

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

start HEALTHY

ISSUE 22

DID YOU KNOW:

The magazine is typically displayed in the home for 3-4 weeks per issue. Half of recipients rank it as the most valuable branded product they receive from businesses.

Comfort Food *Redefined*

*Feel-good recipes for the
new year* | PAGE 16



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a look at love | 24

a sweet success | 30



Front of Tear Out Card 1



**ROASTED
VEGETABLE
AND QUINOA
SALAD**



The Shanners



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57 percent of readers save these tear out cards to reference recipes and other helpful tips and pass along your contact info to referrals.



Back of Tear Out Card 1

SERVES 4

- 2 sweet potatoes, cut into ½-inch dice
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into ½-inch dice
- 1 tbsp. avocado oil
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. sea salt
- ¼ tsp. cardamom
- 1 c. quinoa
- ¼ c. golden raisins
- ¼ c. slivered almonds
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon

GF *Gluten Free* **VG** *Vegan* **DF** *Dairy Free*

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F and cover a sheet pan with unbleached parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, combine the sweet potatoes, carrots, avocado oil, garlic powder, cumin, cinnamon, salt, and cardamom. Toss well to evenly coat the vegetables with the seasoning. Transfer them to the sheet pan, and evenly distribute. Roast for about 20 minutes, or until soft.
3. While the vegetables are cooking, add 2 cups of water and the quinoa to a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer for about 15 minutes, or until the water is absorbed.
4. Add the cooked quinoa, raisins, and slivered almonds to a bowl and toss them in the juice and zest of the lemon. Add the roasted vegetables and toss to combine. Divide among 4 bowls and serve.

Recipes from *The 30-Minute Clean Eating Cookbook*, by Kathy Siegel, MS, RDN, CDN.
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Dear Bill and Judy,

During winter, we eagerly anticipate the possibilities that await us the rest of the year. It's also a great time to proactively make positive changes now rather than waiting for them to happen. As the season settles in, this issue of Start Healthy helps to draw out the best in you with postholiday recharging tips, a low-impact exercise primer, and weekend project inspiration.

Once the holiday season has passed, it can be a bit of a letdown. The good news is that this is natural, and there are physiological reasons we experience it. By understanding this and taking certain steps to overcome it, you can truly enjoy this time of year.

Another great way to refresh your mindset is by exercising, but that doesn't necessarily mean hitting the gym for hours. Low-impact exercise can be impactful, too, especially for beginners and older adults, and the guide inside can help you get started.

While you're making the effort to improve yourself this winter, you can also take easy steps to improve your home. From decluttering your storage to maximizing your lighting, there's so much you can do to transform your space while waiting for spring to arrive.

May you embrace the opportunities that await you, both now and in the future. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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Add a personal letter to the front inside cover that speaks to your connections. This personalization leads 77 percent of recipients to better appreciate the sender.

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The best ways to boost your energy during the day are simple and natural.

How to Choose between *written by: rachel stevens* **Slow and Pressure Cookers**

With so many kitchen gadgets available on the market, it can be tough to decide what to purchase. Recently, electric pressure cookers have become popular, but many people remain confused about how they differ from a traditional slow cooker. Read on to learn about these efficient, hands-off devices that can help you prepare easy, healthy recipes.

*Be sure to follow your device's safety instructions.



Each issue is filled with feel-good content that engages your audience and makes 80 percent of recipients more likely to do business with you.

Traditional slow cookers

Let's start with a classic, well-loved appliance that made its way into the hearts of many in the seventies. Slow cookers haven't changed much since their introduction because the consistency of heat-insulating stoneware can't be beaten. Here are a few of the best parts about a slow cooker:

Stews and meats

Slow cookers are great for preparing soups and meat-based dishes. The slow cook time helps prevent dryness, giving you the most flavor for your protein-packed dinner.

Entertaining

Instead of buying takeout, you can cater your own party by slow-cooking healthier options. Slow cookers also make it easy to serve common party foods like dips and fondues by keeping them hot over long periods of time.

Cooking for busy people and early birds

The "set it and forget it" method attracts people who can throw ingredients together in the morning and come home to a fully cooked, ready-to-eat meal. This is a great way to get your daily vegetables since frying them can be a hot mess.

Electric pressure cookers

These popular do-it-all devices target busy families who need to put food on the table quickly. Pressure cooking, which was once difficult, has now been made accessible. Here are the strengths of an electric pressure cooker:

Multifunctionality

There are many settings on a pressure cooker, such as pressure-cook, slow-cook, steam, warm, sauté, and rice. The pressure-cooking function cooks food by boiling water at a high temperature and trapping the steam to reduce cook time. With so many settings, you'll find new ways to enjoy your vegetables, grains, and proteins.

Simplifies rice and soup cooking

Since pressure cookers typically have a dedicated rice setting, they can make the often challenging rice-cooking process a lot easier. In addition, many people like making soups in a pressure cooker because they taste fresher and require less cooking time than in a slow cooker.

Quick cooking

As its namesake suggests, meals in an instant cooker are fast. If you don't like waking up early to prep a meal or need a meal on the fly, a pressure cooker is the better option between the two.

startHEALTHY



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Speak Your MIND

mind

written by: *matthew brady*

When I was younger, I had a well-deserved reputation for being a people-pleaser. I'd avoid conflict by saying yes more often than I should have, and I'd dance around difficult conversations. It was part of my wanting to be liked, of course, but my parents also taught my brothers and me to be respectful—a lesson I wholeheartedly embraced because it made me feel comfortable.

If this sounds like you or someone you know, you're not alone. There are countless self-help books available dedicated to teaching people how to stand up for themselves. Their proliferation points to an unfortunate fact of life: being unwilling to push back, adults and kids are taking on more responsibilities, trying to get more done every day, and feeling more stress than ever. And the cracks are showing in their well-being.

But there's hope and a solution. Of utmost importance is knowing when it's perfectly reasonable, if not necessary, to say no or to start a difficult conversation, having the confidence to say what you should, and doing it correctly.

The No Way

To avoid eternally being a yes-man (or yes-woman), the key is to be respectful yet show resolve. For example, if you're asked to take on another assignment on top of your already bursting-at-the-seams workload in the office, instead of saying no or gritting your teeth and saying yes, a better response would be a firm, polite "Thanks. I'd love to help, but I can't right now."

Notice the words that should stick during the conversation: "thanks" (appreciation) "love" (eagerness) and "help" (teamwork), which will make a positive out of a potential negative for both parties. Also, it wouldn't hurt to have a backup plan—if need be, you could also ask for help reshuffling your workload priorities, which shows your flexibility in getting the job done.

This type of response would work for your personal life as well. Have you ever been stuck in this situation? On Friday night, a friend asks if you want to hit the town and you have no other plans—but you're so tired after the week you've had. Ever reliable, you could say yes and pay for it later when you sleep the weekend away. You could also lie and say you have other plans. But the best option would be to honestly reply, "Thanks. I'd love to, but I can't tonight. I'm exhausted." and then suggest a different night. If she's really a friend, she might be disappointed, but she'll understand.

Advice for asserting yourself

Here are some other ways you can stand up for yourself, whether you're responding to a request or starting a difficult conversation.

Think instead of react.

Your reflexive response might be to say yes, which you may soon regret. Or you might say no without being prepared to give a valid reason why. If the request is via email or text, take advantage of the time to think your answer through. That being said...

Don't put it off.

You know you're still a people-pleaser at heart, so not responding to a request or initiating a tough talk might allow you to avoid conflict, overthink the situation, and possibly talk yourself out of it. Choose whatever saying you like: *Strike while the iron's hot. There's no better time than the present. Just do it.* They're all sage advice.

Talk face to face.

Admittedly, this may be the biggest elephant in the room for people who want to avoid conflict. But whether it's a difficult discussion about job or home workloads or bad news, it's better to look someone in the eye, which can lead to a discussion and better understanding for both parties involved.

Be confident, straightforward, and empathetic.

You have a side to your story, so say what you mean and explain it—you have a right to do so. Perhaps you won't be able to do your best work under the circumstances. Or maybe you'll be such a downer,





If you try to please all, you please *none*.

—Aesop



you'll ruin the night out for you and your friend. Or if you're not happy living at home, it can make everyone unhappy. Such empathy will likely strike a chord in the conversation, as you'll clearly show that you're looking out for the other person as much as yourself.

Anticipate the best, but be ready for pushback.

If you go into the conversation expecting the worst, it will likely make you a bit defensive. What you have to say is abundantly reasonable, so anticipate a positive outcome. That said, you should also be realistic. If you know that the person's not the type to take no for an answer, don't get frustrated or flustered when it happens. Be ready to respond firmly but politely in kind.

If you've become a conflict-avoiding legend, you may want to consider relinquishing your title. The benefits of having difficult conversations, including saying no to others, usually far outweigh the downsides. Yes, it's uncomfortable. Yes, you may wish to do just about anything else. Yes, you may be afraid of making an awkward situation worse. Yes, it may be tough on the people receiving it. And, the truth is, you may not come to an agreement.

But that's not really the point. When you welcome such conversations, you're embracing the validity of your own voice and your own strength. You're basking in the mutual benefit that comes from the conversation, even if it's just being able to talk about it. Oftentimes, the ice just needs to be broken—and if you don't allow that to happen, the only person you're hurting is you.



a happier end

TO THE HOLIDAYS

written by: alexa bricker

Few activities are sadder than putting away holiday lights and decorations as the season comes to a close, especially for those who relish the bliss and good cheer that time of year brings.

For many, the months that follow the holiday season can be challenging, to say the least. After having so much to look forward to at the end of the year, it can feel like January, February, and March last a lifetime. Fortunately, it doesn't have to be this way.

With the right mindset, you'll be less likely to experience the feelings of anxiety that can sometimes prevent you from truly enjoying the winter season. Follow the tips below, and remember to appreciate every gift, tradition, and moment as it comes.





THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE SLUMP

Although the “holiday slump” may sound like a clever, albeit make-believe, term, there are some scientific reasons for the gloom-and-doom mentality that can follow the holiday season. For example, you may have switched up your sleep routine due to time off from work, hosting responsibilities, or late-night wrapping duties. Any prolonged disruption to your body’s usual schedule is going to have an effect on both your physical and mental health. And if less sleep isn’t a factor, perhaps changes to your fitness routine or diet have you feeling more sluggish than usual. Whatever

the reasons may be, it’s perfectly normal to feel different after the holidays and to require a little extra time to recover.

Many people spend the holidays enjoying time with loved ones, indulging in favorite foods, and more or less celebrating the end of another year. All of those feel-good moments create a euphoric effect in your brain that makes you crave more; therefore, when it comes to an end in January, you naturally might feel a little sad. But it’s important to remember that you don’t have to wait for the holidays to enjoy those things, nor do you have

to go back to restricting yourself when they are over.

If you set aside time throughout the year for the activities you normally save for the holiday season, such as getting together with relatives and friends, embracing traditions, and preparing favorite meals, you’ll be less likely to dread the long winter months.

THE START OF NEW POSSIBILITIES

One of the best ways to overcome the postholiday blues is to look at this time of year as the start of something new, not the end of something great. Whether you choose to plan a trip, start a winter tradition, or commit to a new hobby, planning activities to keep yourself and your family occupied is key.

GET AWAY

It may sound counterintuitive, but planning a trip after the holidays are over is arguably the best way to avoid feeling sad about the end of the season. A family vacation or solo getaway gives you something positive to think about and look forward to. It doesn’t have to be a big trip, either. If you have a local attraction nearby, such as a theater that holds an annual performance, consider purchasing tickets and making a day of it in the city. If you’re the outdoorsy type, winter can be a great time to visit a state or national park, as there are often fewer visitors and the scenery can be just as spectacular.





MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Although the extra time with loved ones is one of the best parts of the season, it can be draining, especially if you consider yourself an introvert. Take ample time after the holidays are over to focus on *you*. This could include booking an appointment at a spa, spending some time in nature, practicing a hobby you enjoy, and getting adequate rest. Whatever you choose to do, make sure that it's rejuvenating.

REFUEL PROPERLY

There's nothing wrong with enjoying the holiday foods you love, and there's nothing wrong with continuing to make your favorite comfort foods throughout the winter. However, be mindful of the way your body feels, and respond accordingly by fueling it with the right foods. The majority of holiday dishes are high in sodium and sugar, which can contribute to that sluggish feeling you may experience in the days and weeks that follow. Replenish your body with nutrient-dense foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and complex carbohydrates. And be sure to drink plenty of water to restore balance to your digestive system.

EASE BACK INTO WORK

Going back to a full work schedule is one of the aspects of postholiday life many people dread the most, and understandably so. If you work a nine-to-five office job, waking up early and sitting in front of a computer all day can be especially tiresome after a long break. However, instead of packing all your time off into covering the holiday period, make sure to save time off

for the weeks and months after the holidays are over. If you have time available, you should consider taking a day off every few months to avoid burnout and renew your productivity.



THE GRACEFUL RECOVERY

If you're tired of feeling tired after the holiday season, rest assured, you're not alone. But if the thought of getting back to normal puts you in a state of dread every year, you can take steps to prevent these feelings and actually enjoy the start of the year.



COMFORT FOOD

REDEFINED

recipes by: *kathy siegel, MS, RDN, CDN*
photos by: *kate sears*



Does anything sound more comforting in winter than a plate of your favorite food? The only problem is that comfort foods don't traditionally fall into the healthy category—but it doesn't have to be that way. These recipes from *The 30-Minute Clean Eating Cookbook* upend everything you may have understood about the indulgence of belly-warming foods, making them nutritious, delicious, and, yes, filling.

GF VG DF **SERVES 4** *Per serving:* Calories: 334 | Fat: 10g | Carbs: 55g | Fiber: 8g | Protein: 10g

ROASTED VEGETABLE AND QUINOA SALAD

Roasted root vegetables combined with the warm spices of cumin, cinnamon, and cardamom are perfect for crisp fall nights. Feel free to add any other root vegetables you have on hand or a boost of plant-based protein such as beans, legumes, or tofu.

measure

- 2 sweet potatoes, cut into ½-inch dice
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into ½-inch dice
- 1 tablespoon avocado oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon cardamom
- 1 cup quinoa
- ¼ cup golden raisins
- ¼ cup slivered almonds
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon

make

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F and cover a sheet pan with unbleached parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, combine the sweet potatoes, carrots, avocado oil, garlic powder, cumin, cinnamon, salt, and cardamom. Toss well to evenly coat the vegetables with the seasoning. Transfer them to the sheet pan, and evenly distribute. Roast for about 20 minutes, or until soft.
3. While the vegetables are cooking, add 2 cups of water and the quinoa to a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer for about 15 minutes, or until the water is absorbed.
4. Add the cooked quinoa, raisins, and slivered almonds to a bowl and toss them in the juice and zest of the lemon. Add the roasted vegetables and toss to combine. Divide among 4 bowls and serve.

RECIPE KEY:

- GF Gluten Free
- VG Vegan
- V Vegetarian
- DF Dairy Free

Recipes from *The 30-Minute Clean Eating Cookbook*, by Kathy Siegel, MS, RDN, CDN.
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SERVES 6

Per serving: Calories: 268 | Fat: 7g | Carbs: 42g | Fiber: 6g | Protein: 13g

LEMON-RICOTTA PANCAKES

Lemons are a staple in my house and are my secret ingredient to enhance the flavor of many dishes, sweet or savory. This breakfast favorite is light, fluffy, and full of lemon flavor. These pancakes are a snap to make and work well with any fruit you have on hand.

measure

- 2 cups white whole wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- ½ cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- ¾ cup 2% Greek yogurt
- ¾ cup whole milk ricotta cheese
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 eggs
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup mixed berries
- Fresh mint to garnish

make

1. In a large mixing bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together the almond milk, yogurt, ricotta, vanilla, lemon zest, lemon juice, honey, and eggs.
3. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and whisk until well combined.
4. Heat a griddle or skillet with nonstick olive oil cooking spray over medium heat. Pour ¼ cup of batter onto the hot griddle per pancake. Cook the pancakes for about 2 minutes, or until bubbles start to form on the top and edges. Flip the pancakes and cook for another minute, or until golden brown on the bottom.
5. Serve the pancakes immediately, topped with the mixed berries and mint.





GF

DF

SERVES 4

Per serving: Calories: 279 | Fat: 12g | Carbs: 17g | Fiber: 4g | Protein: 25g

FISH CURRY WITH COCONUT-LEMONGRASS SAUCE

I love the combination of curry and lemongrass. It's citrusy and herbaceous, and pairs perfectly with whole grains like brown rice, freekeh, or quinoa, making this an excellent weeknight meal and leftover lunch!

measure

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound halibut, skin removed
- 2 shallots, cut into ¼-inch dice
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into ½-inch slices
- 1 cup sugar snap peas
- 6 ounces white mushrooms, cut into ¼-inch dice
- 2 carrots, shredded
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons Thai curry paste
- 1 cup reduced-fat coconut milk
- 2 stalks of lemongrass (yellow part only), cut into ¼-inch dice
- ¼ cup chopped green onion

make

1. In a medium sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil over medium heat. Add the halibut and sear for about 5 minutes, or until starting to brown. Flip the fish gently and cook for another 4 minutes.
2. While the fish is cooking, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil in another medium sauté pan over medium heat. Add the shallots and sauté for about 3 minutes, until soft. Add the bell pepper, snap peas, mushrooms, and carrots. Sauté for another 5 minutes, or until soft.
3. To the vegetables, add the chicken broth, curry paste, coconut milk, and lemongrass. Simmer for 5 minutes.
4. Cut the fish into 2-inch pieces and add to the coconut-lemongrass sauce and vegetables. Simmer for 5 more minutes.
5. Serve the curry in 4 bowls topped with the green onion.

GF

DF

Per serving (2 tablespoons): Calories: 123 | Fat: 8g | Carbs: 10g | Fiber: 3g | Protein: 4g

RAINBOW HUMMUS

measure

- 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup tahini
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 garlic clove
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt

make

1. Add all ingredients to a food processor or high-speed blender and blend until smooth.
2. To make additional colored hummus, follow the variations instructions below, adding the extra ingredients to 1 base hummus and blending until smooth.
3. Store in the refrigerator for up to a week in an air-tight container.

Variations:

Pink Hummus: Add 2 ounces of roasted, peeled beets.

Yellow Hummus: Add 1 teaspoon of turmeric.

Green Hummus: Add 1 cup each of fresh cilantro and parsley.

Blue Hummus: Add ½ teaspoon of powdered spirulina.





A Look at **LOVE**

written by:
matthew brady

Most people would agree that love has been discussed more than any other topic in human history. Ancient philosophers pondered it. Most religious texts address it. Poets and musicians alike find it to be an endless source of inspiration. Some television stations even dedicate programming to it.

It begs the question of whether love is an inherent part of the human condition—a necessary part of our well-being, if not survival. If so, what is it, and how can we foster it?

WHAT IS LOVE?

Despite the efforts of those mentioned above, the answer to this question remains somewhat elusive.

This can partially be attributed to society's ubiquitous usage of the word. For example, can you truly love going to the beach? The hometown baseball team? Your new home? A particular flavor of coffee? These can all bring us happiness, so, in this general sense, love is the warm feeling or passion for *things* that make us happy.

But the primary form of love—the be-all and end-all of so many movies, shows, books, and sonnets—may be better understood through a scientific lens.

For example, studies have clearly shown that newborns, more than anyone, need love almost as much as food and sleep. In addition, science can explain how being in love affects us chemically. Our brain's dopamine levels (which help regulate pleasure) and cortisol levels (which affect stress) rise, while our serotonin (mood) levels fall, especially in the honeymoon phase of love. Or, to put it in romantic terms, love can make us feel giddy, make our hearts race and our palms sweat, and make us fawn over our

object of affection. Perhaps the classic heart shape that symbolizes love should be replaced by a brain.

Speaking of which, from a psychological perspective, Robert J. Sternberg's popular Triangular Theory of Love posits that love has three primary components: intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. These are most often experienced as loving relationships, romantic/physical attraction, and being in love and maintaining it, respectively.

In addition, Dr. Sternberg identifies eight different combinations of the three. Take the intimacy level, for example. By itself, it results in liking; that's how you become friends with someone. However, a combination of intimacy and passion, without the commitment component, is defined as romantic love. In contrast, combining only intimacy and decision/commitment results in companionate love, such as familial love (and, arguably, our love of pets). When you combine all three? That's what Dr. Sternberg calls consummate love—or as we'd likely call it, true love.

CAN LOVE LAST?

Most of us are enamored of the idea of finding a soul mate. Interestingly, our pull to have lifetime partners is a relatively rare one when compared with other mammals—out of thousands of mammalian species, only around 3 to 5 percent are monogamous. It seems to be a truly human quality.

Although some might disagree, science backs the idea that long-term love is achievable. For example, research indicates that the dopamine centers of the



brain of those in long-term relationships can react similarly to how they did when they first start dating.

THE LABOR OF LOVE

However, keeping love alive doesn't usually just *happen*. It takes prioritization, commitment, and work. Here are just a few ways you can foster it.

MINIMIZE THE OBSTACLES.

You've probably heard of the usual grim realities: life today is too hectic and too demanding, and we spend too much time working. And when we do have free time, we spend too much of it in front of screens. How much time is left to work on bettering your loving relationships? Commit time every day, even if it's just thirty minutes watching TV together, to your loved one. It matters.

SHATTER COMMON ILLUSIONS.

- *"Reality" TV*. Throughout the world, and especially in Western culture, we certainly have a long-time idealized take on love, mostly because of television shows, movies, and music. It's OK to watch over-romanticized movies and TV shows, of course—as long as you take to heart that their portrayals are the exception, not the rule.
- *The seven-year itch*. Similarly, this concept was popularized by a movie, and because of that, many people believe it to be true. However, there's no evidence that year seven is when relationships magically start to fade.
- *An empty cupboard*. After being with somebody for a long time, it can seem like there's nothing left to learn about your partner. However, no matter where



or when you are in life, there are endless ways to stoke the fires of curiosity.

PRIORITIZE THE PERSON.

Do you know the primary reason people love babies and puppies? Sure, they're cute and they give a sense of meaning because they need us. But they're also as perfect as possible in terms of unconditional love: they frequently show they care about you and expect nothing in return.

In most other relationships, though, the opposite is true: expectations often outpace reality. Instead, you should focus on the person, not the person you perceive or wish for. This will help you accept and love that person despite, or perhaps even because of, his or her imperfections.

NURTURE THE MOST IMPORTANT LOVE OF ALL.

Frankly, it all starts with you. Simply put, you first have to truly love and accept yourself if you realistically expect others to do the same. If you don't, chances are that it will reflect onto others in your relationships—including friends, family members, and romantic partners—and negative consequences will follow. Instead, focus on your best qualities, and allow yourself to be vulnerable with your partner about your self-doubts and weaknesses.

Perhaps the classic song "Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing" sums up this multifaceted feeling the best. Whether you experience the comforting and stabilizing love of family and friends, the unconditional love of children and pets, or the passion of romantic and long-term love, one fact is certain—life is just better when it's filled with love.





health

A Sweet SUCCESS

written by: *matthew brady*

People naturally make positive associations between happiness and food. This seems to be especially true during certain holidays: for example, we start pining for foods like pumpkin and turkey in autumn and peppermint and cranberry during the winter holidays.

And then there's chocolate, our constant companion at most holidays—or any time of year, for that matter. In fact, this was true even during one of the most challenging years in memory. Amid a pandemic, chocolate sales increased by 4.2 percent in 2020, according to the National Confectioners Association's 2021 *State of Treating* report.



Since we are in the middle of peak chocolate-buying season, let's take a look at why this sweet (and sometimes bitter) treat has captured so many hearts and palates throughout much of human existence and how, yes, it can be good for us.

A treat timeline

The first known documentation of chocolate being created is from thousands of years ago in Mesoamerica, the native home of the cacao tree. Mayans not only consumed it as a drink but also used it in ceremonies. The Aztecs drank it as well, and their

ruler, Montezuma II, was notorious for consuming it regularly. They also used the beans as a form of currency, even rewarding their soldiers with it.

In the early sixteenth century, Spanish explorers brought the chocolate drink home, where it became a hit with the upper classes in Spain and then throughout Europe. When Amsterdam's Coenraad Johannes van Houten perfected the cocoa press, which created cocoa powder, in 1828, it revolutionized the drink, making it more easily accessible to the masses. It also led to the creation of chocolate

bars, milk chocolate, and the first mass-producing chocolatiers later in the nineteenth century. Fast-forward to today, and it's become a \$100 billion industry worldwide.

A complete sensory experience

On a basic level, we tend to be more attracted to things that stimulate our senses, and chocolate checks off most boxes on that front. It tastes great, of course, but its aroma can also be intoxicating. (Think of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies.) Interestingly enough,

when they're being fermented, cocoa beans can also have various other aromas and flavors, including cheesy, floral, and fruity.

Visually, chocolate can be shaped into any number of uplifting images, from bunnies to hearts to coins; additionally, it can boast an array of colors and is often wrapped in shiny foils to make it even more attractive. Finally, with a melting point of 93 degrees F, it's one of the few foods that actually melts in your mouth—just a finishing touch to a thoroughly enjoyable food experience.



Be choosy about your chocolate

Of course, just because something tastes good, smells good, and looks good, that doesn't mean it's actually good for you. And chocolate is no exception, both in terms of health and production. But if you choose wisely, the benefits can be tremendous.

Health reasons

Let's start with the bad aspects of chocolate, most of which are probably already understood. Chocolate tends to be quite sugary, which helps to explain why we can crave it, and it's high in calories. Also be wary of the caffeine content. Although it may not give you the same jolt as a cup of coffee, a soda, or an energy drink, it can still pack a caffeinated punch—most notably dark chocolate. However, that same dark chocolate is where you'll find many of the food's health benefits.

- The primary difference between dark chocolate and milk chocolate is that the former contains at least

50 percent cocoa solids, whereas the latter only needs a minimum of 10 percent to earn its name. White chocolate contains no cocoa solids, so it's technically not even chocolate!

- Yes, chocolate has a lot of saturated fat, but the less processed it is, the better—and dark chocolate mostly consists of healthier fats that aren't believed to raise cholesterol. In fact, dark chocolate consumption has been linked to *lower* cholesterol levels.
- Nutritionally, dark chocolate contains a good amount of fiber and minerals like copper, iron, magnesium, and zinc.
- Research indicates that dark chocolate has antioxidant properties since it's rich in flavanols, which have been connected with decreased inflammation and better blood flow, blood pressure, and overall heart health.
- That same improved blood flow can help your brain, which is why dark chocolate is also associated with improved mood and reduced stress.
- Flavanols are also associated with better insulin resistance, which may help people with diabetes. Plus, the darker it is, the less sugar it contains.

Ethical reasons

Making chocolate is a time-consuming process from start to finish, per the National Confectioners Association. It starts with cocoa trees, which produce pods with cocoa beans after four to five years; each pod has approximately forty beans. Overall, a cocoa tree will produce approximately 2,500 beans in its



lifetime. After all that nurturing, it takes around 400 cocoa beans to make a single pound of chocolate.

The vast majority of the world's cocoa beans—around 70 percent—are harvested by hand on approximately 1.5 million small, family-owned farms in West Africa. In recent years, a number of companies have prioritized and promoted fair trade to help these workers. If you want to feel as good about your chocolate as it makes you feel, simply look for the Fair Trade logo on the packaging.

All things considered, should you ditch fruits and vegetables for lots of dark chocolate? Of course not. As mentioned earlier, it can still be high in calories and caffeine. But if you limit yourself to a small piece or two a few times a week and opt for a cocoa content of 70 percent or higher, you can maximize the health benefits while minimizing the downsides—making it a sweet treat to truly savor.



written by:
alexa bricker

THE BENEFITS OF *low-impact exercise*

For the past few years, HIIT (high-intensity interval training) has dominated the fitness world. HIIT is a specific type of workout characterized by quick, high-intensity movements followed by short periods of rest, repeated back to back. And while it can be hugely effective at burning calories and increasing heart rate, the sheer amount of strain it can place on joints and the overall force of movements can make it challenging for some people.

However, low-impact exercise can provide similar health benefits to those associated with HIIT but with less force put on the body. Low-impact workouts can be a great option for older adults, individuals with joint problems, people recovering from injuries, or those just starting out on their fitness journeys. Essentially, low-impact exercise is beneficial for everyone, and you should consider making it a part of your health-and-wellness routine.

Read on to learn what specific kinds of health benefits a low-impact workout provides, and check out some exercises to get you started.



WHO SHOULD TRY IT?

As mentioned above, anyone can benefit from incorporating low-impact workouts into their routine. But there are certain groups of people who will find a low-impact workout is their only exercise option. If you fall into this category, you should know that there are still varying degrees of intensity when it comes to low-impact fitness, and you can decide what level is right for you.

SENIORS

The CDC recommends that adults sixty-five and older get at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise every week; this is aerobic exercise, meaning the exercises you perform must increase your heart rate and respiration. Low-impact workouts, such as cycling, walking, or yoga, can still get the blood pumping and provide tremendous cardiovascular benefit when performed regularly. Programs such as SilverSneakers are aimed at helping seniors stay fit and healthy through exercise, and SilverSneakers provides resources for virtual and in-person classes you can attend—sometimes at no cost.



PEOPLE WITH JOINT PAIN/ARTHRITIS

When it comes to HIIT, one of the biggest concerns of older adults is the strain it can place on bones and joints. However, these health concerns are more common than you might think and affect a far larger portion of the population than just the elderly. If you are worried about the strain of a high-impact workout but you are physically able to perform moderate- to high-intensity aerobic activities, low-impact workouts such as a dance class, Pilates, and swimming are great for increasing heart rate significantly without the jumping or running required in HIIT.



FITNESS NEWBIES

If you're looking to improve your physical fitness but haven't established a set routine yet, try incorporating three to five low-impact exercise days into your week. You can start with a thirty-minute walk each day, and then gradually increase or rotate in other low-impact exercises like rowing, yoga, or no-jumping aerobics. Once you have established a pattern and have found the types of exercises you're comfortable with, you can experiment with other forms of exercise.

WHY TRY IT?

The health benefits of low-impact workouts are numerous, and they're arguably more sustainable than HIIT or other forms of intense exercise. Even seasoned athletes can reap the benefits of including low-impact exercises in their routines. Low-impact training can help prevent muscle and joint strain from too many back-to-back high-impact workouts while providing the level of aerobic activity necessary for good health.

Low-impact cardio activities like walking and biking are incredibly beneficial for your cardiovascular system. Exercises like these increase heart rate while putting very little to no strain on joints, so you can go at your own pace. They can also be performed as a social activity, offering even more benefits. And it's not just your heart and lungs that stand to gain from frequent low-impact exercising; your mind can benefit, too. That's because all forms of low-impact cardio can give you a boost of endorphins and a subsequent euphoric boost to your mood, much like the one that runners experience.

One of the most important elements of low-impact exercise is that it's sustainable for your

body. Because they are so low-impact, these types of exercises can generally be performed for longer periods of time and more frequently, making it easier for you to achieve maximum health benefits. They can also help you slowly build your strength over time, which will allow you to eventually incorporate more high-intensity exercises into your routine.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

The specific low-impact exercises mentioned above are a great place to start. However, there are also a number of weight-training and other cardio-based activities that qualify as low-impact as well, and you can use them to diversify your routine.



STATIONARY LUNGES

Jumping lunges are a common type of HIIT exercise, but stationary lunges remove the impact of coming down on your knees. To perform them, stand with one leg in front of you and one leg behind you, about shoulder-width apart. Bend at your knees until the knee of your back leg is nearly touching the floor, and then stand to straighten both legs. Repeat with the other leg.

BODY-WEIGHT SQUATS

Strong legs and glutes can be beneficial for helping you perform a number of other low-impact exercises, and body-weight squats are a great way to build your leg and glute strength. With your feet hip-width apart, slowly bend at your knees, being mindful that your weight is in your heels and your knees don't extend past your toes. Straighten your legs, and stand up, squeezing your glutes as you lift.

MODIFIED JUMPING JACKS

Traditional jumping jacks are a relatively low-impact exercise. However, even slight jumping can put stress on joints if performed for an extended period of time. Here's a variation to consider. Start by standing with your feet slightly apart and your arms at your sides. Step one foot out to the side at a time, simultaneously extending your arms above your head and moving back down as you bring your leg back in. Repeat with the other leg.

STANDING CRUNCHES

A strong core is key to a strong body, but if performing crunches on the floor hurts your back, this is another option you can try. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and your hands on the back of your head with your elbows out. Lift one knee upward, and move your opposite elbow to meet your knee. Repeat on the other side.

Whether you just want to get started on your exercise journey, want to raise your heart rate without sacrificing your joints, or add a little variety and stability to your current routine, low-impact exercises are a great way to do it.

**Remember, if you're starting any new wellness routine, consult your doctor first.*



WORTHWILE WINTER WEEKEND PROJECTS

written by: alexa bricker



Being stuck at home all winter tends to be no fun. But being stuck at home all winter in a home that doesn't make you happy or fulfill your needs can be even worse. Why not spend some time this season working on improvements that make your house feel infinitely more comfortable and livable? The following ideas are easy and quick enough to complete as weekend projects but will provide years of enjoyment in return. So grab your tool kit, and give your home a DIY-style refresh.



Seasonal upgrades

Here are a pair of essential weekend projects to tackle this time of year, regardless of where you live.

Seal drafty windows and doors

Drafty windows and doors can put a serious damper on your home's comfort level, not to mention your electric bill. Run your hand around them to feel for cool air, and seal any cracks you find with caulk. An even easier fix for doors? Purchase a draft stopper to place under doors to prevent cool air from creeping into other rooms.

Test your detectors

Winter is a great time to check the batteries in your smoke detectors and other alarm systems and replace the batteries if needed. Also, make sure your detectors aren't out of date—most are good for ten years.

Storage upgrades

What better time than the beginning of the year to prioritize organization? Storage upgrades can help you maximize your space to eliminate clutter and create peace and order throughout your home. When everything is in its place, it's much easier to focus your attention on other improvements.



Built-ins

Built-ins can be beneficial just about anywhere in your home, but good places to start are your entryways and closets. You can purchase and install built-in shelving yourself, and relatively inexpensively, and it will provide enormous benefit when it comes to keeping your items concealed and tidy. In the entryway, consider installing floor-level cubicles to store things like shoes and umbrellas. Tall, rectangular cubicles can also be great for hanging coats. In your closets, built-ins can help keep similar items together and prevent clutter from accumulating.



Basement and attic organization

If you are currently using your basement or attic for storage purposes, but these spaces feel very disorganized, now is the time to tackle them. In the attic, start by clearing away as much clutter as possible so you can remove dust and grime from the floor. Once the floor is clean, group like items together, and place them in clear storage bins for easy access. Arrange the bins throughout the attic by season, rotating to the front as needed.

In the basement, go through the items you have, and compile them into throw-away, store, and donate piles. Designate one wall for storage purposes, and install sturdy plastic or metal shelving to keep items off the floor. Place anything you're keeping in clear plastic bins, organized into item type, label the bins, and place them onto the shelves.



Bathroom upgrades

Giving your bathroom a little TLC can go a long way toward improving your quality of life at home. These simple fixes can work wonders to help you create a spa-like atmosphere.

Incorporate greenery

You might not think of the bathroom when decorating with plants and greenery, but you should. Adding potted or hanging plants that thrive in a warm, humid location, such as pothos, aloe vera, and spider plants, can contribute to a fresh and clean feel. For an even more therapeutic effect, hanging eucalyptus in your shower can promote relaxation and help clear sinuses irritated by winter weather.

Swap out towels

If your bath towels are feeling a little worse for wear, consider investing in high-quality, plush replacements. It's a small change that can make a big difference in the way you care for yourself and your skin. Just be sure to wash any new towels a few times before using them to remove loose fibers that can hinder absorption.



Lighting upgrades

With its shorter daytime hours, winter can be a particularly difficult time for bringing natural light into your home. So why not invest in proper lighting that will illuminate your spaces?

Statement lighting

An eye-catching lighting fixture can immediately transform your entryway, dining room, or kitchen. Choose a piece or pieces that match the rest of your decor and style to ensure a cohesive look, whether it's modern, rustic, or midcentury. You don't have to go for the most expensive-looking chandelier, either. Sites like Wayfair and Etsy offer custom pieces to match your personal taste.

Dimmers and timers

Winter is all about mood lighting, and, while candles can provide their own ambience, installing dimmers and timers for your lights can be extra helpful. Remote-controlled dimmers are great for living rooms and other lounge spaces where you might gather to watch movies or enjoy other activities. They can also be installed in the bedroom to promote relaxation at bedtime.

Security upgrades

There are so many options when it comes to home security upgrades, ranging from simple and affordable to complex and costly. However, striking the perfect balance for your home is possible. No matter what

security system you choose, you are sure to feel more comfortable and secure both while you're at home and while you're away.

Smart home systems

The most popular modern home security systems can be managed from your smartphone. Brands like SimpliSafe and ADT have high ratings from users, their products can be installed by a homeowner or by a professional, and they offer monthly subscriptions for as little as \$14.99 for SimpliSafe and \$28.95 for ADT, respectively. Both companies offer doorbell cameras and systems to protect against intruders, as well as health hazards such as carbon monoxide leaks, floods, and fires.

Keyless entry

Many homeowners are opting to install keyless entry pads at doorways to help prevent break-ins when a key is lost or stolen. Some electronic keypads can be installed in place of a traditional front door handle. You can then select a specific code that must be entered in order to unlock the door. Other keyless entry systems can be paired with smart home devices to lock and unlock via apps.

Spend some time this season transforming your home into the place you've always dreamed of—you'll be glad you did.

5WAYS

to Naturally Increase Energy

written by: *rachel stevens*

Fatigue can drag down your motivation and productivity. Instead of boosting your energy with coffee or supplements, it might be time to try a few natural remedies to let your body function at its best. Here are five ways you can easily and effectively increase your energy levels.

Drink water.

One of the first signs of dehydration is fatigue, so if you're thirsty, don't ignore it. Energy drinks and caffeine can dehydrate you even more. However, water is clinically proven to increase performance.

Drink at least sixty-four ounces of water a day, if not more, depending on your age, weight, and activity level. If you don't like plain water, try adding fruit to give it some natural flavor and vitamins.

Stretch.

Your muscles need regular movement, especially if you work at a desk. Stretching improves blood flow and releases oxygen into your muscles, giving them an energy replenishment that can reduce aches and fatigue. Set reminders to stand up, breathe, and stretch. Stretches like rolling your neck and shoulders slowly in circles are great for helping desk fatigue.



Skip the sweets.

Sugary, processed foods provide a short energy burst with a hard crash. Instead, opt for complex carbohydrates and protein that will give you a steady energy burn. For example, having whole-wheat toast and eggs for breakfast will give you the strength to stay alert until lunch. When lunch comes around, try eating a meal full of vegetables, like a salad.

Create a better sleep schedule.

Not all bodies need the same amount of sleep. On average, adults need anywhere from seven to nine hours of sleep each night to perform at their best. Catching up on sleep is a myth, and the only way to get the proper amount of sleep is by figuring out what your body and mind need and applying it. Start by making a better nightly routine, which can involve unplugging thirty minutes before bed and maintaining a clean, stress-free bedroom environment.

Try aromatherapy.

Smell is one of the most powerful senses because it can affect your mood more directly than taste, touch, sight, or sound can. When your emotions are regulated, you are more likely to feel energized and motivated. Aromatherapy can be a good option, especially if you work at home. Diffuse scents like spearmint and lemon to help regulate your focus and energy levels.

The inclusion of useful tips is one of the top reasons 58 percent of recipients have referred the professional who sent them the magazine in the past 12 months.

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Front of Tear Out Card 2



LEMON-RICOTTA PANCAKES



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Back of Tear Out Card 2

SERVES 6

- 2 c. white whole wheat flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. sea salt
- ½ c. unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- ¾ c. 2% Greek yogurt
- ¾ c. whole milk ricotta cheese
- 1½ tsp. vanilla extract
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tbsp. honey
- 2 eggs
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 c. mixed berries
- Fresh mint to garnish

V Vegetarian

1. In a large mixing bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together the almond milk, yogurt, ricotta, vanilla, lemon zest, lemon juice, honey, and eggs.
3. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and whisk until well combined.
4. Heat a griddle or skillet with nonstick olive oil cooking spray over medium heat. Pour ¼ cup of batter onto the hot griddle per pancake. Cook the pancakes for about 2 minutes, or until bubbles start to form on the top and edges. Flip the pancakes and cook for another minute, or until golden brown on the bottom.
5. Serve the pancakes immediately, topped with the mixed berries and mint.

Recipes from *The 30-Minute Clean Eating Cookbook*, by Kathy Siegel, MS, RDN, CDN.
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Stacey was very patient with us, even though we were very picky. She knew how important it was for us to have a great experience and great service. We would definitely refer Stacey to all of our friends and family.



The Austin Family
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