Active ingredient:** mirabegron

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

#### **Rx Only**

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

Marketed and Distributed by:

**Astellas Pharma US, Inc.**

Northbrook, Illinois 60062

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

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A care package from Philadelphia provides a leukemia patient with an unlikely health food

# The Healing Hoagie

BY JIM SHAHIN FROM THE WASHINGTON POST

**S**“YOU KNOW you can’t eat that,” said my then-girlfriend, Jessica.

I was clutching a classic Philly Italian cold-cut sandwich in my hands, and I looked at her, uncomprehending. “You can’t leave meat and vegetables under the Texas sun all day,” she continued. “It’s a salmonella hothouse.”

No one had been home when the hoagie arrived. It had been sitting

in FedEx packaging on the stoop of a friend’s house in Houston, where we were staying during my clinical trial for leukemia. The disease hadn’t responded to the initial treatment, and, as it happened, my oncologist had just warned me, “We may have to put you on a bland diet.”

As the saying goes, sometimes the cure is worse than the disease. I held that sandwich in my hands

and gazed upon its beauty: the creamy tan roll, crisp outside and squishy inside, encapsulating a perfection of ham, salami, capicola, tomatoes, onions, and lettuce, sprinkled with salt and oregano and drizzled with olive oil and wine vinegar. This was not just any hoagie. It was a hoagie from my childhood shop, the Drexel House in suburban Philadelphia, sent as a good-luck gesture by my brother.

"It was sent with love," I told Jessica. "Nothing sent with love can harm you."

It can, though, emit a sour odor after sitting, hermetically sealed, in the November Houston heat. I took a bite anyway. Then another. The flavor was slightly ... off. Yet each bite conjured a blur of childhood memories. My father, with his crooked smile, who would die of cancer at 43. My mother, a 1950s housewife, in her apron. Pinball at the pizza joint. Baseball in the backyard. The girl in fourth grade who swung her leg back and forth, flipping her shoe on and off.

This was some hoagie.

I ate every bite, honoring the spirit in which it had been sent. The slight pang in my belly would pass, right? Wrong. Later, in bed,

I was awakened by a horrible rumbling in my gut. I raced to the bathroom, where I stayed the rest of the night, throwing up.

The next day, I began the leukemia treatments. I plunged a small vial into my upper thigh, an act I would repeat three days a week for months.

I suffered no side effects. No headaches. No fever. No nausea.

I credited the hoagie, but Jessica was skeptical. "You got lucky," she said.

That was 1985, and things since then have mostly gone well. My spleen was removed, but I haven't missed it. I've been in and out of

remission, but mostly in.

I don't know if anyone has researched the merits of believing in a hoagie, but believing in the power of love communicated through the offering of food strikes me as not as crazy as it sounds. I'm not talking about superfoods. Nor do I dispute a connection between diet and disease. I'm talking about the spirit with which a food is offered and received and the psychic healing it provides, like a jolt of unseen electrical current.

In January of 2015, my doctor discovered I had fallen out of remission again. After the diagnosis was confirmed, the first thing I did was beeline

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“

*This was not  
just any hoagie.  
Each bite  
conjured a blur  
of childhood  
memories.*

---

to Taylor Gourmet for a cheesesteak. The roll was overstuffed with flavorful, tender, well-seasoned meat, gooey with melted American cheese.

The problem was, I could barely eat the thing. I was feverish. Achy. Deeply fatigued. Not just not hungry but frankly revolted by the idea of eating. I nibbled, hoping to tap into the magic of restorative nostalgia.

The magic barely flickered. And over the next few days, I uncharacteristically picked at my food, forcing a couple of spoons of breakfast into my system just to eat something, neglecting lunch altogether, and scarcely touching dinner.

Dispirited and weak, I went to the clinic for a blood transfusion. After I returned home, my temperature rose into the low 100s.

Around 5:30 that evening, a close friend stopped by with an enormous pot of homemade beef stew. "Wish I felt up to eating it," I told Jessica after he left.

My temperature hit 102, and Jessica, now my wife, called the doctor, who said I had to go to the hospital. "If I can bring the temperature down within the next hour," I pleaded, "can I stay home?" I could.

I furiously drank ice water and used cold compresses. Jessica brought me a bowl of stew and insisted I eat something. I glowered at it but took a spoonful. "Wow," I said. "Wow. That is amazing."

The aroma went from off-putting to intoxicating. I had another bite, then another. Meanwhile, my temperature gradually declined. Within the hour, it was at 98.7. "That," I proclaimed, "is a magical stew." I had it for breakfast the next morning and again for lunch.

Meanwhile, as word was getting out about my situation, friends and relatives sprang

into action. My colleagues had a pastrami sandwich from Katz's Deli in New York shipped to me. My cousin and her husband brought a dozen bagels with all the fixings. My bestie brought barbecue from Baltimore. My son came for a surprise visit and made his spicy tomato-based cabbage soup.

Whether it's handmade or purchased, hand delivered or shipped, beef stew or bagels, an offering of food rejuvenates the psyche and, in turn, the body.

Science calls it the placebo effect. I call it hoagie voodoo. And I thank my lucky stars that it exists. R

————— “ —————

***Food offered in  
the right spirit  
can act like a  
jolt of electricity,  
benefiting  
body and soul.***

—————

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Advice for improving any vacation:  
Go it alone, leave your phone at home, and ...

# Talk to Strangers!

BY KIO STARK FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES

I LOVE TO TRAVEL ALONE for one reason: the strangers. I talk to people who live in the places I go, travelers, anyone with a story, anyone who may turn my path a different way from what I had planned. These encounters cement my memories of a place, and my relationship to it.

Once, on an overnight train from

Frankfurt to Milan, I shared a cabin with a prim German woman, maybe in her 70s. I asked her about the newspaper she was reading and got a rundown of the merits and failures of a dozen publications. But I was in the wrong time zone. I soon fell asleep.

Hours later, I woke up to a whisper. "Are you awake?" She beckoned me

to the window. The train was on a slow arc around the shore of a vast black lake. There were a few towns scattered like bits of moonlight, broken loose from the great glowing strip across the still surface of the water. "It's Lake Como," she told me. "I visit sometimes. I would stay forever if I could." She paused; I waited. "What a moon. Isn't it the most beautiful thing you've ever seen?"

It was, and had I not connected with her over that newspaper, I would not have seen it. Talking to strangers along your travels can change your trip into an adventure. Here are five rules of thumb to serve as your guide.

## 1

### DON'T IGNORE YOUR FELLOW TOURISTS

On a long-ago, haphazard road trip, I made a pilgrimage to Nashville's Hatch Show Print shop. Waiting in a line, I asked the woman ahead of me if she was from the area. "Nope. Oklahoma," she told me. "Why?" I replied that I was on a road trip, looking for things to do. The man behind me jumped in. "Where are you headed after this?" I told him Colorado, and he grinned. "Stop in Lucas, Kansas. It's a little off the highway. Go to S. P. Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden. It's a crazy man's house and sculpture garden. Just go." The place was right up my alley: strange, historic, handmade.

Before that, I'd been kind of a snob about other tourists, but I learned a



lesson: When you go someplace off the beaten path, you're likely to have something in common with the other tourists there. Find them, and ask where they would go. They're going to offer advice made of gold.

## 2

### DITCH YOUR PHONE

You need to be an open person, with open body language and open eyes—and without a shield. The world through my phone has its own pleasures, including (sometimes) a sense of community. But my phone often gets between me and the surroundings, ruining my chances to make eye contact with the people I see. It's the antithesis of being present. If ditching it isn't viable or feels unsafe to you, take a deep breath and make a sacred deal with yourself not to touch it. Put it in a different pocket than you usually do or tie a string around it or cover it with tape to remind you to put it away every time you reach for it.

## 3

### LET STRANGERS MAKE

### ALL YOUR PLANS

I'll start by choosing a place to have morning coffee or breakfast. After that, I let

a local make every decision, asking the proprietor or someone sitting close by to suggest what to do. Every time I'm ready to go to the next place, I ask another stranger.

I've found that the easiest way to do this is to talk to people who are in "open roles," such as people who work in restaurants, stores, or museums; anyone in a public service job; or taxi drivers. Or ask someone seated near you on a bench or in a café. Ask where the person's favorite street is. Ask where he or she takes visitors. Ask if there's a residential area where it would be nice to take a walk. Keep asking until you're too tired to speak.

## 4

### USE A PAPER MAP—OR NONE AT ALL

On a visit to London a few years ago, I decided to skip paying for a data plan. The result was ridiculous and delightful. My first night out, I checked Google Maps on my laptop before I left and sketched directions to a dinner I was to attend. I emerged from the Tube and got hopelessly lost.



The small street in the address was nowhere to be found. It began to rain. I asked a man outside a bar where the street was. He had no idea but shooed me inside to keep dry. No one else knew, either, so I had dinner on a pub stool, riveted by a woman drinking straight gin and telling me about her years as a spy.

The takeaway: Ask for directions a lot. Asking for any kind of help is the key to many doors. It's a vulnerable act that invites genuine, unguarded assistance.

## 5

### MOST IMPORTANT: LISTEN

Exploring isn't just about you. People love to tell their own stories, and you can invite that. Not every stranger is going to take you up on it, but some people will, and their stories can make a place unforgettable.

Finding good questions to ask means observing. Noticing. I thought to ask the woman on the train about newspapers because I saw she was reading one from Berlin, though she had said she lived in Frankfurt. I've discovered that a well-turned question shows that you are really paying attention, that you are curious and ready to listen. A good question is a form of seduction. And like seduction's cousin—flattery—it will get you everywhere.



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✓ Yes



✓ Yes



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NEWS FROM THE

# World of Medicine

BY SAMANTHA RIDEOUT

## An Easy Jet Lag Weapon

Sleeping pills, light-regulating apps, herbal remedies—there's enough jet lag advice to fill a 747. But one of the easiest tricks is to regulate your meal-times. In a recent study of airline crew members on long flights, researchers found that travelers who eat at normal mealtimes in their destination time zone (as opposed to eating whenever they want) will likely experience fewer symptoms of jet lag—such as fatigue, moodiness, and brain fog. Fortunately, many airlines serve on-board meals according to the time at their final stop. Of course, that means you've got to eat when, as well as what, they serve you.

## How Middle-Aged Memory Works

Researchers at McGill University used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to monitor the brain activity of people ages 19 to 76 as they viewed images on a screen

and then were asked to recall details. In general, participants 40 and older recalled fewer elements than younger people, but the lead author noted that this "may not be a 'deficit' in brain function." Instead, as the fMRI data showed, middle-aged people tended to use a part of the brain involved with introspection, suggesting that older people were simply more inwardly focused than their younger counterparts. Mindfulness meditation, which trains the brain to pay more attention to the outside world, can help strengthen recall ability.



## Taking Kidney Stones for a Ride

Doctors at Michigan State University's urology clinic love the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad at Walt Disney World. Why? Because a number of patients reported passing kidney stones after riding it. So the urologists put the roller coaster to the test. They used a 3-D printer

to create a model of a kidney containing urine and kidney stones, and then took it for a ride. The forces exerted by the coaster (which includes quick drops and sharp turns but does not turn upside down) did cause stones to dislodge, particularly when the model was placed near the back. Patients with kidney stones might get relief on a coaster ride, the lead researcher said.

## Most Diabetes Patients Skip Sight-Saving Exams

Annual dilated eye exams can prevent 95 percent of diabetes-related vision loss from diabetic retinopathy and other serious eye diseases. Yet nearly six in ten Americans with diabetes don't get these tests regularly, according to a recent study of almost 2,000 patients. Seniors over 65 may be eligible to get free exams through Eye Care America ([aao.org/eyecare-america](http://aao.org/eyecare-america)).

## Surprising Risk Factors for Dementia

About two thirds of a person's risk for developing dementia can be blamed on a combination of genes, lifestyle factors, and health conditions. The rest may be due to environmental triggers. In a review of 60 previous studies, analysts at the University of Edinburgh found that the strongest correlations were with air pollution, vitamin D deficiency, and occupational exposure to certain pesticides

(a concern for farmworkers but not for people exposed to trace amounts from produce). Want to see if you're in the clear? Vitamin D deficiency can be diagnosed using a blood test and treated with supplements. Visit [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov) to check your local air quality, and stay indoors when pollutant levels are unhealthily high.

## Walk Faster for Your Health

You already know walking can help you lose weight and improve your health. But an article in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* found that steps taken at a brisk pace are particularly beneficial for cardiovascular fitness (insulin, body weight, cholesterol, and blood pressure). For healthy adults, a good target is 150 minutes per week at 100 steps or more per minute, the researchers said. Whatever your step count, more—and faster—is better.

## Ticks and Meat Allergies

If you live in or visit a tick-infested area and eating a burger makes you sick, those ticks might be to blame. Research has found that in some people, a tick bite can lead to an allergy to red meat (and, more rarely, to dairy). It's caused when the bite triggers the immune system to view alpha-gal (a carbohydrate found in most meat) as a threat, causing congestion, hives, vomiting, cramps, and even anaphylactic shock. The allergy can be confirmed with a blood or skin test. R



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ALL IN

# A Day's Work



*"We'll run a few tests, but it looks like you have jazz hands."*

**A NEW SALESMAN** saw the nameplate on my desk and said, "Sibyl Short. That's easy to remember, since you're short." The next time he visited our office, he approached me with a big smile and stated with great confidence, "Hello, Ms. Stout!"

**SIBYL SHORT**, *Lilburn, Georgia*

**THE NOTE I LEFT** on my student's middle school test said: "Please look

up the meanings of *suppository* and *depository*." It was in response to a question he'd answered concerning where Lee Harvey Oswald was when he assassinated President Kennedy.

**KAREN SKOPHAMMER**, *Fort Dodge, Iowa*

**IS THERE A WAY** I can filter out all the work e-mails except for the ones telling me there are doughnuts or cake in the office?

**@JOHNLYONTWEETS**

**AFTER GIVING** a guided tour of Old Key West, I reminded my clients to catch the great sunset at 7:15.

"I can't make it tonight," a woman said. "When's the next sunset?"

GARY KLEIN, *University City, Missouri*

**SCENE:** Theme park ticket line

**Customer:** My son wants to go on the ride. There are a ton of people in the way.

**Me:** You need to wait in line like everyone else, madam. May I interest you in getting a Fast Pass?

**Customer:** (*shouting*) Just take me and my son to the front!

**Me:** If I let you go to the front of the line, then I'd have to let everyone go to the front of the line.

**Customer:** Then why don't you do that?

From [notalwaysright.com](http://notalwaysright.com)

**FOUR COFFEE SHOPS** that have gone full-caf on the punny names:

- Sconehegne (Berkeley, California)
- Sisters' Sludge (Minneapolis)
- Rimsky-Korsakoffee House (Portland, Oregon)
- Freudian Sip (Northridge, California)

Source: [atlasobscura.com](http://atlasobscura.com)

**REAL QUESTIONS** from real customers to really bemused store clerks:

- "Where are your vegan apples?"
- "What's the weather like on the patio?"
- "Now, the baked potato, what is that?"
- "What would you do if I robbed you?"

From [reddit.com](http://reddit.com)

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

## ONE OF THESE RECENT HEADLINES IS MADE-UP. WHICH ONE?

JUDGE BARS WARLOCK FROM HARASSING WITCH IN SALEM

CHINA MAY BE USING SEA TO HIDE ITS SUBMARINES

UNC BOOSTERS OUTRAGED THAT SOME ATHLETES TOOK REAL CLASSES

SENATOR BEAGLE AIMS TO REFORM OHIO'S DOG LAWS

MAN ASKED TO CLEAN UP AFTER DOG PULLS GUN

STATE TROOPER HEARD DOPE ON THE PHONE

LACK OF BOLOGNA LEADS TO CHARGES

from the fake Borowitz Report  
The fake headline: "UNC Boosters Outraged ..."

Contributors: Jerald Bear, Millersburg, Ohio; J. W. Noble, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania; Betty Rankin Myrtle, Athens, Georgia



# "I Survived"

*7 heart-stopping tales of*



**Iived!"**

*triumph over disaster*



# I Survived Drowning

BY JAIME RIOS FROM OUTDOOR LIFE

**I**t's the Saturday before Thanksgiving, 1 a.m., and my chocolate Lab, Stormy, and I are headed for a duck blind a few hours north. The weather forecast calls for the possibility of fog, but the drive down Interstate 5 is clear. Along the way, I stop off for gas and lock Stormy in the camper shell before going inside the station. It's a habit I started after I met a sad old hunter looking for his German shorthair, which had been stolen from his unlocked camper shell at a café.

Back on the road, as I approach the marsh, the fog begins to build. At a curve, I hit a soft shoulder and lose control of the truck. I try to correct, but it's too late. With a clang, the back of the pickup goes over a steep bank. The truck slides backward and down, then a splash. There is a series of flashes, clicks, and whirs before all lights and electronics go out. I pray that the water isn't deep.

At first, the scene seems peaceful, almost beautiful. In the dim light, I can barely make out that I'm in a large canal floating gently downstream and spinning slowly in the current. I try to open the door, but it's locked. The water has shorted the electrical system. I remember that I have a glass breaker. It's in the center console. I clench the

tool and give the passenger window a sharp hit. The breaker merely bounces off. I hit it again, with the same result. I try a two-handed swing but only manage to scratch the window. With each failed attempt, the urgency of my situation builds. Water gathers at my feet. I lie down on the seat and try to kick out the window, but my feet just bounce off. By this point, the truck's exterior is mostly submerged and the water is pushing against the window. The water level in the cab is cresting over the seat, and cold water soaks my back and neck.

My toolbox is behind the seat. If I can reach a wrench, surely it would break the window. In order to get to the toolbox, I need to dive for it. I go under but can't pry it loose. I come up for air and go down a second time. In my descent, I become aware of objects floating around me: a squeegee, a foldable windshield cover, a small pillow. The inside of my truck cab has become a giant snow globe, and I'm a captive within it.

While wrestling with the toolbox, my hand bumps against my fire extinguisher. I grasp the handle and cylinder and use it as a battering ram. The extinguisher, too, merely bounces off the glass. The water level has risen, so I'm now swinging the extinguisher

## Escape a Submerged Car

◆ Don't call 911. Responders probably won't get there in time to save you, and a ticking clock is your enemy.

◆ Turn on your interior lights, then unlock your doors. A vehicle's electronics system may work for only a brief time once submerged.

◆ You have about 30 seconds to open a window and swim out before the water pressure pushes the glass against the doorframe, making it tough to open.

◆ If you're too late, break a side window (the windshield is reinforced and too hard to crack). Your last option: Wait for the car to submerge and the inside to fill with water, which will equalize the pressure on the door and allow it to be opened.

CHERYL S. GRANT

underwater. My only hope is to weaken the window through repeated impact. By this time, the water level is about four inches from the cab ceiling, and I have to gulp air, submerge, and take as many swings as my breath will allow. My fear has grown to the point that it's now approaching panic. A part of me just wants to give up rational behavior and scream at the top of my lungs.

They say that in a near-death experience, your life flashes before your eyes. Every thought I've ever had, every feeling I've ever felt, rushes in. I think of all the people I've known, the experiences I've had, and the experiences I'll never have. It takes all my remaining willpower to put those thoughts and feelings aside and concentrate on the task at hand. But then another thought comes to mind, a plea: "God, please help me." An internal voice responds, "You have a little more time. What will you do with it?" It's then that I realize the water level has stopped rising and is holding at two inches from the ceiling of the truck. "I'm going to try harder," I respond.

I continue taking gulps of air, submerging, and swinging the fire extinguisher as hard as I can. With each cycle, the air becomes thinner. It's dark and cold, and I'm exhausted. I contemplate giving up; then I remember that Stormy is under the camper shell. I continue swinging away, and suddenly the impact feels different. I extend my left hand and feel a hole

in the window. I'm going to live! I use the fire extinguisher to break away the rest of the glass and swim out the window. Once at the camper-shell door, I twist the handle and am sickened by the realization that it's locked. I pry my fingers under the shell door and lift with everything I have. The door locks break, and Stormy swims out.

I swim for shore and try to climb up the side of the canal, but the sides are smooth, wet concrete, sloped at a 45-degree angle. I go back to the truck, sit on top, and rest. When I pull Stormy up, I notice that my hands hurt. The tips of my fingers have worn off, I have multiple cuts from ripping the camper-shell door open, and the glass breaker punched a quarter-size hole in my right palm all the way down to the bone. I can't feel or move the middle and index fingers of that hand.

I take the time to think things through. The canal sits below the road and is screened by a wall of cattails, so I can't count on help from a passing motorist. But concrete canals usually have ladders every few hundred yards along their banks. The fog and darkness prevent me from seeing farther than ten yards. I must wait for better visibility to confirm the existence of a ladder. I entered the water at approximately 5 a.m. It will be a long, cold, and painful wait.

I spend the hours until daylight kneeling against Stormy to conserve body heat. The sun finally peeks over the horizon, and at about 8 a.m., the fog lifts. About 70 yards upstream, I see what appears to be a ladder. I must be sure. If I swim that way and there is no ladder, I won't be able to make it back. Then movement catches my eye. A small flock of blackbirds is drinking along the water's edge, near what I'm hoping are the ladder rungs.

I mentally plead for one of them to give me a sign that confirms my hunch. As if on cue, a bird flits up and perches atop a rung one foot above the water.

I step into the water and onto the truck bumper. The cold takes

my breath away. I push off and start to swim. I'm hypothermic, exhausted, and my legs are cramping. When I reach the ladder, I'm too tired to grab the rung just above the water, so I reach for one that I hope is submerged beneath it. When my left hand finds it, I know that Stormy and I will be OK.

Though embarrassed about losing control of my vehicle, I'm pleased that I didn't panic as I went through the problem-solving process. I also recognize that I had some divine help: little birds to show me the way and the gift of more time—not just in the submerged truck, but also to live. ♦

***“The inside  
of my truck has  
become a giant  
snow globe, and  
I’m a captive  
within it.”***

# I Survived an Assault

BY KRIS HERNDON FROM O, THE OPRAH MAGAZINE

**I** was on my way home from work, cutting through the park. On that day, the sun seemed to set faster than usual, and suddenly I found myself walking in the dark. I was less than half a mile from my apartment, but the path would lead me over a bridge, across train tracks, and through an unlit underpass.

Then I heard him—a stranger running alongside me in a half crouch, partly obscured by the bushes. My

mouth went dry; my legs felt like water. But I didn't pick up my pace—instead, I stopped, turned, and faced him. He came out of the bushes and said he'd been watching me "for a long time."

As he walked beside me, I steered us closer to the edge of the park. When we reached the bridge, a train rumbled past, and he seized the moment, lunging at me as his hands closed around my throat. He forced his tongue into my mouth. The self-defense skills I had learned years before kicked in, and I dug my thumb into his eye, hard. And then came the shock: He didn't flinch. He only grew bolder, pulling at my clothes. My mind flashed to a tip from an old guitar teacher: "Press the strings like you're pinching a flea." I put every ounce of my strength into that thumb, and finally he let go.

"Don't be like that," he said.

"It is like that," I replied.

I was shaking with fear, but I looked him straight in the eye and began to back away. I turned to sprint the hell out of there, but then I remembered another self-defense lesson: Never run, because then you're prey. So I walked away—alone—through the pitch-dark tunnel as I punched in 911 with trembling fingers. ♦

## Use Self-Defense Tactics You Already Know

- ◆ **The Seat Belt Elbow:** When you pull your seat belt across your body to unfasten it, you're throwing an elbow. The faster you do this, the more force that elbow has.
- ◆ **The Melon Eye Gouge:** Every time you check a melon for ripeness by holding its sides and pushing into the middle with your thumbs, you're making the same motion as sticking your thumbs in some bad guy's eyes.
- ◆ **The Stair Climber:** Lift a leg to climb stairs, and you're doing what it takes to knee a foe in the groin.

From rd.com

# I Survived a Grizzly Bear Attack

BY TODD ORR

**T**his past October, I took an early morning hike in the Madison Valley in southwest Montana. Knowing that bears are common throughout the area and not wanting to surprise one, I hollered out, "Hey, bear!" every 30 seconds.

About three miles in, I stepped out into a meadow and hollered again. A few more steps and I spotted a grizzly bear with her cubs on the trail at the upper end of the meadow. The sow saw me right away, and they all ran up the trail. But then she stopped, turned, and charged straight for me. I yelled so she would know I was human and hopefully turn back. No such luck. I gave her a full charge of bear spray at about 25 feet. Her momentum carried her right through the orange mist and onto me.

I dived face-first into the dirt and wrapped my arms around the back of my neck for protection. She was on top of me, biting my arms, shoulders, and backpack. The force of each bite was like a sledgehammer with teeth. Over and over she bit me. After what

felt like hours but was merely minutes, she disappeared.

Stunned, I carefully picked myself up. I was able to walk, so I half hiked and half jogged back down the trail toward my truck, three miles below. I had numerous bleeding puncture wounds on my arms and shoulder, but I knew I would survive and thanked God for getting me through this.

***“I could feel her breath on the back of my neck and her front claws digging into my back.”***

About five or ten minutes down the trail, I heard a sound and turned. It was the griz, bearing down at 30 feet. I was lucky after the first attack, but could I survive a second?

Again I protected the back of my neck with my arms and kept tight against the ground to

protect my face and eyes. She slammed down on top of me and bit my shoulder and arms. One bite on my forearm went through to the bone, and I heard a crunch. My hand instantly went numb, and the wrist and fingers were limp and unusable. The sudden pain made me flinch and gasp for breath. That sound triggered a frenzy of bites to my shoulder and upper back. I knew I couldn't move or make a sound again,

## **Know the Bear Essentials**

◆ Grizzlies are aggressive, so if one attacks, play dead, protect your vital organs, and cover the back of your neck and head. The more timid black bear will often run away if you make loud noises or simply yell.

◆ How to tell the difference? Don't go by color. Black bears can be brown or even white. Better to know that grizzlies are larger, have a pronounced shoulder hump, and have smaller ears.

DENISE MANN



so I huddled, motionless. Another couple bites to my head caused a gash to open above my ear, nearly scalping me. The blood gushed over my face and into my eyes. I didn't move. I thought this was the end. She would eventually hit an artery in my neck, and I would bleed out on the trail.

Suddenly she stopped. There was dead silence except for the sound of her heavy breathing and sniffing. I could feel her breath on the back of my neck and her front claws digging into my lower back below my pack, where she stood. I could smell the terrible, pungent odor she emitted. For 30 seconds, she stood there crushing me—my chest smashed into the ground, my forehead in the dirt. And then she was gone.

I tried to peek out, but my eyes were full of blood and I couldn't see. I knew that if she came back a third time, I'd be dead, so I wiped the blood from one eye and looked around. No bear. I stood up and moved quickly down the trail again. Forty-five minutes later, I got into my truck and drove 17 miles to the hospital. It took doctors eight hours to stitch me back together. Most punctures and tears were on my arms and shoulder. A five-inch gash along the side of my head will leave a nasty scar.

The next day, I woke up with dark bruising in the shape of claws across my lower back where the bear had stood on me.

Not my best day, but I'm alive. ◆

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# I Survived A House Fire

BY WALTER LEWIS

AS TOLD TO SARA WAGNER

FROM WANE-TV

*The medicine that Walter Lewis takes for his rheumatoid arthritis causes him to wake up in the middle of the night with a dry mouth. January 15, 2016, was no different. Lewis, of Fort Wayne, Indiana, awoke at 2:30 a.m. needing water. He was walking back upstairs from the kitchen when he heard his American bulldog, Rock.*

**W**hatever Rock was doing down there, it made enough noise for me to go to him. By the time I made it to the bottom of the stairs, he was running up, and he never came up the stairs, no matter what. I think that was his way of telling me, "We've got to go back up."

When I got to the top of the stairs, I turned around and saw a light on, but I didn't remember leaving one on. I walked downstairs again, and that's when I saw fire. I immediately shouted to my wife to wake up and get our three kids. I grabbed a knife and cut out the plastic that covered the window to the porch roof. I then pried open the window and kicked out the screen. I got everybody out on the roof

## Fireproof Yourself

◆ Sleep with the bedroom doors closed. Doors slow a blaze's path and keep out smoke and toxic gases.

◆ If your stairwell is filled with smoke, crawl down backward—you're less likely to lose your balance.

◆ Plan and practice escape routes. Run through them until they're familiar enough to do in the dark and smoke.

and threw a blanket out there so we wouldn't slip off. It was cold, January cold. Then I started screaming for help. But help never came.

Now, I'm scared of heights and have physical issues, what with my rheumatoid arthritis, but I couldn't let my family burn up. So I jumped off the roof. I didn't scoot to the edge; I just jumped and got the wind knocked out of me when I landed.

I found our ladder, placed it against the house, and climbed back up to the roof. I wrapped my arms around my daughter and carried my nine-month-old with my teeth, by his little sleeper.

Then I climbed down the ladder. Once on the ground, I had my little girl hold her brother, and I went back up to the roof to get my other daughter. Then I went back up again and got my wife. I tried to get my dog, but he just disappeared in the black smoke. I never saw him alive again.

I'm no hero. I'm just an ordinary person who'd help anybody. This happened to be the time when I helped my own family. I live to protect my family. Just like Rock—he lived to protect us.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *The fire caused enough damage that the house was condemned by authorities.*

WANE-TV (JANUARY 15, 2016). COPYRIGHT © LIN TELEVISION CORPORATION, A MEDIA GENERAL COMPANY, WANE.COM.

## I Survived a Stampeding Crowd

BY KENDRA GERLACH FROM JEMS: THE JOURNAL OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

**I**t was last August, and as we were about to leave the Crabtree Valley Mall in Raleigh, North Carolina, my sister stepped into a kids' shoe store near the food court. My 15-year-old nephew took the opportunity to refill his drink. While my mother waited near the store with my niece, I went to round up my nephew.

I headed through the large food court and spotted him at the Chick-fil-A counter. That's when I heard what sounded like a train

moving through the food court. Its momentum built around me, and the floor began to shake. Then I saw people emerge from around the corner: scores of people running through the food court, screaming, waving their hands in the air.

It was a stampede, and it was about to swallow up my nephew. I watched the wave of people as it reached him. His drink long forgotten, he had to run or he'd be trampled. So he ran.

And that's when I heard the gunshots

ring out behind me—clear, loud, and unmistakable.

People's belongings—bags, cell phones—were tossed aside, sacrificed in the primal urge to flee to safety. Food and drinks were spilling everywhere, making the floor impossibly slippery. I was being pushed, pulled, and shoved. Someone ripped my dress, and I fell to my knees, my face nearly thrust into a sweeper basket, the kind mall employees use to collect trash off the floors.

I scrambled up and saw my nephew too far ahead for me to reach. I yelled his name, but my voice was swallowed up by the deafening noise of the mob.

"Stay on your feet," I kept telling myself. "Please, God." It was as much of a prayer as I could muster in those moments.

I finally passed through the exit doors, eyes on my nephew. I watched him cross over a bridge connecting the mall to the parking deck. I charged along the bridge as best I could in the crowd. He turned left and took refuge in a concrete alcove. I followed him there and grabbed his arm.

With both of us breathing hard, our conversation was choppy and functional.

"What happened?"

"I don't know."

"Where are they?"

"They went into Stride Rite."

My mom and six-year-old niece had been outside the shoe store waiting for my sister when the stampede overtook them. Big, unknown hands

## Calm Your Inner Panic

◆ Navy SEALs use the 4x4x4x4 breathing technique. Empty your lungs, then breathe in deeply for four seconds, hold for four seconds, exhale for four seconds, and keep your lungs empty for four seconds.

◆ Give yourself a reason to live, says Laurence Gonzales in his book *Deep Survival*. Many survivors "report that they were doing it for someone else (wife, boyfriend, mother, son) back home."

pushed Mom to the ground. She quickly pulled my niece down, and they crawled under a table, which is where my sister found them.

The mob passed by, and suddenly they were alone in this large, open space. Being exposed felt even more dangerous than the stampeding crowd.

Two men ran to them, yelling something. Were these the shooters? One of the men suddenly had Mom in a bear hug, and she was up, helped back to her feet. The men hurried off.

Shortly thereafter, my family appeared outside: Mom, barefoot from having lost her shoes in the melee, and my sister and niece. Mom's breathing was labored, her mouth gaped open, and her chest heaved.

My sister had my mother by the arm and was guiding her. I took her other arm and began repeating over and over, "Everyone is OK. No one is hurt."

As minutes passed, we watched

police arrive and begin blocking the mall entrances, their long guns in tow as they guarded the doors. Ultimately, EMS crews transported eight people to local hospitals for injuries sustained in the stampede, but no shooter was ever found.

No one is certain what triggered the mayhem. Was it an active shooter?

Was it an act of terrorism? We may never know, but one thing is certain: Inciting terror in the public causes a herd mentality to take over. Mob rule becomes the prevailing force. Reactions are visceral. People fight for their own survival. Many will be ruthless in this fight. We were scared for our lives. ♦

JEMS (OCTOBER 26, 2016), COPYRIGHT © 2016 BY KENDRA GERLACH, JEMS.COM.

## I Survived a Tornado

BY CAROLYN BLANTON AS TOLD TO JULIANA LABIANCA

**O**n the day the tornado hit, there was no indication severe weather was on its way—the sky was blue and the sun had been out. The first alert my husband, Jimmy, 67, and I, 65, got came around 9 p.m., from some scrolling text on the TV Jimmy was watching. He ran upstairs to find me in our third-floor bedroom, and we changed the channel from the presidential primary debate I had been watching to our local Pensacola, Florida, station.

No sooner had we found coverage of the tornado than it was on top of us. It was the loudest thing I have ever heard. The bones of the house shook, and the power went out. Pink insulation flew into the room from a trapdoor to the attic, and the wind began to roar through the house, most likely through blown-out windows

and the door to our garage. We had three flights of steps to navigate to get to the relative safety of the first floor. Because the closet down there is wedged underneath a brick staircase, it seemed like the sturdiest place in our town house to wait things out.

I didn't know how or if we would make it down the steps. It felt as if there were no floor underneath me as the wind lifted me off my feet. I gripped the banister and tried to move forward, but this intense pressure held me in place. In those seconds of practical stillness, I could hear everything around me rattling. Everything was moving.

As we reached the last flight of steps, our front door blew out. Shards of glass that looked like crushed ice flew everywhere. Suddenly, a three-foot-long tree branch whipped through the doorframe. It flew over our heads, missing

us by inches. Had we been one step up, it would have impaled us.

We got close to the staircase landing only to hear the loud ripping sound of our garage door coming off. The back wall of the house followed suit and tore off into the darkness outside.

By the time I reached the closet, the tornado had been over us for about a minute. Jimmy pushed me down to the closet floor, but he couldn't get inside himself because of the wind. I gripped Jimmy's arm as the tornado sucked the door open—we never did get it fully shut—and tried to bring Jimmy with it. My knees and scalp were full of glass, but in that moment, I felt no pain. If I had let go, Jimmy would have flown right out the back of the house and into the bay.

"Hold on! Hold on!" he yelled. But there was nothing in this closet to hold on to. We use it to store Christmas decorations.

All of a sudden, Jimmy lifted off his feet like people in tornadoes do in the movies. I thought he was gone. And then everything stopped. He landed on his feet. In those first quiet moments, I couldn't believe it was over. Jimmy said he'd go outside to check. "No," I said. "Don't leave me. Don't leave me."

Our neighbor says the storm lasted four minutes. In that time, four of the twelve town houses in our unit were completely destroyed. Of the houses left standing, ours suffered the most damage. Amazingly, none of us were severely injured. ◆

## Heed the Tornado Siren

◆ If you don't have a basement, hide on the lowest floor in the middle of your home, putting the most walls between you and the tornado. Think interior hallways, under staircases, or inside closets.

◆ Note heavy furniture overhead. A refrigerator or piano on the floor above could fall through the weakened structure—on top of you.

◆ Put on a helmet or hat and cover yourself with a blanket, mattress, or sleeping bag to shield yourself from debris.

LISA MARIE CONKLIN

# I Survived an Armed Kidnapping

BY EARL WOLFF FROM SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

**I**t's a Monday in February, and I'm back home in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Though I'm exhausted from travel, it's my buddy's birthday, so I go over to his girlfriend's house and we spend the night catching up until I say goodbye around midnight. My mother's home is just five minutes away. I had come home to celebrate her birthday.

My 2011 white Range Rover is parked on the street. As I get in and reach for the seat belt, someone yanks my door open. There's a man wearing a black ski mask and pointing an AK-47 inches from my face.

"Give me the keys!" he barks. "And get out of the car!"

I freeze, wondering if my buddy is playing a trick on me. I babble, but words aren't coming out of my mouth.

"Give me your wallet! Your phone!"

I step out and hand over my belongings. Another man with a shotgun rushes toward me and shoves me into the backseat. Two other men with shotguns appear from the side of the house and hop into the car.

The man with the AK-47 gets behind the wheel, and I'm squished between two of the masked men in the backseat. We begin driving around the neighborhood.

"Where's the money at?" one shouts.

"I, I, I don't have any money," I stammer.

"Where's the money at?"

"You can have the car. You can have anything you want," I say. "Just let me get back to my family."

"Why are you lying?" says the man in the front passenger seat. "Lie to me again and I'll kill you."

I can't feel my mouth when I talk. I try to breathe. I think of my mom. I think of God. I stare straight ahead. I'm trembling. Though I can't see their faces, I can tell by their voices that they are young. They ask for my name.

"Earl," I say. "Earl Wolff."

"Wait," one of the men says. "The football player?"

"Yes," I say.

"And you're telling me you have no money?"

One of the men next to me bashes me twice in the right knee with his gun. I'm bleeding.

Where I'm from, a lot of people don't make it out. Of all my friends I grew up with, only one went to college. I've never been arrested; I graduated from college in three and a half years. I'm terrified of getting in trouble. My main motivation: I don't want to ever disappoint my mother.

My parents separated when I was in second grade, and though my father is still in my life, I've always been a mama's boy. She was in the military, and she just retired after 31 years of service. The hardest year of my life was when she deployed overseas.

Playing football, I knew I'd have an opportunity to provide for her. And yet here I am, kidnapped after an innocent night at my friend's house.

My heart is racing, my head spinning. All I'm thinking is, Why is this happening to me? What did I do to deserve this?

My financial adviser never allows me to keep too much money in my bank account. So when one of my captors orders me to withdraw \$10,000, I say it's impossible.

"I only have \$400 in my account," I say. "Look, you have my phone. Open the Wells Fargo app. Here's my

password. You'll see there's just \$400."

"If you're lying," he says, repeating a numbing refrain, "I'll kill you."

When they see I'm not lying, they ask if my friend has money at the house where they picked me up.

"Maybe," I say. "If he does, he'll give you whatever he has."

We drive back to my friend's house. I am led to the door with my hands in the air. I feel the AK-47 pressed against my back. My friend opens the door. He instantly slams it in my face. I now think I am dead. I close my eyes.

***“I am led to  
the door with  
my hands in  
the air. I feel the  
AK-47 pressed  
against my  
back.”***

My captors are panicking. I hear them conspiring, wondering if my friend has called the cops. They rush me back into the vehicle and secure zip ties around my ankles and my arms, which are then tied be-

hind my back. They put an itchy hat over my face. Now we're driving, and I have no idea where we are or what time it is. At some point, two other men get into the vehicle, and five of us are crammed into the backseat. I am exhausted. I try to keep my faith. I try to think of my mom. I am numb, but she is all I have left.

The car jolts to a stop. I'm pulled out of the back and shoved onto the road. Lying on my back, I think, I can't die this way. And then, in the distance, I hear the faintest sound of police sirens. The men hear it too. They

scurry into the car and speed away.

I am left alone. I am alive.

I manage to shimmy out of the arm ties and then slide the hat off my face. I'm surrounded by woods. I can't free my legs because those ties are too tight, so I begin to hop. I hop and hop and hop down the road.

I eventually come across a trailer park. At the second trailer, the lights are on. I can hear the sound of laughter and chatter, so I knock on the door, back up, and wait with my hands up.

"Who is it?" a man barks from behind the door.

"Sir," I say. "I've been in a terrible

### ***As a Last Resort, Consider These Moves***

- ◆ If you're behind the wheel, carefully drive into parked cars, trees—whatever—just to get noticed by others and, hopefully, the police.
- ◆ Make a scene: Yell, scream that the police are coming, or pretend you're sick and faint. Kidnappers rely on your complying with their wishes. When you don't, it ruins their plans, delays their reactions, and, thanks to those few extra seconds, potentially saves your life.
- ◆ If the police arrive, hit the ground, retired New York Police Department detective sergeant and negotiator Wallace Zeins told ABC News. "Stay low. The police are going to shoot for the largest body mass—from the waist up."

situation and I need some help."

He opens the door and stares at me.

"I have just been robbed and kidnapped," I say. "Can you please call the police?"

Another man appears in the doorway and points a handgun at me.

"Look, I play for the Jacksonville Jaguars," I say, pointing to the team-issued shorts I'm wearing.

They don't trust me. I anticipate a shot being fired, so I fall down and roll on the ground. There's a loud bang. Shot fired. I hear the men close the door, and I realize I can still feel my body. The shot was likely a warning to scare me or anyone else who might have been lurking in the shadows.

But I am alone. I am on the ground. I'm sobbing.

I suddenly get a rush of adrenaline. I manage to get my legs out of the ankle restraints and start running. I see an intersection. I stand in the grass as cars pass by. I wave my hands, asking for someone to stop, but no one does.

I run to a gas station. It's lit up, but nobody is there. The pay phone has a broken cord hanging from it. I crumble to the ground, defeated again, when a couple pulls in.

"Are you OK?" the woman asks.

"I was robbed and kidnapped," I say. "Please, I just need some help."

"That's all you need me to do?" she says in a maternal way. "We are going to wait for the police to get here."

"Yes," I say. "Please. Thank you."

Help, finally, is on the way. R



# Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



*"It's a middle-aged potbellied baldo."*

**WHAT DO WE WANT?** An iPhone for fat fingers! When do we want it? BOW! **▼@JOBLESS4EYES**

**"SO HOW'S EVERYTHING** going?" the doctor asks his patient, George.

"Great," says George. "I've found religion. God knows I have poor eyesight, so he's fixed it so that when I get up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom—poof!—the light goes on, and then—poof!—the light goes off when I'm done."

Later in the day, the doctor calls George's wife. "I'm in awe of George's relationship with God," he says. "Is it true that he gets up during the night and—poof!—the light goes on in the bathroom, and then—poof!—the light goes off?"

George's wife sighs. "No," she says. "It means he's peeing in the refrigerator again."

Source: cnet.com

**A PSYCHIC** tells a frog, "You will meet a pretty young woman who will

want to know everything about you."

"Great!" says the frog. "Will I meet her at a party?"

"No. Next term, in biology class."

Source: dribbleglass.com

**DID YOU KNOW** that the male sea horse has the baby? And I was thinking, Why don't they just call that the female sea horse?

Comedian **JIM GAFFIGAN**

## KNOW YOUR \$10 WORDPLAYS!

### **Paraprosdokian:**

*A sentence or phrase that ends in an unexpected way.* For instance:

"I want to die peacefully in my sleep, like my grandfather, not screaming and yelling like the passengers in his car."

"Hospitality is making your guests feel as if they're at home, even if you wish they were."

**Portmanteau:** *A clever word created by blending two other words.*

Examples:

An individual who continues talking on his or her phone so as to be rude to others: *Cellfish*.

The sound of one person applauding after everyone else has stopped: *Afterclap*.

**Mondegreen:** *A famous lyric that is often misheard.* Here are two of our favorites:

Actual lyric from the Rolling Stones song

### **"Beast of Burden":**

"I'll never be your beast of burden." Mondegreen: "I'll never leave your pizza burning."

Actual lyric from the Elton John song "Tiny Dancer": "Hold me closer, tiny dancer." Mondegreen: "Hold me closer, Tony Danza."

**Aptronym:** *A name that is perfectly suited to its owner; think the poet William Wordsworth.* Here are more real examples:

A Los Angeles lawyer is blessed with a name that puts fear in the hearts of her opponents: Sue Yoo.

An Indiana hunter was shot in the foot after his dog stepped on the man's shotgun. The dog's name: Trigger.

**Spoonerism:** *A humorous reversal of sounds in two words.* Examples:

"Don't put all your begs in one ask it."

**"Psychologist:** A person who pulls habits out of rats."

**Tom Swiftly:** *A made-up quote paired with a punny adverb, named after the main character in a series of old adventure books that overused adverbs.*

Examples:

"I think the lobotomy went well," Tom said absentmindedly.

"I really hate this weather," said Tom anticlimactically.

**Neologism:** *A newly coined word or expression.* In need of the perfect word? Make it up, like these:

The color you turn after finding half a grub in the fruit you're eating: *Caterpal/or*.

The last half inch of stick deodorant that won't turn up out of the tube and thus cannot be used without inducing lacerations: *Deodorend*.

Your funny joke or quote might be worth \$\$\$ . For details, go to page 7 or rd.com/submit.



With a handful of videos,  
Lt. Florence Choe helped shape  
her daughter's life—even after  
she lost her own

# A SOLDIER'S LAST BEDTIME Story

BY KENNETH MILLER

WHEN THE PACKAGE ARRIVED in the mail, Cdr. Chong "Jay" Choe stared at it in shock. This was the fifth delivery since his wife had been shipped overseas. On previous occasions, he'd brought the padded envelopes to his three-year-old daughter, Kristin, as soon as he saw the return address. She would eagerly help him open the seals, and they'd watch the DVDs together right away. But this delivery was different. Florence must have sent the disc shortly before the gunman opened fire, he thought. He wondered what she'd chosen for the reading that would be her last gift to her daughter. He could feel the square plastic case inside the pouch. But he couldn't bring himself to pull it out, let alone watch it. So the package sat on his desk for weeks, unopened.

*Kristin (right)  
excitedly awaited  
each package  
from her mother,  
Lt. Florence Choe  
(left).*





JAY AND FLORENCE had met at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, where he was doing his internship in general surgery. Shy and unassuming but fiercely disciplined, Jay hit the hospital gym nearly every day early in the morning before beginning his rounds. The only other person in the room at that hour was a small, beautiful woman who always wore headphones and seemed intent on avoiding eye contact. He ran into her again at a staff meeting and learned that she was a medical service corps officer named Florence Bacong. When he gathered his courage and asked her to dinner, she blurted, "No!" and told him she had other plans. Sensing wariness, he tried another tack: "How about lunch this Sunday after church?" To his amazement, she agreed.

Over sandwiches, he learned that Florence was the daughter of a Navy cook; her parents were from the Philippines, and she'd grown up in San Diego. She was the first in her family to earn a bachelor's degree, which she had topped off with a master's in public health. Two days after the 9/11 attacks, she'd followed her father into the service. Despite her manicured nails and well-coiffed hair, she shared Jay's taste for camping and hiking.

Their romance bloomed on the trails of Virginia's Great Falls Park.

They were married in June 2004 and were deployed to Okinawa, Japan, soon afterward. At Camp Hansen, Jay was assigned to the Third Marine Logistics Group as a general medical officer, while Florence became officer in charge of the Headquarters and Service Battalion, overseeing nearly 100 sailors and Marines.

Kristin was born in November of the following year. The joys and stresses of parenthood—compounded by the demands of their jobs and the challenges of

living abroad—tightened the couple's bond. Jay marveled at Florence's gung ho performance as a mother and an officer, but it stung him when the strain of balancing both roles made her cry. In 2007, as their tour neared its end, he applied to do his residency at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, where his in-laws could provide a support network. And then, in May 2008, Lt. Florence Choe was called for duty in Afghanistan.

FLORENCE AND JAY'S immediate concern was how she could remain in her little girl's life from more than 7,500 miles away. Soon after landing at Bagram Airfield, she

————— “ —————

*Their immediate concern was how Florence could remain in her little girl's life from more than 7,500 miles away.*

—————



*Florence organized the UTR library/video room at Camp Mike Spann, Afghanistan.*

found the answer: United Through Reading (UTR). Run by a San Diego-based nonprofit, the program enables military parents to be recorded on DVD reading storybooks to their faraway children. UTR was founded in 1989 by Betty J. Mohlenbrock, the wife of a naval flight surgeon who was deployed when their daughter was a baby; after his return, the child didn't recognize him, and their relationship had to be painstakingly rebuilt. Mohlenbrock, an educator who'd seen children lagging at school because no one read to them at home, designed the program as a way to sustain family closeness while boosting literacy.

For her first DVD for Kristin, Florence selected *Cinderella*. When the package arrived in San Diego, it was as if the Fairy Godmother herself was inside. Jay popped the DVD into the player and settled on the floor with Kristin while her grandparents sat on the sofa, craning their heads toward the TV. When Florence appeared on the screen, Kristin yelled, "Mommy!" and ran to kiss her face. Kristin sat rapt throughout the performance, then demanded a replay. Over the next few weeks, she begged to watch the video every evening—and sometimes several times a day. Florence and Kristin had, indeed, been united through reading.

From Bagram, Florence flew to Camp Mike Spann, a coalition outpost within an Afghan National Army base near the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif. Her assignment was to help organize administrative logistics at a new medical station for troops and civilians. In her off-hours, she got to work establishing a local branch of UTR. She lobbied camp authorities to set aside a small room for a library, which she furnished with handmade shelves, donated recording equipment, and books collected through an e-mail drive.

Florence's next DVD, reading *Good Night, Gorilla*, was an even bigger hit. Kristin watched it over and over; she made Jay or her grandparents read her the book at bedtime as well. Several weeks later came *The Cat in the Hat*, followed by *Llama Llama Red Pajama*. Between deliveries, Florence checked in via Skype whenever she could, but the connection was often wonky, and Kristin would drift away midconversation. The readings, however, held the toddler's attention with an almost hypnotic force. Like any young child, Jay thought, she thrived on repetition and ritual; the comfort of these virtual visits with her mother was heightened by their utter predictability and the gentle rhythms of the stories. The element of control was

another factor: Instead of waiting for a call, Kristin could summon Mommy's face and voice whenever she chose.

The DVDs were a balm to Jay as well. The tenderness of Florence's gaze, and the avidity of Kristin's response, provided a countercurrent to the worries that come with military life.

It felt deeply soothing to tap into that circuit of love.

In January 2009, when Florence came home on leave, Kristin climbed into her lap as if she'd never been away. The family spent a week in Hawaii, reveling in the sun, the sea, and one another before Florence

boarded a plane back to the war zone.

**T**WO MONTHS LATER, on March 27, Jay's department chair told him the admiral wanted to see him. Jay's first thought was that he'd bungled some task and was due for a dressing down. But when he saw the faces of the dozen people gathered in the wood-paneled office, he knew the news would be infinitely worse. "I'm so sorry," the admiral said.

It had happened when Florence and three friends were on their afternoon run. As they jogged along the base's perimeter fence, an Afghan soldier swung his AK-47 toward the group. The first bullet passed through Navy captain Kim Lebel's arm; the

————— “ —————

*Instead of waiting  
for a call, Kristin  
could summon  
Mommy's face and  
voice whenever  
she chose.*

—————



### HEY, IT'S DAD!

The Reader's Digest Foundation, via its R.E.A.D. Together campaign, has joined forces with United Through Reading to promote the benefits of parent involvement in childhood literacy. Now operating out of more than 200 command posts and USOs around the world, UTR has worked with nearly two million men, women, and children. To learn more, or to donate, go to [unitedthroughreading.org](http://unitedthroughreading.org).

second struck Florence's thigh. Navy lieutenant junior grade Francis Toner, 26, charged the shooter, giving his life in an attempt to save the others. The assailant stood over Florence and finished her off before turning his weapon on himself. No one knew whether he was a Taliban infiltrator or had some other grievance.

A chaplain accompanied Jay to his in-laws' house. As Florence's parents wept, Jay carried Kristin down the street. "Can we visit

Mommy in heaven?" she asked. "No, sweetie," Jay told her. "She's an angel now, watching over us." Kristin hugged him tighter and buried her face in his shoulder.

Florence was only 35 when she was buried at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego, on a hillside with a view of the sea. The last DVD arrived a few weeks after she died. When Jay finally mustered the strength to watch it, he discovered that the disc had been damaged in

transit. He stared through his tears at the blank blue screen—an emblem of all he and his family had lost.

**F**OR A LONG TIME, Jay and Kristin visited Florence's resting place frequently, bringing a blanket, snacks, and cards that Kristin had drawn herself. But inevitably, life began to pull them in new directions. They moved in with Jay's mother, who relocated from Maryland to lend a hand. The DVDs wound up stashed in a closet. Jay couldn't bear to watch them anymore, and Kristin eventually stopped asking to.

Today, Jay is married again, to a fellow surgeon. Kristin, now 11, has two younger sisters—a 23-month-old, Dana, and a newborn baby. Yet Florence remains a presence in the lives of the family members she left behind. Like her mother, Kristin is outwardly prim, with a tomboyish streak just below the surface; on fishing trips with her dad, she insists on being the one to gut the catch. She also inherited Florence's studiousness, her focus, and something of her toughness and adaptability. She recently won the local Rotary Club's "Character Counts" essay

contest with an entry that described her time of bereavement. "Losing my mom made me feel different from the other kids," Jay remembers Kristin writing. "But it taught me perseverance."

As for the storytelling DVDs, Jay keeps them tucked away on a shelf in the closet. He plans to present them to Kristin as a keepsake someday. "The time will have to be right," he says, "for her, for me, for the family. I have no idea when that will be. But when she's older, I want her to have those treasures. None of us ever knew how significant they would be in our lives."

Yet in a sense, the legacy of those DVDs—of the gift that a soldier-mother created for her daughter—is right there in the family living room. In the evenings, when the adults take out their medical journals and Kristin cracks a volume of Harry Potter, little sister Dana invariably climbs into her elder sibling's lap holding a picture book. "Kristin loves to read to her," Jay says. "When Dana is old enough for *Good Night, Gorilla*, we'll really have come full circle." R

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To watch a UTR video tribute to  
Lt. Florence Choe, go to [rd.com/utr](http://rd.com/utr).



## ANIMAL ATTRACTION

It takes me a while to warm up to new people,  
but I will kiss a dog I just met on the mouth.

@PRIMAWESOME (MIKE PRIMAVERA)



# That's Outrageous!

FIVE CLUBS WE'D LIKE TO JOIN

1

## THE SHIRLEY CLUB

As Shirley Temple rose to fame as America's curly-haired sweetheart in the 1930s, her first name became hugely popular, only to glide into obscurity along with the good ship *Lollipop*. Fortunately, there are

still enough of her namesakes to fill the Shirley Club. Members hold social events and sign their correspondence "In Shirley friendship." The lone rule: that you answer to the name Shirley (even if you spell it Shirlee or Shirlie).



2

## THE PROCRASTINATORS'

### CLUB OF AMERICA

It's never too late to join this group. The club was formed in 1956, and its members receive a circular called *Last Month's Newsletter*. One of the group's causes was a peace march on Philadelphia's City Hall in 1966. Its purpose: to end the War of 1812. (It was successful.)

3

## DENSA—THE LOW IQ SOCIETY

You've heard of Mensa, the club for geniuses? This ain't it. A riff on the smarty-pants set, it's for the 98 percent of us who don't qualify for Mensa.

You can take a gag test online. Sample question: Do they have a 4th of July in England? Answer: Yes. It comes after the 3rd of July.

4

## THE DULL MEN'S CLUB

The club's estimated 5,000 members are

devoted to all that is mundane. One of their many mottoes: "Celebrating the ordinary." The group has chapters in America and Great Britain, and they celebrate rollicking holidays such as Clean Out Your Fridge Day and Fill Your Stapler Day.

5

## THE ORDER OF THE OCCULT

HAND In 1965, a police reporter penned this overwrought sentence: "It was as if an occult hand had reached down from above and moved the players like pawns upon some giant chessboard." Thus was born the Order of the Occult Hand. The goal of its journalist members was to sneak a phrase featuring "occult hand" past their editors and into as many articles as possible. The group was exposed in 2004 but has subsequently chosen a new—and secret—purple phrase. R

Nine clever—no, BRILLIANT!—fixes to some truly vexing problems

# Why Didn't I Think of That?!

BY ANDY SIMMONS



## FOR SHE'S A JOLLY GOOD STEALER!

**Here's the problem:** A Dutch department store had suffered countless petty thefts, but threats of arrest didn't deter the shoplifters.

**Why didn't I think of that?!** The store switched to a more painful deterrent: public shaming.

The management hired a marching band, bought flowers, and made signs celebrating a "10,000th shoplifter." Then, when security spotted a woman on the in-store cameras nicking some clothes, employees descended on her, jubilantly

saluting her light-fingered ways. The embarrassed woman stood stunned amid the fracas. Then she pulled the party hat off her head, took a piece of "10,000th shoplifter" cake, and made her escape, the band in hot pursuit.

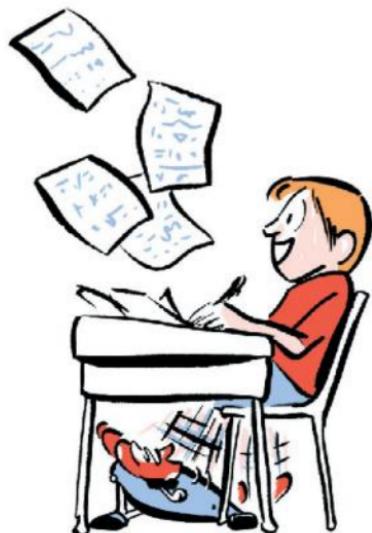
## IT USED TO BE ALGEBRA THAT MADE US SWEAT

### Here's the problem:

Eighth graders fidget by nature. Add math to the equation, and you'll have kids bouncing off the walls, passing notes, and throwing spitballs—anything but concentrating on schoolwork.

**Why didn't I think of that?!** A North Carolina math teacher installed small bike-pedal exercisers—think cycling machines without the seats or handles—under students' desks with the

hope that the kids would work off some nervous energy and stay focused. "Before, they were drumming on their desks; they were touching other people," the teacher, Bethany Lambeth, told WRAL in North Carolina. "They don't do that anymore. Their feet are getting the movement out. There has been a huge



increase in the quality of our students' work and a decrease in the amount of missing work."

## WALKIE-TALKIE FOR HIRE

### Here's the problem:

Actually, this story centers on two problems: Americans' lack of exercise and their increasing sense of social isolation. (The National Science Foundation reported in 2004 that 25 percent of Americans say they lack any meaningful companionship.)

**Why didn't I think of that?!** Chuck McCarthy has a solution to both. He walks people. No, he doesn't use a leash, but

for \$7 a mile, McCarthy will amble about the streets of Los Angeles with clients, many of whom simply want a pleasant chat or a sympathetic ear to bend, all while getting a little exercise. McCarthy, an "underemployed" actor, told the *Guardian*, "I try to listen more than talk." Feel free to laugh, but business is brisk enough that he has had to hire five apprentice walkers. After all, venting to a human

is a lot more satisfying than flaming strangers online. "Tweeting about it and getting no response just makes you feel sadder," says McCarthy.



## ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

### Here's the problem:

Russian roads are notoriously dangerous, resulting in more than 28,000 deaths annually, despite



the efforts of many local governments to slow down speeding drivers.

**Why didn't I think of that?!** Of course, they had never hired topless women to stand on the sides of roads. These "road safety assistants," as they're euphemistically referred to in the town of Nizhni



Novgorod, hold signs with the posted speed limit, hoping drivers will slow down and take a closer look. And—this may be hard to believe—they're getting noticed. "It's a super thing. Amazing," one enthusiastic male driver told the *Mirror*. "I'd like to see more of this by the road." We're sure he would, and so would many pedestrians, who say intersections are safer now that drivers are taking their feet off the gas to check out the ... speed limit.

## GOOSING THE GOOSE-STEPPERS

### Here's the problem:

Every year, neo-Nazis parade through the German town of Wunsiedel to celebrate the birthday of Adolf Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, who was buried in his family's plot there before his remains were disinterred in 2011 and cremated. And every year, Wunsiedelians are less than thrilled.

**Why didn't I think of that?!** The German anti-Nazi group Right against Right hatched a plan to

surreptitiously turn the 2014 march into an anti-Nazi walkathon. For every meter the skinheads walked, local businesses and residents donated 10 euros (\$12.50) to



EXIT-Deutschland, an organization devoted to reforming neo-Nazis. News of the campaign helped line the march with people ironically cheering on the 250 Nazis while holding signs that read, "If only the Führer knew," reported vice.com. When it was over, the parade had raised over \$12,500 for EXIT-Deutschland. Tweeted one German: "This is how one should fight neo-Nazis—and not by behaving even more violently than them."

## GONE FISHING ... FOR HELP

### Here's the problem:

A gas and utility company working on a Detroit street dug a 4-foot-wide, 15-foot-long, several-foot-deep hole—and then inexplicably left it there. Meanwhile, thanks to a broken water main nearby, the hole quickly filled with water. For three years, community members asked the city for help, but they came up empty (unlike the hole).

**Why didn't I think of that?** Neighbors turned their urban crater into a glorious fishing spot by filling it with carp, bluegills, and even goldfish. One neighbor told fox2detroit.com, "Why not do something positive out of something negative in our community?" And thanks to the

publicity, says the *Detroit Free Press*, the leak was fixed, the hole patched, and the fish placed in a bathtub in preparation for their new home in a community garden pond.



## LET'S TAKE THIS OFF-LINE

### Here's the problem:

You've discovered that your beloved teenager—the child you rocked to sleep and whose boo-boos you kissed—trolled someone online. Do you A) explain the error of his ways, B) take away his devices, or ...

**Why didn't I think of that?** ... C) humiliate him in front of his friends.

That, says KCAL in Los Angeles, is what one anonymous mother decided to do. In an effort to teach her son the lesson of all lessons, she took over his Facebook account and left this post: "Hi, this is B----'s mom. I wanted to let all of you know that he is no longer allowed on Facebook due to choices he made. He

posted on Facebook personal information about someone that was rude. Because he chose to make her mad by spreading personal information, I thought he should know how it feels when the tables are turned. He wet the bed until he was 8." Making matters worse for the boy, some of his friends "liked" the post.

## LUCKILY, SHE GETS MILEAGE POINTS

### Here's the problem:

To stem violence in the local jails, the Santa Clara County, California, sheriff wanted to install



security cameras. But the county informed her that it would take two years and up to \$20 million to go through a process "that includes seeking bids from vendors, reviewing construction documents, and testing security equipment," reported the *Mercury News*.

**Why didn't I think of that?!** Sheriff Laurie Smith responded by taking a shopping trip to Costco, where she bought 12 household security cameras for

\$761.24, charging them to her own American Express card. The cameras, which were set up in the jail's maximum-security housing pod, "will capture views of the multipurpose room, the exercise yard, and each of the 50 or more cell doors," wrote the *Mercury News*. "There cannot be a delay because of bureaucracy. That's unacceptable," said Smith, who expects to replace the Costco cameras with the county's—whenever they arrive.

## PEE-U

### Here's the problem:

When you gotta go, you gotta go, even if you can't find a bathroom. In San Francisco, public urination was leaving a disgusting stench and offensive runoff that cost the city \$2 million a year to clean up, stated local news station KPIX.

**Why didn't I think of that?!** How about a paint job for the most problematic areas? According to the manufacturer, a product called Ultra-Ever Dry "repels water, some oils ... and other liquids." That last part—"other liquids"—is the key. Thanks to Ultra-Ever Dry,

urine bounces off painted walls—and back onto the offender. Is it working? "So far, so good," San Francisco Public Works spokesperson Rachel Gordon told sfgate.com. Philadelphia is conducting a trial run in its subway stations. R

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## A REASON TO BE OPTIMISTIC

There are more museums in the United States than there are McDonald's and Starbucks combined.

Source: *Washington Post*



# Laugh Lines

EXERCISE RESTRAINT

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I weigh 240 pounds, and that is not OK. You know when the doctor gives you a rule of thumb for how much you should weigh? I'm pretty sure it's not "your age plus 200 pounds."

LOUIS CK

I belong to a gym now. Well, let me rephrase that: I don't belong there at all, but I go.

TED ALEXANDRO

You can't go from my level of activity into a marathon. Maybe a good start for me is not taking the car to get the mail.

MEGAN MOONEY

I'm on a strict running program. I started yesterday. I've missed only one day so far.

KEVIN NEALON

A gym is just a PE class that you pay to skip.

LISA LANDRY

My new fitness goal is to just not be slower than the Google walking directions.

SEAN DONNELLY





**I**T WAS A DAY IN LATE JUNE, gray and depressing, with clouds hanging low. My husband and I were driving to Nova Scotia, Canada, for a much-needed vacation. We traveled glumly, hoping to reach rest and dinner before the rain came. Suddenly, on a lonely stretch of highway, the storm struck. Cascades of water shut us in, making driving impossible. We pulled off onto

the shoulder of the road and stopped.

Then, as though someone had turned off a celestial faucet, it ended. A thin radiance, like a spray of gold, spread from the clouds. Every blade of grass was crystalline as the sun flashed on trembling drops. The very road shone, and a rainbow arched across the sky. It was as though this beam of color had been built for us alone. We could hardly speak for awe and joy.

# Overtaken by Joy

BY ARDIS  
WHITMAN

A READER'S DIGEST  
CLASSIC

A friend of mine has described a similar experience. She had walked out on a lonely beach at twilight. It was a time of grief for her, and loneliness was what she wanted. Offshore, across the darkening sea, she made out the image of an anchored fishing boat, and in it the figure of a man. My friend told me that after a while, she felt an intense and glowing sense of oneness with that

silent figure. It was as though sea and sky and night and those two solitary human beings were united in a kind of profound identity. "I was overtaken by joy," she said.

Most of us have experienced such lighted moments, when we seem to understand ourselves and the world and, for a single instant, know the loveliness of living beings. But these moments vanish quickly, and we are

almost embarrassed to admit that they have ever been.

However, psychologist Abraham Maslow of Brandeis University embarked some years ago on a study of average individuals and found that a great many report such experiences—"moments of great awe; moments of the most intense happiness or even rapture, ecstasy, or bliss."

In his files, for example, is the story of a young mother. Getting breakfast for her family, she hurried about the kitchen pouring orange juice and coffee, spreading jam on toast. The children were chattering; the sun streamed in on their faces; her husband was playing with the littlest one. All was usual. But as she looked at them, she was suddenly so overcome by how much she loved them that she could scarcely speak for joy.

Here, too, is the story of a man who remembers a day when he went swimming alone and recalls "the crazy, childish joy with which he cavorted in the water like a fish." He was so overwhelmed by his great happiness at being "so perfectly physical" that he shouted again and again with joy.

Apparently almost anything may serve as the impetus of such a feeling—starshine on new snow; a sudden field of daffodils; a moment in marriage when hand reaches out to hand in

the realization that this other person speaks as you speak, feels as you feel. Joy may wait, too, just beyond danger when you have enough to face a situation and live it out. Whatever the source, such experiences provide the most memorable moments of life.

Joy is much more than happiness.

It is "exultation of spirit," says the dictionary, "gladness; delight; a state of felicity." Awe and a sense of mystery are part of it; so are humility and gratitude. Suddenly we are keenly aware of every living thing—every leaf, flower, cloud, the mayfly hovering over the pond, the crow cawing in the treetop. "O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!" cried the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay in such a moment.

The most important thing in these peak experiences, says Maslow, is the feeling of these people that they had really glimpsed "the essence of things, the secret of life, as if veils had been pulled aside."

We see, too, the unity of things—a dazzling vision of the kinship we all have with one another and with the universal life around us. Everyone who has ever had such a moment has noted this quality of "melting into."

The sad thing is that it happens to most of us so rarely. As we grow older, our lives become buried under the



*Joy is the  
feeling that we  
have touched the  
hem of something  
far beyond  
ourselves.*

pressures of the workaday world. Joy is not likely to come to us when we are going round and round the tormenting circle of our own busyness.

Instead, it seems that when life's transiency and frailty are omnipresent, what we have grows sweeter. I remember finding myself seated beside an old gentleman on a train some years ago. He sat quietly looking out the window. His eyes searched each leaf, each cloud, the lines of passing houses, the upturned faces of children watching the train go by.

"It is beautiful, isn't it?" I ventured at last, intrigued by his absorption.

"Yes," he said. Then he smiled and waved a hand at a passing hay wagon. "See," he said. "Hay going to the barn." And he made it sound as though there could be no greater event than a wagonload of hay on its way to the mow.

He saw the question in my face. "You think it's strange," he said, "that just a hay wagon means so much. But you see, last week the doctor told me I have three months to live. Ever since, everything has looked so beautiful, so important to me. You can't imagine how beautiful! I feel as if I had been asleep and had only just woken up."

Perhaps we're more likely to experience a moment of joy if we can admit there is more to life than we have fathomed; if we can acknowledge a world greater than our own. To be sure, the experience of joy is not necessarily religious in a conventional way. But a characteristic is the feeling people

have that they have touched the hem of something far beyond themselves.

In my own life, there was a moment of special exaltation. En route by plane to the Midwest, we were flying at a high altitude, and a continent of shining clouds spread beneath us. Often, before and since, I have watched these radiant towers and hillocks of cloud go by. But this time, the scene was haunted by a strange joy so penetrating that the plane seemed not to be there.

I thought of myself as living and walking in a land like that, and I knew in a flash of deep illumination that there was in the universe a light, a stuff, a web, a substance in company with which one would never be lonely. The experience left the compelling certainty that we dwell safely in a universe far more personal, far more human, far more tender than we are.

What if these moments of joy are given to us to reveal that this is the way we are meant to live? What if the clarity of joy is the way we should be seeing all the time? To many people, it seems almost wicked to feel this radiance in a world threatened as ours is. But most generations have known uncertainty and challenge and peril. The more grievous the world, the more we need to remember the luminous beauty at the center of life. Our moments of joy are proof that at the heart of darkness an unquenchable light shines. R

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This article originally appeared in the  
April 1965 issue of *Reader's Digest*.

# Family Vacations

## North Dakota

*North Dakota  
LEGENDARY*

### 2017 TRAVEL GUIDE



North Dakota invites you to make Legendary family memories. Enjoy family-friendly experiences like Theodore Roosevelt National Park, historic forts, museums and vibrant cities with excellent dining and lodging choices.

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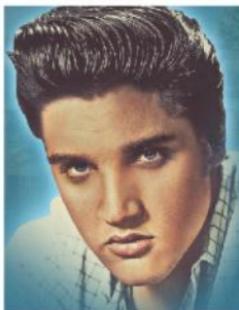
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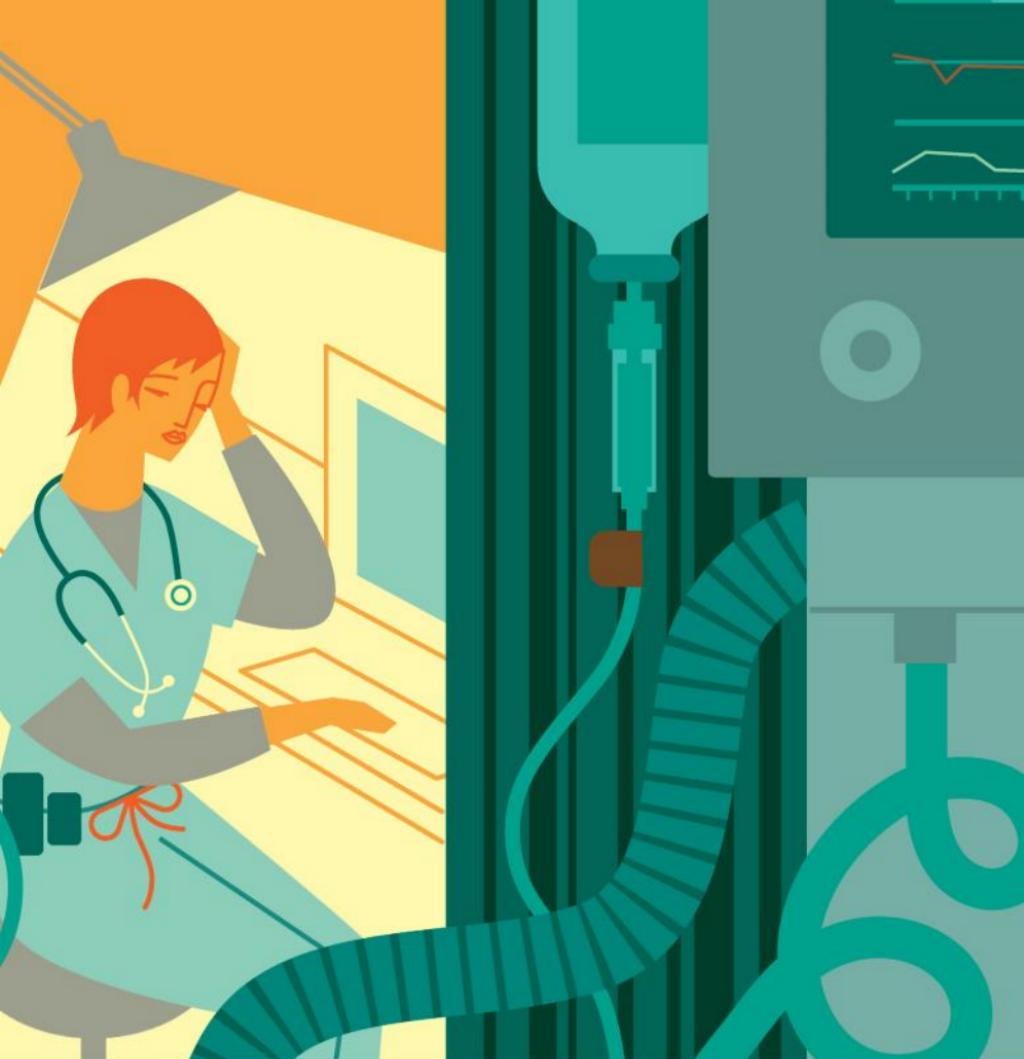
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Doctors and nurses make deadly errors every day and are reprimanded for them. But don't they also deserve some support?

# FATAL MISTAKES

BY SARAH KLIFF FROM VOX.COM



**KIM HIATT HAD WORKED** as a nurse for 24 years when she made her first medical error: She gave a frail infant ten times the recommended dosage of a medication. The baby died five days later.

Kim's mistake was an unnecessary tragedy. But what happened next was an unnecessary tragedy, too: Seven months after the error, Kim killed herself.

"She fell apart," her mother, Sharon Crum, says. "I suppose it would be the same thing you would feel if you felt you were at fault for a child's death."

**THIS IS A STORY** about Kim Hiatt, the mistake she made, and how she struggled with that tragedy. It is also a story about an open secret in American medicine: Medical errors kill more people each year than plane crashes, terrorist attacks, and drug overdoses combined. And there's collateral damage that can go unnoticed: Every day, doctors and nurses quietly live with those they have wounded or even killed. Their ghosts creep into exam rooms, and seeing new patients can reopen old wounds.

It's easy to write off the anguish of these health-care providers as insignificant next to that of the patients and families they've hurt. They made horrible, harmful mistakes. Maybe they *should* feel bad. But clinicians don't exist in a vacuum. In the wake of an error, they have to keep seeing patients and performing surgeries. If they don't regain confidence in their skills, other patients could suffer. Getting past this danger zone will require a shift in medicine, away from a culture that sees mistakes as unspeakable and toward one that recognizes that medical professionals suffer tremendously when they inadvertently run afoul of their sacred oath: "First, do no harm."

"The best word I can use to describe that day, and really the first couple of

days, is *isolated*," says Rick van Pelt, an anesthesiologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston who nearly killed a patient during a routine surgery in 1999. "There was no way to communicate effectively what had happened. What do you say when you almost killed a patient?"

## MEDICINE RAN IN THE FAMILY

**K**im Hiatt's mother, Sharon Crum, was a nurse. Her father, Dan Hiatt, was a physician. He moved the family from West Virginia to Seattle for his residency at the University of Washington when Kim was a few months old.

It seemed like a natural choice when Kim decided to pursue a nursing degree at Pacific Lutheran University in Seattle. In 1986, she accepted an entry-level position on Seattle Children's Hospital's toddler floor, where she saw young patients with serious medical conditions that ranged from cancer to cystic fibrosis.

Kim fell in love with the profession—and her patients. She specialized in taking care of children who were dying and helping their families with the bereavement process. "She used to write poetry about her patients," Crum says. "She just got so involved with them. She loved little kids. She was good at her job, and she knew it."

"You are such a wonderful advocate for your patients and families," Kim's supervisor, Cathie Rea, wrote in



Kim's 2009 annual performance review. But in her 2010 review, Rea raised the possibility that Kim might care too much.

"Kim, you do a great job at the bedside with your patients and families," wrote Rea, who ran Seattle Children's Hospital's intensive care units. "You are able to connect with families in a way that makes them feel valued and special. One of your peers commented that they would hate to see you get hurt by giving so much of yourself to families."

## THE "SECOND VICTIM" CRISIS

**A**lbert Wu, MD, began studying medical errors in the late 1980s, as a newly minted medical school graduate. He'd been told to "study what you know." He knew, from firsthand experience, that

his fellow residents made mistakes, sometimes serious ones.

"Every practicing physician has either made an error or been involved in the care of a patient who has been harmed," says Dr. Wu, who directs the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Services and Outcome Research.

A new line of research that Dr. Wu began found that many health-care providers experience emotional trauma in the wake of a serious medical error. One 2009 study found that two thirds reported "extreme sadness" and "difficulty concentrating." More than half experienced depression; one third said they avoided caring for similar patients afterward, for fear of making a similar mistake. Some consider suicide—and a smaller fraction, like Kim Hiatt, take their own lives.

In May 1989, Dr. Wu mailed a survey to 254 residents training at major

hospitals in the United States about whether they'd made medical errors and, if so, how they coped. A total of 114 residents returned the survey and admitted they had made at least one significant mistake. Some of them said the errors helped them get better at their jobs by, for example, making them more careful about checking data. On the other hand, 13 percent said they became more secretive about their errors.

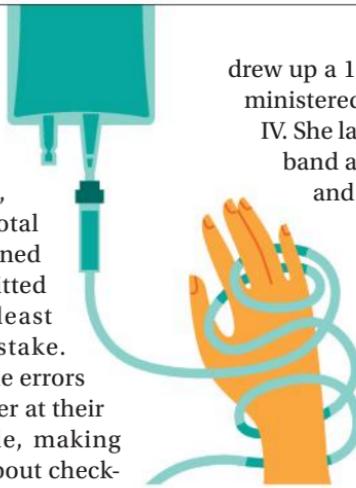
But the most common thread was that residents just didn't know what to do. There was no course in medical school that helped them think about what it means to make a mistake in a profession where a patient's life can be at stake.

"Some of them had caused deaths," Dr. Wu says. "People were pretty devastated, but they were not talking to anyone about it."

## A FATAL ERROR—AND TWO DEATHS

**A**round 9:30 a.m. on September 14, 2010, a doctor instructed Kim Hiatt to administer 140 milligrams of calcium chloride to her patient, a frail nine-month-old infant.

Kim did the math in her head: Thinking that there were 10 milligrams of medication in every milliliter, she



drew up a 14-milliliter dose and administered it through the patient's IV. She labeled the patient's name band and syringe with the time and size of the dosage.

Around lunchtime, another doctor noticed the patient's heart rate spiking. A nurse drew a blood sample that showed her calcium levels to be elevated. Kim discussed the dosage with another nurse and worked through her math.

The other nurse pointed out the error: There were 100 milligrams of medication for every milliliter, not 10. Kim should have administered only 1.4 milliliters. She had given the patient 14.

Kim was terrified. "I've given too much calcium," the nurse, Michelle Asplin, recalled Kim having said.

Kim entered a note into the patient's record: "Miscalculated in my head the correct [dosage] according to the mg/ml. First med error in 25 [years] of working here. I am simply sick about it."

As soon as Cathie Rea, Kim's supervisor, read the note, she escorted Kim to her car and told her to leave the campus. Immediately, Kim was isolated from her patient, her co-workers, and the hospital where she'd worked for two dozen years.

Kim drove home, panicked about

what would happen to her patient. "[Kim] called me on her way home. She said, 'I gave the wrong dose ... and she's going downhill, and it's my fault,'" her widow, Lyn Hiatt, said. "She was worried about the parents. She tried to get information from the hospital, but they told her not to call."

The patient died five days after the error. Seattle Children's Hospital fired Kim shortly afterward.

Kim struggled with both the death of her patient and the loss of a career she loved. "She wept constantly," Crum says of her daughter. "She was questioning her self-worth."

The Washington State Department of Health's investigation of the incident took about five months. Kim wrote the state investigators a lengthy statement about why she hoped to keep her credentials. "Nursing is my passion and the very core of who I am," she wrote.

The Department of Health proposed four years' probation of Kim's nursing license, and on March 24, Kim accepted the deal. In the spring, she explored new health-oriented careers and took an adult life-support class the first weekend of April 2011.

Lyn remembers when Kim called her on the way home from the second day of class. "She told me she got the highest grade in the class," Lyn said. "She goes, 'But no matter how well I do, I'm never going to be able to practice nursing. It's never going to be enough.'"

That was April 3, 2011. After Kim

arrived home, Lyn and their son decided to take a walk to a nearby restaurant. Kim said she would stay home and do laundry. Lyn estimates they were gone for about an hour and a half. During that time, Kim hanged herself in the basement.

## MISTAKES WILL HAPPEN. HOW WILL HOSPITALS REACT?

**S**ue Scott remembers when her first patient died. There was no mistake made—the location of a gunshot wound appeared to guarantee the patient's death—but she still struggled with the gravity of his death.

"When I had my first experience [of a patient dying]," says Scott, a patient-safety expert at the University of Missouri, "I said something to the nurse I was working with, like, 'I don't know if my heart can take this.' Her response was, 'Welcome to nursing. You better buck up!'"

Scott decided to try something she thought might help. She launched a hotline that doctors, nurses, and other providers at the University of Missouri could call in the wake of an adverse event. Health-care workers can reach a peer responder at any hour of any day.

The hotline had no relationship with the hospital's legal department, and it didn't require callers to provide their names or any other identifying information, in order to make them more comfortable speaking openly. It

was the first such hotline in the country, possibly in the world.

This idea, on its own, is controversial. Some safety experts at other hospitals say they've faced opposition from patient advocacy groups, which argue that the providers committing harm shouldn't get these resources.

"There is real resistance in places," says Dr. Wu. "Some of that comes from patient advocates or injured patients. [They] view themselves as being victimized by the health-care system. So the idea that there should be a service provided to the perpetrator gets met with some pushback."

In Missouri, preliminary evidence seems to suggest the hotline is working. Scott published a paper that found that providers served by the program were more likely to think the hospital had a "nonpunitive response to errors" and generally perceived their units as offering safer care.

## **"PEOPLE HERE ARE STILL AFRAID TO ADMIT THEIR MISTAKES"**

**A**bout 500 people attended Kim's memorial service on April 10, 2011, at the University of Washington's leafy arboretum. Lyn remembered seeing Kim's former colleagues and patients in attendance. "One of the moms of a former patient talked about how Kim cared for her daughter when she had a transplant, how she made it a fun time for her," she said.

Seattle Children's Hospital says it made policy changes in the wake of Kim's death. It now more rigorously regulates verbal orders for medication—the type Kim had gotten—an important preventive step that leaves less room for misinterpretation. Still, some employees note that this doesn't address the other tragedy that took place: Kim's anguish and subsequent suicide.

"People here are still afraid to admit their mistakes," says one Seattle Children's Hospital employee who requested anonymity, "because they are afraid of losing their jobs."

Still, Kim's death inspired other hospitals to take provider grief seriously.

Cheryl Connors was working as a patient-safety fellow at Johns Hopkins University in 2011. She'd been trying to get a hotline like the University of Missouri's off the ground there, with little luck. Nothing about it felt urgent; providers had made do without one for decades. Then, during a meeting, someone mentioned Kim's story. "That was really our impetus to take action," Connors said. "Six months later, we implemented our program"—Resilience in Stressful Events, or RISE.

The RISE phone line is staffed with volunteer peer responders who are also health-care providers. When RISE launched in 2011, it averaged one call per month. Now it's up to five.

RISE takes barely any personal

information from callers. This policy helps providers speak honestly and aims to prevent any involvement with the legal system. But it also presents a drawback; it's hard to study whether the peer support makes any difference when the program can't identify whom it has supported. That can make getting resources a tough sell to hospital executives who watch the bottom line.

"I'm an outcomes researcher, so it breaks my heart that we don't have good data," Dr. Wu says. "It's hard to justify in your budget. If you haven't drunk the Kool-Aid, is this something you're willing to invest money in?"

So far, most hospitals have decided the answer is no. Only a handful have hotlines similar to the one the University of Missouri started in 2007—out of more than 5,000 hospitals in the United States.

The actual work of building one of these hotlines—securing a phone number, finding volunteers, advertising the resource—is not a massive

lift. Rather, creating a place where health-care providers are not just allowed but also encouraged to discuss their mistakes is a huge mental leap for a system that routinely demands secrecy. Most American hospitals aren't there yet.



Medicine ran in Kim's family, but her daughter Sydney isn't sure if that tradition will continue. She's a 21-year-old college student who remembers tagging along with her mom to visit the hospital when she was younger. When I met Sydney in 2015, she told me that seeing

her mom's work—how much she loved it, how she helped people—inspired her to consider a career in health care. At the same time, she approaches the field with some trepidation. Sydney saw the anguish her mother went through when her patient died. "I'm kind of scared to go into health care," Sydney told me. "I don't know how I'd handle being the cause of someone's death." **R**

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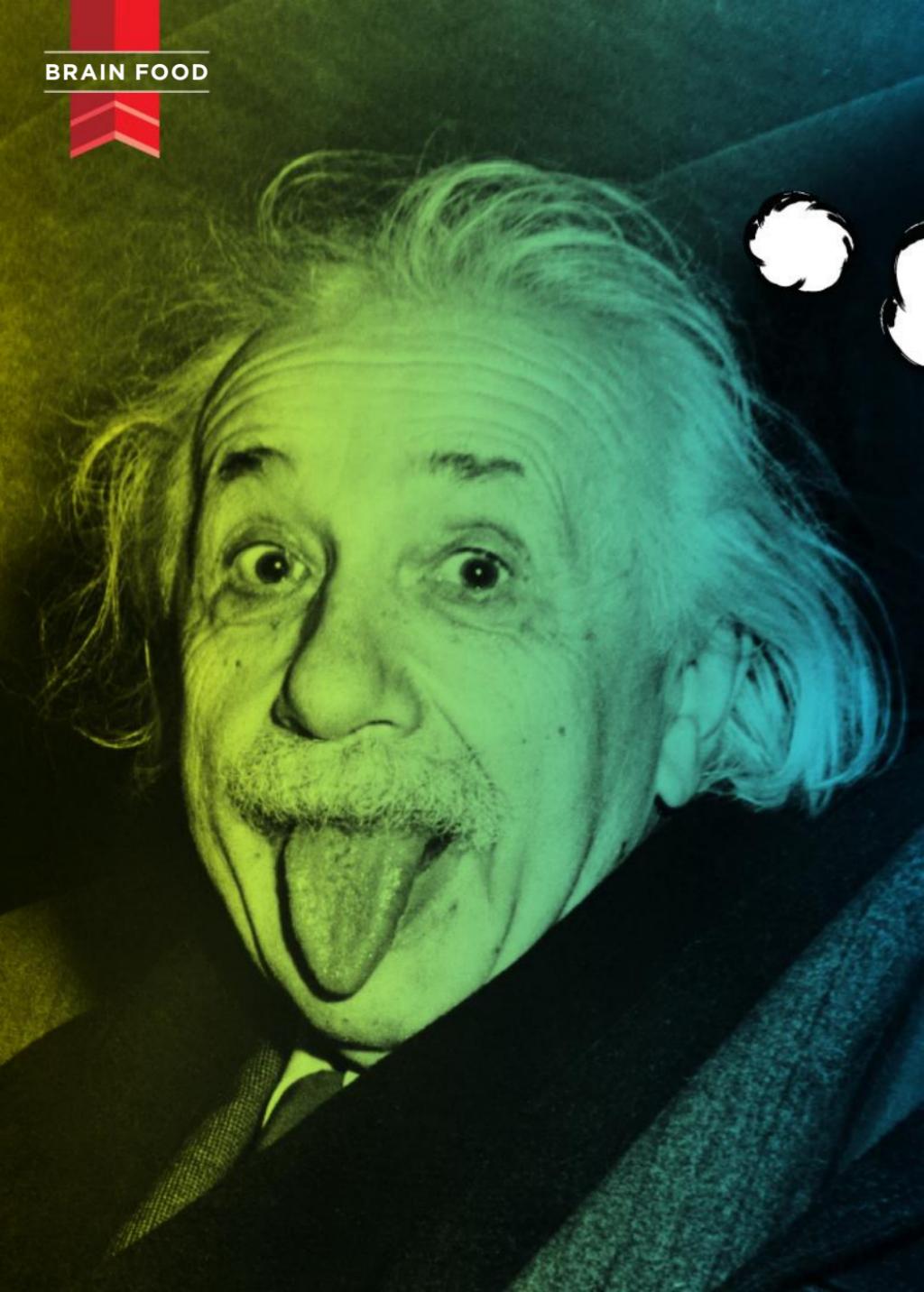


## THE BEST-LAID PLANS

"I have to cancel" should be prefaced with  
"You're welcome" instead of "Sorry."

 @ALEXJMANN

BRAIN FOOD



Feeling a little dim lately? Can't find the right, um ...  
What are those things that go into sentences? Words!  
Our quiz-filled guide is for you.



# Let's Be Less Stupid

BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES; ILLUSTRATIONS: MYATTAGETTY IMAGES

BY PATRICIA MARX FROM THE BOOK *LET'S BE LESS STUPID*

***My brain*** is not nearly as quick on the draw as it used to be. Sometimes, when I look for my glasses while wearing my glasses, I think, "My, my, it's going to be a very smooth transition to dementia." Maybe my brain is filled with so much accumulated intelligence—the shoe size of my ex, the names of Sarah Jessica Parker's children, the calories in cottage cheese—that the contents are gunking up the works, not to mention leaving room for little else.

In case you haven't noticed, your brain, which by some measures peaks when you're 22, has likely been on a cruel slide since you were,

oh, say, 27. What would it take to transform it back to the days before the nuts and bolts and wires and connections inside your head started to slow down, shrink, get sidetracked, forget, and go amiss in dreadful ways?

Many scientists believe that the wrinkly guck inside our skulls might be trainable. Given that supposition, we were a mere metaphor away from the proposal that we can have hunky brains if we just do a few brain exercises, such as crossword puzzles. But, says Alvaro Fernandez, CEO of SharpBrains, a market research firm concerned with brain health, "Once

someone has done hundreds or thousands of puzzles, the marginal benefit tends toward zero because it becomes just another routine, easy activity—probably a bit more stimulating and effortful than watching TV, but not enough to bring benefits other than becoming a master at crossword puzzles." If you're practiced enough to know that an auk is a diving seabird, it's time to learn sign language or take up the tuba. The key to staying sharp, says Fernandez, is to challenge your brain continually with a variety of novel activities—such as the following quizzes.



The self-improvement endeavors on this list will purportedly vitalize your mind. I have culled some from books and websites, but I have invented others. Can you figure out which are **True** and which are **Malarkey**?

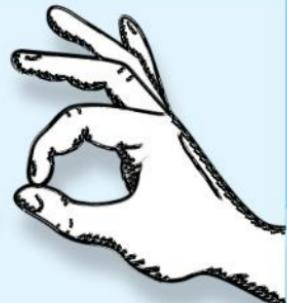
- 1.** Write backward with your weaker hand.
- 2.** Rearrange your furniture.
- 3.** Make your bed using the flat sheet for the fitted sheet and vice versa.
- 4.** Don't step on sidewalk cracks for an entire day.
- 5.** Create to-do lists.

- 6.** Join a cult and then give the leader 13 reasons why you're quitting.
- 7.** Take a slow day, in which you do everything at half speed.
- 8.** Make a pineapple upside-down cake right-side up.
- 9.** Keep a journal.
- 10.** Avoid reading newspapers or news websites for a week.
- 11.** Take ginkgo biloba.
- 12.** Don't take ginkgo biloba.
- 13.** Go to a black-tie affair wearing something red.
- 14.** Consume antioxidants daily.
- 15.** Get rid of toxins by gargling with prune juice.
- 16.** File for a divorce.
- 17.** Question everything. Ask why incessantly.

#### ANSWERS:

1-T; 2-T; 3-M; 4-M; 5-T; 6-M; 7-T; 8-M; 9-T; 10-M; 11-T; 12-T; 13-M; 14-T; 15-M; 16-M; 17-T

# Don't Forget to Take This Test!



**S**tudies have shown that all sorts of external factors affect short-term memory. For each of the following, decide if the item (a) tends to make us forget other stuff, (b) helps us remember, or (c) has not been studied (and therefore I've made it up too).

1. The sight of other people's faces
2. Deep voices
3. Drinking water out of paper cups
4. Using your hands when you talk
5. Walking through doorways
6. Cooking risotto
7. Playing with your hair
8. Wacky fonts

## ANSWERS:

1. (a) Faces are distracting. If you want to recollect something, look at the floor or dreamily into the far-off distance—or just tell everyone to go away.
2. (b) Scientists at the University of Aberdeen found that the utterances of men with low-pitched voices were more memorable to women than anything that squeakier-voiced fellows had to say.
3. (c)

4. (b) Psychology professor Susan Goldin-Meadow of the University of Chicago says that making gestures disencumbers our working memories and may allow us to retain facts longer. She demonstrated this in an experiment in which subjects had to explain the solution to a math problem while remembering a list of items. Those who waved their hands all over the place while explaining recalled 20 percent more.

5. (a) Passing through a physical threshold may give notice to the brain that it should dump the inessential information it learned in the previous room to clear mental space for new inessential information. Anything deemed important, e.g., the room is on fire, is consolidated and moved into long-term memory. As the University of Notre Dame researcher who discovered this phenomenon said, "Doorways are bad. Avoid them at all costs."

6. (c)

7. (c)

8. (b) One small study suggested that *strange fonts, particularly ones that are hard to decipher, make us look more closely at the text and pay more attention to the material. Got it?*

R



*Catrin at home,  
recovered. "You  
are back," her  
father told her.  
"You did it."*

A fiery bus crash left 96 percent of her body burned. Doctors put her chances of survival at one in a thousand.

# —CATRIN'S— **LONG WAY** —BACK—

BY ROBERT KIENER



CATRIN PUGH WAS GOING HOME. The bubbly Welsh 19-year-old had just finished working at a ski resort in the French Alps for four months. The pay was minimal, but this gap-year adventure came with a bonus: She could ski for free on her days off. Yet as much as Catrin enjoyed the experience of living away from her parents, she had felt a bit homesick. By the time spring arrived, she was eager to see her family.

So on April 16, 2013, along with 50 other young seasonal workers, Catrin boarded a charter bus for the 20-hour drive from France to the United Kingdom, grabbing the seat directly behind bus driver Maurice Wrightson. The first stage of the trip, an 8.5-mile descent from the resort, was famous for being one of the most grueling climbs of the Tour de France bicycle race—at each of the route's 21 hairpin turns, there is a plaque commemorating past winners of that stage. As Wrightson maneuvered the bus down turn after tight turn, Catrin looked out on snowcapped peaks and sun-filled valleys. This is so beautiful, she thought. I know I will be back.

Suddenly, just before bend 21—the mountain's last hairpin—the bus sped up unexpectedly. “The brakes are gone!” shouted Wrightson as the 12-ton vehicle continued to gain speed, flirting with the mountain’s

“The brakes  
are gone!”  
shouted the  
driver as  
the bus flirted  
with the  
300-foot drop.

300-foot drop. With the passengers screaming in the background, Wrightson violently turned the bus to the right, hoping to stop it by crashing into the side of the mountain. Catrin’s seatmate and friend, Shaun Stewart, cradled her in a headlock. “Brace yourself!” he shouted, telling her

to wedge her feet against the seat in front of them to prevent herself from flying through the windshield.

The bus did indeed crash into the side of the mountain, with a force that threw most passengers onto the floor amid the sound of twisting metal and shattering glass. Then, as passengers toward the back of the bus began scrambling to safety through the windows, the fuel tank in the front exploded. Flames engulfed Wrightson, then dashed up the floor to find Catrin. The smell of burning flesh mixed with that of diesel fuel.

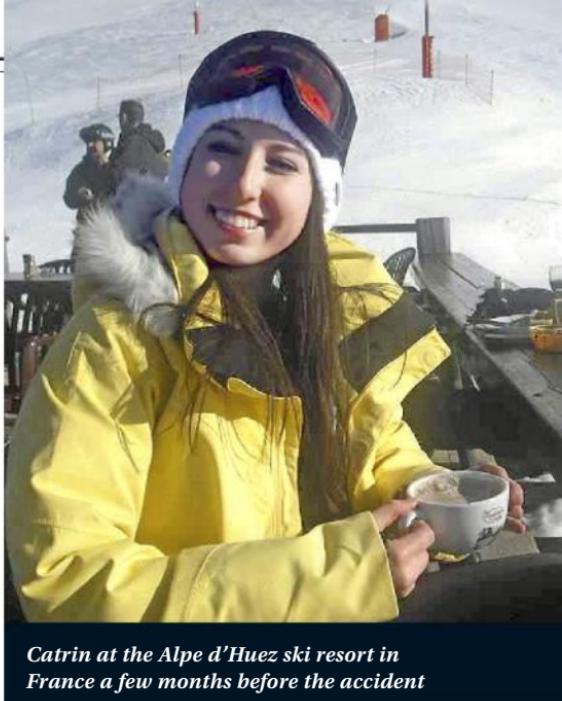
Stewart was able to stand up and

pull Catrin off the bus. He and others stomped out the flames burning her clothes and singeing her skin. Lying on the side of the road, she raised her right arm and was horrified to see her mottled, burned flesh drop off in sheets. The pain was excruciating. Passengers ripped off their shirts to stop her bleeding and support her head. Some held a sheet over her to shield her from the sun. She didn't stop screaming until paramedics arrived and put an oxygen mask on her face. Then she passed out. Wrightson died at the scene.

**T**HE MESSAGE on Sara Pugh's phone from her husband, Carl, was short and to the point: "Come home. Quickly. Nothing to worry about." However, when she arrived, Carl's face told a different story. "There's been an accident," he told Sara. "It's Catrin."

Carl explained that he had gotten a call from France but didn't know more than that. He had been given the number of a hospital for further information.

A helicopter had airlifted their daughter to the University Hospital in Grenoble, where doctors discovered she had burns over 96 percent of her body. Only her scalp, a small part of her face, and the soles of her feet were untouched. The doctors decided to transfer her to a burn unit at a larger



*Catrin at the Alpe d'Huez ski resort in France a few months before the accident*

medical center in Lyon. After finally reaching the hospital by phone, Carl learned that Catrin's burns were so severe that doctors had hooked her up to a ventilator and put her into a medically induced coma. "It is very serious," the doctor told him. "It would be best if you came right away." Sara flew to Lyon the next morning. Carl, confined to a wheelchair after a hip replacement surgery, followed the day after.

Within 24 hours of the accident, Catrin's body tissue had swelled to nearly twice its normal size, which is the body's way of attempting to protect and heal itself. Catrin's severe burns had ravaged her immune system, which in turn threatened her internal organs. Doctors had to act fast to



*The bus wreckage on the side of the mountain. Driver Maurice Wrightson was killed.*

replace the fluid that had escaped from the blood circulating around the burns or Catrin could go into cardiac arrest.

When Sara arrived at the hospital in Lyon, she first met with the head doctor. Before letting her see Catrin, he had a warning: "I have to tell you that her face is badly swollen. It's not pretty." Sara asked him, "Do you survive something like this?" The doctor answered gently, "A small—a very, very small—amount of people do." She saw Catrin unconscious and tethered to a wall of blinking, whirring machines. Her body was completely swathed in a thermal blanket and thick white bandages, which also covered half her face. Sara reached out and touched Catrin's bandaged arm. "Cat, it's Mum. I am right here," she told her, although Catrin would not be able to hear her. "We are going

to get you better." Back in the waiting room, Sara broke down in tears.

The next evening, after Carl had arrived and seen Catrin, he and Sara prepared for the worst. In their hotel room, he said softly, "She has to make it." Carl stayed strong for Sara; it wasn't until she finally fell asleep that he broke down too. He couldn't bear the thought of losing his princess. Ever since Catrin's sister, Mari, was born, when Catrin was three, he'd called them "Princess One" and "Princess Two."

But Carl also knew that Catrin was unusually resilient. "Strong-willed" is how he and Sara had often described her. She was always pushing herself. She started going to dance school when she was eight and loved getting on a stage to act and sing. Catrin's dream had been to enroll in a theater school in London.

**T**HE DOCTORS agreed that Catrin's best hopes lay with Liverpool's Whiston Hospital and M. Ian James, MD, one of the United Kingdom's most accomplished burn specialists. Five days after her accident, an elite team at Whiston operated on Catrin in a determined effort to save her life. First, they scraped off her dead skin because it could have easily become infected. They took a small sample of unburned skin from her scalp and sent it to a laboratory to be grown, or cultured, for future grafting. Then they covered more than 40 percent of Catrin's raw tissue with cadaver skin, 17/1,000 of an inch thick, from Liverpool's national skin bank. The donated skin helps prevent infection, preserves body temperature, and promotes healing. It would eventually be replaced by newer skin grafts.

Catrin made it through the five-hour operation, but when Dr. James met with Sara and Carl, he was blunt about Catrin's chances of survival. "Right now," he said, "I am sorry to say, one in a thousand." Infection was a constant threat; Dr. James's team would need to change Catrin's anti-septic dressings once or twice every day, in sessions lasting three to four hours. Because her organs had been so damaged, the threat of kidney

failure or heart attack was ever present.

One week went by. Then another. Time and again, Catrin was operated on as surgeons harvested and grafted new skin. At three weeks, Dr. James told Carl and Sara that, miraculously, the odds of Catrin's survival had improved to one in a hundred.

He explained that Catrin would remain in a coma while she underwent even more extensive skin grafts and other operations. Every day, either Sara or Carl stood by her bed. Once, as Carl watched Catrin's chest rise and fall, he found himself reaching to lightly hold his daughter's heavily bandaged

arm. "Come on, Cat. You can do this," he whispered.

The doctors woke Catrin from her induced coma after three months. Her muscles had atrophied. She had lost 70 pounds, nearly half her body weight. She was too weak to hold her head up and would have to relearn how to stand and walk.

For months, Catrin would cry out in pain whenever anyone touched her. Painkillers helped, but Catrin dreaded having her dressings changed. Inevitably, as carefully as her nurses removed the dressings, they would peel away some raw skin. One morning, Catrin had had enough. "Nooooo!"

As treatment,  
doctors  
covered over  
40 percent  
of Catrin's  
body with  
cadaver skin.

she shouted at her nurses. "Please don't do this! I hate you all!"

Fire had ravaged the pretty 19-year-old. Most of her face had been badly burned. The flames had claimed part of an ear and the tips of several fingers. Doctors had shaved off the luxurious long hair she had been so proud of; they would scrape her head for skin grafts six times while she was in the hospital. During her thrice-weekly baths, Catrin could finally see her burned, battered body, and it horrified her. Her skin looked like a scarred checkerboard of raw pinks and bloodied reds. No one will ever love me, she thought. She told Sara, "It would have been easier if I had died."

AND CATRIN still had not seen her face or her shaved head. When Donnas Wilkinson, a 30-year veteran nurse who had been supervising Catrin's recovery, heard her tell her mother, "I cannot wait until I can shampoo my hair again," the nurse realized it was time. She brought Catrin a hand mirror. Silence. Then screams. Then tears. "No! No!" Catrin cried as she looked at her emaciated, bruised, and bald reflection. No matter how much Wilkinson explained that her hair would grow back and she'd look so much

better someday, Catrin kept crying.

It was weeks before Catrin could stand unaided; months before she could take a tentative first step. The constant pain, the heartbreak of her appearance, the frustration of having to learn to walk and even feed herself were too much. One day, Catrin broke down, telling her mother, "I'll never be able to walk. I'll never be normal!"

Having seen other burn patients sink into depression, Dr. James and Wilkinson went on the offensive. When Catrin refused to do her physiotherapy, Dr. James told her firmly, "If you ever want to use

your hands again, you have to exercise them now." He knew she had always loved to dance and perform, and he told her, "If you want to dance again, you need to start trying." The psychology began working. Catrin pushed through the pain of physiotherapy by thinking, I'll show them. She began to fight. She asked a nurse to help her take a selfie and bravely posted it on Instagram. I know I look horrible, but I'll show the world! Catrin thought. The picture exposed her with a shaved, scabbed head, a feeding tube hanging from her nose—and a massive smile. The caption: "Getting there ..."

Catrin worked tirelessly. She told herself, I need to turn into a survivor,

“  
If you  
ever want  
to use your  
hands again,”  
Dr. James said,  
“you have to  
exercise now.”

not a victim. After nearly eight months in the hospital, she went home to continue her recovery. She began walking, then, after months of work, running on a treadmill, then jogging outdoors. She regained the use of her arms, controlling her pain with over-the-counter remedies. Her hair grew back. Her face was scarred but not disfigured.

Catrin had been home for just under a year and was walking unaided when she made an announcement to her parents: "I want to ski again." She wanted to go back to the French Alps. Sara and Carl knew their daughter well enough not to doubt her resolve. Catrin began taking lessons using adapted skis (she laughingly called the contraption "my walker on skis") to glide down an artificial dry ski slope in Wales. On December 23, 2014, twenty months after the accident, Catrin and her family and friends went to Val Thorens, the highest ski resort in Europe. Under an impossibly blue sky, Catrin was helped into her skis. "I have butterflies in my stomach," she confessed. She took off, skiing slowly but steadily down one of the gentler slopes. Then, as she sped up, something extraordinary happened. Her brother, sister, and friends formed a diamond-shaped



*Preparing to ski again, on a mountain in Wales outfitted for disabled athletes*

moving "barrier" around her, protecting her as she glided down the slope. Catrin was thrilled. I'm free, she thought as she once again felt the wind against her skin and her legs responding to the snow.

Before she slowed to a stop at the bottom, she spotted her father waiting with his arms outspread. Tears were streaming down Carl's face. Princess One had defeated impossible odds. Carl hugged her, whispering, "You are back, Catrin. You did it!" R

\* \* \*

### BOO ON YOU

How lazy of a ghost are you that you haunt a graveyard?

🐦 @SAD\_TREE (JOEWEN WILSON)

# Do You Suffer From:

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- Joint Pain
- Heel Pain
- Back/Knee Pain
- Bunions
- Heel Spurs
- Arthritis
- Neuropathy



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# WHO ? KNEW

## 13 Things the Tax Man (or Woman) Won't Tell You

**1** If you earn less than \$64,000 annually, many major tax-prep companies will give you their online filing guides. For information, go to [irs.gov/uac/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free](http://irs.gov/uac/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free). Also, H&R Block offers free online support for people ages 17 to 50 who earn less than \$62,000.

**2** The holy trinity of quick refunds: File early, file online, and opt to receive your money through direct deposit. Some e-filing companies report getting refunds to customers in less than three weeks.

**3** That said, refunds aren't as exciting as they may seem; you're



getting money back that was yours to begin with, essentially lent to the government as an interest-free loan. It can be better to just decrease your paycheck withholdings—and then invest the extra money—rather than receive a lump sum at tax time. ➤

**4** Did you get a sign-up bonus for, say, opening a bank account or a credit card? You may have to pay taxes on that. While the IRS treats some rewards as nontaxable discounts (such as most frequent-flier rewards), other payouts are considered income. A rule of thumb: If a company sends you a 1099 form for a reward, you should report it.

**5** Filing late in itself won't hurt your credit rating, but it could lead to penalties that will ratchet up the amount you owe the government. If you don't pay that debt, the IRS may file a federal tax lien—a public, legal claim against your property that can hurt your ability to get credit.

**6** File even if you can't pay. While both failure-to-file and failure-to-pay penalties exist, the first is generally harsher. And don't panic if you can't pay what you owe the IRS. You'll have to fill out some forms and provide documentation, but you may be able to compromise on a lower amount if you meet certain requirements. (In 2014, the IRS settled with about 40 percent of the people who applied for reductions, with an average decrease of about \$6,600.)

**7** Itemizing can yield a bigger return, but be careful: Too many deductions may increase your chances of being audited. One red flag: charitable donations that seem

disproportionate to your income. Intuit's ItsDeductible ([turbotax.intuit.com/personal-taxes/itsdeductible](http://turbotax.intuit.com/personal-taxes/itsdeductible)) can help you keep an exact record.

**8** Another common red flag is excessive business deductions. The best defense: accurate records. If you travel for work, the MileIQ app will track your mileage. Meanwhile, apps such as Shoeboxed allow you to take photos of your receipts or scan your e-mail inbox to instantly log business expenses throughout the year. (Their services start at \$9.95 a month, but free alternatives are available.) Shoeboxed even provides prepaid envelopes if you prefer sending receipts by snail mail.

**9** Your weekend side projects might count as self-employment, which means you'll have to make quarterly estimated tax payments in addition to filing your annual return. Don't forget that you can write off expenses for a home office, though the rules are very specific. For more information, go to [irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/simplified-option-for-home-office-deduction](http://irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/simplified-option-for-home-office-deduction).

**10** If you're a homeowner who's dedicated to energy efficiency, you can earn tax credits of up to 30 percent on select projects—installing an Energy Star-qualified solar water heater, for example.

**11** Even if you didn't put pretax money into a flexible spending account (FSA), you can still recoup some child-care expenses. Depending on your income, the government will refund up to 35 percent of the cost of day care, with a cap of \$3,000 per child or \$6,000 per family. The catch: You must be employed or actively looking for a job to qualify.

**12** Want to avoid an audit? Don't use round numbers, as the IRS may assume you're guessing on expenditures. The government audited 1.2 million people at random in 2015, so there's no guarantee, but you can cut down on your chances

by being precise. That said, don't freak out if you realize you forgot to sign your return—that alone almost certainly won't trigger an audit.

**13** If you do get audited (gulp!), don't go it alone. Hire an accountant, an enrolled agent, or a tax attorney who has experience dealing with the IRS. Sometimes it can be as simple as providing additional documents or filing an amended return, but it's best to work with a professional who knows the ropes. **R**

Sources: irs.gov, cnn.com, usnews.com, turbotax.intuit.com, howardlevyirslawyer.com, aarp.org, H&R Block, energystar.gov, and David Barral, CPA/PFS, CFP

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What can science really tell us about humor?  
Just a load of blablesoc and hablump.

# What Makes a Funny Word Funny

BY MICHAEL HINGSTON  
FROM THE WALRUS

**C**PROFESSOR CHRIS WESTBURY may be a respected psychologist, but his latest research is nothing but nonsense. At the University of Alberta, Westbury has been exploring the connections between language difficulties and brain function,

work that has also provided insights into the nature of humor. As part of his inquiry, Westbury presents patients suffering from aphasia—a condition in which the comprehension of words and speech is often impaired—with a string of letters

and asks whether or not it constitutes a real English word. One day, a graduate student pointed out something curious: Certain nonsense words consistently made patients smile and sometimes even laugh out loud. "Particularly," Westbury says, "*snunkoople*."

He started checking with friends and colleagues to see whether they had the same reaction, and the response was nearly unanimous. *Snunkoople* was funny. But why? In a 2015 paper published in the *Journal of Memory and Language*, Westbury presents what he believes could be the answer: The inherent funniness of a word, or at least of stand-alone nonsense words, can be quantified. Just as fascinating: When it comes to inspiring a chuckle, not all nonsense is created equal.

According to Westbury, the less statistically likely it is for a certain collection of letters to form a real word in English, the funnier it is. (The playwright Neil Simon seemed to grasp this implicitly in his 1972 work *The Sunshine Boys*, in which an old vaudevillian tells his nephew, "If it doesn't have a *k*, it's not funny!"—*k* being one of the least frequently used letters in the alphabet.) Fluent English speakers, Westbury says, are

accustomed to words sounding a particular way. So when they come across unusual clusters of letters or syllables, their expectations are violated. Laughter is the by-product of that violation.

To prove this, Westbury ran two studies. In the first, he presented participants with a computer-generated list of some 5,928 made-up words to see which ones they found comical. The ones that sounded rude shot straight to the top of the scale; four of the six funniest were *whong*, *dongl*, *shart*, and *focky*. Westbury

decided that those quasi-vulgarities had to go because they triggered associative biases. He wanted nonsense in its purest form.

In the second study, the researchers made sure that the nonsuggestive nonwords were easily pronounceable and didn't violate typical English spelling rules. Participants then ranked them on a scale of funny to, well, not funny.

The results were clear: Participants consistently judged the same nonwords to be funny. Among the winners were *hablump*, *jumemo*, and *finglysis*. And the less plausible the word sounded, the funnier the participants deemed it to be.

The results square intuitively with

---

“

***As Dr. Seuss  
knew, less likely  
combinations  
of letters are  
more likely to  
make us laugh.***

---

our everyday lives as English speakers. Many of the funniest fake food products from *The Simpsons*, for example—including Duff Beer and the intriguingly vague TUBBB!—would score high on Westbury's scale of improbably funny constructions. Dr. Seuss elevated the creation of ridiculous words to an art: Even

about the rest of us? Westbury sees his results as further proof that, like any other sense, our sense of humor might be an important survival adaptation. "One of the main functions of emotion is to alert us to unusual, dangerous, and unpredictable aspects of the world that might harm us," he says. When we

## YUZZ-a-ma-TUZZ

kids with a loose grasp of English understand that *Wumbus* and *Yuzz-a-ma-Tuzz* are meant to be laughed at. In fact, Westbury analyzed 65 of Dr. Seuss's made-up words and confirmed that they, too, were reliably (and humorously) improbable.

This is all good for professional purveyors of nonsense, but what

laugh at an unpredictable word, joke, or comedy routine, we may be alerting ourselves and others that something unusual is afoot but it isn't a true threat to our safety.

Westbury isn't sure if his research will lead to anything more substantial, but it's fine if it doesn't. He has created enough snunkoople to keep himself happy. R



### REPEAT AFTER ME

Here are 20 of the top-scoring nonsense words from Westbury's study.

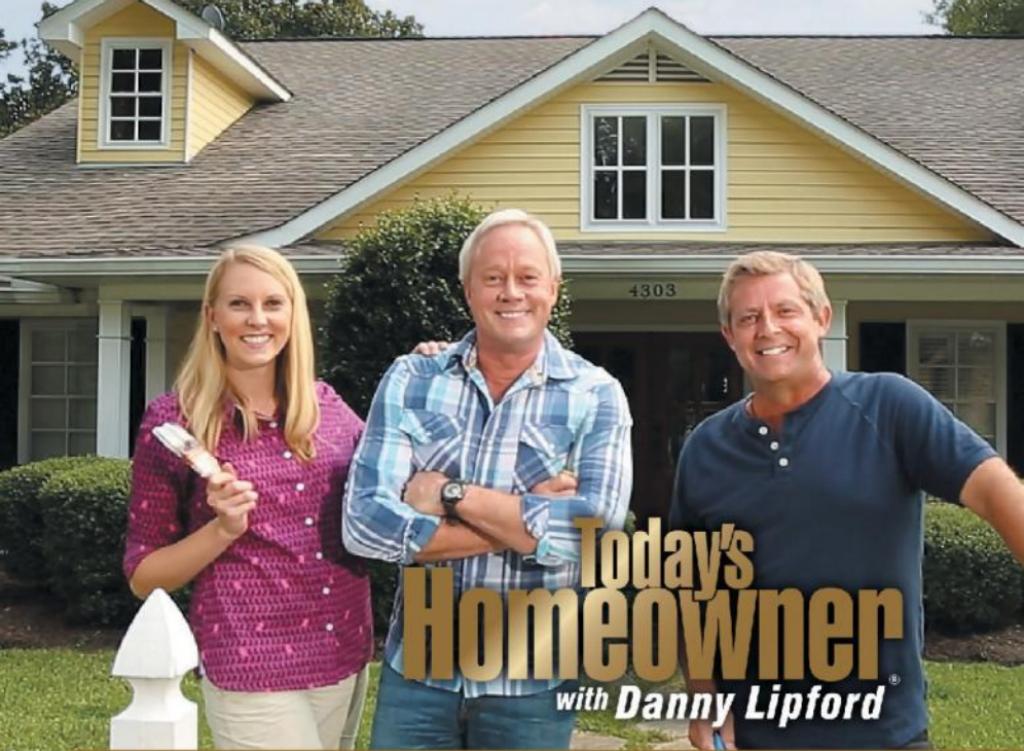
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| ■ blablesoc | ■ finglam | ■ groctsi | ■ nothrog  | ■ scrunne |
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# Mind-Blowing Facts About Your Money

BY BRANDON SPECKTOR

**S**IN APRIL 2016, the U.S. Treasury Department announced that seventh president Andrew Jackson will cede his spot on the \$20 bill to former slave and abolitionist Harriet Tubman, making her the first African American to appear on the face of U.S. currency. While we wait for this makeover (scheduled for 2020), enjoy these freshly minted facts about the life and death of money.

■ U.S. paper money is not paper at all: It's 75 percent cotton and 25 percent linen. In Benjamin Franklin's day, people repaired torn bills with a needle and thread.

■ Today, the Fed prefers to shred. Every month, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia sends 16 tons of old, cut-up cash to an energy-from-waste plant in Chester, Pennsylvania, to be burned; the resulting steam produces electricity to power homes throughout the Delaware Valley.

■ Most paper money never sees puberty. With a life span of about four and a half years, the \$10 bill is our shortest-lived note. Our longest-living, the \$100 bill, lasts only 15 years.

■ It takes about 4,000 double folds (first forward and then

backward) before a bill will tear. It takes far fewer folds for a snooty vending machine to reject your bill—but you can fix that by popping your Washington in the microwave for about 20 seconds to crisp it up.

■ The U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing prints 32.2 million currency notes each day, with a face value of approximately \$907.8 million.

■ Two-dollar bills are seen as a rarity, but there are more than 1.1 billion of them in circulation. You can find them at most local banks.

■ The largest note ever made was the \$100,000 Gold Certificate (printed December 1934 through January 1935). The bills were used only in transactions between Federal Reserve banks and the U.S. Treasury.

■ A quarter has 119 grooves around its edge; a dime has 118. The grooves

were added to make it difficult for people to file down the edges and sell the shavings as precious metals.

■ It costs more than a penny to make a penny. According to the U.S. Mint, it costs roughly 1.7 cents per coin.

*It costs more than a penny to make a penny—about 1.7 cents per coin, says the U.S. Mint.*

■ Benjamin Franklin reportedly designed the first U.S. penny, in 1787. Instead of “E Pluribus Unum,” it proudly stated, “Mind Your Business.”

■ The bald eagle on your money may have a name. From 1830 to

1836, a certain bird swooped into Philadelphia’s U.S. Mint building so often that workers named him Peter the Mint Eagle, cared for him, and allegedly used him as a model for coin engravings for years after.

■ Want to feel time fly? There are 293 ways to make change for a dollar. Go on—try to find them all. R



#### THAT'S A LONG SHOT

The world archery record for farthest accurate shot (930.04 feet) is held by Matt Stutzman, a Paralympian with no arms. He holds the bow with his toes and releases the arrow with a quick jerk of his jaw.

Source: Guinness World Records

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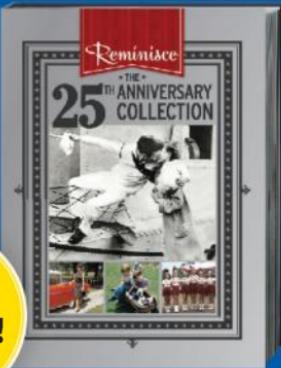
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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

# Word Power

*Thousands of English words, from archery to zest, have their origins in French. Think you're a word connoisseur? Take a tour through this petite list of terms, then sashay to the next page for answers.*

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

- 1. raconteur** (ra-kahn'-ter) *n.*—  
A: skillful storyteller. B: blackmailer.  
C: court jester.
- 2. faience** (fay'-ans) *n.*—A: false pretenses. B: fidelity. C: glazed pottery.
- 3. couturier** (koo'-tuhr-ee-er) *n.*—  
A: head chef. B: fashion designer.  
C: museum guide.
- 4. laissez-faire** (leh-say'-fair) *adj.*—A: festive. B: noninterfering.  
C: done by women.
- 5. cabal** (kuh'-bahrl) *n.*—  
A: plotting group. B: young horse.  
C: crystal wineglass.
- 6. fait accompli** (fayt ah-cahm'-plee) *n.*—A: done deal. B: lucky charm.  
C: partner in crime.
- 7. au courant** (oh kuh'-rahn) *adj.*—  
A: on the contrary. B: with cherries on top. C: up-to-date.
- 8. interlard** (ihn-ter'-lahrd) *v.*—  
A: encroach on. B: vary by intermixing.  
C: fluctuate in weight.

- 9. soupçon** (soop-'sohn) *n.*—  
A: wooden ladle. B: swindle.  
C: small amount.
- 10. milieu** (meel-'yeu) *n.*—  
A: environment. B: thousand.  
C: armed force.
- 11. aubade** (oh-'bahd) *n.*—  
A: gold pendant. B: babysitter.  
C: morning song.
- 12. pince-nez** (pahns-'nay) *n.*—  
A: clipped-on eyeglasses. B: rude interruption. C: narrow hallway.
- 13. sangfroid** (sahn-'fwah) *n.*—  
A: intense heat wave. B: composure under strain.  
C: mind reading.
- 14. fracas** ('fray-kuhs) *n.*—  
A: wool scarf. B: noisy quarrel.  
C: utter failure.
- 15. roué** (roo-'ay) *n.*—A: thick meat sauce. B: rakish man. C: illegal gambling game.

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

## Answers

**1. *raconteur***—[A] skillful storyteller. No one would call me a *raconteur*—I tend to ramble and say “um” a lot.

**2. *faience***—[C] glazed pottery. Catherine hoped to sell the rare *faience* she’d found at the tag sale for a huge profit.

**3. *couturier***—[B] fashion designer. *Couturiers* such as Christian Dior and Jean-Paul Gaultier have shaped fashion history.

**4. *laissez-faire***—[B] noninterfering. In our family, Mom’s the enforcer, while Dad takes more of a *laissez-faire* attitude.

**5. *cabal***—[A] plotting group. There’s a *cabal* among the dictator’s aides, who are all vying for control of the country.

**6. *fait accompli***—  
[A] done deal. Well, we’ve painted the bedroom dark purple—it’s a *fait accompli*.

**7. *au courant***—[C] up-to-date. To stay *au courant*, Rafael snaps up all the newest apps.

**8. *interlard***—  
[B] vary by intermixing. I didn’t understand

your film—why did you *interlard* the narrative with those bizarre dream sequences?

**9. *soupçon***—[C] small amount. Dylan detected a *soupçon* of sarcasm in his teenage son’s remark.

**10. *milieu***—[A] environment. “The briar patch,” said Brer Rabbit, “is my natural *milieu*.”

**11. *aubade***—[C] morning song. Ah, the tuneful *aubade* of my alarm!

**12. *pince-nez***—[A] clipped-on eyeglasses. I’ve never understood how you keep your *pince-nez* on your nose while you dance.

**13. *sangfroid***—[B] composure under strain. We had to admire Magda’s *sangfroid* as she stood up to her obnoxious boss.

**14. *fracas***—[B] noisy quarrel. I wouldn’t call it a *fracas*. It’s just a difference of opinion.

**15. *roué***—[B] rakish man. Steer clear of that guy Casanova—he’s a shameless *roué*.

### WATCH YOUR TONGUE

The Académie Française, which has set the country’s linguistic standards for centuries, has a special distaste for English tech terms. It nixed *e-mail* and *software* in favor of *courriel* and *logiciel*. And in 2013, francophones were urged to slash *hashtag*. The French version: *mot-dièse* (*mot* for “word,” *dièse* for a musical sharp symbol).

### VOCABULARY RATINGS

**9 & below:** bon  
**10-12:** fantastique  
**13-15:** supérieur

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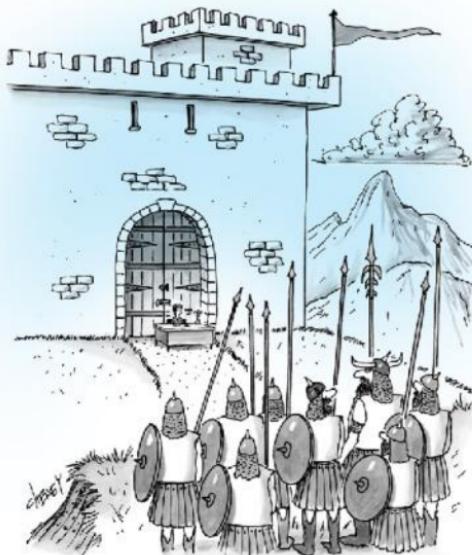


\*Restrictions apply. Consult a medical professional about your hearing health first.

**listen**clear



# Humor in Uniform



*"They have no military, sire—no one's ever made it past their receptionist."*

**DURING AN ENTRANCE** interview with the Air National Guard, my niece was asked, "How long have you wanted to be a pilot?" She answered by recounting an adorable story of how she was videotaped by her mother at the age of five saying she wanted to grow up to be a "princess pilot." Her evaluator, unmoved, responded, "Princess interviews are next week, so we'll just focus on the pilot questions, OK?"

MARK GARVEY, Concord, Massachusetts

**I ASKED MY DAD**, a Navy guy, how far from land his ship was while on the ocean. "We were always just a few miles from land," he said. "Straight down."   PAUL TRUSH, Sussex, New Jersey

**THE PEN IS** mightier than the sword, if you shoot that pen out of a gun.

STEPHEN COLBERT

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Your military anecdote might be worth \$\$\$! For details, see page 7 or go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).

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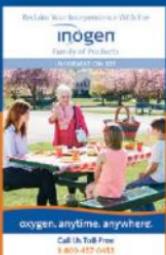
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# Quotable Quotes

“

**Education is when you read the fine print; experience is what you get when you don't.**

PETE SEEGER, *musician*



If animals have moody days, they handle them better than humans do.

BETTY WHITE, *actress*

**My philosophy is that every phone conversation has a loser.**

SCOTT ADAMS, *cartoonist*

COMMON SENSE AND A SENSE OF HUMOR ARE THE SAME THING, MOVING AT DIFFERENT SPEEDS. A SENSE OF HUMOR IS JUST COMMON SENSE, DANCING.

CLIVE JAMES, *author*

**YOU DON'T HAVE A RIGHT TO THE CARDS YOU BELIEVE YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN DEALT.**

CHERYL STRAYED, *author*



Notice when you are happy, and exclaim or murmur or think at some point, “If this isn’t nice, I don’t know what is.”

KURT VONNEGUT, *author*

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**“Bye, bye, frequent heartburn.”**

BECKY LONDON, ACTUAL PRILOSEC OTC USER

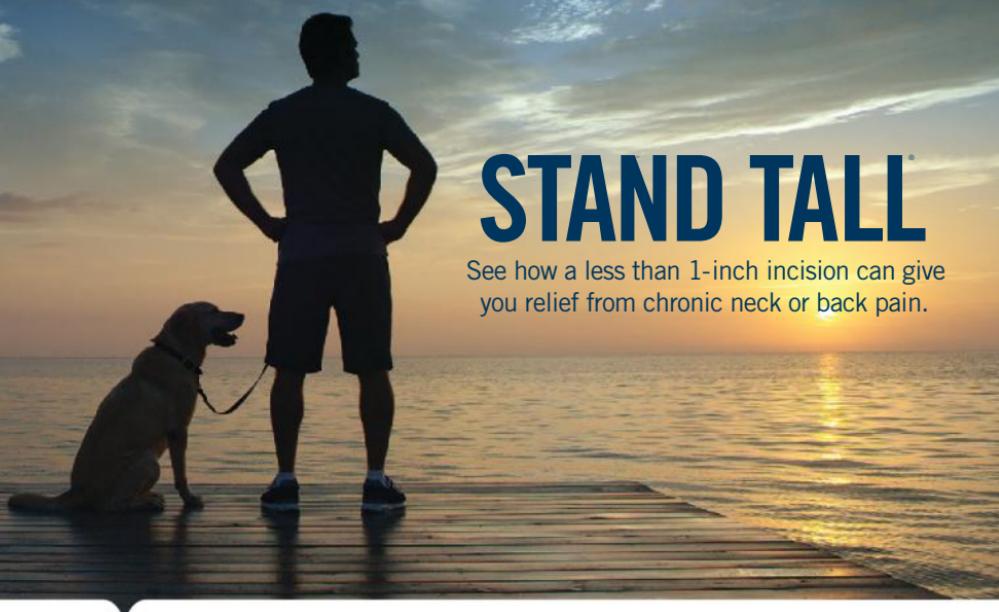


#1

**DOCTOR<sup>†</sup> RECOMMENDED**  
**FOR 10 STRAIGHT YEARS AND**  
**IT'S STILL RECOMMENDED TODAY**

**ONE PILL EACH MORNING. 24 HOURS. ZERO HEARTBURN\***

\*It's possible while taking Prilosec OTC. Use as directed for 14 days to treat frequent heartburn. May take 1-4 days for full effect. <sup>†</sup>AlphalmpactRx ProVoice™ Survey, Jan 2006 - Mar 2016. © Procter & Gamble, Inc., 2017



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