

ASIA

SINCE 1922

# Reader's Digest

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AS PODCASTS

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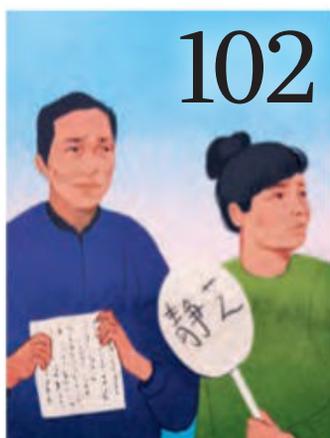
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**EDITOR'S NOTE**

## *Extraordinary People*

**HEROES COME IN MANY DISGUISES.** This month, we have two stories that highlight the extraordinary efforts of ordinary people. Both have endeavoured to resolve a problem and in doing so have improved the lives of others. In 'Changing the Climate' (page 32) we meet meteorologist Petteri Taalas who, as head of the World Meteorological Organization, spends his working day warning the world's powerhouses of the pending climate disaster. Using the only tools he has at his disposal – his sharp scientific knowledge and an ability to share this science with political leaders in a way that doesn't cause conflict – Taalas has grown to become one of the world's most influential (and interesting) weather men.

The other article, 'Making A Difference: Raincoats for Change' (page 26), depicts the positive change created when Dipa Swaminathan made a split-second decision to help someone. Her simple gesture of kindness on a rainy day back in 2013 has led to a flood of support for migrant workers in Singapore that continues to this day.

These stories, plus an insightful look at the future of robots ('Robot Revolution', page 78), our least understood sense ('The Mysterious Sense of Smell', page 86) and much more, are in this month's edition.

We hope you enjoy the many amazing stories in the June edition and share them with family and friends.

*Louise*

LOUISE WATERSON  
Editor-in-Chief



# ASIA Reader's Digest

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# LETTERS

## *Reader's Comments And Opinions*

### **Wildlife Warrior**

What a delight to read Jack Watkins's article about the extraordinary environmental activist Jane Goodall, (April). There's no doubt that Jane's childhood love affair with a toy chimpanzee sparked a passion that would burn for life. From her early travels into the wilds of Africa and around the world, Jane's purpose is to educate, mentor and inspire a new generation to become better caretakers of this wonderful world, and a protector of all creatures great and small.

JUDITH CAINE



### **All About a Healthy Heart**

While cardiologists have outlined how to overcome heart problems 'How to Keep Your Heart Young' (April), not much attention has been paid to outdoor physical exercises. Top sports coaches recommend that 30 minutes of Fartlek running (periods of fast

running intermixed with periods of jogging or brisk walking), coupled with breathing and stretching exercises, will keep all heart problems at bay.

An octogenarian, I have followed this regime strictly for the last 50 years and am still physically fit.

SYED RIFAQUAT ALI

Let us know if you are moved – or provoked – by any item in the magazine, share your thoughts. See page 8 for how to join the discussion.

### Give Credit Where It's Due

I enjoyed 'Fascinating Facts About Dictionaries' (March) but was astonished that there was no mention of England's greatest lexicographer, Dr Samuel Johnson. In 1755, after seven painstaking years, Johnson produced the first comprehensive English dictionary, which remained the pre-eminent work until the first publication of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the early 20th century. Johnson was a poet, writer and scholar and also had a sharp wit.

RANDAL WILLIAMS

### Another Ancient Tree

The Editor's Note in the April issue concludes, "With a variety of in-depth and colourful stories to suit every interest ..." and the article



### WIN A PILOT CAPLESS FOUNTAIN PEN

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### THE LION SLEEPS TONIGHT

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

You're a no-good housekeeper, Leo. You waste your time just lion around.

BILL FORREST

I take pride in my house.

MERRAN TOONE

At divorce settlement, I received the lion's share.

RAJ SANEJA

Just relaxing with my mane man.

NANCY VIETHEER

**Congratulations to this month's winner, Nancy Vietheer.**



### 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 8.

## READER'S DIGEST

'If Trees Could Talk' supports this statement. The authors vividly described how these majestic forest giants relate their stories. May I add yet another ancient giant tree to this collection? The Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi, a sacred fig tree or *Ficus religiosa*, stands in the Mahamewna Gardens in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. This is supposed to be the oldest recorded tree in the world planted by man – in 288 BCE. It was propagated from a sapling sprouted from the Sri Maha Bodhi tree of Buddha Gaya in ancient India, under the shade of which Buddha attained enlightenment.

DAYARATNA WEERASEKARA

### It's All Greek to Us

The word 'ouzo' is defined as 'Greek liqueur' in April's Word Power. Without being pedantic, shouldn't that read liquOr instead?

There may exist an ouzo based liquEur but in general, I could hardly describe that famous Greek beverage as a liqueur. Correct me please if I'm wrong. JOSEPH LE GALL

*Editor's Note: Thank you for pointing this out, Joseph. Ouzo is certainly better defined as a liquor than a liqueur, as liqueurs contain sugar. Perhaps ouzo should have been described as an anise-flavoured liquor. It has also been called an aperitif – a drink taken before a meal to stimulate the appetite.*

## CONTRIBUTE



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### Anecdotes and jokes

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### Smart Animals

**Up to \$100**

Share antics of unique pets or wildlife in up to 300 words.

### My Story **\$250**

Do you have an inspiring or life-changing tale to tell? Submissions must be true, unpublished, original and 800–1000 words.

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## NEWS WORTH SHARING



### All Aboard in Restoring Vintage Trains

**T**here's much more to Oamaru's Steam and Rail Restoration Society than running vintage trains around New Zealand's historic harbour and precinct. Men, women and young people from all walks of life have been set on the 'right track' by volunteering in the workshop.

The society's general manager, Harry Andrew, explains that school students, some of whom had been struggling at school, have come to the workshop over the years and learnt the tricks of the trade – many gaining credits for their National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)

qualification. One young man with dyslexia qualified as a welder and then completed a Bachelor of Engineering. For others, it's the life skills and sense of belonging that are important.

The older volunteers take the younger ones under their wings, teaching them how to mark out jobs and keep the railway maintained to New Zealand Transport Agency standards. Andrew adds that it's important to sit and listen to the students. "They are part of us; they are us," he says. While he doesn't regard himself as a counsellor, he recognises the importance of a chat.

COMPILED BY VICTORIA POLZOT

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

## Why Hugging a Cow Might Help Reduce Loneliness

**T**he world is not short of wellness therapies, but among the most unusual is 'cow cuddling', which started in the Netherlands. Hugging cows, or '*koe knuffelen*' in Dutch, is said to reduce stress and loneliness, thanks to the inherent uplifting effect of snuggling up to a furry animal.

Cow cuddlers typically start by taking a tour of a farm before resting against one of the cows for two to three hours. The cow's warmer body temperature, slower heartbeat and large size help make hugging them a soothing experience. Giving the animal a backrub, reclining against them or even getting licked is all part of the therapeutic encounter.

Cow cuddling is believed to boost oxytocin in humans, the hormone released in social bonding.



## Pygmy Possum Gives Conservationists Hope

**T**he devastating bushfires of 2019/20 in South Australia affected almost half of Kangaroo Island's 440,500 hectares, caused the death of two people and destroyed homes, farms and animal habitats – killing tens of thousands of domestic and wild animals, including kangaroos and koalas.

While a proportion of those two species survived, it was feared that the island's population of little pygmy possums may have been wiped out. Almost a year after the fires, conservationists discovered one that had survived. The rediscovery of this miniature marsupial, which weighs less than ten grams and grows to only five to seven centimetres in length, represents a glimmer of hope after a particularly dark time.



## MY STORY

# GOLF

## *A Game of Life*

*Golf has an interesting way of imitating life  
— you have to play the ball where it lands*

BY *Graham Morley*

In 2014, I qualified to play in the ‘Cock o’ the Walk’ golf event at a course on Sydney’s Northern Beaches, where players competed against one another according to their handicaps.

My first opponent was Don – a former first-grade footballer, who, at over 1.8 metres tall, was all muscle.

“Good luck,” said my wife, Margaret, as I left for the match. “Think of it as David versus Goliath,” I replied. I didn’t feel confident. I had played with Don in other rounds and he was a very good player with a low handicap. However, this was a

handicap event so I was allowed an extra stroke on a number of holes. We shook hands at the first tee and wished one another the best.

“Keep an eye on the crows,” I warned. Strange things can happen in match play.

On the first hole my shot to the green went into the bunker. Don’s appeared to do the same, but we found it hard up against a tree. “Talk about bad luck!” he bellowed. Thanks to this unplayable penalty, he lost the hole.

My next hole was a repeat of the first – my ball landed in the bunker.



Don's made it to the back of the green. I was just about to play my bunker shot when I heard Don bellow again.

He cursed and then said, "A bird just pecked my ear!"

I looked for the culprit expecting to see a magpie. None were in sight. A plover, perhaps? No. All I could

---

Graham Morley is golf convener for a local Probus club. He enjoys tennis, cycling and doing watercolour sketches. He started playing the violin five years ago. He writes humorous lyrics, singing them to well-known songs which he performs for family and friends.

see was a small grey noisy miner fluttering around. We had a good laugh but this put him off his shot and I managed to win the hole.

Ten holes in and I was still ahead. Don played a wonderful long drive on the Par Five 11th hole but the ball nearly ended up in the small lake known by course regulars as 'The Teardrop'. In the distance we could both just see the tiny speck of white next to a red marker peg. We headed down the hill onto the fairway and I noticed two crows taking a lot of interest in his ball.

"Don, the crows!" I yelled out. He ran towards them waving his golf club but before he could reach them, one of the crows picked up his ball and waddled several metres along before dropping it further from the green. The other crow seemed to think this wasn't far enough so it picked up the ball again and carried it to the edge of the lake before dropping it into the water. We were both stunned.

I told Don not to worry since the rules allow you to drop another ball in its place with no penalty. We played on to the 15th tee, and as I was three holes up, this was the last hole that I held an extra shot advantage on Don. This hole is very long – the hardest on the course, and only the best golfers can get to the green in two shots. Don proved his class as a player by placing his

ball next to the green on his second shot. After three shots, I was just short of the green. Don chipped his ball onto the green just three metres from the hole, then I chipped up to a metre from the hole. We walked onto the green and Don prepared to putt.

If he took two putts to get the ball in the hole, and I got mine in with just one putt, then the game would be over. Just as Don was about to putt, a big black cloud that must have followed us up the fairway, burst open with heavy rain, then quickly turned to hail. The whole green was covered under a thick carpet of ice and our clothes were drenched. Don shook his head in disbelief. It didn't seem as though we'd be able to finish our game.

We agreed to mark our balls where they lay, wait for the hail to melt and the water to subside. Luckily, the hole was close to the clubhouse so we could take shelter during the downpour. Fifteen minutes later we returned and, in spite of the surface water, Don sank his ball with two putts. As I was now cold and wet, I didn't really want to keep playing, but I couldn't miss this putt. All I could do was hit the putt and hope ...

and guess what? The ball rolled in.

It was all over. Don congratulated me. As we headed back to the clubhouse, he remarked that he couldn't believe how many obstacles we had encountered during the round.



## HEAVY RAIN QUICKLY TURNED TO HAIL

"Well, Don," I replied. "I may have planted the tree that your ball stopped against, I could have trained the little bird to peck, and the crows to drop the ball into the lake, but I couldn't make it hail!"

We both laughed, glad to see our sense of humour remained intact. In life, as in golf, unforeseen challenges arise but if you can take them in your stride and maintain a sense of humour, you'll be wiser

for the experience.

The sequel to this story is that on my next round of golf I was standing on the second tee when a small grey Noisy Miner hopped over to me and stood at my feet looking up expectantly – so I gave it a small morsel of food!

---

**Do you have a tale to tell? We'll pay cash for any original and unpublished story we print. See page 8 for details on how to contribute.**



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## SMART ANIMALS

*Wildlife offer a wonderful insight into the natural world*



### Returning the Favour

IMAMAH HANIF

I will never forget what I saw one spring evening in 2019 at my local park. At the time, I liked to go and watch the sunset at a park, which was a seaside area in Karachi. There, I would always see the same elderly lady feeding the pigeons. The birds, usually around ten to 15 in number, would gather around her before she

even had a chance to retrieve the bag of *bajra* (pearl millet) from her handbag. It was the same each day, part of her routine.

I found that watching her perform this ordinary task with such keen purpose was both calming and beautiful.

On this particular evening, the lady arrived at her usual spot to feed the birds. But, as she

approached the bench to sit down, her beaded necklace fell to the ground.

I was sitting on the grass nearby and got up to retrieve it for her. However, before I reached it, one of the pigeons from the group picked up the necklace and, holding it in its beak, flew to the bench and dropped it on her lap.

I couldn't believe my eyes. The old lady, also surprised, began chuckling to herself. I was left with a huge smile on my face and happily went back to watching the birds being fed.

## **Patience Rewarded**

JUDITH CAINE

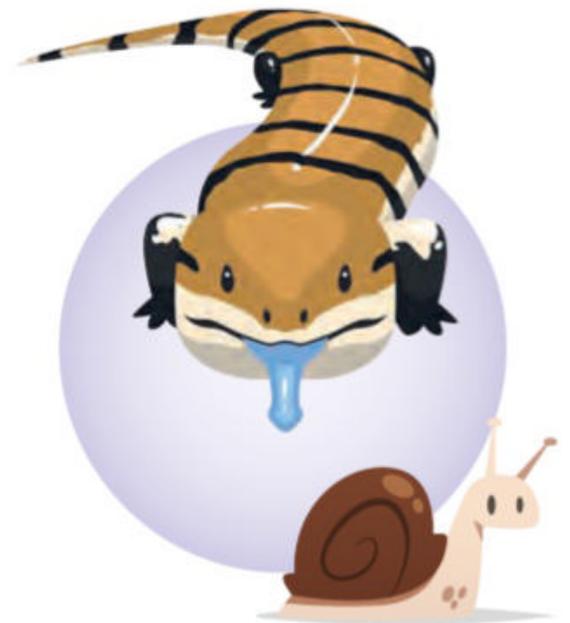
My family is delighted to share our garden with a band of friendly blue tongued lizards, who love to laze about in the warm sunshine. One summer day last year while pruning some shrubs, I came across a large, juicy looking snail not far from where Lizzie, our favourite garden 'resident', was sleeping soundly on the garden path. Knowing that lizards love snails (our garden has very few), I placed the juicy delicacy close to Lizzie and waited to see what would happen next.

It was some time before Lizzie stirred, opened her sleepy eyes, and flicked her tongue in and out several times, before moving towards the snail. After a few more minutes, Lizzie nudged the snail to and fro, eventually tipping it upside down,

before promptly falling back to sleep. Puzzled by this odd response, I continued to watch. And it wasn't long before I understood why the lizard had tipped its 'lunch' upside down.

It was a very warm day and with the sun's rays beating down on the upturned snail, the creature soon began to spill itself out of its shell. When it was fully emerged, Lizzie opened her sleepy eyes, flicked her tongue in and out a few more times, then devoured her perfectly prepared lunch.

That day I was reminded just how clever our wildlife is, and how much we can learn by taking the time to observe the little things that go on all around us in the natural world, often right in our own backyards. We just need to look.



**PETS**

# Keeping Cats Indoors

*Discover ways to make your cat comfortable inside*

BY *Dr Katrina Warren*



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

**THERE WAS A TIME** when people always put the cat out before going to bed. In past generations, cats were generally free roaming, but these days cats are very much part of the family and typically spend most of their time indoors. Living inside has benefits – contained cats are less likely to create a nuisance in the neighbourhood, be exposed to infectious diseases, get into fights with other cats, kill wildlife or be hit by a motor vehicle. They generally have a longer life expectancy than outdoor cats. Dr Warren shares her expert knowledge on managing indoor cats.

**CATS MAKE GREAT INDOOR PETS** Cats are naturally very clean and they love to sleep; in fact most cats sleep for around three-quarters of the day. Confining a cat is not cruel, as they are generally quite happy to live indoors permanently, especially if trained to from a young age. Older cats will often happily adapt to indoor life once they recognise all the creature comforts that go along with it.

**CAT-FRIENDLY SPACES** Many homes have structural features that help make a space cat-friendly. These include contained inner courtyards and atriums, access to sunlight and enclosed balconies. Some balconies are easily enclosed with a simple screen or netting,

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



enabling cats to have free access in your absence. Cats also enjoy rooms with a view, a heater for the cooler months and a few high spots where they can sit to observe the goings-on of the household.

**QUALITY SPACE** Cats don't require a huge house or anything fancy, they just need a safe, comfortable space. It's a good idea to give your cat plenty of options for places to sit and sleep. The more choices a cat has, the more comfortable and happier they will be.

**MAXIMISE WINDOWS** Most cats love a sunny window ledge, a vantage point where they can sit and watch the outside world go by. If your window sills aren't wide enough for your cat to sit on, try placing furniture such as a table or a couch alongside the window to provide access to a view.

**Cats love to sit on window ledges to watch the world outside go by**

**CREATE VERTICAL SPACE** Cats love to be elevated and love to climb. Simple shelves can be placed to create a cat ladder and furniture can be strategically placed to allow a cat to access higher spots, such as the top of a wardrobe.

**EXERCISE** Cats benefit from exercise, so consider training your cat to walk on a harness. Don't forget to provide a scratching post, plenty of toys and play with your cat regularly.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT FOR YOUR CAT

**Create an indoor garden** Bring the outside in by providing potted plants, such as cat grass and catnip.

**Boxes** Empty boxes can provide endless entertainment for cats.

Try stacking and taping them together to create a cat cubby house.

**Toys** Keep a variety of cat toys, including ones that are furry, coloured, jingly, dangly and rolling, and offer them

on a rotating basis to maintain interest.

**Electronic gadgets**

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**HEALTH**

# Fighting Fatigue

*The first step is observing yourself in order to discover its possible cause*

BY Christina Frangou



**Y**ou don't want to get out of bed and, once you finally do, you can't find the energy to exercise. During the day, you lack the ability to concentrate on anything.

Just like paper cuts and bad dreams, fatigue happens to everyone at some point. It's a common ailment, reported by as many as one-third of people visiting their doctor.

In many cases, fatigue is a normal response to life circumstances: stress, a change in sleeping patterns, a heavy workload. Since we can't always avoid these things, Dr Tom Declercq, a specialist in primary

care, suggests giving yourself more rest than usual during these times to restore energy levels. "It's very important to listen to your body when it's asking for more sleep," he says.

But here's the tricky thing: although fatigue can often be resolved with additional rest and lifestyle changes, it can also be a symptom of something more serious. Dr Declercq recommends people visit their GP if they notice any other physical changes along with feeling tired, or if their fatigue persists for more than two weeks after making lifestyle changes.

ILLUSTRATION: ADAM DE SOUZA

When speaking to your doctor, describe your experience of exhaustion in detail to help him/her identify if there is an underlying cause. Although fatigue is generally defined as a lack of energy and motivation, this can manifest as physical, mental or both.

Some questions you could ask yourself before the appointment are: Do you feel unrefreshed even after a long night's rest? Do you find it hard to focus on projects? Do you tire quickly when physically active?

**A WARNING SIGN?**

Fatigue accompanied by a fever may indicate infection, while dizziness could be a sign of anaemia. Laboured breathing may be suggestive of heart disease. If you feel sad or nervous, depression or an anxiety disorder might be causing your fatigue. This could be improved by taking an antidepressant or starting cognitive behavioural therapy.

Fatigue that comes on suddenly, persists and is associated with unexpected weight loss or night sweats may be a warning sign of cancer.

Naturally, the quality and quantity of sleep you're getting should be considered. Poor sleep

hygiene – like dozing with a pet in your bed or using devices late at night – can disturb your rest. Sleep apnoea is another common culprit.

Any amount of alcohol consumption can worsen your sleep, but the more you consume, the greater its effect. While alcohol might help you fall asleep faster, it interrupts circadian rhythms and thus is an obstacle to getting restorative rest.

When does fatigue become chronic fatigue syndrome

(CFS)? There's no specific diagnostic test for CFS (also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis or systemic exertion intolerance disease), but the condition is defined as a prolonged and profound fatigue that hangs around for at least six months

**THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF SLEEP YOU'RE GETTING SHOULD BE CONSIDERED**

without an identifiable cause, impairs your cognitive function and leads to debilitating exhaustion even after minor physical or mental exertion. It's unclear how many people have CFS and what might be behind it.

While not a cure, exercise might help with persistent cases. "When people tend to have a chronic fatigue problem, it's not a good idea to stay in your chair. It's a lot better to move," says Dr Declercq.

## HEALTH

# Why Exercise Can Help Relieve Stress

*Your low-cost antidote to daily pressures*

BY Peter Levidis

Exercise is a great coping mechanism. Everyone uses coping strategies for stress, whether consciously or not, but most of them are unhealthy. Think about it: whether you're plonking yourself down in front of Netflix with a bag of chips or engaging in some retail therapy, you're trying to accomplish the same goal of unwinding. But here's the thing about exercising: unlike the other examples, it actually works.

When you exercise, your brain releases endorphins – known as 'happy hormones' – which give you feelings of wellbeing and euphoria after exercise. When your body eventually adapts to your workout of choice, you need to pick out training



routines that are varied to create a new stimulus. However, once your body gets into this routine, you actually produce less stress hormones, too. And, what's more, it's meditative and helps to change your mindset. An added bonus is that exercise improves the quality of your sleep, which also helps your body cope with stress.

The secret lies in finding the best workout to bust stress: find something that doesn't feel like another chore. Some people gravitate towards yoga for its de-stressing effect, while others opt for long-distance running or cycling.

Whatever activity you choose, ensure you focus while doing it. Think about what you're looking to achieve, whether it's increasing lean muscle tissue or achieving a personal best for your next race. By making a workout your antidote to stress, you'll gain confidence to deal with what's wearing you down in the first place.

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\*TERMS & CONDITIONS APPLY

**HEALTH**

# Laugh for Better Health

*The medical reasons mirth is good for you*

BY *Rebecca Philips*

There are many ways laughter may well be the best medicine. While it can't cure diseases, scientists say it has measurable health benefits: it's good for your heart, brain, relationships and your overall sense of wellbeing.

Laughing triggers the brain to release feel-good neurotransmitters. Dopamine helps the brain process emotional responses and enhances our experience of pleasure; serotonin buoys our mood; and endorphins regulate pain and stress, and induce euphoria. A recent study even showed that laughing with others releases endorphins via opioid receptors, which suggests that laughter-produced euphoria is like a narcotic – but without the obvious drawbacks.

Beyond a mood lift, laughing often



may also help prevent a heart event. Common daily challenges can cause chronic stress. The continual fight-or-flight response causes our blood vessels to constrict and our blood pressure to rise. That can lead to an increased risk of heart attack and stroke. But like aerobic exercise, a good laugh can actually counteract stress.

Laughter is also an antidote to pain, and therefore increases our endurance. A 2011 Oxford University study showed that subjects' pain thresholds were significantly higher after laughing, due to that endorphin-mediated opiate effect. A good belly laugh also happens to be a bit of a workout on its own – it exercises several muscle groups, including your abdomen, back, shoulders, diaphragm and face.

Joking around is also a boon to our social life. Shared giggles act to reinforce and maintain our sense of togetherness. And people who feel more connected to others have higher self-esteem.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

## WORLD OF MEDICINE

### COULD YOU SLEEP BETTER UNDER A WEIGHTED BLANKET?

Most people prefer to treat insomnia without drugs – for good reason, since sleeping pills can lead to a physical dependence and cause dizziness and falls. A Swedish trial recently tested a less risky option: weighted blankets. These blankets supplement the usual plush materials with pellets, chains or beads. The pressure the added weight puts on your body brings comfort and calm to some people. Compared to the study subjects who went to bed with a light cover, those who were given a six- or eight-kilogram blanket saw more improvement in both sleep and mental-health issues such as depression or anxiety.

### BINGE DRINKING MAY RAISE DEMENTIA RISK

A paper published in *JAMA Network Open* looked at people's drinking habits and the effects over a period of 12 to 30 years. Those who sometimes drank enough to lose consciousness were roughly twice as likely to eventually develop dementia. This held

true regardless of how much they usually drank overall. So even if you're a 'moderate drinker' (someone who consumes no more than the recommended ten standard drinks per week – one standard drink is 100ml wine or 285ml beer or cider), you should still be careful not to drink too much at once.

### TO FEEL CONNECTED, PICK UP THE PHONE

Ever since emailing and texting came along, many of us have relied on these methods to stay in touch, in part because we think a call might feel intrusive. However, when the subjects in a Texan study were randomly assigned to reconnect with an old friend using either email or the phone, calling gave them a stronger feeling of being bonded – without the additional awkwardness many of them had expected. Feeling connected to others is essential for

health and wellbeing, so when it comes to long-distance or socially distanced relationships, we should limit text-based communication, choosing calls or video chats more often.



# Raincoats FOR Change

*A simple gesture of kindness one rainy day has led to a flood of support for migrant workers in Singapore*

---

BY Lam Lye Ching

PHOTOS: FACEBOOK, COURTESY IT'S RAINING RAINCOATS

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



**O**n a typical wet Singapore afternoon back in October 2013, Dipa Swaminathan, a Harvard-educated telecommunications lawyer, was driving home after working out at the gym when she noticed two road cleaners crouched under cardboard sheets near her home. They were completely drenched.

*That is so sad,* Dipa thought as she drove past. She stopped the car and reversed back to where the migrant

workers sheltered, rain pounding down heavily against them. Rolling down her window, Dipa asked the men to get into her car so she could take them to her house for cover. The workers shook their heads. “We are muddy and we will dirty the car,” said one.

“I can wash my car, hop in!” Dipa insisted.

Dipa drove the workers to her home, where they took refuge on the front porch of her house for an

hour with hot coffee and *parathas* (flatbread), changing into some dry clothes belonging to Dipa's husband. Before leaving, Dipa took a photo of them and posted it on Facebook, urging employers to provide their workers with umbrellas. The workers were worried about repercussions from their bosses over the post, but Dipa gave them her number, reassuring them that she was a lawyer and could help them.

Three months later, while shopping at her local supermarket, Dipa's phone rang. It was the police. Murugan, one of the men she had assisted, had attempted suicide. It is a criminal offence to commit suicide in Singapore and the police had called Dipa because hers was the only number in Murugan's phone.

Dipa abandoned her shopping trolley and headed to the police station, only to be told that Murugan had already been transferred to hospital. As Dipa jumped back into her car and headed to the hospital, her mind was racing. *He's so vulnerable with nobody to help him*, she thought. *What would have happened if we'd never met?*

At the hospital, she found Murugan locked in a room with other patients, and two policemen were guarding the

door. Granted access, Dipa entered the room and gently led the man into a corner to talk. Distraught and terrified, Murugan revealed he had not been paid wages for six months and now loan sharks were threatening his family back in India.

"This guy is just a victim, not a criminal," Dipa told the police officer. "You and I don't know what it is like to live on the edge of desperation where taking your life is a very real option. But this guy does."

She told Murugan she'd do all she could to help.

That day, Dipa emailed the Commissioner of Police petitioning Murugan's case. Despite getting no response, she continued sending an email every day for a week. Eventually, her persistence paid off. The police dropped all charges and Murugan's

employer paid all the wages he was owed. A month later, Murugan visited Dipa's house to thank her.

"It made me realise that I invested all of maybe two or three hours in this entire episode, but for this man, it changed his life," explains Dipa, whose subsequent Facebook post of Murugan's triumph over adversity went viral, amassing over 40,000 likes and loves. "You can't change the

**AS PEOPLE  
STARTED TO  
SEE THE  
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OF HER  
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INTEREST  
GREW**



**Dipa Swaminathan distributing raincoats to migrant workers**

world but you can change the world for one person and this was a very real demonstration.”

Her success with helping Murugan was no doubt on Dipa’s mind, when on another rainy day she passed a building construction site and saw workers were wearing black garbage bags for raincoats as their supervisor stood in a sheltered area. She tracked down the name of the company, took a photo of the workers in the rain, and called the company to tell them about the situation. The company worker simply hung up, without so much as a word. Returning to the site two days later, Dipa was surprised and thrilled to see the workers were wearing brand new raincoats and boots. Seeing how, yet again, her small efforts had made

a difference, Dipa founded It’s Raining Raincoats in 2014, an initiative to encourage people to distribute raincoats to migrant workers. Using Facebook to promote their work and help attract volunteers, Dipa later collaborated with the Singapore Kindness Movement to distribute 5000 raincoats in one event in 2017.

But it wasn’t all smooth sailing. Dipa initially encountered some resistance to her efforts, and was warned that assisting migrant workers could be dangerous in the wake of riots between locals and migrant workers in Singapore’s Little India in December 2013. About 300 rioters took part in the unrest – the worst case of public violence in Singapore in over four decades – following a traffic accident

## READER'S DIGEST

which killed a construction worker from India.

But as people started to see the positives coming out of her initiative, interest grew. It's Raining Raincoats now has ten regular volunteers with another 200 registered volunteers. But, Dipa hasn't limited herself to keeping migrant workers dry.

One day, when buying coffee in Starbucks, she noticed a container full of pastries. She knew the shop was closing soon and asked that if they were going to throw out the food, she could instead give it to nearby migrant workers who were repairing the road. The coffee chain agreed. When a Facebook post of the incident went viral, Dipa decided to approach Starbucks to see what more they could do to help. She now works with about 40 Starbucks outlets to distribute unsold food every week to migrant workers.

Dipa continues to help migrant workers on an ad hoc basis. During Singapore's COVID-19 lockdown, she fielded calls from many worried workers. "We were very, very busy," she recalls, but no job was too small for Dipa and her team.

It's Raining Raincoats arranged for

the distribution of hundreds of cartons of unsold milk from Starbucks to a dormitory where many migrant workers live. Dipa's group also handed out more than 143,000 hot meals and 12,550 mobile data cards, which meant the workers were able to contact their families in their home countries or use the internet during the lockdown. In November 2020, during the Deepavali Festival of Lights, Dipa and her team organised a procession of more than 200 cars to distribute 3000 pizzas, 7000 samosas and 5000 cream rolls to about 12,000 migrant workers.

Dipa has seen how small changes can make a big impact in these people's lives, and as such It's Raining Raincoats is continuing its work. "I always notice these men building roads, pruning our trees and they are paid very little," she says. "A lot of them go through many hardships and harsh living conditions. It doesn't cost much to show compassion." **R**

*If you or someone you know has had thoughts of self-harm or suicide, visit [befrienders.org.my](http://befrienders.org.my), [www.sos.org.sg](http://www.sos.org.sg) or in the Philippines call HOPELINE 2919*

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### Mummy Parade

**Egypt has used a novel way to revive its flagging tourism industry. In April, 22 mummies in climate-controlled gold coffins were taken on a procession through the streets of Cairo, on their way to a new museum, amidst fanfare fit for a king, queen or pharaoh. AP**



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PROFILE



# *The* **CLIMATE** *Forecaster*

*Meteorologist Petteri Taalas has the ear of world leaders — and he’s using science, and a cool head, to prompt action on global warming*

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BY *Tim Hulse*

**Left: Taalas on a visit to a meteorological station in Finnish Lapland that measures greenhouse gas and air-quality levels**

# IN 2010

*there was drought in China, a 260-square-kilometre ice island broke off one of Greenland's main glaciers, wildfires raged across Russia. And Finland recorded its highest ever temperature as the mercury hit 37.2°C. Professor Petteri Taalas, then head of the Finnish Meteorological Institute, experienced first-hand one consequence of global warming. When he visited his holiday house close to the Russian border, the fires were close enough to set off his smoke alarms.*

“When you are close to these things, it has a big impact,” he says today. Now a year into his second four-year term as Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), he has the job of sounding the alarm on climate change to the world. And as the world looks forward to a time beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, he argues that the time is right for an environmental reset.

“Climate-related records are being broken all the time,” he says. “We used to say something may happen in the future. But the future is already here. My job is to put the facts on the table and explain what’s happening – and also to bring hope that there’s a chance to solve this problem.”

**T**he 59 year old sits atop the WMO both figuratively and literally. His office is on the top floor of the organisation’s Geneva HQ, a modernist, oval construction, clad in blue and green glass, which was designed to include various energy-efficient features.

In this time of COVID-19, his greeting is a cheerful, Namaste-style bow of the head, palms together and pointing upwards. The spacious room offers a 180-degree view beyond the floor-to-ceiling tinted glass: on one side is Geneva’s famous Botanical Gardens, on the other, in the distance, is the snow-capped peak of Mont Blanc. “We can see

**“WE USED TO SAY SOMETHING MAY HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE. BUT THE FUTURE IS ALREADY HERE”**

**UN Secretary-General António Guterres (left) has listened to Taalas and made climate change his top priority**



how the glacier is melting,” Taalas observes wryly.

He is formally dressed in suit and tie but exudes an amiable and relaxed air. Taalas is a modest man and his office reflects that. It is a large space, dominated by a boardroom table, but Taalas’s desk is positioned, almost apologetically, in one corner of the room. There’s a large WMO banner and a flag, but the office gives little clue as to the identity of its occupant.

The WMO is a United Nations agency responsible for monitoring what’s happening to global climate, as well as to the planet’s water resources and air quality. It oversees the global network of satellites that produce the real-time data on which our weather forecasts are based. It is

a parent organisation to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which addresses the implications of climate change.

“We are a scientific and technical organisation, so we don’t tell the US or the Chinese governments how to behave,” says Taalas. “We tell them what we have measured. The IPCC reports describe scenarios for the coming hundred years or so. We also look at how to tackle this problem.”

Taalas delivers his message about the effects of global warming caused by the build-up of carbon dioxide, methane and other gases in person to world leaders such as Germany’s Angela Merkel, France’s Emmanuel Macron and Britain’s Boris Johnson. He has also begun courting many of



**“THERE’S  
STILL A  
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UNDER  
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AND THAT’S  
MY MESSAGE”**

**Taalas giving a speech during the opening session of the 2017 COP23 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany**

the world’s big corporations, such as IBM and Google.

“I will always remember his presentation to our board, in which he described how crop yields will drop dramatically in a +3°C world,” says Jouni Keronen, CEO of the Climate Leadership Coalition, Europe’s largest network of companies trying to speed up the green transition. “After his talk there was a long silence and I believe it was a life-changing moment for several participants.”

According to British science journalist Graham Lawton, Taalas wields his soft power with considerable dexterity. “What’s impressive is that he combines two things you don’t often get in the same person,” says Lawton. “He’s a really good scientist, but he

also gets politics and diplomacy. He’s not a starry-eyed dreamer who thinks that just because the science says something people will act on the evidence. That works in scientific circles, but it doesn’t always work in politics and diplomacy. Taalas gets that. He has the ear of politicians and they pay attention to him because he knows how to play the game.”

Taalas smiles at this assessment. “You have to be a little bit careful how you express things.” He says he is careful not to apportion blame when he meets world leaders. “I think they’re fairly well aware of the facts and personally they are motivated to do something. That’s even the case when it comes to the key figures in Russia,” he adds, pointing out that the Russian

economy is very much dependent on sales of oil and gas.

He understands that politicians have difficult decisions to make. Living 15 kilometres outside Geneva, across the French border, he saw with his own eyes the ‘*gilets jaunes*’ (yellow vests) protests sparked by the French government’s decision to raise taxes on petrol and diesel in order to hasten the country’s transition to green energy.

Taalas tries to find win-win opportunities, where both individuals and the climate benefit, such as, lower taxes for those who buy low-emission vehicles. Or the health benefits of cycling as opposed to driving.

He also practises what he preaches. He gets on a bike and cycles to work most days, and when he doesn’t, he drives an electric car. He follows a mainly pescatarian diet (cattle are significant methane producers), and both his homes use energy-efficient heat pump technology for heating and cooling, which he says has paid for itself in four years.

But Taalas insists we shouldn’t let environmental issues become oppressive: “Some people try to limit their whole life and think only of the climate, and that’s not very healthy.”

**A**s a student at Helsinki University in the early 1980s, at the height of the Cold War, Taalas and his future wife, Anni, took part in peace marches.

They were frightened of the possibility of nuclear war and even thought about moving to New Zealand, which at the time they considered was a safe haven. They also agreed that the world was too dangerous a place to bring children into.

The couple have now been married for 34 years, and their five grown-up children are no doubt grateful to Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan for bringing the Cold War to an end. Taalas says he sees a parallel today in the way many young people fear the future just as he once did, but this time for environmental reasons.

He has a lot of time for young idealists such as Greta Thunberg. He has met the Swedish teenage activist and speaks warmly of her, even if he doesn’t agree with all that she says. He feels she may have been misinformed.

“I know what it is like to be young and have strong emotions,” he says. “But there is a small number of scientists who tell horror stories about tipping points and how mankind will die and so forth, and I think Greta may have heard too many of these stories. Knowing her personality, it may be a little too black and white, but she has been very vocal and the overall result has been positive.”

Taalas’s meteorology career happened almost by accident. He comes from a medical family but chose to study physics at university. When it came time to specialise, he was drawn to hydrology, but his wife,

## READER'S DIGEST

whose wisdom and support he credits for much of his success, favoured meteorology. Taalas went to a couple of lectures “and I realised the subject could be something fascinating”.

Taalas received his PhD in 1993 and, as he rose through the ranks of academia, he found himself leading teams, which came naturally to him. Change management is his passion and among his achievements he lists his transformation of the Finnish meteorological office, which he led on and off for 11 years, and the modernisation of the WMO, making it among other things more science-based.

He believes his main impact has been to spread the word on climate change. He works closely with the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, and has succeeded in making him a convert. “For the past two years he’s said that this is priority number one,” says Taalas with a hint of pride. “I’m happy with that. He’s one of the most influential people on the planet.”

Taalas says that when he first started talking about climate change, around 20 years ago, he would be invited to appear on TV, and usually there would be another guest, a climate sceptic, to give an alternative point of view. That rarely happens these days. “There’s very wide attention for our reports, so worldwide awareness is fairly good.” The problem now lies with those who believe the world is acting too slowly to avoid disaster. He describes their fervour in religious terms.

“If you look at Christianity, for example, there are some people who are very extreme and have very strict rules, and then you have more liberal Christians. It’s a little bit the same when it comes to how you handle the climate. Some people would like to be very orthodox and tell other people how to behave. But if the whole climate issue has a label of being something that’s very extreme green, it doesn’t help to get it sorted out.”

Taalas gives short shrift to the methods of activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion, who advocate a strategy of non-violent, disruptive civil disobedience. “I think it’s not helpful for finding a solution to this problem,” he says. “If the public image of climate mitigation is those people, that may even be counterproductive.”

He also feels the term ‘climate emergency’, which has gained currency in recent years, is not appropriate. “We’ll see climate emergency if we fail with mitigation, but there’s still a chance to keep the warming and this change under control, and that’s my message,” he says.

**M**ore than a year ago, as the world retreated into lockdown, a glimpse of a different planet was briefly visible. In major cities, smog cleared to reveal blue skies – skies noticeably empty of planes. Deer, sheep and goats were seen gambolling on deserted highways.

That was then. The so-called ‘anthropause’ is at an end and pollution levels are heading back towards pre-pandemic levels. But for Taalas, this was a significant moment. “It demonstrated that we can change our behaviour once there’s enough incentive,” he says.

He worries about the effect COVID-19 is having on the world economy and fears that governments may be less motivated to invest in climate-friendly technologies. But he’s also heartened by initiatives such as the EU’s ambitious European Green Deal, which aims to make the bloc carbon neutral by 2050.

“I’m an optimist,” says Taalas. “This is an opportunity to jump to the new green technology in a speedier manner than would have happened otherwise, and the developed countries can afford it.” He says that what happens to the weaker economies is “another question”, but most of the emissions come

from the most developed countries.

The lesson that Taalas learned from his early studies of the effects of acid rain on the lakes and forests of Scandinavia and the damage to the ozone layer from the gases in aerosols and fridges, is that change can happen. Both problems have been pretty much resolved by regulation. Climate change presents a far bigger challenge, but he believes we can succeed in keeping warming to an increase of two or three degrees above pre-industrial levels.

“It’s doable,” he says. “You just have to have international consensus and the science has to be solid enough to convince the decision makers to act.” **R**

*The editors of the European editions of Reader’s Digest have named Professor Petteri Taalas as ‘European of the Year’ for 2021 for his role in tackling climate change in Europe and on an international level.*

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### Majestic Red Faces

Jack Ford, son of former US President Gerald Ford, remembered a visit to the White House by Queen Elizabeth II in 1976. “I was all excited to meet her,” Ford recalled. “Hurrying to get into my formal clothes, I couldn’t find dress studs for my shirt and ran to Dad’s room to look for some. Having no luck there, I ran down the hall and pressed the elevator button to return to my room. As the elevator opened, I found the Queen, Prince Philip, and my mother and dad standing there. As Mother turned to introduce me, with my dress shirt wide open, the Queen simply said, ‘I have one just like that!’.”

METROMEDIA TELEVISION

## LIFE'S LIKE THAT

### *Seeing the Funny Side*



### **Showing Him the Error of His Weighs**

I kept harping on at my husband to go on a diet. We were taking a walk one day and he leapfrogged over a bench. Looking mighty pleased with himself he exclaimed, "How many overweight men do you know who can do that?"

"One," I said.

He didn't like my response.

SUBMITTED BY SHONA LLOYD

### **Larger than Life**

My husband showed our five-year-old son a picture of himself when he

was 16 and asked Harri if he knew who it was.

He stared at it for a long time before replying, "It's me when I'm bigger!"

SUBMITTED BY SHULAH CLARKSON

### **Pretty Please**

Confronting my husband, I demanded, "How come you never tell me I look pretty? Even my sisters tell me I look pretty sometimes."

"Your sisters are absolutely right," he said grandly. "You do look pretty sometimes."

SUBMITTED BY ALICE FAY



## CHOOSING SIDES

**It was my wedding day, and no one was happier than my 78-year-old mother. But as she approached the church doors an usher asked, “Which side are you on?” “Oh, no,” she said. “Are they fighting already?”**

SUBMITTED BY JOSEPH HUBISZ

## Water Hazard

I had to smile when I joined my golf partner for a round of golf.

“Is that a new putter?” I asked him. “What happened to your last one?”

With a deadpan expression, he said, “It couldn’t swim.” RYAN WEBBER

## A Real Card

I received a birthday card from my son this year. He’d written inside:

“I’m sorry about all those stupid things I did when I was a kid.”

And then, “Just be grateful you only know about half of them!”

SUBMITTED BY SHANIE LLOYD



## THE GREAT TWEET OFF: COMING CLEAN EDITION

**The folk of Twitter take personal hygiene fairly seriously.**

Deodorant? No, I’ve never needed to buy any. People just give it to me, complete strangers sometimes.

@SAINTED61

I’m sick of men’s 3-in-1 bodywash-shampoo-conditioner. Throw toothpaste in there.

@COMRADTWITTY

My twins hate to brush their teeth. So I just convinced them that it’s fun to brush someone else’s teeth.

Problem solved.

@HUNZ74

The fact that Head & Shoulders doesn’t have a bodywash called Knees & Toes disappoints me.

@THEREALSASSY1

Dry shampoo is the equivalent of unicorn blood for hair – it’ll keep it alive, but it’ll be a half life, a cursed life.

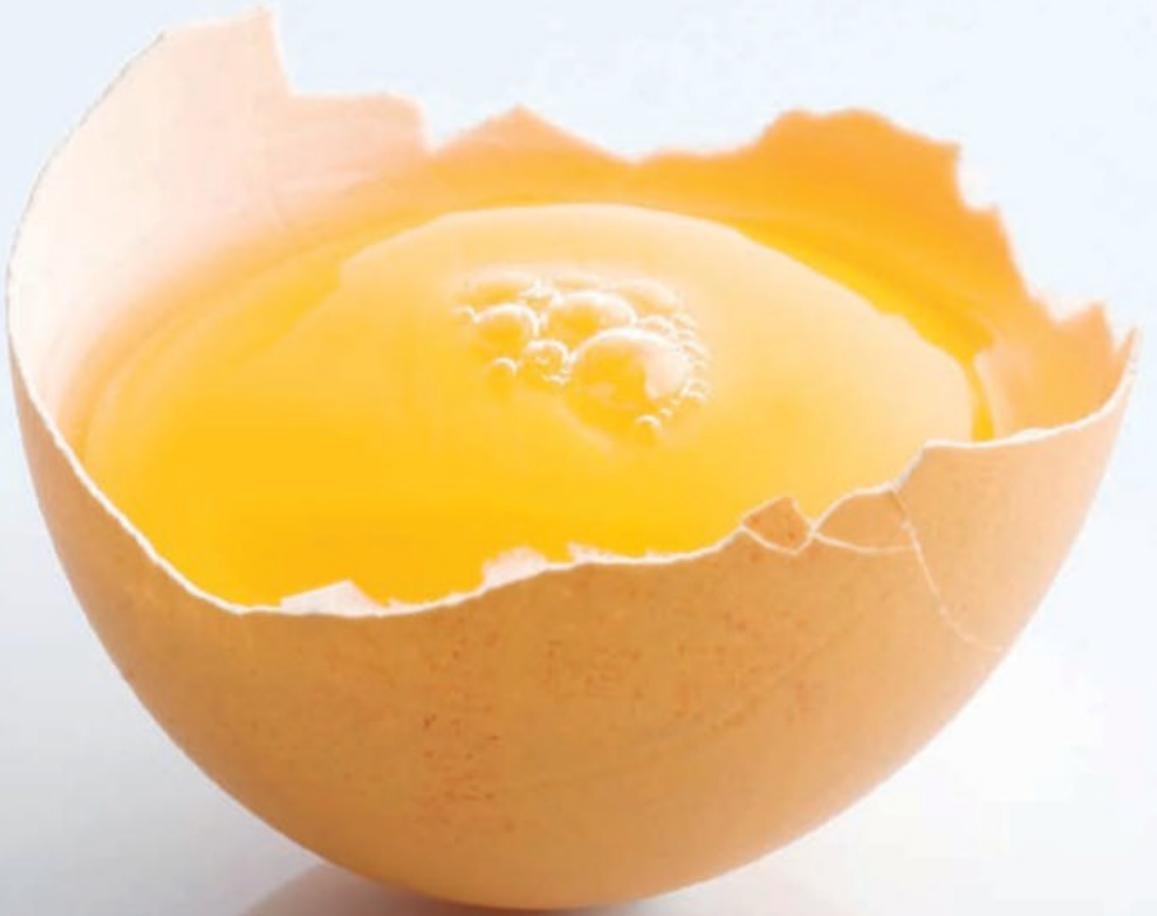
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*The New  
Truth About*

**CHOLESTEROL**



*Debunking some myths with the latest  
research and information will help you  
keep your levels in check*

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BY *Bonnie Munday*

*For most of my adult life, I usually avoided eggs.*

*I had read that since yolks are full of cholesterol, eating them would raise my blood cholesterol and harm my heart health.*

*Then, around three years ago, to lose a few kilograms, I reduced simple carbs and added more protein to my diet*

*— including eggs. But I wondered what that would do to my cholesterol levels, so at my next medical check-up, I asked*

*for a blood test. My doctor surprised me with this response:*

*“We were wrong about that all along. The best research says you don’t need to avoid eggs.”*

To reassure me, she ordered the blood test. The results? Same healthy cholesterol levels as before. It got me wondering: *how many other people were unnecessarily avoiding eggs and other foods based on old information? And now that I am in my 50s, what should I be doing to make sure my cholesterol stays in the safe zone?* My research turned up some surprising facts.

## THE BASICS

High cholesterol is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, as are high blood pressure, smoking and being overweight or obese. According to the largest ever study of global cholesterol levels, led by Imperial College London and published in 2020, high cholesterol is responsible for about 3.9 million deaths annually worldwide. Keeping your cholesterol in check lowers your risk.

Cholesterol is a waxy substance

produced by our livers and found in our blood and every cell in our body. It helps the body build hormones and make vitamin D, maintain cells and digest fatty foods. There are two main lipoproteins that carry cholesterol in the blood. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL), the main type of ‘bad’ cholesterol (though there are others), delivers fatty particles throughout your body. But if there’s too much LDL, the build-up on artery walls can block blood flow and lead to blood clots. This can cause a heart attack or stroke. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is considered ‘good’ cholesterol because it picks up the bad LDL particles and returns them to your liver for excretion.

Cholesterol is such an important factor in our longevity, so it’s crucial we know the latest facts. With myths floating around about the causes and treatments of high cholesterol, it’s time to set the record straight.

### **MYTH: “FOODS THAT CONTAIN CHOLESTEROL ARE UNHEALTHY”**

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### **TRUTH: SOME ARE, BUT NOT ALL**

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When a blood test shows high levels of LDL cholesterol, or high levels of all the ‘bad’ ones – referred to as non-HDL cholesterol – it’s likely the major cause will be from eating the wrong foods. But just because a food contains cholesterol doesn’t always mean eating it will raise your blood cholesterol. Research in the 1960s linked the two, but several studies in the decades since have put this mistaken belief to rest. It depends more on the food’s saturated fat and trans fat content\*.

Cholesterol is found in animal products – meats, seafood, egg yolks

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*\*Small amounts of trans fat occur naturally in animal products, but it is the trans fats in processed food we need to watch out for. Known as partially hydrogenated oil, it is found in deep fried foods, cakes, biscuits, pies and pastries. Manufacturers are banned from adding trans fats to their products in the US and Canada, and limits have been placed on its use in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and South America. Unfortunately it is not even compulsory in Australia or New Zealand for the amount of trans fats to be included on food labels.*

and dairy products. The ones high in saturated fats raise blood cholesterol. “The cholesterol and saturated fats reinforce each other when eaten simultaneously, making the effect on the body even worse,” says Martijn Katan, a professor of nutrition. The worst culprits are high-fat dairy products and fatty red meats, as well as processed meats, whereas seafood such as prawns and squid, while high in cholesterol, are lower in saturated fat. For comparison’s sake, one egg weighing 50 grams has two grams of saturated fat; the same amount of prawns has almost no saturated fat; and beef contains four grams of saturated fat.

As for eggs, recommendations vary from country to country for how many are safe to consume. “In the Netherlands, we recommend sticking with two to three eggs per week,” says Professor Katan. The Australian Heart Foundation doesn’t set a limit on the number of eggs you can eat, although it does recommend no more than seven eggs per week for anyone with high LDL cholesterol, type 2 diabetes or an existing heart disease.

So, the best way to improve your diet is to reduce LDL. How? By replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats, for example switching from butter to nut and seed butters, mashed avocado, hummus, extra virgin olive oil or soft margarine, and cooking with sunflower, canola or olive oil. These oils contain linoleic

## READER'S DIGEST

acids and can actually lower your LDL cholesterol. "As for dairy, go low fat, and consider cheese a treat," says Professor Katan

He adds that the optimal foods for keeping cholesterol in check include legumes and beans, whole grains and vegetables.

### **MYTH: "IF MY CHOLESTEROL IS HIGH, I'LL FEEL IT"**

### **TRUTH: NO; ONLY A TEST CAN TELL YOU**

Five years ago, Fredrik Sundell was active and a healthy weight. But a company health check-up showed his cholesterol levels were borderline high. "I was surprised, because I felt fine," says the now 49-year-old CFO of a publishing company. "I thought if I had a heart-health problem, I'd know it; maybe I'd have a faster heartbeat or be short of breath."

The doctor told Fredrik he should try lifestyle improvements to keep it in check; otherwise, he'd have to go on medication. So, Fredrik made an effort to incorporate more fitness into his day, by walking instead of driving. Plus, Fredrik says he became more careful about eating healthily.

You can't feel high cholesterol. The only way to know if you have it is to get a test. The age at which you are given a cholesterol test at a routine medical check-up – if you don't have other risk factors – varies from country

to country. The Singapore Ministry of Health recommends getting a heart health check from the age of 40, or age 30 if you have other risk factors, such as you have high blood pressure, you smoke, you are Indian or have Indian parentage, or you have family history of high cholesterol or heart disease.

Indeed, some experts feel testing should start when people are in their 30s or even their 20s. "Testing cholesterol levels in young people could be life saving," says cardiologist Dr Fabian Brunner.

Dr Brunner was lead author of a major international study, published in 2019, that analysed decades of population-based data on cardiovascular patients. Using the data, the researchers estimated the long-term risk of a cardiovascular event by the time someone was 75 and calculated the potential benefit of lowering non-HDL cholesterol earlier in life. Their results showed that doing so does indeed help protect you from cardiovascular disease later in life.

As for Fredrik, he is just glad he was tested. At his most recent check-up, his doctor was pleased that his cholesterol had not increased further but told him he had to try harder to get it down, and to focus on diet.

While exercise won't lower LDL cholesterol – diet is the biggest factor – "it can increase HDL," notes cardiologist Professor Ian Graham. "And exercise is a marker of a healthy lifestyle."

### **MYTH: “STATINS HAVE BAD SIDE EFFECTS”**

### **TRUTH: SIDE EFFECTS FROM STATINS ARE RARE**

When Ricardo Saénz, a 50-year-old engineer, had a check-up around four years ago, his cholesterol levels were within the healthy range, but because he had high blood pressure – a major risk for heart attack and stroke – his doctor said he’d have to reduce his cholesterol, and quickly. “He said if I didn’t, it would be really dangerous.” The doctor recommended Ricardo go on statins right away.

Statins, which are widely used globally and have been around since the 1980s, lower the production of LDL cholesterol by blocking an enzyme in the liver that helps make it.

“And they stabilise the plaque in your arteries to stop it breaking off and causing a heart attack or stroke,” says Christopher Allen, head of healthcare at HEART UK. “They’re a proven, incredibly effective drug. Statins reduce the chance of cardiac events by 30 per cent.” Your doctor can assess whether you have risk factors that warrant statins.

When Ricardo got home with the prescription, his wife warned him that she had heard statins had side effects. “That did make me hesitate, but I went ahead with my doctor’s

orders,” he says. “It’s been four years, and I have had no side effects at all.” The best news: not only is his cholesterol much lower, his blood pressure is also under control thanks to blood-pressure medicine.

Statins “have fallen victim to the Age of Misinformation,” according to a paper published in 2019 by the European Society of Cardiology (ESC). There are rumours they cause muscle pain, type 2 diabetes, cancer, even dementia.

In reality, while the most common side effect reported by statin users is muscle aches, says the ESC, it occurs in less than one per cent of patients (although Harvard Medical School’s website states the true number is hard to pin down and puts the figure at between 10-29 per cent) and is often alleviated by switching to another brand of statin.

As for claims statins cause cancer, that’s “Google scaremongering,” says Professor Graham. In fact, a 2020 study by Johns Hopkins Medicine shows statins may actually starve cancer cells.

Another example is a purported link between dementia and statin use.

“Yet there is no hard evidence of cognitive impairment,” Professor Graham says, “and indeed the risk of vascular dementia is probably reduced.” That’s the second most common form of dementia after Alzheimer’s disease.

Though statins worked for Ricardo, they aren't enough in some cases. "Your doctor may add ezetimibe," says Allen. Together, these oral medications make for an aggressive treatment.

And for the few who are intolerant to statins, there are new injectable medications called PCSK9 inhibitors that work by blocking production of a protein in the liver so that the liver can better remove cholesterol from the blood.

### **MYTH: "I CAN PREVENT HIGH CHOLESTEROL WITH EXERCISE AND DIET"**

### **TRUTH: IF IT'S GENETIC, YOU CAN'T AVOID IT**

Renee Welling, 60, never worried about her heart health; she worked out "like an Olympic athlete", doing aerobics and weight training regularly at the gym and maintaining a super-healthy diet that kept the former model slim and trim.

Then, when she was 54, she had her first cholesterol test – and was shocked to discover it was dangerously high. She was a ticking time bomb.

Familial hypercholesterolaemia (FH for short) means you are born with an inability to rid your blood of LDL (bad) cholesterol. It has no symptoms and occurs in around one in 250 of the general

population, according to Professor Graham. "It's genetic. If the condition is inherited from one or, worse, both parents, untreated high cholesterol will often result in a heart attack when you're relatively young."

But you won't know you have FH without a test. "Let's say one of your parents has a heart attack," says Allen. "You don't automatically think it must be because of high cholesterol and that you might have it too." In reality, he says, "those with FH have it from birth."

In almost all cases, people with FH can't lower their cholesterol to a healthy level without medication. Renee Welling's doctor put her on statins, and it worked. Her cholesterol levels are now well within the healthy zone. "Thank goodness I was tested," she says.

Controlling your cholesterol can mean a longer, healthier life by lowering your odds of having a heart attack or stroke. And it's possible to get it under control regardless of your age. "The research confirms it's never too late to treat cholesterol, at least until the mid-80s," says Professor Graham.

The takeaway: talk to your doctor about getting tested; keep cholesterol in check with dietary changes (especially limiting saturated fats and high-fat dairy) if you don't have other heart disease risk factors; and if you need statins, they work, and most people tolerate them well. **R**

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*I Am the*  
**FOOD ON YOUR PLATE**



# *Pomegranate*

## Revered Since Antiquity

BY *Diane Godley*

**S**ince ancient times, I, the esteemed pomegranate (*Punica granatum*), have been regarded with reverence as a symbol of your human central beliefs. In many cultures and virtually

every religion, I have come to represent life and death, fertility and marriage, beauty and abundance. Why, you may ask? It all has to do with my seeds (my name means ‘apple with many seeds’), while my orb shape

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

and crown of sepals take on a different meaning all together.

Buddhists revere me as one of the three blessed fruit (the other two are peach and citrus); in some Hindu traditions I'm a symbol of prosperity and fertility, while for Muslims I'm a symbol of beauty.

As a romantic symbol I have featured in sonnets and literature, as well as Renaissance paintings. Sandro Botticelli and Leonardo di Vinci placed me in the hands of both the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus. They also depicted me bursting open, which happens when I am overripe, to signify the death and suffering of Jesus, as well as his resurrection and eternal life.

In the Middle Ages, my resemblance to an imperial orb – the Christian symbol of authority – made me a symbol of power. The artist Albrecht Dürer painted several portraits of the Emperor Maximilian I (archduke of Austria, German king and Holy Roman emperor) holding me. I have also appeared in the decorative patterns of rich fabrics and carpets throughout Europe since the 15th century.

And when my skins are cooked, I yield a pitch-black ink which was used to dye Oriental carpets.

The Ancient Greeks regarded me as a culinary symbol of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, beauty, desire and procreation. Greek mythology also credits the goddess with planting my very first tree. Understandably, I have been seen as an aphrodisiac and was often a key ingredient in love potions.

Today, I am enjoyed, not for my powers of love, but as a superfood. Packed with antioxidants, vitamins,

minerals, fibre and powerful plant compounds, I am touted for having a wide-range of health benefits, helpful in lowering the risk of serious illnesses and reducing muscle loss. You see, I'm rich in a molecule called ellagic acid. When it reaches your gut, it is trans-

**I HAVE BEEN  
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AND WAS  
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LOVE POTIONS**

---

formed by microbes into a substance called urolithin A, which enables muscle cells to protect themselves against one of the major causes of ageing.

Native to Iran, Afghanistan, North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean, I grow in hot, dry climates. I don't like humidity but unlike many of my peers, I can tolerate frost and drought. So, I can grow just about anywhere. My tree is a deciduous shrub that grows up to five metres and bears as many as 200 of me.

And I don't mind pointing out my other charm. My tree is so pleasing

## READER'S DIGEST

to the eye that I'm often planted as an ornamental shrub because of my exquisite scarlet-coral flowers, crepe-like petals and autumn foliage.

I grow between 5-12 centimetres in diameter and comprise up to 1000 closely packed red grains, or arils, inside a hard shell. My arils contain a seed surrounded by an edible juicy pulp and I'm sometimes referred to as a 'false berry', which is very misleading, to say the least!

To discover if I am ready to be picked from my tree, rap on my shell with your knuckles and if you hear a metallic sound, then I'm ripe. Once I'm separated from my tree, I stop ripening, but don't worry, my flavour and juiciness will improve while I'm in storage. I keep in ambient temperatures for between one and two months, and for several months if refrigerated. My arils are sometimes scooped out and vacuum packed, which can last for six months.

There are several varieties of me, but the fruit you humans enjoy most have a balance of sugar and acidity, mixed with soft seeds. Eaten with a teaspoon straight from my shell makes a lovely treat, but can be a rather messy – many an outfit has



### *How to Deseed a* **POMEGRANATE**

- With a sharp knife, cut the fruit through the middle.
- Separate your fingers and place the halved pomegranate, flesh side down, on your spread fingers.
- Place your hand over a bowl and with a wooden spoon, start hitting the outside of the shell until all the arils tumble out.

suffered permanent stains from my deep red juice. But there are easier ways to separate my seeds from my shell (see above).

My sweet-tart flavour works wonders in salads and my vibrant colouring makes me perfect as a garnish. I can also be juiced, turned into molasses and added to champagne and cider to give a pop of colour and splash of flavour. **R**



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## ...DIFFERENTLY

**THE MALE** 'orchard' or 'mason' bee (*Osmia cornuta*) is recognisable by his impressive hairdo. As you can see in the photo on the previous spread, the face and underside of the head are covered in long, white hairs. The female of the species is considerably more discreet with her plain black hairstyle. Native to almost all of Europe, these wild bees are also 'solitary', meaning they do not live in hives or have queens like honey bees, but rather live on their own. They start building their nests in May. After mating, the male leaves and the female stays behind to care for the next generation.

PHOTOS: JOHN-OLIVER  
DUM/500PX/GETTY IMAGES; BIOS-  
PHOTO/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO





DRAMA IN REAL LIFE



# Rescue

## ON THE HIGH RISE BRIDGE

*With his truck dangling 21 metres above a roiling river and a storm whipping 80km/h winds, a trapped driver's only hope is a team of trained emergency rescuers – who are stuck in traffic*

---

BY Anita Bartholomew

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVEN P. HUGHES

**T**he winds this April morning were giving Wayne Boone's massive 2007 semi-trailer a good lashing. A driver for a paper recycling company in Virginia, US, Boone steered the empty 18-wheeler up a stretch of the highway, to pick up his first load of the day.

The 53-year-old driver pulled into the eastbound left lane of the G.A. Treacle Memorial Bridge, known to locals as the I-64 High Rise, a four-lane drawbridge traversing the Elizabeth River. On the span, the storm let loose its full force, finding no obstacles in its path but vehicles, which it pummelled. Boone slowed as wind and rain hammered his windshield.

At the bridge's crest, 21 metres above the rushing estuary, the concrete road gave way to steel decking. Boone's front wheels met the slick steel just as a powerful gust blasted the driver's side.

To Boone, it felt as if the wind lifted his truck clear off the surface. He could swear he floated for a second before being dumped into the right lane. His cab barrelled into the guardrail on the far right edge, mangling the metal barrier that protected his truck from launching into the water below. As he struggled to regain control, his empty trailer jackknifed to the left, skidding sideways.

Fighting both truck and weather, the steering wheel unresponsive, Boone was swept along about

60 metres. Then a second even more violent gust blew through the open mesh of the bridge's steel grid. It slammed into the driver's side of the cab and shoved it upwards, lifting the cab, with Boone inside, over the edge of the bridge before dropping it. The cab was now aimed straight down towards the grey-black water.

Chad Little, 49, of the Chesapeake Fire Department, was driving a minute or two from the area when an odd message popped up on his SUV's touchscreen: "Truck hanging over the bridge." He flicked on his siren and sped to the High Rise.

The traffic on the bridge was impassable. Little got to the drawbridge's grid but no further. When he stepped outside, the wind blasted him. He tucked in his chin, walked ahead about 70 metres, and radioed in his assessment. The front cab of a semi-trailer had gone over the High Rise, its trailer still on the bridge. The heavy steel frame where the cab couples with the trailer had literally folded, and the cab, bent at 90 degrees, dangled over the river. Engine, bonnet and fuel tanks had already fallen,

## Rescue on the High Rise Bridge

leaving a slick on the water. The driver was trapped in the cab, hanging three metres below the roadbed.

“This will be a complex technical rescue incident,” Little reported. That meant calling in Rescue 15, a team of highly trained firefighter-EMTs who respond when the unthinkable happens: an earthquake, a bombing or some other disaster. He switched to another channel to request the largest fireboat in the region. He needed assets below in case something – or someone – should fall.

Meanwhile, a bystander had tossed a rigging strap and roofer’s harness over the edge of the bridge to the driver. Police officers and civilians stood in a line holding the rope as if in a one-sided tug-of-war. Little knew they wanted to help, but he explained that if they pulled the driver out of the truck without the proper equipment, he was likely to tumble to his death. Once Rescue 15 got there, they would anchor their specialised equipment for a complex rope rescue.

The first ladder truck arrived from the westbound side of the bridge, where traffic was still able to move. Running chains over the concrete barrier that separated east- and westbound lanes, firefighters anchored their truck to the cab’s back wheels.

Wayne Boone, the driver, knew he should be dead. Busting through the guardrail and literally flying through the air before nose-diving towards the river – it had all happened so fast.

How was he still alive? Somehow, the back of his cab had snagged on the bridge’s edge before it could complete its descent. Still strapped into his seat, he dangled at a 90-degree angle above the rushing river, swinging with each new gust. Whatever the force was that held the cab on the edge, he knew it couldn’t last. Gravity and wind would have their say.

Sticky red blood spilled into his eyes. He was injured, but his body had yet to register the pain. He forced himself to focus. If he had any chance of escaping the cab, he had to get free from his seat belt. The position of the cab gave little room to manoeuvre. The cracked windshield exposed the looming dark waters below. If he put



## READER'S DIGEST

any weight on the glass, he risked breaking through and falling the rest of the way. Under the howling wind, he heard from above, "It's about to go!"

*I have got to get free*, he thought. Releasing his seat belt, Boone tried to hang on to the seat, but he immediately slid into the windshield. The glass shifted in its frame. He scrambled upwards, doing his best to grab pieces of the shattered dashboard, getting cut along the way. He slipped again. And again. Each time his feet met the windshield, the glass gave a little more. The next time could be the last. Summoning all his strength, straddling broken bits of truck, he pulled himself between the seats and wedged himself as far as he could behind the driver's seat; it would have to do.

Minutes passed – to Boone, it felt like hours – before he heard sirens. To his ears, the jarring wail could have been angels singing.

From the bridge above, an on-looker tossed him a harness. Boone reached out his open driver's side window and pulled it inside the cab. That effort was all he could manage. Disoriented and weak, he could not figure out how to get it on his body.

The call came in to Rescue 15 at 8.43am. The trio on duty – Brad Gregory, Justin Beazley and Mark Poag – piled into the rescue truck and headed to the scene, running through various rescue scenarios to figure out what ropes they would need and where



**As 80-km/h wind gusts threatened to toss him off the truck, Justin Beazley did his best to put the truck driver at ease**

they should position the equipment.

But their first challenge was more mundane: the sea of red brake lights that greeted them on the bridge. The bridge had, at most, a 60-centimetre shoulder, so the cars had nowhere to go. Beazley jumped down, tapped on windows, and got a few vehicles to move to let them pass. As they inched forwards, the clock ticked on for the dangling truck driver. Traffic filled in behind them, cutting off the possibility of backing up and approaching from the westbound lanes police had cleared. About 200 metres from the accident, it was clear they would get no further. Beazley grabbed harnesses, rope and other gear off the top of the rescue truck

PHOTO: COURTESY CHESAPEAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT

and hitched a ride on Ladder 12, a fire truck headed to the scene in the westbound lane.

Poag and Gregory gathered more equipment from their truck: extra rope, a pulley system called a set-of-fours, and a belay to anchor equipment. As they marched towards the crippled semi-trailer, the wind grew more intense. Rain and sleet battered them, soaking through to the skin. About a dozen bystanders had left their cars, braving the storm's fury to stand vigil at the bridge's edge.

Gregory, Poag and the ladder truck crew quickly devised a plan: Beazley would rappel down to the driver from the extended ladder of one of the trucks, open the door, secure the driver to himself, and the two would be lifted to safety. By now, sustained winds were approaching 80km/h, with stronger gusts. Working shoulder to shoulder, the men had to shout to hear each other above the howling gales.

Beazley walked to the bridge's edge and tried to process what he saw. Spilled diesel fuel soaked everything on the ground, including their equipment. The cab was barely holding on.

Getting into his harness, Beazley checked the rope and rigging. The ladder operator set the fire engine's extended ladder in place over the top of the crippled semi-trailer. Firefighters would never usually raise a ladder in such high winds. It could shake the truck, wear out the metal, or even blow the fire engine over. But

this was as far from usual as it got.

Poag and another firefighter worked the pulley system attached to the ladder, to which Beazley, in his harness, was fastened at the other end. They lifted him over the bridge's edge, manoeuvred him above the cab, before slowly lowering him.

As he rappelled towards Boone, the wind tossed Beazley like a pinball. He grabbed the cab to avoid being blown into the bridge. He'd planned to open the door to extricate the driver, but now he saw that such a move risked putting more downwards pressure on the vehicle. Any rescue attempt would have to be via the window.

The driver, Beazley realised, was in shock. After dangling in the wind for an hour, waiting to die, he was spent. But his relief at seeing Beazley was evident. "My name's Justin," Beazley shouted. "What's yours?"

Boone replied, but Beazley barely heard him over the wind. "We're going to get you out of here," he said. Gripping the cab's side, he handed the harness through the open window and gave Boone step-by-step instructions for getting into it.

Boone fumbled, clearly too dazed to assist in his own extraction. The wind, meanwhile, wanted to blast Beazley off the cab's door. The rescue became more precarious by the second as 80-145km/h gusts lashed at both the cab and the rescuer. Beazley realised there was no time left. He would have to get inside the cab.



**Of saving the incapacitated truck driver, Beazley told the media, “It all happened so quickly. You train for this, but you just never expect it”**

Pulling his torso through the window, he worked quickly and methodically to get Boone’s arms and legs through the harness loops, securing him to the rope system that tethered them to each other. “C’mon, you can do it,” he reassured, as he grabbed the pulley and hoisted them through the window and fully into the whipping winds. Poag and a second firefighter worked the pulleys to haul them back up. As they cleared the edge, cheers broke out from the crowd on the bridge. Three first responders bear-hugged both men and pulled them back over the guardrail. It was over.

Paramedics bundled Boone into an ambulance, but the storm wasn’t quite done. A gust rose up and, despite the securing chains, lifted one side of Boone’s empty semi-trailer into the air and shoved it half a lane across the roadway, prompting the firefighters to evacuate the area.

Boone was taken to hospital with lacerations and injuries to his face, neck,

shoulder and knees. The worst damage was to his right ear, almost severed from his head in the crash, but doctors were able to save it.

Through it all, Boone had never panicked. He’d accepted his fate. But a stranger had risked his life to save him. Hearing people shout with joy at his rescue had been uplifting. His heart was awash in gratitude.

Back on the safety of the bridge, Beazley had reached out for a handshake. Emotionally and physically drained, Boone had taken his rescuer’s hand and hoped the gesture would say everything he couldn’t. **R**

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### Super-Sized Price for Comic

One of the few copies of the comic book that introduced Superman to the world has sold for a record-setting price, going for US\$3.25 million in a private sale. The comic, published in 1938, told readers about the origins of Superman, how he came to Earth from another planet and went by the alias of Clark Kent. AP

PHOTO: COURTESY CHESAPEAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

I started out reading as an escape, then a chore, then a habit, then a luxury. Only now I've realised what a necessity it is.

**PHOEBE WALLER-BRIDGE,**  
WRITER/ACTOR



**"I'VE ALWAYS FELT AND BELIEVED IN FENG SHUI. IF IT IS YOURS, IT IS YOURS. IF IT IS NOT YOURS, IT IS NOT YOURS."**

**TAN KHENG HUA,** ACTRESS

*Do what you know best; if you're a runner, run, if you're a bell, ring.*

**IGNAZ BERNSTEIN,** BIBLIOPHILE

**I NEVER ASK 'WHY' TO MYSELF. I ASK 'HOW'. IF I FEEL LIKE I CAN DO IT, THAT FOR ME IS ENOUGH MOTIVATION.**

**BØRGE OUSLAND,**  
EXPLORER

We have the ability to be the heroes of our families, our communities and our lives. It's important to remind people of that truth: you have what it takes to make an impact. What is your hero's journey?

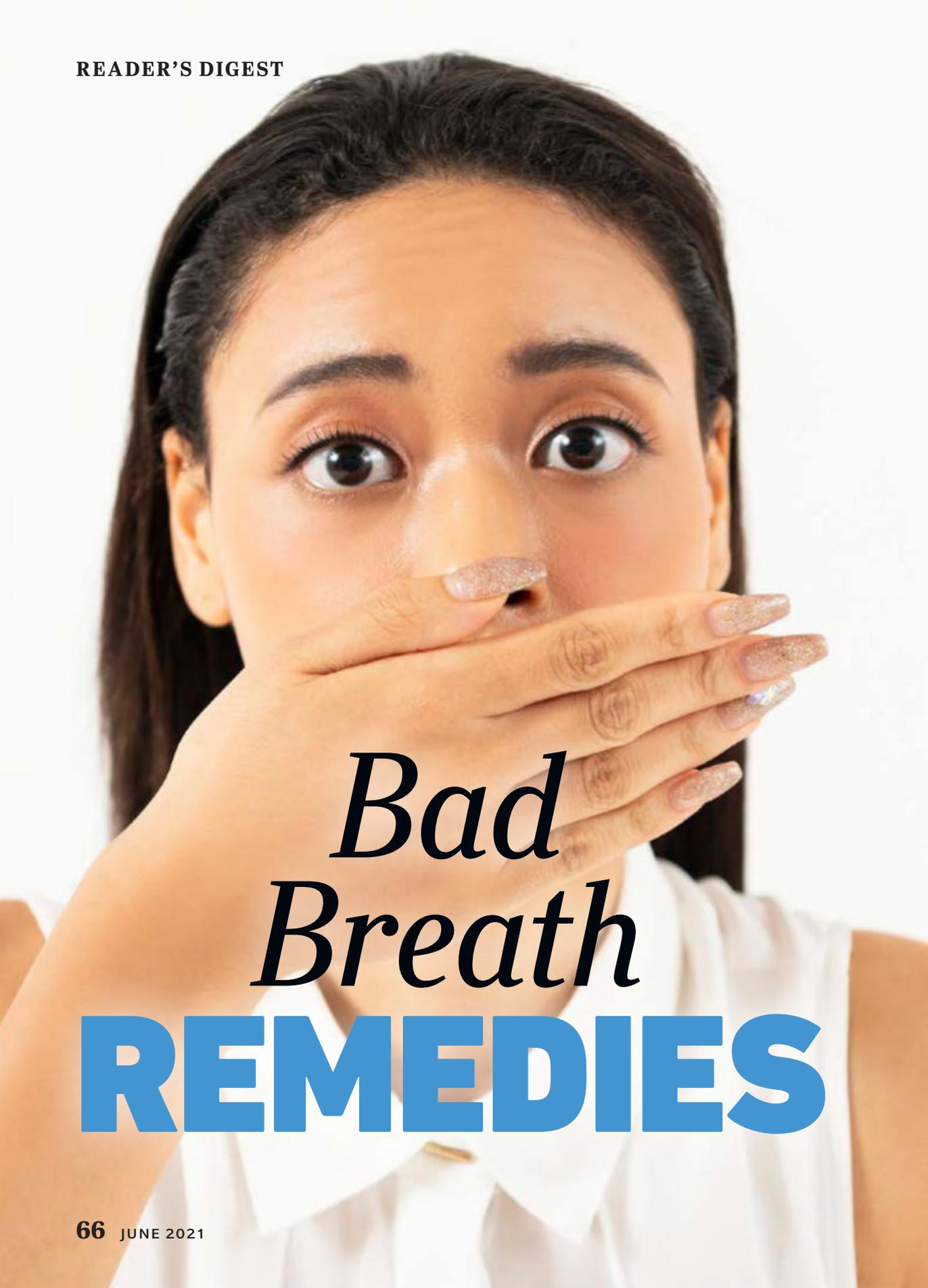
**KERRY WASHINGTON,**  
ACTOR



**When anger rises, think of the consequences.**

**CONFUCIUS,**  
CHINESE PHILOSOPHER





*Bad  
Breath*

**REMEDIES**

*From mouse dung to mummy-embalming salts to floor cleaners, humans have left no stone unturned in their quest for fresh breath.*  
*Zoë Meunier investigates*

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**B**ad breath is nothing new. And ever since humans have spent enough time alongside their fellow humans to appreciate just how potent a case of halitosis can be, we have sought ways to improve our breath.

As in most other areas of life, those Ancient Egyptians were all over those bad breath cures – after all, what’s the point of having a gold-and-jewel encrusted bed and glamorous make-up if your breath makes people wither on approach? Not only did the Egyptians create recipes for ‘toothpaste’ out of natron (a salt which performed double duty embalming mummies – versatile!), they also made breath-sweetening pellets of frankincense, myrrh, cinnamon and honey.

Ancient Greek guru Hippocrates instructed his adherents to combat bad breath by swilling red wine followed by spices. While we’ve no doubt the Ancient Greeks enjoyed testing his theorem, it turns out

Hippocrates’ halitosis hypothesis was erroneous, as alcohol-containing mouthwashes are now known to exacerbate bad breath because they dry the mouth, leading to increased microbial growth. (But many others after you made the same mistake, Hippoc, so don’t beat yourself up.)

The writers of the Talmud must have been dealing with some hefty historic halitosis, as bad breath was considered grounds for the legal breaking of a marriage licence. At least they were kind enough to offer some remedies, such as the chewing of a mastic gum made from tree resin, still in use in Greece and Turkey today.

The Ancient Romans cottoned on to the idea of munching on parsley after meals to freshen breath, another ongoing practice – admit it, who hasn’t attacked the leftover garnish in a desperate bid to stave off garlic breath? We definitely prefer this method to that of Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder, who recommended rubbing one’s teeth with ashes of burnt

## READER'S DIGEST

mouse-dung and honey, while picking one's teeth with a porcupine quill.

Over in the medieval Arabic empire, people chewed on the aromatic twigs of the fibrous *Salvadora persica* shrub called miswak to freshen their breath – another quite effective if not altogether pleasurable remedy still in use in parts of the world.

While ancient Chinese doctors recommended chewing crushed egg shells to grind off the plaque and grime that caused festy breath (thanks, but no thanks), they were the first inspired population to come up with the idea of brushing teeth to eliminate foul breath, fashioning a brush out of hog's-hair bristles in the 15th century.

The rest of the world was slow to catch on, but by the time the toothbrush made its way to Europe a few centuries later, people opted for softer bristles made of horsehair.

Contrary to the popular

depiction of medieval peasants in Europe as having black, rotting teeth, the average person in the Middle Ages actually had passable choppers – and, presumably, breath – largely due to the rarity of sugar in the diet, something most couldn't afford.

Medieval folk cleaned their not-so-gnarly gnashers by rubbing them and their gums with rough linen cloths laden with pastes and powders that mixed an abrasive with a scented herb, such as pepper, mint and rock salt.

Bad breath remedies included mouthwashes of herbs and spices such as mint, marjoram and cinnamon steeped with wine or vinegar, or munching on fennel seeds, parsley or cloves.

Mint, that holy grail of fresh breath, really started to make its mark in the 1800s. In 1870, peppermint Altoids were invented by London confectioner Smith & Company.

**BREATH  
EASY**  
Keeping fresh  
over the  
years



**Medieval  
Mint**



**1700s  
Tooth brush**



**1870s  
Mouthwash**



**1870s  
Toothpaste**

Originally created to calm stomachs, their breath-sweetening side effects soon became apparent and beloved.

Modern-day chewing gum was devised by American inventor Thomas Adams in the 1850s and by the 1890s, Wrigley's had introduced a whole line of chewing gums, including Wrigley's Spearmint.

Around the same time, mint also began its foray into dental hygiene. In the mid-1870s, a dentist named Washington Sheffield invented modern-day toothpaste. It was made with hydrogen peroxide and baking soda, so Sheffield added mint extracts (as well as other flavours, but the mint won out) to make it more palatable.

Meanwhile, during this hubbub of invention, English surgeon Joseph Lister was coming up with an anti-septic to kill the bacteria that often caused infections during surgery. After presenting his idea at a meeting in Philadelphia in 1876, one of

the doctors in the audience, Joseph Joshua Lawrence, devised his own antiseptic formula made of alcohol, thymol, eucalyptol and menthol for the US market. He dubbed it Listerine, in honour of the man who had inspired him.

First marketed as a treatment for everything from dandruff to gonorrhoea to dirty floors, the Listerine company finally honed in on hawking it as a cure for bad breath - or rather halitosis. Once nothing more than an obscure medical term, halitosis became the newly-minted buzzword of the 1920s, thanks to Listerine heir Gerard Barnes Lambert's targeted ad campaign, which claimed the insidious condition would lead to eternal spinsterhood, social alienation and, well, a sad, sorry excuse for a life.

Once the Listerine crew had put the fear of halitosis into the minds of everyone (there now exists a genuine



**1890s**  
**Chewing gum**



**1900s**  
**Lozenge**



**2020**  
**Phone app**

psychological condition called 'halitophobia', in which people are convinced they have bad breath when they don't), the 20th century continued to see a huge expansion in the production of breath mints of varying potency (such as Tic Tacs, Mentos, Eclipse mints and – only for the hardy – Fisher-man's Friend); breath sprays (including Binaca and Ultrafresh), minty chewing gums (eg Wrigley's Doublemint and Extra) and mouth washes (such as Colgate, Oral B and the ubiquitous Listerine).

Of course, advances really sped up once scientists pinpointed the cause of halitosis. In 1964, Dr Joseph Tonzetich discovered that the bad breath smell was the result of volatile sulphur compounds from out-of-control bacteria and that the back of the tongue was the major source of the smell.

This discovery has changed the landscape of bad breath treatment. While breath mints and chewing gum products remain popular – especially as quick fixes after a pungent meal – if you're really serious about beating bad breath (or if your bad breath is really serious), there are

targeted treatments and high-tech products designed to tackle the issue from multiple angles.

Obviously, befriending a dentist is the first port of call, with the vast majority of halitosis cases caused by issues such as poor oral hygiene, periodontal disease such as gingivitis, tongue coat, food impaction, infections, or *xerostomia* (aka 'dry mouth'), a condition in which the salivary glands cannot make enough saliva to keep your mouth moist.

From there, you might consider an irrigation system for flushing bacteria from the sinuses and nasal passages; a tongue scraper to help keep your

tongue clean; medications to treat dry mouth, or a fancy water flossing machine.

Better yet, you could arm yourself with a 'Breathometer Mint', a wireless device that works with your smartphone to record the amount of halitosis-causing compounds in your mouth. In a nutshell, before you go out, you can find out how bad your breath is. Because, as the 1920s Listerine ads hastened to share, nobody is ever going to tell you. **R**



### **ARM YOURSELF WITH A 'BREATHO-METER' TO FIND OUT HOW BAD YOUR BREATH IS**

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ASIA  
**Reader's**  
Digest



*Is Your Child Having a*  
**TEEN-LIFE CRISIS?**



*Parenting expert Jennifer Kolari explains how the pandemic is accelerating a downturn in mental health in teenagers*

BY *Claire Sibonney*

**B**efore the COVID-19 pandemic started threatening our collective mental health, one age demographic was starting to show warning signs – and at an alarming rate. The worries of this age group are broad, according to mental health experts specialising in young people. Teens can become anxious about bigger societal issues like climate change, or more personal fears, such as worrying they’ll never be able to afford to buy a home. They may be anxious about failing or how to communicate effectively (not over social media). Then a pandemic comes along and compounds everything.

Now child and family therapist expert Jennifer Kolari is ringing an alarm bell of her own. All of this turmoil and anxiety adds up to a ‘teen-life crisis’ among young people, which can lead to teens and young adults becoming paralysed by these fears and becoming unengaged in their own lives, she says. We spoke

with Jennifer about what she sees in her practice and where we go from here.

*It seems like parents have never been so involved in their children’s lives and yet we’re seeing unprecedented numbers of kids suffering from depression and anxiety. Why?*

Like anything else in our world, things swing and polarise, and parenting is no different. If you go back to the 1960s, the ‘let your kid cry’ theory ruled. There was a philosophy that kids needed a colder kind of parent to know who’s boss. Then it swung very, very wildly in the other direction, and we heard that ‘no is a bad word’, and ‘children should have a say on what’s going on in the family’.

We have swung so far that kids have too much power, they have too much say, and they don’t feel like anyone’s actually in charge, so you’re going to see an increase in anxiety, depression and even ADHD-like symptoms.

The other layer is social media. Teenagers who are very depressed or super anxious are all talking to each other about it, so that's the viewpoint they're getting back from the world. They're talking about how unwell they are and how depressed they are and what medications they're on. It's good that they're talking to each other about mental health issues, but sometimes they start to feel hopeless and that nobody's feeling good - and that there's no point in trying to feel better, because nobody does.

Sometimes it helps to give your child a script to share with others like, "I love you very much. This feels big to me. You need to talk to your mum, or you need to talk to a counsellor at school." It's a huge and heavy emotional load for teenagers, who are feeling horrible themselves, to also take care of each other.

### ***What kind of pressure on teens are you seeing as a result?***

An increasing number of teens and young adults do not have the emotional tools and the neurological hardware to handle the bumps in life, because we didn't give them a chance to develop. When they were younger, the bumps were smoothed out by their parents. Parents have been tutoring them and telling them they can do anything they want. They

win trophies for showing up. And kids are smart. They know they shouldn't win a trophy just because they showed up at a karate tournament.

The bumps that we experienced in life are supposed to be there. Those contours are there so we can practise life. So later when life happens - and it always does, with break-ups, losing a job, not making the team - you have developed the neurological hardware in your brain to handle upset and sadness. When they get older, some young people are literally paralysed and afraid to move out on their own, terrified that they're not going to be successful.

*Teens don't have the emotional tools and neurological hardware to handle the bumps in life*

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### ***How has the pandemic exacerbated the situation?***

Teenagers are feeling isolated, particularly the ones who aren't physically in school.

And yet, some of the teachers I'm speaking to, and the kids that I work with, say that they're not even turning their cameras on during online learning. So they're not even seeing each other. It drives teachers crazy but the kids don't want to be seen in that environment - they're all in that stage where they're embarrassed.

Teenagers have a higher amount of anxiety anyway and it's really tough on parents, particularly when you have a child that is not moving forward.

Video gaming also plays into this. Because that's a world they can control. That's a world where there is a real-time instant response to a decision they make. So I'm seeing teens becoming increasingly stuck in the video world, which is going to get more intense and sophisticated.

### *What are other ways you're seeing this isolation and anxiety manifest?*

We see avoidance. It's social anxiety. It's major sleep issues. Many of these kids are up all night – they go to bed at seven in the morning and they sleep all day. Or they refuse to do anything school-related.

Many of them have major social anxiety, because social media has caused them to lose the ability to have conversations with each other. That's become more pronounced during the pandemic.

And then layering everything on top of it, everyone is more anxious. Everyone is unnerved, no one knows when life is going to go back to normal. But it's not just about the pandemic. When I was a kid, we didn't really have to worry about things like global warming. Teenagers today are literally thinking to themselves, *Is the world going to be inhabitable when I'm 30?* This is what they're thinking about and worrying about at night and we don't understand, as parents, how heavily this weighs on this generation, who are wise, well-informed, and take these issues very seriously.

### *What can parents do to help their teens through all this uncertainty?*

Parents are thinking, *Do we just wait and hope that they're going to wake up one morning and decide to participate in life?*

To a certain extent, you should set some limits, but you also need to re-establish a bond, which can be difficult to do. Parents need that foundation and buy-in, otherwise the limits you set are going to be experienced as just parental meanness.

I certainly recommend therapy, but you can't always get your teenager to go. There are also life coaches and educational coaches who can be really helpful. It's super for kids to have a mentor where someone who's not their parent is giving them guidance and advice. And parents also need their own expert in parenting to help them through it, if they think their child is falling off the deep end. Anxiety is usually behind it and it is a beast. It is a very hungry emotion that likes to be fed and the more you give into it the bigger it gets.

A lot of kids, especially boys, don't even realise it's anxiety. Helping boys understand their own emotions, that they can control their emotions instead of their emotions controlling them is also important. They see other teenagers struggling with it too, so they think this is just how it is. But you can control your feelings and you can rewire your brain. 

# LAUGHTER

## *The Best Medicine*



### **Crunch Time**

I ate a clock yesterday.  
It was very time consuming.  
Especially when I went back  
for seconds!

Seen online

### **Not the Same**

*The opposite of...*

... mermaid is landlady. @calbo

... Iceland is water water. @HotBitHoran

... isolate is yousoearly. Seen online

... formaldehyde is casualdejekyll.

@Browtweaten

### **Couple Skills**

A husband and wife go to see a marriage counsellor. At the start of their session, the counsellor asks them what the problem is. The wife starts listing every issue the couple had ever had in the 15 years they've been married. She goes on and on.

When she's finally done, the counsellor gets up, embraces the woman, and kisses her passionately. The woman is stunned.

The counsellor then turns to the

CARTOON BY P.C. REY

husband and says, “That is what your wife needs at least three times a week. Can you do that?”

The husband thinks for a moment before he replies. “Well,” he says, “I can bring her here on Mondays and Wednesdays, but on Fridays, I golf.”

Bouldertherapist.com

### Workings of the Body

A teacher giving a lesson on the circulation of blood says to her class, “Now, if I stood on my head, the blood, as you know, would run into it, and I would turn red in the face.

“Then why is it,” she continues, “that while I am standing upright, the blood doesn’t run into my feet?”

One little fellow shouts, “Because your feet ain’t empty!”

Innerworkspublishing.com

### Fake Identity

My stepfather doesn’t like it when I call him my fake dad. He prefers faux pa.

GLENN MOORE, COMEDIAN



### GOOD FOR BEES-NESS

A man decided that he wanted to make his own honey, so he purchased 100 bees from his local beekeeper. When he got home, he counted his new bees and discovered that he actually had 101.

Being an honest man, he called the beekeeper back to tell him that he had taken home one too many. “That’s OK,” the beekeeper told him. “That one’s a freebee.”

SUBMITTED BY HELEN EVANS

### Sheep Shot

A border collie was bragging about all the work he did around the farm. A nearby sheep piped up, “You don’t work hard, all you do is boss us around!”

“What did you say?” the collie demanded.

“You herd me.”

Submitted via Facebook



# Welcome, ROBOTS

*Devices designed to 'live' and work among us are steadily entering our daily lives. Are we ready for them?*

*By David Berreby*

FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

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PHOTO: SPENCER LOWELL

**With a firm yet delicate grip, mimicking the human hand's dexterity, the rbo Hand 3, developed at the Technical University of Berlin, picks up a flower**

## READER'S DIGEST

If you're like most people, you've probably never met a robot. But you will.

I met one on a windy US prairie in January 2020, in the company of a rail-thin 31 year old named Noah Ready-Campbell. To the south, wind turbines stretched to the horizon.

In front of me was a hole that would become the foundation for another one.

A Caterpillar 336 excavator was digging that hole – 18 metres in diameter, with a floor three metres deep and almost perfectly level. Every dip, dig, raise, turn and drop of the 41-ton machine required firm control and well-tuned judgement. The excavator operator's seat, however, was empty. Ready-Campbell, co-founder of Built Robotics, climbed onto the excavator and lifted the lid of a compartment on the roof. Inside was his company's product – a 90-

kilogram device that does work that once required a human being.

"This is where the AI runs," he said, pointing into the circuit boards, wires and metal boxes that make up the machine: sensors to tell it where it is, cameras to let it see, controllers to send commands to the excavator, communication devices that allow humans to monitor it, and the processor where its artificial intelligence, or AI, makes decisions.

When I was a child, I expected robots would look and act human, like C-3PO from *Star Wars*. Instead, the real robots that were being set up in factories were very different.

Today millions of these industrial machines bolt, weld, paint and do other repetitive, assembly-line tasks. Often fenced off to keep the remaining human workers safe, they are what roboticist Andrea Thomaz has called "mute and brute" behemoths.

Ready-Campbell's device isn't like that, or like C-3PO. It is, instead, a new

kind of robot, far from human but still smart, adept and mobile. Once rare, these devices – designed to 'live' and work with people who have never met a robot – are migrating steadily into daily life.

Already, robots shelve and fetch goods in warehouses. They take inventory and clean floors in supermarkets. They cut lettuce and pick apples. They help children with



**Opposite page:**  
A Built Robotics employee checks the robotic control systems on one of the company's excavators, which allow them to work without an operator.

**Right:** At Medical City Heart Hospital in Dallas, nurses work with Moxi, a robot that performs tasks that take nurses away from patients, such as fetching supplies and delivering lab samples



autism socialise and stroke patients regain the use of their limbs.

And that was before the COVID-19 pandemic. Suddenly, replacing people with robots looks medically wise, if not essential. Robots now deliver food in Britain, tote supplies in a US hospital, disinfect patients' rooms in China and Europe, and wander parks in Singapore, nagging pedestrians to maintain social distancing.

Last year, in the middle of a global economic collapse, the robotmakers I'd first contacted in 2019 said they were getting more, not fewer, inquiries from potential customers. The pandemic has made more people realise that "automation is going to be a part of work," Ready-Campbell told me last May.

Even before the COVID crisis, technological trends were accelerating the creation of robots. Mechanical parts got lighter, cheaper and sturdier. Electronics packed more computing power into smaller packages. Better digital communications let engineers connect hundreds of robots, letting them share a collective intelligence, like a beehive's.

"We've gotten used to having machine intelligence that we can carry around with us," said Professor Manuela Veloso, an AI roboticist. She held up her smartphone. "Now we're going to have to get used to intelligence that has a body and moves around without us."

Outside her university office, her team's 'cobots' – collaborative robots

## READER'S DIGEST

- roam the corridors, guiding visitors and delivering paperwork. They look like iPads on wheeled display stands. "When you start accepting robots around you, like a third species, along with pets and humans, you want to relate to them," Professor Veloso said.

We're all just going to have to figure out how.

**V**idal Pérez likes his new co-worker.

For seven years, working for Taylors Farms in California, US, the 34 year old would bend at the waist and, using a large knife, slice off a head of lettuce, shear off imperfect leaves, and toss it into a bin.

Since 2016, though, a robot has done the slicing. It's an eight-and-a-half-metre-long, tractor-like harvester that moves down the rows and cuts off a lettuce head every time its sensor detects one. A conveyor belt carries the cut lettuce up to the harvester's platform, where about 20 workers sort it into bins.

I met Pérez as he took a break from working a nine-hectare field of lettuce. "This is better, because you get a lot more tired cutting lettuce with a knife than with this machine," he said. Riding on the robot, he rotates bins on the conveyor belt.

Not all the workers prefer the new system, he said. "Some people want to stay with what they know. And some get bored with standing on the machine."

"We're going through a generational change ... in agriculture," Taylor Farms president Mark Borman told me. As older workers leave, younger people aren't choosing to fill the backbreaking jobs. Restrictions on cross-border migration haven't helped either. "We're growing, our workforce is shrinking, so robots present an opportunity that's good for both of us," Borman said.

It was a refrain I heard from employers in farming and construction, manufacturing and health care: we're giving tasks to robots because we can't find people to do them.

At the wind farm site, executives from the Mortenson Company, a construction firm that hired Built Robotics' robots, told me about a dire shortage of skilled workers.

"Operators will say things like, 'Oh, hey, here come the job killers,'" said Derek Smith, innovation manager for Mortenson. "But after they see that the robot takes away a lot of repetitive work and they still have plenty to do, that shifts pretty quickly."

In a world that now fears human contact, it won't be easy to fill jobs caring for children or the elderly. Maja Matari, a computer scientist and roboticist, develops 'socially assistive robots' - machines that do support, rather than physical support.

One project is a robot coach that leads an elderly user through an exercise routine. The robot, a plastic head, torso and arms atop a rolling

**A harvesting robot developed by Abundant Robotics uses suction to pick apples off trees in an orchard in the US. Robots are helping farms that face labour shortages by performing tasks that once required the precision of human hands**



metal stand, can do some of what a human coach would do – for example, saying, “Bend your left forearm inwards a little,” during exercise, or “Nice job!” afterwards.

We walked around Matari’s lab – a warren of people in cubicles, working on the technologies that might let a robot help keep the conversation going in a support group, for example, or respond in an empathetic way.

I asked Matari if people ever got creeped out at the thought of a machine watching over Granddad. “The people who take care of other people in this country are underpaid and underappreciated,” she said. “Until that changes, using robots is what we’ll have to do.”

**E**conomists disagree about how much and how soon robots will affect future jobs. But many experts do agree that some workers will have a hard time adapting to robots.

“The evidence is fairly clear that we have many, many fewer blue-collar production jobs, assembly jobs, in industries that are adopting robots,” said Professor Daron Acemoglu, who has studied the effects of robots and other automation. “That doesn’t mean that future technology cannot create jobs. But the notion that we’re going to adopt automation technologies left, right and centre and also create lots of jobs is a purposefully misleading and incorrect fantasy.”

Many people fear robots won’t take over just grunt work but the whole job, or at least the parts of it that are challenging, honourable – and well paid. People also fear robots will make work more stressful, perhaps even more dangerous.

Beth Gutelius, an urban planner and economist who has researched the warehouse industry, told me about one warehouse she visited after it introduced robots. The robots were

quickly delivering goods to humans for packing, saving the workers a lot of walking. On the flip side, it made them feel rushed and eliminated their chance to speak to one another.

**W**e are already getting attached to robots. Military units have held funerals for bomb-clearing robots blown up in action. Nurses in hospitals tease their robot colleagues. As robots get more lifelike, people will invest them with even more affection and trust.

something that lends itself well to automation," he said. "It requires a human brain and tactile feedback to know it's in the right place and connected."

Robot legs aren't any better. In 1996 Prof Veloso was part of a challenge to create robots that would play soccer better than humans by 2050. No one still expects it to happen anytime soon.

"It's crazy how sophisticated our bodies are as machines," Prof Veloso said. "We're very good at handling

## **"IT'S GOING TO BE MANY YEARS BEFORE A BIPEDAL ROBOT CAN WALK AS WELL AS A PERSON"**

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Adapting to them must start with realistic expectations, experts told me. Robots can be programmed or trained to do a well-defined task - dig a foundation, harvest lettuce - but none can equal the human mind's ability to do a lot of different tasks, especially unexpected ones. None has yet mastered common sense.

Today's robots can't match human hands either, said Chico Marks, a manufacturing engineering manager at a Subaru car plant. The plant, like all carmakers, has used standard industrial robots for decades.

Marks showed me a group of wires that would snake through a future car's rear door. "Routing a wiring harness into a vehicle is not

gravity, dealing with forces as we walk, being pushed and keeping our balance. It's going to be many years before a bipedal robot can walk as well as a person."

Robots are not going to be artificial people. We need to adapt to them, and most robotmakers are engineering robots that make allowances for our human feelings.

Sarjoun Skaff, co-founder and chief technology officer of Bossa Nova Robotics, told me that in the long run, robots and people will settle on "interaction conventions" that will enable humans to know "how to interpret what the robot is doing and how to behave around it." For now, robotmakers and ordinary people are feeling their way there.



**Foodly, a collaborative robot, or cobot, developed by RT Corporation, uses advanced vision, algorithms and a grasping hand to place pieces of chicken in a bento box**

In a conference room near Tokyo, I learned firsthand what it's like to work with a robot: by wearing it.

The exoskeleton, manufactured by a Japanese firm called Cyberdyne, consisted of two connected white tubes that curved across my back, a belt at my waist, and two straps on my thighs. I bent at the waist to lift an 18-kilogram container, which should have hurt my lower back. Instead, a computer in the tubes deduced that I was lifting an object, and motors kicked in to assist me.

Cyberdyne sees a large market in medical rehabilitation; it also makes a lower-limb exoskeleton used to help people regain the use of their own legs. For many of its products, “another market will be for workers,

so they can work longer and without risking injuries,” Cyberdyne spokesman Yudai Katami said.

Though construction sites will always need human adaptability and ingenuity for some tasks, “with robots we see an opportunity to standardise practices and create efficiencies for the tasks where robots are appropriate,” said Gaurav Kikani, Built Robotics’ vice president for strategy, operations and finance.

When determining whose preferences ought to prevail, technology itself has no answers. However advanced, there's one task robots won't help us solve: deciding how, when, and where to use them. **R**

FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC (AUGUST 2020),  
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HEALTH



*Our*  
**MYSTERIOUS**  
*Sense of*  
**SMELL**

*The world's leading researchers are unlocking facts about the least understood of our senses*

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BY *Lisa Fields*

PHOTO: FLASHPOP/STONE/GETTY IMAGES



Your sense of smell is largely responsible for your ability to taste food. “Flavour is really an integrated experience that combines what happens on your tongue – that’s sweet, sour, salty, bitter, spicy – with smell,” says Asifa Majid, a psychology professor. “When you put something in your mouth, the molecules go into

*For many people,  
a fading sense of  
smell may be just a  
natural part of ageing*



your nasal cavity. Your tongue might be able to tell that there’s fat in that chocolate, and that’s something the brain finds very rewarding, but the formal chocolate experience comes from all the molecules going into your nose.”

**Women outperform men** when both groups are asked to identify a certain number of scents. That holds true across all age groups. “This could be due both to women being better able to perceive the smell and being better at verbalising the odour – that is, providing the odour with a verbal label,” says Swedish researcher into ageing and psychologist Erika Jonsson Laukka. Her research shows that when people were asked to memorise eight scents (including garlic, fish, turpentine and lemon) and were then given a scent test, which included some of the original scents and some new scents, the women were better able to identify whether or not a scent was one of the ones that had been memorised. Women were also better at identifying the scents by name.

**After age 50 or so**, our sense of smell starts to decline. “This loss accelerates as people get older,” says Dr Thomas Hummel, director of the Smell and Taste Centre at Germany’s Technical University. “Among people over 50, a quarter have a loss. In people over 80, about a third will have no

olfactory function at all. But half of those over 80 still have a good sense of smell.”

People often think that those who are blind, deaf or have lost their ability to smell will have another sense heightened, but according to research, this is merely an old wives’ tale. For example, Dr Hummel has studied the sense of smell in people who are vision impaired and has not found the sense to be heightened.

“That’s a little bit of a myth,” Dr Hummel says. “We’ve been looking at this in very large groups - up to 40 people - with congenital blindness, and people with acquired blindness, and they are not better in their sense of smell. There may be individuals who are really good, but when you look at larger groups, you don’t see it. It’s not there.”

**“Every time we have a cold,** a toll is taken,” says Richard Doty, director of the University of Pennsylvania’s Smell and Taste Centre. Cumulative damage from a lifetime of illnesses suffered by the average person contributes to smell loss in many older adults.

In the case of a cold, “The virus damages little elements of the epithelium - the lining of the olfactory region where the receptors are located, at the top of the nose - pockmarking it. By the time we get into our 60s, 70s and 80s, it looks like cheesecloth.”

Smell loss can be an early symptom of Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s.



## *Cumulative damage from a lifetime of illnesses can contribute to smell loss*



It could indicate illness or chronic disease, so see your doctor if you notice your sense of smell fades, says Professor Majid. “But for most of us, it’s not a concern. It’s just part of getting older.”

Recently, the COVID-19 virus caused temporary smell loss among people of any age. “There’s ten per cent or so - that’s the current estimate - where the smell loss lingers,” Dr Hummel says.

## FRESH INSIGHTS, THANKS TO COVID-19

*Many of us have a new appreciation for our sense of smell*

In 2018, the polling firm YouGov asked almost 20,000 adults which of the five senses they would miss the most if they lost it. Sight was by far the number one answer, at 70 per cent. Next came hearing, taste, then touch. Smell was at the bottom, with just two per cent saying they would miss it.

Had the survey been done in the wake of the pandemic, the results might have differed, since many of those who got the illness experienced *anosmia*: a loss of smell. The link between COVID-19 and anosmia became clearer, wrote Brooke Jarvis in *The New York Times Magazine* in January, when a newly formed group of specialists (the Global Consortium for Chemosensory Research, or GCCR) surveyed thousands of COVID-19 patients from 40 countries. They had suddenly lost their sense



of smell; many also lost their ability to taste.

GCCR survey data showed that changes in smell and taste often occurred just days after infection with COVID-19. The group's research, published in the journal *Nature* in October 2020, concluded that of those people surveyed in France, self-reports of smell and taste changes were earlier markers of infection spread than government metrics.

The GCCR data showed that many who lost their sense of smell were also no longer able to perceive cooling, tingling and burning sensations from stimulants such as chilli and menthol.

And when smell did return, for some people everything smelt rancid. According to AbScent, a UK-based support organisation, even water can smell disgusting – and eating no longer brings joy.

Not only that, the condition can be dangerous: according to *Nature*, people with anosmia are less able to detect spoiled food and smoke, leaving them twice as vulnerable to food poisoning and fire.

Thanks to the new attention and interest in researching smell, this sense, that has been perceived as expendable, is becoming better appreciated and understood.

**The Editors**

And, he says, anyone may also lose the sense of smell, temporarily or permanently, after having a concussion or other trauma to the head. “This does not mean anything, then, in terms of these future cognition functions or future health.”

If your doctor can't find a cause for your smell loss, it's likely age-related.

**Your eating habits** may be compromised by loss of smell. “You think, ‘I remember how this tasted in the past. I guess they don't have as good tomatoes or meat any more,’” says psychology professor Dr Johannes Frasnelli. “But in fact, it's your sense of smell that may be working less.”

“Some people will find food is no longer enjoyable, get depressed over it, or don't want to eat with their friends,” says Doty.

“Others will start eating lots of junk food, spices and salt to try to make food more enjoyable.”

Strangely, some individuals don't notice an absence of aromas in their environments, or that they no longer taste their food. This may be because their sense of smell faded gradually.

“Probably about a quarter of the population worldwide has a considerable loss and is not really aware of it,” says Doty.

For many of us, scents unlock memories that date back to childhood. One whiff of your grandmother's perfume on a passer-by may

transport you back in time to your grandparents' home. Researchers believe this happens because of the proximity of certain brain regions to the olfactory bulb, which sends information from the nose.

“The olfactory bulb is situated close to the amygdala, which regulates our emotions, and the hippocampus, a structure important for encoding and recollecting memories,” Laukka says. “Smell-evoked memories may be more emotional,

*“When you lose the sense of smell, you lose your memories. It's like the key is lost”*



run deeper, than those cued by other senses.”

Adds Dr Hummel, “When you lose the sense of smell, you lose these memories. It's like the key is lost.”

**To improve your sense of smell,** some medical treatments can work. If your doctor suspects that inflammation has caused your smell loss, he/she may prescribe a course of steroids.

“If after that a person's smell comes back, then they can use judiciously a topical steroid through nasal sprays,” says Doty.



*An appreciation of,  
or distaste for,  
a certain smell is  
often learned at  
an early age*



Researchers haven't yet developed devices to improve the sense of smell. "We have glasses and hearing aids," says Professor Majiid. "There's nothing like that for smell."

But they do know that the sense of smell improves throughout childhood and into adulthood, as people are exposed to more scents and

tastes. The more flavours and delicacies that you sample while growing up, the better your nose will be at detecting subtle aromas.

So expanding your diet and varying what you eat may stimulate your sense of smell. Be mindful at meal-times, noting the aromas, flavours and textures.

"The best thing is to have a diverse diet, a cookbook with food from all over the world," Dr Frasnelli says.

**Scent training** might preserve our sense of smell, some research suggests. People often do this at the suggestion of an ear, nose and throat specialist, if they go to the doctor to find out why they have lost their sense of smell. When people deliberately inhale strong odours for several weeks, they may become more sensitive to all aromas and improve their ability to smell.

Dr Hummel believes that the technique has physiological effects. "We probably grow more olfactory receptors. There's animal research supporting this idea."

Dr Frasnelli has analysed MRI brain images of people undergoing scent training and observed positive changes in brain plasticity.

"They got thicker in the regions of the brain that are responsible for processing the olfactory function," he says, "which means it's not just a nose that is trained, it's the whole brain."

But don't expect dramatic results: most scent-training research involves younger adults, so it's unknown how effective it may be in older adults, he warns.

Still, it's something inexpensive that you can try on your own, even in your 70s or beyond. As Professor Majid says, "Smell does seem to be a sense that you can train throughout your lifetime."

**Smells aren't universally** 'good' or 'bad'. Research has shown that appreciation of, or distaste for, a particular odour is often learned at an early age, based on cultural preferences or the popularity of certain foods or customs around the world.

For example, individuals who dislike the smell and taste of cheese with pungent odours – especially creamy, runny varieties – perceive the scent differently from people who enjoy such cheeses. Their negative reaction to the aroma is detectable during a functional MRI brain scan.

Intriguingly, when women were asked to judge the likeability of male body odour, they preferred the scent

of men who followed a vegetarian diet to that of men who ate red meat.

**Digital noses on the way?** "There have been some really interesting things happening in digital olfaction in recent years," says Professor Majid. "For example, there is a device that can tell you if something in your fridge is going bad. There are also electronic noses that are used in urban environments to capture if there's something dangerous happening, for example a gas leak."

This has already been used in a limited capacity. When unpleasant odours pervaded a town in southern Spain in 2017, University of Malaga researchers who had developed an e-nose were invited to identify the presence of volatile chemicals, which were believed to be emanating from a point within the sewer system.

The e-nose identified where the chemicals were most prevalent within the town, which coincided with the local government's clean-up efforts.

None of these devices are yet available to consumers. **R**



### Nectar of the Dogs

A US brewing company sold out quickly of its newest offering: Dog Brew. Designed for man's best friend, the non-alcoholic brew is a bone broth made from pork, corn, celery and spices – ingredients the brewers suggest appeal to the tastes and nutritional needs of dogs. UPI

*Trust is the thread holding life's patchwork together. It not only saves lives but creates bonds and strengthens others*

# TRUST

## *in Pictures*

BY *Cornelia Kumfert*





PHOTO FEATURE



PHOTO: © ZOONAR GMBH/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

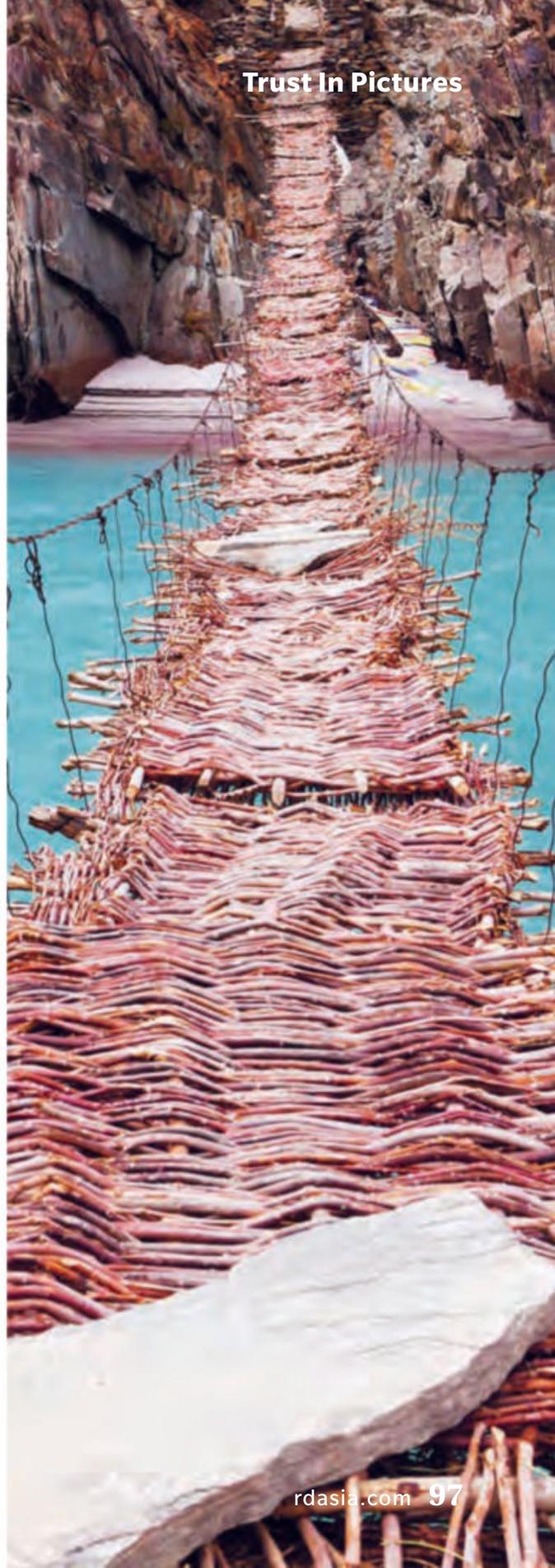


▲ **(Previous page) When a trapeze artist** performs somersaults at dizzying heights, the audience on the ground holds its breath. Like the acrobat in the air, they can only trust that their partner will catch them. The hard work behind making these death-defying feats look so effortless is staggering. Every day, trapeze artists train for hours to maintain flexibility, balance and strength.

◀ **There must be trust** between the members of what are known as 'rope teams' during an ascent. When climbing a summit or crossing a glacier, three or more people are usually linked together by a rope. This means they can help save a fellow climber from falling should they get into difficulties. On easier tours, a trained mountain guide can also put a less-experienced climber on a short safety line to prevent a stumble from turning into a fall.

▶ **Every step** across this bridge demands a huge effort of will. The locals, however, trust that the wickerwork of thin branches will hold their weight. The bridge over the Tsarap river in the Indian Himalaya is one of the few remaining wooden bridges in India. It connects the village of Marling to the outside world.

◀ **Polar bears** are one of the most dangerous animals in the world. A highly unusual interspecies trust developed between Knut, a cub abandoned by his mother, and Berlin zookeeper Thomas Dörflein, who bottle-fed and raised the polar bear to adulthood.





◀ **This tiny fellow** absolutely adores being thrown into the air and caught again by his dad. Incidentally, the game also builds up the child's basic trust, which develops during the first months of life. Researchers have discovered that babies and infants who have experienced a loving bond with their parents learn to trust others more easily.

▶ **The faithful**, who flock to St Peter's Square in the Vatican week after week seeking the blessing of Pope Francis at the General Audience, place their trust in a higher power. The head of the Catholic Church generally enjoys the personal touch of walking amongst the crowds. Only the recent curfews of the COVID-19 pandemic caused him to replace the coveted live audience event with video addresses.

◀ **Emperor penguin** chicks trust their parents unconditionally. They must, because the young animals would not survive temperatures in Antarctica as low as  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  without the warming plumage of their parents. Before they even hatch, the father places the egg on his feet to warm it in a breeding pouch under his dense feathers for around 65-75 consecutive days. Once hatched, the little penguin also spends the first days of his life there before exploring the world under his parent's watchful eyes.

R





# ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

## *Humour on the Job*



### **Sorely Missed**

I was welcoming my class of ten year olds when a boy came over looking very upset.

“What’s up, James?” I asked.

“My uncle has died this morning,” he replied.

“I am so sorry, James,” I consoled.

“How old was he?”

James told me that he was 85.

“He’s lived a long life. Is that why you’re so upset?” I asked.

“No,” he replied, “I’m upset because he hadn’t given me his sponsor money for the spelling fundraiser.”

SUBMITTED BY PAUL SCHLEISING

### **Choice Position**

When I worked at an employment agency, I was interviewing a candidate for an entry-level job. I read his application as we talked: name, address, year of graduation, and so on. Then I looked at what he had written next in the box that read ‘Position desired’.

“Near a window,” it said.

SONA DORAN IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

### **Blame the Driver**

My brother who is a policeman comes across some good excuses from motorists for speeding.

He recently stopped a married couple. He spoke to the man who stated indignantly that it was in fact his wife's fault they had been speeding. "She's doing all the driving," he said. "I'm just the one behind the wheel."

SUBMITTED BY ALEXA MILLWARD

### Looking for Love

My maiden name is Love. One day I rang a washing machine repair company and was asked what time preference I had for an appointment. When the repairman arrived, he was bemused. His job sheet read: "Love urgently needed in the morning."

SUBMITTED BY JENNY (LOVE) MOYNEUX

### The Great Outdoors

Customers can take advantage of a generous return policy at a camping-gear company. How generous? Here are return claims/excuses that employees have had to deal with:

- "I dried these boots by the fire, and the soles melted."
- "I bought a different car, and this roof rack doesn't fit it."
- "Paramedics cut my jacket."
- "These sandals for walking in rivers aren't sexy enough."

adventure-journal.com

### Suspicious Character

While working in the men's department of a large retailer, I noticed a gentleman was behaving rather suspiciously.



### Old School Tie

Male teachers at my old school had to wear suits. But one colleague always managed to subvert the dress code by wearing the ugliest ties. Every day, staff and students alike couldn't wait to see what hideous accessory he had on. When he retired, I finally asked him, "Why the ugly ties?"

He responded, "Because that way, no one would ever know I only owned one suit."

SUBMITTED BY ROD HANSON

I immediately phoned the CCTV room of the store to ask them to focus their cameras on the individual.

I could hear a lot of laughter in the background and then the response, "That's the new store detective!"

SUBMITTED BY MICHAEL G. PHILLIPS

# *“Will We Ever See Our Child Again?”*

*It broke the young couple’s heart that they had to give up their infant daughter to save her life. They never stopped loving her*

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BY *Robert Kiener*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Nicole Xu*



*“Be strong,” Xu Lida whispers to himself as he walks along Sanxiang Road in Suzhou, China, a picturesque city some 100 kilometres west of Shanghai. It is early morning on August 24, 1995, and the slight 23-year-old shopkeeper is fighting back tears as he dodges pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles on his way to an outdoor market.*

In his right arm he is carrying a basket that holds his tiny, three-day-old daughter Jingzhi. After crossing a busy street he peels back her blanket and checks that she is still asleep. His heart pounding, he reminds himself what he and his wife have decided: we have no choice. He blinks back tears and wraps her up again. Perhaps, one day, she will understand and forgive us.

He reaches the popular market just before 5am and is relieved to see that it is nearly empty. He can leave his daughter here without being seen. He spots a small tent outside a bicycle maintenance shop. She will stay warm there and someone will surely find her.

He hasn't slept in more than 24 hours, and as he carries Jingzhi to the tent he begins crying again. He kisses her gently and tucks her basket into the tent, knowing that this is his final farewell. He walks away but doesn't get far before he stops, compelled to go back. But as he nears

the tent, he notices people gathered around it and realises she has already been discovered.

He hears her cry and knows she will be rescued. But he feels horribly guilty, saddened, devastated. *What have I done?* Reluctantly he walks away, knowing he will never forget the sound of her crying.

**IN 1995**, China's strict one-child policy, which sought to control the nation's soaring population growth by compelling Chinese couples to have only one child, was in full effect. Couples who disobeyed were harshly punished with government-forced abortion, sterilisation, steep fines and destruction of their homes.\*

Because Xu and his wife Qian Fenxiang already had a daughter, one-year-old Xiaochen, they were forbidden to have another child.

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\* MORE THAN 336 MILLION ABORTIONS, MANY OF THEM FORCED, WERE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN 1971 AND 2015, WHEN CHINA'S NATIONAL BIRTH PLANNING PROGRAMME ENDED.

## “Will We Ever See Our Child Again?”

Xu and Qian met in 1990 when they were both 20. They fell in love and married, and Qian gave birth to Xiaochen a couple of years later. Although Xu had little education beyond middle school, he was a hard worker and ambitious.

He soon left his job as a garbage picker and opened a shop in nearby Hangzhou, where he refurbished and sold refrigerators, washing machines and other appliances. Despite working seven days a week, they struggled to make ends meet.

One day Xu said to his wife, “Our daughter is so lonely. She needs a brother or a sister to keep her company.” They often discussed having another child but knew the government forbade it.

Still, the couple couldn’t get the

idea of having a second child out of their mind. Then, in late 1994, Qian fell pregnant.

She hid her pregnancy but family planning officials learned of it when she was seven months along and demanded she undergo an abortion. One late spring evening, as Xu held his wife, he felt their baby moving within her. “It’s like our child is already alive,” he told her. “We cannot kill her.”

The couple decided to offer the baby for adoption to a couple who could not conceive. Qian tried to reason with the local family planning officials, telling them, “I want to save a life.” But they were adamant; she must abort her child.

When Qian and Xu refused, village leaders tore down the couple’s house.



Terrified, they escaped 160 kilometres north to Suzhou, where they hid on Qian's sister's small boat. They planned to deliver the baby on their own because going to a hospital without a government-issued birth permit would result in a forced abortion.

When Jingzhi was born, Xu cut the baby's umbilical cord with scissors he had sterilised while aboard the small boat. They had hoped friends would adopt their newborn daughter, but no one could.

Village leaders were still pursuing the couple, threatening to tear down Qian's mother's house as well as her brother's. She confessed to her sister, "We have no hope." In desperation, the couple agreed: They would leave Jingzhi in the nearby market, where she could be found and adopted.

Before Xu set out for the market with Jingzhi, he placed a small bag of powdered milk, a bottle of milk and six (a lucky number) yuan in her basket to wish her good luck on her journey to find a good family.

He also included a letter he had penned with brush and ink. It read: "Our daughter, Jingzhi, was born at 10am on the 24th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, 1995. We have been forced by poverty and

affairs of the world to abandon her. Oh, pity the hearts of fathers and mothers far and near! Thank you for saving our little daughter and taking her into your care. If the heavens have feelings, if we are brought together by fate, then let us meet again on the Broken Bridge in Hangzhou on the morning of the Qixi Festival in 10 or 20 years from now."

### A NEW HOME IN AMERICA

It is August 17, 1996, almost a year to the day after Jingzhi had been abandoned in the market, and she's the centre of attention in the Suzhou Social Welfare Home, an orphanage that has been her home since she was discovered. The little girl with the big eyes is in the arms of her new adoptive parents Ruth and Ken

Pohler, an American couple from Michigan who have flown to China to adopt her.

"Say 'Mumma.' Say 'Mumma,'" says Ruth as she holds Jingzhi, or Kati, as she has been renamed by the Pohlers, and beams into her smiling face. "She's so beautiful. So sweet," says Ruth as Ken smiles broadly and looks on. The Pohlers, who have two sons of their own, were anxious to add a girl to their family. They were

*"You came  
from a  
lady's tummy  
in China,"  
Ruth tells Kati.  
"But you came  
from my heart"*

aided by Bethany Christian Services, a child and family support group that helps to facilitate international adoptions.

Along with Kati's official papers, the Suzhou orphanage officials give the Pohlers the letter that Xu had tucked into the baby's basket. After boarding the bus to their hotel, Ken hands it to his Bethany translator Xian. He watches her reading it and is amazed when he sees tears rolling down her cheeks. She comes over to Ken and Ruth and explains what the note said.

“What anguish these parents must have been feeling when they were forced to abandon their baby daughter,” Ken says to Ruth.

Later, they confess to one another that they are puzzled: how could they ever meet these birth parents, ten years down the road, on some bridge on the other side of the world? It seemed impossible.

**GROWING UP** in the midwestern town of Hudsonville, Michigan (population 7000), Kati is flourishing. She fits in with the Pohlers and her older brothers Jeff and Steve. She has a natural talent for music and sport and, with her parents' urging, she learns to play the viola, the violin and the piano.

Kati is readily accepted by the close-knit community and has lots of friends. However, by age five she is aware that she is different from them. One day, she asks Ruth, “Whose

tummy did I come from? Did I come from your tummy?”

Ruth pauses, takes a deep breath and tells her, “No honey. You didn't come from my tummy. You came from a lady's tummy in China.” Holding back her tears, she adds, “But you came from my heart.”

That is enough for Kati. The answer seems to satisfy her. She runs off to play with friends.

Occasionally, Kati wonders about her mother in China. Ken and Ruth had placed her passport, orphanage records and other files from her past on a high shelf in her wardrobe. Sometimes, thinking about ‘that woman's tummy’, Kati stacks two chairs atop one another and clambers up them to look at the Chinese-language documents and pictures. Among them is the poignant note from Xu.

But Kati does not ask again about her birth parents. From time to time, Ken and Ruth talk about when to tell Kati about her parents and the letter. Ken proposes, “Let's wait until she's older and better able to handle the news or begins asking us more questions.” Ruth agrees.

**AS KATI'S TENTH BIRTHDAY NEARS**, Ken and Ruth begin formulating a plan. They put themselves in the shoes of Kati's birth parents and imagine what they would be thinking: “Where does our daughter live? Is she being cared for well? Is she happy and healthy?” They agree that they



would be heartbroken if they had been forced to abandon their child.

They want to reassure Kati's birth parents. But Ruth is concerned about somehow losing Kati. "She's our daughter," she tells Ken. "I don't want to think anyone could take her away."

One evening, they explain their feelings to a friend, Kirk Northouse, who does business in China. They tell him about the birth father's letter and his hope to meet his daughter or her adoptive parents on the Hangzhou bridge. The couple tell Northouse that they wish there was a way to reassure Kati's birth parents that she is happy and healthy without exposing Kati or themselves. "She's far too young to handle all this, much less go to China to meet them," they say.

"I have good friends who live near the Broken Bridge," Northouse replies. "They may be able to help."

Over the next few weeks the Pohlers put together a package for the birth parents. They include pictures of Kati growing up and explain that she is a healthy, happy, accomplished, well-adjusted American girl. They do not include their names or other details.

A China-based friend of Northouse, Anne Wu, agrees to visit the Broken Bridge in Hangzhou on August 11, the date of the Qixi Festival – often described as the Chinese Valentine's Day – just as Xu had requested ten years earlier, and deliver the package to Kati's birth parents.

If only it could be that simple.

## “IF IS A VERY BIG WORD”

Xu and Qian had returned to Hangzhou a few days after leaving their daughter in the market in Suzhou, but they never stopped thinking about her. The questions nagged at them: “Has she been adopted? Did we do the right thing?”

They reached out to friends in Suzhou to ask their help in locating Jingzhi, but no one could find any trace of her. Frustrated, Xu drew up a list of orphanages in Suzhou. The couple considered going back to inquire about their daughter but knew they would be risking prosecution.

It broke Xu’s heart to watch his wife cry whenever they spoke about Jingzhi. He often reminded her about the letter he had written and left with the baby, saying, “Let’s hope we will meet her and see how she is doing when she is ten ... if her new parents bring her to the Broken Bridge.”

Every time Xu said it, he thought to himself, *‘If’ ... ‘If’ is a very big word.*

Finally, the ten-year anniversary of her birth arrived. “Even if our child doesn’t come, surely her new parents will,” Xu told Qian. “Our letter will have touched them. Have faith.”

IT IS JUST PAST THREE O’CLOCK on August 11, 2005, and the Broken Bridge, famed in Chinese legend as the place where lovers reunite, is packed with visitors. Holidaymakers on the bridge jostle one another as they search for a better view of the picturesque West Lake for a photo. The sun is beating down; the lake is still.

The three members of the Xu family, including 11-year-old Xiaochen, have been on the bridge since 8am and are now exhausted. And disappointed. For eight hours Xu has been holding a fan with Jingzhi’s name on it and a copy of the letter he’d left in her basket ten years ago. But no one among the tens of thousands of people who walked by them has come forward.

*“Even if our child doesn’t come, surely her new parents will,” Xu tells Qian*

The wait today has been especially hard on Qian. For the first time in a decade she thinks there is a good chance her daughter, or her daughter’s adoptive parents, might appear. She has long hoped to hold Jingzhi in her arms, hug and kiss her and tell her how sorry she is about having to leave her in the market.

Will she, or her adoptive parents, understand that she and Xu had no choice? Turning to her husband, who looks so tired under the hot sun, she

## READER'S DIGEST

asks, "Will they ever forgive us?" Each time she sees a family with a little girl she is overcome with emotion; from initial bursts of joy to searing, painful sadness. She and Xu watch anxiously as taxis dispatch their passengers at the bridge, hoping one might bring their daughter to them.

Dejected, depressed and exhausted, Xu turns to his wife just before four o'clock and admits, "No one is coming. Let's go." In tears, Qian nods, holds Xiaochen tightly by the hand, and the three of them leave.

**REMARKABLY**, shortly after the family leave the bridge, Anne Wu appears. She missed the train from her home in Suzhou and arrived late, carrying pictures of Kati, a long letter from the Pohlers to her birth parents, and a photocopy of Xu's ten-year-old letter.

She looks all over the bridge for Kati's parents, but they are nowhere to be found. She has missed them by mere minutes.

Wu is devastated and blames herself. She approaches a television crew on the bridge working a news feature on the Qixi Festival. Did they notice anyone waiting for someone?

"No," says one of the crew who is intrigued by Wu's story. "But come to

our studio and we can look over the film we shot today." At the nearby television studio, Wu and the crew scan the footage of visitors to the bridge that day. They see no one who might be Kati's parents.

"Wait," says one of the crew. "Let's slow down the film and look again." Sure enough, in a single 1/25th-of-a-second frame, they spot a slight, tired-looking man holding a sign and a copy of the letter. The station soon reports the story, asking viewers to help locate the as-yet-unnamed 'man

on the Broken Bridge.'

Other TV stations and major newspapers across the nation pick up the powerful human-interest story. The Xu family has no idea that their search for their daughter has become national news.

*The Xu family has no idea that their search for their daughter has become national news*

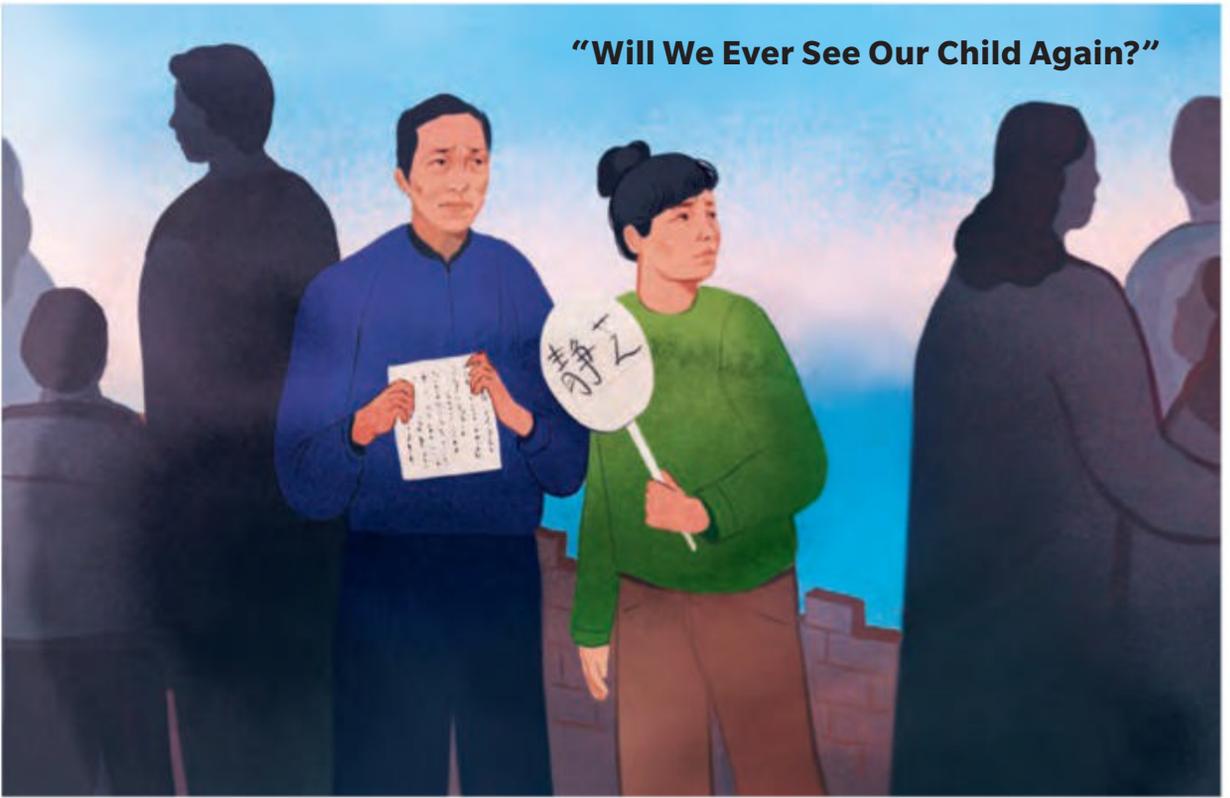
## THE STORY

### CREATES A STIR

"It can't be!" exclaims Lao Guo, a shopkeeper in Hangzhou. As he opens his take-away breakfast of sweet cakes, he notices a grainy photograph in the newspaper that has been used to wrap his meal. "It's my friend Xu Lida!"

When Lao Guo brings them the battered newspaper, the couple is speechless. Xu reads the article and begins shaking. "They say someone

## “Will We Ever See Our Child Again?”



came to the bridge the day we were there,” he tells Qian. “And she was bringing us news about Jingzhi!” Qian breaks down crying. The miracle they had hoped for is happening.

From a newspaper reporter they learn that Kati has been adopted by an American couple. Through Anne Wu they soon receive the pictures and news about Kati that the Pohlers have supplied anonymously.

As Qian stares lovingly at one recent picture of Kati, she strokes it as if she were stroking her long-lost daughter’s hair. She tells Xu, “There’s no doubt that is our Jingzhi. She has my eyes. But she is in America, so far away!”

Xu replies, “She is safe. I just pray that she is not bitter towards us.”

The couple’s story shows no signs

of dying down and is picked up by the powerful Chinese Central Television Station (CCTV).

When the Pohlers hear of the stir this story is causing in China, Ken is stunned. “How did this become such a massive story?” Ken tells Ruth, “It’s best we back off. Kati is still so young.”

Kati knows nothing of how famous she has become on the other side of the world. The happy, piano-playing fifth-grader living in rural Michigan is safe in the embrace of her adoptive parents.

Without any input from Ken and Ruth, the story begins to fade in China. But it soon takes a twist when an enterprising US-based documentarian and academic, Changfu Chang, hears of it from a friend in China.

Chang has produced several stories on adoption and is intrigued by the Xu family. "It has all the elements of a great story," he tells a friend and travels to China to research it.

He meets Xu and Qian and films them, along with several other Chinese couples, for his documentary, *Long Wait for Home*, about international adoption. In it, the couple offer a moving confession to the daughter they abandoned. Looking straight into the camera Xu says, "We think of you every day."

However, as Chang admits after finishing his documentary, "There's a major piece of the puzzle still missing. Who adopted Jingzhi? Will Jingzhi ever meet her birth parents?"

Back in the US, Chang searches for clues about the identity of Jingzhi's adoptive parents. Drawing on details from Ken's letter – that Jingzhi had a knee problem and that the family enjoyed spending time at the beach – he starts combing through message boards and adoption-related sites. Eventually he identifies a Michigan family who mention that their adoptive daughter once had knee problems. They also live near Lake Michigan, which has numerous beaches.

Chang finds a picture of Ken Pohler online – he looks like the father in the photograph given by Anne Wu. He locates the Pohlers and reaches out to them.

Neither Ken nor Ruth, remembering the 'media circus' in China, have any

interest in talking with Chang. But he convinces them he can act as an intermediary between them and the Xu family, passing along news and pictures of Kati without revealing the Pohlers' identity. They agree and he does not betray their trust. He hopes that someday, if everyone agrees, he can do another documentary that includes Kati and the Pohlers.

As the years go by, Xu and Qian cherish the bits of information about Kati they glean from Changfu Chang. They learn she is doing well in high school, playing in the orchestra and, later, starting university. Occasionally they receive a new picture of Kati and add it to the others they have framed and hung on their walls.

Hoping against hope, Xu returns to the Broken Bridge every year on the day of the Qixi Festival, praying that his long-lost daughter or her adoptive parents will appear. But they never do. As Xu tells a friend, "My hopes have been dashed time and time again. But I won't give up."

### REUNION ON THE BROKEN BRIDGE

In 2016, Kati, soon to turn 21, is about to start a university semester in Spain and feels her new classmates may have questions about her background. So she asks Ken and Ruth if they know anything about her birth parents. She is startled when they tell her about the Xu family, give her Xu's letter, and explain how the

birth parents’ story spread through China.

Kati is overwhelmed, then angered. “You knew this all this time and didn’t tell me?” she asks her mother. Ruth and Ken apologise, explaining that they were trying to protect her.

“Time,” Ruth tells Kati, “just slipped by. We are sorry.”

Says Ken, “Honey, we should have told you earlier. But there’s no book about handling these things. We weren’t trying to hide anything from you.”

Ken and Ruth explain how Chang-fu Chang has acted as an intermediary for them with Kati’s birth parents. “And he has met your birth parents,” says Ken. “He has also done a documentary about adoption that included interviews with them.”

A few days later Kati is sitting alone in the audio-visual studio at her university watching *Long Wait for Home*. In raw, heartfelt interviews filmed nearly a decade earlier, her birth parents spill out their hearts, speaking directly to the precious daughter they were forced to give up.

When Qian speaks to her in the video, Kati cannot stop crying. “I love and miss you every day ... I hope you live a happy life. I thank your

adoptive parents for giving you a new life and taking care of you ...”

The camera turns to Xu. He wipes tears from his eyes and says, “Every night your mother and I have been talking about you, thinking of what you look like, where you are living and whether you are struggling or suffering. We thought that our wrong decision might have given you a troubled life ... Every day we love you dearly.”

Kati’s heart goes out to her birth parents. She wants to tell them she

understands. She wants to tell them that she has no bitterness towards them. They need not feel guilty. After watching the video, she now knows what she has to do.

Kati and Chang keep in touch as she completes her semester in Spain and

returns to the US to finish university. She accepts his invitation to fly to China and help him make a documentary about her story. He suggests Kati meet Xu and Qian on the Broken Bridge during the 2017 Qixi Festival.

Ken and Ruth are apprehensive and offer to go with her, but Kati, who has forgiven her parents, explains that, “I want to go on my own”. Ruth knows it is Kati’s decision.

*Kati’s heart goes out to her birth parents. She wants to tell them she understands*



**Above: the Pohler family (left to right): Ruth, Jeff, Steve, Kati and Ken. Below: Kati's birth family (left to right): Qian, Kati, Xu and Xiaochen**

"I don't want to lose you," she tells Kati.

Kati holds Ruth's hand and tells her softly, "You are my family. I love you. You raised me. Yes, I have another set of parents but you're my family."

It is the eve of the seventh day of the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar. The Qixi Festival starts the next day, August 26. Kati has flown to Hangzhou to meet – for the first time – her birth parents, Xu and Qian, and her older sister, Xiaochen, on the Broken Bridge.

Xu and Qian have been up all night, unable to sleep because they are so excited about meeting their daughter after 22 years. As he sits close to his wife, Xu asks, "What can I say to her? Would it help to say I am sorry?" He pauses, takes a breath and adds, "No. Ten thousand sorries wouldn't be enough."

Hardly able to control her emotions, Qian says, "I will throw myself at her and beg her for forgiveness."

Kati, approaching the Broken Bridge on foot with Chang, keeps wondering what she will say, how she will feel. After more than two decades, it's time. In minutes her life will change.

The late-afternoon sun bathes the stone-arched bridge and West Lake in a warm glow. Although the Qixi Festival won't start until the next day, scores of holiday-makers already line the bridge.

Kati, her heart beating fast, scans ahead for the birth parents she has seen only on film. Suddenly she spots a teary-eyed Qian, trailed by Xu and Xiaochen, and a wave of emotion sweeps over her. *Finally! Is this really happening?*

Xu and Qian spot their daughter. Qian runs free, weeping uncontrollably as she pulls Kati into her arms. Xu, his eyes wide, steadies his wife

## “Will We Ever See Our Child Again?”

as she cries, “My daughter! Mum is so sorry! For all these years Mum couldn’t find you. I couldn’t take care of you.” Qian, Xu and Xiaochen all hug Kati tightly.

Kati, back in the country where she was born and reunited with her birth parents, holds Qian tightly. Although she cannot understand what she is saying, she feels her mother’s love.

After years of hoping and years of disappointments, Xu and Qian get the wish Xu expressed so eloquently

in the letter he wrote more than two decades earlier: “If the heavens have feelings, if we are brought together by fate, then let us meet again on the Broken Bridge.” **R**

*Kati, now 25 and teaching English to students in Prague, has returned to China several times, the most recent visit being for her sister’s wedding. Ruth and Ken Pohler have also visited the Xu family in China. Xu texts Kati frequently, reminding her how much he and Qian love and miss her.*

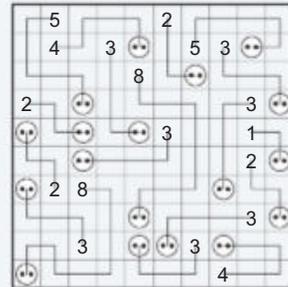
### Puzzle Answers

From pages  
122-124

#### ABC

		A	C	B	
	B	C		A	
C	A		B		
B			A	C	
A	C	B			

#### CONTACT



#### SUDOKU

1

3	4	5	2	1	6
2	1	6	3	5	4
6	5	1	4	2	3
4	3	2	1	6	5
1	6	4	5	3	2
5	2	3	6	4	1

2

1	3	5	4	2	6
4	2	6	1	3	5
6	5	2	3	4	1
3	1	4	6	5	2
5	6	3	2	1	4
2	4	1	5	6	3

3

3	1	2	6	5	4
6	4	5	3	2	1
5	2	1	4	6	3
4	3	6	2	1	5
2	5	3	1	4	6
1	6	4	5	3	2

4

6	1	2	3	5	4
5	3	4	6	2	1
4	2	1	5	6	3
3	6	5	4	1	2
2	5	3	1	4	6
1	4	6	2	3	5

5

1	3	4	6	2	5
5	2	6	4	1	3
6	1	3	2	5	4
4	5	2	1	3	6
2	4	5	3	6	1
3	6	1	5	4	2

6

5	6	1	4	3	2
2	3	4	5	1	6
4	1	2	6	5	3
6	5	3	1	2	4
3	4	5	2	6	1
1	2	6	3	4	5



# WHAT'S NEW IN RD TALKS

*Join over 100,000 readers who enjoy listening to our podcasts.  
Each story guaranteed to thrill, engage and inspire.*

READ BY *Zoë Meunier*



### **BORN AND BREAD**

Renowned author Peter Mayle shares a heartwarming tale from inside the walls of a French bakery.



### **THE ART DETECTIVE**

Art forgers make millions conning museums and private collectors with faked paintings. But one art detective is on their case.



### **GONE IN 60 SECONDS**

The car was in the driveway and the kids were in the back. The story of a terrifying carjacking on a suburban street.



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**RD RECOMMENDS**

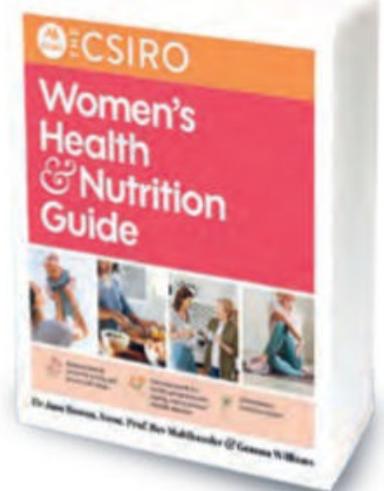


**Non  
Fiction**

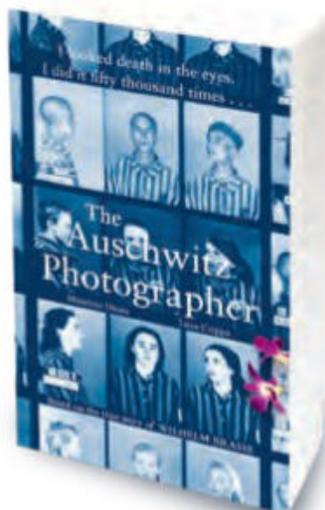
## **The CSIRO Women's Health & Nutrition Guide**

**Dr Jane Bowen, Assoc Prof Bev Muhlhausler  
& Gemma Williams** PAN MACMILLAN

**T**he hormonal system plays a critical role in the female physiology and presents challenges across the different stages of life – from puberty to menopause. Good nutrition combined with healthy lifestyle habits can help manage some of the common emotional and physical effects caused by fluctuating hormones, according to the authors. In this easy-to-read book, the CSIRO provides the latest research and dishes up 80 nutritious recipes for time-poor women so they can enjoy delicious food that will benefit them, regardless if they are a pimply teen, pregnant, breastfeeding, or going through menopause.



**COMPILED BY DIANE GODLEY**



## The Auschwitz Photographer

**Maurizio Onnis & Luca Crippa**

PENGUIN  
RANDOM HOUSE

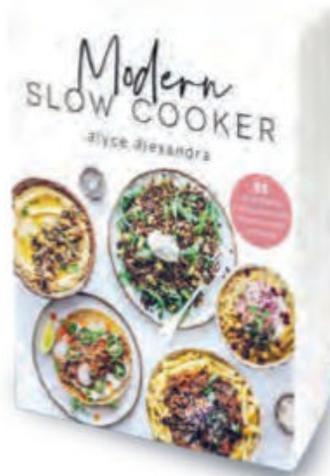
Painstakingly recreated from archives and interviews, this book is based on the poignant true story of prisoner 3444 – Auschwitz photographer Wilhelm Brasse, whose images exposed the atrocities of the Holocaust to the world. When the camp was liberated by Soviet troops, the Polish political prisoner refused to destroy his photographs, which later helped convict Nazis at the Nuremberg Trials. An extraordinary story of horror, hope and courage.

## Fake Medicine

**Dr Brad McKay**

HACHETTE

We all want to be healthy, live longer and avoid cancer, but too many of us are being scammed by science-sounding crooks and nonsense marketing, says author, GP and science communicator Dr Brad McKay. Investigating the myths, scams and fads of modern health practitioners, Dr McKay explores the potential dangers of ‘wellness warriors’ and anti-vaxxers’ and exposes the wellness quacks and cons costing us our health – and money. *Fake Medicine* is an essential tool to protect you from health scams.

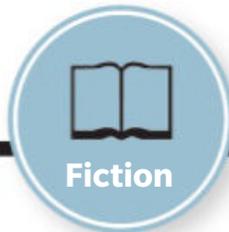


## Modern Slow Cooker

**Alyce Alexandra**

PENGUIN  
RANDOM HOUSE

If I'm going to cook something for eight hours, I want a hearty, one-pot meal at the end of it. What I don't get are recipes that require hours in the slow cooker which you can do on the stove top in a few minutes – especially breakfasts like porridge. If you do get it, have a timer on your slow cooker and want more vegetarian meals in your repertoire, this cookbook provides 85 recipes, including breakfasts, tacos, soups, sides, sweet treats and staples.



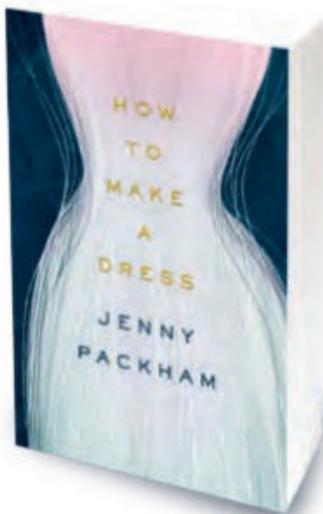
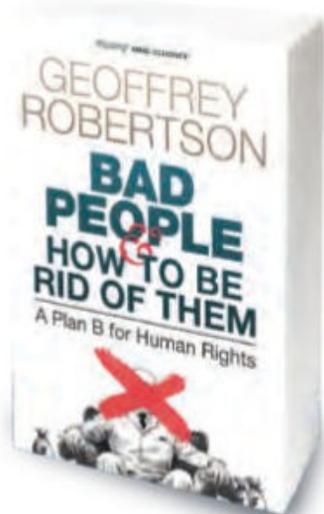
## Bad People & How to be Rid of Them

**Geoffrey Robertson**

VINTAGE

Renowned human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson sets out a way for liberal democracies to deter those nations that abuse human rights, including those of their own citizens, and turn their nations into gulags. He argues that using targeted sanctions – for example freezing funds – can form a ‘Plan B’ for global justice. Robertson examines human rights through history, looks at Nuremberg, and outlines the laws so far – and what the next stage should be.

*Melanie Egan*



## How to Make a Dress

**Jenny Packham**

PENGUIN

RANDOM HOUSE

Some of the most photographed women in the world, including the Duchess of Cambridge, Taylor Swift and Angelina Jolie, are fans of internationally acclaimed fashion designer Jenny Packham’s gowns – always beautifully cut and often vintage-inspired. In her memoir, she explores the power of style and the art of being well dressed. Packham is engaging and honest about her successes and failures in fashion, family and life.

*Melanie Egan*

## The Emporium of Imagination

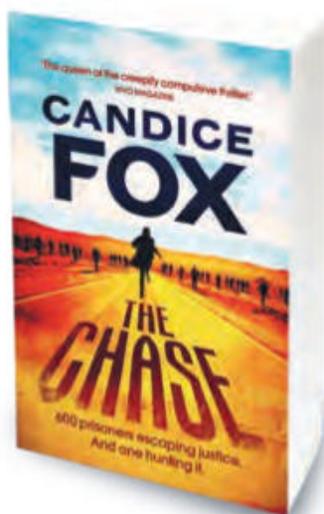
**Tabitha Bird**

PENGUIN

RANDOM HOUSE

The Emporium of Imagination is a most unusual shop. It travels the world offering vintage gifts to repair broken dreams, and extraordinary phones to contact people with loved ones beyond the grave. On arrival at a tiny Queensland town, the store’s long-time custodian realises the clock is ticking to find his replacement. Sometimes sad, sometimes uplifting, and nearly always magical, this novel is uniquely out of the ordinary. I loved it!





## The Chase

**Candice Fox**

PENGUIN  
RANDOM HOUSE

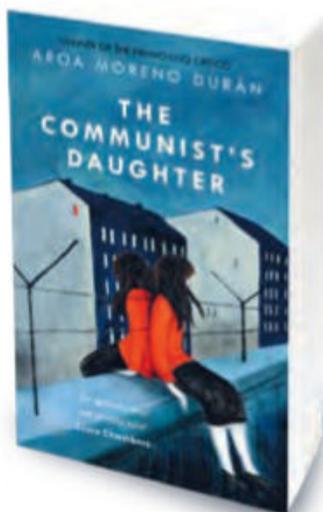
Candice Fox's new book further cements her position as one of the world's most original thriller writers. When 600 prison inmates go on the run in the desert, it's a wild chase from start to finish. There's a death row inmate determined to prove his innocence, a conman ready to seize any opportunity and a female prison guard who will do anything to get them all back behind bars. I was blown away by the clever twists and quirky characters, all underlaid with Fox's characteristic dark humour. *Melanie Egan*

## The Communist's Daughter

**Aroa Moreno Duran**

HACHETTE

This 200-page critically acclaimed novel punches to the heart of how one decision can change a life. Katia has spent her childhood in the shadow of the Berlin Wall. She knows no other life until a chance encounter with a youth from the West who persuades her to escape. It's only once she has made the perilous journey that she realises what she has left behind – and many years more before she fully comprehends the consequences her family endured because of her decision. A powerful novel.



## Mirror Man

**Fiona McIntosh**

PENGUIN  
RANDOM HOUSE

The third in the series featuring enigmatic and dashing Scotland Yard DCI Jack Hawksworth, *Mirror Man* sends him on the trail of a vigilante who is responsible for several unique and bizarre deaths. With few leads, Jack and his investigative team have to rely on instinct and painstaking modern police work as the body count rises. Lovers of British crime novels will enjoy the suspenseful storyline, plot devices and solid characterisation of Jack and his team.

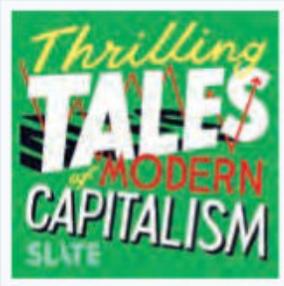
*Melanie Egan*



## Podcasts

**Wild Thing**

While the first series of *Wild Thing* followed the hunt for Bigfoot, the new series looks for life beyond Earth, interviewing pilots who have seen strange lights, true believers in UFOs, and the strange things that capture our imaginations and leave us wondering if the truth is out there.

**Thrilling Tales of Modern Capitalism**

Slate's podcast examines the stories behind well-known brands and how they got to be where they are today – the successes and the bumps along the road. From Hallmark and the selling of sentiment to Airbnb turning spare rooms into money spinners, this podcast turns business into an adventure.

**Kidnapped and Trapped Below Ground**

As hours turn into days, time is running out for a young man buried alive by his abductors in a flimsy wooden box in the middle of nowhere. While Mike Baucom has an incredible will to survive, all he has to breathe through are four lengths of plastic tubing.

**Fairytale Every Child Should Know**

This is a collection of much-loved fairy tales, including the Grimm Brothers' *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Story of Aladdin* from Arabian Nights and Charles Perrault's *Blue Beard* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. With a range of human and fantasy experiences, who says fairy tales are only for children?



Audio Book

**HOW TO GET PODCASTS To listen on the web:** In a search engine, look up 'Wild Thing', for example, and click on the play button. **To download:** Download an app such as Podcatchers or iTunes on your device and simply search by title.

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# PUZZLES

*Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles and mind stretchers, then check your answers on page 115.*

## Contact

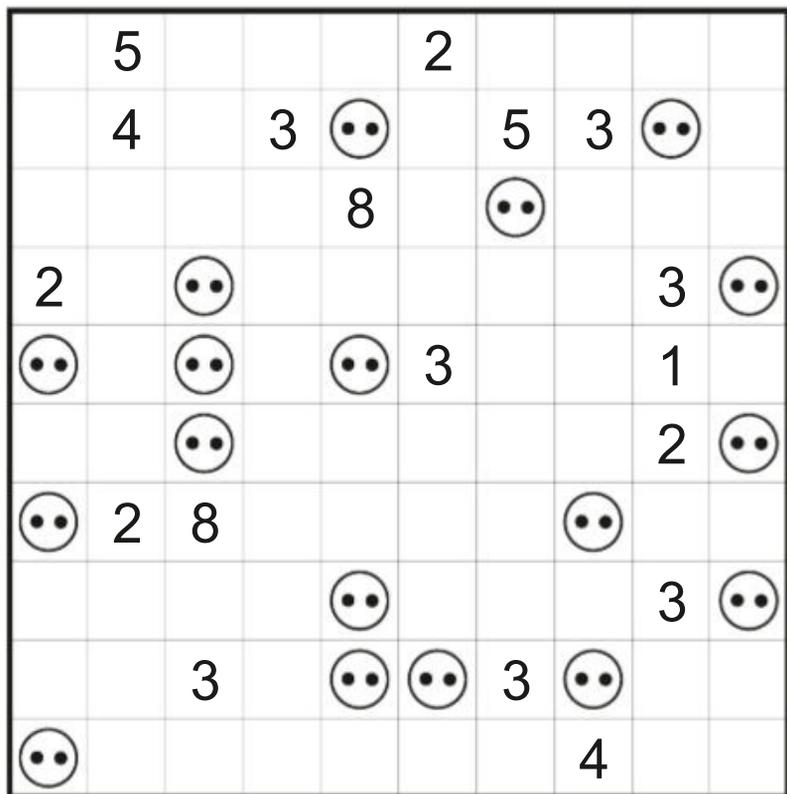
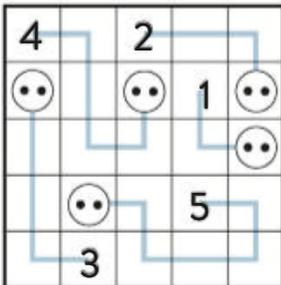
### How to play

Draw a line from each number to an outlet.

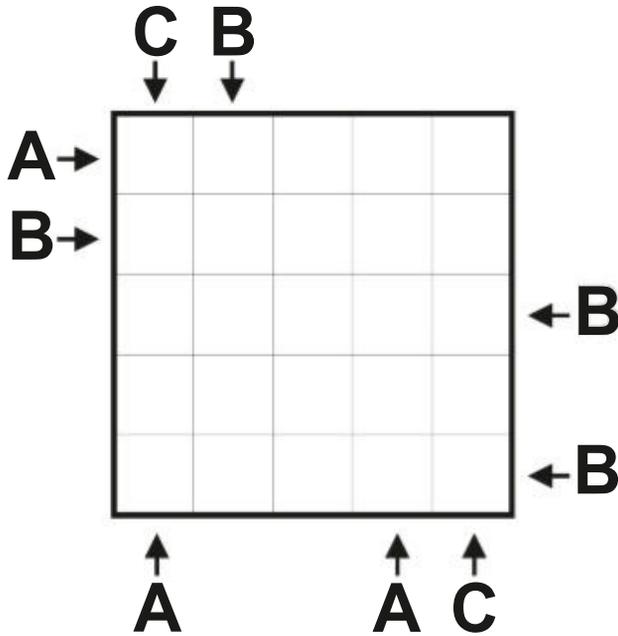
Each line should pass as many empty squares as the number indicates.

No square remains empty, and no outlet remains unused.

#### EXAMPLE:



**BRAIN POWER**  
brought to you by

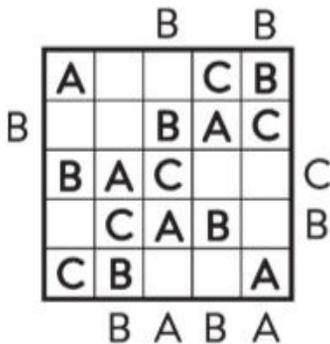


**ABC**

**How to play**

Enter in each row and column the letters A, B and C in such a way that no row or column contains the same letter twice. The letters outside the grid indicate what letter is encountered first from the direction of the arrow.

**EXAMPLE:**



**"Write, Erase, Rewrite"**

# SIX SUDOKU

**Puzzle  
Answers**  
PAGE 115

**1**

	4		2	1	
					4
	5			2	3
					5
1		4		3	
	2				

**How to play**

Insert the numbers 1 to 6 just once in each  
a) row,  
b) column,  
c) bold outlined area and  
d) white or grey rectangle.

**2**

	3		4		
	2	6			
	5				1
3					2
	6				
		1	5		

**3**

		2			
			3		1
5					
		3		4	
	6				2

**EXAMPLE:**

1	2	6	5	3	4
3	5	4	1	2	6
6	4	2	3	5	1
5	1	3	6	4	2
2	3	1	4	5	6
4	6	5	2	1	3

**4**

					4
5					
		1			
	6			1	
			1		
					3

**5**

				2	
5		6			
					1
3					

**Beware!**

The bold outlined areas are no longer 2x3!

**6**

5					
				1	
4					
				2	
		6		4	

# FAMILY FUN

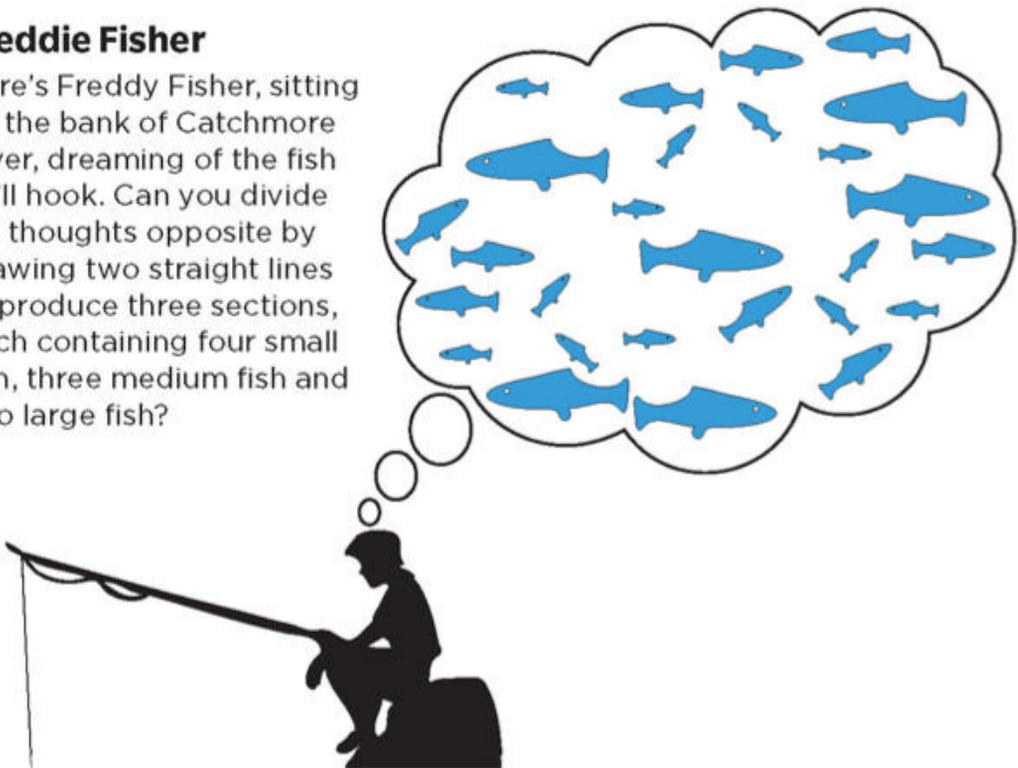
## Spot the Difference

There are ten differences. Can you find them?



## Freddie Fisher

Here's Freddie Fisher, sitting on the bank of Catchmore River, dreaming of the fish he'll hook. Can you divide his thoughts opposite by drawing two straight lines to produce three sections, each containing four small fish, three medium fish and two large fish?



*Check your answers for Family Fun on page 128.*

# TRIVIA

## Test Your General Knowledge

- 1.** What constellation is depicted on the Australian and New Zealand flags? *1 point*
- 2.** Until the 1970s, what was notable about the pubs in Ireland on Saint Patrick's Day? *2 points*
- 3.** Artist J.M.W. Turner illustrated some of which Scottish writer's poems and stories? *1 point*
- 4.** What led to recent discoveries of 40,000-year-old mosses in the Canadian Arctic? *1 point*
- 5.** University of Warwick researchers had success treating antibiotic-resistant bacteria with a remedy from what ninth-century book? *2 points*
- 6.** What country is the world's leading producer of coconuts? *1 point*
- 7.** What country was first known as *Chersonesus Aurea*, or peninsula of gold? *1 point*
- 8.** What species has fingerprints so similar to our own that crime

investigators might confuse them with human prints? *2 points*

- 9.** Zimbabwe's successful Akashinga anti-poaching ranger group has what distinguishing feature? *2 points*
- 10.** The French dictionary did not contain the letter w until the 19th century. True or false? *1 point*
- 11.** To encourage kids to eat greens, what chain created 'bubblegum-flavoured' broccoli? *1 point*
- 12.** A ventilation system malfunction at a Swiss Lindt & Sprüngli factory caused what delicious event? *1 point*



- 15.** In 2020, what European city adopted an economic strategy modelled on a doughnut? *2 points*

- 13.** Which sport event consoles its last-place getters with a wooden spoon? *1 point*

- 14.** What mathematical term was referred to as "the quantity which, when the diameter is multiplied by it, yields the circumference"? *1 point*

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

**Answers:** 1. The Southern Cross. 2. They were closed. 3. Sir Walter Scott. 4. Melting glaciers and ice caps. 5. Bald's Leechbook. 6. The Philippines. 7. Malaysia. 8. Koalas. 9. They are all women. 10. True. 11. McDonald's. 12. Chocolate 'snow'. 13. Rugby, Six Nations Championship. 14. Pi (π). 15. Amsterdam.

# WORD POWER

## *Book Club Members Unite*

*UNESCO has named 39 locations across the planet as Cities of Literature, including Melbourne, Dunedin, Bucheon, Wonju, Nanjing and Lahore. Bibliophiles, test your literacy expertise with these book-related words, then turn to page 128 for answers*

BY *Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon*

- 1. abridged** – A: adapted.  
B: shortened. C: translated.
- 2. riffle** – A: skim. B: brainstorm.  
C: copy from.
- 3. saga** – A: beach read.  
B: memoir. C: heroic tale.
- 4. prosaic** – A: uplifting.  
B: dull. C: overly wordy.
- 5. omnibus** – A: road atlas with  
coloured illustrations.  
B: collection. C: paperback.
- 6. scrivener** – A: critic.  
B: writer. C: bookbinder.
- 7. stanza** – A: romance.  
B: library shelf. C: poem part.
- 8. lexicon** – A: dictionary.  
B: villain. C: twisty plot.

- 9. hyperbole** – A: overstatement.  
B: understatement.  
C: nonsense word.
- 10. elegy** – A: scientific paper.  
B: mournful poem.  
C: beautiful quotation.
- 11. tome** – A: horror story.  
B: poetry slam. C: large book.
- 12. vignette** – A: comedic play.  
B: short scene. C: reading glasses.
- 13. analogy** – A: travel blog.  
B: symbolism. C: comparison.
- 14. epigraph** – A: opening  
quotation. B: illustrated guide.  
C: words said for the dead.
- 15. synopsis** – A: Greek drama.  
B: brief summary.  
C: cast of characters.

## Answers

- 1. abridged** – (B) shortened. Peter read an abridged version of *War and Peace* right before his book club meeting.
- 2. riffle** – (A) skim. Work has been so busy, I've barely had time to riffle through my inbox.
- 3. saga** – (C) heroic tale. The latest *Avengers* saga was a box office smash throughout the world.
- 4. prosaic** – (B) dull. In her magazine column, Mina can make even the most prosaic subjects feel profound.
- 5. omnibus** – (B) collection. Priya settled into an armchair with an omnibus of medieval poetry.
- 6. scrivener** – (B) writer. An amateur scrivener since high school, Timothy published his first bestseller in his 50s.
- 7. stanza** – (C) poem part. "What does the imagery in the second stanza tell us?" the professor asked the class.
- 8. lexicon** – (A) dictionary. Armed with a bilingual lexicon, Ginny spent all day studying for her French exam.
- 9. hyperbole** – (A) overstatement. Since you're my only sibling, I can say without hyperbole that you're the best brother I've ever had!
- 10. elegy** – (B) mournful poem. Billy composed an elegy for Lee, his dearly departed goldfish.
- 11. tome** – (C) large book. I can't believe you're using my antique Tolkien tome as a doorstop.

- 12. vignette** – (B) short scene. The novel's central mystery is revealed through a series of seemingly unrelated vignettes.
- 13. analogy** – (C) comparison. As a football coach, my dad often uses the sport as an analogy for life.
- 14. epigraph** – (A) opening quotation. The book's epigraph comes from a Stevie Wonder song.
- 15. synopsis** – (B) brief summary. Here's a synopsis of *Moby-Dick*: it's about a whale.

### VOCABULARY RATINGS

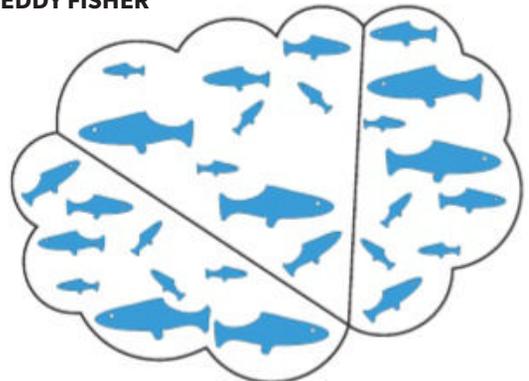
5-8: Fair 9-12: Good 13-15: Word Power Wizard

### FAMILY FUN ANSWERS See Page 125

#### SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



#### FREDDY FISHER



Malaysia's First-ever

# FLAX LINEN MATTRESS

For Healthy, Hygienic Sleep

KING  
KOIL

Simplicity  
SCANDINAVIAN SERIES  
FLAX LINEN MATTRESS  
Luxury Made Simple



Durable



Breathable



Optimal Sleep  
Temperature



Antibacterial



Anti-Dust Mite



*Comfort*

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