

# renaissance

RTOERO Magazine

Fall 2023



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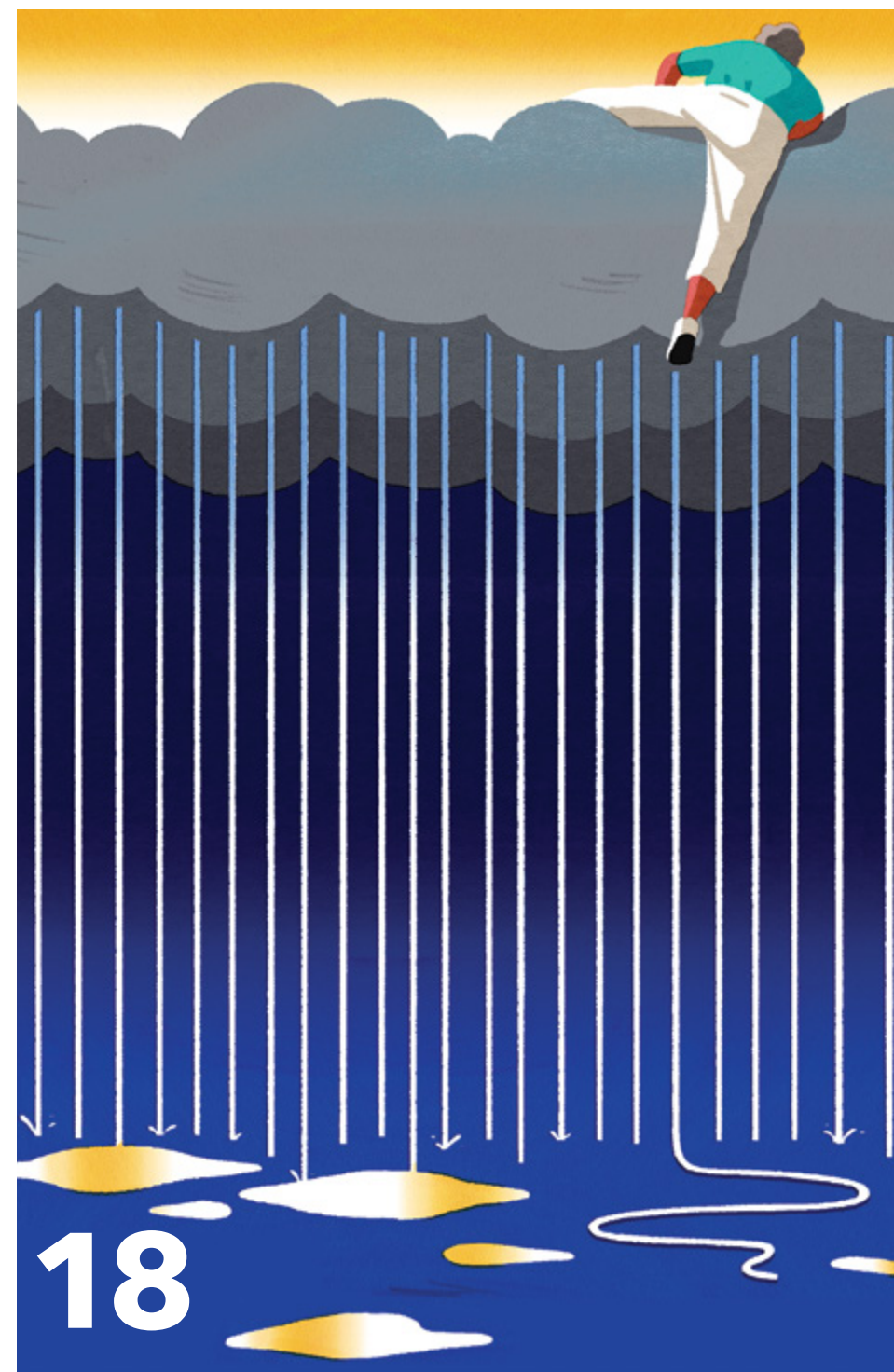
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# Reader letters

**I enjoyed reading the diverse articles** in the spring issue of *Renaissance*. Sharing heritage through cooking was a refreshing inclusion, and I intend to test these “storied” recipes out with my family. As an artist/educator, please forward my appreciation of Jori Bolton’s illustrations for “May I Have This Dance?” The benefits to health and social attributes were affirming.

–Wendy Hooker (District 24 Scarborough and East York)

**Thank you for such a beautiful magazine!** The summer issue of *Renaissance* was very informative – and one of your best! I much prefer information to reading about the lives of people I don’t know, even if they were teachers, rehashing of people’s lives I don’t know, even if they were teachers – this issue is a keeper. And the insurance booklet was much appreciated.

Respectfully,  
–Catherine Boate (District 8 London, Middlesex)

**My wife, Susan, and I** have been retired for over 15 years and have been enjoying *Renaissance* magazine. We have made some contributions and thank you for the practical advice and good reading. Keep up the good work.  
–Peter and Susan Iaboni (District 16 City of Toronto)

**WOW!** Kudos to everyone responsible for the summer edition of *Renaissance*! I have greatly enjoyed the magazine since retiring in 1995, and this edition is the best of the best – every article had something for me. Congratulations to the editorial team and all the contributing writers. Your dedication in serving our readers/members is greatly appreciated.

–Ron Speck (District 1 Rainy River)

**When I saw the words “family reunions”** on the cover of the summer issue of *Renaissance*, I thought,



“I could contribute to that.” Then, turning the pages, there I was in the photograph on page 21, fourth row from the back, on the left, wearing the red ribbon (as a member of the committee), celebrating the Baker family’s 100th reunion. I note it suggests the Bakers arrived in Canada in 1897, but in fact they came in 1847, 50 years earlier. The

first picnic was organized by grandchildren of the first arrivals, and for a few years it was held in the fall after haying season. Quite a family! Families matter and reunions help cement the bonds, especially for our younger members. If anyone is contemplating a gathering, do it! You won’t be sorry!

–Gwen Farrow (District 24 Scarborough and East York)



**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

We welcome your feedback, so please send your letters to [renaissance@rtoero.ca](mailto:renaissance@rtoero.ca). Letters may be edited for length and clarity at the discretion of the editor.

**RENAISSANCE ALWAYS KEEPS THE ENVIRONMENT IN MIND**



**Environmental stewardship** is one of RTOERO’s main advocacy issues. Responsible use of resources, conservation, and protecting our air, land and water are critical to a sustainable future.

We honour our commitment by printing *Renaissance* on ethically sourced paper and using plant-based ink to

ensure the magazine is produced using materials that are environmentally sound; in addition, more than 10,000 RTOERO members choose to go paperless, receiving only *eRenaissance*.

Occasionally, we bundle other important information with your copy of *Renaissance*. We use a clear wrap made of a

compostable, 100 per cent biodegradable plant-based substance you can simply toss in your compost bin.

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We asked RTOERO member Shirley Marie Lazareth, writer Stuart Foxman and Money Matters columnist Lesley-Anne Scorgie to share their one wellness must-do.



**SHIRLEY MARIE LAZARETH**

I love to write poetry, and the opening stanza for my poem “My Garden” reflects my special wellness place:

*My garden is my hallowed ground  
for in its borders I have found  
such joy, contentment, quiet,  
peace,  
a place where I can find release.*  
(District 14 Niagara)



**STUART FOXMAN**

I’ve started one habit and broken another one, and each has done wonders for my well-being. For the past year, I have taken a walk every day, maybe an hour. It clears my head and gives me more energy. I usually use the time to listen to podcasts, so I learn and get inspired too. Two years ago, I quit any televised news, of any sort, from the U.S. I’m a news junkie and remain informed but don’t watch a second of TV broadcasts. Ever. The outrage machine doesn’t illuminate.



**LESLEY-ANNE SCORGIE**

Besides smothering my two babies with kisses each day, my wellness go-to is moving for a minimum of 30 minutes per day. This could be Pilates, yoga, a walk or running with the kids. The physical activity I invest in for myself always helps to create the mental space I need to focus on my work and my family.

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## Wellness workout



Now's the time to add resistance training

by **Martha Foster**,  
RTOERO Chair

**Wellness – what a great theme** for this edition of *Renaissance*. Wellness affects every one of us, and there is so much to be considered.

It's a well-known fact that as we age, we lose muscle mass and strength. Many of us are pretty good at keeping up some type of cardiovascular exercise, the most popular being walking, and that's great.

So don't stop walking; do start muscle work to mitigate the loss and build back muscle.

We should all be including some kind of resistance training in our fitness programs. Not only does it improve your muscle mass; it also helps strengthen your bones and can improve your range of motion. The gain? Improved balance, better mobility, lower chance of hospitalization due to falls, and increased muscle reserves in case you do end up in the hospital.

When should you start? Yesterday. The next best time? Today.

How do you get started? You can do resistance exercises at home with resistance bands and small weights you can pick up at almost any home improvement store.

If you are game to go a step further, check out programs at your local senior centre. Or sign up at a gym. A gym has everything you need, including machines (you don't have to move any weights around) and free weights (moving required).

Find a friend to go with you, or talk to your RTOERO executive to set up a "get to know your gym" session.

Remember, we are not after abs of steel. Building back up some of that lost muscle mass and strength, with all the positive effects that come along with that, is an amazing goal and one that will benefit you in so many ways. 🧘

Have fun at the gym!  
Martha

## Portal to a new you



Trusted articles on healthy, active living

by **Jim Grieve**,  
RTOERO CEO

**I love the theme of this issue of Renaissance.** The articles present invitations for each of us to make investments in our own health and well-being.

Being the trusted voice for healthy, active living for members and older adults across Canada is one major RTOERO goal. The thoughtful articles written for this award-winning magazine, by authors who also include RTOERO members, are evidence of this commitment.

Another wonderful weekly source of trusted articles on healthy and active living for older adults originates from McMaster University, an organization with which we have enjoyed a formal partnership for the last eight years.

RTOERO members can register free of charge with the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal. Once you register, you will receive a new publication every week with researched articles on such topics as:

- Walking for good health
- The health benefits of the outdoors
- How intergenerational programs benefit people of all ages
- Five ways to stay steady on your feet this winter

As well, the McMaster portal offers a range of free 15- to 30-minute interactive e-learning lessons on such topics as anxiety disorders, social isolation and delirium. These lessons are prepared by trusted experts using scientific evidence to provide credible insights to inform and inspire healthy aging. Some of the lesson titles include:

- Walking Speed: Is It a New Vital Sign?
- Changing Gears: Making a Plan to Retire from Driving
- Promoting Brain Health
- Social Isolation: Are You at Risk?
- Delirium: Is Your Loved One at Risk?

The McMaster portal has also introduced blog posts. A recent example is "Immersive Virtual Reality: An Innovative Solution to Support the Well-Being of Older Adults." This post describes technology that follows the user's head movements to create a realistic sense of presence in a virtual world designed to support well-being in older adults.

For your health and well-being, please use this link to join this superb portal: [mcmasteroptimalaging.org](https://mcmasteroptimalaging.org). 🧘

Here's to living well.  
Jim

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# Mentally healthy living post-COVID-19

Experiencing troubling anxiety? Add these two strategies to your mental-health toolbox

by **Alison LaMantia**



**Mental health may be complex**, but supporting our mental health doesn't need to be. That's a key takeaway from the RTOERO Foundation-funded project *Mentally Healthy Living after Social Distancing – A Study of Older Canadians*.

In August 2022, the University of Alberta's Living Well research team, led by associate professor of nursing Gail Low, surveyed 1,327 Canadians aged 60 years and older. An additional 1,163 RTOERO members also completed the survey. The goal: Learn from older Canadians about their level of anxiety after the pandemic lockdowns ended and which mentally healthy living strategies worked well for them.

In the summer issue of *Renaissance*, we shared the finding that older age groups felt less anxious – so our ability to cope with stress seems to improve with age. But age aside, the study uncovered a trio of troubling symptoms that, if present, could spur on other anxiety symptoms. The study also identified their antidotes.

"If we're not careful, we can weave tangled webs of anxiety that seem to trap us," says Low. "It's helpful to know there's a way out, and by incorporating some basic strategies into our day-to-day lives, we can support our mental health."

The three troubling symptoms were:

- Feeling restless, keyed up or on edge
- Feeling of having no control over life
- Experiencing muscle tension

"These three symptoms were the most influential symptoms in the anxiety network," Low notes. "If people were experiencing them, they were more likely to be experiencing other symptoms, and they also had higher anxiety levels."

The team also analyzed which strategies were most effective for reducing the trio of symptoms, and two stood out: staying active and remembering resilience.

"Staying active appears to reduce the troubling trio

"Staying active appears to reduce the troubling trio – especially the feeling of having no control over life."

—  
Gail Low

– especially the feeling of having no control over life," Low explains. "And what's also significant is people who stayed active were more likely to eat healthily, get proper rest and be kinder to themselves."

Resilience was another effective strategy because it activates and reinforces many other coping behaviours. "Positive self-talk can go a long way – intentionally remembering how you've coped and recovered from challenges through life can support other good mental-health strategies," says Low.

While staying active and remembering resilience stood out for how they worked on the three key symptoms, they were also among the six most effective strategies for mental health identified in the study. The other four were eating healthily, dealing with problems in a structured way, getting proper rest and decreasing other sources of stress in life.

"Our findings reinforce existing evidence," says Low, "but from the perspective specifically of older adults. A core insight here is we don't need to get complicated – it's about consistently doing foundational health behaviours to maintain or bolster our well-being."

The study's findings and more information on the top six strategies have been captured in a digital cookbook – side by side with easy-to-make recipes, including the one-pan salmon at right – to mix, match and create a menu for mentally healthy living in the later years. The cookbook is available through the RTOERO Foundation website: [rtoero.ca](http://rtoero.ca).

## TIPS ON STAYING ACTIVE

What exactly does staying active mean? For starters, it's worth reminding yourself of the many activities you do that count as staying active. For example, yard work is exercise. So is cleaning your kitchen or dancing in the living room. Any movement you do is good for you.

If you're the kind of person who likes a specific target, ParticipACTION offers advice for adults 65 and older. These are based on the Canadian 24-hour movement guidelines:

- 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous aerobic physical activities (your heart rate and body temperature should rise)
- Muscle strengthening twice a week
- Activities that challenge balance

Most adults in Canada aren't reaching these levels. Any increase in activity is worth celebrating – and increasing your activity level may lead to other mentally healthy (and physically healthy) behaviours.

Read the guidelines at [participaction.com/the-science/benefits-and-guidelines/adults-65-plus](http://participaction.com/the-science/benefits-and-guidelines/adults-65-plus).



## ONE-PAN GARLIC-BAKED SALMON WITH POTATOES AND ASPARAGUS

Makes 2 servings

- 2 small to medium potatoes (approximately 10 oz/300g total)
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) minced garlic, divided
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) unsalted butter
- ¼ cup (60 mL) lemon juice
- 2 6-oz (170g) salmon fillets
- 1 bunch asparagus
- 1 ½ tsp (7 mL) minced parsley
- 1 tsp (5 mL) minced sage

Heat oven to 400°F (200°C).

Wash the potatoes and cut them into quarters, leaving the skin on. Toss the potatoes with olive oil and half of the minced garlic; season with salt and pepper.

Spread the potatoes in a single layer on a sheet pan and roast in the oven for 20 minutes or until they begin to soften and brown.

While the potatoes are baking, melt the butter, then add lemon juice and the remaining minced garlic.

Move the potatoes to one side of the tray and place the salmon skin side down in the centre. Arrange the asparagus in a single layer on the other end of the pan. Brush the lemon-butter mixture over the salmon and asparagus. Season with salt and pepper.

Return the sheet pan to the oven and continue baking until potatoes are golden and fork-tender and the salmon is cooked through, about 15 minutes. (Cooked salmon should reach an internal temperature of 125°F/52°C.)

Garnish with sage and parsley.

## COOKING NOTES:

You can use an air fryer instead of the oven. Substitute carrots, cauliflower, mushrooms or other favourite vegetables for the potatoes and asparagus. 🌱

# Climate change and mental well-being

Channel your eco-anxiety into positive action

by **Patricia Ogura**



**Good health is predicated on** physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being, interconnected elements that influence each other positively or negatively. We often overlook the extent to which mental well-being contributes to overall health.

Fear, anxiety and depression can be the result of any number of life challenges — illness, loss of loved ones, loneliness, low sense of self-worth, political news, and economic or cultural insecurity.

Another source of stress these days is “eco-anxiety,” a term that originated with the American Psychological Association (APA) and the non-profit ecoAmerica in 2017. APA defines eco-anxiety as the “chronic fear of environmental cataclysm that comes from observing the seeming irrevocable impact of climate change and the associated concern for one’s future and that of next generations.”

We see, and experience, the consequences of our earth’s poor health — floods, compromised water, fires, evacuations, severe weather conditions, disease — with ever-increasing frequency.

In *The Myth of Normal*, physician Gabor Maté writes, “The harms of climate change include acute and chronic physical illness such as cardiovascular disease and susceptibility to infections, along with mental health challenges. ... I need hardly mention food and water insecurity, major stressors already affecting millions.”

Britt Wray, author of *Generation Dread* and the *Gen Dread* newsletter, writes on her website ([brittwray.com](http://brittwray.com)) that “The age of eco-anxiety is upon us ... the afterglow of climate disasters radiates psychiatric trauma throughout the globe. We need to get wise to what is happening as well as what we can do to better care for each other and ourselves.”

It’s easy to feel helpless and fatalistic about the earth’s future and the life that depends on it, and eco-anxiety gnaws at our well-being physically and mentally.

But we can take control. Experts like Wray and APA agree that once you acknowledge eco-anxiety you can channel that anxiety into positive energy and direct it into positive environmental behaviour. Engaging in activity that helps heal the environment is to engage in hope — and help control the anxiety.

RTOERO encourages members to identify what they can do as individuals, with their families, and with their communities to work toward a healthier Earth. And, make sure your political leaders know you care and why.

Responsible use of resources, conservation, and protecting our air, land and water is a key to a sustainable future. To learn about RTOERO’s environmental stewardship initiatives and how you can advocate for a healthier planet, visit [rtoero.ca/vibrant-voices](http://rtoero.ca/vibrant-voices). 🌱

PHOTO: AZMAN JAKA

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## Fact or fiction?

Five nutrition myths we wish would disappear

by **Fran Berkoff**, registered dietitian

**I spend a lot of time in my practice** answering questions about both food facts and fallacies. Here are five from my most-asked list.

**MYTH:** To have a healthy diet, you should cut out all white foods.

**FACT:** Well ... if you say “no thanks” to all white foods, you would be avoiding yogurt, chicken, cauliflower, white beans and more — all nutritious and popular foods, so this makes no sense. What does make sense, however, is switching from white bread, rolls and snacks made with white flour to those made with whole grains. Fill your plate with a variety of colours, but don’t exclude white.

**MYTH:** A gluten-free diet is the path to good health and weight loss.

**FACT:** While a gluten-free diet is essential for people with celiac disease or a non-celiac sensitivity, it’s not necessary or recommended for anyone else. You will, of course, lose weight if you cut out lots of bread products and flour-based snack foods but not if you replace them with gluten-free cookies, breads and snacks. Beyond helping those with a gluten problem, research has shown there are no extra health benefits to going gluten-free.

**MYTH:** If it’s fat-free, it must be a healthy food choice.

**FACT:** Fat-free foods may sound healthy, but they can be high in calories, salt, sugar and more. Take fat-free cookies, chips, cakes or even jujubes, for example, which get their flavour, texture and calories from the addition of sugars, salt or other additives. Unfortunately, many people believe that if it’s fat-free, it’s also low-cal and eat these foods in larger quantities. The next time you reach for a bag of fat-free cookies, read the ingredient label first and compare the ingredients to regular cookies. You’ll probably be surprised. And, let’s not forget that some fats — such as olive oil (think Mediterranean diet) and nuts and seeds, including almonds, walnuts and flaxseed — are chock full of health benefits.

**MYTH:** You shouldn’t eat anything after 7 p.m.

**FACT:** Nothing magical happens at 7 p.m., so there’s no reason to pay this myth any mind. That said, we’re not talking about late-night cookies, chips or other rich high-cal snack foods — it’s not the time, it’s the habit at play. Intermittent fasting is a different story and can be helpful if it makes sense to the way you live. The bottom line: The number and quality of calories is what counts.

**MYTH:** Plant-based beverages are healthier than cow’s milk.

**FACT:** There’s no yes or no answer to this one. Cow’s milk has a strong nutritional profile. Rich in protein, calcium, B vitamins, phosphorous and potassium, it’s also fortified with vitamin D, essential for bone health. But not everyone can tolerate milk. You may be allergic, have lactose intolerance, be vegetarian or vegan or simply not like the taste. Here’s where plant-based beverages play a role. There are lots to choose from, including almond, soy and oat milk. Each has its own nutritional profile. While soy is closest to cow’s milk in protein and many other nutrients, not everyone loves the taste. Some drinks have less protein, fewer or more calories, and although many are fortified with calcium and vitamin D, not all are. So reading and comparing nutrition labels and ingredient lists is essential to making a smart choice here. 🌱

PHOTO, HAPPY APRILBOY

# Mediterranean diet 101

Eating the Mediterranean way is good for your health

by **Pauline Anderson**



**There’s mounting evidence** that eating lots of leafy green vegetables and other fresh foods helps ward off dementia and heart disease.

The Mediterranean diet, which includes these healthy food choices, has already been linked to reduced dementia risk, but previous studies were small and their assessment of diet inconsistent. Now, a large study published in *BMC Medicine* provides more reliable proof of the association. The study included 60,298 people aged 40 to 69 years who regularly completed detailed dietary questionnaires. Researchers scored these subjects on how closely they followed the Mediterranean diet.

In addition to greens like spinach and kale, this diet includes plenty of other fresh vegetables, fruits, fish, whole grains, beans, seeds and olive oil. It discourages consuming other fats, as well as processed and sugary food.

During an average follow-up of just over nine years, 882 cases of dementia were reported. People who followed the Mediterranean diet most closely had a 23 per cent lower risk of developing dementia compared to those with the lowest level of

adherence. Even those at higher genetic risk for dementia had a lower risk of developing this cognitive condition if they adopted a Mediterranean-like diet.

The study had a number of limitations. It included only people with British or Irish ancestry. As well, it was observational, so it couldn’t determine that poor adherence to the diet actually causes dementia. It’s possible, for example, that people who were more physically active were more likely to follow the diet and it was this healthy lifestyle that lowered the dementia risk.

The diet may affect dementia risk by protecting vessels carrying oxygen to the brain or by preventing the buildup of amyloid, a hallmark sign of Alzheimer’s disease dementia.

It appears that amyloid is specifically affected by diet. Another recent study in the journal *Neurology*, which assessed information from 581 autopsies, found that subjects who had followed Mediterranean-type diets most closely before death had less brain amyloid compared to other subjects.

Those who most closely followed these diets had almost 40 per cent lower

odds of having an Alzheimer’s diagnosis at the time of death.

Green leafy vegetables, for example spinach and kale, appeared to carry a particularly powerful health punch. The amount of brain amyloid in subjects who ate seven or more servings of such vegetables per week corresponded to being almost 19 years younger than those who ate the fewest servings per week.

In addition to lowering dementia risk, the Mediterranean diet has been linked to prevention of heart disease. However, the evidence so far has not looked specifically at women, in whom heart disease accounts for about 35 per cent of all deaths worldwide. But a new assessment of multiple studies examining the association between the diet and heart disease in women was published recently in the journal *Heart*.

The analysis included 16 studies with a total of 722,495 subjects who had no heart disease to begin with. The studies included only women — or separated heart-related outcomes for women from such outcomes for men — and reported a Mediterranean-diet score for these subjects. Over an average follow-up of about 12 years, women who most closely followed the Mediterranean diet had a 24 per cent lower risk of heart disease compared to women who didn’t follow the diet closely.

Six of the studies included outcomes for mortality. The analysis showed that the highest adherence level was linked to a 23 per cent lower risk of death from any cause.

The results suggest, for the first time, that a Mediterranean diet is just as beneficial for women as it is for men.

And the benefits of the diet go beyond brain and heart health. There’s also evidence it helps maintain ideal body weight, prevents diabetes and strengthens bones.

So stock up on foods in the produce department and check out the fresh fish and selection of beans at your supermarket. And don’t forget the olive oil! 🌱

PHOTO, KIAN OKSANA



# Fit for life

Exercise for the wellness you want

by **Ylva Van Buuren** Illustrations by **Jori Bolton**



**“All my clients know** they need to do some kind of exercise to stay mobile and keep their quality of life,” says Carole Ito, a certified fitness trainer who works with older adults.

And it’s a fact. Doing specific types of exercise regularly has been shown to have a significant impact on your health and wellness, keeping you strong, protecting against dementia, improving balance and keeping you limber. It even improves your mood!

**Before you start:** Talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine if it has been a while since you’ve exercised, and if you have any health issues or concerns.

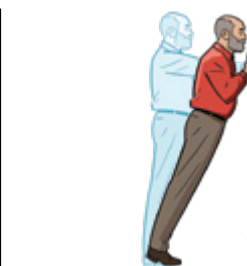
The recommended physical activity guidelines for adults in Canada consist of moderate to vigorous aerobic physical activities for a total of at least 150 minutes per week and muscle-strengthening activities using major muscle groups at least twice a week. So how often you do these wellness exercises depends on what else you do during the week.

## STAY STRONG

We lose three to five per cent of muscle mass per decade after the age of 30, says Sheryl Fieldstone, a functional aging specialist at Westside Recreation Centre in Calgary. With the loss of muscle mass comes a decrease in functional strength, mobility and balance. It’s also a factor in frailty and falls. Fieldstone recommends a regular strength-training class, online or in person, to maintain your muscle strength and the ability to participate in daily activities. “Remember, this isn’t about building big muscles. We are trying to regain the strength we’re losing every year.” Here are three exercises to try at home.



**Chair squat:** Stand in front of a chair, facing away from it with feet shoulder-width apart. With spine neutral, head and chest raised, and core engaged, lift arms in front for balance. Slowly lower hips down and back. Tap the chair with your butt, then move hips forward and back up to starting position. Repeat two to three sets of eight to 10 repetitions.



**Wall push-up:** Stand about an arm’s length away from a wall. Place palms flat against the wall at shoulder level. Bend elbows and lower your body toward the wall, keeping back straight and abs engaged. Pause, then push yourself away from the wall until arms are extended. Repeat two to three sets of eight to 10 repetitions.



**Chair plank:** Place a chair against a wall with the seat facing you. Face the chair and place the heels of your hands on the outside edges of the seat. Slowly walk your feet backward until your body forms a straight line from head to feet. Hold for 10 seconds. Slowly walk your legs back toward the chair until you can stand. Repeat two to three times.

## BRAIN HEALTH

“Exercise is one of the greatest modifiable risk factors against developing dementia,” says Jennifer Heisz, associate professor in the Department of Kinesiology at McMaster University and the Canada Research Chair in Brain Health and Aging. When your heart and lungs are functioning optimally, the rest of your body does too, including the brain, says Heisz, author of *Move the Body, Heal the Mind*. Exercise helps to promote blood flow, which delivers nutrients the brain needs to thrive. Lactate, for example, builds up in muscles during vigorous exercise and travels to the hippocampus, the region in the brain responsible for memory, she says. Here are three levels of a walking program for brain health created by Heisz.

**Basic wellness walk:** Walk for 30 minutes at a comfortable, easy pace.

**Interval walk:** Warm up with a five-minute wellness walk. Then, for three minutes, walk at a faster pace (a brisk walk or easy jog). Use the “talk test” to check that you’re working hard enough — you shouldn’t be able to talk comfortably. Slow to the more comfortable pace for three minutes. Alternate these paces five times. Cool down with a five-minute wellness walk.

**Memory-booster walk:** Warm up as above. Walk up a gradual hill for four minutes and then walk down the hill. Repeat the hill walk four times. Cool down with a five-minute wellness walk.

## STAY POSITIVE

The pandemic taught us how important exercise is to our mental health, says Fieldstone. “Every person will benefit from better mental health after exercise. And it can be something different for each person: social time for those who live alone, the endorphin rush from aerobic exercise, lower stress levels, the satisfaction of achieving a goal, or just feeling joy and fun.” What to do? If you enjoy music, take a dance class where they play music you like or exercise on your own to your favourite tunes. Join a gym with friends, take up an activity you loved as a child, learn a new sport. What’s important is finding an activity that you enjoy, says Fieldstone.

## BETTER BALANCE

Research has shown that practising tai chi is an efficient exercise for improving balance and balance confidence in older adults. “It’s probably the single most important thing people can do for their balance,” says David Stark, tai chi instructor at Westside Recreation Centre in Calgary. Tai chi is a slow-motion exercise done with slow and deliberate body movements and deep breathing. In almost every move, participants are moving from one foot to the other and constantly re-weighting the body and improving balance, says Stark. Sign up for an in-person class at your local community centre, yoga studio or fitness club.

## FLEXIBILITY

We spend a lot of time on activities where the spine is in flexion or hunched forward — at the computer, watching television, sitting — says Ito. She recommends loosening up with this standing spine sequence. “Do movements slowly and try to feel the incremental movement through your spine,” she says.

## Standing spine sequence



- Stand with legs shoulder-width apart.
- Slowly curl down through your spine — drop your head, curl through your upper back, bend your knees and let arms hang down to the floor. Hold for a few seconds (and feel the stretch in your back). Reverse the motion, rolling back up slowly to standing.



- Place hands at the top of your hips and lift your chest to the ceiling, keeping your neck in line with your spine. Hold for a few seconds. Release and return to starting position.



- Raise one arm overhead and reach up and over your body, crossing over your midline and lifting from below your shoulder. Return to starting position and repeat on the other side.



- Put hands behind your head, and while keeping hips fairly square to the front, rotate your shoulders to the left and then to the right.
- Repeat the entire sequence five times. 🧘

# Nature's wellness powerhouse

Mushrooms are the new it veg for good reason

by Brooke Smith

**Mushrooms are tasty** — in salads, stir-fries, sautéed and topping a juicy steak ...

And now, the wellness world has embraced mushrooms as a savoury superfood — for good reason.

Mushrooms are packed with vitamins that boost your immune system and support bone strength, and they're low in sodium and calories, fat- and cholesterol-free and a source of B and D vitamins and minerals, including selenium and copper.

"Mushrooms are truly these powerhouses of nutrition," says Jess Pirnak, a registered dietitian based in Vancouver, B.C. "In a little tiny fungi, it's pretty jam-packed with nutrition: B vitamins for energy and selenium for antioxidants. Copper is really great for red blood cells and nerve health, and polysaccharides for immune-boosting benefits. That's pretty incredible in a little button mushroom."

PHOTO: DAMIR OMEROVIC

"Mushrooms tend to be the best substitute for plant-based alternatives because they have the same texture as ground beef."

—  
Jess Pirnak

Not only do mushrooms pack a nutritional punch, there has been research on their effects on immunity, heart health and cancer.

A 2015 study in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* indicated that regular consumption of shiitake mushrooms can boost immunity.

A systematic review of observational studies — published in the May 2021 issue of *The American Journal of Medicine* — indicates that mushrooms may aid in lowering cholesterol levels and reducing blood pressure.

A 2021 meta-analysis study published in the medical journal *Advances in Nutrition* looked at studies on mushroom consumption and cancer published from 1966 to 2020. The study noted that higher consumption is associated with lower cancer risk, specifically breast cancer.

"Shiitake mushrooms are super incredible from a heart-health and cancer perspective," says Pirnak. "We can't say that a lot about different foods, but we can say that about shiitake mushrooms."

Then there are the mental health benefits — both brain and mood. According to a 2019 study in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, participants in Singapore aged 60 and over who consumed more than two portions of mushrooms a week had less chance of incurring mild cognitive impairment. A population-based study using data from the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey indicated that participants who consumed mushrooms

had lower odds of depression.

If those benefits don't convince you to add more mushrooms to your diet, how about this? Mushrooms also act as a meat substitute. "I think they're getting really popular now because we live in a very plant-based society," says Pirnak. "Mushrooms tend to be the best substitute for plant-based alternatives because they have the same texture as ground beef."

In fact, the Mushroom Council has trademarked a concept called The Blend, which is combining mushrooms and meat. Try these recommended ratios: 25/75 mushrooms/meat (burgers), 50/50 (tacos) and 75/25 (chilis). Chop the mushrooms finely so they're the same consistency as ground beef, blend the two together, and cook.

If you're not keen on the taste or texture of mushrooms, and lots of people aren't, you can buy mushroom powder, a supplement made using dual-extracted "functional mushrooms" like lion's mane, reishi or chaga. Functional medicine practitioners (who analyze the root causes of pain and disease through a biology-based approach) believe these mushrooms provide more benefits than simply their nutritional value. Add mushroom powder to your morning coffee or smoothie, or add it to dressings and dips. For that sweet tooth, include it in your brownie or pudding recipe.

Heart protector, brain booster, mood enhancer, cancer fighter. And tasty. Who could ask for anything more?

## MUSHROOM VARIETIES

Cremini (a.k.a. brown mushrooms or baby bellas) are a more mature version of the white button. They have a light-tan to brown cap and a firmer texture.

Lion's mane has a white shaggy texture, and its flavour and texture are similar to crab and lobster.

Maitake (a.k.a. hen of the woods) has a rippling fan shape, resembling feathers.

Portabella is the bigger relative of the white button and cremini. Its cap can be up to 15 centimetres in diameter. Shiitake has an umbrella-shaped cap atop a curved stem; it has an earthy, smoky flavour.

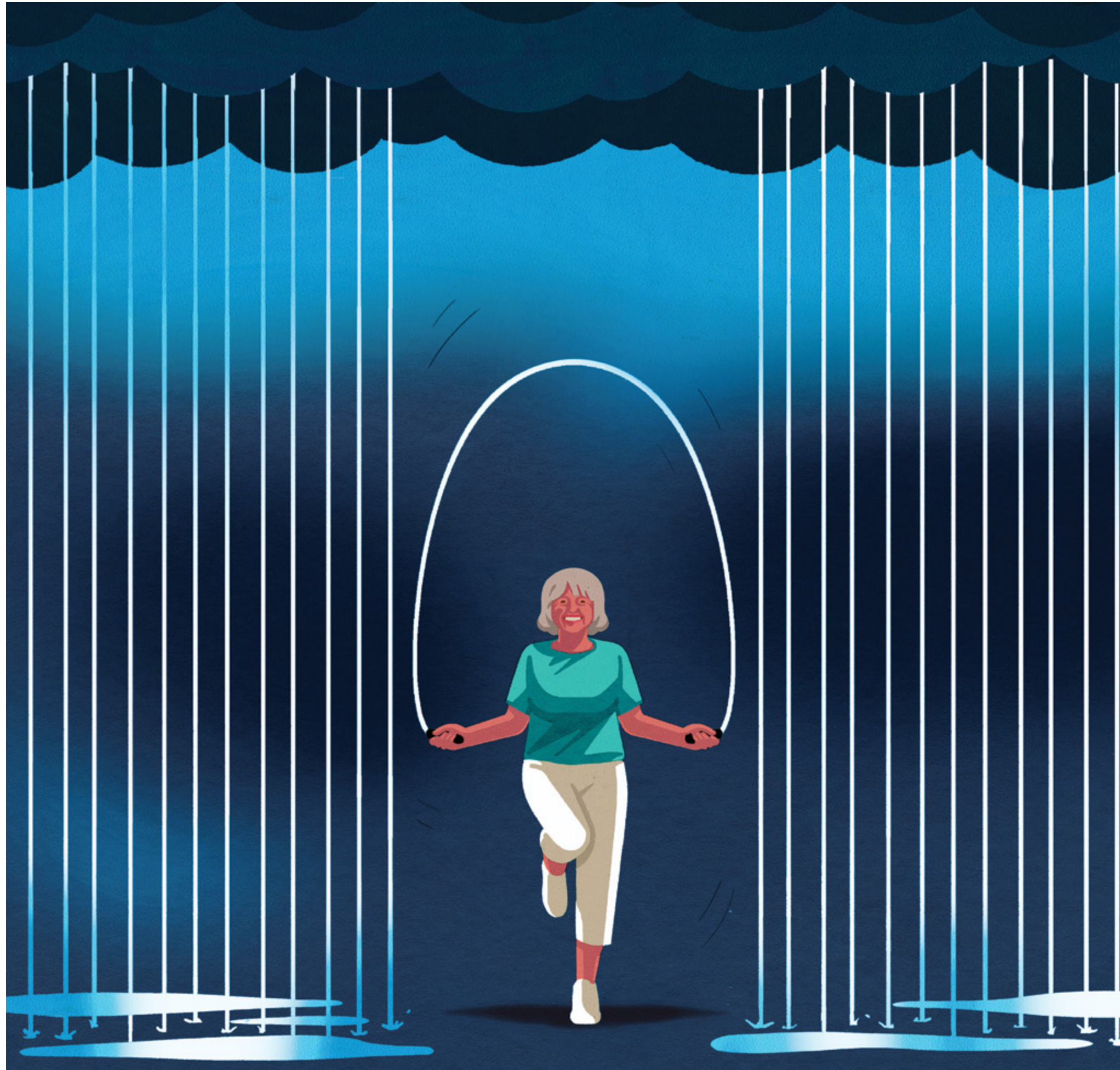
White button is the most common mushroom, and it's the most popular shroom in Canada, according to [mushrooms.ca](http://mushrooms.ca).

## DID YOU KNOW ...

Mushrooms have more in common with humans than with plants. Mushrooms breathe in oxygen and release carbon dioxide, just like us.

Some mushrooms actually glow in the dark. These fungi — such as the ghost fungus (*Omphalotus nidiformis*) found in Australia — have luciferins, light-emitting compounds that are also found in bioluminescent animals and plants. (Warning: Don't eat this one; it's poisonous.)

Montreal-based Mycoboutique ([mycoboutique.com](http://mycoboutique.com)) is your source for all things mushroom, including recipes, products and information on conferences and workshops. ☘



# Building resilience day by day

Harness your inner strength to rebound when things go wrong

by **Martin Zibauer** illustrations by **Pete Ryan**

**It's not difficult to find** authors, philosophers and even entire religions that tell us that suffering — illness, grief, job loss, relationship breakdown, personal failure — is just part of life.

“Thy fate is the common fate of all, into each life some rain must fall,” according to William Wordsworth. Lynn Anderson reminded us we’re never promised a rose garden.

The Dalai Lama said in an interview, “The day of your birth was the birth of your suffering,” before adding a little joke about how people try to avoid acknowledging life’s problems. “People usually say ‘Happy birthday’ — nobody says ‘Happy birth-of-suffering-day!’” A better approach, the Dalai Lama suggests, would be to shift our attitude to suffering.

Bad stuff happens to everyone at some point, but research shows we can become more resilient to those experiences. Resilience isn’t a way of avoiding or ignoring setbacks, or having the brute strength to just put up with life’s setbacks; it’s finding ways to use your inner strength to rebound. As psychologist Darlene Mininni, author of *The Emotional Toolkit*, explains, “The issue is not to never fall down — we’re human. Resilience is having skills to know how to get up.”



For many people, adversity can be an opportunity for growth. In fact, medical researchers at the University of Southern California's Resilience Lab have found that the more common outcome of personal tragedy is not post-traumatic stress disorder, but post-traumatic growth. Researcher Em Arpawong has described it as "when people undergo a life-altering, profound experience that they perceive as negative, but ultimately, they find a way to thrive and do better than expected."

Resilient people tend to ask themselves what they can learn from a negative experience. That's one way of shifting your attitude — instead of asking yourself "Why is this bad thing happening *to* me?" ask yourself "Why is it happening *for* me?"

It's not always possible to make lemonade from life's lemons. Approaching personal tragedies as learning opportunities

may be a stretch for most of us, and the idea can seem like glib pop-psychobabble.

But resilience is a skill, psychologists have found, that can be learned. And there are many ways to start.

### Take care of yourself

No surprise: The basics of moderate exercise, good sleep and a healthy diet have all been shown to improve resilience and help you respond better to stress and adverse events. After eight weeks of exercise, three times a week, participants in a 2021 study at Northern Arizona University showed greater resilience to oxidative stress — that's free radicals versus antioxidants in your body. And the effect held for men and women, young and old; greater gains in aerobic fitness match up with improved

"Resilience is a skill, psychologists have found, that can be learned. And there are many ways to start."

resilience. Similarly, mice that could exercise as much as they liked were found, in a 2020 study at Emory University in the U.S., to have higher levels of galanin, a hormone associated with good mental health, and they return to normal behaviour faster after a stressful event than mice that don't exercise.

Mindfulness meditation, too, can give you the skills to escape thinking patterns that can make you feel stuck. Mindfulness is being aware, moment by moment, of what's happening now — your current feelings, thoughts, sensations — and simply recognizing them, without judgment. In mindfulness meditation, which often takes the form of focusing your mind on your breath, when a stray thought crosses your mind — as they do — you don't try to suppress it, you just label it: "Oh, there's a thought. Hmm."

Expanding your frame of awareness can help when you're faced with a crisis. Many of us focus on one aspect of a problem, thinking about it over and over again in a frustrating, all-consuming loop — we ruminate. When you can step back and recognize that your thoughts are just thoughts, you can change how you approach them, moving past the round-and-round rumination that isn't helpful. Maybe, with that little bit of distance, you'll realize you don't need to always agree with what you're thinking.

### Build relationships

Social connections are good for us. The Alameda County Study, a longitudinal study that ran from 1965 to 1999, found that people with strong social support — friends, family, connections through volunteering and clubs — tended to live longer, even if they smoked or were overweight. Being isolated is estimated to be the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day. You don't have to be a social butterfly, though: Infrequent social connection, as little as once every three weeks, or a connection through social media is enough to make a difference. Even a non-human connection, with a pet, improves resilience.

### Cultivate optimism

Humans evolved to be pessimists, says Martin Seligman, widely regarded as the father of positive psychology. When the most serious threats we faced were physical, the person who paid more attention to problems that could occur — bad weather, predators, lack of food — was more likely to survive. Pessimism still has value: People who practise defensive pessimism — setting low expectations, anticipating worst-case scenarios, and then taking action accordingly — are less anxious and can be more motivated.

In our modern world, though, optimists have better health outcomes. In 2019, a review of 15 studies in the U.S., Europe, Israel and Australia found that the optimists among the 229,000 participants had a 35 per cent lower chance of getting heart disease and a 14 per cent lower chance of early death.

But optimism can cross over into toxic positivity — you know, that smile-though-your-heart-is-breaking response — when it denies reality by refusing to recognize negative emotions. It's treating the facile advice that "if life gives you lemons ..." as an all-purpose remedy for every problem. There's a middle ground: optimism tempered with realism. As one wag put it, "If life gives you lemons, remember that they are the result of humans crossbreeding bitter oranges with citrons and do not occur naturally."

An optimist, according to Mininni, acknowledges that difficult times are real and genuinely distressing but sees them as temporary. They try to see things as they are, but not worse than they are. One way to frame problems as temporary is to avoid thinking in terms of "always" and "never." Those



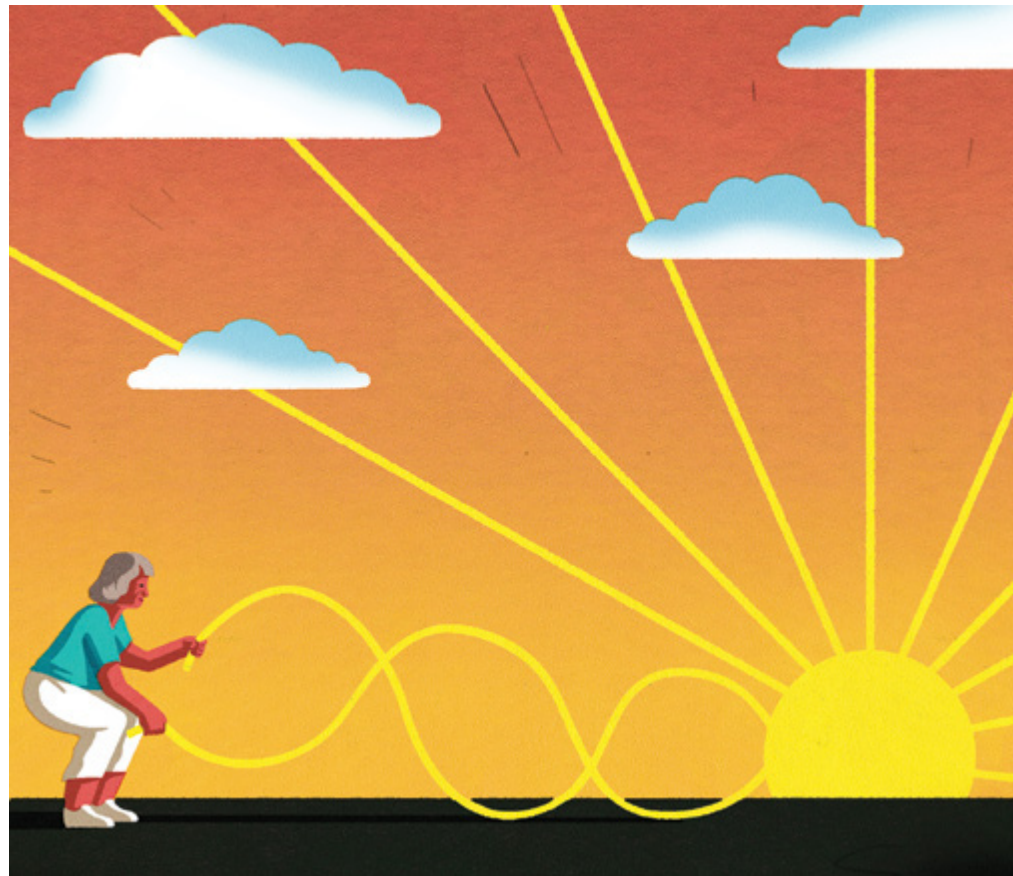
words turn a current situation into something that's perceived as permanent. Even with situations that are permanent, such as chronic illness or the death of a loved one, our feelings about them can change.

Another technique for cultivating optimism is to shift your focus by balancing our evolved tendency to pay close attention to threats with an awareness of positive things in life. A gratitude journal – writing down a few good things in your life every day – is one way, but you can also just thank people more for little things they do, pay attention to how it feels when something good (especially something small) happens, or do something that is of service to others. Helping others become more resilient will help you be more resilient, too.

### Societal resilience

When we were in the middle of pandemic lockdowns and vaccine rollouts, the prevailing view was that almost everyone's mental health was getting walloped, and the effects would be long-term. We talked – in Zoom calls or two-metre-distant conversations – about the “new normal” and “mental health tsunamis.”

A meta-analysis study published this March in the *British Medical Journal* shows, in hindsight, a more nuanced view. The researchers, from McGill, McMaster, the University of Toronto and others, reviewed 137 studies from 31 countries. And while individuals and specific groups had a range of mental health experiences, overall and over time the mental health of most of the populations studied was surprisingly stable. “People have been much more resilient than many



have assumed,” wrote Ying Sun, a research coordinator at Lady Davis Institute in Montreal and one of the study authors.

Lucy Hone, a New Zealand psychologist who worked with survivors of the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes, suggests that one of the keys to resilience in societies is visibility: “Not seeing yourself represented in society, whether it's [because of] race, sexuality, mental illness, is hurtful when it comes to resilience.” When societies are more resilient, much like when individuals are resilient, they're better able to respond to crises, mobilize resources quickly, protect vulnerable members and the economy – and are better able to trust each other. ☘

### RESILIENCE EXERCISES THAT WORK

#### Three senses

Anxiety Canada suggests this exercise to be more calm, mindful and focused on the present. Try it next time you're feeling annoyed by something you can't change, like waiting in line. Take a few deep, slow breaths and ask yourself: What are three things I can hear right now? What are three things I can see? What are three things I can feel?

#### Gratitude journal

Challenge yourself to write three to five things, every day, that you're grateful for or that went well – small things like a comfortable chair or catching a bus. After doing this exercise, a study group of people with debilitating, permanent illnesses became more optimistic and more satisfied, and they slept better.

Another study had students write five lines every day about one positive thing. It turns out the more specific and detailed your gratitude, the better.

#### Best possible self

Every day, imagine one aspect of your life – health, relationships, hobbies – and imagine exactly what it would look like in your best possible future. Spend 15 minutes writing about it, in detail.

This exercise can improve your mood and motivation. In some studies, patients with chronic pain who did this exercise over several weeks had decreased pain symptoms.

**TURN UP THE ZEN**

The magic of music on mind, body and soul  
by **Sue Horner**

**Is there anything music can't do?** Not much. Music can reconnect Alzheimer's patients with the soundtrack of their lives, stirring pleasant memories and sparking a smile. Music helps those with Parkinson's disease manage their emotions and become calm or energized. Music is used to help people who have had strokes or who have



The Art of Healing: CAMH and TSO partner to launch a program for First Nations, Inuit and Métis patients.

mobility issues or depression.

Certified music therapists use music purposefully to support development, health and well-being. Those who benefit include people with difficulties such as acquired brain injury, AIDS, developmental disabilities, anxiety and other mental health challenges, and pain.

The Global Council on Brain Health gathered experts in Washington, D.C., in February 2020 to examine the effects of music on the brain. They all agreed that engaging in music can support brain health as people age.

Perhaps most importantly, as the world recovers from the pandemic, music has been shown to lessen the effects of depression, anxiety and other mental health issues.

**WHO'S USING MUSIC?**

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Canada's largest mental health teaching hospital, believes in the power of music. "Through music we can create meaningful connections between people and their stories, to help pave the path to recovery," says Sarah Downey, president and chief executive officer of CAMH.

CAMH introduced mobile arts programming in 2018, bringing a small mobile recording studio to patients at the centre. The weekly program explores songwriting as a healthy form of self-expression and has engaged more than 1,100 patients. Over the pandemic, the in-person program switched to

virtual, but a new permanent space is being created.

In a pilot in the winter of 2023, CAMH launched another music program, this one in partnership with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO). The Art of Healing program is a culturally responsive healing and wellness initiative supporting First Nations, Inuit and Métis patients at CAMH. The TSO is working with a Métis composer and Indigenous patients to support their healing through storytelling and musical composition, creating an original composition for the 2023/2024 season.

TSO has other music programs to reach diverse communities and support well-being. TSOOUND Connections, for instance, uses music and technology to reach seniors in care to reduce social isolation. Created in response to the immediate and long-term effects of the pandemic, TSOOUND connects seniors with a TSO musician for a 30-minute session of music and conversation over Zoom or Google Meet.

The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and the TSO both offer "relaxed performances," designed to be more welcoming for neurodiverse patrons and those with dementia, ADHD or sensory and communication disorders. The shorter, casual performances provide a sensory-friendly experience: people can move around and have access to sound-dampening headphones and quiet spaces.

The National Music Centre, in

Calgary, launched two weekly music therapy drop-in programs in 2022 for seniors and others navigating life transitions. Participants in FunDrum learn and enjoy singing and drumming in a circle, while those in HealthSong sing, create playlists, analyze lyrics and find the music that keeps them feeling connected.

**PUT MUSIC TO WORK FOR YOU**

You don't need an official program to benefit from music. In its *Music on Our Minds: The Rich Potential of Music to Promote Brain Health and Mental Well-Being* report, the Global Council on Brain Health suggests we build music into our lives to promote mental well-being, increase social connection and stimulate thinking skills.

Here are a few ways to make the most of music:

- Dance, sing or move to music — alone or with friends and family, in person or virtually.
- Listen to music you know and like.
- Listen to new music; experiment with suggestions from music apps like Spotify.
- Make playlists that help you feel calm or energized.
- Exercise to music.
- Learn to play a musical instrument.
- Sing along — loudly — to one song each day.

Whether you're into country or classical, rock or rap, music is good for you. Have you given it a try?

PHOTO, COURTESY OF CAMH



David Fox thinks that school music programs are critical to having well-rounded students.

Joyce Thompson's husband, David, making music.



**RTOERO MEMBERS SING THE PRAISES OF MUSIC**

As a music lover and social worker for 40 years, Joyce Thompson (District 28 Region of Durham) says that when it comes to mental health, music appreciation can be both a protective and replenishing factor. "Music and art therapy have been shown to be helpful wellness tools," she says. "I always ask clients about what they love to do, and music is always on the list. Music can be the best company, whether you're alone or in a crowd. At the same time, some music can be uplifting, and other music may feel draining. For those struggling with depression, it is helpful that they prioritize 'feel better' music and take care about the lyrics they are listening to."

David Fox (District 19 Hastings and Prince Edward) has always been "picked up" by certain familiar songs. "Music calms the soul and can rejuvenate a person's mood," he says. He and his wife also love to dance, and when they hear certain songs, "no matter who we are talking to at a dance or in a bar, up we get!" Fox points out that school music programs are critical to having well-rounded students, especially now with so many mental health issues. "It saddens me when I see the programs lacking today compared to what we had in my earlier years of teaching."

Pat Messner (District 29 Lanark) is a professional musician who plays percussion, timpani and drums. At one time, she played with the National Arts Centre orchestra; these days, she plays with local symphonies and in dinner theatre performances. Before becoming a teacher, she was also a world-champion water skier, her career ended by injuries and surgeries. Music helped her relax or get pumped up before competing then and helps her deal with aches and pains now. "Music is extremely powerful," she says. "It can change people's moods and can bring you up when you're feeling down. It also brings people together, as it did with groups of neighbours and porch concerts over the pandemic." 🎵



Pat Messner believes music can change people's moods and can bring them up when they're feeling down.



PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF DAVID FOX, JOYCE THOMPSON AND PAT MESSNER



# What is spiritual health, anyway?

Why it matters, how to achieve it

by **Stuart Foxman**  
illustrations by **Lynn Scurfield**

**Few aspects of our well-being are** as essential, yet as mystifying, as spiritual health.

In a McKinsey Health Institute global survey on aspects of wellness, 62 per cent of people rated their spiritual health as very or extremely important. And 53 per cent of Canadians surveyed by Research Co. described themselves as very or moderately spiritual — more than twice as many as the 25 per cent who said religion is very important to them.

But that said, ask just about anyone to describe spiritual health and chances are they'll struggle with an answer.



Think of it this way. Part of the human experience is our desire for meaning and our connections to ourselves, others, nature or a higher power, says Jane Kuepfer, a professor and the Schlegel Specialist in Spirituality and Aging at the University of Waterloo's Conrad Grebel University College. That's spirituality.

Kuepfer says that spirituality finds expression in our relationships, rituals, traditions, practices, stories, creativity, beliefs and values. All of these things can be both personal and communal. That's spiritual practices and resources.

Together, they feed our spiritual health — “gathering, holding and sharing love, hope, peace and joy, in the midst of life's circumstances,” says Kuepfer. “Spiritual health is a way of being from day to day.”

It's that grab bag of definitions that appeals to Brenda Mailer, who operates a business called Seabright Spirit just outside Halifax. “The thing I love about spirituality is that it can be so individual,” says Mailer, a certified life coach who also teaches yoga and runs workshops on living with clarity.

Spirituality has long lived in religious devotions and cultural beliefs, but the spiritual-but-not-religious community is growing. Religious faith can be part of a spiritual quest, but so can many other pursuits and ways of thinking. In fact, it has become much more personal, and, says Mailer, you could well be on your own spiritual journey without even knowing it.

So just what is spiritual health? Why do you want it? And what can you do to achieve it?

### THREE LEGS OF THE WELLNESS STOOL

If you think of being healthy in mind, body and spirit as three legs of our wellness stool, the question is whether they're in balance.

As with any other health practice, you can find ways to work a range of spiritual habits into your day and week, and they add up. Why should you? Because spiritual health is beneficial in its own right, and can be part of our broader physical and mental wellness.

The *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* reported that higher levels of spirituality were associated with greater well-being, including positive emotions and relations with others, purpose in life, personal growth and self-acceptance. Another study in *Social and Behavioral Sciences* showed a strong relationship between spiritual wellness and mental health. And a major review led by researchers at Harvard's School of Public Health concluded that spirituality can offer “protective benefits” and for many people is associated with better health outcomes, longer lives and less depression.

“Spirituality” can take on a different meaning over time, says Kuepfer. Priorities and responsibilities change. Building careers and raising children may be behind us. “As we get older, our meaning in life shifts,” she says.

You might start to reassess life in a new stage. Kuepfer says that can bring greater clarity regarding “What's it all about?” You may become better able to grasp your entire life story and the threads pulling it together.

### STILL NOT SURE WHAT SPIRITUALITY MEANS?

If you're still having trouble defining spirituality, think of the concept in terms of its opposite.

A piece in *Psychology Today* suggests that the inverse of spiritual is mechanical: “To live mechanically as a human is to live as a stimulus-response machine, to think, feel and act on automatic pilot, by habit, reflex and unconscious conditioning,” writes the author, Russell Siler Jones, a psychotherapist who also holds a doctorate in theology.

With machines, he writes, you flip a switch and they run — no thinking and no choice. A mechanical life means being under the control of whatever is “flipping our switch” at the moment.

Any number of events, circumstances, people, moods, prejudices, impulses and assumptions can control us. When we're spiritual, we're better able to resist those forces and tune in to everything that really matters around us.

Mailer says people can find themselves living a reactive life, going through the motions. Once they recognize they're living on autopilot, they're better able to adopt new or more conscious actions and attitudes that feed a more spiritual life. “We're not machines. We start to realize there is a deeper sense of self we can cultivate,” she says.

The notion may be abstract and subjective, but it's nevertheless powerful.

“The more grounded, centred and aligned you are, the more you realize the connection with self and other,” Mailer says. “It's about finding purpose in every interaction. That's different for everybody. But are you living in accordance to who you are? What's causing you to stray from that? And what brings you home to yourself?” ☸

### DO A SPIRITUAL CHECK-IN

Other health directives are pretty straightforward — eat enough fruits and vegetables, or take 30 minutes a day for physical activity. The road to spiritual health doesn't offer a similar, clear-to-follow menu or workout schedule. If anything, part of the journey is asking yourself questions that have no easy answers, says Kuepfer.

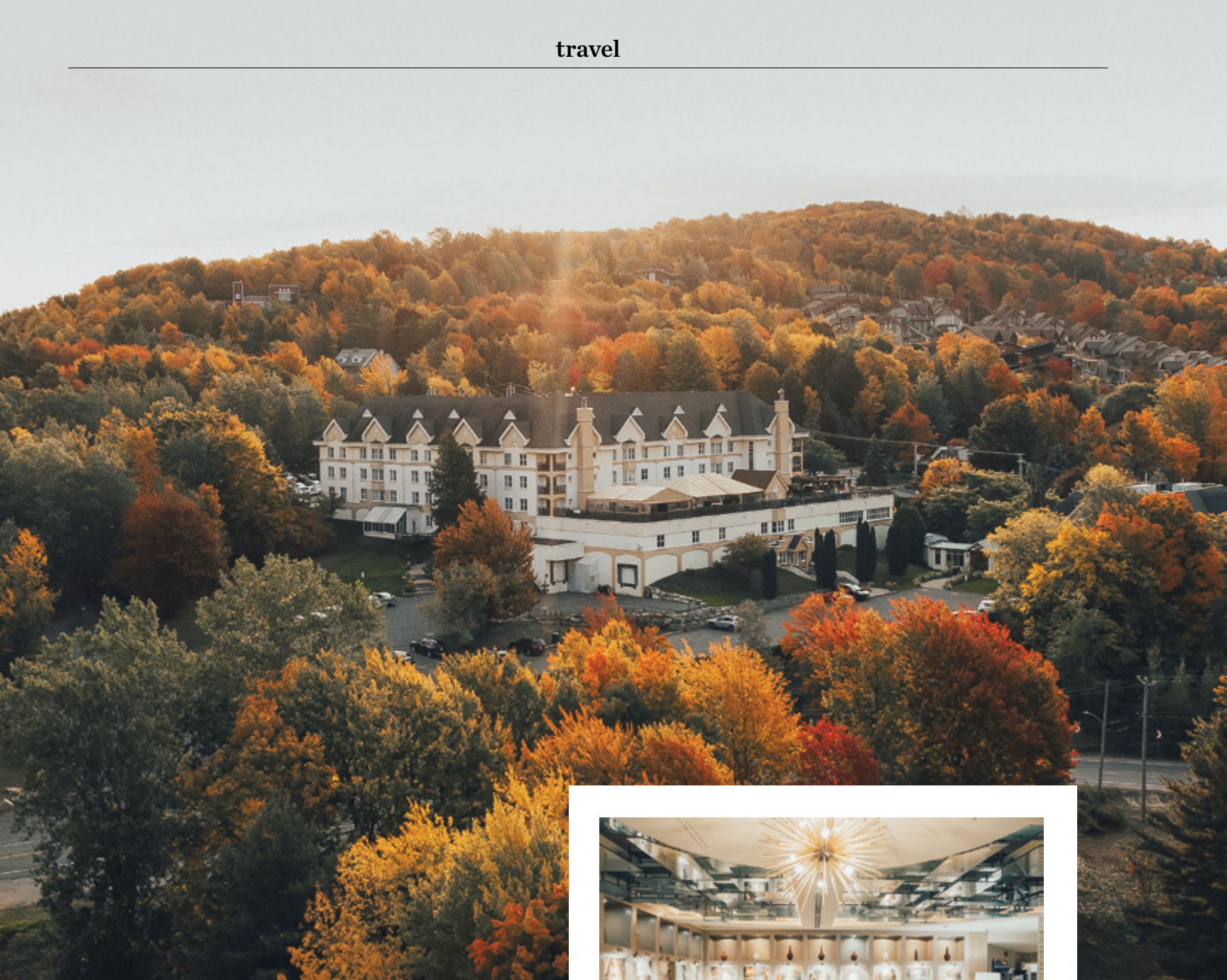
She thinks of spirituality as looking for the “more” in our lives. She calls it a process of discovery and curiosity. “Spirituality is about being more fully alive and engaged in all dimensions of life,” she explains.

Think of becoming more spiritual as a check-in, not a checklist, says Mailer. To start, consider these 15 questions.

1. What offers you larger meaning, and how are your pastimes connected to that?
2. Do you take time for quiet reflection, prayer or meditation?
3. Do you take time for yourself, disconnected from technology to be present?
4. Do you participate in formal or informal community service?
5. Do you engage in activities or employ strategies that connect your mind and body — yoga, for example, or mindfulness and breathing exercises?
6. Do you have hobbies that uplift you beyond a physical or intellectual payoff?
7. Do you practise spiritual traditions or attend faith services or classes?
8. Do you spend enough quality time with loved ones?
9. Do you take walks outside or do other things that help you notice and appreciate the natural surroundings?
10. Do you practise open-mindedness, forgiveness and compassion in your daily life, with others and yourself?
11. Do you have clear values, ethics and beliefs and respect those of others?
12. What have you learned from some of the losses in your life?
13. Do you have interests or activities that allow you to slow down?
14. Do you have a sense of where your happiness comes from, and are you tied closely enough to whatever that is?
15. What legacy do you want, and are you on track to leave it?

You could easily ask yourself dozens more deep questions like these, and the answers can alter your actions and attitudes. “Part of spirituality is self-awareness, of how we're moving through the world. It's understanding who you are and your purpose in the collective,” Mailer says.





## Spa getaways refresh body and soul

Wellness spas offer much more than pampering

by **Doug Wallace**

**These top spas offer** a range of classic treatments focused on whole-body health and wellness.



### **BROMONT, QUEBEC** **Domaine Château-Bromont**

**Overview:** The Amerispa at this upmarket retreat at the foot of a ski hill in Quebec's Eastern Townships is noted for its thermal experience: whirlpool baths, eucalyptus-scented steam bath, Finnish sauna, hydromassage stations, temperate pool and waterfall. But there's no need to stop there: Guests can also book massages and beauty treatments, manicures and pedicures, or find a fireplace to curl up in front of.  
**Extracurricular:** This place has everything: skiing, golf, mountain biking, fat biking, waterpark, farm visits, berry-picking and more. The region is also renowned for the Townships Trail, serene walking paths, and wine and food tours.  
**Bonus:** The Chocolate Museum is a five-minute drive away.  
[CHATEAUBROMONT.COM](http://CHATEAUBROMONT.COM)

PHOTOS, COURTESY OF DOMAINE CHÂTEAU-BROMONT



### **RIGI, SWITZERLAND** **Rigi Kaltbad Mineral Baths & Spa**

**Overview:** This luxe spa, a day trip from Lucerne, is located at the top of 1,800-metre Mount Rigi in the pre-Alps, a pilgrimage site noted for its healing waters since the 16th century. Connected via tunnel to the 50-room Hotel Rigi Kaltbad, the spa features a lavish indoor- and outdoor-pool complex, mineral-water bubble loungers, herbal steam baths and a sweeping Alpine panorama.  
**Extracurricular:** Your tranquil wellness experience is augmented by hiking trails, car-free villages, quaint mountainside pubs and restaurants — including a Michelin-star one.  
**Bonus:** You can't beat the beauty of the sunset in the Alps.

[EN.HOTELRIGIKALTBAD.CH](http://EN.HOTELRIGIKALTBAD.CH)

### **VERNON, BRITISH COLUMBIA** **Sparkling Hill Resort**

**Overview:** With Swarovski crystals everywhere — 3.5 million of them, in fact — Sparkling Hill comes by its name honestly. This luxury European-style wellness resort sports a 3,700-square-metre KurSpa, noted for its whole-body offerings, including 100 different treatments and a hot-cold-rest water therapy cycle.  
**Extracurricular:** Visitors enjoy golf, tennis, mountain biking and fresh mountain air, coupled with infinity pools, fireplaces, wine tasting and farm-to-table dining.  
**Bonus:** A cryotherapy treatment — you spend up to three minutes in a room set to minus 110°C, but it's a dry cold, so you are not uncomfortable — to energize your nervous and circulatory systems.  
[SPARKLINGHILL.COM](http://SPARKLINGHILL.COM)

TOP PHOTO, BEAT HUEBSCHER, SWITZERLAND TOURISM  
BOTTOM PHOTO, DARREN HULL



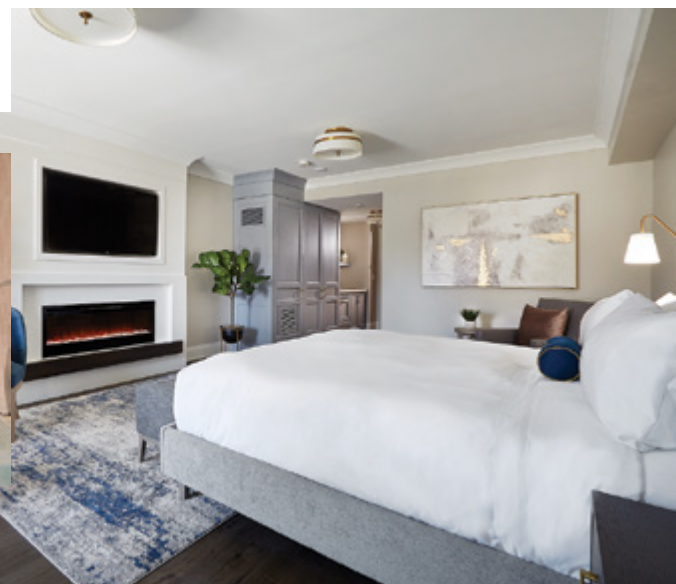
**MANITOU LAKE, SASKATCHEWAN**

**Manitou Springs Resort & Mineral Spa**

**Overview:** This resort is located on the shallow, saltwater Little Manitou Lake, known as the Dead Sea of Canada, formed by receding glaciers and fed by underground springs. The complex comprises a 102-room hotel, conference centre, large heated indoor mineral pool and a range of spa services. Historically, the lake was a place of healing for the Indigenous Peoples of the region. You can't really swim-swim, because the water is so salty — five times as salty as the ocean — but floating is a shrieking good time. It's like you're weightless.

**Extracurricular:** The resort village of Manitou Beach itself is a peaceful place, equipped with walking trails, golfing, sailing, boating, paddling and more.

**Bonus:** Therapeutic minerals in the water include magnesium, carbonate, potassium, mineral salts, sodium, calcium, iron, silica and sulphur.



**NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONTARIO**  
**124 on Queen Hotel & Spa**

**Overview:** The wellness hydrotherapy circuit is the key feature of The Spa at Q, a 12,000-square-foot full-service subterranean space with a giant skylight. Guests work their way through hot, warm and cool pools, plus a sensory shower, eucalyptus steam room and cedar-lined sauna. A snow room cools and refreshes, while a Himalayan salt room gets rid of toxins.

**Extracurricular:** The boutique hotel itself is a delight, as is the adjacent Treadwell Cuisine, its menus driven by the best Niagara has to offer. The town is filled with tempting treats like ice cream parlours and little boutiques.

**Bonus:** The signature treatment room has an infrared sauna to enjoy before the therapy.

[124QUEEN.COM](http://124QUEEN.COM)

TOP PHOTO, COURTESY OF MANITOU SPRINGS  
BOTTOM PHOTOS, COURTESY OF 124 ON QUEEN



**CHESTER, NOVA SCOTIA**  
**Sensea Nordic Spa**

**Overview:** Nova Scotia's first Nordic spa offers a full menu of massages, facials and body treatments, including a noted Ayurvedic head massage. For facilities, the chief attraction is the four-season outdoor water features — relaxing Scandinavian sauna rituals, hot and cold baths and Turkish baths, all scenic and beautifully landscaped. Visitors can also do yoga and Pilates.

**Extracurricular:** The village and surrounding waters are filled with resorts and marinas, making it a popular hub for the yacht crowd and racing buffs. Recreational pursuits like kayaking, golf, hiking and wandering the art studios and cool boutiques can also be worked into the agenda.

**Bonus:** There are a number of B&Bs and quaint inns nearby, but overnight accommodations at the spa itself are "coming soon."

[SENSEA.CA](http://SENSEA.CA)

**NAPLES, ITALY**  
**Ischia**

**Overview:** Less glamorous than its younger sister Capri, this picturesque volcanic island in the Tyrrhenian Sea, at the northwest entrance to the Gulf of Naples, is thick with mineral-rich natural springs and thermal spas — some of the most renowned in Europe. The outdoor Baia di Sorgeto and Le Fumarole dei Maronti are open to the public, but there are numerous private offerings, too.

**Extracurricular:** Beyond the spas, cultural heritage can be found in the archaeological and marine museums and at the medieval Aragonese Castle. The foothills of Mount Epomeo are nothing but unspoiled forest to hike through, and you can snorkel over the remains of a Roman city on the sea floor at Cartaromana Beach.

**Bonus:** You get the best of both worlds here: the high-style vibe of a luxe dolce vita wrapped in simple, rural Italian authenticity.

[ISCHIA.IT](http://ISCHIA.IT)

TOP PHOTOS, COURTESY OF SENSEA NORDIC SPA  
BOTTOM PHOTOS, COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



## A family affair

“What tips do you have for multi-generational family travel? We are heading to the beach with teens, young adults, aunties and uncles, grandparents – the works.”



**It's great getting the whole family together** on an exciting getaway — until it isn't. Different age ranges, tastes, interests and personalities can make the whole exercise beyond annoying. Planning such a trip can be a difficult and thankless task — and family members make the best complainers, don't they? So fussy.

The beach is a great idea, because there's a guaranteed recreation overload for those who want it and relaxation for those who don't. But whether you're checking in to a big all-inclusive resort or a cabin in the woods, many of the guidelines are the same:

- Have everyone help with the planning. That way, no one can complain later if they didn't provide input. Make sure the budget is involved in these negotiations so there are no surprises when the time comes to pay the bill.
- Get everyone involved in the routine, each person playing to their strengths, chipping in to move the day forward. Someone gets up early to secure chairs on the beach, someone takes care of dinner reservations, someone else researches the excursions or plans a physical activity. Many hands and brains make light work.
- Map out as many things in advance as possible — particularly the meal

planning — so you're all not texting or messaging each other constantly. No one wants their phone dinging every two minutes.

- Try not to overschedule — this is a vacation, after all. Downtime gives everyone a chance to rest and take a break from each other.
- Make activities optional. I once went on a group vacation where the organizer handed us a weekend itinerary with something planned at noon, at 4 p.m. and at 8 p.m. The morning and midnight were sometimes included, too. You could jump into the daily plan whenever you liked — you knew where the gang would be at each designated time.

### HOW TO AVOID COVID ON VACATION

Ah yes, the impossible dream. Trying to avoid COVID is like trying to stop breathing. However, there are a few things you can control.

Choose destinations and hotels that are noted for their thorough safety protocols. Research the vaccination rates of the destinations on your short list and see how they measure up. This pre-trip research may be more enlightening than you expect.

Try not to get worn down by staying up late, skipping your nap and drinking a pile of wine every night with dinner. Any kind of illness can strike when your body lets its guard down.

Boost your immune system as much as you can, adding vitamins to your morning routine and making healthy meal choices throughout the day.

Wash your hands more than you would normally, and don't touch your face. Sanitize your hands whenever you're entering a restaurant or sidling up to the buffet.

If you're really worried about becoming ill while abroad, choose outdoorsy activities or plan your vacation around a remote mountainside or beach.

And as always, keep your vaccinations up to date. 🦠



**Doug Wallace**  
Editor & publisher,  
*TravelRight.Today*,  
and your in-the-know  
friend for travel tips  
and trends.

TOP LEFT PHOTO, KUPICOO

## Snacks for the season

Turn summer's bounty into at-the-ready snacks

by **Elizabeth Baird**

**There comes a time in the day when** you feel a little peckish — mid-morning or -afternoon, perhaps, or in the evening. You crave a little something. Sometimes an apple will do, but other times you're after something a little more satisfying.

### GOLDEN BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP WITH EXTRAS

**From the fridge, or freezer:** A golden bowl of soup, chunky with squash, beans, the last of the corn, even a hit of spinach, is guaranteed to satisfy that craving. For a vegetarian/vegan version, replace chicken stock with vegetable stock.

- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) canola or extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp (10 mL) chopped fresh oregano or 1 tsp (5 mL) dried, crumbled
- 1 tsp (5 mL) smoked or unsmoked sweet paprika
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) pepper
- 4 cups (1 L) cubed, peeled and seeded butternut squash
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) each diced sweet red bell pepper and halved cherry tomatoes
- 4 cups (1 L) chicken stock, approximate
- 1 can (19 oz/540 mL) cannellini or navy beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) yellow corn kernels, scraped from 1 large cob
- 1 cup (250 mL) lightly packed coarsely shredded spinach



In a large pot over medium-low heat, sweat the onion and garlic in oil until tender, about 8 minutes. Stir in the oregano, paprika, cumin, salt and pepper, then add the squash, red pepper and tomatoes. Stir well to coat the vegetables with the spiced onion and garlic; cook, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes.

Pour in the chicken stock and use it to deglaze (scraping any tasty bits from the bottom) the pot. Bring to a boil, cover and reduce heat to a simmer. Cook until the squash is tender, about 10 minutes. Stir in the beans; cook for 10 minutes. (Make-ahead: Let cool.

Cover and refrigerate for up to a day. Reheat to continue.) Stir in more stock or water if desired. Add the corn kernels; simmer until tender, 5 to 10 minutes, and just before serving, stir in the spinach. The steaming heat of the soup will cook the spinach almost instantly.

Makes 6 big-bowl snacks. Refrigerate or freeze in containers the size to suit your household.

**Timesaver:** Save time and effort with already peeled, seeded and cubed butternut squash. You may need to cut the already-cubed squash into smaller pieces.

PHOTO, JEZEBEL ROSE



**CLASSIC HUMMUS**

**From the fridge:** The best and lasting culinary remnant of the 1960s and '70s.

- 1/2 cup (125 mL) tahini
- 1/4 to 1/3 cup (60 to 80 mL) fresh lemon juice, divided
- 1 tsp (5 mL) ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
- 1 can (19 oz/540 mL) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1/3 cup (80 mL) cold water
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) extra virgin olive oil
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced

**Garnish with drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and a sprinkle of sun-dried black olives**

In a food processor, whirl the tahini, 1/4 cup (60 mL) lemon juice, cumin and salt until smooth. Add the chickpeas, water and olive oil; whirl again to make a super-smooth hummus. Scrape sides of bowl as needed. Stir in the minced garlic. Taste, adding more lemon juice if you like.

**Tip:** If you don't own a food processor, whirl in a blender or mash with a potato masher or fork – your hummus will be a little chunkier, which you may prefer.

**Make-ahead:** Hummus tastes even better after mellowing in the fridge overnight. Scrape into air-tight containers and refrigerate for up to 2 days. Or, neatly pack into shallow bowls, smooth the top and drizzle with olive oil and a sprinkle of sun-dried black olives.

Makes about 2 cups, enough for 8 people, with chips, crackers, celery, carrot or fennel sticks.

**Roasted Red Pepper Hummus:** A roasted sweet bell pepper adds a smoky twist to a classic tahini-based hummus. Nowadays, you will find already-roasted and peeled sweet bell peppers alongside the supermarket's selection of olives. Or check out jarred roasted peppers. Or roast your own peppers at 375°F (190°C) for about 45 minutes until the flesh is tender and the skin roasted brown and easy to pull off. Trim away core and seeds; chop the flesh. Add the red pepper and 1 tsp (5 mL) smoked sweet paprika to the ingredients in the food processor; whirl until smooth, stopping from time to time to scrape down the sides of the bowl.

**MUSHROOM PÂTÉ**

**From the fridge:** Regular cremini mushrooms make a savoury pâté, partnered with cream cheese on toasted baguette slices or spread straight onto crackers or crispbread. You might think about adding a few tangy pickles.

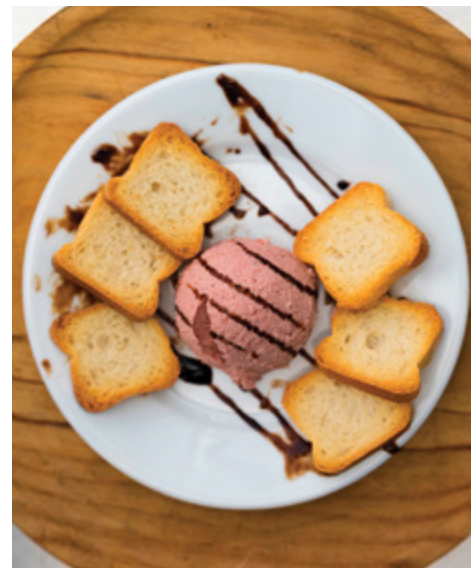
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) butter, divided
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 3 1/2 cups (8 oz/225 g) sliced mushrooms
- 2 tsp (10 mL) chopped fresh thyme
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) pepper
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) dry white wine or chicken stock

In a saucepan, melt half of the butter over medium-low heat. Stir in the onion and garlic and cook, covered, over medium-low heat, stirring often, until onion pieces are translucent, about 6 minutes.

Add mushrooms, thyme, salt and pepper. Increase the heat to medium high and, stirring frequently, sauté until they release moisture. Keep stirring until the mushrooms are dry and brown, about 10 minutes.

Pour in the wine and continue stirring until the wine has been absorbed. Add the remaining butter. Purée in a food processor (small bowl recommended) until smooth. Press the pâté into an airtight container or serving dish and refrigerate until firm, about 4 hours.

Makes about 1 cup (250 mL) pâté, enough to top a dozen baguette slices.



TOP PHOTO: GULSINA  
BOTTOM PHOTO: JONATAN RICARDI JOYA

**DATE AND APPLE MUFFINS**

**From the treats jar, a.k.a. large cookie jar:** Why are old-fashioned muffins still a good snack? Most likely because they are quick to make and bake, they freeze well, and they fill that little hole. Make them local with the flavours of fall, including freshly picked apples. Cortland, Northern Spy and Golden Delicious are my choice to combine with dates.

- 1 large apple, about 8 oz/250 g
- 2 cups (500 mL) all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup (180 mL) granulated sugar
- 2 tsp (10 mL) baking soda
- 1 tsp (5 mL) freshly grated nutmeg or ground cinnamon
- 3/4 tsp (4 mL) salt
- 3/4 cup (180 mL) chopped pitted dates
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 cup (250 mL) buttermilk, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) canola oil
- Extra granulated sugar, optional

Line 12 muffin cups with paper liners or butter judiciously; set aside. Position an oven rack in the centre of the oven. Heat oven to 375°F (190°C).

Quarter, core and peel the apple. Cut into 1/4-inch (1/2 cm) dice; set aside 1 cup (250 mL) of apple for the filling, the remainder for topping.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking soda, nutmeg and salt. Add the dates and 1 cup (250 mL) apples; toss briskly to separate and coat the pieces of fruit.

In a separate bowl whisk together the eggs, buttermilk and oil. Scrape over the dry ingredients, and with a wooden spoon, stir the dry and wet together until there are no streaks of dry ingredients left in the batter.

Scoop neatly into the prepared muffin cups. Scatter remaining chopped apple over tops of batter and, if desired, sprinkle lightly with a little extra granulated sugar. Bake until nicely domed golden brown and firm to a light touch, about 20 minutes. Let pan cool on a rack for 5 minutes, then gently transfer muffins to a plate to enjoy still warm, or separately onto a rack to cool.

Store in airtight container(s) at room temperature for 1 or 2 days, or freeze for up to 2 weeks.

Makes 12 especially satisfying snacks.

PHOTO: MELICA

**POACHED PEARS WITH A SWEET SPICE TOUCH**

**From the market:** Too fancy for a snack, you say? Picture opening the fridge door and spying those fat pears in their sweet wine and spicy syrup bath ...

And why not top with a modest scoop of something creamy – ice cream, crème fraîche, Greek yogurt.

- 4 cups (1 L) water
- 2 cups (500 mL) white wine, Riesling, Moscato or Gewurztraminer recommended
- 1 cup (250 mL) granulated sugar
- 2 strips lemon peel
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) fresh lemon juice
- 2 thin slices fresh ginger
- 4 whole star anise, optional
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) whole cloves
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) whole cardamom, lightly crushed
- 6 firm but ripe pears, Bartlett or Bosc recommended

In a large pot, mix the water, wine, sugar, lemon peel and juice, ginger, star anise, if using, cloves and cardamom. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, set out a large bowl of

cold water. Peel pears and cut in half from stem to blossom end. With a melon baller or small spoon, neatly scoop out the core. As you work, add the pears to the water to keep them from browning. When the poaching syrup is ready, drain the pears.

Arrange the pears in a single layer in the syrup; cover with a circle of parchment or waxed paper cut to fit over the pears so they cook evenly. Bring to a simmer; cook, turning pears if needed to balance the cooking time, until pears are tender but not mushy, about 20 to 30 minutes. With a large slotted spoon transfer the pears to a storage container or serving bowl. Pour any syrup collected around the pears back into the pot.

Return the pot of poaching syrup to a medium-high heat. Boil until reduced to about 1 1/2 cups (375 mL), about 10 to 15 minutes. Let cool and spoon over the pears, keeping a few of the whole spices for decoration.

Makes 6 generous snacks at 2 halves per serving, or up to 12 snacks in individual bowls with the "something creamy."

**POPCORN WITH TWISTS**

**Pantry treat:** The ultimate snack – finger-friendly and forever associated with relaxing and fun times. The toppings below are more savoury than salty, relying on spices rather than salt to keep your hand dipping into that big bowl. Just one more little handful ... you know the risk!

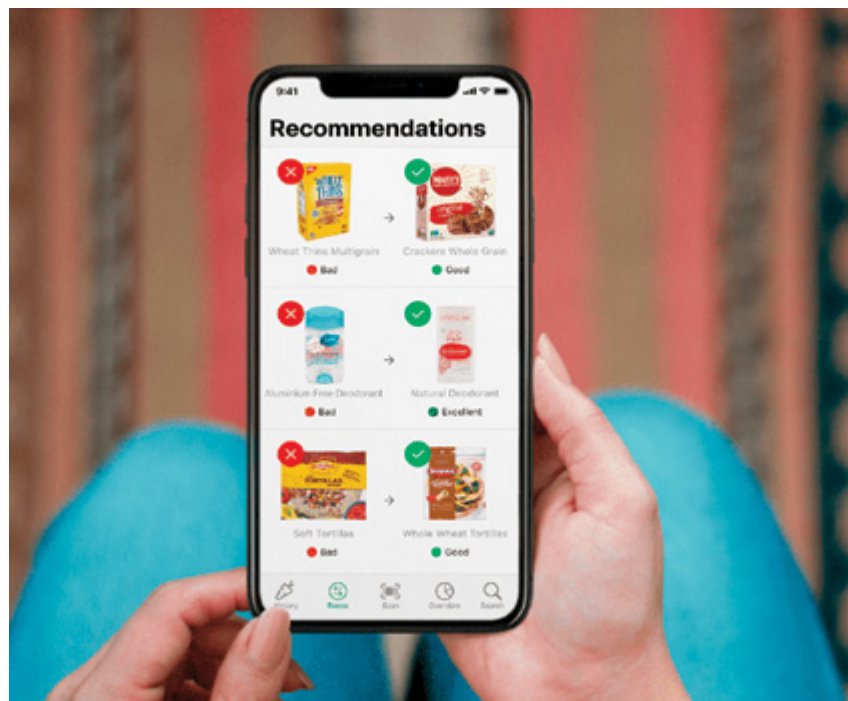
Pop your corn as you would usually – stovetop or microwave. Then sprinkle on a topping!

**Zaatar Popcorn:** While tossing the popcorn, drizzle over it 1 tbsp (15 mL) canola or extra virgin olive oil. Keep tossing while sprinkling in 1 to 2 tsp (5 to 10 mL) zaatar.

**Masala Spice:** While tossing the popcorn, drizzle over it 2 tbsp (30 mL) melted butter or canola oil, followed by 2 tsp (10 mL) mild masala spice blend.

**Parmesan Popcorn:** While tossing the popcorn, drizzle over it 2 tbsp (30 mL) melted butter, followed by 3 tbsp (45 mL) finely and freshly grated Parmesan (Parmigiano Reggiano). Toss and enjoy while still warm. 🍿





## Just what's in that?

A mobile app makes it easy to see

by **Andrew Dobson**

**You know you should read the ingredient list** before you put that box of energy bars in your basket, but who really knows what half those ingredients are? And their impact on your health?

To the rescue: Yuka mobile app. Just open the app, tap “scan,” point it at the product’s bar code, and get an easy-to-understand colour-code score out of 100. Tap on the rating and you get the positives and negatives that contributed to the product’s score and links to backup research.

Yuka can rate cosmetic ingredients, too, on their potential impact on your health and the environment.

Download Yuka for free — iOS and Android — at the Apple or Google app store.

### Salt Spring Kitchen Co.

This woman-owned jam factory has been making small-batch sweet and savoury jams, preserves and hot sauces since 2012, creating meaningful employment on the tiny island off the B.C. coast. Culinary entrepreneur Melanie Mulherin launched with Spicy Tomato Savoury Spread, a next-level topping for sandwiches, burgers and more, selling it at local farmers’ markets, to rave reviews. Today, Salt Spring Kitchen Co. offers a range of savoury, spicy and sweet jams and sauces — Candied Jalapeño Relish and Sour Cherry, Rhubarb & Rosemary Spread are favourites — to pair with cheese and charcuterie, wow up your sandwiches or turn classic mains like beef brisket into something Michelin-worthy.

Order online ([saltspringkitchen.com](http://saltspringkitchen.com)) or visit local gourmet food stores across Canada.



### Cuisinart Hurricane Pro Blender

In my family, fall marks the start of soup season. If that’s true for you, visit your local farmers’ market, pick up some just-harvested vegetables and fruit, and blend up a velvety, restaurant-quality bisque. Cuisinart’s new Hurricane Pro Blender with innovative BlendLogix technology ensures consistent blending speeds regardless of density or volume of your veg or fruit, and the memory function lets you adjust preset times, then remembers the new settings.

Available online at [cuisinart.ca](http://cuisinart.ca), [amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca) and kitchen-supply, hardware and electronics stores.

### Caramunchies

If you’re looking for a new snack to enjoy on a cozy movie night, look no further than Alberta-based Caramunchies, clusters of creamy, melt-in-your-mouth caramel tumbled with crispy cornflakes. They’re handcrafted in small batches, packaged in resealable bags and come in fun flavours like Salted Caramel, Chocolate Drizzled, London Fog Latte and Reese’s Pieces.

Available online at [caramunchies.com](http://caramunchies.com) — you’ll find a store locator there, too.

### Love and Lemons: Simple Feel Good Food

Much-loved food blogger Jeanine Donofrio’s new cookbook serves up 125 plant-focused meals I’m pretty sure carnivores will also love! Each chapter in *Love and Lemons: Simple Feel Good Food* — breakfasts, salads, soups, stews, dinners and desserts — is broken down into two parts: one for recipes you can make with minimal prep, and the other for food you can prepare ahead of time. Donofrio’s easy recipes include trusted tips and flow charts that offer visuals on how to mix and match ingredients. Available at Chapters Indigo. 🌱



PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: COURTESY OF SALT SPRING KITCHEN CO., YUKA, CUISINART AND CHAPTERS INDIGO

# Fall for lower-sugar drinks

All the taste without all the sugar

by **Charlene Rooke**



### Ahhh ... the long, sun-drenched

patio days of summer, sipping refreshing glasses of coral-coloured spritz or fruity sangria. Well, surprise! You were getting 60 to 75 per cent of your daily sugar intake from just one of those drinks.

Sugar lurks everywhere in everyday drinks, from the relatively low levels in table wines (even those labelled “dry”) to higher levels in some canned ciders, coolers and spritzes. Some so-called hard seltzers and sodas are quite low in sugar and carbs, but if your drink isn’t labelled with a sugar content that’s well under 10 grams per litre, you might be drinking an alco-pop!

### Low-sugar wine

If you favour white wines like Riesling or Moscato or gravitate to “smooth reds,” you’re likely drinking wines with notable sugar levels — though the acidity and tannins in wine can make them taste balanced. Look for wines labelled “dry” — or better yet, with no sugar, such as Bask wines. The Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Grigio and Crisp Rosé all qualify as no-sugar tipples. (They may have up to 0.49 grams per litre of sugar, which rounds down to zero as per Canadian food regulations.) Bask “ferments to dry” in winemaking speak, which means there is no residual sugar left in the bottled wine. Bask also makes tasty zero-sugar canned wine spritzes.

### Fall Spritz

Choose your own flavour adventure with a lighter spritz that gets its taste from seasonal fruit, not sugar.

Gently muddle a few slices of peach, plum or a few raspberries in the bottom of each of two large goblets or wine glasses. Fill glasses halfway with ice cubes, add two ounces of fruit juice (such as cranberry, white grape) to each glass, then slowly top each with five ounces of non-alcoholic or traditional bubbly white or rosé wine. Top with a splash of citrus carbonated water. Garnish with mint leaves and more fresh fruit. Makes two drinks.

### No added sugar

Many non-alcoholic drinks replace the mouthfeel of alcohol with substantial amounts of sugar. Grüvi Dry Secco (made from de-alcoholized Chardonnay) and Bubbly Rosé (made from Chardonnay and Cabernet grapes) are non-alcoholic wines with no added sugar. Yet they still have a lovely effervescent mouthfeel and plenty of fruity and floral flavours and aromatics. They ring in at a mere 60 calories per 10-ounce bottle, half that of soda.

### Sugar and carbs

Most spirits, such as unflavoured vodka, gin, blanco tequila and whisky, have no carbs or sugar, although some rum and brandy is sweetened before bottling. A standard 1.5-ounce alcoholic drink, though, has 100 calories from the alcohol alone. Make a highball with plain or flavoured sparkling water (regular tonic water has almost the same amount of sugar as cola!) and a squeeze of citrus, and your drink is still relatively light.

Beer, on the other hand, is carb-alicious, with around 13 grams from carbs and 150 calories per can, which can quickly add up. Light beers taste refreshing and typically ring in with one-third fewer calories and carbs, and non-alc beers can have just one-third of those amounts. 🍷

PHOTO, COURTESY OF GRÜVI

# In a supporting role

My unexpected journey through retirement

by **Shirley Marie Lazareth** (District 14 Niagara)



Clockwise from top: Shirley Marie Lazareth's mom, Molly Rogers, age then 100, and her son John, Molly's first grandchild. Lazareth's husband, Don, who died last year, his aunt Tiny Boughen and Lazareth's father, John Rogers. Don and Shirley Marie Lazareth in happy times.

**I**t was autumn, September 1988, and in one brief moment, my future was determined.

I had decided to take an early retirement — to step down, to back away, to open the door for others as the door had been opened for me. I was just 56, still young enough to enjoy all that leaving my career offered and ready to embrace a carefree future.

Or so I thought.

Following my decision and actual departure in the summer of 1989, I spent a year on cloud nine, living the “retirement dream.” There were no more early mornings, no yard duties, no meetings, no reports, no bouncing from school to school as I had done for many years as a learning resource teacher. But then my comfortable, welcoming world abruptly took an unscheduled turn. A new “career” emerged — and it became my life.

PHOTOS, COURTESY OF SHIRLEY MARIE LAZARETH

“My retirement did have purpose and, in many ways, has given me a sense of fulfillment and pride.”



Left: Molly Rogers and Lazareth.  
Right: Don and Shirley Marie Lazareth.

The role I began to play was not one I chose — rather, it chose me. Perhaps you have stood on the same stage. Perhaps you also accepted the role you were handed. Perhaps this story could be yours. My retirement from teaching gave way to a necessary and new position — that of a family caregiver. And this is a role I would play for 34 years. But strangely enough, now that I have reached the venerable age of 91, the person I am caring for is me!

As I tell my story, I'm not looking for sympathy but to reflect on the reality that so many of us experience — our retirement dreams of freedom and fun give way to a different reality — but one that is part of the circle of life and can bring its own rewards.

If your story is like mine, you will understand the highs and lows of being a giver of care. The role brings challenges but also a sense of purpose, and a recognition that the beauty of retirement is that we now have the time and ability to serve those who need us most.

This is how it all began ...

My husband's aunt, who was a widow and had no children, was sadly and unexpectedly diagnosed with ovarian cancer at McMaster University Medical Centre in Hamilton, Ont. The year was 1990, and it is forever embedded in my memory. She needed help and we were there.

For the next three years, while my husband ran his business, I took his aunt to appointments, to surgery, further treatment,

and, finally, Hotel Dieu Hospital, where her last days were spent in 1994. It was a sad and eye-opening experience for everyone who knew and loved this gentle, elderly woman. But it was just the beginning of my journey of care.

My 84-year-old father had begun to show signs of dementia and was experiencing a variety of other ailments that had taken a toll on his fragile body. His health was touch and go — too much for my 80-year-old mother to manage alone. As a family, we decided that the best available option was a long-term care home in a different city. My mother sold her house and moved closer to me. It made life easier for everyone, another hurdle met and crossed; his subsequent diagnosis of Alzheimer's did not come as a surprise. We were able to visit Papa John several times a week, and on each visit, he greeted us with little recognition, but he had a smile on his face and blew us a kiss when we left. My husband, mother and I sat by his bedside as he left this earthly life in 1997.

Losing the elderly is sad, but it is the final stage of “being,” as we are told. Life goes on. I repeated those words like a catechism, etching them tenderly into my palette of memories. My personal growth would also go on. I now had my 84-year-old mother to consider. She would be my focus and her well-being my goal. But despite my best-laid plans, life had once again taken a turn.

In 1996, my son was diagnosed with advanced oral cancer and underwent complex surgery. While he remained in remission



Left: Lazareth's garden is her hallowed ground. Each statue is dedicated to someone who has been an angel to her and her family.  
Above: Molly Rogers, Lazareth and John Rogers.

for many years, the threat of a recurrence loomed, and a second surgery was necessary in 2015. Watching your child, no matter their age, suffer and face an uncertain future is traumatic. Although John is nearing age 68, the effects of his cancer, and concerns about a possible relapse, still lurk in the minds of his immediate family and in mine. The years between the first frightening diagnosis and today have affected all of us — his wife, his son, and his extended family. But, most importantly, John is still here, a blessing for which we offer thanks.

Following John's original surgery, life briefly returned to a variation of normal. My husband, Don, had not been well for some time, experiencing frequent transient ischemic attacks, with stroke-like symptoms that last a few minutes — with some, to his dismay, on the golf course. "That is a true handicap," I told him, trying to inject some levity into his fractured world. Over the next several years, I provided care, support and encouragement to Don as he fought valiantly through many other afflictions, including a pacemaker in 2000, a triple bypass in 2001 and macular degeneration in his later years, which affected both his sight and independence.

Although the years following retirement presented many challenges, there were many treasured moments as well.

My mother, Molly, a sweet little British import, came to Canada in 1919 at the age of six on the *Olympic*, the sister ship of the *Titanic*. The ship was designated a troop ship, carrying our soldiers back to Canada from the First World War in Europe; Molly's stepfather was a wounded Canadian soldier. My mother was always a trouper, a real British bulldog. When my dad passed in 1997, she maintained her little Port Colborne, Ont., home until 2000, when she relocated close to me in Fonthill, Ont. For 18 years, she resided at Shorthills Villa Retirement, where I visited several times each week. It was also my pleasure to conduct a lively poetry class for the residents there, along with sharing frequent meals and special occasions such as

Christmas, Mother's Day and birthday parties. Molly's 100th birthday was a blast!

Caretaking can be a physical and emotional challenge, but supporting and spending time with a loved one in their time of need can also bring a sense of intrinsic spiritual satisfaction. Molly was a joy to visit, always smiling and singing songs from her childhood. I will forever cherish my time with her. I felt an uplifting warmth and sense of comfort every time I saw her. She passed away in May of 2018 at the wondrous age of 104.

In 2017, our eldest daughter, who has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and emphysema, moved here from British Columbia to be with Don and me — to lend support and to be supported herself as her struggle to breathe continues. Now, since my husband's passing in March 2022, we two will look after each other.

No, I did not spend my retirement on a sunny beach in Spain, on a mountain trail in Nepal, painting in a unique style like Picasso or learning a new language. I did not further my formal education, stitch quilts.

But my retirement did have purpose and, in many ways, has given me a sense of fulfillment and pride. I believe many of you reading my words today have also played a leading role as a caregiver. Perhaps you are playing it still. This is a life only retirement and opportunity can bring. As a fitting conclusion to my story, my legacy of caregiving has been passed down to my youngest child, Tracey. She, too, is a recently retired teacher who has waited in the wings, my most significant understudy. She is ready, willing and able to pick up the torch and provide care to the members of her family, including me, who need assistance.

Caregivers will always play an important part on this stage called life for those who need us most. And so, I drink a toast to you, my kindred spirits, for a job well done. For now, my final role is clear — to be the best possible caregiver for MYSELF. ☘

## Aging in place

How to grow older at home

by Lesley-Anne Scorgie



**You've decided to stay** in your home rather than move to a supported retirement home, but it means that renovations are in order. Consider these factors before hiring a contractor or choosing your new countertops.

Crafting a list of core needs for your home is key to ensuring that you invest in the right, lasting and flexible home modifications, and it will help you stay on budget.

If your mobility is reduced, you may need to look at ramps, railings, adjusted heights for countertops, beds, toilets and so on, for example. If vision is a concern, modifying lighting, marking the stove and laundry areas clearly, and reducing any built-in tripping hazards, such as lifting carpets, is key.

Rather than making this list on your own, leverage in-home assessment services to better understand your needs and the required improvements to age in place comfortably. Many primary health-care providers can recommend free or low-cost assessment services, specifically suited to your unique health requirements. Some of these are provided through the province

you live in, while others are offered through national or local non-profits like the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has a helpful checklist of low- to no-cost home modifications to consider, if you opt not to receive an in-home assessment ([tinyurl.com/yz82p4et](https://tinyurl.com/yz82p4et)).

Next, prioritize the most important set of home modifications and flag the nice-to-haves. The cost of must-do modifications will form the basis of your budget (don't forget to include any anticipated contractor costs).

### GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

Modifying your home, and then living in it as you age, is an investment. The good news: You can access financial help. Each province offers unique programs; many are geared to support lower-income seniors. The grants include:

- Home mobility adaptations (e.g., the SHARP program in Alberta or the Ontario Renovates program)
- Emergency repair and home-preservation programs (e.g., Nova Scotia's Emergency Repair Program)

- Energy efficiency upgrades and emergency relief for energy costs (e.g., the LEAP program in Ontario); many local utility companies also offer relief programs
- Credits or deferrals for property taxes (e.g., Saskatchewan's Property Tax Deferral Program)
- Secondary suites for retirees (e.g., Manitoba's Secondary Suites program)
- Snow removal (e.g., Ottawa's Snow Go Assist program)

After you've completed a needs assessment and built your budget, investigate available financial systems and supports. And, if your internet searching isn't fruitful, make a trip to your local library. Librarians are incredible in helping to refine searches and get you the information you need.

If you need in-home care, eligible medical expenses can be claimed on your tax return.

If staying in your home for as long as possible is what's right for you, incorporate these additional to-dos into your plans: get an updated financial plan prepared with your advisor so that you can see the long-term impacts of your age-in-place investments; check in on your will, power of attorney and health directive to ensure they reflect what you want should you become unable to make independent decisions about your finances or health; and make a clear plan to stay connected socially and to the services you need to thrive.

1. The provincial grants (and in some cases forgivable loans) range from a few thousand dollars to over \$20,000, and the terms and conditions are unique. The usual process is that you pay first, and then apply for the grants.
2. Renovation expenses that improve safety and access in a home generally qualify for the federal Home Accessibility Tax Credit or the Medical Expense Tax Credit. The maximum claim is \$20,000 per year per qualifying individual for the federal Home Accessibility Tax Credit.

Home modifications can affect the price when it comes time to sell. Keep the modifications as flexible as possible, so a potential buyer can reverse the work. That said, some buyers might need the modifications themselves and might be willing to pay the asking price. ☘

PHOTO: THURTELL

# Taking time out

We asked: Do you meditate? Why?

Kelly Matheson,  
RTOERO member



I have anxiety from time to time, so I took up kundalini yoga and meditation. I enjoy the kriya technique as well as the mantras, which address common issues for all of us. I find it very calming and relaxing. I do my practices morning and evening and occasionally in between. I enjoy the sociability of the classes as well as being able to practise on my own anytime.

*Anne Masson*  
(District 28 Region of Durham)

I learned mindfulness meditation for anxiety and depression and still continue a daily practice to calm and centre me for the day.

*Elizabeth Mahy*  
(District 23 North York)

Meditation settles my brain. I meditate every day, usually for 30 minutes. I listen to either a guided meditation or meditation music.

*Catherine Cameron-True*  
(District 17 Simcoe County)

I have been following the Transcendental Meditation technique for over 45 years.

It involves two 20-minute meditation sessions, morning and late afternoon. It is fantastic for stress management and helping the body's immune system to take care of itself. I have recently taken a night technique program, a special technique to use just prior to going to sleep, which settles me down and has allowed me to discontinue using sleep aids, which I had been using for the past several years. It uses a mantra system. TM is a big part of my lifestyle and has contributed to my well-being.

*Aubrey Millard*  
(District 3 Algoma)

I do 20-minute meditation and guided meditation via the Art of Living Foundation. I also participate in a 90-minute SKY Breath Meditation with Art of Living.

*Bob French*  
(District 21 Renfrew)

I practise qigong and breathing exercises.

*Andy O'Brien*  
(District 40 Brant)

I meditate as part of yoga and tai chi practice. I also use meditation to help me get to sleep.

*Carol Fortnum*  
(District 8 London, Middlesex)

I have started yoga classes for beginners. I needed to learn how to relax and focus on myself for a while each day.

*Carroll Carkner*  
(District 32 Prescott-Russell)

I practise hygge – the ability to create serenity and coziness in your life by celebrating the little things. Mindfulness is a large part of this concept, and mindfulness is a form of meditation, as is the focused concentration required by yoga.

*Cheryl Nidd*  
(District 43 Nipissing)

I did the Vipassana 10-day retreat/course – I've done it eight times now. At the retreat you meditate 10 times a day for 10 days. At home you meditate in the morning and evening. Great practice.

*Dierdre Bascus*  
(District 16 City of Toronto)

I do self-hypnosis, which is really the same thing but a lot easier, for 15 to 20 minutes a day. I also read Tolstoy's *Calendar of Wisdom* every day.

*Lloyd Gregory McPhee*  
(District 39 Peel)

I do meditate, 20 minutes at a time, in the mornings, after my yoga session. Meditation offers many health benefits. It keeps me centred and calm. I suffer from vertigo, and it helps me manage my vertigo. Sometimes I focus my meditation on having optimum health; sometimes it's just about being still, at peace and totally calm.

*Sylvie Girard*  
(District 5 Cochrane, Temiskaming) 🍷

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