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Reader's Digest

RD TALKS
OUR STORIES
AS PODCASTS

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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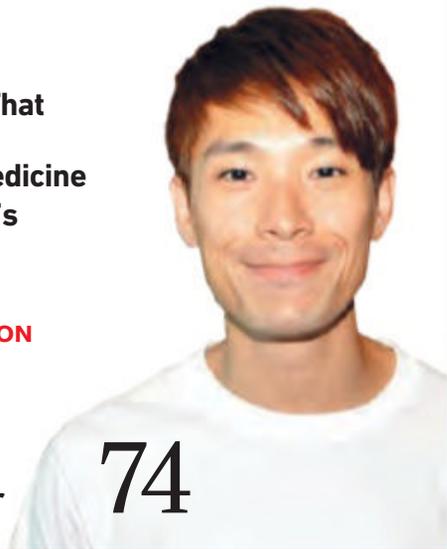
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 iamhimalayeti

First, we commend you on the effort of turning the page upside down! If you held this page to the mirror just to read the headline, you are an A+ student. If you had no trouble reading this left to right, upside down, you are a genius. But if you read this page just as it is, just because it made you feel alive, without understanding a single thing – congrats, that's the Vajomba spirit!

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Ready to take over the world with you. Ready to give you a fresh perspective on life again. Ready to help you feel alive once more. So bust out those awkward dance moves – you haven't aged a single day! Let your imagination run wild and free. Whoosh through a galaxy of stars after working overtime! Or wear mismatched socks just for the fun of it! You are alive. So live like you are alive!

That inner child you have within you? That's the Himalayeti. That invitation to prance around in an oversized adult suit? Vajomba. The consumer that we long to sell our unique and distinctive-tasting candy to? You. Our exciting new Himalaya Vajomba Activhoosh Mints and Honey Lime Mints? Yum.

Was this all just to convince you to buy our yummy, refreshing, and rehydrating candy? Maybe.

Himala-who? Vajomba what? Relax. We'll get to that. Before that, let's talk about the first time you put on your adult suit.

Being a grown-up probably felt a little uncomfortable, like a child playing dress-up in your parents' closet. The sleeves were likely too long; everything felt a few sizes too big.

It was fun when you were young though. We would have flapped around in those sleeves gleefully, genuinely entertained. Wearing an adult suit was fun when we were young. It allowed us to imagine how it'd be like if the tides were turned. "Dad, it's your turn to wash the dishes. Quick!" we would scream, waving around Mom's favourite spatula authoritatively.

Those fun times do not have to stay in the past. Look into yourself. Your inner child is still there – ready.

T.M.A.C.U.O.Y.T.E.B.I
2.I.H.T.D.A.E.R



EDITOR'S NOTE

Action Leads To Achievement

STARTING A NEW JOB CAN BE DIFFICULT. Yet when you're a famous athlete working in an elite sport, the public tends to assume the transition is seamless. The reality isn't always the case. Today, Daniel Ricciardo is one of the world's top Formula One drivers. In our exclusive interview with the 32 year old ('Deep Focus', page 34), Daniel discusses how personally challenging his new job with the famed McLaren team has been, how COVID-19 has impacted him the past two years, and even how tricky braking in the McLaren has proved. And then there's the ever-present reminders of legends who drove before him.

Each year, many thousands of people place their hope in receiving a life-saving organ transplant. For those needing multiple organ transplants, that hope involves cruel odds. This month's health drama, ('The Double Triple', page 40) portrays an extraordinary day for two people and a team of organ transplant doctors in the same hospital. Their achievement is nothing short of miraculous.

The first of our new Earth's Heroes articles, 'Biscuits For Life' (page 28) is a heart-warming story about a mountain community of children, teachers and park rangers working together to help save a super tiny species of possums. Over the next few months, we'll be featuring more inspiring stories about ordinary people making big contributions to ease our burden on the environment.

Our October issue has stories that will inspire, inform and make you feel better about yourself and your place in the world - each one a story you'll want to share with friends and family. Happy reading!



LOUISE WATERSON
Editor-in-Chief



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LETTERS

Reader's Comments And Opinions

Creating Circumstances

Thanks for the most informative quiz on Napoleon Bonaparte in the May issue. However, I was disappointed there was no reference to a famous remark attributed to Napoleon when an aide is said to have commented, "Circumstances alter cases, your lordship."

Napoleon's reply was "Circumstances – what are circumstances? I make circumstances." **ARNOLD BENTLEY**



On Your Bike

Then And Now: 'The Bicycle' (July) took me down memory lane. The BMX bike was a coveted and prized possession for children in the 1980s. I was envious of my friend who received a BMX bike for his birthday. I longed for a BMX back then but it never came. Now I own a giant mountain bike but I still

relish the nostalgic thought of the BMX era.

DAVID TOH

Anyone For Golf?

'Golf, A Game of Life', by Graham Morley (My Story, June) is an interesting article. Golf is a game which this senior citizen can play and forget about all the problems and shed away routine stress,

Let us know if you are moved – or provoked – by any item in the magazine, share your thoughts. See page 10 for how to join the discussion.

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which is a part of everyone's life! The brisk walk I have while playing is very useful at my age; helps in controlling my weight, digestion, and lightens my mood and raises my spirits. The hours spent on the golf course helps me spend time in a useful physical activity, and I also socialise with other golfers in a very congenial environment.

TARIQUE MAHMOOD MALAK

A Crafty Solution

I can relate to the article 'Active Hands, Calm Mind' in The Genius Section (July). Crafts such as knitting can certainly help deal with stress and more. My mother, 92, has knitted several sweaters and scarves in the last three months and continues to do so.

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ROLLING ALONG

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

Family roll models.

MERRAN TOONE

Next in line to the throne.

CELESTE MCDERMOTT

Smile Rolly, before we're all wiped out!

KERRI WILKINSON

Why is everyone panicking, we'll always be 'round'!

MICHAEL KOJIC

Meet the family:

Lou, Lavvy, and wee Daly!

JANINE BEACHAM

Congratulations to this month's winner, Celeste McDermott.



CAPTION CONTEST

Come up with the funniest caption for the above photo and you could win

\$100. To enter, email

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or see details on page 10.

READER'S DIGEST

Knitting keeps her mind engaged and calm. She loves to gift her creations and gets immense satisfaction that she has helped someone in need. She craves complex knitting patterns and is elated when she can solve the complexity herself. **SHUBHA APTE**

Early Investor Or Company Co-founder?

In the 'Rich, Richer and Super-Rich' quiz (July), the answer to question 7 is incorrect.

Elon Musk was not a co-founder of the Tesla company. He was an early investor. The company was founded by Martin Eberhard and Marc Tarpinning. They secured Musk as an early investor and he eventually joined the company and then took over the management.

BRAD FOSSEY

Editor's Note: Thank you for raising this very interesting and debatable point about the founding of Tesla. You are completely correct that Eberhard and Tarpinning founded Tesla Motors in 2003 and brought in Musk as an early investor in 2004. However, the company's website describes Musk as "a co-founder". In 2009, after months of legal wrangling, Musk and Eberhard agreed that they, along with three others, are officially equals and co-founders of the company.

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MY STORY

A Child Reader

A love of reading blossomed into a career for life

BY *Jenny Canty*



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I was introduced to the world of stories in books, comics and on the wireless long before starting school. At the time we lived in a sleepy little village in Yorkshire, England. The year was 1956.

When my baby brother, Stephen, was put down for his afternoon nap, Mum and I shared a special time. We sat by the fire and read our magazines. Mum read *Woman*, a weekly that thoughtfully included a children's story which she read to me.

Then at two o'clock was *Woman's Hour* on the wireless, which also including a children's story. Best of all, I received a comic called *Sunny Stories*. Mum read me the stories until I was old enough to read them myself.

In January 1957, aged four and ten months, I started school. My parents marked the occasion by investing in a set of children's encyclopedias, forever called 'The Big Red Books'. It was a good investment; my brother and I read and referred to them till we left home.

Jenny Canty is a retired primary school teacher-cum-librarian. Jenny's first children's picture book will be published shortly, with illustrations by her daughter, Lara. She lives on a bush block with lots of native birds in south-east Melbourne.

Ganton School had 32 pupils and two classes. Mrs Bows took the infants and Miss Friar the children from age eight to fourteen.

Mrs Bows taught me to read. One day, I stared at a page of a Happy Venture Reader book and the words swam into focus. From then on, I was unstoppable.

The class reader for the whole year was *Dick and Dora* with their pets, Tip the cat and Nip the dog, its beige cover grubby with age and children's hands. I read it three times before reading it to the teacher once a week. I finished my work quickly so I could read the shiny Ladybird books on the modern revolving stand. I loved *Mick the Disobedient Puppy* and *Tiptoes the Mischievous Kitten*. The books were new and colourful; my favourite illustration was Tiptoes ripping open a pillow sending feathers flying into the air.

As we grew older, relatives could be relied on to give us books for Christmas. One year I received two copies of the *Reader's Digest Junior Treasury*, one from each set of grandparents. I was eight or nine and they lasted years. I wore one out. Mum had saved the second copy and gave it to me a few years later. It was a thick, hard-cover book and quite difficult for an eight

READER'S DIGEST

year old. When the colourful dust jackets wore out, I covered them with plastic or brown paper, just like we did with schoolbooks. I picked the stories I could read and left the rest for later years.

I learnt about the life of a salmon and a true story about a dog called Rolf who could find things. There were little jokes at the end of some stories and pages of puzzles which challenged me for years. I read and reread those stories and, looking at titles in my precious second copy now, I can remember the stories. My parents bought *The World Atlas* and the *Atlas of the British Isles* as well as *Birds of the British Isles* which often came out to be pored over on wintry afternoons.

My grandmother fostered my love of reading by having a small bookcase of old children's books. I discovered a small crimson edition of *Alice in Wonderland* in that bookcase, and read instalments of it every time I visited. When I showed my mother the grotesque illustrations by Sir John Tenniel, they made her shudder.

I also read Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales For Children*, my first Agatha Christie murder mystery, and the Reader's Digest, where I expanded my vocabulary by doing the puzzle: 'It Pays To Increase Your Word Power'.

I discovered 'Laughter, The Best Medicine' and found the articles interesting and easy to read. There was ample opportunity to read, as the adults left us to amuse ourselves and there was not much to explore in small city gardens.

My love of reading led to studying literature in three languages at high school and a career as a teacher and, ultimately, a teacher of reading.

Reader's Digest continues to play an ongoing role in my life. I have used *The Cookery Year* and *The Gardening Year* since the 1970s and was delighted to later discover Australian versions some time after I moved to Australia in 1983.



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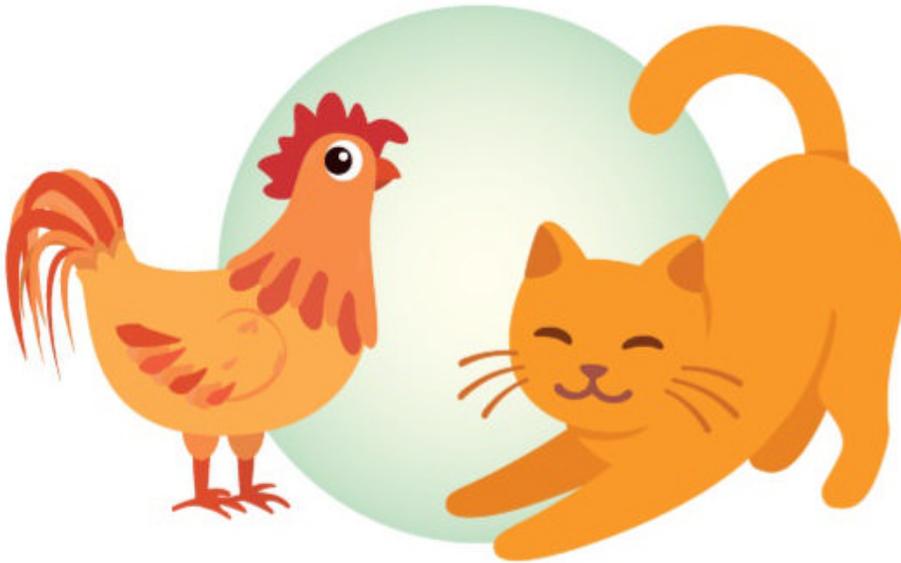
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SMART ANIMALS

Animal adventures can be a constant source of wonder



Homer's Odyssey

JOAN CAMPBELL

Our family lived in a old house on land near the Waikato River in New Zealand. We had a very large orchard and grassy paddocks that led down to the river. It was a great opportunity for me to own many pets – a horse, a goat, a sheep, rabbits and, of course, cats.

I was about five when our resident cat gave birth to a litter of kittens. One in particular was my favourite, a spunky and playful ginger tom that we named Jack.

My mother kept hens in a well-fenced hen run and as time went

by she purchased some sittings for eggs and I waited eagerly to see them hatch out – and so it seemed did Jack.

At first, we didn't suspect Jack of treachery, but every day, one or sometimes two chickens disappeared. After about a week of watching him, there came the fateful day when my mother caught Jack in the hen yard in the act of devouring a chicken. She promptly made repairs

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to the run that might keep Jack out and on the straight and narrow.

It was to no avail as Jack had developed a taste for these little morsels. After discussions with my father, it was decided to rehome Jack to a family who lived over five kilometres away at the hydro scheme town of Karapiro, where my father was employed. I was sad to see Jack go but it seemed the best solution.

Jack was duly delivered to his new home and our chickens lived safely in their enclosure. Sadly, after a few days we heard that Jack had disappeared from his new home and we worried about his fate.

Six months later our family was woken in the early hours of the morning by a loud mewing and yowling and there in the hall of our house, Jack made his joyful return known to us. He was thin, his fur was rough and he was footsore and hungry. What a fuss he made and what a fuss we made of him.

Jack was back.

We like to think that Jack walked all that distance to be with our family and not just because he was craving chicken. From that day on it was always pointed out to visitors that Jack had got six months for stealing. Perhaps, sensing his mistake, Jack showed no more interest in the hen yard – or more likely, in the six months that Jack had been away the chickens had grown too large for him to tackle.

In honour of his long and no doubt adventurous journey home, he was renamed ‘Homer’ and lived with us to a ripe old age for a cat.



Friendly Greeting

CAROLE LAWRENCE

One winter morning, while I was pegging some clothes out on my clothesline, a flock of sulphur-crested cockatoos flew overhead making a loud din with their usual screeches. Just for a laugh I called out, “Hello cocky” to them. Suddenly one of the cockatoos flew down very close to me and replied with a “Hello cocky” of his own to me.

Then it flew back to join the rest of the flock. After I’d recovered from my shock, I realised that it must have been an escaped caged cockatoo that had joined a flock of wild birds. I waved to them as they flew away from me still screeching merrily and wished the escapee well with its new life.

PETS

Bringing A Bunny Home

Things to know if you want to keep a pet rabbit

BY *Dr Katrina Warren*



Our regular pet columnist, Dr Katrina Warren, is an established and trusted animal expert.

ALTHOUGH DOGS AND CATS are by far our most popular pets, there are other choices. Rabbits, for example, are small, quiet and can make a lovely furry friend for the right household. It's important for would-be owners to be aware that rabbits have very specific care requirements to keep them happy and healthy – they're not as low maintenance as many people often believe.

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT Rabbits that are well cared for can live for eight to ten years, even up to 15, so be prepared to provide appropriate long-term care.

COMPANIONSHIP Rabbits are social animals and therefore should always be kept with an appropriate companion, preferably a neutered rabbit of the opposite sex and similar size. (The phrase 'breed like rabbits' is a sound rationale for ensuring your rabbit is desexed.) Same sex companions will often fight, even when neutered.

SUITABLE HOUSEHOLDS As rabbits prefer quiet homes, they are not suitable pets for very young children. Older children should be taught to handle them respectfully and safely. Rabbits that haven't had much experience with people may find it difficult to

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PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



adapt to their environment if adopted as an adult. This can lead to fear-related aggression towards people making it difficult to handle the rabbit. Rabbits should never be forced to interact and should always have a safe hiding place available as an escape.

ACCOMMODATION Rabbits are best kept indoors. When raised indoors from a young age, they generally enjoy being a part of the family, much like a dog or cat. They keep themselves clean and can be toilet trained to use a litter tray. Rabbits love to chew, so be sure to rabbit-proof your house by preventing access to electrical cables and items such as medicines and poisons. Pens can block off areas.

Outdoor rabbits need protection at all times from predators. They need a large hutch that is insect proof and protects against extreme weather. Rabbits are prone to heat stress.

Rabbit breeds range from 2 kg to 9 kg, but most fall somewhere in between

FEEDING As rabbits are herbivores, they prefer to graze throughout the day, so they need to have a constant supply of hay and grass. This should make up 80 to 90 per cent of their diet and be supplemented with fresh leafy greens, such as broccoli, and commercial rabbit pellets. They will also enjoy freshly picked grass, but avoid grass that is dirty or has been treated with pesticides, and never feed them grass clippings. Carrots should only be fed as a treat and unlimited access to fresh water is essential.

TIPS FOR RABBIT CARE

- Smaller or dwarf varieties are easier for younger children to handle.
- Rabbits' teeth continue to grow throughout their lives,

- so chewing on hay is essential to help wear their teeth down.
- Rabbits that are socially isolated can become frustrated and display stress

- behaviours, such as flattened ears, hunched posture, freezing, agitation and rapid breathing.
- Rabbits require a visit to the vet every year.

INVESTING IN OIL PALM PLANTATION

Sustainable solutions and good returns

In the realm of Malaysia's Agricultural Sector, East West One Group ("**EWOG**") is a company established in 2004, with the objective of becoming Asia Pacific's top-tier dependable Oil Palm Planter's Scheme opportunity business ("**Company/Group**"). Together with our structural ecosystem which consists of prospective investors, planter's consultants and the Company, this has significantly contributed to our extensive success in this domain.

EWOG provides and delivers end-to-end services along the value chain, from the initial stage of cultivation to the peak of distribution and collection of fresh fruit bunches. From our leading know-how and long-standing success in the agricultural sector, we have successfully extended the Company's commercial activities to our neighbouring country Indonesia in 2014. This achievement notably streamlined the Company's services, resulting in the fortification of our product quality and excellence.

Our practice involves the conservation of riparian reserves and forest buffers, which are homes and habitats to Borneo's diverse flora, fauna and wildlife. This is aligned with the Company's adherence to all national and international sustainable development principles. The EWOG Planter's Scheme has evolved into a cutting-edge financial tool which allows investors to diversify their

portfolios by investing in Malaysia's fast-growing and sustainable palm oil production (MSPO) sector.

In conjunction with the expected rise of the usage of palm oil in tandem with the growth of the world's population, EWOG is the first group in Malaysia to operate and manage three (3) Companies Commission of Malaysia-approved Planter's Schemes under the Interest Scheme Act 2016. This results in the group becoming Malaysia's leading, largest, and most successful Planter's Schemes operator and manager, with a total land bank of over 30,000 acres and quarterly fixed contractual returns for a mid term investment of eight (8) years.

Further, the above allows investors to acquire a fixed-term interest in an oil palm plantation and profit from the upside potential of palm oil without having to manage the plantation. This constitutes one of Malaysia's safest investment options. To date, East West One Planter's Scheme and East West Horizon Planter's Scheme have paid out 39 and 25 no. of quarterly returns respectively.

In addition to the group's headquarters in Kota Kinabalu, EWOG maintains marketing offices in Malacca, Penang, Selangor and Sarawak to serve all investors. Moving forward, EWOG is proud to be a sustainable solutions partner of choice to all investors, planter's consultants, and industry partners.



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HEALTH

Body Fat Secrets

Did you know there are several types of body fat?

BY Denise Mann

Being overweight isn't generally good for our health, but not all fat is created equal. Here are ten facts that you may not know about fat:

1 There are two major kinds of body fat: white fat and brown fat. White fat, the most abundant, is what you feel when you pinch your midsection. Brown fat is found mainly in the neck region and burns energy rather than storing it, as white fat does, says Dr Scott Kahan, director of the US National Center for Weight and Wellness. Brown fat may also ward off diabetes: a study in *Cell Metabolism* showed people with more brown fat had smaller fluctuations in blood sugar.

2 Infants have high levels of brown fat, which helps regulate their body temperature. Sadly, we lose it as we age – adults have only small amounts. But we can boost brown fat by exposing ourselves to cold temperatures. In a recent study, people who slept in a mildly cool room (about 18°C) increased the amount and activity of their brown fat by up to 40 per cent. Sleeping in warmth (27°C) decreased brown fat. Cold showers don't affect it.

3 Ursolic acid, a substance found in high concentrations in apple peels, increases brown fat. Other foods that contain ursolic acid include blueberries, plums and prunes.

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4 Brown fat has its drawbacks. Radiologists don't like it because the heat it generates makes it harder for body scans to detect tumour-related activity in cancer patients. There is no firm evidence that any specific foods or nutrients can activate brown fat, but radiologists routinely recommend that patients eat a high-fat, low-carb diet before scans to reduce brown-fat activation. Some radiologists even keep their waiting rooms warm to avoid activating brown fat.

5 White fat isn't all bad. Its health benefits include: cushioning and protecting our vital organs; keeping us warm; and storing kilojoules for later use, if food were to become scarce.

6 White fat can sometimes be turned into brown – it's then called beige fat. Like brown fat, beige fat burns kilojoules, helping combat obesity. Scientists are trying to figure out how the conversion happens; one study points to a hormone that our muscles produce when we exercise.

7 Fat cells are sensitive to temperature changes. Cooling treatments (for example, CoolSculpting) freeze fat cells to death, explains dermatology instructor Dr Anne Chapas. The body removes these damaged cells over several months.

8 Heat can also be used to eliminate fat cells, says Dr Chapas. Several studies have shown that heating fat cells above 40°C for a sustained amount of time can cause them to die, she says, and be eliminated from the body. This is how laser and radio-frequency lipolysis weight-loss treatments work. But heating or cooling treatments are no substitute for healthy eating and exercise: remaining fat cells can expand and new fat cells can appear.

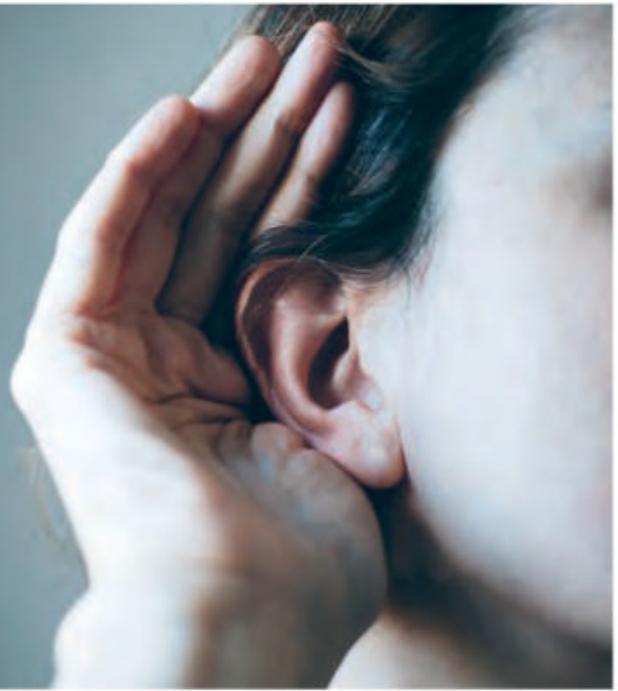
9 Colour isn't the only tell tale marker of how harmful fat might be. Excess fat stored in the abdomen or around inner organs “releases inflammatory chemicals and other molecules that can increase the risk of heart disease, liver disease, diabetes and other health conditions,” notes Dr Kahan. Fat in your arms, legs and hips doesn't typically do much harm.

10 Fat has been linked to brain health. According to a limited 2019 study in *Neurology*, people with higher body mass indices (BMI) and waist-to-hip ratios had slightly less grey matter – the material in the brain that helps process new information – compared with their leaner counterparts. But the study's authors can't say whether body fat is the cause of these differences in the brain or a result of them.

HEALTH

Silent Signs Of Hearing Loss

BY *Alyssa Jung*



You may think hearing loss is a problem for just the elderly, but the World Health Organization reports that 50 per cent of people aged 13 to 35 years are at risk for developing hearing loss due to recreational noise.

RINGING IN THE EARS that comes and goes is one of the earliest signs of hearing loss. “You may start to hear a low-level buzzing or ringing sound. When it becomes more noticeable and is more frequent or constantly there, that means you’ve damaged the nerves in your ear,” says ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist Dr Robert L. Pincus.

HEADPHONES AND EARBUDS are big contributors to hearing damage, so younger generations should be aware of this and start paying attention to signs of hearing loss now.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF STUMBLING more often, clumsiness might not be to blame. “When people have trouble hearing, they spend so much effort trying to hear that simple things like balance get less of the brain’s attention,” says hearing specialist Dr Sreekant Cherukuri.

LOUD NOISES ARE PAINFUL. “When you lose your hearing, your ear is less able to dampen loud noises,” says Dr Pincus. “The pain is hard to describe, but it’s somewhere between a sharp shooting pain and a dull ache.”

A GOOD FUNCTIONING EAR can pick up what you want to hear in a noisy room. If you can’t, that could be one of the early signs of hearing loss in the upper ranges, says Dr Pincus.

If you are experiencing hearing loss, seek help from a qualified hearing professional.

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News From the

WORLD OF MEDICINE

EXERCISE PROTECTS THE DECLINING BRAIN

It's not unusual for some cognitive decline to occur as you age. But if you have more difficulty with judgement, language or memory than is expected for your age, a doctor may diagnose you with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). This condition raises your risk of progressing to dementia.

However, in a Korean study of nearly a quarter of a million people with MCI, participants who exercised more than once a week were 18 per cent less likely to develop Alzheimer's. Physical activity may protect us by increasing blood flow to the brain or by aiding the production of the molecules that help neurons to grow.

DYSLEXIA BRINGS CHALLENGES – AS WELL AS STRENGTHS

There might be more to dyslexia than difficulties with reading, suggests a California study. Children who took part in the study

watched emotionally evocative videos, such as a baby laughing and a woman who was about to vomit. The kids with dyslexia showed stronger reactions, as measured by signs such as their facial expressions and breathing rate. It's possible that because their brains work differently, many children with dyslexia experience their emotions more intensely.

While this can contribute to sharp social skills, kids with dyslexia may also need extra support when it comes to processing strong negative feelings, in order to avoid depression and anxiety.

GRIN (OR GRIMACE) AND BEAR NEEDLES

If getting a needle makes you wince, that might actually be a good thing.

American participants in a study

were asked to make various facial expressions while

being injected. Those

who grimaced or smiled, involving both the mouth and eyes, reported about 40 per cent less pain as those who maintained a stoic expression.



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The endangered mountain
pygmy possum is so small, it can
fit in the palm of your hand

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EARTH'S HEROES



BISCUITS *For* LIFE

*Youngsters turned to baking to help save
some tiny mountain marsupials*

By Diane Godley
www.bookshq.net

When students at Berridale Public School returned to classes in February 2020, and heard that a group of locals from their Snowy Mountains community needed help after the summer bushfires had devastated the region, they set to work. Armed with aprons, bowls and wooden spoons, plus an array of interesting ingredients, the youngsters headed into the school's kitchen to bake biscuits. But these biscuits didn't use flour or butter or sugar, instead, they had healthy helpings of macadamia nuts, oil, minerals and ... mealworms.

These nutritional treats were for a fragile group of endangered mountain pygmy possums. This elusive pint-sized marsupial lives only in the cool alpine and sub-alpine Australian regions of Victoria and New South Wales, and being nocturnal is rarely seen in the wild. Up until the 1960s, when a small population of the possum was found in Victoria's Mount Hotham, the species was thought to be extinct.

Pygmy possums thrive on a diet of bogong moths, seeds, insects and fruit from the mountain plum pine. Yet in recent years, the once vast number of bogong moths that migrate each spring to the



Bogong moths are an important food source for pygmy possums

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Snowy Mountains has severely plummeted. Then, after bushfires struck the region over December 2019 and January 2020 and large tracts of the fire-sensitive mountain plum pine were lost, the animals' already dwindling food supply became even more limited.

Ecologist Dr Linda Broome, a specialist in threatened marsupial species at the NSW Department of Environment, Energy and Science, heads a team that has been tracking the region's community of mountain pygmy possums for more than 30 years. Today, just three populations are left in the wild.

"An estimated 330 adults were counted in the Cabramurra region in 2016, with 200 counted in 2018-19," says Broome. "The number counted in spring 2020 was similar to 2019, and it is thought they took refuge from the fires in the boulder field habitat."

The mini-marsupials are vulnerable to extremes in weather – if exposed to temperatures of 28°C they can perish, yet freezing winter temperatures are just as deadly. To survive, they

live in the cracks and crevices of the region's boulder fields.

Wedged safely inside these boulders, the marsupials can sleep for up to seven months during the winter periods. The small spaces are insulated by snow cover, which acts like a quilt and shields

the tiny possums from the severe cold above – where the air can drop to -22°C.

Climate change, habitat loss and feral predators are all threats to the mountain pygmy possum. But another major threat is its main food source: the bogong moth. In steady decline since 1980, the drought in 2017 saw numbers drop catastrophically.

According to the 2020 review *Australian Bogong Moths 1951-2020: Decline and Crash*, up until 2016, as many as four billion moths would migrate, mostly from Queensland, to the Australian Alps each spring, providing the essential nutrients for the alpine ecosystem. But between 2017-2020, only a small number arrived. The initial 2017 crash was most likely due to severe drought conditions in the moth's breeding grounds – from which it is still recovering.

After the fire storms tore through the alpine brush, leaving behind parched earth and scarce natural food supplies, the pygmy possums' future looked bleak. That's when Broome, with the help of volunteers, started baking 'bogong' biscuits, using a specially developed recipe that replicates the nutritional value and energy content of the moths. They then hand-delivered the biscuits to feeding stations set up in the boulder fields. But with vast quantities of



Biscuits For Life

NPWS staff helping pupils from Adaminaby Public School to make bogong biscuits

the nutritional supplement needed weekly to feed the hundreds of tiny hungry mouths, she needed help.

Fortunately, she received assistance from Dan Nicholls, a discovery officer with NSW National Parks, who set up the supplementary feeding programme Save our Species (SoS). They delivered the biscuits and water to 61 feeding stations scattered across the mountains, in the hope the possums would have enough food in their bellies to get through the long winter sleep. An adult possum may only weigh between 30-40 grams, but before they go into hibernation, they eat vast amounts of food, doubling their weight to between 65 and 80 grams.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL after the bushfires, the children at Berridale Public School wanted to know how they could help the region recover. With a history of caring for the environment, the school, under the leadership of current principal Tracey

READER'S DIGEST

Southam, contacted NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and asked what they could do. "The team at the Kosciuszko Education Centre thought the bogong 'bikkie' baking was a useful job that local students could help with," says Nicholls.

The environmentally aware kids were more than happy to put down their pencils and pick up wooden spoons instead.

Many other local schools followed Berridale's example, including Cooma and Adaminaby Public Schools. It wasn't long before all the primary school students across the Snowy Mountains region were "busy baking treats that the hungry mountain pygmy possums find irresistible," says Nicholls.

Each bake-off took around 4.5 hours to produce sixty 200-gram bags of biscuits. Altogether, this resulted in an impressive 660 bags (or 132 kilograms) of bogong biscuits.

Children as young as five eagerly participated in the biscuit drive, although none were tempted to lick the bowls. Twelve-year-old Josie Holfter, a student from Berridale Public School, told the ABC that while she had fun, she wasn't tempted to eat any of the mixture because it smelt "really gross".

Although some of the mountain pygmy possums had started to feed on natural food sources before this year's hibernation, the SoS programme



Biscuits baked with love by youngsters who wanted to help their small neighbours

continued until mid-May to give the animals a much-needed extra boost and ensure they had a good start to this year's hibernation season, says Broome. "While it is difficult to estimate the number of infants that have survived with the help of the biscuits, a field count in March resulted in 15 adult females and 32 juveniles, which is a survival ratio similar to good seasons. Approximately 50 per cent of pouch young born in spring survive the autumn," she says.

Although the figures are still small, the results are pleasing and everyone is hopeful that the numbers of this particularly vulnerable (and very cute) little marsupial can be recovered.

It's an experience the kids at Berridale Public School are unlikely to forget in a hurry. "Students learnt that giving time and effort is an important way to assist communities," says principal Southam. "But we are most proud of our new-found resilience and ability to look outwards, towards others and the future." **R**



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DEEP FOCUS

For Formula One driver Daniel Ricciardo, joining the famed McLaren team is one of his career's greatest achievements – and challenges

AS TOLD TO *Stewart Bell*

READER'S DIGEST EXCLUSIVE

“In July, I got to drive Ayrton Senna's 1990 Formula One World Championship-winning McLaren MP4/5B car at the Goodwood Festival of Speed [in England]. It was weird, surreal and amazing. But getting in the car, I also pictured Senna. I was wondering, *What was he thinking when he hopped in? What was he feeling? Where was he looking, what were his*

reference points? Or, how would he have changed gears? All this weird stuff came to me. It was unbelievable.

This season, my first with McLaren, has been challenging from personal expectations. The results have been a bit so-so, but it's definitely not through a lack of trying. I've come to a point now where I accept this car is different, it's something that I've never quite experienced. So I'm

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READER'S DIGEST

going to have to dig into a new skill set to figure it out.

There have been days where it clicks, and I'm pretty happy, and then there are days where I'm left scratching my head. It's just taking a little longer than I probably thought.

A big emphasis in any racing car is braking. Everyone thinks you've just got to get on the throttle hard. But, there's so much technique and so much that happens when you're



Above: This season is Daniel Ricciardo's first with the iconic McLaren team; (below) the McLaren Technology Centre in Surrey, England



braking. Because the cars are so fast now, the braking points are so late that you don't get much time to fix something. If you don't nail it, then it really just upsets the car throughout the whole corner.

The car, the MCL35M, doesn't always work well with what I would typically like to do, so I have to adjust and I'm definitely telling the team what I wish it could do to try to let me get back to a little bit of my style. But, for now, it's about trying to adjust to what works for the car.

There's been inner frustration from that as well, because everything around me is awesome. I love the team, the facilities, everything is good. Now, more often than not, it's just the lap times and the results. Everything feels like it should be there, so now it's getting the quickest time on the stopwatch.

It's pretty surreal walking into the McLaren Technology Centre (MTC) [in England]. I feel like every time I walk in there they change the look of the boulevard [entrance]. They have different historic cars there, so every time you're pinching yourself, thinking, *Oh wow, this team has done a bit, and it's been around a while.*

Seeing my teammate Lando Norris doing so well, as a fellow competitor, it's frustrating because you want to be the quickest guy. I want to be the best on the grid. But, there's



Ricciardo racing the Mercedes-powered McLaren in Baku, Azerbaijan, this year

the flipside where it's encouraging to see that the MCL35M can do it. Although I haven't been able to fully get it yet, it shows that if I keep on working at it and persisting, then there's definitely some light at the end of the tunnel.

DUE TO THE ONGOING COVID-19 pandemic, I haven't seen my family for over a year, but I'm not feeling homesick. I left Australia when I was 17. I think I was too young and naïve or even just too excited to ever really get homesick. I missed family and friends, but I was never lying in bed crying at night. This year has definitely been more challenging from that point of view, because the

results haven't been there. I'm not going to put on a brave face - I've missed home and I have missed seeing the family.

In terms of getting downtime, it's been challenging for several reasons. One is because everything is not completely natural in the car, we are doing quite a few simulator sessions and working on the off days. So I want a break, but there's still also a lot to learn.

I'm also aware that at some point you need to switch off and your brain needs to reset as well. Otherwise, it can be a bit like paralysis through analysis.

What also makes having a break difficult is the travel restrictions.



A seven-time Grand Prix winner, Ricciardo is regarded as one of Formula One's best all-round – and most likeable – drivers

Laying on my couch is nice, but trying to get away and completely switch off – whether it's to go and see friends, have a weekend off or just have a few beers – that's a little bit tricky at the moment. But, I'm trying to find a balance in this crazy world.

I was certainly upset about the cancellation of the Australian Grand Prix earlier this year. But, because my feet aren't on the ground in Australia, I don't really know the background to the decision. Obviously, I speak to my parents and find out what it's like. But I can't say 'Oh, that's the right decision or that's the wrong decision'. But it's sad and upsetting because obviously I'd love to get home.

The fans and the other Grand Prix drivers love coming to Melbourne.

It's a fun race for everyone, and I know that they love Australia. Hopefully, it means there'll be fireworks when we come back.

FOR NOW, CROWDS are returning to racetracks in Europe. I love the return of fans. We all nearly forgot how much more it gives you because we raced with virtually no crowds last year. I found myself in free practice at Silverstone for the British Grand Prix, waving to fans in the grandstands and just being excited they're back.

I always feel like I would be just as competitive and ferocious with or without crowds, but you do get a pick-me-up when there's a full capacity, so I'm loving it." **R**



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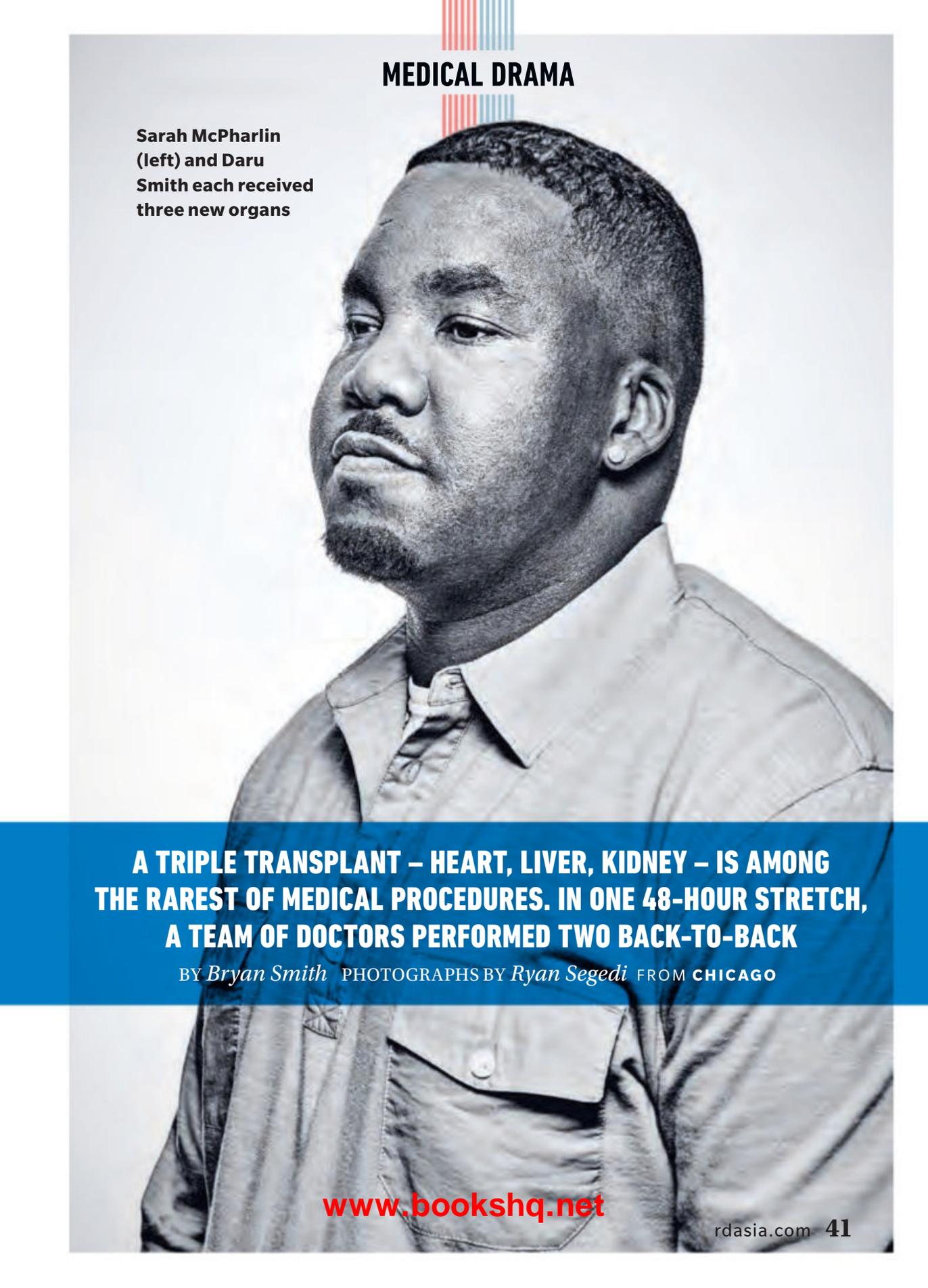


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THE Double Triple

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MEDICAL DRAMA

**Sarah McPharlin
(left) and Daru
Smith each received
three new organs**

**A TRIPLE TRANSPLANT – HEART, LIVER, KIDNEY – IS AMONG
THE RAREST OF MEDICAL PROCEDURES. IN ONE 48-HOUR STRETCH,
A TEAM OF DOCTORS PERFORMED TWO BACK-TO-BACK**

BY *Bryan Smith* PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Ryan Segedi* FROM **CHICAGO**

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D

aru Smith was talking to his doctor and sister one day in December 2018 when he began to die. He saw their forms grow dim, a dark curtain coming down on them and himself in his fluorescent-lit

hospital room at University of Chicago Medicine hospital (UChicago Medicine). Then the 29 year old was above it all, looking into a hole in the ground where a torrent of water was swirling like a giant draining sink. Next he was in a hallway. At the end of it glowed a white light. He felt at peace. No more heart palpitations, no flutters, no aches. He saw pictures on a wall. Scenes from his life. His son being born. It felt good, the light. Until Daru realised: *this is what happens when you die.*

He turned around and began to run. The light pulled him. *I have to fight*, he said to himself.

Daru had been sick. A few weeks earlier, he'd gone to the emergency department with a cold he couldn't shake. But tests showed it was much more than that. Daru was in cardiogenic shock, a condition in which the heart can't pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. He also had something called *sarcoidosis*, a rare autoimmune disease that can cause the body to overproduce certain cells

that all but shut down organs - in Daru's case, the heart, liver and kidneys.

That meant Daru needed all three vital organs replaced, a procedure so complex and risky that only 15 had been performed in the US at that point. And he would need the rarest of donors, one with three healthy organs compatible with Daru's blood type and strong enough to support his 1.8-metre tall body.

Still unconscious, Daru continued to fight the light. Then his eyes fluttered open. "Hey, where'd you go?" Daru's cardiologist, Bryan Smith, said. "Thought we lost you for a second."

Sarah McPharlin sat in a spare room at the same hospital, waiting to plead for her life. She was there to meet with the transplant-evaluation team.

As different as Sarah was from Daru - she'd grown up in a tree-lined suburb of Detroit, gone to college, travelled the world; he was raised by a mother who managed a fast-food restaurant in Chicago, where he worked until he found a better-paying job as a truck driver - they were, in more important ways, alike.

Like Daru, Sarah was 29. A rare autoimmune disease - an inflammatory condition called *giant cell myocarditis* - had attacked her heart. At 12, Sarah had had a heart transplant, but over the years the replacement organ also began to fail. Surgeons had to open her chest five more times to repair ongoing problems. Complications from years of



The surgeons (from left): Yolanda Becker (kidney), Talia Baker (liver) and Valluvan Jeevanandam (heart)

procedures and medications had all but destroyed her liver and kidneys. Her only hope, too, lay in a triple transplant.

But there were some ugly realities that needed to be addressed: the degree of difficulty of a heart transplant doubles with each previous cardiac operation. Sarah's numerous procedures had left her heart buried in scar tissue. This 'hostile' chest, as surgeons call it, makes it harder for them to locate the arteries and veins they will need to disconnect and reattach. What's more, she was so physically

weak that doctors weren't sure she could survive such gruelling surgery.

And then there's the macabre maths that goes into such decisions. A triple transplant means using three organs that could potentially save three other patients. Does it make sense to use them on a single long shot?

Heart specialist Dr Nir Uriel was at first sceptical about Sarah's case. She was as pale as the hospital sheets. She had almost no muscle mass. Her chest seemed to have collapsed in on itself, while fluid swelled in her arms and abdomen. She could barely speak a

READER'S DIGEST

sentence without gasping for breath. But when Dr Uriel asked what she would do post-transplant, the words she could get out moved him.

She'd travel, she said, maybe to Europe, where she had visited as a student in high school. She'd restart her career as an occupational therapist. Beyond that? She loved spending time with her family. They were inseparable. Oh, and there would be Michigan State University sports teams' games! How could she forget about her old uni?

Before the day was out, Sarah had spoken with nearly 30 members of the transplant evaluation team. Afterwards, they unanimously voted to move forward, each one seeing what Dr Uriel saw: someone who, though facing death, radiated life.

For both Sarah and Daru, it was now a waiting game. Waiting for organs to become available. Waiting, to put it in blunt terms, for the right person to die.

But at their darkest point, a bright spot flickered: the two patients, just two doors apart in the intensive care unit (ICU), met. Over the following weeks, a bond developed. Sarah and Daru could be seen comparing notes as they walked laps around the floor together, challenging each other on how many trips they could make, laughing at what they must look like in their gowns, with tubes and machines trailing behind. Their go-to phrase became, "You got this."

At 3.15pm on Tuesday, December 18, 2018, the pager of Jamie Bucio, lead coordinator of UChicago Medicine's organ procurement team, buzzed with an alert. A potential match for Daru had been declared brain-dead. The young man's heart, liver and kidneys were intact and strong, and his family had agreed to donate the organs. Bucio and her five-person team had one hour to respond with a preliminary acceptance of the organs – otherwise they would go to the next patient on the waiting list.

Every moment of that hour was crucial. First, Bucio collected information on the organs. What kind of shape were they in? Were they good matches? Then she and her team alerted the surgeons and the attending doctor, sending them medical records of the intended recipient. If everyone approved, then and only then would the patient be notified that a transplant was a go – and would be happening in a matter of hours.

After hearing back from all the surgeons, Bucio called the attending doctor. "Tell Daru it's time."

"You ready?" Dr Smith asked Daru as he walked into his room.

"For what?"

"Are you ready?" he repeated, smiling. Now Daru smiled, too, the realisation dawning on him.

"All right, then," said Dr Smith. "Let's do this."

On most days, the white-tiled hallway just outside operating room

Five-West is deserted, save for the occasional flock of surgeons, nurses and orderlies. But on this day, December 19, just before 3pm – 24 hours after Jamie Bucio got the call – an unusually large contingent of 20 medical staff members milled about. The star of the show was the hospital's head cardiac surgeon, Dr Valluvan Jeevanandam. He'd be performing Daru's heart transplant, the initial procedure upon which the rest of the undertaking rested.

As Dr Jeevanandam and his team began preparing for the first part of the marathon surgery, two floors below Daru was being wheeled away from his ICU room and his family. Meanwhile, three cars carrying the two surgical teams – one for the heart and one for the liver and kidney – sped across the city to retrieve the donor organs. Speed was of the essence. A heart needs to be implanted within six hours – and ideally within four – of being removed from a donor.

Dr Jeevanandam made his first cut at 3.07pm, timing it to when the doctor at the other hospital began removing the donor's heart. Inserting the rib spreader, a stainless steel retractor used to lay bare the chest cavity, he began to crank slowly. Daru was then hooked up to the heart-lung

bypass machine, the major arteries to his heart clamped shut, leaving him without a functioning heart for what would be 102 minutes, and then the removal process began. The donor organ, packed in a pickle jar, bathed in a preservation solution, and chilled in a medical box, arrived at 5.04pm.

Daru's sarcoidosis presented a complication for Dr Jeevanandam. A healthy person's tissue is like supple leather, which helps it fuse when sewn together. Much of Daru's tissue was more like cardboard, so the doctor had to be extra careful not to rip it while sewing in the new heart.

That accomplished, Daru was ready to be taken off the bypass machine. In transplant surgery, it's always a tense moment when the aortic clamp is removed. To preserve a heart for transport, doctors fill it with a solution high in potassium. If all goes well, when the clamp is released, the whoosh of blood into the heart restores normal levels of potassium and other electrolytes, and the heart begins to beat.

In Daru's case, the heart didn't beat. Not panicking, Dr Jeevanandam picked up forceps and gently massaged the heart, trying to 'tickle' it back to life. Finally a dot began to hop up from the long, flat green line

**His new heart
didn't beat, so
the surgeon
gently massaged
it back to life**

on the screen across the room. With that, Dr Jeevanandam stepped back. Four hours after surgery began, his part was done. It was 7.00pm.

While Dr Jeevanandam's assistants affixed drainage tubes and packed the area around the heart with gauze to absorb blood, Dr Talia Baker, the surgeon performing the liver transplant, and her team were setting up.

There are some 180 steps in performing a liver transplant. But Dr Baker's main challenge with Daru was the state of his liver. A healthy liver has the spongy consistency of a jellyfish, which makes it pliable. A cirrhotic, or scarred, liver like Daru's is firm, so manipulating it is more difficult, raising the risk of damage to the tissue around the organ when removing it.

With liver transplants, there's also a fear that the absence of oxygen and nutrient-rich blood can damage the newly transplanted organ once the blood flow is restored. That damage can cause the heart and lungs to collapse, resulting in death. In Daru's case, though, the new liver handled the blood flow as it was supposed to.

At 11.46pm – eight hours and 39 minutes after surgery began – the second portion of his transplant was complete. All that remained was the kidney.

Around that time, Bucio got a page that stunned her: a young woman in another state had been declared brain-dead. She was a potential match for Sarah, and she had three healthy organs. Bucio called Dr Smith, Sarah's attending doctor. "Well, I guess nobody's getting any sleep for the next 48 hours."

No hospital had ever performed

two triple transplants within a year, and yet UChicago Medicine was preparing to begin its second in just over a day. Doctors and nurses would be working on little to no sleep. The surgeons would need

**The surgeons
used some
700 instruments
for each triple
transplant**

some 700 instruments for each of the two triple transplants, all of which would have to be cleaned, sterilised, and inspected – no small task since there were also three other transplants happening at the hospital at the time, one of which was a double: kidney and liver. Was it even possible? It had to be. The offer of three matching organs simply could not be turned down.

Bucio had already sprung into action, working out the logistics. Because Sarah's organs were coming from some distance, UChicago Medicine would need two jets, plus ground transportation to and from both airports.

The Double Triple



At 8.18am on December 20, Daru's triple transplant was completed. After more than 17 hours in surgery, he was moved back to ICU. Ten hours later, Sarah's triple transplant began.

As Dr Jeevanandam had anticipated, the heart portion of Sarah's surgery required extra care, taking longer than Daru's. The scar tissue that had built up in her chest from past surgeries made hunting for the arteries and veins seem like an archaeological dig. And just as an archaeologist uses little brushes to carefully clear away dust and debris, Dr Jeevanandam had to use special instruments to tease apart the tissue to find the arteries underneath. A miscalculation of a single millimetre with the scalpel could cause a nick in the heart itself.

Sarah's liver posed special challenges as well. Because she had been on immunosuppressive drugs for most of her life, her tissues were fragile. Dr Baker had to work slowly and precisely, taking painstaking care with each incision and suture.

Dr Yolanda Becker was last up. As the final surgeon, she had to perform the kidney transplant as well as make sure the heart and liver were still functioning, which meant keeping a close eye on all of Sarah's vital signs. She also had to navigate the minefield of drains and chest tubes and pacemaker wires left in place by the previous two surgeons. Dislodge any of the tubes or drains, and she might



Top: Daru having his post-op vitals checked. Middle: Sarah and her parents. Bottom: Dr Jeevanandam (left) checks in on Sarah (right)





Daru and Sarah, seven months after their surgeries: "I feel better than I have in years," said Sarah

not notice any internal bleeding. Detach a pacemaker wire, and the heart could develop a dangerous arrhythmia without her knowing.

By the time her surgery was done, at 2.27pm on Friday, December 21, Sarah had been on the table for more than 20 hours. UChicago had accomplished the unthinkable: two triple transplants in less than two days.

Just days after the surgery, Sarah was amazed by how good she felt.

Before the transplant, she had gained 20 kilograms of water weight. She'd also felt out of breath and cold all the time, a result of the poor circulation caused by her failing heart. Now she didn't have to constantly be swaddled in a blanket or coat, and she had her normal legs back.

But the two patients' recoveries were not without complications. Two weeks after the transplant, Sarah registered low magnesium levels, requiring weekly infusions of the mineral, which keeps the heartbeat steady and maintains nerve and muscle functions. She has also struggled with a low white blood cell count, necessitating booster shots. And yet she's more active than ever. She exercises regularly, and in February 2020 she participated in Hustle Chicago, a charity

stair climb to the very top of the city's tallest building, 94 floors up.

As for Daru, a month after the operation, surgeons placed a stent in one of his bile ducts to open up a blocked passageway. Other than that, he's been working out and "actually seeing results".

Sarah and Daru had intended to meet up after leaving the hospital, but life and the COVID-19 pandemic conspired against them. Instead,

Sarah sends Daru banana bread, and they text each other three to four times a week. They also have a regular group chat with two other triple organ recipients, both of whom had their operations after Sarah and Daru.

Daru appreciates the camaraderie. There were days when the pain and the boundaries placed upon him due to his compromised immune system made him wonder whether the triple transplant was worth it. “No one can relate to what it’s like walking around with three new organs,” Daru told Reader’s Digest. But on these calls, you have “people who truly understand you, from your risk factors to your benefits.”

A few days after Sarah’s discharge, on January 7, 2019, Daru was granted his own release from the hospital he’d called home for eight weeks. As

he was wheeled through the ICU towards the lift, nurses, doctors and administrative staff clapped and shouted goodbyes.

“You are loved here,” the orderly pushing his wheelchair said.

They turned one corner. And then another. And then they stood looking down a final hallway. At the end of it shone what looked like a bright white light. The orderly pushed him forward. And as he did, the source became clear – a set of white double doors illuminated by bright disks of light in the ceiling.

The white grew brighter until Daru was on the other side, where he saw a familiar car and his sister standing beside it, smiling, waiting to take him home to his son. **R**

FROM CHICAGO (SEPTEMBER 2019), © 2019
BY TRONC (TRIBUNE).



Sorry, Gotta Jet

A 64-year-old executive at a defence company in France accidentally ejected himself from a two-seater fighter jet. His colleagues had sent him on the ride as a gift in March last year, and while he wasn’t wild about the idea, he accepted out of politeness, an inquiry heard. But when the jet took off, a combination of the 3.7 G-force and loose safety straps caused him to float up out of his seat. What he grabbed to steady himself turned out to be the ejection handle. He was launched from the aircraft, which was going over 500 kilometres an hour. Fortunately, his parachute opened, and he landed in a field with only minimal injuries. A malfunction prevented the pilot from being automatically ejected too, and he was able to land the plane. RD

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LIFE'S LIKE THAT

Seeing The Funny Side



**"If you get to be a stay-at-home dad,
why can't I be a stay-at-home kid?"**

No Prizes For Guessing

I was driving with my young twin grandsons when their mother called. As we chatted over the car's mobile phone speaker, one of the boys yelled out from the back, "Hey, Mum, guess who this is? Is it me or Luke?"

After a slight pause, the boys' mother remarked, "And he's the smart one."

SUBMITTED BY MARY MEILLIER

Fear Of Missing Out

2019: Jealous of vacation photos.

2021: Jealous of vaccination photos.

GIULIA ROZZI, COMEDIAN

Ticked Off

My brother was stopped for going 20 kilometres over the speed limit and moaned to the police officer: "Do you have to give me a ticket? Don't you give out warnings?"

The cop looked him straight in

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the face and replied sternly, "We do! They're posted along the freeway."

SUBMITTED BY MADDIE DRURY

Short And Sharp

My grandmother is a woman of few words. She looked my grandfather up and down one morning and asked him, "Did you shave today?"

"Of course I did!" he replied.

"Well, next time stand a little closer to the razor," she retorted.

SUBMITTED BY BETH WEBB

Carrot On Without

When our tour group entered a cafeteria for breakfast, the woman walking in with me made a beeline for the carrot cake. But just as she reached for a slice, she thought better of it and withdrew her hand.

As she turned away, I heard her murmur, "No, it's too early for vegetables."

SUBMITTED BY BETTY ROSIAN

AGE CREEPS UP ON YOU

I told my six year old that I'm 38 and she started crying. When I asked why, she said, "I'm just sad because old people die."

I'm both touched that she loves me so much and depressed that she thinks my life expectancy is that of a farmer in the 17th century.

CLINT EDWARDS, WRITER



THE GREAT TWEET OFF: APPEARANCE EDITION

Who knew the folks of Twitter had such a passion for fashion?

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "Do one thing every day that scares you". Today, I'm going jeans shopping.

@JAKE_40K

Since everyone laughs at the parents who wear pyjamas when they drop their kids off at school, I started sleeping in my gym clothes.

@STELLAGMADDOX

Every neck tattoo should read "I'm not getting the job, am I?"

@BAZECRAZE

HOW TO DRESS LIKE A DAD:

1. T-shirt from your team's championship 20 years ago.
2. Tomato sauce and yoghurt stains.
3. That sweater with a half-zipper at the top.
4. Instead of 'on trend', your wardrobe is more 'life's end'.
5. Cargo shorts. Every. Single. Day.

@DAD_ON_MY_FEET



I Am The
**FOOD ON
YOUR
PLATE**

Chilli

*A fine line between
pleasure and pain*

—
BY *Diane Godley*

When you humans crave a little spice in your life, need a pick-me-up, or have a consuming burning desire, you turn to me - chilli. Indigenous people from what is today known as South America have had a love affair with my kind of pleasure and pain for some 8000 years. Whether it was to give meals that lacked my razzmatazz a lift (think potatoes, grain and corn - yawn) or to stop food from spoiling, my eye-watering goodness has had long-lasting appeal.

Regardless of why I was first picked, devoured and later cultivated, once

the 16th century Spanish and Portuguese spice traders got hold of my hot little bod, I spread around the world like wildfire. Although not initially appreciated by many on the Continent, the Portuguese knew they were onto a good thing and introduced me to Africa, India, Japan and China, where I was highly prized and became a star of many a cuisine. Fast forward to today, and a quarter of the world's population crave a spicy infusion from me every day.

Although there are thousands of varieties of me, my ancestors can be divided into around 28 rare wild subspecies and five domesticated

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species (*Capsicum annuum*, *chinense*, *frutescens*, *baccatum* and *pubescens*).

C.annuum is the most abundant and mildest of my family and include the inoffensive capsicum, as well as the slightly warmer cayenne pepper and jalapeño. You can recognise this species when growing as all the fruit points towards the ground. Cousins with a 'sharper' edge, such as the popular bird's eye chilli widely used in southeast Asian cuisine, piri piri (legendary for the chicken dish) and Tabasco (renowned for its sauce) come from *C.frutescens* and point upwards when growing. Meanwhile, the chilli used in Mexican salsa and chilli con carne, the habanero - named after Havana, the capital of Cuba - is about ten times sharper than a jalapeño and belongs to the *C.chinense* species.

This 'sharpness', or let's be frank, the burning sensation you feel when you bite into me, comes from a compound called capsaicin. When ingested, the capsaicin triggers pain receptors - the temperature sensation receptor TRPV1, to be exact - in the body, the same mechanism that protects you when you do something stupid, like pulling a hot tray of biscuits out of the oven without mitts on.

Although this receptor may signal that your mouth is on fire, scientists believe I won't cause any tissue damage. It's just your old brain tricking

you into thinking you've taken up fire-eating. However, that's not to say that if you do take a bite into one of my bolder brethren, that you won't feel actual searing pain.

That's why law enforcers use my active ingredient, capsaicin, to help them incapacitate violent offenders. One squirt of capsicum spray to the face causes an intense burning sensation to your skin, eyes, nasal passages and mucous membrane lining inside the mouth, with severe cases needing treatment by medicos.

No doubt many an agonising mishap that involved me gave some clever clogs the idea to decipher how to measure the heat emitted by my extended family. In 1912, chemist Wilbur Scoville developed a scale to gauge the intensity of capsaicin in my lineage - from the mildest to the

PAIN RECEPTORS SIGNAL THAT YOUR MOUTH IS ON FIRE

outright blistering.

The aptly-named Scoville Heat Unit (SHU) measures the amount of capsaicin in each chilli variety and assigns it a numbered rating. For instance, the innocent capsicum (known as a bell pepper in some parts of the world) results in a zero SHU, while its warmer brother cayenne pepper has 50,000 SHUs, and the tiny bird's eye packs a mighty punch with 100,000-225,000 SHUs.

The chilli that fits in the hell-fire category, the man-made Carolina

READER'S DIGEST

Reaper – created by crossing the *naga jolokia* or ghost pepper (one million SHUs) with the red habanero (100,000-350,000 SHUs), has an agonising one-and-a-half million to 2,200,000 SHUs. Shaped like a devil's tail, take it from me, you don't want to mess with this guy – let alone chomp into him!

I'm often asked why I'm so hot. Well baby, let me explain. To continue to multiply, and I'm guessing you're pretty glad that I do, I need animals that will deposit my seeds whole from their droppings – such as birds – not ones

that destroy my seeds by chewing the living daylight out of them – think mammals and rodents. When these animals chew on my unsuspecting plants, they crush the seeds, deeming them useless for germination.

Birds, who are attracted to my fetching colours and are immune to my spicy centre, help carry on the good work of propagation, while the sting in my tail repels the seed-crushing mammals.

Any such mammals that do try a nibble of my fruit get a bolt of fire and brimstone for their troubles. **R**

CHILLI SOY CHICKEN STIR FRY

- To make chilli soy sauce, combine $\frac{1}{3}$ cup soy sauce; 2 tbs brown sugar; 2 crushed garlic cloves; 3 cm piece of ginger, grated; and one finely chopped red bird's eye chilli in a bowl and stir. Set aside.
- Heat wok and stir-fry $\frac{1}{3}$ cup raw cashews until toasted, then transfer to plate.
- Add 1 tbs oil to wok and stir-fry 500 g chicken strips in 3 batches until browned and cooked through. Transfer each batch to a bowl and cover to keep warm.
- Add 1 tbs oil to wok. Stir-fry 1 onion, cut into wedges and 1 capsicum, cut into thin strips, for 2 minutes. Add 300 g trimmed beans and a bunch

of broccolini, halved, and stir-fry for 1 minute or until greens are bright green and tender.

- Return chicken to wok. Add chilli soy sauce. Stir-fry for 1 to 2 minutes. Add cashews and a handful of torn Thai basil leaves. Toss to combine.
- Serve with rice and a scattering of finely chopped chilli.





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Parenting During **LOCKDOWN**

COVID-19 has brought home schooling and working from home into many households.

Here are some strategies to cope

BY *Dr Amit Sen*

Sonia loved going to school. Despite her learning difficulties, she was the art teacher's pet and popular with her friends. Every evening she would return from school happy, although she struggled with her homework in the afternoon, impatient to go down to play with her friends. Weekends were filled with plenty of fun visits to the park, outings with cousins, going to the cinema or

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the mall, and time with Papa. Life was full, and despite some distant worries about Sonia's future, her parents were quite satisfied with the way their lively ten year old was growing up.

Then came the COVID-19 lockdown. At first, Sonia was thrilled to have both parents at home 24/7. But after the novelty wore off after the first few days, Sonia's mother began to fret about Sonia's shifting bedtime and overindulgence in junk food.

The adults started blaming each other for the lack of discipline. Frayed tempers followed. Restless and cooped up, Sonia became rude and moody with frequent emotional meltdowns about missing her friends and cousins, of wanting desperately to return to school.

The fear of contracting the virus, especially by her grandparents, hung like a grey shroud. None of the adults in her life had answers to her questions of why, how and when things would return to normal again.

As we've heard said often, these are unprecedented times. We are facing a level of crisis that we have never experienced in our lifetimes. The sense of security and safety that we tend to take for granted has been taken away and replaced with unsettling questions of life and death. Besides the imminent threats and trauma it has caused, the disruptions to daily life

can have profound effects on mental health, both in the young and old.

For all of us, particularly children, the daily routine and predictability of their surroundings provides an invisible scaffolding that is essential for security and protection. Daily rituals and weekly engagements may have appeared mundane and repetitive, but they form the platform for emotional safety – a prerequisite for growth, development and effective

functioning. Sonia's mood swings and tantrums, and her parents' helplessness in containing her emotions and boundless energy, is a reflection of how distressing sudden disruptions can be.

RECONNECT TO THE THINGS AT HOME THAT BRING BACK MEMORIES AND MEANING

The second fallout has been the institutional breakdowns and consequent lack of structure that has usurped people's sense of purpose – jobs, going to schools and colleges, fulfilling responsibilities at home and in the community. It causes confusion and makes us, at best, question our belief system and can lead to intense anxiety or utter hopelessness and despair. The consequences on mental health could become serious if this state were to persist, which seems quite likely.

The third damning effect has been the limitation of pleasure and recreation activities and the connections that give us joy and lend meaning to

READER'S DIGEST

our lives – the walk in the park, the family holiday, coffee with a friend, celebrating anniversaries and milestones, or going to the cinema.

When these freedoms are taken away, frustration and eventually feelings of deep loss and grief follow. It can, indeed, precipitate an existential crisis.

Needless to say, it becomes imperative to prepare for the aftermath and attempt to prevent serious consequences. Many organisations working with mental health and associated disciplines are providing online services for the young and the old.

Here are a few strategies that you may find useful.

Stem the tide of worry

Information, stories and speculations about COVID-19 is omnipresent, filling our minds, dominating our conversations and even sometimes invading our dreams. So it is best to compartmentalise it into COVID worry breaks – allocate time a couple of times a day to read, discuss or worry, but only in the designated times.

Reclaim purpose and meaning

This may require some brainstorming. Reconnect to the things at home that

bring back memories and meaning: dig out old photos, remember songs that you would sing together, books you read when the kids were little, holidays that you've been on. You could also bring out old board games, jigsaws, and make creative spaces with whatever is available at home. Also cook and eat together, and be playful.

Discussions along these lines helped bring Sonia's family back some rhythm, routine and joy to their lives.

Switch up roles

All family members could participate in what is fun and fulfilling for each individual and the family, and the responsibilities for each as far as household chores are concerned. Then create a loose structure with each having their own schedule, which is balanced and acceptable.

Question the given

COVID-19 has made us question our beliefs, look at our institutions and examine our priorities in life. It has also been a time to express gratitude for what we have. **R**

Dr Amit Sen is co-founder of Children First.



As Kids See It

My director's son interrupted our zoom meeting at 9.45am

to ask for a popsicle. @HUNTERSTRUDEL

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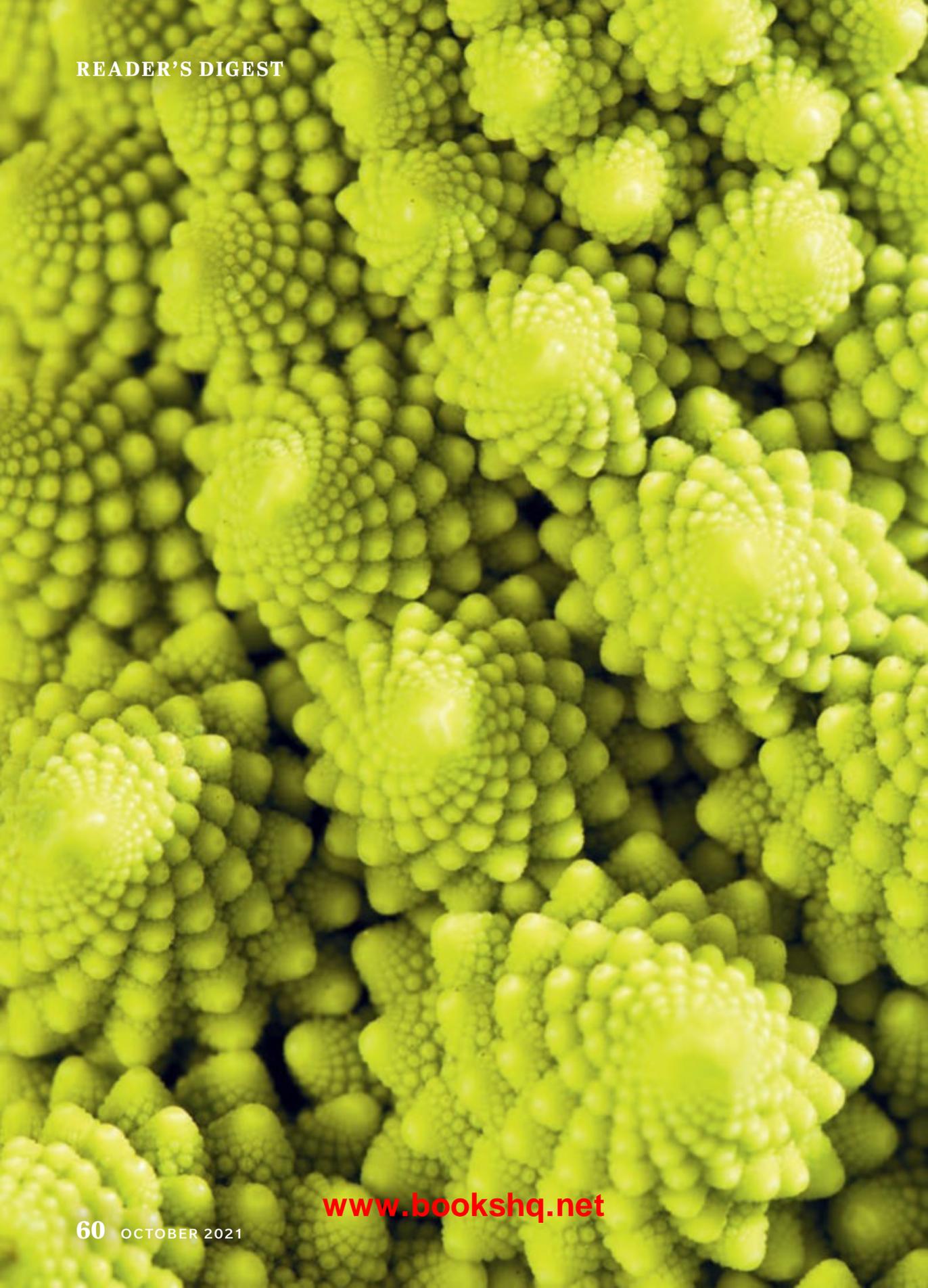
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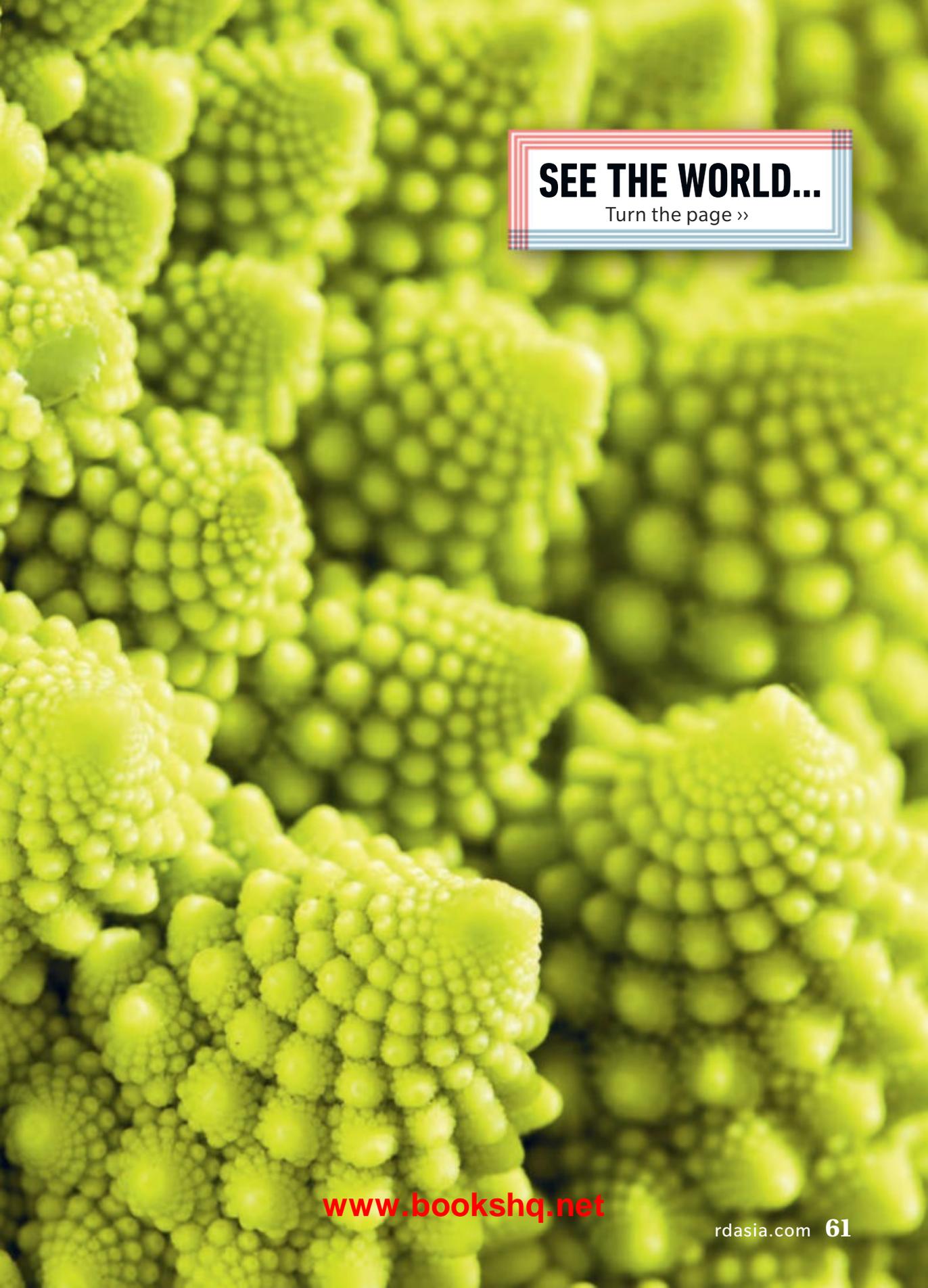
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SEE THE WORLD...

Turn the page »

...DIFFERENTLY

ROMANESCO BROCCOLI

is a vegetable that should be particularly tasty to mathematicians, as it simultaneously displays two numerical phenomena:

Fibonacci sequence and fractals. The spiral form of the bud follows a Fibonacci sequence which is used in mathematics to determine 'The Golden Ratio', also known as the 'most beautiful number', as its proportions appear in everything from architecture to the human body. To find the next number in a Fibonacci sequence, the two previous numbers are added together.

A Fibonacci sequence looks like this: 1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55 and so forth. The vegetable also displays a fractal shape with its form (fractals appear the same at different scales). Each tiny green bud is a smaller copy of the larger head's shape. Beyond that, Romanesco is rich in nutrients and vitamin C and simply tastes good.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES/WESTEND61/
DIETER HEINEMANN; PIERRE ROCHON/
ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



LAUGHTER

The Best Medicine



Job For Life

Want to live forever? Then choose one of these professions:

Old bankers never die, they just lose their interest.

Old lawyers never die, they just lose their appeal.

Old limbo dancers never die, they just go under.

Old printers never die, they're just not the type. www.ba-bamail.com

Pour Decision

Doctor says to his patient: "Your liver results are back. And frankly, they're surprisingly poor considering that I

only allowed you one glass of wine per week."

The patient shrugs: "Do you really think you are the only doctor I am going to?" From Short-funny.com

Mind Your Language

I handed her the flowers.

"You shouldn't of!" she said.

I took them back. "Have," I whispered. @ISCOFF

I used to love correcting people's grammar, until I realised that I loved having friends more.

MARA WILSON, ACTRESS

Protect Your Home

I saved a lot of money on a home security system by hanging a picture of my pay cheque on the front door.

@TBONE7219

Tyred and Tested

Two guys were studying chemistry at university. They were so confident going into the final exam that two days before, they decided to travel to the city and go to a party with some friends. However, they overslept and didn't make it back to the campus in time to write their exam.

They found their professor to explain why they missed the final. Their excuse was that they had gone up to the city and had planned to come back in time to study, but that they had a flat tyre on the way back. They didn't have a spare tyre, and couldn't get help for a long time, so they were late in getting back. The professor told them they could make up the final the next day.

The relieved students studied that night and went in the next day for the exam. The professor placed them in separate rooms, and handed each of them a test booklet and told them to begin. They looked at the first problem, which was worth 5 points. It was something simple. *This is going to be easy*, they thought.

They did that problem and then turned the page. Question No. 2 said: "Which tyre?" (95 points).

From the internet

www.bookshq.net



HALLO-SCREAMS

With Halloween on October 31, we found some jokes that will tickle a skeleton's funny bone:

- Know why skeletons are so calm? Because nothing gets under their skin.
- What do skeletons order at a restaurant? Spare ribs.

Q: What's a skeleton's favourite board game?

A: Tibial Pursuit.

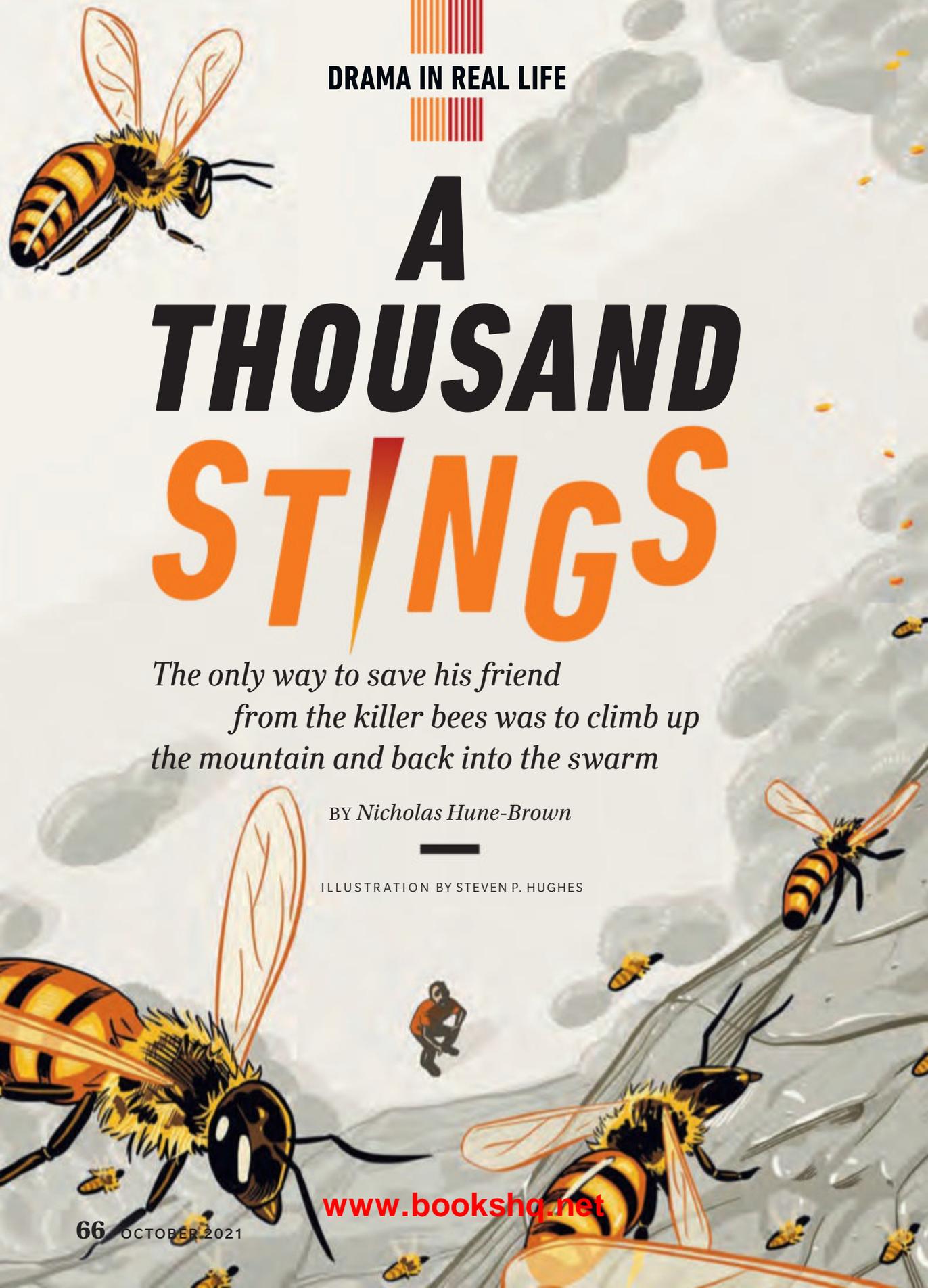
Q: What do skeletons call a raging fun party?

A: An osteoblast!

- What song do skeleton bikers ride to? Bone to be wild.

kinghalloween.com; bestoflifeonline.com





DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

A THOUSAND STINGS

*The only way to save his friend
from the killer bees was to climb up
the mountain and back into the swarm*

BY *Nicholas Hune-Brown*

ILLUSTRATION BY STEVEN P. HUGHES





The weathered syenite rock hills of Hueco Tanks in El Paso County, Texas, rise dramatically above the scrubby, high-altitude desert – and have long been a rock-climbing paradise.



In May 2015, Doug April was finishing a six-month stint as a campground host at Hueco Tanks State Park, living by himself in a caravan. The lanky 46 year old was divorced with three kids, with the youngest having just started high school. Doug had served two tours of military duty in Iraq, where he saw plenty of things that were hard to forget. Throughout it all, climbing had been a refuge. Out on the rock, he could turn off his racing mind and just concentrate on what was in front of him.

Now that respite was coming to an end. Doug had officially left the army three weeks earlier, retiring as a major, but he wasn't through with war zones yet. In a few weeks, he was heading to Afghanistan for three months to fly reconnaissance missions as a private military contractor. He wanted to make the most of his last days of climbing.

Around 8am, Doug's climbing

partner, Ian Cappelle, pulled up to the campsite. The 38-year-old geologist had moved to El Paso with his wife, Malynda, five years earlier. Shortly after, he'd met Doug while out climbing, and they'd been friends ever since.

Burly and bearded, Ian didn't necessarily look the part of a climber. But as soon as he'd tried the sport, he was hooked. He regarded Doug as a kind of big brother – an experienced climber and generous teacher.

"What should we do today?" Doug asked as they packed their ropes that morning.

"Well, you've been up Indecent Exposure twice already," Ian said. "I'd like to do that route."

Doug paused. Indecent Exposure had always filled him with anxiety. It wasn't the most difficult route in Hueco Tanks, but it was probably the most intimidating. It had two sections, and both had passages that left you hanging out over 75-metre drops,

unprotected. Midway along the route there was a plaque in memory of a university student who had died while attempting it.

But when it's one of your last climbs for a long time, you want to make it a memorable one.

The day was beautiful. The sun was just right, the breeze perfect. If Ian agreed to lead the first part of the climb, Doug said he would lead the second.

Ian climbed out to his right, his chalked fingers finding their way to the cliff's handholds. He and Doug were tethered together for safety,

step to the right, followed by a few metres of slim, fingertip-and-toe edges. He'd had trouble there in past attempts, but this time he nailed it, making his way to a chunk of rock about the size of a refrigerator.

"That was great!" he called out across the chasm, a few metres above his partner and eight metres out to the right. Then: "This is weird. Where did all these bugs come from?" Doug slapped the back of his neck. He looked down and, in the next moment, watched in terror as a cloud of bees swirled out of the rock - more bees than he'd ever seen, like a scene from



THE SWARM ENVELOPED HIM IN AN INSTANT, STINGING HIM OVER AND OVER, THE PAIN SPREADING ACROSS HIS BODY

with two lines of rope connecting them through belaying devices on each of their harnesses that would act as a brake, holding the rope tight if either of them fell.

As Ian led the way, he clipped the rope into metal anchors drilled into the rock face for protection. Twenty minutes into the climb, he saw the memorial plaque and silently paid his respects. He made it to the ledge that marked the end of the section and attached himself to an anchor. Doug followed and they paused for a moment to rest, 40 metres up in the air.

Doug led the second section. The hardest part came early on - a huge

a horror movie. The swarm enveloped him in an instant, stinging him over and over again, the pain spreading across his neck and face and body.

NORMAL HONEYBEES can sometimes be territorial, but Africanised bees are much more aggressive. They arrived in the Americas in 1956, when African bees that were introduced to Brazil to increase honey production escaped, bred with European honeybees, and quickly spread across the US.

When Africanised bees sense a threat, they don't just send a couple of bees to ward it off - they send hordes, chasing a person for up to

400 metres until the threat is eliminated. If someone is stung between 1000 to 1500 times, scientists estimate they've got a 50-50 chance of dying. Since the 1950s, swarms of Africanised bees have been responsible for more than 1000 deaths; there's a reason they're known as 'killer bees'.

A moment after the bees swarmed, Ian watched in horror as Doug jumped off the ledge, feeling the jerk of tension in his harness as his partner's weight pulled the rope taught. "Lower me, lower me, lower me, go, go, go!" Doug yelled.

From his perch, a slim ledge about a metre across and just half a metre deep, Ian played out all 60 metres of rope, ripping it through the belaying device as fast as he could. Below him, the wall undercut the ledge he was standing on, and Doug disappeared from view.

That's when Ian saw the first bee flying towards him. He stood as still as he could, figuring if he just ignored it, it should go away. Instead, it flew straight at him and stung him on the neck. The stings came quickly after that - one, two, three, four, and then a crescendo of pain as the bulk of the hive attacked him. Ian tried to cover his face, the high-pitched whine drowning out everything as the bees attacked his ears, eyes, nose and mouth.

His mind raced as the bees stung him. *Why hadn't Doug unclipped*

himself once he reached the ground? Once he unclipped, Ian could pull up the rope, anchor himself into the wall and rappel down to safety. But Doug was still hanging there, dead weight on the end of the rope.

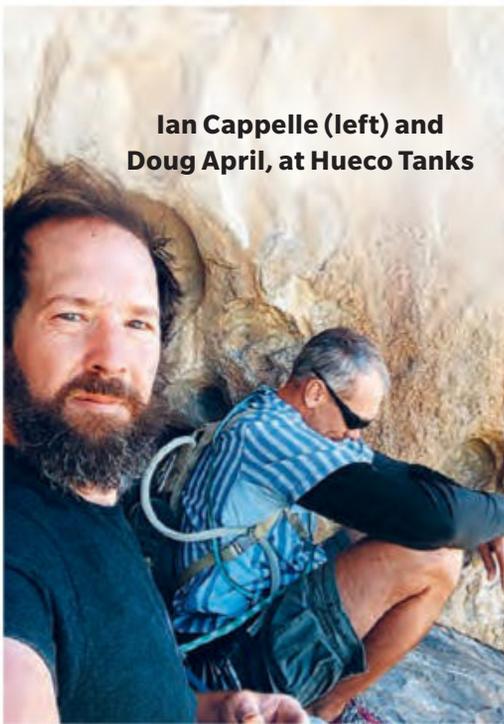
Ian stood on the slim ledge and sucked water out of his climbing bottle, desperate to stay hydrated to stave off the effects of the venom. *What do I do?* He reached up to brush the bees off his head and felt a halo of insect bodies four centimetres thick, stinging him over and over again. *Call your wife, he thought. Tell her you love her. But what if he dropped the phone?*



The toxins coursed through his bloodstream. At a certain point, the panicked thoughts subsided, replaced by a strange sense of calm. It was a terrible way to go. He was so sorry Malyn-da was going to lose him like this, but there was nothing he could do. The world shrunk around him, squeezing to a pinprick, and Ian blacked out, slumping down onto the rocky ledge.

BELOW HIM, Doug hung suspended in mid-air, two metres away from the wall and about 20 metres off the ground. He'd been stuck that way for about ten minutes, and the bees hadn't stopped stinging.

"Untie the blue rope!" he yelled to Ian. He wanted Ian to use one of the ropes to rappel himself to the



**Ian Cappelle (left) and
Doug April, at Hueco Tanks**



ground. But neither man could hear the other. All they could hear was the deafening buzz.

After so many stings, Doug's body was becoming numb to the pain. He could feel the bees climbing all over him, but the stings hardly registered. One flew into his mouth – vibrating and fuzzy, with a slight flowery taste – and he quickly spat it out. After more than a dozen stings, people can experience vertigo, nausea and even convulsions and fainting. Doug had been stung hundreds of times. He pulled his cap over his face and tried to think.

He had always been able to keep his head in a bad situation. He'd crashed a helicopter in training and seen men die in combat. And no matter the danger, he'd always been able to flick a switch in his brain. Turn off the fear. Concentrate on what needs to be done.

What needed to be done now was clear: he had to climb down. The mountain was criss-crossed with climbing routes – he just had to find one. About five metres away, he spotted an anchor that was part of another route. He swung himself towards the bolt, caught it on the third try and clipped himself in. Then he released the ropes that were attached to Ian, leaving them dangling in the wind.

On a good day, this wouldn't have been a difficult route, but this wasn't a good day. He was pumped full of bee venom, his body inflamed and his mind swimming. He carefully picked out a route down.

The climb down took him about five minutes, but it felt like forever. By the time Doug made it to the ground, he was nauseous and nearly delirious. He stumbled towards the

road, just as one of the park rangers pulled up.

"Ian," Doug gasped, gesturing up at the cliff. He and the ranger called Ian's name. They could see him up on the ledge. He was in the foetal position, a massive cloud of bees surrounding him. "Ian!" he yelled again. His friend didn't move.

Doug did the calculations in his head. Someone had already called search and rescue, but it would take them about an hour to get a team

had been about 45 minutes since the start of the attack, and Doug had no idea if his friend was dead or alive. Even in his nauseous state, it didn't cross his mind to ask one of the other climbers to head down. It was his partner down there – he would be the one to go and get him. Doug set an anchor at the edge of the cliff and clipped himself in. One of the other climbers began belaying him down.

For about the first 15 metres, Ian was out of sight. Finally, the cliff grew



TWO PASSERSBY USED THEIR CREDIT CARDS TO SCRAPE DOUG DOWN, *SLOUGHING OFF HUNDREDS OF STINGERS INTO THE SAND*

from El Paso. And to get a team that could safely climb down to Ian and remove him? That could take climbers who didn't know the area a few hours more.

Doug knew what he had to do. "Drive me back to my car," he said to the ranger. "I've got another rope in there. I'll go get him."

Doug scrambled up the rocks as fast as he could. He'd decided to hike another route up the back of the mountain, then rappel down to Ian. He wore the park ranger's radio as well as a mesh net that he pulled over his baseball cap.

Part way up the trail, he ran into two other climbing friends and conscripted them into the rescue plan.

By the time they reached the top, it

steep enough that Doug could see his partner, still motionless, covered by a swirling blanket of bees. "Ian!" he yelled. And this time he looked up.

"He had the same look I've seen too many times in combat, where someone's been blown up or shot," Doug remembers. It's not fear, exactly – more a look of pure incredulity. *How did this happen to me?* "That's how he looked at me. Then he put his head back down."

Doug made his way down to the ledge. The bees were all over him again, but by now he was entirely numb to them. He attached Ian to his belay device. "I'm going to get you out of here," he said.

Ian was just conscious enough to follow his friend's simple

instructions, while Doug carefully lowered him the 40 metres to the ground. Below them, the first ambulance was just pulling up.

DOUG WATCHED as the rangers and paramedics collected Ian. Then he lowered himself as quickly as he could. By the time he reached the ground, Ian was in a helicopter headed for the hospital in El Paso. It was only then that the search-and-rescue team arrived.

Doug turned down the paramedics' advice to go to the hospital. Although he felt faint, he didn't believe he was going to die anytime soon.

In the car park, he ran into two climbers who had wilderness first-aid training. Doug stripped down to his underwear. The best way to remove the stingers, they told him, wasn't to use tweezers, which squeeze the poison from the venom sacks into your body. The two men used their credit cards to scrape him down, sloughing off hundreds of stingers into the desert sand.

At the hospital, doctors estimated that Ian had been stung more than a thousand times – a high enough dose to be lethal. He had been lucky. And

with a day or two to flush it out of his system, he would be fine.

MONTHS LATER, after Doug returned from Afghanistan, the men planned a climb – back at Hueco Tanks.

They took a different route this time, and any trepidation they might have felt being out there dissipated in the fresh air of another perfect day. They reached a little alcove high above the desert and sat down to rest.

In the months since the attack, Ian had plenty of time to think about what could have happened if Doug hadn't come back for him that day. His one memory after he blacked out is a thick carpet of dead bees covering the cliff ledge and then, entering the picture, Doug's red shoes.

On the ledge, he tried to tell Doug how much he appreciated what he'd done, but his friend waved him off. It hadn't even been a choice. "There was just no way he wasn't going to try to help me," says Ian.

The two men took in the view. The sun was just right, the breeze light. They stood up again, the rope strong and secure between them, and went back out on the rock. **R**



Dead Or Alive?

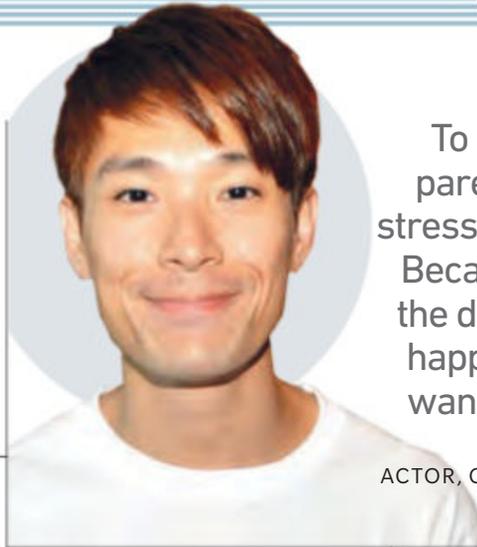
Several Romanian courts initially rejected a 63-year-old man's claim that he's alive, after he was officially registered as deceased. After working aboard for 20 years, Constantin Reliu discovered he had been declared dead in 2003 after he lost contact with his family. AP

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QUOTABLE QUOTES

WORDS ARE
AS CLOSE TO
IMMORTALITY
AS YOU'LL
EVER GET.

AUTHOR YANN MARTEL,
IN *THE WALRUS*



To me, I think as a parent we shouldn't stress our kids so much. Because at the end of the day, do you want a happy kid? Or do you want a stressed kid?

BEN YEBO,
ACTOR, COOK AND FATHER OF TWO

All laughter
is a muscular
rigidity
spasmodically
relieved by
involuntary
twitching.

ROBERT BENCHLEY,
US HUMORIST

**KEEP THE
GOLD AND
KEEP THE
SILVER, BUT
GIVE US
WISDOM.**

ARABIAN PROVERB



THERE'S
NO THEM.
THIS IS WHAT
EVERYBODY
DOES: MAKE
A DISTINCTION
ABOUT THEM.
IT'S JUST US.

KEN BURNS, FILMMAKER



*I hate it when
people press the
lift or crosswalk
button right after
me. You think
you press buttons
better than I do?*

ISSA RAE,
ACTOR

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FRESH FROM
THE OCEAN.*



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Plastic

オーシャンプラスチック



(0.5mm) Blue Ink



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*Made from
plastic trash + recycled
in the ocean plastic

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THEN AND NOW



The Toilet

Take a seat as we explore the historic origins of a life-changing – and life-saving – invention: the toilet. Don't worry, we promise to keep it clean

BY Zoë Meunier

Most of us probably don't give our humble loos too much consideration, but these hard-working appliances, as well as being highly convenient, can lay claim to saving more lives than nearly any other human invention. And yet tragically, around 60 per cent of the world – 4.5 billion people – still don't have a toilet.

While toilets took some time to get to their modern day level of porcelain perfection, they have existed in some form since ancient times.

Much like today, in ancient civilisations, wealth influenced toileting standards. If you were flush circa

3100BCE in Ancient Egypt, you took a lovely limestone seat indoors, but if you were poor, you made do with a wooden stool with a hole in it out back. But regardless of class, below each seat was a container filled with sand to collect the waste. Think human kitty litter, if you will. Of course, wealthier people had servants to empty the containers, while lower classes did their own dirty work – typically emptying waste into a river or onto the street, as there were no sewer systems.

Other ancient civilisations – including Mesopotamia (3200 BCE), the Minoan civilisation of Ancient Greece (300 BCE-100 BCE) and the

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READER'S DIGEST

Indus Valley Civilisation in East Asia (2600 BCE to 1900 BCE) were extremely sophisticated when it came to sewage systems and toilets, with private toilets connected to such features as underground drains, water management systems and clay pipes for sanitation. There is even evidence that the Minoans used flush toilets.

The Ancient Romans were one of the first civilisations to invent public lavatories, although theirs were perhaps a little more public than we would prefer today. In these rooms lined with benches of toilets, groups of men would sit and do business (the workplace kind) while doing their business (the non-workplace kind). In lieu of toilet paper, they used a communal sponge on a stick instead called a *xylospongium*, which was kept in a tub of water in front of

where one sat. Add that to the list of things you never knew and will now never be able to forget.

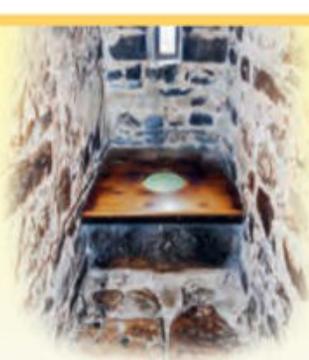
Sadly, all this early innovation got lost down the gurgler somewhere along the way. For many more centuries, a 'toilet' could have been anything from a communal outhouse to a chamber pot or a hole in the ground, but during the castle-building boom of the Middle Ages, toilets found their way into the architecture. These early bathrooms, known as 'garderobes', were small rooms that protruded from castle walls and consisted of a stone or wooden seat over a vertical shaft over an open drop. The name garderobe - which translates as 'guarding one's robes' - is thought to have come from the practice of hanging one's clothes in the toilet shaft, as the ammonia from the urine would kill the fleas. (A handy hint to keep up your sleeve.)

Waste from the garderobe would either land in a pit (to be cleared out by an unfortunate individual known as a 'gong farmer'), or drop into a moat, river or the sea. Being open to the ground, garderobes could be a weak spot in a castle's defences, for

**FLUSHED
WITH
SUCCESS**
A history
as old
as time



c. 300 BCE
AN EARLY MODEL LOO



Middle Ages
THE GARDEROBE



1830s
AN EMPEROR'S STOOL

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those brave enemies who drew the short straw and were prepared to attempt to clamber up inside one.

While job applications for gong farmers and garderobe chute climbers were probably in short supply, a much more coveted role in the Tudor court was the position of Groom of the Stool. Fear not, the 'stool' in question was the King's commode, and the Groom's job was to help the king undress before using it and supply him with water, towels and a washbowl after he was suitably relieved. Rumour has it, if you were that close to the King, he was more than likely to share some of his coveted secrets, too.

In 1596, Sir John Harington, godson of Queen Elizabeth I, invented a flushing toilet. A noisy, valved contraption, it featured a 60cm-deep oval bowl fed by water from an upstairs cistern, which required a whopping 28 litres of water per flush. While Queen Elizabeth I was impressed enough to get one installed, the fact that the bowl washed straight into a fetid cesspool

below meant the pong outweighed any convenience. Still, as the first royal flush, it's worth mentioning.

(Fun fact: Kit Harington, the actor who played Jon Snow in *Game of Thrones*, is a descendant of Sir John Harington, the man who invented one of the first 'thrones'.)

It was a couple more centuries before English inventor Alexander Cumming was granted the first patent for a flush toilet in 1775. His greatest innovation was the S-shaped pipe below the bowl that used water to create a seal preventing sewer gas from entering through the toilet and sparing our olfactory senses. Thank you, sir.

The huge amount of growth brought on by the Industrial Revolution saw hugely overpopulated streets, resulting in rampant disease and death by cholera and typhoid, which were spread by contaminated water. It actually took many years for scientists to make this connection, but once they did, many countries worldwide began feverishly building



c. 1880

A HIGHLY DECORATED BOWL



1970s

CARPET SEAT COVER



2020s

THE MODERN BIDET

READER'S DIGEST

extensive sewer systems to help control these diseases. Working toilets (or water closets, as they were then known) were wed to working sewers in the 1880s, and much of the world was changed forever.

Of course, no self-respecting toilet retrospective would be complete without mentioning Thomas Crapper. Many credit this British plumbing impresario with inventing the toilet (and the slang word for what goes into it), but alas, neither is true. He was, however, hired by Prince Edward (later King Edward VII) to construct lavatories in several royal palaces, and he manufactured and sold one of the first widely successful lines of flush toilets, opening the world's first bathroom showroom in Chelsea, England in 1866.

At the time, it wasn't proper to talk about toilets, much less flaunt them. Crapper brazenly displayed toilet pans in his store windows, allegedly causing some ladies to faint at the sight. He's also believed to have pioneered the first hinged toilet seats, thus being the cause of much marital disharmony in households the world over.

Being the Victorian era, these newly visible vessels were decorated to within an inch of their lives with ornate embossing, glazing and

decorative effect. But by 1910, most had twigged that white, smooth surfaces, while less visually exciting, were much easier to keep clean.

The first decade of the 20th century saw more important improvements, with toilet bowls, flushable valves and the all-important toilet paper rolls all making their presence felt.

Economic pressures during the Great Depression made the new, more affordable close-coupled two-

piece model of toilet popular – a style many of us still have today. The following century saw a variety of tweaks and improvements – many good (low-flush and dual-flush capabilities, soft-closing toilet seats, concealed tanks) and some not-so-good (shag-pile toilet seats).

In the 21st century, it's all about toilet tech, with Japan leading the charge. Today's most futuristic toilets come complete with a sensor-activated seat and a complex control panel to operate a bidet system – air dryer, deodorising spray, LED light display and background music. Some even include a foot warmer. Sounds a bit excessive? Given a recent poll found we spend close to three hours (on average) on the throne each *week*, maybe we all deserve to feel like royalty while we're there. 

The loo roll made its debut in the early 20th century



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TRUE CRIME

**FROM THE
COMFORT
OF THEIR
GAOL
CELLS**

**A DIABOLICAL SCAM SNARES EVERYDAY PEOPLE.
THE REAL SHOCK IS THAT IT IS PULLED OFF BY PRISONERS**

BY *Doug Shadel* FROM AARP THE MAGAZINE

www.bookshq.net

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3. TYPED NAME OF MR. LOUIS

APPROPRIATE OFFICIAL *[Signature]* IS DATE 6/10/8

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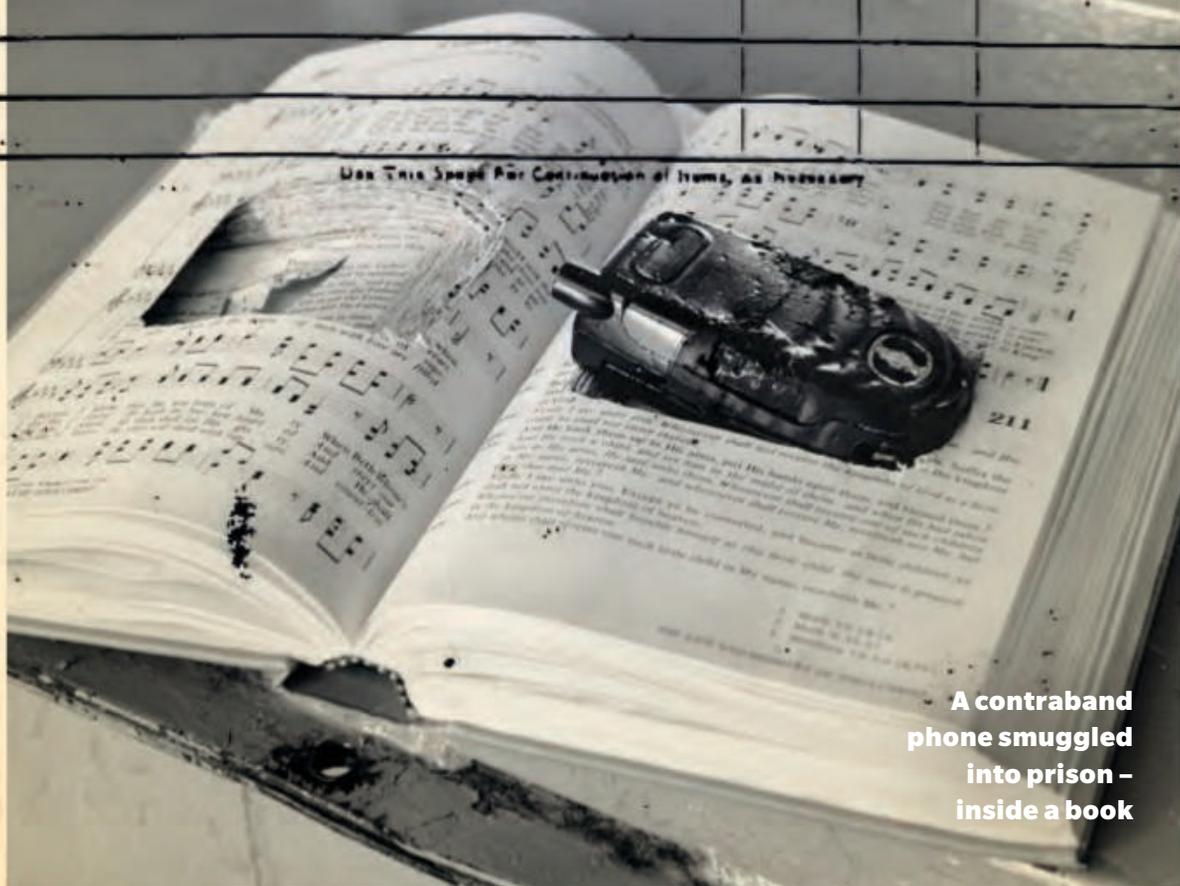
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A contraband phone smuggled into prison – inside a book

LIKE

so many of us, Kaj Miller, 50, almost never answers her landline anymore. But when it rang one Saturday morning in August 2015, the caller ID read 'San Diego County Sheriff's Office'. Since she'd had a number of family members in trouble with the law over the years, she decided to pick up. Turns out that she was the one in trouble. The officer on the phone told her she had missed jury duty and there were warrants out for her immediate arrest.

Miller didn't believe him. "I had just served on a jury three months before," she says, "so I pushed back and told him I thought it was a scam. I asked to talk to his supervisor:"

The man on the phone calmly said, "No problem," gave Miller the number for the sheriff's office, and told her to ask for the Court Services Division. When she called the number, a recording answered with "San Diego County Sheriff's Office", then ran through a series of prompts. She pressed 3 for the Court Services Division.

Captain Dwight Garrison picked up the call and, after a pause to check her status, told her the same story:

**"WORK WITH
ME OR OFFICERS
WILL COME AND
ARREST YOU"**

she had missed several jury duty notices and there were two warrants in circulation for her arrest. "Unfortunately, because it's Saturday, if you don't work with me to pay the US\$989 fine, officers will come out to your house and arrest you."

Miller told Garrison that there must be some mistake; he responded that she was probably right. But only the court could say so, and it was closed. Meanwhile, the warrants were still live. The one way to avoid arrest was to pay the fine and then straighten things out on Monday, when the court reopened. Otherwise, Miller would likely spend the rest of the weekend in gaol.

Miller was still sceptical, but the prospect of being arrested and spending a night or two in gaol really frightened her. "At this point, I was terrified."

So she decided to follow Garrison's instructions. She drove to a retail store, as she was told to do, took out a \$989 MoneyGram wire, and gave Garrison the wiring information and immediate access to the money. Still on the phone, Garrison told her that only part of the money went through, so she needed to get another money order to avoid arrest. By this time, Miller had had it. After a testy back-and-forth with Garrison, she hung up and nervously waited out the weekend.

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Sneaking phones into prison was key to the ruse



PHOTO: COURTESY GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

On Monday she called the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, and an officer confirmed that she had been the victim of a scam.

'CAPTAIN DWIGHT GARRISON' was actually sitting 3500 kilometres away in a gaol cell at Autry State Prison, a medium-security facility in Georgia. His real name: Joseph Tate. He was two years into serving a 40-year sentence for cocaine distribution. His cellmate, Jesse Lopez, was the first 'officer' Miller had spoken with; he was serving a ten-year sentence for two robbery convictions.

Lopez and Tate made a good team; over two years, they had brought in more than \$300,000 from the bunks of their cell by pretending to be cops and calling people around the country,

pulling the jury duty scam. It's a relatively simple, common swindle that requires just a phone, a few apps, and a healthy dose of daring.

Lopez and Tate had all these tools. And they got very good at using them, playing off each other's strengths. Lopez was the researcher, staying up for days at a time, high on crystal meth that was smuggled into the prison, finding potential victims to target and all the information about local courts and sheriffs to use in the pitch. Tate, a gifted talker, was the closer – he had a knack for persuading people to send him money. He even got a retired judge to pay more than \$900 so his daughter, who supposedly missed jury duty, wouldn't be sent to gaol.

Key to the success of the conspiracy were the mobile phones smuggled



Lopez (right) led the online hunt for victims. Tate talked them into sending the money

into the prison. By law, inmates aren't allowed to have them. But overcoming that is often just a question of prison economics. Reginald Perkins was one of the guys recruited to join the scam, and in testimony to FBI agents, he explained how easy it was to smuggle phones into Autry. The most common strategy was simply to bribe the guards. A prison guard in Georgia makes \$15 to \$20 an hour. As Perkins told the FBI, "I can pay them \$1000 in one day for a mobile phone. Who's not going to take the chance?"

More creative ways to smuggle in mobile phones included throwing them over a prison wall or even flying them over with remote-controlled drones. Then either corrupt guards or inmates would pick them up. Or, as was one case, an old couch was sent to a prison so it could be

reupholstered by inmates getting vocational training. More than 100 phones were found hidden inside.

With phones in hand and endless free time, Lopez and Tate got to work. Mostly they targeted individuals living in wealthy neighbourhoods. "It's easier to get money from people who have money," Lopez later testified. "And they more likely don't want to go to gaol."

The internet and a smartphone made locating them easy. "I would type in a listing for something between \$1 million to \$3 million [on a real estate service]. And I would just start calling people in the area around it."

Lopez liked to phone his victims late in the afternoon, hoping no one was home. He would leave a message, using a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) service to fool the caller ID so it looked as if the call came from the local police department. When the victim got home and found a message from the police, the person would call back and be tricked by Lopez. He used an app that directed the call to an online call centre, where an automated answering service allowed him to record something like, "You have reached the Detroit Police Department. To file a police report,

press 1; for civil matters, press 2; for the Court Services Division, press 3.” If the victim pressed 3, Captain Dwight Garrison, Lopez’s cellmate, responded.

“It was more believable if you called and heard this computer-automated voice say, ‘This is the police department’ and give you the same rundown that any police department nationwide is going to give you,” Lopez says.

Once Tate or Lopez got someone on the phone, the deceit continued. Lopez had downloaded a police-scanner app that would play a random feed of local police calls as background noise during the phone conversation.

Tate and Lopez also played off each other. Lopez would be the dumb cop, pretending to know only that a warrant had been issued. He would tell victims to call Tate for more information. When they called back, they would get Tate/Garrison, who was sitting right next to Lopez in their gaol cell. Tate would speak more formally, answering with “Court Services Division,” and then take the victim through the process of securing the money to pay the ‘fine’ or ‘bond’. Lopez describes Tate as incredibly persuasive, which is why Tate did more of the pitching and Lopez did more of the research.

CONVINCING VICTIMS such as Miller to send in money was just one part of the conspiracy. The scammers also needed someone to launder the payments. That’s where Reginald Perkins came in. Perkins was a *washer*, the gaol term for a money launderer. He got the job thanks to his unique ability to befriend women on the outside, which he did by using contraband phones to access social media sites. Perkins bragged that he had about 100 women working for him across the country who

would help him launder prepaid debit cards and MoneyGrams.

Perkins would get a \$500 debit card from a colleague and then call one of his ‘girls’, who would take the number and convert it into two

or three new debit cards. Next, she would call him back with the card numbers, after taking a \$100 cut for herself. Perkins told the FBI that he may have laundered as much as \$1 million while he was at Autry.

Washing the initial payment by transferring it to different cards was important for two reasons: first, the inmates wanted to distance themselves from the crime as much as possible; and second, this eliminated the possibility of a victim cancelling the payment. Once the scammer had the illegal proceeds loaded onto a debit card, he could use it at

PERKINS LAUNDERED \$1 MILLION FROM HIS GAOL CELL

the prison shop, trade it for drugs or contraband inside the prison, or transfer the balance to friends or family on the outside.

AFTER THE POLICE verified that she didn't have any warrants against her for missing jury duty, Kaj Miller filed a detailed criminal complaint with them and notified her bank that she had been scammed. Unlike many victims, she was able to get a refund from her bank. But that was not the end of the matter for Miller. About two years later, she was contacted by FBI agents, who asked whether she would testify against two of the scammers. She gladly cooperated.

It turns out that the FBI had been investigating activities at Autry and other Georgia prisons. The FBI had gone so far as to transfer an inmate to the prison to act as an informant. This individual told inmates at Autry that he had a contact on the outside who could launder money. What he didn't tell them was that guy was the lead FBI agent on the case. Over several months, the informant supplied debit cards and thousands of dollars in cash to inmates to build the case against them. He even secretly recorded Lopez and Tate practising their scam. The FBI also intercepted phone calls coming out of the prison.

Perhaps the bad guys should have seen this coming. Between 2014 and 2015, sweeps of Georgia prison facilities led to the seizure of 23,000 contraband phones – one for nearly every other inmate in the system.

Finally, in January 2016, the US attorney in Georgia filed criminal charges against 51 individuals: Tate, Lopez, 17 other inmates, 15 prison guards and 17 civilians. All were alleged to be part of a conspiracy to bribe guards, smuggle contraband phones into prisons, defraud citizens and launder money.

Over the next two years, most of the 51 individuals pleaded guilty, including Lopez and Tate. The exceptions were one inmate and a female washer who fought the charges

and took their case to trial. In April 2018, Lopez, the FBI's confidential informant, Miller, and five other victims testified against the two. The inmate was convicted; the woman was found not guilty due to insufficient evidence. Perkins, the money launderer, pleaded guilty in August 2016 and was sentenced to nearly 13 additional years in prison.

Although prosecutors were pleased by the convictions, the court found the crimes disturbing. At the sentencing, Judge Steve C. Jones said, "When I sentence people, I say, 'You are a danger to society, so I am sentencing

**"HERE IS
A PERSON IN
PRISON AND
STILL A DANGER
TO SOCIETY"**



**More than
23,000
phones were
confiscated
from Georgia
prisoners**

you to prison.' Well, here is a person who is in prison and is still a danger to society. The amount of money that was taken – over \$1 million – it's mind-boggling. You are in prison and able to take that much money."

DID THE CONVICTIONS teach a lesson to other inmates? Not necessarily. Several other cases have since been brought against prisoners in Georgia for perpetrating the same scam. One, filed in 2018, charged an inmate for using a contraband phone to pose as a US marshal and demand payment from residents for missing jury duty. And in 2019, yet another inmate at Autry pleaded guilty to using the same scam.

Georgia isn't the only state to experience these kinds of scams. In 2020, California inmates pulled in

up to \$2 billion in fraudulent unemployment benefits tied to Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. They, too, used contraband phones to communicate with each other and outside helpers. One of the 35,000 beneficiaries named was Scott Peterson, convicted in 2004 of the murder of his pregnant wife, Laci.

As for Lopez, he pleaded guilty in December 2017 and testified against two of his co-conspirators. He was sentenced to three years probation in February 2020. He has made peace with his decision to testify. "I caused a lot of torment. In order for me to correct that, I've got to make amends. If that means testifying against anybody, including myself, then that is what I'm willing to do," he said. **R**

FROM AARP THE MAGAZINE (FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020), © 2020 BY AARP, AARP.ORG.

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Humour On The Job



Candle With Care

Spotting a candle with the inscription 'Calming' in my dentist's bathroom, I smiled and thought, *Oh sure*. Later, as I nervously settled into the dental chair, I told my dentist that his candle wasn't working for me.

He replied, "That's for us."

SUBMITTED BY JEAN BROWN

Are You Kitten Me?

I used to work in human resources. A woman once complained that someone in her department kept

meowing, and it was getting on her nerves. I asked the meowing woman to come to my office. I said, "You're not in trouble, but apparently you keep meowing and an employee asked us to address it with you."

Her response: "I have freedom of speech. What happens if she sees a cat in a TV commercial and the cat meows, does she get angry at the cat?!"

To which I replied, "Well no, because it's a cat. It's expected to meow."

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This went on for some time until the woman agreed to stop meowing. There was no reason for the meowing. She was just meowing.

marabou22 on Reddit

The Insider

I've always wanted to be a whistleblower, but unfortunately I don't know anything.

@shutupaida

On The Button

For my Sunday sermon, I purposely buttoned my suit vest incorrectly to illustrate how difficult it is to fix things once you've started off on the wrong foot. So I stood before my congregation, opened my suit jacket, and asked, "Does anyone notice anything unusual about me?"

A small child shouted, "Yes, your shoes are dirty."

SUBMITTED BY LEWIS KUJAWSKI

Zooming Along

- I can't believe Zoom gives away their best feature, limiting meetings to 40 minutes, for free.

DANIEL JALKUT, FOUNDER REDSWEATER.COM

- I'm going to update my CV to say "survived 1000 Zoom calls that should have been an email" as part of my achievements.

@alanah_torralba

- Waving at the end of every Zoom call like it is the 1800s and a big steam ship is leaving the harbour.

@PJVogt

MAKING THE ROUNDS

Hospital nurses share their strangest encounters:

I asked a patient complaining of dizziness if she had ever been diagnosed with vertigo.

Her daughter shook her head. "No, no," she said. "Mum's a Libra."

tbmtonada

It was 3am when a well-dressed man came in with his eight-year-old son. "What's the problem?" I asked.

He replied, "Well, I was at a wedding and it occurred to me that my son is a little short. Can you give him something right now to make him taller?"

Sxhpott1

I gave a patient the hospital dressing gown, left the room, and came back a few minutes later with the doctor. To our shock, the man was leaning with his arms against the doctor's table stark naked! He gave us a huge smile and started to come over to give us a hug. That's when the doctor intervened with a firm handshake and a walk over to the still unopened hospital gown.

Nora B



ON JAPAN'S ICE CREAM TRAIL

SOFT CREAM

COFFEE SOFT 380
 COFFEE GELLY SOFT 430
 PARFAIT 480

DRINK MENU

COFFEE (Hot/Iced) 370
 AMERICANO (Hot/Iced) 370
 CAFE LATTE (Hot/Iced) 500
 CAPPUCCINO (Hot/Iced) 500
 CAFE MOCHA (Hot/Iced) 500
 CARAMEL LATTE (Hot/Iced) 500
 HOKKAIDO (HOT/ICED) MILK COFFEE 500
 TEA (Hot/Iced) 370
 ORANGEICED TEA 500
 GRAPEFRUIT ICED TEA 500
 ORANGE JUICE 370
 GRAPEFRUIT JUICE 370
 NIKI GRAPE JUICE 470
 NIKI APPLE JUICE 470
 HOT CHOCOLATE 500
 COCOA (Hot/Iced) 500





TRAVEL



'Rainbow ice cream' from Otaru includes green tea, Yubari melon, Hokkaido milk, chocolate and lavender flavours



A journey that's extra special thanks to unique local flavours

BY *Michael Colbert*

FROM GASTRO OBSCURA VIA ATLASOBSCURA.COM

www.bookshq.net

If you ask Lynn Ng which flavour of soft ice cream is her favourite, she'll probably say scallop. "It's actually really delicious despite seeming like such an incompatible mix," she says.

Four years ago, Lynn and I worked together as assistant language teachers at a technical high school in Hokkaido. Hokkaido is Japan's northernmost prefecture, an island comprising some 20 per cent of the nation's landmass but less than five per cent of the population. For many, Hokkaido is synonymous with road trips and *inaka*: the countryside. This meant Lynn and I spent weekends on the local roads in her blue Toyota Passo.

One of our first trips brought us to Wakkanai, the northernmost city in the country. From Cape Soya, we waved at Sakhalin Island, which belongs to Russia. On our drive south, we punctuated our trip with stops at *michi-no-ekis*, or roadside service areas. At a stop in Sarufutsu, we ordered cones of soft ice cream (referred to in Japan as 'soft cream'). It wasn't vanilla or chocolate. It was blue honeysuckle.

Creamy and thick, Japan's soft ice cream is popular throughout Hokkaido, and Japan as a whole, and many towns showcase their local identity

through unique flavours. The flavour of the city where we lived, Takikawa, was apple, in homage to the orchards in one of the farming districts. The city of Furano and the small town of Biei offer lavender and rose, like the flowers they are famous for. And in the small city of Yubari, its melon soft ice cream is cheaper than its famous King melons, a pair of which has sold at auction for more than 5 million yen (US\$46,000).

While flavours like these honour Hokkaido's gardens and orchards, which can be buried under snow most of the year, in the rest of Japan the flavours can get more inventive. Ishii Miso Brewery in Matsumoto, a mountain city in the Nagano prefecture on Japan's main island of Honshu, makes soft ice cream with miso (a fermented soybean paste). In Japan's former capital city, Kyoto, you can find yuba ice cream, flavoured like the skin that forms over boiled soy milk. And the city of Hakodate, which sits on Hokkaido's southern tentacle, slaps visitors with black squid-ink ice cream.

PHOTOS: (ICE CREAM, LAVENDER FARM) GETTY IMAGES. (WOMEN) SHUTTERSTOCK



Clockwise from top left: Traditionally dressed women enjoying an ice cream in Japan's former imperial capital, Kyoto; melon ice cream is the flavour of Yubari; the lavender from this Hokkaido farm is used to flavour local ice cream



Clockwise from top left: Specialty ice creams help draw people out of big cities to regional areas, such as Mount Fuji; black squid-ink ice cream in Hakodate; the Usa Jingu shrine on Kyushu Island, the third largest of Japan's main islands, is one of many attractions awaiting travellers who take on the full ice-cream trail from north to south

Ocean brine and ice cream might seem unlikely partners, yet these flavours of soft ice cream celebrate Japan's regional identity. The country is long: to drive from Wakkanai at the most northern end of Hokkaido to Kagoshima on the southern tip of Kyushu island, would take 38 hours nonstop and cover some 2700 kilometres. Japan also extends through varied landscapes and climates. Thus, it's well-suited to road trips through the countryside.

And the *michi-no-ekis* – where these unique soft ice creams can be bought – are key aspects of the nation's plan to revitalise its regional communities.

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism oversees these roadside stations and uses them as a venue to showcase local specialties.

Rural revitalisation is a potential solution to a problem perplexing Japan: an ageing population and declining birth rates. Though this demographic quandary puzzles the entire nation, the pressure pinches rural areas more acutely. As young people have relocated to cities, 'ghost houses' stand as a testament to the contraction of towns and villages. Shigeru Ishiba, former minister of regional revitalisation, has listed "establishing corporations in rural areas

to promote and sell local goods and tourism" among efforts to stimulate the countryside's economy.

Lynn researches rural revitalisation and tourism at Tokyo's Waseda University. One approach that stands out to her is Fukushima. Following the 2011 earthquake and consequent nuclear disaster there, the region experienced a major exodus of people, which prompted officials to get creative.

Touting local specialties and boasting hometown pride have deep roots here

"Some local governments loan out temporary rent-free houses to visitors so that they have a free place to stay in the region while job-hunting and

apartment-hunting," says Lynn. "It's extremely helpful for anyone hoping to relocate without connections or having already secured jobs in the rural regions."

In addition to drawing new residents to rural areas, Japanese officials promote movement and exchange among urban, suburban and rural locales. To entice people to the countryside, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) has come up with a plan to make it more attractive, and food plays a role. Its 'Savour Japan' effort spotlights regional flavours, highlighting produce in many of the country's prefectures.

READER'S DIGEST

Why food? Perhaps it has something to do with the power of the Japan Agricultural Cooperatives, known as the JA Group, which lobbies for the country's agricultural interests. Or perhaps it's a bit more sentimental.

"Food especially stands in a rather emotional domain compared to other products like pottery or clothes," says Lynn. "And since tourism draws on a tourist's emotions and imaginations, a tourist might more easily remember

some soft ice cream they ate on a trip than the displays in a castle."

Touting local specialties and boasting hometown pride have deep roots in Japanese culture. Every town, no matter how small, is famous for something. For many, those famed products will be extracted and swirled into soft serve. Also tapping into this is the concept of *omiyage* – when people go travelling, they're expected to bring back a gift, typically an individually

SIGNATURE TREATS FROM THE REGIONS

In Japan, *meibutsu* literally means 'famous thing' and it's applied to the idea of regional specialties. All of Japan's 47 prefectures have noteworthy treats for visitors to try. Here are just a few:

IWATE Northeast Honshu: Egg-shaped cakes with a white-chocolate shell.

YAMAGATA Northwest Honshu: Jelly with a whole cherry inside.

GUNMA Central Honshu: Cheese aged in miso.



Jelly balls from Gifu

KAGAWA Shikoku Island: Local olive oils.

GIFU Central Honshu (between Osaka and Tokyo): Jelly-like balls made from arrowroot that look like water droplets.

MIYAZAKI Southeastern Kyushu:

Yuzu citrus-fruit jelly in a candied shell.

NIIGATA Northwestern Honshu: High-quality sake rice wine.

OKAYAMA Western Honshu, a sunny prefecture full of fruit trees: Fruit parfaits.

PHOTO: COMMON DOMAIN

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wrapped edible novelty that represents the place they visited.

"I think what really ties in with soft ice cream flavours and rural revitalisation is this concept of *meibutsu* [famous items and foods] and the omiyage culture," Lynn says. "Because of these things, people are rather obsessed with figuring out what is 'famous' about a place."

Soft ice cream is not the only example of this tourism strategy. Michino-ekis sell commemorative books so visitors can prove they've visited a city with a locally branded stamp, and Japanese cities and prefectures organise travel experiences around these stamp rallies. Lynn gives the example of Tsuetate Onsen, a hot-springs town on the island of Kyushu: it attempted to become a hub for custard by encouraging visitors to earn stamps with the purchase of the sweet treat at ten local shops and restaurants, which they could then redeem for a souvenir.

But while stamp rallies tend to focus on regional areas, soft ice cream is national – tourists can sample unique flavours all over Japan.

Dairy is also a valued industry in Japan: last summer, MAFF reportedly asked people to eat ice cream every day as part of its Plus One campaign to boost dwindling dairy-product sales due to COVID-19.

"I think soft ice cream works especially well because the Japanese – or anyone, really – tend to have this soft spot for ice cream in general," says Lynn.

Given people's positive associations, ice cream is a potent promotional tool. So while novel flavours such as black squid ink and sunflower stand out for visitors, the goal is to represent a region faithfully – something that locals can appreciate just as much. That's why, if you really press her, Lynn will admit that her actual favourite flavour is apple: the flavour of Takikawa, where we lived as language teachers. "It is ten per cent delicious," she says, "and 90 per cent imbued with all my affective attachments to Takikawa." **R**

FROM GASTRO OBSCURA (SEPTEMBER 20, 2020), © 2020 BY MICHAEL COLBERT, ATLASOBSCURA.COM



Where's Wally?

Europe's most famous wandering walrus has pitched up on the Irish coast – and set up home on a motorboat. Dubbed 'Wally', the four year old has journeyed thousands of kilometres. With walruses being semi-aquatic and needing to rest on land, authorities plan to acquire him a pontoon during his stay. The inveterate traveller has reportedly sunk one small boat and damaged others. SKY NEWS

www.bookshq.net



MOON
AND
ME



THE
NIGHT
GARDEN

CHILDREN'S TV

Where Weirdness Thrives

*What makes the world's most successful children's TV programmes so addictive – and so strange?
Linda Geddes explores the world of kids' television*

FROM MOSAIC

Pepi Nana stirs, and sits up in bed. “Tiddle toddle, tiddle toddle,” she says, flapping her arms and blinking a pair of enormous round eyes. She walks over to the desk, sits down, and scribbles a letter to the Moon.

“Tiddle toddle, please come to tea, and we can have a story. Yours lovingly, out of the window, Pepi Nana.”

She steps onto the balcony of her toy house, kisses the letter and watches it flutter up into the night sky. What Pepi Nana doesn't know is that on the Moon lives a waxy-looking creature with coal-black eyes called Moon Baby. He has a fixed smile and a blue Mohican. He reads her letter and flies out of his crater towards Earth.



Arriving at Pepi Nana's house, Moon Baby rings the doorbell, hugs Pepi Nana, and wakes up all the other toys with his African thumb piano...

IF YOU'RE A PARENT, there's probably a show that your children adored but you found strange. For many parents, that show is *Moon and Me*. It follows the night-time exploits of a mismatched set of dolls – including Pepi Nana, a soft pink onion called Mr Onion, and the clown-like Colly Wobble – who come to life when the Moon shines.

My 18-month-old nephew doesn't share this scepticism. As the episode we're watching unfolds, he moves closer to the screen, smiling, pointing and saying "Wow". My eight-year-old daughter stares in wonder at it all.

What is it about these pre-school TV shows that captivate young viewers, but are so strange to adult eyes? As a mother, I've worried whether watching television at a young age

is healthy or a mind-rotting activity stunting my children's development. The fact that I don't understand these shows hasn't helped.

But weirdness, it turns out, can be a good thing.

YOUNG CHILDREN'S MINDS process information differently from adults'; what's weird to us is often highly engaging to

them. *Moon and Me*, it turns out, is a product of research, informed by a collaboration between the co-creator of the *Teletubbies* – Andrew Davenport – and Dylan Yamada-Rice, a researcher specialising in children's education and storytelling, to study how children interact with toy houses.

Direct collaborations between academics and children's TV are not new. *Sesame Street*, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2019, employed developmental psychologists and education experts as part of the production team from the outset. Co-creator Joan Ganz Cooney thought television might be used as an educational tool to better prepare kids for kindergarten.

By January 1970, just a few months after it first aired, roughly a third of children aged from two to five in the US regularly watched the show, with estimates of two million households and upwards of five million children

tuning in to each episode. And although it was entertaining, every episode was – and still is – planned with specific learning objectives in mind. “The Sesame mission is to help children grow smarter, stronger and kinder,” says Rosemarie Truglio, senior vice president of curriculum and content at Sesame Workshop and a developmental psychologist.

Has it succeeded? “The question you really want to ask is: if you had the equivalent of kids who were randomly assigned to watch television and another group that didn’t, would it change the outcomes?” says economist Phillip Levine. As it turns out, the rollout of *Sesame Street* in 1969 did almost exactly that.

By the late 1960s, most US households owned a television, but whether they could watch *Sesame Street* depended on where they lived, because in some areas it was broadcast on Very High Frequency (VHF) channels, in others on Ultra High Frequency (UHF) channels. UHF signals were weaker, and some TV sets couldn’t receive them, which meant only around two-thirds of Americans had access to *Sesame Street*.

“Just being exposed to the show and watching it routinely increased school performance among the children who were able to view it,” Levine says, citing

the results of a study he and Melissa Kearney at the University of Maryland published.

NOT ALL TELEVISION is as concerned with children’s education, though. In the late 2000s, Angeline Lillard, a developmental psychologist at the University of Virginia, was looking at how children’s behaviour might be affected by the ways television characters behaved. Her team had been watching a lot of *SpongeBob SquarePants* – an eclectic cartoon about a talking yellow sea sponge living in a pineapple at the bottom of the sea.

“We were watching a lot of *SpongeBob* in lab meetings, and I felt I just couldn’t get any work done afterwards,” Lillard recalls. “I thought, *If that happens to me after watching it, I wonder what happens to four year olds.*”

This prompted her to start a new study, looking at the impact of television viewing

SESAME
STREET



on children's cognitive abilities that include focusing attention, planning, deferring gratification and managing emotions. Compared to watching a different children's cartoon, called *Caillou* (about the everyday life of a four year old), or simply doodling on paper with crayons, watching *SpongeBob* impaired four year olds' performance on various tests, including reciting a list of numbers in reverse and learning to touch their toes when being instructed to touch their head.

At the time, Lillard thought it might have been the fast-paced editing that was to blame. In the *SpongeBob* clip they used, the scene changed roughly every 11 seconds, whereas in *Caillou* it was every 34 seconds. Four years later, she published the results of a more thorough follow-up study. It wasn't the speed of cuts that was problematic, but how much fantastical, physics-defying content they contained.

"Very early in life, babies have an understanding that

if something pushes against something else, it is going to fall down," Lillard explains. But what happens is that a car flies through the air, then it winds up in outer space, then suddenly they're skiing down a slope, they're under the sea, they pour cat food out of a box and what comes out is far more than could possibly have fitted inside the box... It's just one thing after another that can't possibly happen in the real world. "Our brains aren't set up to process all of that," says Lillard. "My inkling is that the prefrontal cortex is working hard to figure all that out and then POOF! It can't do it. It's just not realistic."

Lillard stresses that they have only observed a short-term effect - there's no direct evidence to suggest that watching highly fantastical content will harm your child in the long run - but children as old as six were affected (they haven't studied older children).

And it wasn't just *SpongeBob*. *Martha Speaks* - a programme about a dog who gains the ability to speak English after drinking some alphabet soup, intended to teach children vocabulary - had a similar effect, as did a relatively slow-paced cartoon called *Little Einsteins*, about four preschoolers helping a fairy put the Northern Lights back in the sky. Even

**SPONGEBOB
SQUARE
PANTS**



well-intentioned educational programmes can backfire if their content isn't age-appropriate.

A MEMORY FLOODS back to me: sitting on the sofa, trying to get my own young kids to watch the David Attenborough nature documentary *The Blue Planet*. It seemed relaxing, educational – surely polar bears are better than endless repeats of *Peppa Pig*? But they seemed completely uninterested.

Tim Smith, a developmental psychologist at Birkbeck Babylab in London, pulls up a video. A three-year-old girl in a pink cardigan sits on her mum's lap watching TV. Another window shows what she's looking at: *Waybuloo* – a children's TV series, featuring four animated characters with unnaturally large heads and eyes, floating around a fantastical land called Nara.

The girl is hooked up to eye-tracking equipment and, as the freakishly cute 'Piplings' float around, her eyes track their movements, confirming that it's these creatures, rather than the mountains or trees in the background, that have engaged her interest. Smith tells me *Waybuloo* is so effective that Babylabs around the world now use a clip from it whenever they need to draw the attention of a child back to what they want them to look at on the screen.



**LITTLE
EINSTEINS**

The TV screen flickers. Now the little girl is watching a film of three women in a line, each holding a brightly coloured ball. Smith points out the girl's eye movements. First, she looks at each of their faces in turn. As the women begin to dance on the spot, her attention switches between them. Next, the women take it in turns to throw their ball in the air or shake it from side to side, and the girl's attention is drawn to these bright, moving objects.

I watch footage of the same girl when she was just a year old. Her enormous brown eyes show a gaze that is sluggish, less coordinated, drawn less to faces and more towards any movement on the screen – and to those brightly coloured balls.

There's a subtle difference, but if you want to attract a young child's attention towards an object or character, you have to point all the visual information in a scene towards it or they will struggle to follow the story. That's why children's TV shows have



big caricatured faces, often with things sticking out of their heads. “So when they move their heads, there’s a lot of peripheral motion,” says Smith. “There’s also lots of luminance and colour contrast that guides their attention to it. You’re helping them find the thing they’re interested in.”

In 2014, he published a study showing how attention-grabbing features, such as colour, brightness and movement, closely matched the location of the main speaking character in frames from children’s TV shows, compared with six adult shows. “We wanted to see whether the producers of these children’s shows have, through trial and error, developed techniques that effectively help infants to understand and process information,” Smith said at the time.

They had. Paring down the action enables infants’ sluggish attentional and visual systems to keep up. And characters’ eyes tend to be clearly marked, the outlines of their faces often set against white,

or uniform-coloured backgrounds, making them stand out even more.

It means that even with a very primitive visual system, you’re still able to very quickly identify the main speaking character. This makes it easier for children to follow the story and potentially learn from it.

ANDREW DAVENPORT, the producer of *Teletubbies* (1997) and *Moon and Me*, studied speech therapy at university, but his real passion was drama. One of his first jobs was as a writer and puppeteer on a Ragdoll Productions show called *Tots TV*. The show, which featured three ragdoll friends, their pet donkey and a mischievous dog, won two BAFTA awards. But it was nothing compared to what Davenport did next.

Teletubbies was the TV equivalent of a Hollywood blockbuster, going on to air in over 120 territories in 45 different languages. Tinky Winky, Dipsy, Laa-Laa and Po were inspired by a trip to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington with Anne Wood, founder and creative director at Ragdoll. They wandered into an exhibition about space and Davenport said, “Isn’t it weird how they put all this technology into the spacesuits, and when you see them walking about in them, they look as much like babies in nappies as anything.”

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The teletubbies were conceived as technological babies, set in a technological superdome. Even the windmill on the hill is a nod to one of the first pieces of technology children encounter: a pinwheel on their pram. Their bodies were painted bright fluorescent colours, because that seemed to fit with the technology theme, as did putting the TV screens on their stomachs – TVs that showed videos of children doing simple activities out in the real world.

“For me, *Teletubbies* is entirely around that early stage of life when the child is coming to grips with their own body and their own physicality: walking, talking, running, falling over – all of the things that the teletubbies did,” says Davenport. The green-hilled set was designed to accentuate the depth of the physical space they inhabited, and much of the show simply involved the characters coming and going and popping up and down, playing with those physical concepts.

Some adults, however, didn't get it. The show was accused of “dumbing down” children's TV and criticised for its constant repetition, poor plots and lack of sense of place. But that was exactly the point. *Teletubbies* was perhaps the first TV show specifically designed for one to two year olds.

Davenport and Wood had learnt the visual equivalent

of babytalk. If the teletubbies are weird, it's because – visually and developmentally – so are infants.

For Wood, the design of shows like *Teletubbies* is intuition combined with years of trial and error. “I think the only skill I have is being able to watch a screen like a three year old might. It is about knowing when to pause, how long to pause for, how to make that comic, how to use anticipation.”

Although children live in the same world as us, they perceive it differently. A little girl with a baby brother might assume that all babies are born boys, and then turn into girls, for instance. “You can see how young children will often say things that we think are funny because their perception is that X is the case, when in fact Y is the case. That difference needs to be respected, but equally it can be the stuff of content,” says Wood.

Often, her programmes are designed as a conversation between the television

TINY TOTS





IN THE NIGHT GARDEN

and the children watching it. “When people objected to *Teletubbies*, we used to say: ‘Look, teletubbies understand babies, and babies understand teletubbies. If you’re watching *Teletubbies* without a child, you are only getting one half of the conversation’.”

She cites the start of the show, where a boat goes out of frame, then comes back in, then goes out of frame again. “That sequence is virtually playing a peekaboo game with a very young child: Where’s the boat gone? Here it is, coming back again.” A recent survey found that a game of peekaboo is the surest way to make a baby laugh.

Wood is a firm believer in taking material to children and watching how they respond: “Very often, a good response is when they say nothing, and they are absolutely absorbed. But the most important response is if they smile – because that always signifies understanding.”

After the success of *Teletubbies*, Davenport and Wood moved on to

In the Night Garden, a “contemporary nursery rhyme” aimed at two to three year olds. “It’s that stage where the child has come to grips with the physicality of the world and is now fascinated with the idea of turning what it knows on its head in an abstract way – the time when nursery rhymes, language play, symbolic play, toy play start to become the

thing,” says Davenport. Each character is designed to stand alone, just like Humpty Dumpty or The Old Woman Who Lived In A Shoe do in a book of nursery rhymes.

The central character, Iggle Piggle, represents a kind of ‘every-child’, who lollops around trying to make sense of it all. There’s also Makka Pakka, a beige, round-bodied creature, with a penchant for collecting piles of rocks and washing things with a sponge – his face, Iggle Piggle’s face, his rocks or his scooter.

Davenport is fascinated by the idea of accessing his audience through their own preoccupations and interests. Rock-collecting was a childhood hobby of his, while the obsessive washing is not about cleanliness but engaging with an activity that many young children find challenging: washing their faces and getting ready for bed.

I remember *In the Night Garden*’s opening sequence – which involves

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a rhyme about a little boat no bigger than your hand circling round and around in the ocean, while an adult traces circles on a child's palm. It was a failsafe way to put my son to sleep. When I tell him, Davenport sounds genuinely moved. "When these things are working, they do become components of the relationship between the parent and the child".

Davenport has seen his godson using Makka Pakka's song from *In the Night Garden* as a way to wash his hair and face. "When you find that something is useful, that's obviously incredibly satisfying and rewarding."

This is what led him to approach the University of Sheffield during the development of *Moon and Me*. He'd read a study where two groups of children were taught a lesson with either standard materials or some involving the *Teletubbies*. Those working with the *Teletubbies* material seemed far more engaged than those in their normal lessons – in one case a child who barely spoke and hardly took part in class activities returned their completed task asking for another one. "If you approach children through their own culture, rather than imposing your culture on them, they are much more motivated and more interested," says Davenport.

Moon and Me is aimed at a broader age range than the *Teletubbies*. It's a tale about a toy house coming to life at night, of the sort that were popular in the 1940s and 50s. Having

read about the work with *Teletubbies*, and becoming intrigued by the idea of child culture, he approached the researchers about doing a study to learn more about how contemporary children play with toy houses. The result was his collaboration with Dylan Yamada-Rice, now at the Royal College of Art in London.

"There is still a general assumption that stuff can be made for adults and just dumbed down for kids without looking specifically at the needs of that young audience," she says. But if you want them to learn anything from it, you need to find ways of engaging that young audience.

"If you can't believe in the depth of the character and that one character deeply cares about another character, then you're not going to be very effective in maintaining children's interest. And if you don't believe in that character, then you're not going to care that they are writing a letter to the moon."

Yamada-Rice joined two large toy houses and fitted them with tiny cameras, pointed not at the children but at the toys within the houses. They then assembled one to five year olds from different cultural backgrounds and set them loose on the toys, recording how the toys were moved, what the children were saying as they played with the characters, and what voices they were giving them.

One thing they noticed was the children's preoccupation with

READER'S DIGEST

transitions: going up and down the stairs; in and out through the front door; into bed for sleep; and the importance of sitting down for tea. Another observation was how the children often had multiple scenarios occurring on different floors.

“Maintaining them all was a bit like spinning plates,” says Davenport. “A shot which recurs a lot in *Moon and Me* is of the house with all three floors exposed, so you can see the characters on the different floors and stairs.”

I sit with Tim Smith and watch an episode. There's the narrator tucking the various characters into bed on the different floors of the house. There's Moon Baby ringing the front doorbell and Pepi Nana letting him in. There's a shot of Pepi Nana walking down every step of a staircase.

Smith points out the use of noises, such as Colly Wobble's tinkling bell, to cue viewers' attention and prompt them to seek him out; the adult narrator asking “What's next?” as Mr Onions lays the table, and then a subtle flash of movement near the cups.

All of these help engage the child's attention and help them to follow the story. There are subtle lessons woven into the fabric of *Moon and Me*, such as the art of structuring a letter, and telling a story – core principles of early-years education – or Pepi Nana climbing into a tub, which rolls away, and then popping out of it again, which helps teach about object permanence. Davenport tells

me his shows aren't intended to be “educational”. His audience, he says, is pre-educational. He strives to provide what he describes as “the unfatiguable exercise of mind”.

HERE'S THE GENERAL RULE: before age two, kids won't get much out of TV – unless an adult is sitting with them, helping them to understand it.

From age two or three to five, children can follow simple plots, but not complex moral lessons, such as a bully getting his or her comeuppance at the end. Rather, these young children may try to emulate the bad behaviour.

School-age children can cope with more complex plots and moral lessons. “Certainly, the eight-to-12 age group are able to see that negative



**Puzzle
Answers**

From pages
122-124

**SPOT THE
DIFFERENCE**

behaviour and understand that the message is 'Don't do this negative behaviour'," says developmental psychologist Heather Kirkorian. They may still struggle with jumps in time, such as flashbacks. It's not until around age 12 that children begin to have adult-like comprehension of what they see on the screen.

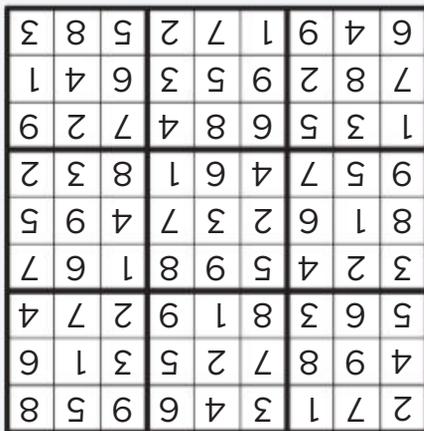
"All television content is teaching something. The question is what is it teaching?" Joan Ganz Cooney, the co-creator of *Sesame Street*, used to say. A lot of content still portrays unhelpful stereotypes about, say, what girls and boys can do, or features violence. "It's very different from an adult brain where you can say, all right, this is just comedy and this is fun," says Rosemarie Truglio of the Sesame

Foundation. She says the best way for kids to watch TV is with a caregiver. That way you can reinforce the educational messages.

Children can be highly engaged and cognitively active, but their attention is always limited, says Smith. He suggests occasionally pressing pause, giving children the time to engage and discuss what they're watching.

I'm reassured that Moon Baby is unlikely to be harmful. But I'm also inspired to not switch off when the TV or iPad is switched on. Because with a little more effort from me, it can be something even better: a weird world that we can explore together. **R**

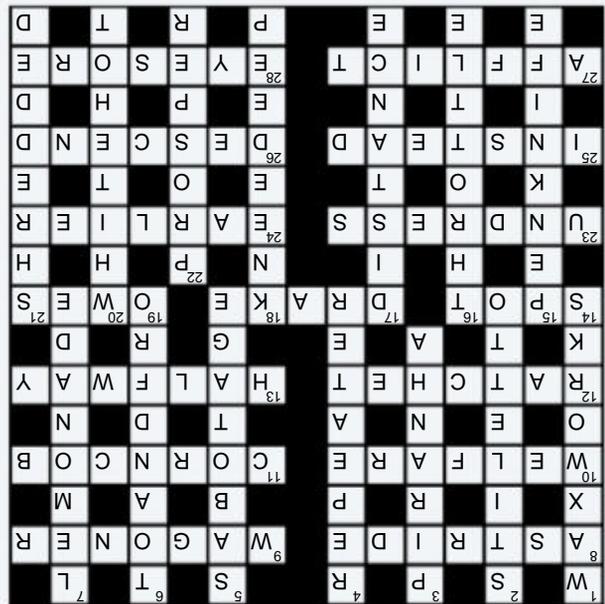
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RD RECOMMENDS



Movies

The Last Duel **Historical Drama**

From filmmaker Ridley Scott (*Alien*, *Bladerunner*) comes *The Last Duel*, a gripping tale of betrayal and vengeance based on true events in Medieval France. Marguerite, played by the brilliant Jodie Comer from the TV drama *Killing Eve*, is the wife of knight Jean de Carrouges (Matt Damon). She claims she has been raped by her husband's best

friend, squire Jacques Le Gris (Adam Driver, *Marriage Story*).

As a mere female, the kingdom blames her for misconduct and wants to burn her at the stake, but to save himself from humiliation (rather than her from death), her husband challenges his former friend to a duel, the last legally sanctioned duel in France.

COMPILED BY DIANE GODLEY

www.bookshq.net



The Many Saints Of Newark **Mobster Drama**

This film looks at the formative years of New Jersey gangster Tony Soprano, and is a prequel to the award-winning HBO TV drama *The Sopranos*. Young Anthony Soprano (Michael Gandolfini, *Ocean's 8*) is growing up in one of the most tumultuous eras in New Jersey history. He's still a

teenager in the city of Newark when rival gangsters start to rise up and challenge the all-powerful DiMeo crime family. Caught up in the changing times is Uncle Dickie Moltisanti, whose influence over his nephew will help shape the impressionable teen into the all-powerful mob boss, Tony Soprano.



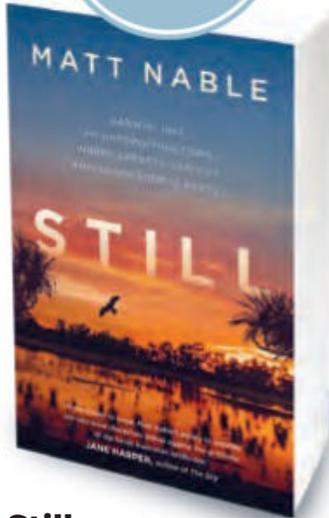
Dune Sci-fi

This much-awaited film is a remake of the 1984 classic directed by David Lynch and starring Sting. The 2021 version is the first of a two-part adaptation of the 1965 novel by Frank Herbert. Far into the future, a spice called melange is coveted by all as it extends human life, provides superhuman levels of thought, and makes travel faster than light. The only problem, it can only be sourced from the desert planet Arrakis, where giant sandworms live and other dangers lurk.

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Fiction



Still

Matt Nable

HACHETTE

The fourth novel by scriptwriter/actor Matt Nable, *Still* is a crime thriller you won't be able to put down. Set in 1960s Darwin, the blokes are tough, hard-drinking racists, the women keep their thoughts to themselves, and the authorities are largely corrupt. When Senior Constable Ned Potter finds a body in the marshlands, his investigation is shut down by those above. If Potter is to see justice served, he realises he has to be both smart and wily. A confronting page-turner with characters that will get under your skin.

The Stranding

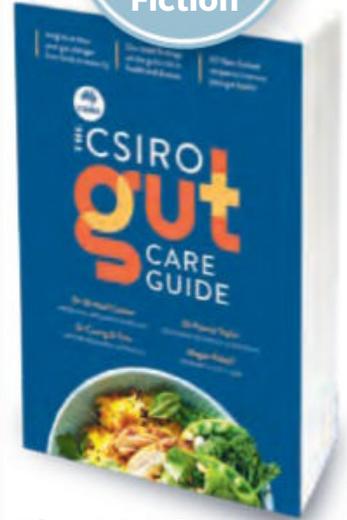
Kate Sawyer

HACHETTE

When things go pear-shaped, Ruth decides to leave London to travel to the other side of the world and see whales – an animal she has been enthralled with since childhood. Having chosen to ignore the dire news reports, when she arrives in New Zealand she is unaware of the catastrophe that has taken place back home. But when the end of the world comes knocking, Ruth and a Kiwi guy she befriends hide inside the cavernous mouth of a stranded whale. When they emerge, a little worse for wear, the world is changed beyond recognition.



Non Fiction

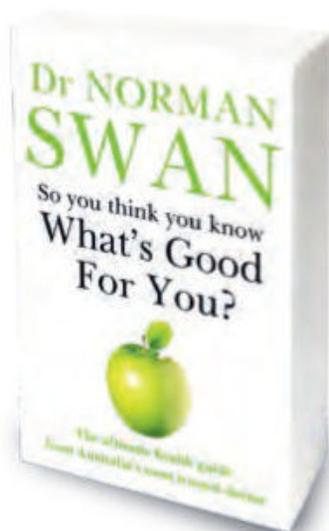


The CSIRO Gut Care Guide

**Dr Michael Conlon,
Dr Pennie Taylor,
Dr Cuong D. Tran
and Megan Rebuli**

MACMILLAN

There comes a time in our lives when things down below just don't work as smoothly as they once did. But the answer to these woes could be as simple as adding more fibre to our diets. This book provides insights into how our guts change over time and the latest findings of the gut's role in health and disease. Plus, it provides 60 fibre-fuelled recipes for every meal of the day designed to boost your gut health.



So You Think You Know What's Good For You?

Dr Norman Swan

HACHETTE

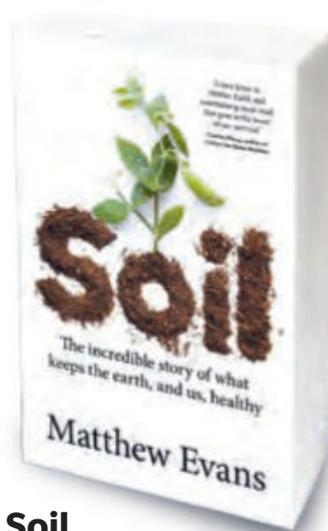
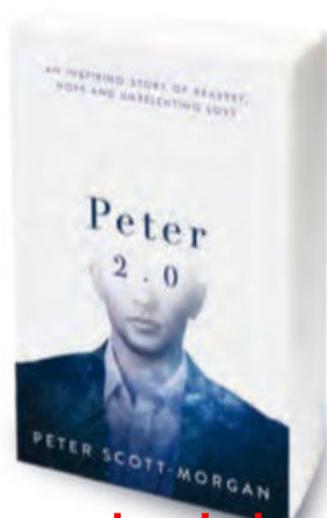
Dr Norman Swan was one of the first medically qualified journalists in Australia and has been delivering common-sense health information to ordinary people for over 30 years. Drawing on the questions we often ask, the popular and sometimes controversial health broadcaster knows what issues concern us. In this one-stop handbook, he replaces medical myths, half-truths and misconceptions with facts and information that help us make better choices about what we eat and how we live.

Peter 2.0

Peter Scott-Morgan

PENGUIN
RANDOMHOUSE

This book reads more like science fiction than non-fiction. *Peter 2.0* is the astonishing tale of robotics scientist Dr Peter Scott-Morgan who, when told he had motor neurone disease and had two years to live, decided there had to be another way. Growing up with *Doctor Who* and *Star Trek*, Peter had a firm belief that technology would be able to help him re-write the future of his disability. Using his expertise, he navigated a path that melded his humanity with robotics to become the world's first "human cyborg".



Soil

Matthew Evans

MURDOCH BOOKS

According to commentator, farmer and former chef Matthew Evans, soil has an image problem. This wonderfully complex and important part of Earth not only feeds us, it heals us, nurtures us and sustains us. But because it isn't pretty, we have largely ignored it. In an entertaining love letter to Mother Earth, Evans stresses if we want to ensure the long-term health of the planet, we need to understand how soil is made, lost and repaired. He explores what soil does for us, including the link between human health and plant health.



Podcasts

**Three Days To See**

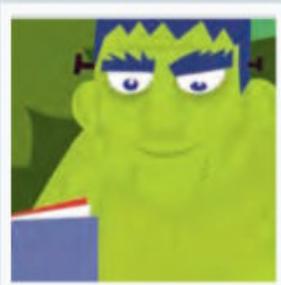
What would you most want to let your gaze rest upon if you had just three days of sight? The dawn? Or perhaps the sun going down? A forest? Helen Keller, blind and deaf from infancy, gives her answers in this inspiring and heart-touching essay on “adding fullness to life”.

**Principle Of Charity**

Based on the idea that we should try to seek the truth, rather than simply win arguments, this unique debate format brings together guests with strong but opposing ideas on controversial topics. Topics include climate change, the price of human life, and whether it is moral to eat meat.

**Morbid: A True Crime Podcast**

Enter the creepy but light-hearted nightmare of *Morbid*, featuring crime, hauntings, disappearances and all things spooky and hosted by an autopsy technician and hairstylist. Listeners also contribute their own real-life supernatural experiences. Just the thing for Halloween Night on October 31.

**Frankenstein On YouTube**

Also good for Halloween is the classic 1818 novel that brought the iconic scar-faced monster to life. *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley, tells the story of a young scientist who creates a grotesque but articulate creature. Listen to and read the free audio book transcript at <https://youtu.be/AmUuXtVWZb4>.



Audio Book

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THE GENIUS SECTION

*Sharpen Your
Mind*

SHAKE IT UP

*Exercise is a known stress
reducer, but how do you
choose which is best for you?*

BY *Donyale Harrison*

www.bookshq.net

“Try boxing,” my friend recently suggested. We’d been talking about reducing stress and I’d confessed that yoga didn’t really work for me.

I paused, because, looking at me, it’s not the sort of suggestion you’d naturally make. I’m short, on the far side of 50 and I look like a lady who would know a lot about flowers. But I’m always up for a challenge and my local Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) runs cheap boxing-for-exercise classes for all ages, with equipment available to borrow.

So, I went, and I kept going, and I now feel much calmer and have a decent right cross.

There’s a vast body of research on how exercise can help us deal with stress. Regular exercise has been linked to more emotional resilience during times of acute stress. Studies have shown that people who exercise regularly may be able to reduce the physical impacts stress has on the body – including maintaining the length of their telomeres, the ‘caps’ at the end of each strand of DNA that protect our chromosomes and which can be shortened by the negative health impacts of chronic stress. Exercise may even reduce the intensity of stress itself.

All of which is great news for regular exercisers but probably a bit confronting for the 55 per cent of people who don’t get enough exercise, according to findings of the

2017-18 Physical Activity Report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

“We get a lot of people who say they don’t like exercising,” says trainer Maria Khamo, who’s been a trainer with PCYC for over 13 years. “What they usually mean is they haven’t found an exercise they enjoy doing yet.”

Enjoyment is the key factor in whether or not you stick with a programme. But how do you find out what you enjoy? Even if you loved sport at school, you might not have the same abilities, resources or time now.

A 2018 study conducted by exercise science and community health researchers from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Kennesaw State University looked at different types of personality traits and motivations and how they related to different types of preferred physical activity. The team hypothesised that there might be strong relationships between the ‘Big Five’ personality traits – Extraversion, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness – and exercise choices. They also considered motivations such as health, body issues, social recognition, competition, stress management and enjoyment.

The results weren’t entirely as ex-

pected. People who preferred weights reported less Agreeableness and people who had high levels of Conscientiousness were more likely to exercise regularly than people with high levels of Neuroticism. Extraverts were slightly more likely to exercise regularly than Introverts. Otherwise, there weren’t very strong links between personality traits and exercise preferences.

Motivations were generally a stronger indicator of whether people were likely to exercise. “And that’s good news,” says Maria, “because we can use those motivations to get us off the couch.” She recommends writing down three motivations aside from reducing stress to help you find the types of exercise that will work for you.

If your main motivations include broadening your social networks, group classes and team sports, then CrossFit will work best.

“Have a chat to your doctor before you start an exercise programme so you don’t risk aggravating any conditions you might have,” Maria says. “You’ll find options at every level of ability, from seated yoga to Muay Thai [kickboxing].”

“Because the class is going through the same thing together, it’s easy to form bonds and new friendships. If you’re worried about costs, look for affordable options: a lot of councils and other community groups subsidise

ENJOYMENT IS KEY TO WHETHER YOU STICK WITH AN EXERCISE

activities, or you can form a running or walking group for free.”

Exercising with other people has additional benefits, too. In 2016, a team of Japanese researchers cross-examined data from the 2010 and 2013 Japanese Gerontological Evaluation Study, which surveyed over 100,000 seniors, to examine the comparative benefits of exercising alone or with others.

It found that while all exercisers reported better health than non-exercisers, people who exercised with others some or all of the time reported better physical and mental health than those who only exercised alone, even when they exercised less often.

If your motivations are more about fitness and body image, then consider whole-body activities, including dance, boxing, squash, mountain biking or surfing, as well as circuit classes at gyms or body-weight exercises at home.

“Exercise that gives you a good whole-body workout will give you the biggest range of stress-busting effects all at once,” says Maria. “You’ll get the endorphins, the fitness and strength boost, plus a sense of

achievement. Boxing is particularly good for women, because we’ve often been told to hold our aggression in and this is a safe place to let it out. It doesn’t need to be full contact to get the full benefits.

But if exercising with other people isn’t for you, you’ll enjoy a lot of the same results following a programme at home using body weight exercises like squats and push-ups. “Just make sure you choose one that’s appropriate for your age and fitness level,” Maria adds.

Motivations such as improved health after serious illness, or increased happiness after a period of depression, are both common reasons to exercise regularly. But so too is the simple motivation of getting a break from hectic days by having a swim, doing some Tai Chi, yoga, playing tennis, going for a walk or even doing some gardening.

“While some of these activities might seem less ‘active’ than others, any exercise is better than none, says Maria. “You can always change your routine if you need more or less of a challenge or if your needs change.

“Remember, the best exercise is the one you do.”

R

EXERCISING WITH OTHERS HAS ADDED BENEFITS



Cheap Medicine

Humour is by far the most significant activity of the human brain.

EDWARD DE BONO, PSYCHOLOGIST/PHILOSOPHER

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READ BY *Zoë Meunier*



FREE FALL AT DEATH CANYON

Her climbing rope had malfunctioned. Now, 275 metres above the floor of a canyon, an injured Lauren McLean clung to a narrow ledge. And a storm was rolling in.



WHAT I LEARNED AT THE FLOWER SHOP

After a tragic loss, a young woman finally found comfort in working at a small florist, and hearing other people's stories about their own lives and experiences.



THE HUSBAND WHO VANISHED

For 15 years, Anne McDonnell lived in limbo, not knowing whether her husband was dead or alive. Don't miss this fascinating story about a mysterious disappearance – and reappearance.

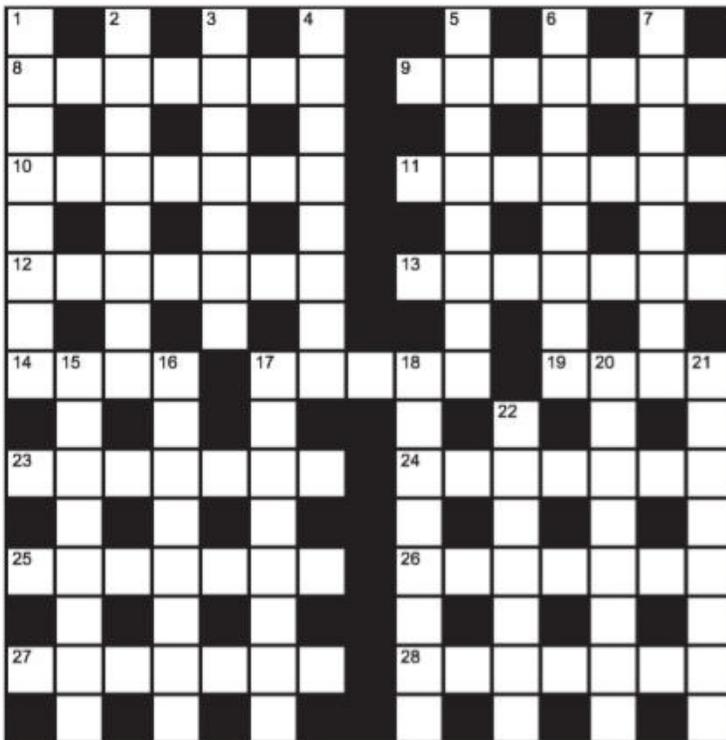


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PUZZLES

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles and mind stretchers, then check your answers on pages 110-111.



Crosswise

Test your general knowledge.

DOWN

ACROSS

- 8** Straddling (7)
- 9** Old-fashioned farm vehicle driver (7)
- 10** Wellbeing (7)
- 11** Woody core of a yellow vegetable (7)
- 12** Move by degrees (7)
- 13** Midpoint (7)
- 14** Small blemish (4)

- 17** Bowling Elizabethan admiral (5)
- 19** Is indebted (4)
- 23** Disrobe (7)
- 24** Prior (7)
- 25** Alternatively (7)
- 26** Move down (7)
- 27** Trouble grievously (7)
- 28** Something unpleasant to look at (7)

- 1** Type of effigy museum (8)
- 2** Sharp heel of a shoe (8)
- 3** Predatory South American fish (7)
- 4** Recurring decimal (8)
- 5** Deliberate damage (8)
- 6** Back and forth (2,3,3)
- 7** Citrus softdrink (8)
- 15** Pocket tool, originally a quill cutter (8)
- 16** Strangle (8)
- 17** Space between two objects (8)
- 18** Submerged halfway up the legs (4-4)
- 20** Incandescent (5-3)
- 21** Finely chopped (8)
- 22** Flourish (7)

Puzzle Answers

PAGES 110-111

		1		4	6	9		
			7					1
	6	3	8					7
3			5					6
	1							9
	5				1			2
	3				4	7	2	
	8				3			
		9	1	7		5		

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY: To win, you have to put a number from 1 to 9 in each outlined section so that:

- Every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numerals (1-9) without repeating any of them;
- Each of the outlined sections has all nine numerals, none repeated.

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"Write, Erase, Rewrite"

FAMILY FUN

**Puzzle
Answers**
PAGES 110-111

Spot the Difference

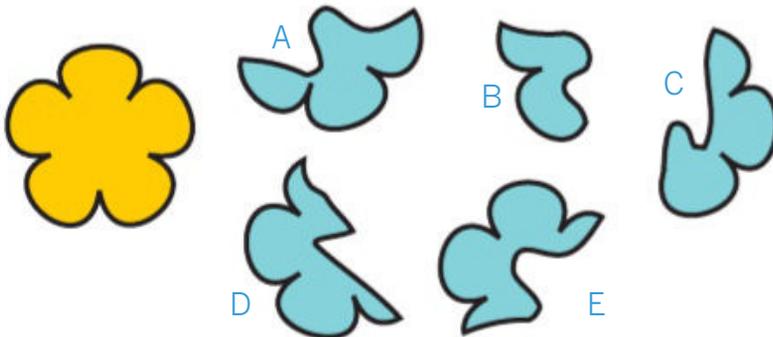
There are ten differences. Can you find them?



Flower Power

Which are the only two pieces that will fit together perfectly to form a blue flower identical to this yellow flower?

Pieces may be rotated, but not flipped over.





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TRIVIA

Test Your General Knowledge

- 1.** Underwater stuntwoman Katrin Gray opened the world's first school for what kind of specialised swimming? **2 points**
- 2.** The 2019 UK hit song 'Let Nature Sing' featured what type of wildlife to raise awareness of their endangerment? **2 points**
- 3.** Which company was purchased by eBay in 2002 to replace Billpoint as the online auction site's preferred payment method? **1 point**
- 4.** Who was the first prophet in Islam? **1 point**
- 5.** What country legislated compulsory voting in 1924 and had a voting rate of more than 90% in the 2019 Federal election? **1 point**
- 6.** Who was the first woman pilot to fly solo across the Atlantic? **1 point**
- 7.** The mine at Wieliczka, Poland, has been in operation since

- the 13th century. What does it contain? **2 points**
- 8.** The Indonesian all-girl band Voice of Baceprot has garnered international attention for its take on what kind of music? **2 points**
- 9.** Which Central American country has a name which translates into English as 'The Saviour'? **1 point**
- 10.** Who wrote in his fantasy series *Discworld*, "The pen is mightier than the sword if the sword is very short and the pen is very sharp?" **2 points**
- 11.** What unusual sport,



- 13.** An international team of scientists recently found a way to prevent mosquitoes from transmitting what disease to humans? **1 point**

- originating in Britain, combines a household chore with physical challenges? **2 points**
- 12.** According to a recent academic study, men will unconsciously mimic the body language of other men if they are doing what? **2 points**

16-20 Gold medal **11-15** Silver medal **6-10** Bronze medal **0-5** Wooden spoon

ANSWERS: 1. Mermald. 2. Birds. 3. PayPal. 4. Adam. 5. Australia. 6. Amelia Earhart. 7. Salt. 8. Heavy metal. 9. El Salvador. 10. Sir Terry Pratchett. 11. Extreme ironing. 12. LyIng. 13. Malaria.

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WORD POWER

The Human Brain

Make new connections in yours with this cerebral quiz

BY *Samantha Rideout*

- 1. neurodiversity** – range of A: differences in brain function. B: brain-cell types. C: opinions.
- 2. hemisphere** – A: shape of the brain. B: one half of the cerebrum. C: helmet used to record brain activity.
- 3. glymphatic system** – system that A: clears waste from the brain and spinal cord. B: regulates brain temperature. C: carries signals between the brain and body.
- 4. oxytocin** – A: drug for ADHD. B: hormone and neurotransmitter involved in social bonding. C: technique for inducing calm.
- 5. neuroethics** – A: study of ethical issues in neuroscience. B: forms required for neurosurgery. C: ethics of artificial intelligence.
- 6. lesion** – A: neuron connection. B: moment of disorientation. C: damaged body region.
- 7. genome** – A: gene that affects the risk of stroke. B: gene-naming system. C: complete set of genes in an organism.
- 8. fissures** – A: grooves on the brain. B: thought habits. C: automatic activities such as blinking.
- 9. frontal lobes** – brain area involved in A: orientation. B: self-control. C: colour perception.
- 10. melatonin** – A: colour of brain tissues. B: brain-freeze sensation. C: hormone that helps regulate sleep cycles.
- 11. endorphins** – A: effects of loneliness on the mind. B: pain-relieving peptides. C: brain images.
- 12. amygdala** – A: almond-shaped brain region involved in emotion. B: herb preventing cognitive decline. C: animal without a brain.
- 13. meninges** – A: membranes that cushion the brain. B: standardised cognitive tests. C: people of exceptional intelligence.
- 14. psychoactive** – A: using most of the brain. B: alert. C: affecting the mind.
- 15. neuron** – A: feeling. B: nerve cell. C: hallucination brought about by sleep deprivation.

Answers

1. neurodiversity – (A) range of differences in brain function. Autism is part of humanity's natural neurodiversity.

2. hemisphere – (B) one half of the cerebrum. Despite popular belief, people don't tend to use one brain hemisphere more than the other.

3. glymphatic system – (A) system that clears waste from the brain and spinal cord. The glymphatic system operates mainly during sleep.

4. oxytocin – (B) hormone and neurotransmitter involved in social bonding. Oxytocin is popularly called 'the cuddle chemical'.

5. neuroethics – (A) study of ethical issues in neuroscience. The uses of brain-stimulation tools are a hot topic in neuroethics.

6. lesion – (C) damaged body region. Studying people with lesions in the brain helps scientists learn how its different parts function.

7. genome – (C) complete set of genes in an organism. At least a third of the genes in the human genome are expressed primarily in the brain.

8. fissures – (A) grooves on the brain. Fissures allow humans to fit a large cerebral cortex into a relatively small skull.

9. frontal lobes – (B) brain area involved in self-control. The frontal lobes are found right behind the forehead.

10. melatonin – (C) hormone that helps regulate sleep cycles. The brain produces melatonin in response to darkness.

11. endorphins – (B) pain-relieving peptides. Produced naturally by the body, endorphins interact with the same brain receptors as opioid drugs.

12. amygdala – (A) almond-shaped brain region involved in emotion. Amygdala damage can affect the ability to feel afraid.

13. meninges – (A) membranes that cushion the brain. Childhood vaccines help protect the meninges from life-threatening infections.

14. psychoactive – (C) affecting the mind. Mantreh didn't enjoy the psychoactive effects of cannabis.

15. neuron – (B) nerve cell. The neuron is the basic working unit of the brain, a specialised cell designed to transmit information to other cells.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

5–8: Fair

9–11: Good

12–15: Word Power Wizard



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