## 200% BETTER

**INSIDER SECRETS TO** LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE POSSIBLE

ISSUE8

## **DNA** SECRETS TO Staying Young

9 Secrets **To Serene** 

**Decluttering** 

**The BMI Brain** 

**Connection** 

The Key To Discovering

The Real You

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### 9 Secrets TOSERENE DECLUTTERING

Whether it's a New Year's clearingout, a spring cleaning, or the moment you realize the clutter has gotten out of hand, it's always a good feeling to clear out space and declutter.

At least, you think it'll feel great to see more space around your home, but you might not know where to start.

I know that feeling. I'll visit a friend and be awed by her decorating and use of space, and how I feel while in her home...and then I'll come home to my stacks of books and paper everywhere.

That's when I really feel the difference of a beautiful, well organized home compared to a cluttered one. And that's when I really want to declutter and organize!

Finding that place of motivation is great...but actually jumping into action can be hard, and then sometimes, you start and get overwhelmed right away.

That's why we're focusing on serene decluttering. Here's 12 secrets to get you get organized to declutter, stay focused and calm from start to finish, and enjoy the process.

### 1. Prep for **Decluttering**

If you suddenly decide you need to declutter, and jump right into it, you can find yourself in a mess of new stacks, garbage bags, and a sense of chaos.



That works better for a quick cleaning—you know, that spruce up you do right after inviting friends over.

For a real decluttering and reorganizing, planning will help prepare you mentally and set you up for success.

First, decide if you want:

- An all day, all house, decluttering (or one weekend)
- 2. Or a room a day approach (and this could be your days off or a few weekends in a row)
- A box when you can approach (for super busy people or if you're having a really hard time getting started on this)

An all-day project is for people who need to get it done, and know they won't come back to it on several different days.

It's also for project oriented people who love to see big results.

But not everyone can tackle their entire house in one day. You might concede up front that it's a much bigger project, or you know you can't handle doing it all in one day or one weekend.

With either method, we'll go room by room. So really, if you start and don't get it all done in one day or weekend, you should finish the room you're working on.

Now, throw out the idea that there's only one way to declutter your room. We know there's not because there are professional declutter-ers, and they all have super useful advice. (Which we're offering to you right here!)

And that's why we're including the "box when you can" approach. Because if that's all you can do, it will add up and slowly declutter your home.

For some tactical prepping, have some boxes for organizing, garbage and paper bags, markers and tape, and possibly people to help.

### 2. First Steps

Is anyone storing things in your home? This might be children who don't live there, friends, or someone from a past relationship.

Now, do you have room for those things? If it's a few boxes in the attic or garage and they actually don't get in the way, maybe it's fine to leave them

However, if you have a room full of someone else's things, or shelves of belongings from your children, or an ex is using you for

their storage unit, it's time to take back

your home!

Ask them to come get their things soon. If that's not possible, give them a month. If they live locally, they should be able to get their things, or at the very least come organize them into boxes for storage.

Also, you can jump start your organizing by walking around your home and seeing if you'd like to purchase new shelves or furniture to help you organize. You might be able to better utilize a space that way, or have a way to organize things.

Think of baskets and decorative shelves made for organizing.

While you're walking around your home, envision what it will look like once

you've decluttered and organized. Maybe you'll paint with a new color theme or redecorate around a style you love.

### 3. Where to Start

Yay! Now we're getting going.

It's time to decide where to start decluttering.

If you're doing an all-day project, it might not matter too much where you start.

Look for a place with a lot of

clutter that you know needs to go—then you'll get a lot done quickly.

If you're not sure where to start, consider these questions:

Would you rather work on your most used room, like your living room, home office, or bedroom? Or would you like to start near your entryway and work through the house?

If you have company often, and would like to make a visible difference early, start with your entry way or living room, or wherever your company hangs out.

### 4. Let's play "Do I like this?"

Now that you have room picked to declutter, let's play a game.

Take in the room and ask yourself, do you like the way it looks?

Imagine ways you'd like to change the room.

Now start with the things in the room, and with each item, ask yourself, you do like it?

Why is it there?

Is it useful and

you want it around? Is it beautiful and makes you happy?

Only keep things that are useful and needed, or you enjoy having them.

Have bags ready and labeled for recycling, trash, and donating. You might also have a box for storage for seasonal decorations, or things you want to keep but don't need out in your home.

Now let's go room by room and see how to make decluttering, cleaning, and reorganizing easier.

### 5. The Living Room: A Relaxed, Comfortable Haven

Let's dive into the room that's usually the most used by the family.

What kind of living room do you have?

Is it centered around watching TV with family, entertaining, or playing with small children?

What would you like your living room to be like?

Keep that image in mind as you organize.





Most families can benefit from either some bins for toys or a ottoman that opens to store blankets, pillows, or toys.

And just about everyone could use an organizer for controllers: TV, sound system, Xbox, Wii... Let's face it, you probably have controllers for several different things.

Imagine an organizer that you can close or set aside so the controllers aren't scattered around in plain view.

You probably have an assortment of things in this room that you like, but the overall collection has gotten out of hand.

Choose the pictures and knickknacks that you really love or want to display right now, and store the rest. You can rotate them or even giveaway/donate some things that don't match the new theme you want to use.

Put a limit on how many blankets and toys can stay in the living room.

### 6. Your Bedroom: a **Place of Peace and** Rest

Your bedroom should be a serene getaway where you can relax, not the catch-all storage for the home.

Are there boxes of junk that could go in the garage/attic, or even down the road? Do you have your dresser, nightstand, and shelves covered with things you didn't want to deal with?

Throw out any junk mail or bill that's older than two months. There's no reason to keep stacks of old bills around!

If something has been lying on your

nightstand for a year, you probably don't use it or need it.

Some easy steps to declutter your bedroom:

- 1. Don't use it? Donate it.
- Don't need to store it in your room? Move it. (Guitars, Christmas supplies, sport equipment)
- 3. Don't really like it? Junk it!
- Clear off surfaces and create places to put the things you want to keep.

This is a time to let go of things and feel refreshed.

Also, ask yourself if you need all of those decorative pillows on your bed that you move twice a day.

If you do tend to store things in your bedroom, buy bins or plastic drawers, or invest in nicer storage shelves. But create spaces and places for things that look nice and keep them organized.

For me, that means a plastic drawers for art supplies baskets for my rather large lotion collection.

One last thing... Do you have baskets of laundry that never empty? Be honest, how many do you have in your bedroom?

If you want to get wild and crazy and feel really free, take those baskets of socks and odds-and-ends that will never get folded, and throw them away! Yes, just get rid of them.

Or, you might want to sort them and donate, or actually sort and put away things that you can still use.

But if that basket is going to sit around for another year with all the socks you don't wear, why not just dump it and start new? And then make sure to put laundry away when you wash it!



## 7. Bathrooms: Less Make it Easier to Get Ready!

So, what does your bathroom counter look like? A warzone of cosmetics, hairbrushes, curling irons, razors?

Go through your bathroom and throw out any old prescriptions, old cosmetics, tubes of things with a tiny bit left, and makeup or other things that you won't use.

Get baskets to organize your things, especially if you don't have a medicine cabinet. You might consider putting in some small shelves to store things.

Small baskets work well to vertically

store mascara, lipstick, concealer, brushes, and other small items.

Using baskets, bins, and other decorate storage also means you can move them to clean the counter.

### 8. The Kitchen: a Warm Space

Some kitchens end up being the catchall for every odd-and-end that comes in the door. keys, mail, phones, charging chords, papers, and anything else that people don't want to put away.

It can be very frustrating for the person who wants to cook in the kitchen.

Part of decluttering is deciding what a room is for, and then not using it to dump lots of other things.



nice to drop things into, but at some point it needs cleaned out.

I find that I can take those "catch all spots and pretty much dump them out once a year. First I set aside anything I actually use like paperclips, scissors, charge chords, and tools, and then the rest is something that I thought I wanted to keep and use, but I never will.

9. A Clean, Beautiful, Organized Home

The purpose of decluttering is to clear out space. It clears your head and makes you feel good to be in your home.

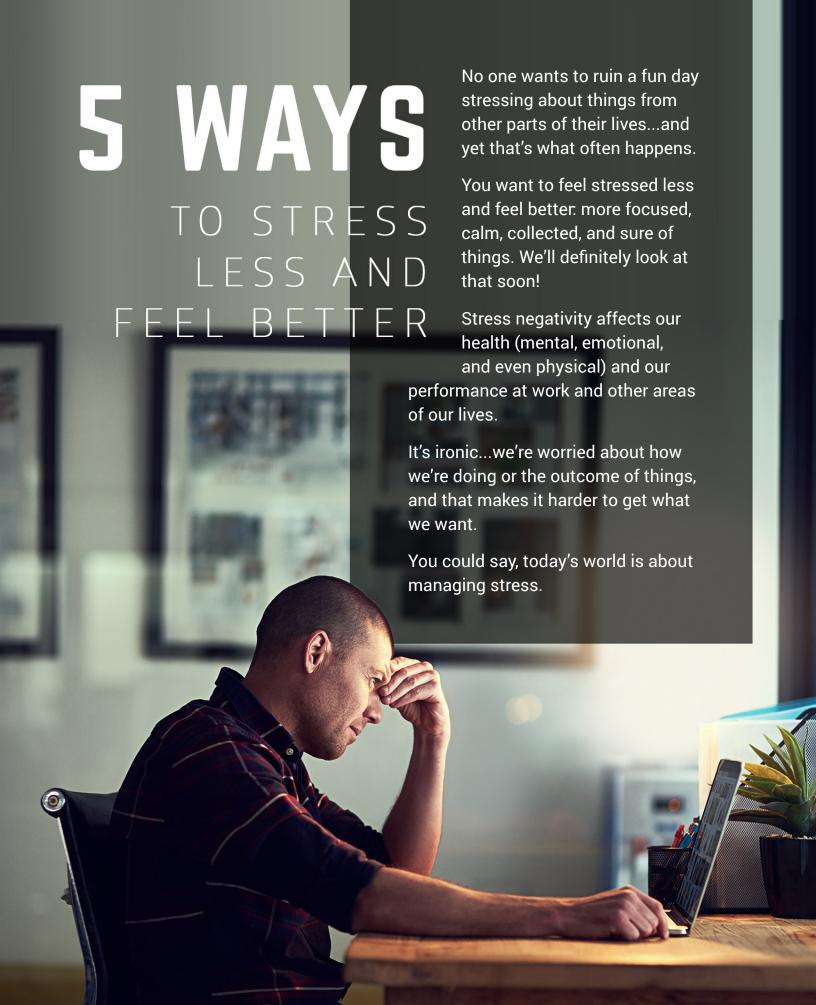
Once you've cleared things out, you can then pick a beautiful piece of artwork to display that will be the center of your theme, or guide for decorating. Consider a painting for the wall, or a small water fountain on a shelf, or organized family photos.

You can keep your home decluttered by creating spots for things and actually using those spots. Then, once a month, look around and see how you're doing. That way you can keep on top of things and not let them get out of hand again.

Pick the first or last weekend of the month, or maybe even every weekend, and do a walk through to ensure that things are stacking up somewhere again.

You'll thank yourself for creating a home environment that nurtures you!







Let's face it, we have a lot to manage and juggle:

- Personal time
- Home
- Work/career
- Friends and social life
- School or classes
- Children

- Helping parents in some cases
- Bills
- Saving money
- Trying to have some time to enjoy life!

The true problem, however, is not that we have too much to manage. Sure, we might have more to manage these days, but we have more resources and help.

how to focus on one thing and not worry about all of the others.

When you're at work, do you worry about other things?

When you're out having fun, on a date with your partner or with friends, do you drop all your other responsibilities?

Or do you always have a "worry list" running in your head?

Then, with all these thoughts about every part of your life, you try to "manage your stress."

It's quite possible that we're focused on managing stress, when we could better serve ourselves and our productivity if we think about managing our emotions and thoughts.

## 1. MANAGING EMOTIONS WHEN YOU CAN'T CHANGE THINGS

Let's say you have a situation that you can't change—you might be able to do something about it at a later date, with someone else involved, but you're hands are tied for right now.

You can't stop thinking about it. Why is that? You're worried, frustrated, anxious, and maybe angry about it. You can't let it go.

So to manage the stress, you really have to find some peace over the situation. At the very least, you need to put it in a mental box and not think about it.

To help you with that, try writing the situation down. You might even list possible outcomes or steps you could take down the road.

But if you can't do anything about the situation, take that paper and fold it up. Then put it away.

Now it's out of sight and out of mind.

This is one way to manage your emotions about a situation or person so that you can then focus on the present moment.

You can also help your normal mood or set point by:

- Mediating to clear your mind (15 minutes a day does wonders)
- Yoga (exercise, breathing, and meditation!)



- Weight lifting and cardio at the gym-working on your physical self is empowering and also helps emotionally and mentally
- Any kind of exercise, like swimming, to focus and get your mind off of things
- Hiking in nature
- Talking to a friend—while walking or exercising is a way to supercharge the positive effects

Many of these are taking a step to help you manage your thoughts and emotions—without exactly taking a step on the issue, but let's look at that next.

### 2. TAKING STEPS WHEN YOU CAN

Before I advised to write about the situation on a piece of paper. That might help you see action steps you can take.

So if there is something you can do, go for it. Get it down and out of the way.

Of course the stress might be about taking that step, but then you can motivate yourself by thinking about how you will feel once it's done.

Other action steps include:

- Cutting out activities that only bring stress to your life
- Talking to someone involved in something stressful to see how you can change it
- Seeing a therapist or counselor
- Joining a group (counseling or support group)
- Finding someone that can help

### 3. TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Self care is critical to proper functioning, so it's not selfish at all.

And each of us deserves to enjoy our life. The biggest key is to focus on



what you're doing. If it's time with your kids, enjoy them. If you're doing something, actually focus on it.

We often steal our present moment by worrying about other things.

You stress level will go down if you can put those other things down for even an hour a day.

A few ways to take care of yourself include:

- Eat well
- Exercise
- Make time for yourself--reading, meditating, walking, playing your favorite game, or whatever recharges you
- Make time for fun—family game night, date night, lunch with a friend once a week, etc
- Live in the moment—don't churn work things over in your mind on your day off. You can do that when you go back to work.

### 4. DISCONNECT

Many will argue that we have more stress than ever. I'll say again that's about managing emotions...

And one way to do that is to disconnect.

If you leave work but anyone from work can call, text, or email you, then you aren't free from work.



stranger can reach you at any time.

You might see a tweet that upsets you, or get an email, or a text, or see someone's Facebook post that bothers you.

We love our phones, but those devices also are an open portal of stress.

When was the last time you had four hours to yourself where no one could throw you off balance or interrupt? What about a full day? Or even a weekend?

When working, if anyone can interrupt you (as in a beep on your phone that you check) then you never get to deep focus. You get less done and it takes longer.

Try this out: take some time at least once a week where you disconnect. Put your phone away.

Or get an app that will turn off notifications except for phone calls so true emergencies can get through. (You can go to settings and swipe a switch to turn off notifications from Facebook and other apps.)

Use that time to take care of yourself.

And I know many people are worried about missing something important or a call they really need to take.

So keep your phone on, and turn down the volume on notifications. Don't check it at every little noise. Have timed check points, like every hour or half hour when you check for anything important.

During work time or when you want to focus (or disconnect) wait longer in between checks.

That puts the power back in your hands instead of being at the mercy of anyone who wants to reach out to you.

### 5. REPLACE STRESS WITH FUN

Let's say you can cut down on some things in your life. There has to be

at least one thing that you can do without or step down from.

Now imagine that you purposely choose how to spend your time.
What if you can find a new passion to give you a sense of purpose?

Is there anything you've always wanted to do?

You might just want to join a fun group or have a morning where you do something fun with a friend.

This is really helpful if you tend to spend time worrying. For some, they can be so worried or stressed about something that they sit and stew on it. Imagine taking that time and painting, taking a dance class, or building model cars.

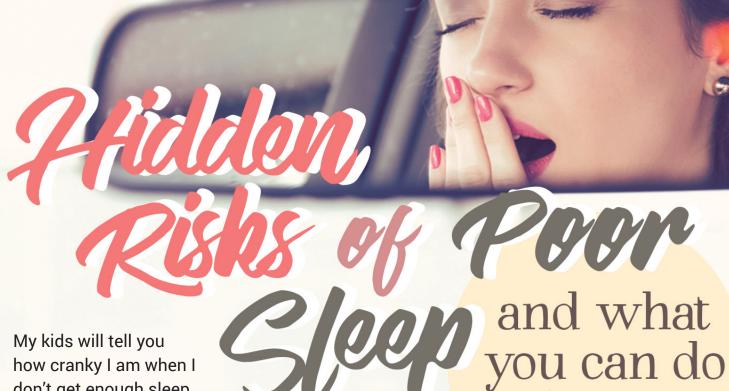
### DE-STRESSING

Stress is a part of life, but not the out-of-hand stress that plagues so many people today.

Stress should be something that tells us to take action on a particular thing. When we're away from that "thing" and not working on it, then it's time to put those thoughts away.

You are not your stress. You're not even your emotions. So you are completely allowed to put those aside and take care of yourself!





how cranky I am when I don't get enough sleep. For some people, we know how many hours we need, and we also know how badly we feel when we don't get them.

Other people aren't sure how much sleep they need. And truth be told, many people don't truly understand the negative effects of poor sleep.

Before looking at what poor sleep does to us, let's take a look at how sleep benefits us, so we'll start to understand why it's so critical.

### BENEFITS OF SLEEP

Of course there is the obvious benefit of feeling rested and ready to go after a good night's sleep.

In addition to that, the body heals itself while we sleep.

Sleep restores the immune system and balances hormones.

We release hormones in our sleep that help with all

the functions in our body. We'll talk more about why that's important...to your sex drive.

about it

### HOW POOR SLEEP HURTS YOUR LIBIDO

Now this is a surprising side affect of poor sleep, and one that most people wouldn't think about.

The Journal of American Medical Association

learned that the lack of sleep directly impacts testosterone production in men by 10-15 percent.

Backing that up, men with sleep apnea frequently have low testosterone levels.

A different study, from the University of California, Berkeley, discovered that a lack of sleep had a negative impact on expressions of gratitude.

That makes sense—when we don't get enough sleep, we're cranky, and it's hard to be grateful and show that when you're snarling at people!

The reason I mention that now is that this further hurts relationships. So if someone is experiencing lower testosterone levels and having trouble showing gratitude, it's going to affect the sexual relationship even more.

selfish choices. Someone who's experiencing poor sleep is feeling bad, tired, unfocused, and sleepy, so that person needs to take care of them self.

That means the other person in the relationship isn't being taken care of as much.

So while we normally think of poor sleep as something affecting that person, it can really hurt sex drive and therefore the relationship.

### HOW POOR SLEEP HURTS YOUR HEALTH

Everyone experiences poor sleep from time to time, resulting in that tired, can't-focus feeling the next morning.





If poor sleep is a regular issue, people experience brain fog, memory issues, trouble concentrating, reduced productivity, reduced interest in social interaction, and a higher risk of making mistakes—which can be very dangerous if you're driving or operating machinery.

We'll talk about how poor sleep affects your driving next.

First let's look at how it hurts your health.

It's been known for a while that poor sleep over an extended period contributes to obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University studied people with sleep apnea to see how it affected their health.

They were worried that the sleep apnea would worsen heart health and blood sugar levels, and the study showed that it did.

Patients slept in a sleep lab where doctors could monitor them and their blood sugar level. Some patients used a CPAP to help them breathe and others did not.

The patients who did not use the CPAP had low oxygen levels, increased heart rate, increased fatty acids, increased sugar, and increased cortisol (the stress hormone).

Now, not everyone who experiences poor sleep has sleep apnea, but this study shows how one form of poor sleep can really hurt your health.

### HOW POOR SLEEP AFFECTS YOUR DRIVING

We see warnings about drunk driving, and now about texting while driving, but drowsy driving (or fatigue related) accidents are the top cause of fatal-to-driver truck crashes in the US.

The AAA states that sleepiness is responsible for 1 in 6 deadly traffic accidents.

Driving after a poor night's sleep impairs your concentration, observation, and even the ability to stay awake.

How many people drive while drowsy? In a survey by The National Sleep Foundation, 60% of respondents said they had.

### WHAT **CAUSES POOR SLEEP**

People wake up during the night for many reasons. If you wake up frequently and can't get back to sleep quickly, it's insomnia.

Stress is a big cause for many people, so the cure is learning to manage emotions and turn off the spinning thoughts at night. That might mean counseling, and using some of the tips in the next section.

Drinking more liquid closer to bedtime than throughout the day

can cause you to wake up several times to use the bathroom. If so, try cutting back on liquids for a few hours before bedtime.

It could also be a bladder infection or side effects from medicine, so it's a good idea to talk to vour doctor if it doesn't improve.

Too much caffeine in the second half of the day can keep a person up at night.

Drinking alcohol can cause poor sleep too-it initially puts you to sleep if you drink enough, but as it clears your system, you find yourself wide awake again.

Aches and pains can make people roll around, so you might be tossing and turning more than you realize.

Heartburn tends to do that as well. Luckily there is over the counter and prescription medicine for that. You can also cut back on eating in the hours before bedtime, drink less fluids, avoid trigger foods, and elevate your head while you sleep.



### HOW TO GET BETTER SLEEP

Having a schedule and being consistent is a big step toward a good night's sleep. That way your body knows when it's time to wind down.

Ditto on rising in the morning. It's okay to sleep in once in and while, but if you do it too often, you throw your clock off.

You can set the scene for better sleep by setting the mood in your home and bedroom.

As bedtime nears, turn down lights and sounds to create a calm, relaxing environment.

Try not to stare at screens before bedtime. You can further relax by reading a physical book (not ebook, or read on Paperwhite or non-lit screen) or taking a hot shower or bath.

When it's actually bedtime, have your room darkened. Bright nightlights or a TV can affect your pineal

gland's production of serotonin and melatonin.

That's one

reason why
taking
melatonin
can help you
fall asleep—it
occurs naturally in
our body, and you can also
take a supplement an hour
before bedtime.

Aromatherapy such as lavender essential oil is very calming. Pour a little into your bath before bedtime, or use an essential oil humidifier. You can even rub a little into your skin.

Another tip: if you didn't take a hot shower or bath, find a way to make sure your feet and hands are warm. Swiss researchers found that warm

feet and hands were the best predictor of how quickly a person falls asleep.

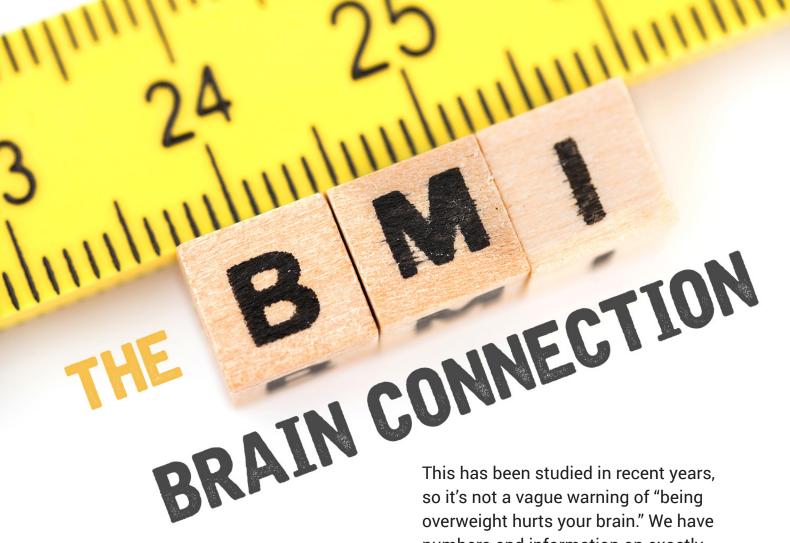
If you want to try something drastic to reset your clock, sleep outside for a few nights. As you can probably tell, this works better in summer.

A camping trip where you experience natural light and daylight hours, and sleep under the stars or in a tent, will help your body find the natural rhythm again.

Sleep is so important to our health and safety. It's something we can take for granted, until we can't sleep.

Finding a way to fall asleep and stay asleep longer allows your body to heal and reset, and promotes focus, clarity, and better energy the following day. It's worth it to set up a routine in the evening and wind down for the day.





We hear a lot about how our weight, and more specifically our BMI, affects our health.

It's carrying extra fat that overtaxes our heart, throws off our hormone balances. and causes many diseases.

So it's not "new" news that being overweight hurts your health, causes disease, and leads to a shorter life.

What we haven't heard about as much is how carrying extra fat affects our brain.

Everyone wants to be sharp and mentally aware in their later years, so our brain health is an important consideration.

numbers and information on exactly how it's hurting our brain.

It starts with understanding BMI, or body mass index.

### **Calculating Your BMI**

BMI actually has a formula, just like you used back in high school.

 $kg/m^2 = BMI$ 

That's your weight in kilograms divided by your height in meters squared.

(And yes, you can jump online and find a calculator to tell you your BMI based on inches and pounds. If you google BMI calculator, one opens at the top of your search results.)

You can also convert inches and pounds like this:

Your weight in pounds X 0.45 = your weight in kilograms (kg)

Your height in inches X 0.025 = your height in meters (m)

Let's say Kim is 5 foot 3 and 138 pounds. Her BMI is 24.1, in the normal range.

Then her sister is the same height but 145 pounds. Her BMI is 25.3, in the overweight category for medical purposes.

A man who is 5'8" and 200 pounds has a BMI of 30.4 and is considered obese.

If that same man loses 40 pounds to weight 160, he would have normal, healthy BMI of 24.3.

### Why It's Useful

It's so easy for people to put on a few pounds but ignore it. They keep the old picture of themselves in their head. Then they see a photo and think, "That can't be me". Or they realize they can't fit into their pants, or maybe just that their pants are much snugger.

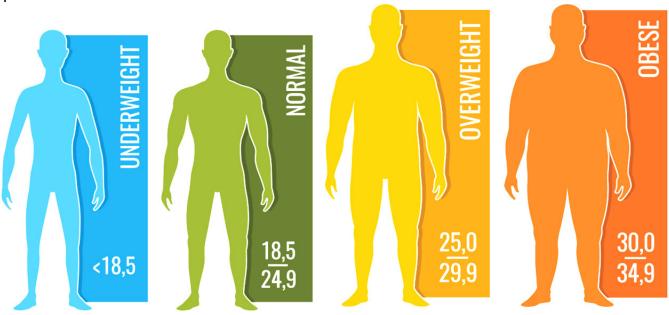
We also don't always realize where we fall on the healthy scale. So we might think of ourselves as fairly healthy and at a good weight...when we're a little past what is considered a healthy weight.

My point? If you calculate your BMI and are surprised at where you fall, you're not alone.

The BMI standards lean toward medical purposes—so you're looking at your risk factor.

And many of us don't realize that we might have a little extra weight. This is a good way to see if you're actually where you think you are on weight, and if you need to take some action.

Here's the BMI categories for adults (over 20):



If you're an bodybuilder or athlete with high muscle mass, it can throw off the numbers—you'll have a higher BMI but you can see that it's muscle and not fat.

A little extra weight might not hurt your brain—but it's good to know if you're trending upward on the BMI scale.

We want to look at BMIs at 30 and over, which medically are classified as obese, and that that does to the brain.

## **If Your** BMI is higher than 25, your brain may be shrinking

Researchers at the University of Arizona discovered that a higher BMI will negatively affect cognitive functioning in older adults.

So the good news is, if you know you have a BMI of over 25, you can always work to change that and improve your health and brain function.

And if you're getting close to 25 BMI, you can cut calories, eat healthier, and up your workouts. (Or add exercise if you don't make a habit of it—sometimes we're pretty healthy so we don't work out, but that can change if you're getting to 23, 24, 25 BMI...)

It's shocking to say that being overweight will shrink your brain. Here's how it breaks down:

For every 2 units of increase in your BMI over 25, your left hippocampus shrinks by almost 1%.

Why does that matter? Alzheimer's is associated with early and faster hippocampus shrinkage.

And how does it do that? Fat cells produce inflammatory molecules that hurt your body in many ways, and are toxic to neurons.

Before scientists
learned this, they
knew that a higher
BMI correlated to
lower brain function but
they didn't know why.

Now we've seen that inflammation is the culprit.

Obese (BMI over 30) people have 8% less brain tissue compared to people with a normal weight range.

Overweight people (BMI 25 to 29.9) have 4% less brain tissue.

This is classified as severe brain degeneration that will deplete cognitive function.

The shrinking areas are:

- The frontal and temporal lobes that we use for planning and memory
- The Anterior cingulate gyrus that we use for attention and executive functions

- The hippocampus that we use for long-term memory
- And the Basal ganglia that we use for movement and coordination

If you think about the functions listed, those are the ones that suffer as we age.

Speaking of aging, in brain scans, the brains of overweight people looked 8 years older than they should.

The brains of obese people looked 16 years older than their actual age!

### What Can You Do About It?

Yes, we all can see the obvious answer. lose weight.

But we all know how hard that can be, so let's talk about how to *actually* lose weight.

First, to help deal with the inflammation, consider taking a turmeric supplement. It's a natural herb used in curry dishes. It's been proven to fight inflammation.

Second, check out new research on how to lose weight.

It's not about just exercising more.
The reason is, many people will
overestimate how many calories they
burn and then how much food they
can eat.



Exercising burns fat and makes us hungry, so we often eat more calories than we burn!

So add in a little more exercise, but look at the comprehensive picture of how to lose weight.

Third, know that it's hard to break habits, especially food habits. "Willpower" can be a bit of a myth. It's so much easier to just not have certain foods in your home, bag at work, or other places where you'll eat them.

Fourth, it doesn't work to suddenly starve yourself while exercising more.

Take a honest look at your diet—what you actually eat every day—and see if you can replace high calories, fatty foods with healthier ones.

Imagine that you could lose weight by eating *different* foods. Wouldn't that be easier and better than trying to cut way back? Almost everyone could cut calories out of their daily diet and lose weight by:

Replacing soda pop, energy drinks, and sugary coffee drinks with healthier options like flavored water, lemon water, tea, black coffee, coffee made at home with a little creamer verses a mocha, coconut water, and even some fruit juice.

Cut candy bars, cookies, packaged treats and snacks with more natural food. Even sweet natural food is better, such as fruit, raisins, carrots, and sweet potatoes.

\*Avoid the low-calorie and low-fat treats in stores. They're full of other harmful chemicals.

And finally portion control. And that's a hard one. If you're used to eating a lot at a meal, you won't feel full or satisfied on less.

It helps to drink water with your meal, or even try to drink a full glass before eating. Water helps with digestion and helps you fill full sooner and on less food.

With so much conclusive evidence that extra weight hurts our health and brain, we know it's well worth it to strive for a healthy weight!

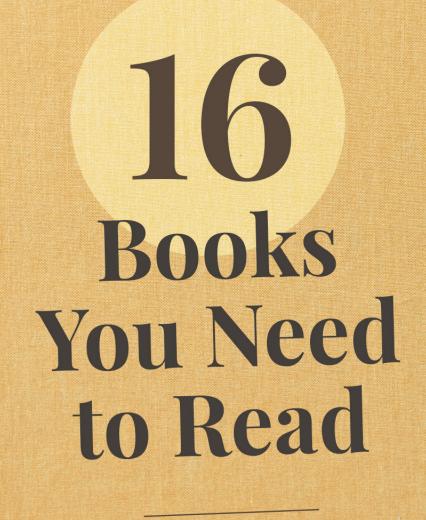
Remember Kim. who is 5'3" and 138 pounds, so her BMI is at the top edge of the normal range at 24.1.

At those numbers, she looks very healthy—not super skinny but a typical, active-looking person.

Reaching a healthy BMI doesn't mean you have to be totally trim and sporting a six pack at all! It's very reachable with a healthy diet and healthy activity level.

A healthy BMI is well worth it for your body and brain!





In a world where we have instant access to information on any subject, it's a challenge to pick a handful of books that all people should read.

We have to look at what qualifies a book as required literature.

Well, that depends on your purpose. Is your focus to read books that have shaped history, tell the history of the world or the U.S., or are you looking for the top spiritual books of all time?

Maybe you want to find the most pertinent financial books ever written, or the best books about leadership. Perhaps you'd like a list that covers all of these topics, meaning it offers one book on each subject.

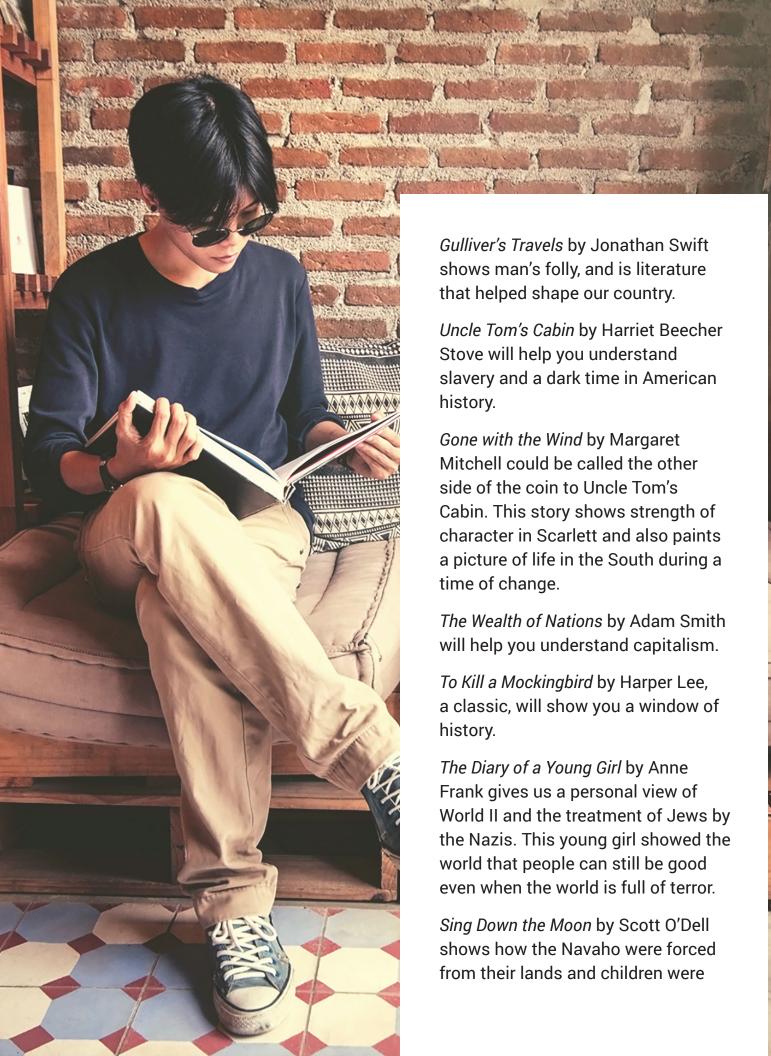
Here are 16 books that span topics from history to economics to finance and leadership.

These are books that have captured important history or shaped history, or eve both. Other offer valuable insight into personal growth, finance, and success.

The Bible book shaped American history and still influences politics. So much of our culture is based on the Bible even though we don't see it.

The System of the World by Isaac Newton will show you about the universe.







kidnapped. It's a story about a young girl, giving a face to the awful treatment of Native Americans, by Spanish slavers in this case.

A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawking is a book from one of the greatest thinkers of our time. It'll challenge you, make you smarter, and give you direction in understanding the universe.

Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill gives you a glimpse into thinking of the past but also sound advice on getting rich.
One included story about
a miner stopping just feet
short of the gold created
the saying not to stop
short of the goal or gold.

The Tipping Point by
Malcolm Gladwell, also his
other titles Blink, Outliers,
What the Dog Saw, and
Gavid and Goliath. These
books offer insight into
society: surprising things
that make products or
ideas tip and help people
succeed.

The Universe has your Back by Gabrielle Bernstein will open your eyes to the Law of Attraction and give you a new way of thinking about life.

The Omnivore's
Dilemma: Natural
History of Four Meals by

Michael Pollan will show you some shocking things about what we eat in America.

On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft by Stephen King. This is a book for every writer or wanna-be writer, or for anyone who reads Stephen King's novel as it tells his life story.

Reading this list of books will change your life and give you ample material to talk about parties.

If you find you'd like to read more of the American cannon, if we can call it that, here's a list of novels to fill out your reading experience and expand your sense of collective knowledge.

And it might seem a bit funny, but we'll start off with a book by a British author.

The Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling has shaped the childhood of millions. The writing and the character Harry both mature throughout the series. It's fantasy about wizards but also a coming of age story that has shaped life for about every reader under 30.



The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton is a classic about a young boy in the 60s dealing with gangs and growing up. It was written by a 15 year old girl (when she was 15 and then 16). Even today readers feel a deep connection to the main character Ponyboy.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon shows us the world through a person that many would consider an "other". It will make you think about how people are treated when they're different.

The Fault in our Stars by John Green is a newer young adult novel about a two young people who fall in love...and also happen to have terminal cancer. Have a box of Kleenex ready.

Catch-22 by Joseph Heller will not only show you where the phrase came from, but it takes you into World War II in Italy. The book will make you question following systems blindly.

The Help by Kathryn Stockett is a modern classic that takes us into life in the South.

Yes, there are many other classics out there, and even more newer books that are well worth reading. But this short list takes a look at some that might be on other lists so you can expand your fiction experience even more.

Reading is a way of enriching your soul and mind, and it connects people across time and place. Reading the "must read" books of our time gives you a priceless base of knowledge.

# THE NASTY TRUTH about sugar



The U.S. is ranked in the top 5 countries for obesity. We have more obese people here than just about anywhere on the planet.

2/3 of Americans are overweight and 30 to 35% of people are obese.

This is partly due to all the unhealthy fast food and packaged foods and snacks, but it's also largely because there is sugar in about everything.

We've been conditioned to accept that this amount of sugar is okay. We have sugar in our drinks, our foods, and in all kinds of treats that many people eat almost daily.



But when we pull one ingredient out of a plant, such as sugar, and then add it to almost everything we eat, we're poisoning ourselves.

Sugar is eight times as addictive as cocaine. Eating sugar lights up the same part of the brain as doing cocaine.

You could say sugar is not as damaging as cocaine, but consuming lots of sugar over several decades does wreck havoc on your health and eventually kills you with various diseases.

If you're not sure how much sugar you consume, or if it's hurting you, let me ask you... Do you experience any of these symptoms:

- Energy crashes
- Insulin spikes
- Weight gain
- Weight loss with certain health issues
- Sleep problems
- Hyperactivity

- Skin problems
- Foggy brain
- Inflammation
- Hormone imbalances
- Diabetes
- Heart disease

The most commonly recognized sugar comes from sugar cane. Chewing on an actual sugar cane once in a while wouldn't hurt your health that much, but

we extract the sugar and make it into those yummy little white crystals...

...and then we add that to everything.

On top of that, we have sugar in many products but it's referred to by dozens of different names such as:

- Sucrose
- Corn Syrup
- High-Fructose Corn Syrup
- Agave Nectar
- Dextrose
- Corn syrup solids
- Dextrin
- Diastatic malt
- Ethyl Maltol
- Lactose

- Glucose solids
- Rice syrup
- Malt syrup
- Barley malt
- Panela sugar
- Molasses
- Muscovado sugar
- Refiner's syrup
- Sorghum syrup
- Sucanat

We find sugar in obvious and not-soobvious foods like ketchup, mints, chewing gum, baked beans, and salad dressings.

We eat candy bars, cookies, treats, and products with added sugar, and we also consume simple carbohydrates, which our body processes as sugar.

Simple carbs include white bread, pasta, fillers in sausage, rice, granola, and many other things.

#### So what do you do to be healthier?

Quitting sugar is hard, especially if you at a lot and especially when it's in everything.

Take a walk into a minimart and about every other grocery store as well, and you'll see treats galore.

Even energy and protein bars that are the picture of eating healthy...aren't. They're full of sugar, artificial sugar, soy, chemicals, and other additives.

So this takes a lifestyle change. But it's worth it if you want to see a massively positive change in the way you feel physically, mentally, and emotionally.

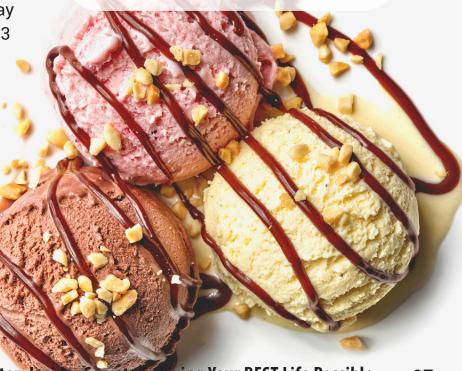
To make this change, try the 30 Day Detox plan below—it starts with a 3 day challenge to reset your body and taste buds, and then you complete the month.

First, you should clean any sugar and sugary foods out of your home. You can do this ahead of time, or do it as a Day 1 activity.

Go through your house, pantry, and refrigerator and clean out any foods that will temp you such as:

- Soft drinks
- Candy bars, cookies
- Sugary snacks
- Jerky
   (teriyaki and other flavor are made with sugar)
- White breads
- Milk (at least for the first week due to the natural sugar)

- Fruit juices
  (which will
  be ok later
  but for now
  you want
  to get even
  natural sugar
  out of sight!)
- Any products
   with added
   sugar, corn
   syrup, high
   fructose
   corn syrup,
   or any other
   sweetener,
   even artificial
   sweeteners.



Remember to refill your pantry with healthy snacks so you're not hungry.

When you crave sweets, eat almonds or a really delicious meal that doesn't have sugar.

Now that your home is a sugar-free zone, you can start the Sugar Detox Challenge!

#### The 30 Day Detox Challenge

The 30 day challenge starts with a 3 day detox where you avoid anything sweet.

#### The 3 Day Detox

To do this, avoid all sugar, fruit, starchy vegetables, dairy, grains, and alcohol for three days.

That means, for these 3 days, you're avoiding starchy veggies which are normally healthy for three days because they're sweet.

This will reset your palate so you'll be able to taste sweet again when you eat something that is naturally sweet.

Eat protein, non-starchy vegetables, and healthy fats, so think: eggs, poultry, nuts, fish, tofu, salad, and steamed vegetables.

Avoid artificial sweeteners too because will confuse your taste buds.

After these three days, an apple will taste super sweet to you. Then you can use fruit to fix your sweet cravings as you cut sugar from your diet.

You should feel a difference from this too!

And now that you've reset your taste buds so they can taste naturally sweet things, you can start including starchy vegetables, dairy, and grains again, but no food with added sugar.

If you experience withdrawal symptoms during these 3 days, such as headaches or other problems, try protein first, and then eat fruit if you don't feel better.

Once you've gone 3 days without
eating anything sweet, you'll
be amazed at how food
'tastes and how
you'll start to feel
different.

Now let's move
onto the rest
of the 30 Day
Challenge.

You can do a 30 Day No Sugar Challenge simply by cutting any kind of sugar. Then you would avoid anything you know has sugar (like cake, candy bars, drinks, etc) and also check labels on anything you eat.

That can make it simpler, and for some, easier because they don't have to think about the rest of what they eat.

However, you can also use the following plan that has you cut out certain foods—more so in the beginning to recondition yourself for a healthier diet.

So you will slowly add back in natural types of sugar as the month progresses.

Days 4 – 7 – continue to eat the proteins and healthy fats listed before. Now you can add back in 1 fruit serving a day, and up to 2 servings of carrots or snow peas. So you can eat:

- Eggs, cooked any way you like
- Poultry
- Nuts

- Fish
- Tofu
- Salad
- Steamed vegetables

Continue to avoid any kind of sugar or artificial sweetener, and still avoid dairy and grains for this week.

Week 2 – Eat a healthy diet with protein and healthy fat, and now you can add berries along with dairy to slow sugar absorption.

You can also have starchy veggies again now that your taste buds are reconditioned to taste the natural sugars.

#### Still avoid grains.

<u>Week 3</u> – Continue with protein, healthy fats, fruits, starchy veggies, and now you can add in grains.

<u>Week 4</u> – Finish the month with what your diet should look like all of the time:

 A healthy amount of protein and healthy fat



- More vegetables than the average American diet
- Fruit and berries
- Small amounts of grains and starches

After 30 days, you're going to feel amazing because:

- The high levels of sugar are out of your body.
- You're burning fat faster and your organs are functioning better.
- Some people will notice much more mental clarity, and illnesses caused by sugar will get better.

A 30 Day Sugar Detox is fantastic for your health, even if you go back to including some sugar in your diet afterwards.

For one, it lets you know how dependant you are on sugar, and gives you an idea of how much you've been eating.

If it's hard to give up sugar, you know you were eating too much!

It also detoxes your body and organs, and gives you a chance to see what it feels like to be on a more natural diet.

Many people lose weight on this 30 Day Challenge. Then it spurs you onto continuing to eat healthier, and even pick up other healthy habits. Good luck!



# 6 FOODS

#### YOU SHOULD EAT LESS OF

We have more food options available to us today than ever—more than any time in history by a long shot!

So how do you know what to eat to be healthy?

We could follow government recommendations, but the sad fact is that lobbyists affect those so that the guidelines help food manufacturers more than you.

We could go by the health claims on commercials and packaging, but the people making those claims are the people making money from selling the product.

With so many options and then information coming from the wrong source, it can be tricky to make healthy food decisions.

And you already know that you should limit desserts, any kind of sugary drink, candy, fast food, processed food, and greasy food. So we'll look at 5 foods here that might really surprise you.

But here's 5 foods you should eat less of...and why.

**1. SOY** 

You might drink soy milk if you have trouble digesting dairy, but you might want to pick another dairy alternative.



Soy messes with hormones in both males and females. In males, it causes gynecomastia, or the enlargement of

the male chest (err, breast) through added fatty tissue.

In females, soy can mess with fertility and hormonal imbalances, leading to other problems.

Basically, a female might feel like she has a thyroid problem (feeling sluggish, gaining weight, exhausted all the time...) but the medical test will come back negative.

The problem is soy is in most packaged foods like protein bars, snack bars, protein mixes, and anything else that needs cheap filler or something to make it chewy and smooth

Check labels and you'll find soy hiding in many things, and you'll want to avoid those so you'll feel more energetic and stay more tone.

#### 2. GRAINS

Humans haven't been eating grains at the level we do now until the last 50 to 70 years. So our bodies haven't evolved to digest grain.

If you look at the rising levels of grain consumption, it correlates to the rising numbers for obesity, diabetes, and inflammation diseases.

The grain we eat is often bleached, white bread foods which turn to sugar in our bodies.

Grains today have been bred so they are very different from the grain people have been eating the last few hundred years.

And after all the cross breeding, many are genetically modified.

On top of all that, most grains have pesticides in them when processed into food.

So if you want grains in your diet, go for organic ones that are processed as little as possible.



#### 3. MARGARINE

It's softer than refrigerated butter and therefore easier to use. But it's not worth the health risks.

Margarine is marketed as a healthier, low fat butter, but it's loaded with bad fats and increases your cholesterol, hurts your heart, and makes it harder to lose weight.

#### 4. LIQUID FOOD

It seems like grabbing a shake is a good idea if you're running out the door.

But drinking a supplement drink will spike your insulin levels much more than eating actual food.

That can make you develop insulin insensitivity and lead to many different health problems.

These drinks also have lots of chemicals in them. Just take a look at the very long ingredient list.



#### 5. GRAIN FED BEEF

Cows are not mean to eat grain. In fact, cows must have medicine and antibiotics if they eat grain, which basically keep them alive long enough to butcher.

Grass fed beef, or free range beef, actually has a completely different fat makeup. So the fat content in grass fed beef is healthy instead of bad for you.

You can compare the products in store: you'll see a huge difference in how grain and grass fed beef looks.

You'll also taste a big difference, and then feel a big difference in your health.

Yes, it's more expensive. But if you limit your red meat intake, as you should, it's not the much more money for a few of your monthly meals.



#### 6. LAB CREATED FOOD

So this is a group of food—a rather large group of food products that are causing ridiculously high numbers of disease in our country.

There are many, many ingredients in our foods that do much more harm than we realize.

Research is showing the GMO food is not healthy, but it goes beyond that.

Limit your consumption, or avoid, foods that aren't natural.

Artificial sweeteners might be zero calories, but the body still reacts as if you're eating sugar. They're also linked to cancer and diabetes.

Preservatives and food dyes are

linked to a long list of diseases. Other countries ban ingredients that the U.S. allows, so check labels! Buy organic instead.

If you don't understand what ingredients are, you can't know what it'll do to your body.

You might think that it's safe because it's on the shelf of a store, but look around at the general health of Americans. The truth is in front of us.

Natural is always better!

If you make these 6 diet changes, you can make a big difference for your health: better energy, less disease, and longer life.



Everyone I know has gone through some really hard times. Even my super successful and positive friends have stories about when they wanted to guit.

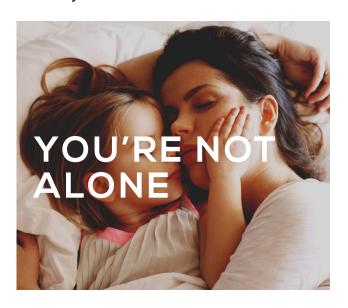
We aren't defined by our failures, unless we allow that.

We aren't defined by the bad things that happen to us.

We're defined by the choices we make in life, and that includes what we do when we're knocked flat on our back.

You get the choice to stay down and accept defeat, or get up and kick some serious ass!

In case your thinking...I don't know your situation... You're right. I don't know exactly what you're going through, but I do know people can come back from the very worst.



"Jennifer" became a single mom to three very young children when her husband left for another women. He moved out of state so she as on her own, without any family living nearby.

She turned hardships into "fun adventures" so her kids didn't see that things were bad for them.

She found some inner strength and started a business so she could work from home.

That's not the end of her story. She had another serious relationship but it ended abruptly, and that ended her business arrangement as well. She had to start over a second time.

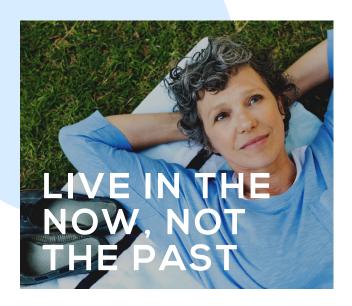
That's about where I would have thrown in the towel. Jennifer didn't. She made another come back and started a business that wouldn't depend on anyone else.

THERE IS NO POINT WHERE YOU CAN'T **MAKE THE DECISION** TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE

46

I look to her, and my other friends who have suffered losses, for inspiration on how to bounce back from anything.

And when I say "anything" I mean divorce, business failure, job loss, financial trouble, being widowed, cancer, heart attack, long-term stress, addiction, depression, and even suicide attempts. There is no point where you can't made the decision to change your life.



Maybe you messed up big time. There might be lessons to learn.

Or maybe someone really hurt you, and you're not sure how to let go of the pain, anger, betrayal, or other strong emotions.

But from this point forward, face forward

No more regret and blame. Learn what you can from what happened, but do it from a few steps back where you can be objective instead of emotional.

And then think of one thing you can do to turn toward a new direction.

Do you want to feel like you have been feeling? Or do you want to move up a step or two, feeling something slighter better? And then something better than that?

Do you want to sit and ponder your regrets for hours, or do you want to make a list of dream goals?

Do you want to continue the way you are, or do you want to change?

I challenge you to make two lists:

A list of any and everything good in your life, that you like, that makes you happy.

And a list of things you want: that you want to make happen, that you want to see, that you want to visit, that you want to do, and changes you want to make. It's a dream list.

Your happy list might not be long, and it might be made up of little things:

My coffee is so good today. Someone's cat jumped up in my lap and purred. I found my favorite jeans that went missing two months ago.

Your dream list should be fun—don't stress about how you're going to do any of it. Just let yourself dream. See if it sparks any old passions or even just makes you smile.

When you've hit bottom or feel like giving up, it's hard to dream big or pull yourself up to being "happy" but you can take the first step in that direction.



Things are pretty bad, I get that. But have you really sorted out the problem?

Maybe you're miserable on the inside, despite having all the "things" you wanted.

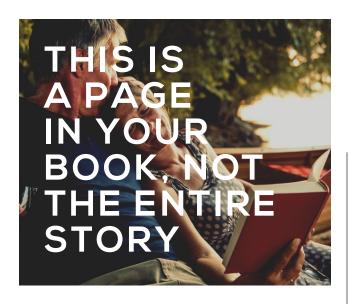
Or maybe you feel overwhelmed by several huge problems, and you can't see clearly what to fix or how you're going to do it.

That's why it's important to reflect and figure out what's going on. I tend to make a huge thing out of smaller things, and when I sit down with pen and paper, I discover that I can tackle the issues, and it's not as hard as I was picturing.

Many people don't want to look the

problem in the eye. They're scared. But that first step is a huge one, and it takes you a long ways down the road of fixing things.

This will be different depending on your situation, but if you can accept where you are, and take a look at what can be done about it, you'll feel more empowered and ready to embark on the road out of here.



"Kimberly" had gone through a lot of heartache relationship-wise over the last decade. Then she met this super handsome, charming, funny man and fell in love.

They were very similar: they both loved to hike, explore the outdoors, and they seemed to match up as two positive, high "vibration" people.

She moved in with him and within a month realized, oh @%^@&\*#, he wasn't that person at all. Apparently he

been playing the exact role she needed, but once she moved in, he went back to spending hours playing video games (which he never mentioned or did before) and didn't seem to have any time to talk to her.

That's a pretty big mess up. And even worse, she had moved to a new location to be with him, and she'd gotten rid of all her furniture.

That meant she had to save for a while to afford the larger deposits in that area, and the higher rent, in order to get her own place again.

You can probably imagine how frustrating it would be to be "stuck" in that situation, slowly working her way out of it.

She said something that's stuck with me: that was a page in her story, not the entire book.

At times, she admitted, it felt like a chapter. But it wasn't forever. She managed to pull some big lessons out of that and keep her eyes on her goal of moving out.



So you don't like where you are, and you know you want to make big changes.

You want to bounce back and take life by the horns.

When you face your reality, make your happy list and dream list, and decide you're going to do it—that decision will spark a small flame.

Or maybe it'll feel like a fire.

Just the decision—and commitment to take back your life will give you that inner light and determination.

If you're struggling to feel it, make a list (right now!) of all the reasons why you will succeed, and why you deserve to succeed, and why you're going to succeed.

Look at your dreams, and start making a plan. Break things down until you have a list of small steps.

What is the smallest step you can take to start moving forward? Take it.

Have a list ready so you can then take another step after that.

Keep things small, but keep taking steps. A thousand tiny steps can get you to a very big goal. And you can do those tiny steps.

And the amazing thing is, a tiny step can make a huge impact on your life and how you feel. Sometimes a few tiny steps will take you way closer to your goal than you can imagine right now. Because things will start happening. People will connect with you. Opportunities will arise. Things will work out.

FOCUS ON ONE
GOAL AND PUT
EVERYTHING INTO
IT. DON'T WORRY
ABOUT OTHER
THINGS. JUST
FOCUS.

Succeed, and move onto the next goal.

And all through this process, it is not only okay to ask for help, it's a good idea. People like to help other people, but they often don't know about the need or how to help.

If you make a specific request to someone, that makes it easier for them to help you.

Bouncing back starts with a decision. Make that decision. Ask for help. Focus on something positive. Take tiny steps forward. Do that for a week, and then look back at how far you came.

Write down how good that feels, and then take another step. Imagine what it'll feel like in a month. You deserve to succeed and you will!

# DNA SECRETS TO STAYING YOUNG

Myths and modern day fiction have stories of "the fountain of youth" that can make a person stop aging.

Once upon a time, a few people actually went in search of this magical phenomenon.

In modern times, we look for a kind of "fountain of youth" in facial creams, diets, herbs, and medical science.

There is a body of material about how to stay young longer: using sunscreen, eating right, exercising, and of course having good genes.

That last part is interesting because we're discovering more and more about aging and our genes. This isn't a "stay young forever" story, but real scientific study about how we age.

Intrigued?

## IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY...

When people talk about family history in relation to health, they usually look at what diseases tend to kill people.

That's the focus of the paperwork at a doctor's office when you have your first visit—you fill out a form that lists any cancer, diabetes, heart diseases, or other diseases on both sides of your family.

Basically, it tells you what you might be at a higher risk of getting.

It's also curious, and something that the typical sheet doesn't ask, to look at how long people in your family live.

The reason?

People who live to be over 100 usually have other relatives that do too.

We have many articles with advice from older people on how to live longer. And then you'll find a story about a woman who is 105, smokes every day, and has a whiskey nightcap every night!

Discover Magazine shared the story of Jemima Westcott, a 105 year old woman, has one living brother who is 94. Her two sisters are gone, but they lived to 105 and 107.

(By the way, she says her secret to

long life is resilience. Experts agree!)

Jemima Westcott is participating in the New England Centenarian Study that is looking at people who enjoy long life.

The study has found that people who live to be over 100 tend to be surprisingly intact mentally, and 90% of them could function independently into their 90s.

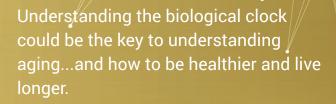
These people recover better from illnesses and therefore live longer.

The study has found 281 genetic markers that appear to offer a protective function and slow aging.

Centenarians also have fewer genes that contribute to major diseases.

The researchers involved in the study theorize that some people have a slower biological clock while others have a faster one.

When people have a faster biological clock, it wears down the body's protective processes. So people with faster clocks are more likely to get a fatal disease.



## THE SCIENCE BEHIND AGING

We know that people's age doesn't necessarily line up with their "real, technical" age.

Some people are spry at 90 while others have failing health at 60.

You can see this in younger people too: sometimes you'll meet someone who's 50 but seems more like 30.

It can be just a ten year difference between their real age and what they act and look like, but that can make a big difference later on.

The Dunedin study followed people from their birth and looked at lab work to determine age. When people were around 40, some were biologically 30 while others were 50. One had the indicators of being 61.

To study aging more, a team of scientists led by Juan Carlos Izpisua

Belmonete looked to the gene that causes accelerated aging in people who have Werner syndrome (adult progeria).

Belmonete's team published their findings in *Science* magazine.

Werner syndrome causes grey hair and heart disease in very early adulthood, basically making you age much younger than you should.

The accelerated aging is due to gene deficiency. The Werner patients are deficient in the gene that copies DNA, essentially repairing any mistakes during the replication process.

This gene also keeps track of telomeres, which are fragments of DNA at the ends of chromosomes—those strange twisty looking ladders if you've forgotten what they look like.

These telomeres are the genetic clocks that set a cell's life span.

So without this critical gene, cells don't replicate properly, which our cells need to do all of the time.

Cells also don't have the proper cell life span without the gene.

This is all interesting, but what does

it mean for people? And could these findings predict anything about aging?

To find out, the researchers took embryonic stem cells and removed the gene. Normally these embryonic cells will develop into all the different cells in the human body.

Without the gene, however, the cells aged prematurely.

The researchers discovered that the cause was how the DNA was packaged.

Normal DNA is tightly twisted and wound into chromosomes. Remember the twisty ladder I mentioned?

The DNA will unwrap only when it's ready to replicate itself. At that time, it will unwind a little section at a time.



However, when people have Werner syndrome, the chromosomes aren't as tight. They're loosely stuffed into the nuclei.

That creates instability and causes the cell to age faster.

Chromosome instability is the key to aging—how instable the chromosomes are dictates how fast a cell ages.

The exciting aspect of this research is that by using stem cells, the scientists were able to determine this applies to all cells and not just Werner syndrome patients.

So this research can lead to helping cells (and therefore people) live longer.

## TELOMERES: PART OF THE PUZZLE

We have Nobel Prize winner Elizabeth Blackburn to thank for much of our knowledge about telomeres. She's spent her life studying them and how they affect aging.

Understanding telomeres—the caps at the end of DNA—is opening the door to discover why and how we age.

The telomeres I mentioned earlier act as a cap at the end of DNA so it won't fry. But these ends get shorter over time, with each cell division.

The telomeres shrink until they're just

a little stub, and that's when cells stop replicating and die.

Telomere shortening is a biomarker of cellular aging and linked to all kinds of diseases related to aging such as Alzheimer's heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and lung disease.

People who age early or get diseases have shorter telomeres. There's good and bad news.

First, the bad news: our genes determine our telomeres length, so that's out of our hands, but...

Smoking and stress shrinks them.

And that is in our control.

You might have also heard about Blue Zones where people live much longer and have better life quality at older ages.

Scientists who study telomeres wanted to see if people in Costa Rica had good DNA or if their long lives were due to the "pura vida" attitude.

People who make it to 60 in Costa Rica tend to live a very long life after that, and they do have longer telomeres.

Science is getting closer and closer to figuring out exactly how aging happens on a cellular level, and that understanding will allow us to slow it down and avoid diseases.

But it's easily provable that the telomeres are only a part of the puzzle. The leisurely pace of life in Costa Rica, along with their plant-based diet, active lifestyle, and support network of family and friends, helps keeps telomeres healthy and longer.

So while some people do have a genetic advantage with their DNA and longer telomeres, lifestyle also greatly affects the telomeres and quality of life.

We can actually affect our genes with our lifestyle, and in the coming years, science will offer more ways to stay healthy andlive longer!



#### YOUR NEW SUPERPOWER

I would love to see what would happen in the world if everyone was just 1% kinder.

Imagine the changes if people were 5% kinder.

Kindness truly can be a superpower that changes your family, your relationships, your community, and eventually the world.

Kindness can turn someone's day around, and it can shock someone when they expected retaliation or mean behavior and instead get kindness.

I know that kindness has had a powerful effect on my day and entire outlook on life. People have shown me kindness out of the blue, or sometimes when I was in need.

Kindness can be life changing whether it's from a stranger or someone you know—each has a special way of touching us.

Just the other day, my teenage son took an old guitar into a music store to have the strings replaced. A young man did the work, explaining how to do it, and giving tips on how to care for a guitar. I really appreciated that. Then, when my son went to pay for the strings and the work, the man shook his head and only charged him the \$7 for the strings. The work would have been \$20.

You could say 20 bucks isn't much, but it can be for a 14 year old boy. And the act really touched me.

It brought to mind the other times that strangers have done nice things for my children, like once when someone paid for our dinner when I took them out.

Another time, my daughter was going to buy something in a small, locally owned store and the store owner gave it to her.

And yet another time, when my children and I picked blueberries at a farm, the owner took \$2 off per child so they had money to go buy an ice cream. That was such a creative, fun way to do something kind for other people.

It always makes wonder how I can pay those kind acts forward and do something kind for someone else.

It doesn't take much to really touch someone with your kindness, and it makes a huge impact on them and other people by extension.

Of course, you
don't have to find
strangers to be kind
to. You can be kind to
them and to people you

know as well.

If you make kindness your superpower, you can do something that makes real change. How many abilities allow you to say that?

And the best part is, anyone can be kind at any time, and to anyone they encounter. When you start looking for opportunities to be kind to others, you find more and more chances.

This is a superpower that makes you feel empowered, valuable, and full of purpose...all the while making someone else feel valued and special as well.

Here's how to make kindness your superpower and change the world, one small act at a time!

#### <u> 1. FLASH A SMILE</u>

Back when I was in college, I was walking across compass one day and noticed that everyone was flashing huge smiles at me.

It was really nice.



And ironically, it took me a bit to realize that I had been smiling at people because I was having a really good day. So they all smiled back.

Sometimes when you're running around doing errands and a stranger smiles at you, it makes you stop and take notice, and feel a boost in your mood.

You can flash a smile at people you know too, and watch them light up.

#### 2. REMEMBER THANK YOU NOTES

People don't practice writing Thank You notes as much as we did in the past. But it's so nice to get one, and it doesn't take long to write one.

All kinds of people could benefit from a random Thank You note:

- Your spouse or partner
- Your mom or dad
- Your children's teachers
- The school principal
- Someone who did something for you
- Someone you appreciate for what they do at the office, church, club, or other place
- A veteran

#### 3. MAKE SMALL TALK

I'm one of those people who prefer deep conversations over small talk, but I've learned to see the value in chatting with people I come across.

If you see an elderly person out for a walk, go say hello, and "Isn't it warm today?"

Sometimes it's the people in your workplace and even your home that could use some attention—if you normally rush through breakfast, slow down and talk for a few minutes.

Giving a few minutes of your time can put a big smile on someone's face.



#### 4. PAY FOR LUNCH

Some people are in the position that they can pay for a stranger's meal at a restaurant.

Even if you did this once a year, it would make a huge difference to someone.

It's hard to describe what that feels like on the receiving end—like the world is a good place after all, and people do kind things.

It can feel awesome on the giving end too!

You might be able to take a friend out to lunch too. Or your mother! It's a small thing but so many of us feel that we don't have time for it, or the money for it, but it's not that much.

#### 5. LEAVE A KIND NOTE

A friend of mine has a handwritten note on his refrigerator. Someone wrote it and left it tucked under his windshield wiper.

The person who wrote it saw him leave the truck with his three children, and then noticed his Veteran license plate.

It was a page long note, not just a quick "thank you" although that would have been meaningful too. And the person left him a \$20 for lunch!

#### 6. REACH OUT

I see so many posts on social media where people talk about being lonely. It's that ironic? They're on a social site saying they wish they had more friends.

You might know people who have a hard time meeting others and getting out, such as single parents, stay-at-home parents, self-employed or work-at-home people, someone with a disability, or someone who's gone through a hard time lately.

Maybe you could simply reach out and ask how they're doing, and later invite them to a movie, a party at your home, lunch, or out with some of your friends.

## 7. OVERLOOK SOMETHING

So someone cuts you off in traffic. How you react will probably affect the rest of your day more than theirs.

And if you don't honk or make a gesture at them, it might make their day a little better too.

There are times when people offend us, usually on accident. There is a time and place for speaking up, but sometimes you can also let it go.





## 8. HELP SOMEONE

One of my best experiences in high school was doing something nice for a teacher after her house was flooded. We didn't do much, actually, just left a bag on her porch.

It was a small high school and we all loved our English teacher. So our small class of 30 students all pooled a little money, and a few students bought some things that might cheer her up.

There were useful items and then just things to be nice. I don't remember exactly what we did get her.

But I do remember the thrill of leaving the gifts on her porch, ringing the bell, and racing off. And I'll always remember the expression on her face when she thanked the class.

You don't have to do much to make people feel like other people really care.

Some people prepare and keep "blessing bags" or care pack in their vehicle. The idea is to have something ready for someone that appears to be homeless, and these might be gender specific for hygiene items.

These can be a gallon-sized Ziploc bag with supplies like socks, hand wipes, sunscreen, a toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, Band-Aids, nail clippers, snack bars, and other foods that don't need refrigerated, and maybe a gift like a book.

You could also include a small amount of cash or gift card to a fast food restaurant, a resource paper with local information, and even a kind note.

#### 9. ENCOURAGE A CHILD

School is a tough environment. The news is full of sad stories about young people being bullied.

It can feel awkward to say something nice or encouraging to a child or teenager you don't know (or even one you do) but a quick compliment goes a long way toward helping their self esteem.

A few ideas of things you can say when you see a young person showing kindness or doing something good:

 "Wow, you're really patient with your younger sibling."

 "That was so nice of you to help that lady."

"Thanks for being so helpful!"

Of course, everyone likes compliments on their nice shoes or jacket too.

Maybe you can imagine how a very shy child would feel if someone said, "I love your hair." (Or smile, or laugh, or the way they did something.)

In today's world, we need kindness more than ever. We can help other people with kindness and model it for the people around us.

Kindness is a real superpower that anyone can do!



If you want to transform your life, one of the quickest and most powerful ways to do that is through giving.

Of course, it's also about changing the world.

I can't do that, one might think, I don't have the means to give. I can't change the world.

That's like one raindrop of water saying it can't change the world. But if you add another drop, and then another drop, soon you'll have puddles, and then lakes, and then rivers, and eventually you'll have oceans.

The smallest acts of giving add up. A small act of giving might make all the difference to another person.



You see, if you're waiting until you reach a certain level, you'll always be waiting.

That's because we naturally strive for more. So no matter how much your income grows, you'll always be looking at that next step, and feeling like you can't give yet.

So find ways to give now—look for small ways and ways that don't take money. You'll soon learn it's about attitude and not your bank account balance.

As one example, Reader's Digest shared the story of a 10-year-old girl named Riley Christensen (in "5 Stories that Celebrate the Spirit of Giving").

She was looking at bikes with her mom, wanting to pick out a Christmas present for her father.

Riley wanted to help more kids get bikes like these, so she wrote a letter to family and friends. Others heard about it too. She raised over \$12,000 and helped seven kids gets bikes.

Riley got to deliver three of the bikes and ride with some of the kids. She talked about a girl who used her arms to peddle, but loved to ride as fast as Riley.

Giving is simply about giving in whatever way you can.

Think of Meals on Wheels, an organization that delivers meals to the elderly who can't leave home. Many think the best part of this service is how the people visit with the elderly when they deliver their meal.

#### "GIVING" ISN'T **JUST ABOUT DONATING MONEY**

"You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give." -Kahlil Gibran

Each of us has way more than money to give. Sure, we can donate money (even a small amount) to make a difference. and we can give in many other ways too.

We can teach, mentor, encourage, donate work, donate time, donate things we have, and offer to help.

In fact, there are times that giving

of yourself and time are way more valuable than

giving money.

You might know a neighbor who has trouble mowing their lawn or cleaning their gutters; a younger person in your industry that could really use some advice: a struggling couple that would love help and advice from someone who's been through it.

Know any single parents? Or a mom who's taking care of her children and other family members?

Maybe you know someone who can't get out as much as they like, and they would love someone to come by and visit.

Many people live by the Law of Giving and Receiving, saying that even when you don't know the outcome, things will come back to you tenfold.

But when you decide to use the power of giving, do it truly to help others and change their lives.



You'll feel the reward in your heart, and maybe in your life, but most importantly you are making the world a better place for everyone.

#### WHEN GIVING DOES INVOLVE MONEY

Giving can be as simple as donating to a cause, in an amount that you can do. This amount doesn't have to be a shocking amount—because if everyone donates a little, it becomes a lot.

Many people choose to tithe, either to their church or to a charity. "Tithe" actually means a tenth. You can take that literally and give 10% of your income to charity or the church.

You can also help others by loaning money so they can start a business or build their own wealth. If you begin in a place of giving, you'll be less worried about your return. It will be frosting on the cake.

Very wealthy people are often big givers and they say it's blessed them more than they can count.

But it's not about the actual number. If you give \$20 and it's most of the money you have, that's huge.

To drive that thought home, consider these words from young Anne Frank:

"No one has ever become poor by giving."



## SERVING OTHERS IS HEALING YOURSELF

We all go through times in life when we're hurting or trying to overcome something.

It can be tempting to fall into the victim trap, or think that we don't have anyone to help us.

When that is actually true, one of the best things you can do for yourself is to help others.

It gives you something else to focus on, people to interact and connect with, and a sense of purpose.

Helping others fosters gratitude and helps you feel more cheerful.

Rory Vaden shared his journey in a piece called "The Mysterious Power of Giving." He grew up very poor and

learned a belief system centered around lack.

Later on, he was able to make money and rise above his childhood.

He admits that he didn't start giving for the right reasons. But once he did, he experienced a transformation where he felt peace and importance.

He learned gratitude and happiness, and had to ask himself, "How many of the things I have in my own life are truly entirely 100 percent in my possession because of only me and my work?"

Rory Vaden points out that giving opens your eyes to how it helps other people, and then you see how much you have, and how you didn't get it all on your own. We're all interconnected.

Now he believes that the more tightly you hang onto your money, it will slip through your fingers like sand.

#### HOW TO GIVE MORE

You can find hundreds of ways to give:

- Tithe
- Donate online to companies that help in disasters.
- "Adopt" a child in a foreign country with a company like Save the Children. You get photos, letters, and updates on the child you're helping.

- Find ways to give to family, friends, and people who know—maybe by leaving a surprise gift or offering to help them with a new venture.
- Keep an eye out for people in your community that need help. There are posts on Facebook about families in need all the time.
- Volunteer locally. Ask if your children's school needs help.

Giving is so fulfilling and even exciting when you see how it helps others.

Sometimes, however, people are hesitant to give because they worry about how their money will be used.

I don't like to donate because I don't know where the money goes.

The company keeps a cut.

I need that money. If I give it to \_\_\_\_\_, it'll just get wasted.

But once you give money, you don't have to worry about that. You did your part. So don't let those worries stop you from giving.

If you want to research a company or where the money goes, that's fine.

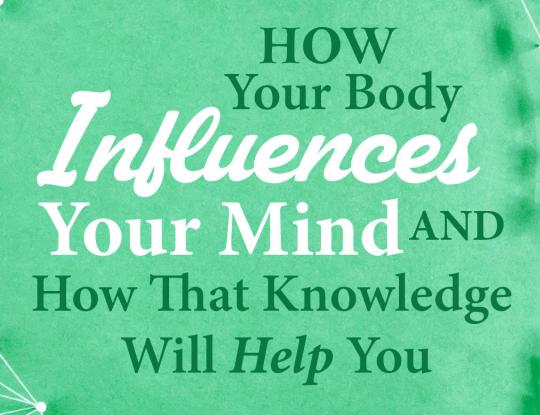
But don't not give because you can't control where your donation goes.

Some people will find a specific way to donate so they can have a say. There's a story of an anonyms man who hides money at a community center every year.

He calls with a clue so the staff has to find the donation. And he includes a letter asking that his money helps make Christmas better for the families that the centers help.

There are so many ways to give, and so many rewards for doing so—most importantly the awesome feeling of helping others

and making the world better.



As humans, we're aware of our brain and our body as two systems that work together.
Our thoughts on how they work together has changed over time.

We might see them as separate systems that do separate things, and work independently for the most part.

But we have to realize that our mind is inside our body, and the two systems are very interweaved.

In times past, experts have said that our thoughts affect our bodies...

We think about reaching for a glass and then our arm reaches for the glass.

We daydream about something happy, and we might smile.

Focusing on pain can make it worse.

So it's very true and indisputable that our mind affects our body, but it's only one side of the equation.

The reverse is also true. The *body* can also affect the *mind*, creating a cycle or even a ying and yang effect.

This body-mind affect is called embodied cogitation.

## The Other Side of the Equation

Let's do an experiment. It's quick and easy, and you can do it right now.

It's just one step: Smile.

Don't try to think of anything funny or nice. Just use your facial muscles to make yourself smile.

Did you smile?

Now, did you notice that you felt any different?

Did it maybe affect your mood?

Try smiling while looking it the mirror now.

This quick exercise shows how you can do something physical with your body and have it affect your mind or mood. You can actually put a pencil between your teeth, and it can affect your mood because it's similar to smiling, in a muscle sense.



#### Digging Deeper

Science is uncovering some new and fun facts about the body-mind connection.

We can affect our mind with our facial expressions:

If you wrinkle your nose and then smell something, the item will actually smell worse.

If you raise your eyebrows and then listen to something, it can be more surprising.

Your posture can affect how you see things.
Leaning to one side can affect how you perceive things—you might think something is taller when you are leaning to the left.

So body position, posture, gestures, and expressions can all effect your mind.

You may be noticing that this seems more mechanical than a mind to body effect. In that process, it's thoughts affecting the physical body.

This is where what you do with your body (mechanical actions like sitting up straighter) affects your mind.

It's a very different kind of science. Instead of trying to control your thoughts to direct your emotions and eventually how you feel physically, you can do a quick posture to change your thoughts and how you feel.

#### How This is Helpful

So this is interesting, you may think, but you don't yet know why it matters or

how it helps you.

It is very interesting, because you probably already use embodied cognition!

Imagine that you're in a meeting and you don't feel very sure about the outcome. You might do something physically, without thinking about it, to help you feel more confident.

You might sit up straighter and raise your chin. It's your

body trying to make you feel more confident.

Researchers have studied embodied cognition to learn more about power poses. These can also be called expansive poses because they're more open.



#### A few examples are:

- Arms out and relaxed, elbows pointing away from body.
- Leaning back in your chair with your arm over the back of the chair.
- Resting your ankle on your other knee.
- The Superman or Superwoman pose: feet apart and hands on hips.

The opposite, or closed, poses include:

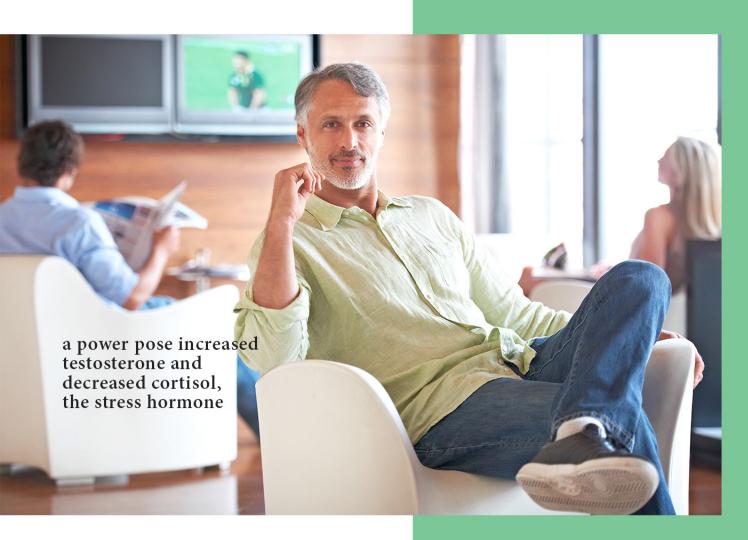
- Head down, shoulders rounded or slouched
- Arms wrapped around your middle
- Hands tucked under your legs while sitting

Scientists have measured the physical changes that open or power poses bring about.

Psychological Science repeated, back in 2010, that just one minute of doing a power pose increased testosterone and decreased cortisol, the stress hormone.

This has been backed up with research from The University of Oregon, The University of Texas, and Harvard. These universities found that leaders often have similar mindsets...and hormone levels.

Feeling confident means having higher testosterone and lower cortisol—which



is what happens in your body when you use a power pose.

This hormone balance lowers anxiety (because you feel more in control) and helps you better deal with stress.

So a power pose can actually give you the hormone balance that a natural leader enjoys, making you more confident, more assertive, and more relaxed.

Open poses can do more than just function as a power pose.

One open pose that might not be considered a power pose is to lay your hands on your thighs, palms up. It's similar to a meditation pose.

This has been shown to make you more open and accepting of new ideas—which also is a trait of a good leader and successful person.

This knowledge can help you because now you can change your posture to change how you feel and how you're perceived.

This is a real example of "fake it till you make it".

You can use poses to fake being confident and therefore increase your confidence. Others will see your more confident body language and see you that way as well.

Let's wrap up with one more benefit. Open poses also relieve pain! A power pose gives you a sense of control, so even if you can't actually reduce pain, feeling more in control will make it feel that way.

Understanding how your posture and expressions affects your mind and emotions gives you an extra edge in many situations.

The human body is truly amazing, and a complex system that does even more than we know!



# The Key to Discovering the Real You



Our caveman brains, which are still down there in the center bottom, put everything into categories to help us survive.

We tend to categorize everything, including people, which means we put can put them into boxes to know how to deal with them.

Oh, he's a bossy type. Or, she's super athletic and always active. He's a computer geek. She's a book worm.

You may be aware of some of the "boxes" that you live in. Your parents probably had dreams and ideas for you and your life. Your friends influenced you. Society presented plans and dreams that you're supposed to follow.

Your experiences, too, might have "made" you a certain way.

But that doesn't mean that you actually are the sum of your experiences, or what people think

you should be. However, you might be playing that role.

And we all have an idea of ourselves that may or may not match up to what we really are, or what we really want to be and do with our lives.

If you want to know yourself better, and see how that can help you, read on...

## Why you should get to know yourself better

The key to leading a fulfilling life is to know yourself. That gives you a guiding light for making decisions about who to date, who to marry, what jobs to take, what career(s) to pursue, and what life goals to set.

If you don't know yourself, you'll have to make all kinds of possibly wrong decisions to figure it out. Even somewhat good decisions can take you away from your desired life path...and you might not know that until after you've clarified what your life path is!

#### Always learning about yourself and knowing you who are will help you:

- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Know what things you're not good at and don't enjoy
- Understand why you react the way you
- Understand your personality and how it affects relationships
- · Set the right goals
- Make decisions easier
- Feel more confident about decisions and what you're doing
- Know where you're going in life



There are so many ways to get to know yourself, so it's not a hard thing to do. But it does take time and reflection.

Another reason why it's so worth knowing yourself is it's a critical component of success in life—and especially for leadership, business, public careers, and athletics.

I'd like to talk about the different ways you can get to know the real you, and then we'll take at the key to all of this.

## Learn more about yourself with a personality test

We have different personality tests. The most popular is probably the Myers-Briggs test that uses 16 personality types. These are based on four qualities:

How you focus and recharge; are you extraverted or introverted.

How you learn and take in information; either sensing or intuition.

How you make decisions; through thinking or feeling

How you deal with the world; through judging or perceiving.

Knowing where you fall with these different traits can be

very helpful. If you take the personality test, you'll get a type such as "ENFP". That will give you a description, and then you can decide how well it matches you.

That last bit is important because you shouldn't accept test results 100% as who you are. It's a test. And it's for some insight, not a concrete description of YOU.

To illustrate this, I'm a ENFP and INFP.

Basically, I'm a Introvert and Extrovert, plus Intuitive, Feeler, Perceiver.

The test said I'm exactly half introvert and half extrovert. How is that possible?

Well, you might have heard of introverted extroverts. So you can see that this gets complicated.





The test gave me some insight, but I knew much of what it told me:

I love being around like-minded business/positive people, and I get a huge energy burst from that. But I like being self employed so I can work alone, where and when I want.

So take tests, but be aware that we can sometimes rewrite what we think about ourselves to match. So look inward and reflect on if the results give you really useful insights.

## Learn about your Love Language

Another helpful test to take is the 5 Love Languages. This tells you how you show love to other people, and what ways you like to receive love.

This has a huge impact on our relationships, so knowing how you love, how you show love, and how you perceive love form others might reveal why some past relationships didn't work out.

Imagine "Bill" shows love through gifts and big gestures. He's a giver.

His girlfriend "Ann" connects through deep conversation and time alone with someone. So while Bill showers her with presents, she doesn't feel like he loves her.

You might read the book The 5 Love Languages or find a test online, but you can also think about how you express love:

- Talking
- Word of praise
- · Action/gifts
- Time alone together
- Activities together (adventure, trips, movies)
- Shared purpose like a business, building a home, or charity

These aren't the official 5 Languages, but some areas to think about. Also consider what on this list would make you feel loved.

The way you express love and receive it might not be the same!

## Learn about your learning work style

There are also tests to help you discover your learning and/or work styles.

I once took a test that would help me figure out how to study. It said it'd show me which of the four ways would work best for me.

I scored equally on all four methods: visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic. I love to learn, so I took that to mean I'll learn however I can. (You see, sometimes you have to interpret test results and reflect on them!)

The Four Learning Modalities are:

## Visual Preference - about 60% of people

- Learn through demonstrations and descriptions, and use lists to organize thoughts.
- Recognize words by sight.

Remember faces but forget names.

 Can be distracted more by movement than noise.

#### Auditory Preference

- Learn through verbal instructions and learn through listening.
- Enjoy dialogues, discussions, and plays.
- Remember names but forget faces.
- Distracted by noise so they need quiet to work



#### **Tactile Preference**

- Learn by taking notes either during a lecture or when reading something new or difficult
- Like to draw or doodle to remember
- Learn through hands-on activities such as projects, demonstrations, or labs

#### **Kinesthetic Preference**

Most people are kinesthetic learners as children and then grow into another learning style, but not all

- Learn best when involved or active, would rather do than watch or listen
- Often have high energy levels
- Think and learn best while moving
- Often lose much of what is said during lecture
- Find it hard to sit and read

In today's world, we have unlimited resources for learning, so if you understand how you learn best, you can customize any self learning to your

style, such as listening to audiobooks, or watching videos where you can see the speaker, or finding a book so you can skim to where you want to read.

## Where you fall on decision making

Being decisive is the one quality that makes leaders stand out. It's such a big influence on our lives that I wanted to discuss it separately.

Think of when your partner and you discuss where to eat dinner or what to eat for dinner. Is there a lot of "I don't know" and "what do you think?"

There are decisive people and people who have trouble making up their minds about small and big things. That's the two ends of the spectrum, and knowing where you fall will help you work on getting to where you want to be, or knowing how to can best make decisions.



## Questions to learn about yourself

These will help you dig a little deeper, and they look at areas we haven't covered above such as personality, love language, learning style, and decision making.

1. What are 3 things you love to do, and do you do them very often? If no, why not? Do you have a list of interests that you chose yourself that you get to enjoy?

2. Do you wake
up and jump out of
bed because you're
excited about your
day? No? Then what do
you need to do (or what would
you love to do) to achieve that feeling?

- 3. What do you like best about yourself? List 3 things. Next write a description of yourself, and then one of the person you want to be. Is there a big difference between those two versions?
- 4. What are you good at? What have you done exceptionally well, even if it was only one time? What things do you think you could do that you don't do often, or haven't even tried?

5. Do you know your values? By this I mean: what do you value? What's important for you to have in your life?

Your big values might be very different from what you typically think of for the word "value". Think of things like: freedom to travel, freedom to explore the outdoors, time freedom, creativity, charity, helping find a cure for cancer, improving quality of life in your

community, your legacy (a family business), or whatever it is that you want people to see when they look at your life.

6. What accomplishments are you most proud of?

7. Do you feel confident about yourself and abilities? Or do you know of any limiting beliefs or negative thought cycles you get caught in?

8. What would you improve about your life? Are you taking any steps to do so?

Lastly, take some time by yourself (maybe a day trip or even a weekend) where you can reflect on your life, what you love, what you want to do, and things you value.

It's very helpful to simply free-write: just write and keep going, and see what you

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come up with. You can start with the questions above, and then write about yourself. It's just for you, so you can write whatever you want.

## The true key to understanding yourself

Some people believe that we all have a destiny to fulfill.

There's a few problems with that theory, the first being that you only have one purpose. That implies that you might miss it.

It also takes away your freedom to choose.

And that's the true key to knowing yourself: choosing you who want to be and what you want to do with your life.

You see, you can take tests to learn about yourself, and there's value in those.

You can look at your natural talents and abilities, but you should also consider what you love to do.

Just understand the "real" you is not preordained where you have to follow one certain path to either be useful or happy.



The real you is simply you—what do you love? What do you want to do? What do you feel that you are? You can choose to change during your life and you will still be you.

And the real you will grow and change all through your life. For the most part, your fundamental qualities and beliefs will probably stay the same but then again, maybe not.

You're on a journey of self discovery and growth, and that journey is the true adventure and answer.

Deciding where you want to go, and how you want to get there, is a big part of deciding who you are. Enjoy the journey of self discovery!