

Reader's

₹100

digest

FEBRUARY
2018

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TODAY
GROUP

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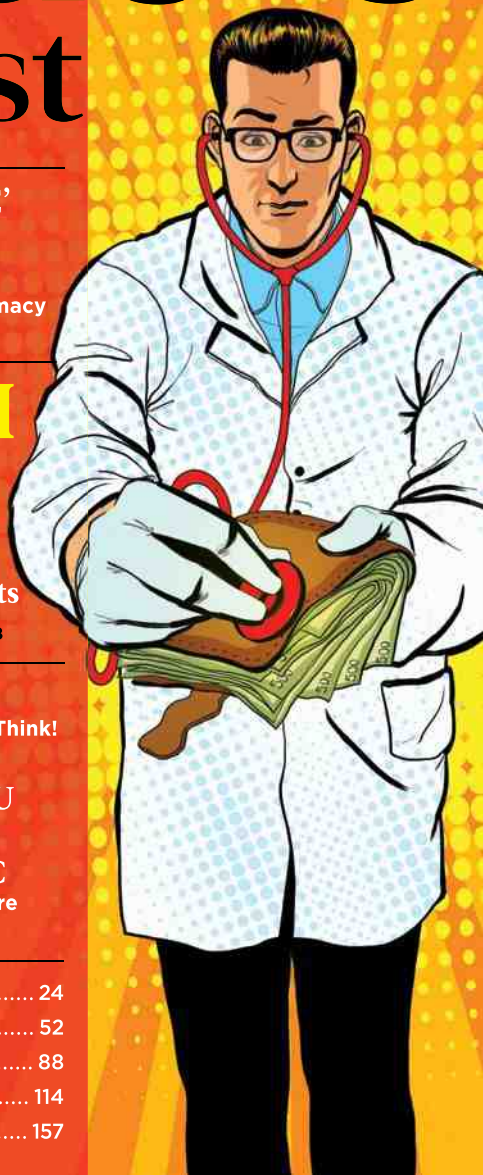
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INSURE NOT JUST HOME, BUT HAPPINESS!

Mom, what happened to Grandpa? Did he fall down?



Be quiet, Dad is calling the doctor.

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Oh God! It must be very expensive. Should I talk to my brother?

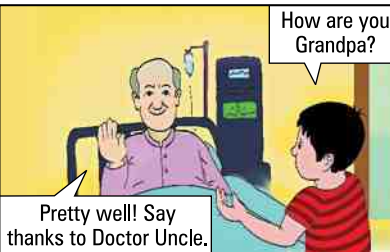


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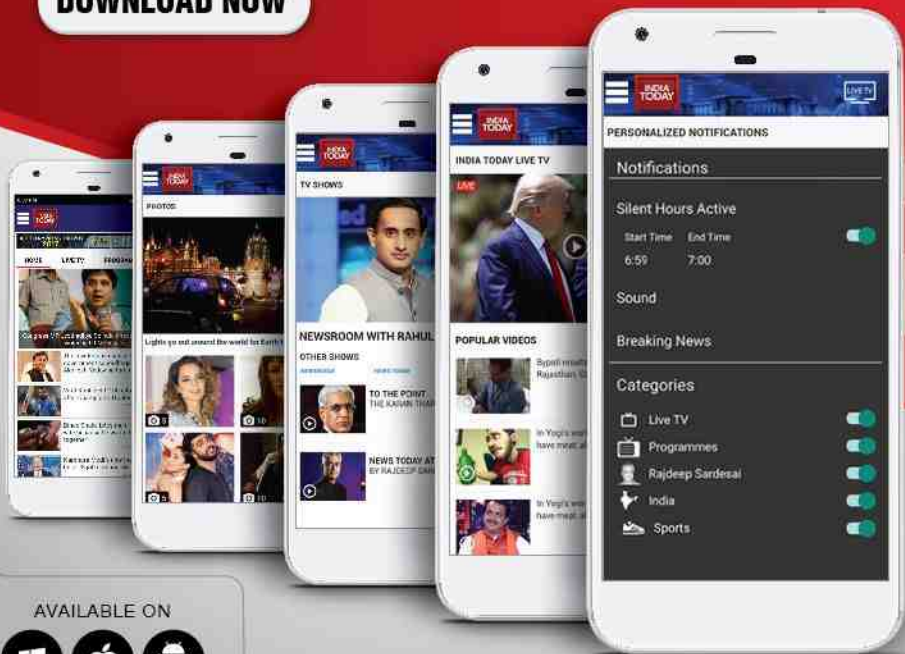
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sankeet@2018

Dear Reader

Make Your Money Count

 I HAVE AN AUNT WHO, like any senior citizen, worries about where to invest her money. Her son says she is addicted to insurance—it's like smoking for her. She buys it compulsively for herself and her children. The truth is, seeing that she lives alone and has money to invest, banks and agents mis-sell a load of products that bag them handsome commissions. This is entirely to their benefit, not hers.

Financial advice can be a slippery slope. Who do you trust, how do you know you are on firm ground? While money decisions are based on hard facts, markets tend to follow their own logic, swayed by hype and sentiment.

How do you keep your nest egg safe and make it grow so that life is comfortable—now and post-retirement?

Reader's Digest identified top investment experts for the best advice possible for our annual money issue—just in time for this financial year. They have broken down the fundamentals in our cover story (pp 58, 64) and shared solid tips on what to do with your money right now. Before you start, remember, each of us needs to use this information and fit it to our personal goals and risk appetites. Also, think long term and do not keep everything in one basket. Most important, use your gut feel to spot good advice and be skeptical.

For all those who want to put meaning before money, there is 'Imagine You Can ...' (p 70), which will inspire you to transition to a life of giving, without having to worry about your finances. Also, read 'Unmasking Aadhaar' (p 24), by Sucheta Dalal, to understand the grim realities of the biometric system.

We celebrate the month of love with stories from our readers in 'In the Mood for Love' (p 74). Reading them I recalled The Beatles anthem, 'All You Need Is Love.' Then there is Valentine's Day humour (p 30), valuable relationship advice (p 102) and the warm and fuzzy 'Little Kids & Their Big Dogs' (p 118). Even our Drama in Real Life (p 88) this month has love at its core.

What's not to love about February, then?

Sanghamitra

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BEST DEAL



Humour in Uniform



WHILE I WAS ATTENDING the Army's Airborne School, USA an instructor demonstrated all the possible parachute malfunctions one might encounter. A student asked, "If we have a complete malfunction, how much time do we have to deploy our reserve parachutes?"

Our instructor answered, "The rest of your life."

Source: netfunny.com

THE INDIAN ARMY is very strict about their rules, even if it is for God. A makeshift temple had been built in

a forward post and everyone would assemble there for puja. One evening, the commanding officer joined them and he was surprised to find Lord Krishna alone on the pedestal, without his consort Radha.

"Where is Radha?" he asked.

"Sir, she can't come here," a jawan replied, "it's a non-family station."

SHANTANU MITRA, Kolkata

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FEEDBACK ON OUR DECEMBER ISSUE

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FUNNY BONES

'Smart People Being (Very) Dumb' was a real treat and made me laugh out loud several times. I am going to keep this issue safe and re-read it when my spirits need a lift. Zohar Lazar's illustrations added to the fun quotient. **SHIRIN PAIS**, via email



OOTY'S UTOPIA

Real secularism does not blossom out of constitutional diktats or administrative annunciations ['My Very Muslim Christmas']. Most Indians, irrespective of their religion or sect, enjoy festivals of all religions.

In Ooty, where we lived

for four decades, we celebrated every Indian festival. I would join Rafiq, the fruit vendor, to partake of the *kanji* (gruel) he broke his Ramzan fast with. Shah, my colleague and friend, was a Brahminic vegetarian who brought vegetable biryani for Eid! He and his children never missed our *sakkarai pongal*. My family never missed the candle-light service at St Stephen's Church, usually held on the eve of the second Saturday in December. The carols at midnight were like the bhajans we heard during Margazhi [a month in the Hindu calendar]. How I miss Ooty and its festivals.

DR N. GOPALAKRISHNAN, Bengaluru

Dr N. Gopalakrishnan, gets this month's 'Write & Win' prize of ₹1,000.—EDS

A MATTER OF ATTIRE

Today, few would regard shirts and trousers, or a colourful sari, as evidence of "sartorial inelegance" ['The Case of the Appropriate Attire']. To state that such attire "undermines the majesty of law" appears a little far-fetched. The high court's order also appears to go against the spirit of the Supreme Court's pronouncements on the right to privacy enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution.

SUNIL MATHUR, Allahabad

ROAD TO DISCOVERY

Srikanan Masabathula's 'The Road Less Travelled' was soul stirring and made me realize that the wish to travel and seek new horizons is universal. Leaving behind the comforts of familiar settings and journeying on my own solitary voyage crosses my mind often. Srikanan achieved it and returned to the fold, but his experience will always

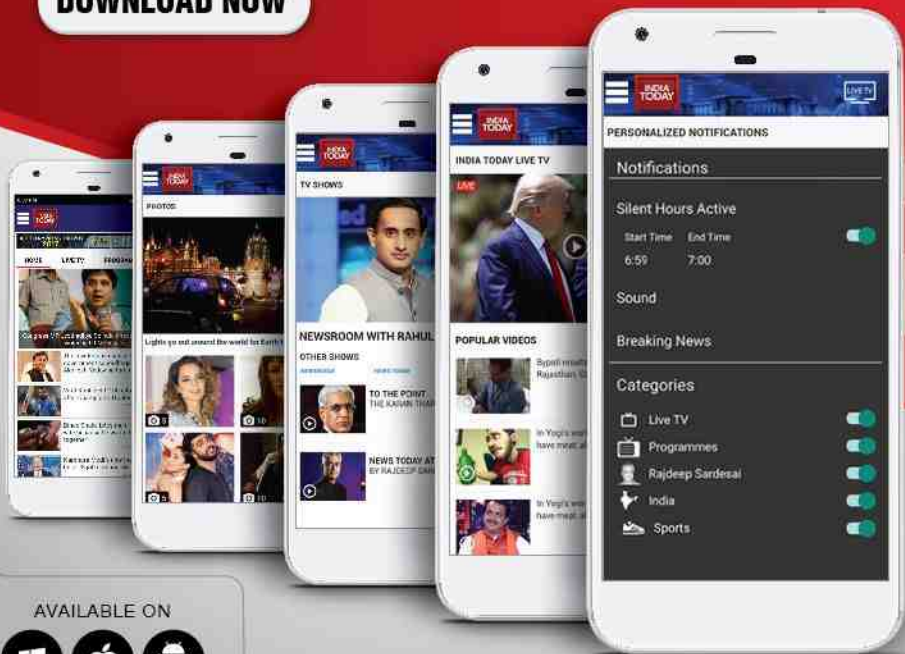


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guide him. Everyday pressures make us want to escape, but we can only travel with a free heart if we view the world without blinkers.

PRITHVIJEET SINHA, *Lucknow*

Such stories can give youngsters the wrong impression, that running away from home could help them succeed in life. These are rare cases and can't serve as a guide to others.

V. R. SASTRY, *Bengaluru*

IN NATURE'S LAP

'The Nature Cure' reminded me of my days in Delhi University's South Campus. Spending a major portion of my youth in nature's lap was indeed therapeutic. The green lands surrounding the concrete, with an abundance of butterflies, insects, snakes, peacocks and peahens, made life on campus blissful. I got to watch fireflies in the evening during the rainy season. It was an antidote to the ever-agitated mind.

SURINDER PAL, *New Delhi*

THE GIFT OF LIFE

I was moved by 'Final Beat of a Golden Heart', and the hero Nicholas's image is engraved in my heart. His death has given a new lease of life to many. His parents' sacrifice is a lesson to the world. His story will touch every heart and will be a boon to those struggling to survive, awaiting a transplant. It's also a lesson on humanity for those who could save lives by donating their organs. **SATYAJIT ROY**, *Bishnupur, West Bengal*

UNLIKELY SAVIOUR

The stories in 'Miracles in Real Life' reminded me of an incident in the late '80s. When my friend's grandfather expired he was given the task of informing his father, who worked in a village nearby. We did not have phones, so we rushed to the bus stop, but the last bus had left. We would have to wait until the morning. As we wondered what to do, a policeman approached us. When we told him what had happened, he asked us to wait. A few minutes later, a police jeep arrived. The officer told us to hop on. They were going to Mancherial town, from where we could reach his father's village easily. It was a real miracle.

K. VENKATA RAMANA RAO, *Chelpur, Telangana*

WOMEN, AS EQUALS

It is atrocious that women continue to face inequality and sexual abuse, even after so many years of gender awareness and sensitization [Kavita Srivastava's 'Yes, All Women']. It tells us a lot about the society we live in. It is appalling that the administration's response to such complaints is always of incredulity. This emboldens men with a perverted mind. I hope we learn to respect women and treat them as equals.

GURPREET SINGH, *New Delhi* 

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Bryant Park



Coaker's Walk



Pillar Rocks

Kodaikanal Hill Station

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EVERYDAY HEROES



A young man saves a suicidal stranger
simply by showing he cares

Bridge Builder

BY ALYSSA JUNG

IT WAS 9 P.M. on a dark, chilly night in November 2015. Desmond Powell, then 17, was walking home from a basketball game along an empty seven-lane road in Manchester, New Hampshire, US; he was looking forward to seeing his mum and grabbing dinner. As he approached the Granite Street Bridge, he noticed something peculiar—a person was sitting on the cement railing, legs dangling over the Merrimack River, about 100 feet below.

“At first I thought he was just hanging out. But as I got closer, I heard

him muttering. Then I clearly heard ‘I’m just gonna jump,’” says Powell.

The stranger was slender, probably in his 20s, Powell thought. He wore dark clothing, and his red hair was topped by a baseball cap. “Hey, buddy, what are you doing?” Powell asked. He kept his distance, standing about six feet away so as not to spook the stranger.

“I’m gonna jump,” the guy said.

“His voice had pain in it, but I could tell he didn’t really want to do this. He just felt there wasn’t any other way,” says Powell.



*Powell, now a second-year student at
Plymouth State University, New Hampshire,
on the bridge where he encountered the
would-be jumper*

Powell sought to engage him. “You have any kids?”

Without turning to look at Powell, the stranger pulled up a picture of his daughter on his mobile phone. She looked to be two years old. “Think about how losing her dad at a young age will affect her,” Powell

suggested. Over the next 10 minutes they talked, the stranger alternating between crying and staring vacantly at the churning black water below.

“My heart was racing, but I stayed collected,” says Powell. By doing so, he teased out the source of the stranger’s troubles.

“I’m having a rough time,” the stranger said. “I can’t make any money, I’m hungry and I’m addicted to heroin.”

Powell, who by this point had inched closer to the stranger, assured him that he cared and that others would care, too, if he leaped into the river. Something about Powell’s calm, earnest entreaty caused the stranger to finally turn and look at him. Powell, now about two feet from the stranger, held out his hand and left it there. “I felt I could grab him in time if he jumped, but I also wanted him to know that I was there for him,” he says. To his surprise, the stranger took his hand and climbed down.

“Let me buy you something to eat,” Powell said. “I’m Desmond.” They walked a few minutes to a Dunkin’ Donuts. As they sat down to eat, someone who’d overheard Powell talk about the stranger’s sad story suggested that the police be called. Afraid he might be arrested, the

stranger bolted from the restaurant. “Come back!” Powell yelled. But he was gone before Powell could stop him.

Powell scoured the area, looking for the stranger. While searching a parking lot, he heard “Hey, Desmond”. It was the stranger. “I’m sorry, man. I panicked.”

“*I’m having a rough time. I can’t make any money, and I’m addicted to heroin.*”

Then, after a pause: “Can you call the police so I can get help?”

The two waited together on the street until the police arrived. During that time, the stranger turned the tables on Powell. “He asked me about my life and goals,” says Powell.

Fifteen minutes later, Powell watched the police drive the stranger away. He never did get his name, nor does he know what became of him. But Powell, who was honoured by the city of Manchester for his caring response, will always remember the last words the stranger said to him. As he climbed into the patrol car, he turned to Powell. “Thank you,” he said. “You really are a hero to me.” **R**

Where fashion gets personal



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VOICES & VIEWS

In My Opinion

Unmasking Aadhaar

Will the UIDAI listen to the harassed and needy?

BY SUCHETA DALAL



SUCHETA DALAL is the Managing Editor of Moneylife and founder of its associate, non-profit Moneylife Foundation. A business journalist for over three decades, she has been engaged in spreading financial literacy and consumer awareness. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 2006.

THE MINDLESS, MANDATORY biometric linkage of Aadhaar numbers to every aspect of our lives—from birth to death, telephones and bank accounts—is causing widespread harassment. It has, finally, woken up many who believed the hype that biometric identification was a gift to citizens and a world-beating technological leap. The number of people who are wary about the risks involved in Aadhaar linkages has now risen dramatically, with details of its fallibility being widely reported. But the continued coercive tactics by phone companies, banks, insurers, cooking gas suppliers and regulators indicate that the UIDAI (Unique Identification Development Authority of India) and the government are in no mood to listen.

Meanwhile, three things have worked at making people cautious. First, the growing evidence of how inefficient biometric identification in Aadhaar is. Second, Aadhaar is not merely about acquiring an identification number; there will be a cost/fee involved in every authentication and updation (for those who are not net-savvy). The government has maintained a stunning silence on the cost of updation and other mandatory services.

Third, most people are realizing that biometrics change

ILLUSTRATION BY KESHAV KAPIL

over a lifetime. This means that Aadhaar authentication can fail anytime and would need frequent updating (for senior citizens, maybe even every couple of years). Sections 6 and 31(2) of the Aadhaar Act also make it clear that citizens may need to “update their demographic information and biometric information from time to time” in the manner specified by the UIDAI regulations. If you find it frustrating to update bank KYC (know your customer) information, get prepared for perpetual harassment of multiple updates every time you change telephone service-provider, bank or insurer; or when your biometrics let you down.

While secure updation is not an issue for the tech-savvy, Aadhaar is a nightmare for vulnerable, less-literate people and disempowering for senior citizens who will need to rely on Aadhaar *kendras* or bank officials for updation. What is stunning is that the UIDAI appoints enrollers and mandates linkages, but provides no recourse to those who are cheated by enrolment agents and banks. If you are a victim, you will end up fighting a legal battle or chasing the police for redress.

Consider another aspect. Like direct debits for loan repayment and standing instructions for credit card and other payments, the effort involved in the updation exercise will make us even more reluctant to change service-providers and put up



with shoddy service. This makes a mockery of competition and choice in a free market.

Interestingly, even the Institute of Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT), a subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has called for caution in use of Aadhaar for government programmes, based on a study of its implementation in Andhra Pradesh. It says that it is also unclear if, in the long run, the benefits of Aadhaar will outweigh the negatives.

DEVASTATING IMPACT

Let us look at how people across the economic spectrum are already affected. On 1 December 2017, Premani Kunwar, a 64-year old widow died of starvation. Her Aadhaar-linked bank account was manipulated to fraudulently transfer her old-age pension into the account of her husband's first wife. Denied

income and rations, she slowly starved. Shockingly, the first wife had a valid bank account with updated KYC (presumably Aadhaar-linked) to which funds were transferred, even 25 years after her death. The case reeks of collusion between bank officials and a stepson, who has been arrested, and exposes the easy manipulation of records and its devastating impact on the very poor.

At another end of the spectrum is N. Vadia, a high net-worth chartered accountant, who had his bank account abruptly frozen for failure to update KYC information. While Vadia claims he was never informed, the bank says it sent him multiple messages. There is no explanation on why the bank, a major corporate entity, failed to follow RBI rules prescribing graded freezing of the account, or couldn't have made a call. Instead, it even dishonoured RTGS/NEFT credits. Since the banking ombudsman rarely rules in favour of customers, Vadia will have to battle it out in a consumer court, switch banks or simply accept subpar service. In effect, he is slightly less vulnerable than Kunwar. Failure of biometrics adds another tool of harassment to this situation.

Ravindra, a 64-year-old central government officer, who, harried by

repeated failure of Aadhaar authentication, wrote, "I am desperate and sometimes start thinking of ending of my life."

Writing to the UIDAI was of no use. Instead, he received gratuitous advice to procure a phone in his son's name, thereby defeating the purpose of linkage, disempowering the senior citizen and placing a needless burden on his son.

Neither the government nor the UIDAI has bothered to respond to thousands of such senior citizens

posting angry or plaintive complaints on the National Consumer Complaints Forum.

Then there is Airtel Payment Bank, which with its telecom provider, Bharti Airtel, opened illegal accounts for subscribers who linked their Aadhaar to their phone, and diverted over ₹138 crores of

subsidies to these accounts. It was fined ₹2.5 crores by the UIDAI, but the 5,60,000 consumers got no compensation; getting their money back was the only reward. This raises serious issues about data sharing between related entities and account opening procedures followed by payment banks. The RBI has been silent so far.

From the unschooled Premani, who lost her life, to the tech-savvy Vadia, every consumer segment is vulnerable



*Every
consumer is
vulnerable in
the opaque
Aadhaar
environment.*

to coercive actions or fraud in the opaque Aadhaar environment.

What is worse, a government that is in the habit of repeatedly changing its goalposts is not called upon to explain its claim that it will help unearth black money.

UIDAI's response to criticism has been to browbeat and silence critics. When *The Tribune* exposed its vulnerability by gaining access to the UIDAI database (not biometrics) by paying just ₹500 to an intermediary, it reacted by filing a police report. When this led to a media uproar, the government back-pedalled quickly.

With Supreme Court hearings starting on 17 January*, the UIDAI has come up with the idea of a 16-digit virtual ID that gives enrollers an option to not share their real Aadhaar number. This has already come in for

criticism from experts, but the bigger issue is that it will be operational only by March, when the new deadlines for Aadhaar linkage to phones and bank accounts would have expired.

The UIDAI has also announced the introduction of facial recognition purportedly for better security, and to address the issue of failed authentication for citizens whose fingerprints have worn out. In case the apex court does not grant relief to the petitioners, we are all in for rough times, while the UIDAI experiments with new technologies whose cost, efficacy and availability across the country are unknown. **R**

*Editors' Note: At the time of going to press, the Supreme Court was hearing the Aadhaar matter.

Sources: *The Tribune*; thehindubusinessline.com; ptinews.com; thewire.in; scroll.in; countercurrents.org; uidai.gov.in; pib.nic.in; rbi.org.in; idrbit.ac.in; livemint.com; indianexpress.com

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* *

CELEBRITIES TALK BRITAIN

TV personalities share their thoughts on their fair nation:

Kevin Bridges on the Royal Family: "It must be pretty surreal, being Prince Harry and William on a stag night. Just you and your mates, stuffing pictures of your gran into your lap-dancer's bra."

Karl Pilkington on having a stiff upper lip: "I'm really happy. I just don't choose to show it."

Frankie Boyle on English-Scottish relations: "In Scotland we have mixed feelings about global warming, because we'll get to sit on the mountains and watch the English drown."

Source: buzzfeed.com

Points to Ponder

SINCE WE'RE ALL going to get wrinkly and die, maybe we've got to move in the direction of acceptance about that. It's like what they teach you in driving school: If your car skids, turn the wheels right into it. It's counter-intuitive, but don't fight the slide.

AMANDA PEET,
actor, on lennyletter.com

THE TWO WORDS *silent* and *listen* contain the same letters arranged differently ... In whatever relationship you may be in, the best way to listen is to remain silent.

ROBERT HERJAVEC,
*entrepreneur, in his book
You Don't Have to Be a Shark*

PEOPLE USED TO wait in line at the checkout and daydream. Now they pull out their phones and go right back into the digital world. This is a missed opportunity to reflect, to relax, to be mindful of the moment. Creativity really lives in those quiet, silent spaces.

ADAM GAZZALEY,
neuroscientist, on berkeleywellness.com



I never woke up and thought, I really want to live a bold life. I just can't do the other.

ANGELINA JOLIE,
actor, in Vanity Fair

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Valentine's Day Gifts Are Silly. Unless ...



BY ROBIN McCAULEY



ROBIN
McCAULEY is an artist and a writer living in Los Angeles with her husband and four cats.

☞ PLEASE DON'T GET ME anything for Valentine's Day. I mean it. I don't need anything. I don't need you to give me material things to show me how much you love me. I know you love me. That's all that matters!

I mean, OK, if you really want to do something to show me you love me this Valentine's Day, you can just make me something. Handmade gifts are the best! I would love nothing more than a thoughtful handmade Tiffany diamond ring or card.

If you do make me a card, you don't have to write a love poem in it or anything like that. I don't need all that mushy stuff. Besides, not many words rhyme with my name, Robin. *Bobbin?* No, that's not good for a poem. Maybe try *love*. *Dove ... glove ... in awe of ...* I don't want to put words in your mouth.

I for sure don't need a pretty heart-shaped box of chocolates for Valentine's Day. You never know what is inside each piece, so you have to take a little bite out of all of them just to find the

ILLUSTRATION BY NISHANT CHOKSI,
ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (McCAULEY)

one you like—which is all of them. But no, I can't eat them anyway, because I'm trying to not eat sweets. Unless it's a special occasion.

Some women like getting adorable red or pink teddy bears for Valentine's Day. You know, the ones that have *I Love You* embroidered on them.

But not me! I can't even imagine where I would keep something like that, besides on my bed or on the couch or in the back window of my car or on my desk at work. Where would I put something like that?

I don't need to go out for a fancy dinner on Valentine's Day. Even if we wanted to get a table at a fancy restaurant for Valentine's Day, we wouldn't be able to now. It's too late. Right? Are you sure? Maybe we should call around.

You did? Oh. Well, there's no need to make a special romantic candlelit dinner for me at home. I don't need a perfectly cooked filet mignon with mashed potatoes and asparagus—I'm fine with leftovers or frozen pizza. No Fuss is my middle name! For sure, don't worry about making a delicious creamy cheesecake with cherry topping for dessert. Cheesecake is hard to make. (There are really easy recipes online.)

Oh, and definitely don't get me red roses for Valentine's Day. Yuck! Who

would want red roses? Pink roses are prettier. But as I said, please don't get them for me. They will just die anyway, and I would be able to really enjoy them for only a week or so—well, probably longer if I put an aspirin in the water. They would probably stay pretty for almost two

weeks. Maybe three. But don't get me any. I don't need them.

And don't even *think* about planning a surprise romantic Valentine's weekend getaway. I don't need to be whisked away for a fun trip to know that you love me. That would be just too much planning!

How would I pack for a surprise trip? You would have to pack a suitcase for me, and then I would have to wear what you packed for me.

Like a bikini.

Or my comfy flats that would make it easier to walk on the cobblestones in, say, Rome.

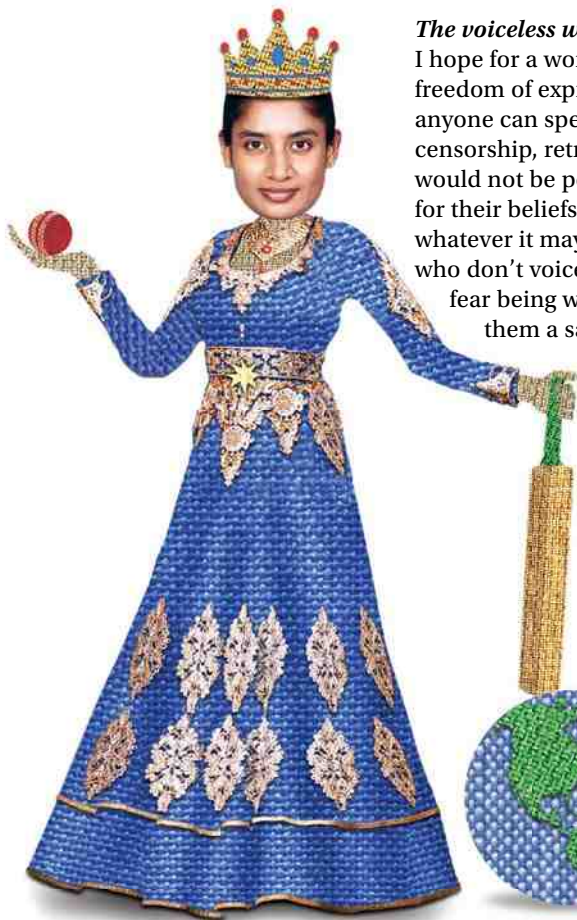
Or that blue sweater (in the third drawer on the right side of the dresser, beneath the grey shawl) to keep me warm during those chilly February nights in Paris.

But I know you, and I'm sure you are sensible and know a surprise romantic trip would not be something I would enjoy at all.

It's a cruise, isn't it? You booked us on a romantic cruise? **R**

“
***Don't worry
about making a
cheesecake, it's
hard to make.
(There are easy
recipes online.)***
”

Mithali Raj's Egalitarian Empire ...



The voiceless would have a voice
 I hope for a world that encourages true freedom of expression. Under my reign, anyone can speak without the fear of censorship, retribution or ridicule. They would not be persecuted for standing up for their beliefs or for having an opinion, whatever it may be. There are some people who don't voice their views because they fear being written off. I would offer them a safe space. Even those who otherwise choose to remain silent will be persuaded to come out and share their opinion. Anyone who misrepresents facts and opinions would lose privileges. My rules will hold fast for all; there will be no exceptions.

The common man would not be forgotten
 Every day would be a celebration of the hard-working common man. Today,



people forget that the average person's life is filled with daily challenges. In the noise of celebrity culture the ordinary person is often ignored.

In my world, we'd seek inspiration from such people. They would serve as role models. We would expand the definition of success so that it goes beyond material wealth and acknowledges individual creativity and growth.

Children would be happy

In my world, schools will not open early in the morning. Children would get to sleep in just a little while longer. I would ban heavy school bags and teachers would not be allowed to burden children with tons of homework. They would have to ensure that each student has understood the subject well. Schools in my world would shun rote learning and encourage children to use their creativity. School would end a little early so that there is enough time to play in the evenings. Children would have the time to enjoy their childhood.

The rat race would be left to rats

Aggressive competition can have negative consequences, pitting people against each other, making them self-centred and alienating those who need a helping hand. People would work together, growing as individuals and as a

team. No skill or quality would be ignored or deemed unfit for success. Healthy competition would be encouraged, be it in college or at the workplace, and we would celebrate every individual's ability.

Compassion and tolerance for all

There would be no place for gender disparity. Citizens would learn to be more compassionate towards each other. I would pass a law that would eliminate gender bias in every aspect of life. Laws would also ensure the eradication of social discrimination. Men, women and children will live in harmony with each other and their environment. We'd be tolerant of different ways of life, cultures and religions.

Caring for the planet

There are so many campaigns to protect the environment today. However, these are not fruitful because people only care for a finite period and get busy in their day-to-day life afterwards. I would like my citizens to be compassionate towards nature and protective of wildlife. We'd nurture the land we live on, giving back more than we take.

—AS TOLD TO GAGAN DHILLON 

Mithali Raj is the captain of the Indian women's cricket team. She became the first woman cricketer to cross the 6,000-run mark in ODIs during India's ICC Women's World Cup 2017.

SOME POSITIVE STORIES THAT CAME OUR WAY

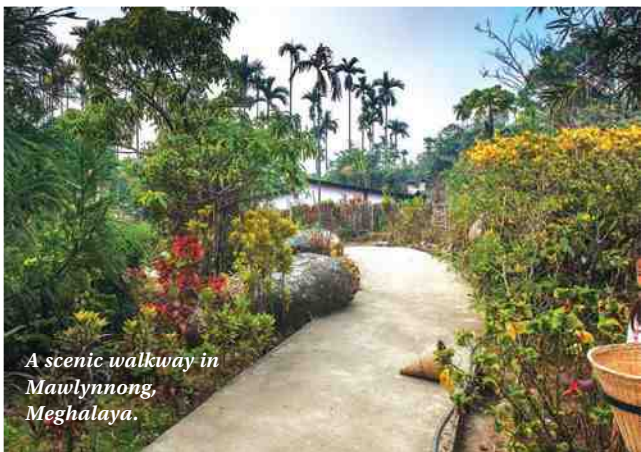
Good News

BY AYUSHI THAPLIYAL

Clean as a whistle

HABITAT “God’s own garden” is a little village, at an altitude of around 5,000 feet in the East Khasi Hills of Meghalaya. Known to be the cleanest village in India, Mawlynnong’s stars are its 500 residents. Every morning, a team of women, deputed to sweep the walkways and common areas, emerge, armed with the trademark cone-shaped wicker baskets and broomsticks.

On Saturdays, the entire village comes together to clean the lanes—now essential, as tourism is booming. People from across India travel to this hamlet, to marvel at its beauty, yes, but also admire its cleanliness. Even the water bodies, where the villagers



A scenic walkway in Mawlynnong, Meghalaya.

wash clothes, are pristine and crystal clear. There is a wicker basket for trash disposal every 50 feet and a recycling programme is also in place.

Mawlynnong also has a 100 per cent literacy rate. Here’s hoping we can draw inspiration and create an Eden in our surroundings.



“It’s a game changer and will have a huge ripple effect throughout the world of fashion.”

Kitty Block, president of Humane Society International, celebrates Italian fashion house Gucci’s decision to become fur-free.

TOP: ALAMY; RIGHT: EMMA CHANNING/LIVERPOOL ECHO

All in it

COMMUNITY An art and community engagement programme, Chaan-Daar, is changing public spaces in the slums of Yerawada area in Pune. Homes are painted in bright colours and decorated with beautiful art and rangoli by artists and residents. The initiative, taken up by the Pune Biennale Foundation and Panchshil Foundation, aims at improving the environment across three more clusters in the city. Inaugurated in December 2017, the project, its official website says, “is based on the idea of ‘*sundarta se swachta ki oor*’” and ‘Chaan-Daar’ is a “metaphorical

opening of minds towards beautiful and clean living environment”.

A happy reunion

RESCUE Officers from the Mettupalayam Forest Department reunited a baby elephant stuck in a canal in Nellimala, Ooty, Tamil Nadu, with its mother. The mother had been attacking vehicles and civilians trying to enter the area where the calf was stuck. The officers then rescued the baby, pulling it out gently from the bog. Weak and exhausted, it was unable to move, so the officers fed it glucose, coconut water and Lactogen till the mother returned two days later.



HEROES: NURSE SAVES LIFE AT 30,000 FEET

BRITISH NURSE Emma Channing (pictured) was flying back to London after a holiday in Mexico when an announcement was made: “Are there any qualified doctors or nurses on board?”

Channing made herself known, and was taken to a passenger suffering from breathing difficulties. “You could tell immediately it was serious,” she says. “I have to admit to being a bit scared.”

But Channing’s nursing instincts took over. The man had suffered a broken rib on holiday and she realized he could be suffering from potentially fatal sepsis. She told the pilot they needed to land, and the plane diverted to Newfoundland, Canada, where paramedics were waiting on the runway to treat the man.

“You never expect something like that to happen to you on holiday,” says Channing. “You just do everything you can.”

—TIM HULSE



A woman finds rare 1933 coins in her family's safe-deposit box. Can the US government confiscate them?



The Case of the Double Eagle Gold Coins

BY VICKI GLEBOCKI

WHEN JOAN LANGBORD found 10 gold coins in a family safe-deposit box in 2003, she knew she'd unburied a treasure. Langbord, then 75, had worked in her late father's Philadelphia jewellery store her entire life, and she was fairly sure that the coins were 1933 double eagles. Designed by American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens with Lady Liberty on one side and a bald eagle on the other, the 1933 double eagle is one of America's rarest and most beautiful coins.

Although 4,45,500 double eagles were minted in 1933, each one valued at \$20, they were never issued. Instead, 500 coins were held by the US Mint's cashier, and the rest were sealed away in the

agency's basement vault. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had pulled all gold coins from circulation because people were hoarding gold during the Depression, depleting the Federal Reserve's stash. The Mint ultimately sent two of the 1933 double eagles to the Smithsonian; the rest were melted into bars and stored in the just-built Fort Knox [US Bullion Depository] in Kentucky.

Or so the Mint thought. In the 1940s, reports of private collectors trading 1933 double eagles shocked Mint officials and sparked a Secret Service investigation. The agents discovered that a cashier had smuggled an unknown number of the coins out of the Mint. The Feds traced 10 of them to Philadelphia jeweller

ILLUSTRATION BY NOMA BAR

Israel Switt—Joan Langbord’s father. Switt had sold those coins to private collectors, later testifying that he had no records of how he’d obtained them or from whom he’d bought them. He was never prosecuted for any crime.

The trail went cold until almost 60 years later, when an English coin dealer tried to sell a 1933 double eagle to a New York collector. The US government immediately seized it. It turned out to be a stolen coin Switt had sold to a Philadelphia collector; it had later been sold by a Texas collector to Egypt’s King Farouk in 1944. Unaware then that the Secret Service was investigating the stolen coins, the Department of the Treasury mistakenly had allowed King Farouk to export the coin. Because of its own error, in 2002 the government agreed to sell that 1933 double eagle at auction and split the proceeds between the English coin dealer and the Mint. It sold for \$7.6 million.

It was two years later that Langbord took her 1933 double eagles to the Mint for authentication. Assuming that her father had owned the coins legally, she hoped to make a similar arrangement, which would have netted about \$40 million, according to Langbord’s original claim. The Mint refused—and confiscated the coins, claiming that the double eagles “already are, and always have been, property belonging to the United States”.

In 2006, Langbord sued the Mint, the

Treasury and various federal officials. She claimed there was a period in 1933, after the coins were minted but before Roosevelt pulled gold from the market, when her father could have legally purchased them. The government maintained that the coins were stolen.

Should the government return the coins to Joan Langbord? You be the judge.



THE VERDICT

No, but it took the courts nearly a decade to make that call. The case came down to one question: Were the coins stolen, or was it possible that they were accidentally but legally issued and then sold to Switt? The United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit ruled in August 2016 that the coins were the Mint’s property, citing testimony showing that Mint records “track the movement of each 1933 double eagle. These records were remarkably detailed”. In other words, says Mint attorney Greg Weinman, “these coins didn’t go out through the front door—they went out the back door”. Langbord appealed to the Supreme Court, but in April 2017, it declined to hear the case. **R**

**Agree? Disagree? Sound off at
editor.india@rd.com.**

Life's Like That



"I told you the tank was half-empty, but oh no, you said it was half-full."

DURING A CONSULTATION with her doctor before having surgery, my friend said to him, "My husband wants me to ask when I will be able to—"

The doctor cut her off right there. "I'm asked that question frequently," he said. He then leaned in and added, "You need to wait at least six weeks for intimacy." My friend shook her head.

"No, what he wanted to know was when I will be able to cook for him."

MICHELLE HOSKINS

A MUCH MARRIED friend visited my bachelorette pad a few months ago.

She gazed at the bedroom, now converted into a library-cum-reading room, and sighed wistfully.

"I wish I had the space for a library," she said.

I jested, “At least you have people in your house. Mine is full of characters!”

SUNANDA SATWAH, *Mumbai*

AFTER OUR MEAL at the pancake house, the waitress asked if we needed anything else.

“Yes,” I said. “Could I get more water, please?”

“Sure,” she said. And with that, she picked up my friend’s glass of water, poured half into mine, and then walked away.

RICHARD HORNER

ASKED MY HUSBAND to bring me a cookie. He brought me the whole box. We’re soulmates. [@WINOSAURUSMOM](#)

QUESTION: What did frequency tell noise?

Answer: Ouch, that hertz!

PRANAY PRADHAN, from the internet

AN ELDERLY COUPLE are in church.

The wife leans over and whispers to her husband, “I just let out a long, silent fart. What should I do?”

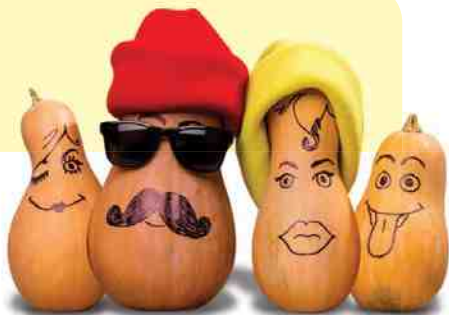
The husband replies, “First off, replace the batteries in your hearing aid!”

GURPREET BAINS, from the internet

Reader’s Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our jokes sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

Reader’s digest

Do you have a
Funny Family
full of characters?



A wise man, or woman, once said, “Families are like fudge—mostly sweet, with a few nuts.” Remember any funny anecdotes that will make us laugh out loud? Share them with us and laugh along ... You stand a chance to be a part of the April cover story and win exciting prizes!

Send your stories—original, unpublished and drawn from real-life incidents—in not more than 200 words, along with your contact details. The last date for submission is 26 February. Email us at editor.india@rd.com.

If I had an extra vacation day, I would ...

... relax and cuddle
with my son,

and watch a movie at home with a
big bowl of butter popcorn.

SHRUTI DIGGAVI, *Bengaluru*



... complete one more

season of an anime.

NAVEEN SALONKAR, *via Facebook*

... be over the moon
half the day

for having an extra day added to my
holidays and spend the other half planning
what to do, and end up doing nothing.

FENEESHIAH THANASLAS,
Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu



... go hiking
into a forest

to freshen up for a new start,
all over again.

NILRATAN BOSE, *via Facebook*

... I would
organize my closet.

NIDA KHWAJA, *Ghaziabad*

... sleep the
whole day.

GIRIJA ARORA, *Dehradun*



ART *of* LIVING

You take supplements to boost your overall health. Here's how to get the most out of every pill

10 Ways to Make Your Vitamins Work Better

BY DENISE MANN WITH BUSHRA AHMED

1. TAKE THEM WITH FOOD

"Eating initiates a cascade of digestive processes that help absorb nutrients from food, and this will also optimize the absorption of the vitamins and minerals," explains Douglas MacKay, senior vice at the Council for Responsi-



ble Nutrition, USA. Taking supplements on a full stomach helps prevent nausea, a common side effect. Of course, there are exceptions. Iron should be taken on an empty stomach for better absorption.

2. LEARN HOW THEY WORK WITH YOUR MEDS

Vitamins and minerals can interact with prescription and over-the-counter medications. “For example, vitamin B₆ (pyridoxine) must not be taken by people consuming levodopa for Parkinson’s. Similarly, vitamin D interacts with many agents including the anti-epileptic agent, phenytoin and anti-TB medicine, rifampicin. And calcium interacts with tetracycline (antibiotic), atenolol (beta-blocker) and levothyroxine,” says Dr Chandra Mohan Gulhati, editor of the journal *Monthly Index of Medical Specialties* (MIMS).

Also, calcium and levothyroxine, a thyroid medication, “compete for absorption in the bloodstream and should be taken a few hours apart”, MacKay says. On the other hand, supplements sometimes help drugs work better. Studies show that antidepressants are more effective when taken with Omega-3-rich fish oil. The worst-case scenario: when supplements excessively amplify

a medication’s effects. For instance, fish oil and vitamin E are natural blood thinners, so if you take any of them together with an anticoagulant, your blood may become too thin, raising the risk for internal bleeding and haemorrhagic stroke. Ask your doctor for guidance before starting on any supplements.



Some vitamins and minerals work especially well together, such as vitamin C and iron.

3. TAKE THEM WITH FAT

Fat-soluble vitamins—namely A, D, E and K—are better absorbed when taken with fat. One study in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* found that adults who took vitamin D with a high-

fat breakfast had 32 per cent greater absorption of the vitamin than those who ate a fat-free morning meal. Ishi Khosla, Delhi-based clinical nutritionist, suggests a breakfast containing eggs, nuts and dairy for healthy fats. But fat-soluble vitamins can accumulate in the body and it is possible to get too much of them. So, always get your doctor’s OK before taking any extra A, D, E or K supplements.

4. PAIR THEM

Some vitamins and minerals work especially well together, says Chris D’Adamo, PhD, director of research at the Center for Integrative Medicine,

USA. Vitamins D and K₂ help calcium absorption. Vitamin C helps in better absorption of iron, as D'Adamo notes, "In a study we did, taking iron with vitamin C reduced side effects such as constipation and nausea."

5. BUT KEEP THESE APART

"Large doses (60 mg or more) of zinc and copper compete with one another, as do iron and zinc," D'Adamo says. Calcium also inhibits iron absorption. Take iron in the morning before eating and calcium in the evening, when it can calm your mood.

6. LOOK INTO DIGESTIVE ENZYMES OR PROBIOTICS

Probiotics, which are live bacteria and yeasts that aid digestion, can help nutrients assimilate better, D'Adamo says. So can digestive enzymes. "Plant-based digestive enzymes tend to survive stomach acid," he says, "so they can help with absorption of certain nutrients that may normally get destroyed by the acid."

7. KNOW HOW AND WHERE TO STORE YOUR STASH

"I've found that the best-quality probiotics are shipped and stored cold in the refrigerator," D'Adamo says. Otherwise, the live cultures they contain will be dead on arrival. Omega-3 fatty-fish oil, another popular supplement, should be kept in a cool, dark spot.


8. GO NATURAL

While studies of vitamin E have had mixed results, it is a powerful antioxidant. If you choose to take a supplement, look for natural forms, which are twice as bioavailable as synthetic ones, D'Adamo says. This means your body can use more of the good stuff. Khosla suggests a holistic approach to food to get vitamins and minerals naturally; consuming fresh vegetables, nuts, seeds in their raw form for better absorption. "At times malabsorption can cause a deficiency despite a healthy diet, so addressing underlying reasons like food sensitivities or poor gut health is essential," adds Khosla.

9. WATCH THE CAFFEINE

Caffeine in your morning cup of coffee may interfere with the absorption of vitamins and minerals and may also leach calcium from your bones. Minimize these risks by consuming no more than three cups a day, and wait about 15 minutes after your cup of coffee to take your vitamins.

10. SCHEDULE THEM

Some supplements should be reserved for evenings, as they can make you drowsy. "Magnesium has a true calming effect, and in some cases, it can make people feel downright sleepy, so it is best taken just before bed," says Michael J. Breus, clinical psychologist and author of *The Power of When*. 

World of Medicine

Acid reflux: diet or drugs

A study published in *JAMA Otolaryngology* examined the medical records of people with acid reflux. One cohort had been treated with proton-pump inhibitors (PPIs) and asked to avoid foods that exacerbate the problem (carbonated beverages, alcohol, spicy or greasy meals and so on). The second group avoided the same items, drank only alkaline water and ate a Mediterranean-style diet wherein 90 per cent of the food came from plants. After six weeks, the two cohorts saw roughly the same amount of improvement.

Feeling your partner's pain

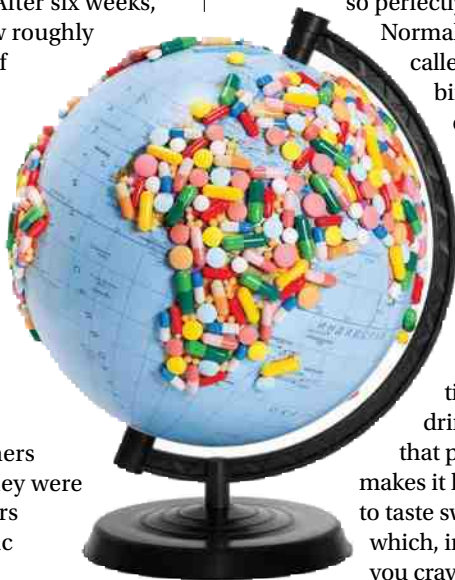
A 2017 study published in *Psychological Science* followed 145 patients with knee osteoarthritis and looked at the three ways that their significant others responded when they were in pain: The partners could be empathetic (show emotional

support), solicitous (take over tasks and encourage rest) or punitive (express frustration). Only those whose spouses reacted mainly with empathy had improved physical function after 18 months. In other words, you really can help your loved one heal.

The coffee and cravings link

Cornell University researchers might have found a scientific answer to that age-old question: Why does coffee pair so perfectly with pastries?

Normally, a chemical called adenosine binds to nerve cell membrane receptors, making you feel sleepy. Caffeine binds to the receptors to block them, which is why you feel less tired when you drink coffee. But that process also makes it harder for you to taste sweetness—which, ironically, makes you crave it more.



Affordable second opinions

Navya, a website led by Tata Memorial Centre and National Cancer Grid offers tailor-made, standardized treatment options to cancer patients. The website suggests affordable treatment plans after scouring published medical literature, assessing opinions of leading experts worldwide and taking into account outcomes of similar patients. *The Times of India* reports that over the last three years, 17,000 patients sought second opinions and a majority of these patients had availed the service free of cost. Given India's poor doctor-patient ratio, Navya is sure to go a long way.

Why for anti-ageing

Bodybuilders swear by whey protein, and older folks should, too—whether or not they pump iron. In a new study, one group of men age 70 and older took a protein-based nutritional supplement for six weeks. A second group took a placebo. Then they added resistance and high-intensity interval training while continuing to take the supplement or placebo for an additional 12 weeks. The participants taking the whey protein gained more than half a kilogram of lean body mass—muscle, mostly—in the first six weeks, which is the amount they would typically lose in a year. They also noticed greater strength gains after they began weightlifting compared with the participants who took the placebo.

DIGEST THIS

WEEKEND WARRIORS

Can't make time to exercise daily? Just squeeze in two workouts a week to be healthier than your inactive peers. It cuts the risk of dying from cardiovascular disease by 40 per cent and cancer by 18 per cent.

Source: *Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine*

Mindfulness to drink less

A University College London experiment recruited heavy drinkers (men who imbibe more than 21 drinks per week and women who consume more than 14). Half were given a short training session in mindfulness: an awareness of the feelings and bodily sensations—e.g., the cravings—of the present moment. The other participants were taught relaxation techniques such as deep breathing—a treatment intended to appear equally credible so as to control for the placebo effect. During the following week, the mindfulness group cut back by an average of 9.3 drinks, whereas the relaxation group continued their previous habits. **R**

Midlife Flow Problems

BY SUSAN INCE

URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS (UTIs) can become more common in both men and women at midlife. Understanding how your age changes your risk and the best treatments can bring relief. Often men get a urinary tract infection for the first time in their 50s, usually because of a kidney stone or an enlarged prostate, says Dr N. Subramanian, urologist, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi. A growing prostate compresses the urethra, causing a weak urine stream, the need to pee frequently and a dribble after a void. If the bladder doesn't completely empty, the reservoir of urine can become infected.

Some 5 to 10 per cent of men who have an enlarged prostate experience repeat UTIs. Medication can relax muscles in the gland or shrink it so urine can pass easily. Minimally invasive procedures (usually endoscopic) to relieve blockage or pressure also help, he says. While blocked pipes can cause UTIs in men, weakened pipe linings contribute to women's increased risk.

As oestrogen levels drop during menopause, the germ-fighting capability and physical barrier of the urinary tract weaken and the mix of bacteria in the vagina changes—all of which can increase the odds of developing UTIs.



Antibiotics treat acute infections, but other treatments may be necessary to prevent recurrences. A few weeks of topical oestrogen cream treatment in postmenopausal women can strengthen the urinary tract wall, making it less prone to infection. “However, oestrogen creams are not recommended for those with a family history of breast, ovarian or uterine cancer,” says Subramanian. If you start experiencing UTIs out of nowhere, your doctor will want to rule out other issues, such as stones in the bladder or the kidney.

Catheters also can be a hazard for UTIs. Germs can enter the slim tube,

if the device is inserted incorrectly, not kept clean or left in too long. This also applies to individuals in nursing homes.

When older individuals develop UTIs, they may become confused and suspicious during the infection period. Seniors, especially, may be more likely to become delirious because of changes in the immune system. And, many older adults don't have the usual symptoms of a UTI. So, if you suspect a loved one might have a UTI because of changes in their behaviour, have them tested and treated, if necessary.

—WITH INPUTS BY GAGAN DHILLON



CUT YOUR INFECTION RISK

- **Boost good bacteria.** Small studies have found that women with repeat UTIs are less likely to get another if they use vaginal suppositories with the probiotic lactobacillus, which balances good and bad bacteria.
- **Drink cranberry juice.** In a 2013 meta-analysis, cranberry juice and supplements reduced repeat UTIs.
- **Wipe from front to back.** The most common UTI-causing germs are from the gastrointestinal tract, so wipe from front to back to avoid moving the bugs closer to your urinary tract.
- **Pee after intercourse.** This gives bacteria less chance to enter the urinary tract.
- **Drink lots of water.** When you urinate, bacteria are flushed from the urinary tract, so drink enough to go regularly, especially if you have incontinence.





Add this superfood to your plate for a healthy boost

The Quinoa Edge

BY GAGAN DHILLON

PACKED WITH EQUAL measures of crunch and nutrients, quinoa is a tasty addition to a wholesome diet. This gluten-free seed is packed with the goodness of antioxidants (flavonoids), protein and fibre.

Native to South America, quinoa (ki-nwa) is, in fact, an ancient grain that was once the staple diet of the Incas. Hundreds of years since, the nutritional content of these seeds hasn't changed significantly. It is rich in quercetin and kaempferol, flavonoids known for their anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties. Quinoa is packed with

phytochemicals, such as saponins, phytosterols and phytoecdysteroids that have a positive impact on our metabolic, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal health.

"Compared to other cereals, quinoa seeds are low in carbohydrates and higher in protein than other grains," says Mumbai-based clinical nutritionist Shweta Bhatia. A cup gives you about eight grams of protein. Quinoa has all the essential amino acids that makes it a good source of plant protein. It is also abundant in lysine, an amino acid essential for growth and tissue repair.



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full of fat is **not**
what you're looking at.



Big, fat and juicy does not mean unhealthy anymore. Because now you can make delicious burgers with India Gate Quinoa. It's high on protein, fibre, minerals, has low GI and is so versatile, that you can make desserts, snacks and all your favourite dishes easily. So buy your pack of India Gate Quinoa today and indulge guilt-free. Discover more at www.quinoa.life

www.quinoa.life

For those looking to lose weight, it is an ideal substitute for rice. Its high-fibre content makes it a great low-glycaemic index food. Simply put, it keeps hunger and cravings at bay by keeping you satiated for longer. "It is also a good alternative for those trying to keep diabetes in check," says Bhatia. That's not all, it is a powerhouse abundant in minerals like magnesium, manganese, phosphorous and vitamins B and E.

To treat yourself to light and fluffy quinoa, first rinse the seeds under running water. This will remove some of the bitterness. Then cook it like you would cook rice. Just remember to use two parts of water for one part of quinoa. Give it 10 to 15 minutes or wait until the water is soaked. When cooked, this slightly nutty grain 'pops' releasing a white 'tail' or bran.

Quinoa is a versatile ingredient. Use generously to add volume to your salad (right), blend into smoothies or stir-fry with veggies. For some Indian flavour, swap it with rice and make pulao. In fact, you can make breakfast super healthy by trying out quinoa *upma*. First sauté the onions and spices in hot oil, add veggies, toss in washed quinoa, water and some salt and cook until done. Top it off with a dash of lemon juice. **R**

Quinoa Salad

Total time: 10 minutes

Servings: 2

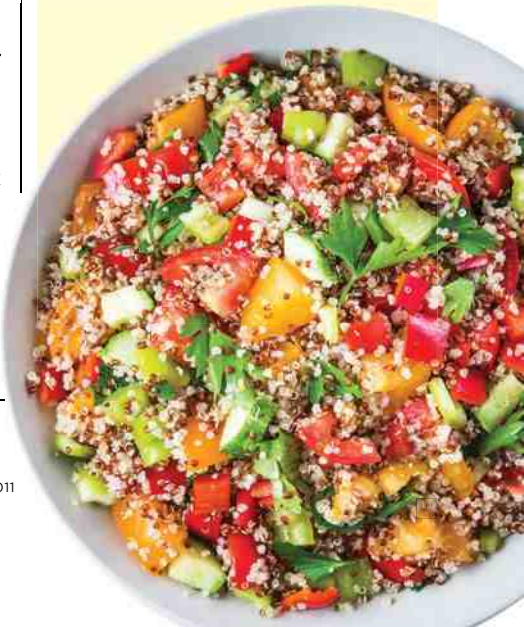
- ½ cup quinoa, sprouted; or
¼ cup quinoa, soaked and sprouted overnight
- ¼ cup cucumber, diced
- ¼ capsicum, chopped
- ½ tbsp lemon juice
- ¼ cup walnuts, chopped
- ½ tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp crushed pepper

Mix all ingredients together for a healthy salad.

Variation: Millets or brown rice can be substituted for quinoa. Add a dash of colour and amp up the nutrients with bell peppers and cherry tomatoes.

Nutritional info per serving:

140 Kcals, 15 g carbs, 3 g protein, 2 g fibre, 7g fat



Sources: National Center for Biotechnology Information; University of Maryland Medical Center; *Journal of Cereal Science*; bbcgoodfood.com

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—> **HEALTHY CONSCIOUS LIVING** <—



When the heat is on at work, these tips can help

Office De-stress Ideas

BY DEBRA L. GORDON AND DAVID L. KATZ, MD
FROM THE BOOK *STEALTH HEALTH*

Schedule worry time

Close your office door or go to an empty conference room and focus on what is stressing you. Divide a sheet of paper into three columns: My Worry, Why It Worries Me, Worst Thing That Could Happen. Once you confront the worst thing that could possibly happen—and realize that it's highly unlikely it ever *will* happen—you can get back to work with your worry load lightened.

Keep a vacation file

This could be a physical or electronic file that you fill with pictures of places you'd like to visit. When you're feeling stressed, sneak a peek. It will remind you of one reason you're working and open a virtual escape route.

Loosen up with this exercise

Stand against a wall, and then slide down it as if you were sitting in a chair. Stay there for as long as you can without looking down. (Don't worry if it's for only a few seconds.) Breathe


deeply (in through your nose, out through your mouth), and focus on one peaceful thought (waves crashing on the shore, a glass of wine by a roaring fire—or your boss leaving on an extended vacation). Press your feet into the ground as you hold this position and picture the stress oozing out of your body. After you stand up, shake out your arms and legs and return to work refreshed.

Rub a drop of lavender oil on your inner wrist

The aroma of lavender is a known relaxant. Close your eyes, hold your wrist up to your nose and sniff deeply. You can even try picturing yourself in a field of lavender, the purple stalks waving in the breeze.

Take control of your email

A survey by Canadian researchers found that many workers spend more than an hour a day on email. To cope, use the rule of three: If you've gone back and forth three times on a topic



with a co-worker and you still have questions, pick up the phone.

Deal directly with difficult workplace relationships

‘Toxic’ people can be annoying—and draining. After a negative encounter, try this direct, honest and disarming approach: “I am finding our interactions stressful because of [blank] and am feeling bad about [blank]. I would like our working relationship to improve. What suggestions do you have for me?” Even if you feel that the other person is the one who should change, by asking for his or her suggestions, you avoid putting that person on the defensive. If your colleague is even a little bit reasonable, this might make him or her admit, “Well, I suppose there are some changes I could make too.”

Read a poem out loud

The cadence, words and images will soothe your soul. Not into poetry? If you’re religious, try reading a psalm or another sacred writing. If you love music, listen to a few of your favourite songs.

Draw

Seriously. Grab a pencil and sketch the stress triggers around you, doodle

something peaceful or funny—such as a caricature of the office villain—or reap the calming benefits of an adult colouring book. Using another part of your brain and focusing on something outside the chaos can provide a much-needed break.

Make true work friends


Studies find that if you believe your supervisor and co-workers care about you, your blood pressure will be lower during the day and will surge less in those sometimes stressful work moments.

Eat peppermint chocolate

Treat yourself now and again to some peppermint chocolate—prefer-

ably dark chocolate. The chocolate itself is stress relieving, the peppermint provides a burst of minty energy, and the tiny sugar rush might be just enough to get you over the hump.

Examine your real feelings

If you love what you do, work stress will be far less damaging than if you don’t. But if you hate your job, it’s time to explore other options. Spend a few minutes each evening rewriting your resume, researching new jobs, or listing potential employers. The feeling of empowerment can help you handle the stress at your current job. 

“
*If you believe
colleagues care
about you, your
blood pressure
will be lower
during the day.*

How to nurture introverted kids and give them a leg up

Let The Quiet Ones Shine

BY SHELJA SEN

☞ FROM THE TIME I was little, I preferred being on my own, reading or listening to music than socializing. People around me, including my parents, struggled to understand me. Consequently, there was always a sense of tension and dissatisfaction at my being so asocial. As I grew up, in my attempt to fit in, to adhere to what was expected of me, I became a 'pseudo-extrovert.' I pretended to be outgoing and social when all I wanted to do was to find a corner and snuggle with a book. It took a long time for me to be able to tell myself and my loved ones, "I am fine the way I am."

As a society, we value and find worth in a narrow range of personality styles. We all want our children to be outgoing, bold, popular, assertive, sociable, exuberant and confident. In one word—an extrovert.

Actress Emma Watson shared in one of her interviews, "If you're anything other than an extrovert, you're made to think there's some-

thing wrong with you."

Introverts struggle with invisibility. They are the quiet ones who are not so social, popular, assertive and out there. They prefer hanging out with a couple of their friends or better still spending their break in the library. They avoid attracting attention, so generally do not raise their hand to ask questions, give answers or offer more than necessary information. Many times their talents go unnoticed, as they would rather not talk about it. They happily, or most times unhappily, stand in the shadows while others, less talented and skilled than them, take away all the limelight.

There are many complex, multi-layered personality tests out there (Myers-Briggs is a prominent one and is used primarily for adults). However, for our understanding, just dividing children into two temperaments—extroversion and introversion—is sufficient. Extroverts are energized by social interaction and being with others where introverts can find that



draining and exhausting. They get energized by quiet reflection, reading and being on their own. Temperament refers to the innate, biologically based behavioural and emotional patterns whereas personality is a complex cocktail that is also impacted by culture and experiences. Temperament is the foundation and personality is the building.

We also tend to confuse shyness with introversion when actually they are quite different. Shyness is fear of being socially judged or disapproved whereas introversion is preference for quieter pursuits. Introverts can be socially adept. Many times, through repeated messages that we give an introverted child, he might become shy as he starts thinking something is wrong with him and therefore fears social rejection.

I was observing a class where there

was an adorable, quiet little boy sitting next to me. He tried raising his hand tentatively to answer and at times even tried calling out gently for the class teacher. Unfortunately, the teacher was too busy responding to the louder voices vying to grab her attention. After sometime I saw him give up and just sit back, quiet and dejected.

In her book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*, Susan Cain highlights research that indicates that there is a tendency in all of us to admire the Extrovert Ideal. The research highlighted how people who are more talkative, speak with higher velocity and volubility (typical extrovert) were rated as smarter compared to people who spoke less or more slowly.

Schools are perfect examples of this bias. Children who shine on stage or

in student councils are generally typical extroverts. Introverts are generally hauled up for not raising their hands, speaking up or being bold enough.

I am not saying that we should let introverts be as they are. Gentle nudges to go out and play, attend parties occasionally, participate in school events, speak up in class are necessary. Just as we need to train extroverts to be a little more reflective, sensitive, learn to spend time on their own and appreciate their internal world. As Susan Cain explains, our children's temperaments are like rubber band; they can only stretch a little. The trick is to accept, balance and then celebrate.

Let them bloom

ACCEPT: Introverts end up carrying a huge sense of guilt and anxiety for not being good enough. Nowadays, in most progressive schools there is a lot of focus on group learning. The assumption is that only through collaborative work can children learn effectively and that will encourage essential life skills. This is good for extroverts but what about introverts who learn best in solitude? A child who understands 'I might be different from others, but I am fine', will be in a much better position to explore her strengths rather than wasting her time pretending to be who she is not.

BALANCE: Try to gently encourage introverted children towards being a little more adventurous. Talk to her and help her understand that having 'people skills' is also a life skill. Work towards an agreement whereby she could do one thing every week/fortnight/month that helps her build social skills. It could range from doing a show and tell, speaking at the assembly, preparing on a topic before a class discussion or performing in front of a small

group of friends and teachers. As long as the child is feeling accepted and she has a sense of ownership of what she needs to do, she will be learning an important life lesson.

CELEBRATE: Can you imagine what our world would have been without amazing people like Satyajit Ray, Premchand, Proust, J. K. Rowling and Steven Spielberg? Introverts are the thinkers, listeners, poets, writers, creators who love dwelling in their rich inner life. Known for being highly sensitive, they perceive and feel the world much more strongly. Go ahead and celebrate your introverted child. He might not be the star of the party, but his sparkling mind can shine like none other if given the space to be. **R**

Dr Shelja Sen is a Delhi-based child and adolescent psychologist with Children First.



IT HAPPENS

Only in India



STUBBORN IS AS stubborn does. The Kanpur police were struck by this realization when they tried to tow a man's motorcycle last year. Instead of giving up, he continued to sit on his bike, as it dangled dangerously from the tow truck. A video has the tow truck driver driving while trying to ignore the man at the back. Good thing the motorcyclist was wearing his helmet. After all, safety first!

Source: huffingtonpost.in

SANTA CLAUS MADE a special pit stop for the primates at the Byculla zoo, Mumbai, this past Christmas with

baskets of toys wrapped in shiny paper. The "enrichment" exercise organized by zoo authorities saw the staff hiding the gifts under hay for the monkeys to find. There was, of course, a lavish feast to round off the party with channa, a barbeque of fruit and vegetable skewers and jaggery *chikki* as dessert.

Source: *The Times of India*

Spotted by **LESTER SANTOS**, Mumbai

—COMPILED BY **CHITRA SUBRAMANYAM**

Reader's Digest will pay for contributions to this column. Post your suggestions with the source to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com.

What To Do With your Money Right Now

Arm yourself with everything you need to know to keep your finances safe and healthy

BY DEVANGSHU DATTA

ILLUSTRATION BY KESHAV KAPIL

My friend, Ranjan Bhattacharya, 52, retired from the Navy about a year ago, after serving in submarines, arguably one of the world's most isolated jobs. Post retirement, he's made up for lost time by turning into a news junkie. In this time, he's acquired a large portfolio of small, obscure stocks. Watching the TV market shows, he follows recommendations and buys.

Another friend, Abhijit Banerjee, 61, is worried if the government is really going to seize his fixed deposits and convert them forcibly into bank shares. Like other 60-plus people, he keeps a lot of money in the bank in case of medical emergencies.

These instances reflect typical middle-class attitudes and concerns about personal finances. Lakhs of people who had not heard of the stock market a year ago, now believe "mutual funds *sahi hai*" and blindly buy TV-recommended shares. And, the infamous bail-in clause in the new Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance (FRDI) Bill, which allows the use of the money of depositors to bail out loss-making, ailing banks, has struck fear into the hearts of many who are still recovering from the shock of demonetization.





So, what should you do with your savings in 2018? By the time you read this, there may be significant changes to the tax system, but the advice will remain the same in broad terms.

Spread your money across asset classes. Put some savings into debt, invest some in equity, and make sure you have enough insurance to cover emergencies and take care of your family. Also consider putting some savings into gold and real estate. Avoid cryptocurrencies (see box on p 62)—unless you're tech-savvy, be prepared to lose vast amounts. Here's a quick tour of the various options.

Debt: Debt comes in many shapes and sizes. Bank fixed deposits are the default option. You can also buy mutual funds dealing in different types of debt. In addition, you can buy corporate debentures, or subscribe to corporate fixed deposits.

There's a key counter-intuitive aspect to understanding debt. If interest rates rise, any portfolio of previous debt instruments loses value because that same money could now be earning more interest. Conversely, a portfolio gains value if interest rates fall. So rising rates are actually bad for debt investors. A more sophisticated understanding: interest rates rise when inflation rises. If inflation rises, the value of money erodes faster. Interest rates (and inflation) are expected to rise in 2018. So debt may not give great returns.

Debt returns and associated safety

varies with the chosen instruments. Bank fixed deposits are safest but also liable to give the lowest returns due to low rates of interest. Even bank deposits are not totally safe. The new FRDI Bill highlights the fact that bank deposits are not guaranteed beyond the limit of ₹1 lakh. That limit was set in 1993 when ₹1 lakh was worth ₹10–11 lakhs in today's terms.

In theory, if there is a bank collapse, deposits beyond that level are at risk. A failing bank might use the bail-in clause to hold up payments, or convert such savings forcibly into shares. Of course, any government would be very reluctant to take this step, fearing a political backlash. But it is true that many banks (especially state-owned ones) are struggling to cope with bad debts. So bail-ins are now neither impossible, nor illegal.

**SPREAD YOUR
MONEY ACROSS
ASSET CLASSES.
PUT SOME INTO
DEBT, SOME
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EMERGENCIES.**



Mutual funds trade debt instruments, to exploit changes in interest rates. Safety varies, depending on what the fund holds and how effectively it trades. Money market funds are liquid, very safe, but give comparatively low returns. Funds that focus on corporate debt give much higher returns but take larger risks. It's important to understand that you can lose capital in a debt fund. So look carefully at the track records, the mandate and the portfolio.

Real Estate (RE): This is entirely a local market. There could be a boom in one neighbourhood and a bust in the next. Overall, the industry is in poor shape. But new legislation, which led to the establishment of the Real Estate Regulatory Agency (RERA) and tax breaks could stoke a revival. One problem with RE is that it's a

large, lumpy investment done once in a lifetime by middle-class folks.

The REIT—real estate investment trusts—could be an entry point for investors who want to park small sums in RE. A REIT is like a mutual fund. It sells units to small investors and invests in RE. New norms could help this asset class grow. As and when REITs do get off the ground, take a look. For example, a REIT may give a safe, regular income with a higher yield if it holds commercial properties and earns regular income from rentals, making it a good alternative to debt.

Gold: Precious metals are the age-old hedge against inflation and uncertainty. But gold yields no interest and capital appreciation is uncertain. Also, making charges for jewellery add considerably to cost. It's still worth investing a small amount, as security. Consider silver—it is more linked to industrial recovery—and buying shares in gems and jewellery businesses instead. The performance of these companies are linked to gold prices, many are profitable with good export profiles, and they offer dividends as well as capital appreciation.

Equity: The last two years have seen terrific returns from the stock market. Is the economy booming? No, but a lot of investors hope that it will start growing faster. The World Bank and other institutions concur that growth should accelerate in 2018–19. Many savvy investors have already entered the stock market on that expectation.



As more money has come into the market, it has boosted share prices and created a positive feedback loop where investors have pumped even more money into stocks.

People have invested directly in stocks. They have also invested via equity mutual funds. The first option is for those who have time and inclination to do their own research. The second route is fire-and-forget. Both methods can fetch great returns. Both methods also carry the risk of capital loss.

My advice would be to stick to mutual funds and commit to systematic investment plans (SIPs) for three years, or longer. These are likely to fetch excellent returns.

Don't expect super returns in 2018. The economy may recover. Though it's very likely to happen, it's still uncertain.

What's certain is that there are a series of assembly elections and a general election scheduled in the next 18 months. Political uncertainty might cloud short-term returns. The market fell 2 per cent in 15 minutes fearing that the BJP might lose the Gujarat assembly elections, even though Gujarat is a small state with just 5 per cent of Lok Sabha seats. What happens if there are apprehensions that the Narendra Modi government will not return?

Insurance: Insurance is a bet you want to lose. You don't want your loved ones to claim on your life insurance

CRYPTOCURRENCIES

Bitcoin, Ripple, Ethereum and other exotics have zoomed in the last two years. In 2017, Bitcoin was up 2,000 per cent, Ripple was up 20,000 per cent (that is, the price has multiplied 200 times). So you might be tempted to buy these. But here are the caveats:

- There are hundreds (literally) of fraud cryptocurrencies and fraudulent schemes.
- The regulatory situation is uncertain. Most nations including India are still wondering what to do about regulating them.
- You will be asked questions by the taxman.

- It's normal for "cryptos" to fluctuate 20 per cent in a single day. You could lose that much instantly. If you lose or forget the password to your digital wallet, or you're hacked, your investment goes down the drain. There is no redress, no recourse. Your money has evaporated.

- Trades can take hours, or even days, to confirm. So you may not know if you've traded for sure.

If you can handle uncertainty and you don't mind gambling, go ahead. Please check first if the cryptocurrency is genuine. A website like coinmarketcap.com can be helpful.

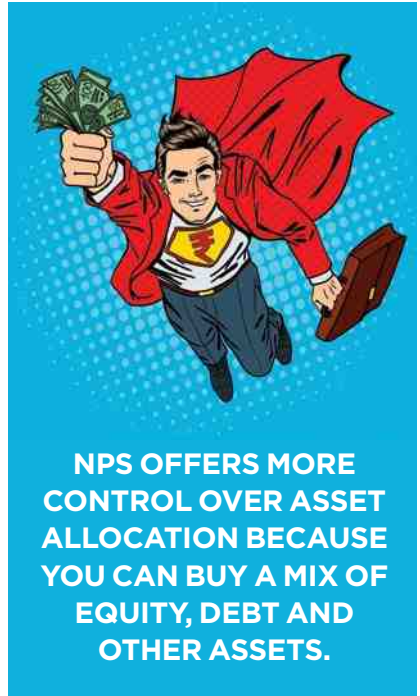
policy. Don't mix that up in your head with trying to make money.

Don't buy equity-linked insurance schemes such as unit linked insurance plans (ULIPs). ULIPs carry massive commissions, which is why the agent will try to sell them to you. But they are losing propositions, precisely because your money goes to the agent and the insurer and not into your investments. There is rampant mis-selling in this space.

Instead, buy either term policies (these are the cheapest) or buy money-back schemes, which are also cheap but you get your money back. If you need to, do it yourself. If not, read the fine print very carefully rather than trust an agent's verbal assurances.

PPF and the National Pension Scheme: The Public Provident Fund (PPF) is safe, and you get a guaranteed return. That return rate is set every quarter. So this is like a fixed deposit with a tax break (up to a limit) and it compounds.

Consider the relatively new National Pension Scheme (NPS) as an alternative. The NPS may actually give you considerably better returns than the PPF. It offers more control over asset allocation because you can buy a mix of equity and debt and other assets. However, the NPS also has a longer lock-in. It has an unusual exit policy, in that some of your corpus will be converted into an annuity. It is still worth checking out because of superior design.



Finally ... Don't keep all your eggs in one basket and invest for the long term. The next year is guaranteed to see lots of market and business volatility due to the political situation. It is perfectly possible, indeed likely, that the government will try another shock-and-awe scheme like demonetization if it thinks that will win votes. So do not be surprised if there are stock market crashes or confused economic messages from a government seeking re-election. Give things time to settle down. **R**

Devangshu Datta is a financial researcher who writes regularly on investment and personal finance.

SOUND MONEY ADVICE (That won't cost you a dime)

India's top experts break down the rules of smart investment



**Gaurav
Mashruwala**
Financial
planner
and author

PERSONAL FINANCE

- **Identify your financial goals, then choose your asset class.** Create a separate strategy for each goal and pick financial instruments accordingly. For instance, a woman in her 40s with investments in place, and saving for her child's higher education and retirement is looking at a long horizon. So, her preferred asset class would be equity and she could choose from a mutual fund scheme to suit her goals.
- **Diversify to minimize risk** and invest regularly in a disciplined manner. A single man in his 20s, with an eye on a future family and retirement, could start investing regularly in both equity and debt funds, so that, if needed, he could even make a down payment on a house in the next two to three years. The younger the investor, the more justified a higher percentage of equity investment.
- **Equity is best for long-term investments** of over seven years. The chance of losing your money is less as the severity of risk goes down over a period of time. The impact on one's overall returns could average out. However, that same equity could be highly volatile if invested in for a year or two.

■ **Avoid knee-jerk reactions to current developments**, such as talk of the bail-in clause as a part of the FRDI Bill. Remember, every change in your investments will have an impact on your finances—payment against exit clause, brokerage, short- or long-term capital gains tax. A retired person with a nest egg may feel vulnerable, but he should ideally have a little reserve cash at home, with only contingency funds for about a week in the bank. Ideally, he should have regular income from various options (monthly income schemes, pension) and a corpus that grows at a rate higher than inflation (a small portion in gold mutual funds and equity). A systematic plan such as this may make him feel more confident.

■ **Don't follow financial advice blindly.** Investments may always be risky, which is why be led by good advice. Always go to the source (RBI or SEBI websites would help) instead of relying on WhatsApp forwards. Look for opinions after you have familiarized yourself with facts. Ask questions, read all the documents and speak to a trusted advisor. Go to the advisor or agent's office to get a sense of his set-up. Ensure that your financial advisor is approved by a regulator, has the necessary qualifications and valid licences and permissions. After all, you are handing him your hard-earned money.



Nilesh Shah
Managing
director,
Kotak
Mahindra Asset
Management
Company

MUTUAL FUNDS

■ **Optimize returns with Mutual Funds (MF).**

The nature of MF is to optimize return per unit of risk taken. When it comes to liquid funds, lump sum investment is advisable. Whereas, generally in equity mutual funds an SIP that involves regular investment is ideal.

■ **Choose long-term, regular investments.** Use the right technique and tools to maximize returns. The long-term investment horizon is ideal, having a fair asset allocation across different categories is prudent and investing regularly is key—which, of course, requires discipline. SIPs average out your risks and allow you to ride out the ups and downs in the market. The best way to diversify MFs is to invest in a multi-cap fund, which invests in stocks across market

capitalization, i.e. large-, mid- and small-cap stocks.

■ **Always do your research.** CRISIL, for example, is a great source for industry insights. It's an independent research agency and ranks Indian MFs on quantitative parameters such as past performance and qualitative parameters like return volatility and portfolio quality.

■ **Learn from your mistakes.** In the stock market every investor has lost money. The way to make money from stocks is to learn from your mistakes. Sector-specific funds like banking, pharma and information technology (IT) are meant for experienced investors. While they add spice to your portfolio, these can be tricky for the average investor.

■ **Have patience, allow it time.** For the average investor, external factors and disruptions in the market don't make a difference. MFs will continue to manage your money well, as you have invested in a diversified fund. The fund manager's job is to take a call based on the market variations and build a portfolio to outperform the market. The investor has to have patience and allow their investments a time horizon. Overall, the basic rules of investments don't change. Always remember, price is what you put in and value is what you get.



Sankaran Naren

Executive director and chief investment officer, ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company Limited

EQUITY

■ **Save as a lifelong habit.** For a long-term goal like retirement planning, the key is to consistently save throughout your earning lifespan. Since the time frame is relatively large, this is a good opportunity to consider equities, as they deliver reasonable returns, compounded, enabling you to build a sizeable corpus. Here, slow and steady wins the race. To put this into perspective, SIPs make bigger goals look achievable—investing ₹5,000 monthly for 20 years will accumulate around ₹50 lakhs, assuming returns of 12 per cent p.a.

■ **Diversify across asset classes.** Systematically investing in a mutual fund scheme is recommended for beginners who do not have

the time or inclination to follow market trends. Taking the required exposure to multiple asset classes, as opposed to putting all your eggs in one basket or spending all your savings buying one type of financial instrument, is the need of the hour.

■ **Be cautious with thematic funds.** They are a form of equity investment, advised for people well versed with the stock market. This is because when investing in a thematic fund (high-risk, high-return), all the stocks in that portfolio will have exposure to just that one theme. Sector-wise, banking, big pharmaceuticals, IT and rural themes currently look attractive from a three-year investment perspective.



**Yashish
Dahiya**
CEO and
co-founder,
Policybazaar.com

INSURANCE

■ **Pick the plan that suits you.** While a pure term plan guarantees a fixed sum assured to the nominee in case of death, within the coverage period, a whole life-term plan gives a payout for life insured throughout their lifespan. The term return of premium (TROP) plan ensures that the premium paid is returned to the insured at the end of the cover period. Whole life-term plans can be availed by those who are looking for a guaranteed payout or might have liabilities well into their 70s–80s. The nature of the plans you choose is related to your dependents and their earning capacities.


■ **Have a judicious mix of plans** that offer protection and handsome returns. Unit linked insurance plans (ULIPs) offer various benefits including high returns, protection in the form of sum assured and tax savings. They have undergone many changes in the past few years. Guidelines by the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI) in 2010 limit total charges over the lifetime of the policy. Thereafter, innovations by insurance

companies resulted in ULIPs turning into low-cost investment products. The average rate of returns from ULIPs now range from 12-15 per cent. If invested long term, this is enough to beat inflation.

■ **Get a buffer against hospitalization.** Pick your health insurance according to the cost of living in your city. Room rent limit (a common feature in health insurance policies) should be as high as it can be because the claim expenses depend on it. Do consider restore options and no-claim bonus (NCB). While the latter is an add-on feature, the former works towards enhancement of the sum insured, where the insurance company restores that sum in case it is exhausted during treatment. If you live in a metro, a minimum cover of ₹10 lakhs for you and your family would be sufficient. In case of a tier-2 or tier-3 city, a ₹5-lakh cover should do. A newly married couple could consider one with the best maternity cover while a couple in their late 40s could go for one with a minimum waiting period and no room rent cap.

■ **Customize your plan.** A super top-up plan is an economical option to enhance the health insurance cover. A working professional should opt for the super top-up cover to get adequate/enhanced health insurance cover at a nominal cost. If you live in a metro and have a health insurance policy worth ₹5 lakhs, you should buy a super top-up plan with a deductible of ₹5 lakhs. The premium of a base health insurance policy for a 30 year-old man, from a metro, would range between ₹6,000 and ₹8,000 and a super top-up would come between ₹1,200 and ₹1,500. The only limitation of a super top-up option is that the features would depend on your base policy.

■ **Consider critical illness and personal accident term riders.** Anybody between 35 and 45 years should have a critical illness plan. Buy one as early as possible and look for one that covers the maximum number of illnesses, their severity and the survival period (which should be minimum).

—INTERVIEWS BY CHITRA SUBRAMANYAM, AYUSHI THAPLIYAL,
SUCHISMITA UKIL AND GAGAN DHILLON 

Laugh Lines

ZOO-LOL-OGY

The fact that we know chameleons exist means they are worthless idiot failures. [@PEACHCOFFIN](#)

Giraffes were invented in 1780 when three horses accidentally swallowed a ladder.

[@KIMMYMONTE](#)

Science tip: You can distinguish an alligator from a crocodile by paying attention to whether the animal sees you later or in a while.

[@GOOOOATS](#)



Dogs look up to you; cats look down on you. Give me a pig! He looks you in the eye and treats you as an equal.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Turkeys are peacocks that have let themselves go.

KRISTEN SCHAA

Ant: A small insect that, though always at work, still finds time to go to picnics.

ANONYMOUS

IMAGINE YOU CAN ...

... live the dream of changing the world—a little. But first you must take care of your family. Where do you start?

BY VENKAT KRISHNAN N.

AS A NEW YEAR ROLLS AROUND, you think about your secret wish once again. What if you could change someone's life? What if you did not have to worry about the future and immerse yourself in work that would bring you the joy of giving? If you have been there, you are not an exception. There are many who hold back from giving, and maintain status quo, racked by insecurities about money. Worrying that they should probably keep aside enough for themselves before helping others, they postpone it until they have a buffer—or indefinitely.

You know the story: What starts out in our 20s with the need to pay bills progresses to the desire for a house and a car, and then the dream of a family life. We join the race for a fancy school for the children, and start setting our own goals by looking around us—foreign vacations, fancy gadgets ... Life becomes less about who we *are* and more about what we *have*.

How does one go about deciding where to draw the line? How much is enough? The first and most important step is to actually ask that question. You may well discover that your family can get by with a lot less. We



overestimate how important money is.

It helps to create a financial planning spreadsheet, where you put down all that you may need, including potential contingencies. Take care to budget for inflation as well—not just the 5 to 6 per cent rise in the cost of living, but another 4 to 5 per cent in lifestyle enhancements that you can't predict. Find out where you stand, and whether you still need more, or you can now focus your time and energy on how to pursue your dream instead, as two friends of mine have.

Taking the plunge

In 2002, Ujwal Thakar, country manager of a large multinational bank in India, was told by his parent company that over 300 new job offers needed to be rescinded. "Is this really what I want to do with my life?" he asked himself. At the age of 52, Ujwal's children were well settled and he had just enough savings to buy a house for himself. But he was eager to switch to a life of giving. An opportunity came in the form of a chance to lead Pratham, one of India's largest NGOs. A quick conversation with his wife led him to conclude that ₹50,000 a month (less than a tenth of his bank salary) was enough to meet their living expenses.

And so, Ujwal decided to chuck his fancy job. He went on to lead Pratham for six years and then took over as CEO of GiveIndia for two years before retiring. He has spent the last 10 years mentoring, pro bono, scores of young

social entrepreneurs and guiding education non-profits as a board member.

Looking back, Ujwal thinks it was the best decision he made in his life. "Make sure that your basic maths is OK. Ensure that you have enough to maintain your current standard of living and get your family's buy-in. But don't overthink it—if you feel good at the gut level, take the plunge and do what you want to," he says.

Does Ujwal regret not having earned more money and a fancier lifestyle? "Certainly not," he says, "I have more than enough to meet all my needs, and the things I can't afford can't give me the kind of joy I get out of spending time with young social entrepreneurs and helping them make a difference."

Were there periods of insecurity? Not really. The family has certainly been through some difficult times, such as when his wife was detected with cancer, something that was not "budgeted" for. However, Ujwal's agreement with the Pratham board ensured that in addition to his nominal pay and accommodation, all his medical expenses would be covered. It never became a serious financial issue. A fully recovered Usha continues to bring enormous joy and stability to his life. Pausing to ask the question, *How much do I really need?*—like Ujwal did—can significantly change the direction of your life.

In 2009, Ashish Shrivastava did the same. A middle-class boy from Lucknow, he had started working



Ashish and Shalini in Sukma, from where they run their non-profit Shiksharth.



with Infosys after completing his engineering, but it wasn't what he really wanted. He decided to quit and take up the Teach for India Fellowship. The need to "earn enough" drove him to a well-paying job at NIIT, Delhi, but a couple of years into it, he realized he was still in the wrong place. He wanted to do something more socially transformative. He decided to chuck his job and relocate to Dantewada in Chhattisgarh, with his newly-wed wife Shalini joining him a year later to help set up the Bachpan Banao Fellowship and educate tribal children in the country's most inaccessible, Naxal-dominated regions. Ashish and Shalini now live in Sukma, Chhattisgarh, and run Shiksharth, a non-profit that works closely in the various portable cabin schools run for tribals by the state government.

"Our needs are limited to just the necessities," says Ashish. "All we need is a decent place to stay, enough money to meet our living expenses and save a

little to afford a decent education for the children we will eventually have."

Azim Premji probably asked himself the same question before donating over ₹63,000 crores in the past few years. It seems he "indulged" himself by buying a second-hand Mercedes. In early 2013, I had the pleasure of travelling with him in his local car from the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai to the airport. I noticed his dinner of simple *roomali* rotis and kebabs bought from the street and eaten on the way.

The people I have told you about have exercised a deliberate choice on the standard of living they wish to maintain, telling themselves they are not going to get greedier even if the world around them changes. And all of them find tremendous joy in using their time and wealth to make a difference for those less fortunate, helping pull others out of poverty and giving back to society in their own unique ways. None of them would trade the joy they derive from this for a second home or fancy cars. All it takes is to pause and reflect on what you want to accomplish with your life. To paraphrase Gandhi: Make sure there is "enough for your need" because there will never be enough for your greed. **R**

Venkat Krishnan N. graduated from the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad in 1993 and began his career working in media companies. In 1996, he co-founded Eklavya School, to help children learn rather than be taught. He set up GivelIndia in 2000 with the aim of encouraging a culture of giving. In 2009, he and other volunteers launched DaanUtsav, a festival that celebrates the joy of giving, between 2-8 October every year.

Was it that shy glance, the clever line—or an internet romance? As our readers' stories attest, lightning often strikes when you least expect it

In the mood **FOR** *Love*

FLYING FANCY

He was this lanky Sardar, carrying a rose for the bride, when I first saw him. I was 23, lived in Jaipur and was attending the wedding of my best friend's brother. He was the groom's best friend and had come from Delhi for the ceremony. He was a pilot. I was training to be one. Flying was our thing.

He had showered me with attention all evening, and in the end offered to drop me home. He seemed nice. So, I agreed. Midway he proposed a visit to Nahargarh, a little away from the city. This spontaneity thrilled me.

When we pulled up at the fort around 1 a.m., **the courtyard was awash in moonlight, and the city glimmered below us.**

He stood too close to me, and I stiffened. Sensing it immediately he said, "I want to spend the entire night here with you but if you're uncomfortable, I'll take you home right away." We left soon after but that did it for me. Five years later, we got married and I continue to bask in the warmth of his love.

—SANGITA MENON MALHAN, *New Delhi*



THEN CAME LOVE

“He is not my type at all,” I told my sister after our first call.

“Come on, give it a shot. If you don’t like him, we can go on with the hunt. A lot of people have liked your profile on the site after all,” she said.

So we continued with the chats, even though we had little in common. I am an extrovert: I love travel, Hollywood and sitcoms. He is an introvert—a cricket-and-stock-market kind of guy, whose idea of a perfect weekend is lazing in bed, watching crappy Hindi comedy shows or Tollywood movies.

This went on for about a month until it was Diwali time and he was in town. We decided to meet. More precisely, he decided we should meet. Before leaving home I told mum, **“I’ll go tell him this won’t work and come back in 30 minutes—maximum!”**

I walked into the coffee place, 45 minutes late and found him waiting there, patiently. We talked. Sorry, he talked and I listened, for a couple of hours. We realized we had lingered a bit too long and decided to go out for a drive. We had been together for about four hours when I got a call from home. “Coming in some time,” I texted Papa.

We’ve spent many more hours together since then. Did I tell you, we fell in love and are getting hitched?

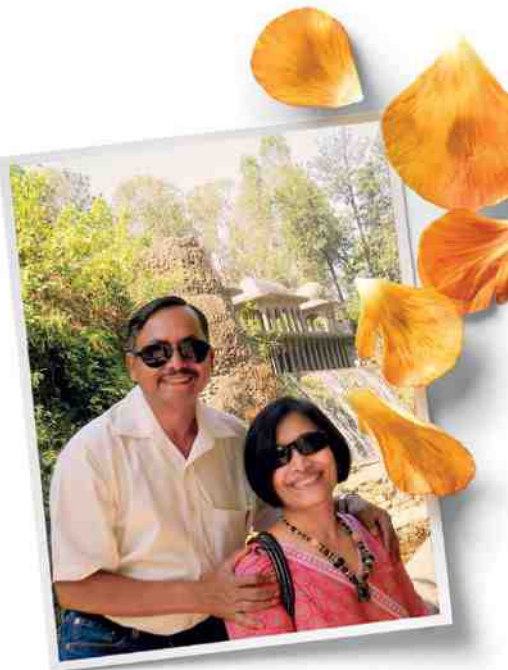
—AYUSHI THAPLIYAL, *Chandigarh*

HOW I MET MY MOTHER

My father, at 24, was an Indian Navy officer, posted miles away from home. My grandfather, also in the Navy, invited my father over for dinner one evening, out of courtesy. My mother, a shy young woman, entered the living room to greet him and—wham! It was love at first sight.

These living room meetings with Mum continued, while my grandmother kept a not-so-subtle watch. On one such occasion, Papa scribbled ‘143’ on a sheet of paper. Mum knew exactly what it meant. Grandpa’s house was next to the train tracks. While returning from Lonavala, Papa would wave at her from the train, fixing the time beforehand.

Papa’s family was dead set against the match, though. He loved his family but stood his ground—Papa wanted to spend the rest of his life with Mum and nothing could change that. His family finally acquiesced.



My parents' love story is nothing short of a blockbuster, running for 31 years, getting better each year. My brother and I are truly blessed to have witnessed it.

—JIVISHA GHOSH, *Mumbai*

TEXTUAL

Nandini is typing ...

Arjun takes a quick look at the browser tabs. *Jacobin*, *Salon* and *The Onion*, of course.

Nandini is typing ...

Arjun looks at the last message in the chat window. An article from a daily discussing economic reforms. He gazes again at the tabs, trying to find something suitable. After all, this was the entirety of their bond. Although they met in the most real-world way possible, at a party hosted by mutual friends, the nature of their courtship was strange.

He didn't want to come across as bland, nor as someone who was too eager to hook up with the witty girl from the party.

So he shared an article that would be sharp, of current interest, though not loaded with opinion. Artificial intelligence was a near-perfect theme, something that could spark off a conversation perhaps? Instead, she sent another link, rather urgently, on an imagined love story between two AIs. That was a month ago, before some 367 links had been exchanged between them.

Arjun: "Are you manually typing out a really long link?"

Nandini: "No. Actually I was going to ask you out on a date, and add a line about bringing magazines and newspapers that we can exchange,

instead of talking. But I can't. So, I will just ask."

Arjun: "Ask away."

Nandini is typing ...

—SHIRALIE CHATURVEDI, *New Delhi*

THAT CONVERSATION

How many rooms do you have in your house?

Strange question to ask a girl, while swigging beers at a party, by the side of a dried up pool, on a clear starlit night. I wondered why I was sitting with this slightly earnest, handsome, bespectacled young man. More such questions followed, and I don't

remember now if I found them funny or intriguing, but **I didn't move away, even as the others around us grew louder.** Maybe I liked hearing him talk. And I was in no hurry to go back. We

were high on conversation.

We left when the sky began to pale. He walked me to my hostel. We didn't say it yet, but I think we hoped this was the beginning of many long conversations. We're older now, and we are hardly ever awake to see the sky grow paler, and while we do have long conversations, I'm not always sure if he's listening!

—IRENE DHAR MALIK, *Mumbai*

THE STILETTOS

Click-clack. I knew that sound, it was her stilettos. I looked up at her confident gait and perfect demeanour, her hair pulled back in a tight bun. My heart raced in sync with her stilettos. She would simply wave, smile shyly and walk on.

During lunch break, I would end up near her to make her laugh. When I told



her that her laughter was like a flowing silver stream, she would flutter her eyelashes and vanish.

I was besotted by then. **Scented cards would be discreetly placed in her drawer, followed by red roses and long chats.**

She would give me a knowing look, a lingering smile playing on her lips. Then on Valentine's Day in 1987, I went down on my knee before her, red roses in hand. Her face turned the colour of the flowers. "Talk to my brother," she whispered, between short gasps of breath.

Inquiries about her brother turned my spine to jelly. But he conceded and forgetting everything, I did a whoopee. She joined me, literally letting her hair down. It was then that I noticed it—her soft, long and silky hair. We got married that July. It has been 30 years. She still stumps me with her little surprises.

—JOHN METHUSELAH,
Secunderabad, Telangana



A STRANGER CALLS

It was my first day of college in Bhubaneswar. Returning to my hostel room, I realized I had left my file along with Shaw's *Arms and the Man* at the bus stop. Just then a girl knocked on my door and said I had a visitor. At the hall, another girl handed over my file. Apparently my "boyfriend" had left it and said he would call tonight.

I was relieved to have my file back, although the book was missing, so I waited for the call. Eventually when it came I thanked the stranger profusely. He said it was his duty, and enquired about my courses, hostel life and future plans. He then said goodbye, saying he would call again.

I had blabbered away about myself, yet not even asked his name. When he called again, I was better prepared. But he tricked me again, mentioning my book, then chatting about good libraries and places to buy second-hand books. He promised to call again and reveal his identity, however this never happened in my three years of college.

His calls calmed me down during homesickness, misunderstandings with friends or exam stress. I admired the wise stranger but never really got to know him. On my last day at the hostel, Swagatika, a day-scholar friend invited me home.

The previous night I had cried myself to sleep as my phone friend had ditched me after promising to meet up. After I met Swagatika's parents we went to her brother's room. There on his desk lay my copy of *Arms and the Man!* The young man, whose room it was, looked happy being introduced. I had imagined this meeting about a thousand times, but now I trembled—with anger and joy.

We married two years later and are now blessed with a girl.

—NIVEDITA DAS, Hyderabad **R**

As Kids See It



"I got into a fight with Emily over what colour we should make our friendship bracelets."

ONE MORNING WHILE visiting his grandparents in Calgary, Canada, my three-year-old son, Graham, asked his grandmother if he could pick berries in the backyard.

"Not in your PJs!" she responded. Two minutes later, she heard the screen door close and turned to find Graham's PJs in a tidy pile by the door.

MARILYN PENLEY

AS LIGHTING SPLIT the night sky, my three-year-old granddaughter looked up in bewildered delight. She shouted: "Look, look! God is taking our photojafs!"

NISHI BAHL, *Dehradun*

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our jokes sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com



Science is showing that how you feel isn't just about what you eat or do or think. It's about what you believe

**THE
HEALING
POWER
OF
YOU**

BY ERIK VANCE
FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

RICHARD MÖDL HAD RECENTLY BROKEN HIS HEEL, but in 2003 he was determined to complete his first pilgrimage from Regensburg to Altötting, Germany. It was agony to walk at all, let alone endure the 135 kilometres that thousands of believers trek each year to behold the Black Madonna of Altötting.

But Mödl had a deep faith in the Virgin Mary's ability to deliver him. "When you are on your way to Altötting, you almost don't feel the pain," he says.

Today, at 74, Mödl has a warm smile and a wiry frame. Since the healing of his foot, he's made the pilgrimage 12 more times, and he's a passionate believer in its transformative power.

Mödl is not alone in his belief. Whether it takes the form of a touch of the Holy Spirit at a Florida revival meeting or a dip in the water of the Ganges, the healing power of belief is all around us. Studies suggest that regular religious services may improve the immune system, decrease blood pressure, add years to our lives.

Religious faith is hardly the only kind of belief that has the ability to make us feel inexplicably better. About 9,900 kilometres from Altötting,

another man experienced what seemed to be a medical miracle.

At 42 years old, Mike Pauletich was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's disease. For years he struggled with the disease and with depression, as talking and writing became ever harder.

Then, in 2011, Pauletich turned to Ceregene, an American company that was testing a new gene therapy. Parkinson's is the result of a chronic loss of the neurotransmitter dopamine. Ceregene's experimental treatment was to cut two holes through a patient's skull and inject neurturin, a protein that had been shown to halt the progress of the disease in monkeys, directly into the brain.

After the surgery Pauletich's



PLACEBO SUPPOSITORIES WORK BETTER
IN FRANCE, WHILE THE ENGLISH
PREFER TO SWALLOW THEIR PLACEBOS.

mobility improved, and his speech became markedly clearer. (Today you can hardly tell he has the disease at all.) His doctor on the study, Kathleen Poston, was astonished. Strictly speaking, Parkinson's had never been reversed in humans; the best one could hope for was a slowdown in the progression of the disease.

In April 2013, Ceregene announced that the neurturin trial had failed. Patients who had been treated with the drug did not improve any more significantly than those who had received a placebo treatment—a sham surgery in which a doctor drilled 'divots' into the patient's skull so that it would feel as if there had been an operation.

Poston was crushed. But then she looked at the data and noticed something that stopped her cold. Mike Pauleitich had gotten the placebo.

IN A SENSE both Pauleitich and Mödl participated in a performance. And just as a good performance in a theatre can draw us in until we feel we're watching something real, the theatre of healing is designed to draw us in by creating powerful expectations in our brains. These expectations drive the so-called placebo effect, which can affect what happens in our bodies as well.



When Pauleitich experienced improvement in his symptoms, it wasn't just because of the divots he could feel in his head or what the doctors told him about surgery. It was the whole scene he'd experienced: the doctors in their white coats, stethoscopes around their necks; the nurses, check-ups and tests.

This stagecraft extends to many aspects of treatment and can operate on a subconscious level. Expensive placebos work better than cheap ones. Placebo suppositories work better in France, while the English prefer to swallow their placebos. Often fake injections work better than fake pills.

But fake surgeries seem to be the most powerful of all.

Most astonishingly, placebos can work even when the person taking them knows they are placebos. This was reported in a 2010 paper published by Ted Kaptchuk, a researcher at Harvard Medical School, and his team. After 21 days of taking a placebo, people with irritable bowel syndrome felt markedly better when compared with people who received nothing, even though those who reported feeling relief were told that they were receiving placebos.

A supportive patient-practitioner relationship was key in creating belief in a successful outcome. Patients were told that the placebo pills had been shown, in rigorous clinical testing, to induce meaningful self-healing.

“Dealing with expectation is very tricky,” says Kaptchuk, who has spent his life studying placebo effects. “We’re dealing with very imprecise measuring of a very imprecise phenomenon. And a lot of it’s nonconscious.”

Karin Jensen, one of Kaptchuk’s former colleagues who now runs her



own lab at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, designed an experiment to determine whether it was possible to use subliminal cues to condition subjects to experience a placebo effect.

During the conditioning phase of the experiment, subjects viewed alternating faces on a screen. Half the subjects received subliminal cues: The faces appeared for just a fraction of a second—not long enough to consciously tell them apart. For the other subjects, the faces



“WITHOUT THE EXPECTATION OF PAIN RELIEF, YOU CAN’T HAVE A PLACEBO EFFECT,” SAYS PROFESSOR HOWARD FIELDS.

appeared long enough for them to be consciously recognized.

During this first phase, varying heat stimuli were delivered to the subjects' arms along with the facial cues: more heat with the first face, less heat with the second. In the testing phase that followed, the subjects, including those who saw only the quick-flash subliminal cues, reported feeling more pain when they saw the first face, although the heat stimuli remained moderate and identical for both faces. The subjects had developed an unconscious link between greater pain and the first face.

The experiment showed that a placebo response can be conditioned subliminally. Jensen points out that tiny cues as you walk into a hospital—many of which are experienced unconsciously—trigger responses in our bodies in a similar way. “Part of healing is nonconscious—something that happens instinctually,” she says.

Hospitals are just one common venue for the theatre of belief. There are hundreds of alternative medical treatments that harness our expectations—homeopathy, acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicines, vitamin infusions, sound healing, to name a few—all with varying levels of proven efficacy.

SO HOW DOES a belief literally heal? One part of the puzzle involves conditioning, as Jensen has shown. Recall Pavlov's dog, which drooled every

time it heard a bell. That happened because Pavlov conditioned the animal to connect food with the sound.

The placebo effect's conditioned response in reaction to pain is to release brain chemicals—endorphins, or opium-like painkillers. In the 1970s two San Francisco neuroscientists interested in how those internal opioids control pain studied patients who had just had their wisdom teeth pulled.

The researchers first compared a placebo group to another group that received naloxone, a drug that cancels out the ameliorating effect of opioids. None of the subjects received or expected to receive morphine—and all of them felt miserable. Then the scientists told the patients that some of them would receive morphine, some a placebo and some naloxone.

This time, some of the patients felt better, even though they didn't receive morphine. Their expectation of potential relief triggered the release of endorphins, which reduced the pain. But as soon as they got naloxone, they were in pain again. The drug wiped out the action of the endorphins that the placebo response had released.

“Without the expectation of pain relief, you can't have a placebo effect,” says Howard Fields, a neurology professor at the University of California, San Francisco, and one of the authors of the study.

It wasn't until the early 2000s that scientists could watch how these effects play out in the brain.

Tor Wager, then a PhD student at the University of Michigan, put subjects in a brain scanner. He applied cream to each subject's wrists, then strapped on electrodes that could deliver painful shocks or heat. He told the subjects that one of the creams could ameliorate pain, but, in fact, neither cream had any inherent pain-reducing qualities.

After several rounds of conditioning, the subjects learnt to feel less pain on the wrist coated with the "pain relieving" cream; on the last run, strong shocks felt no worse than a light pinch.

The brain scans showed that normal pain sensations begin at an injury and travel in a split second up the spine to a network of brain areas that recognize the sensation as pain. A placebo response travels in the opposite direction. An expectation of healing in the prefrontal cortex sends signals to the brain stem, which creates opioids and releases them down to the spinal cord.

"The right belief and the right experience work together," says Wager, now a professor at the University of Colorado Boulder and director of a neuroscience lab there. "And that's the recipe."

The recipe is finding its way into clinical practice. Christopher Spevak is a pain and addiction doctor at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. Every day he sees active service members and veterans with severe injuries.

When Spevak asks patients about

themselves, he might learn that in childhood a person had a favourite eucalyptus tree outside his house or loved peppermint candies. If Spevak prescribes opioid painkillers, every time the patient takes one, he also has eucalyptus oil to smell or a peppermint to eat—whatever stimulus will resonate. Patients start linking the sensory experience to the drugs. After a while, Spevak cuts down on the drug and just provides the sounds or smells. The patient's brain can go to an internal pharmacy for the needed drugs.

"We have triple amputees, quadruple amputees, who are on no opioids," Spevak says. "Yet we have older Vietnam vets who've been on high doses of morphine for low back pain for the past 30 years."

TWO YEARS AGO Leonie Koban, a member of Tor Wager's lab, tested the effect of other believers on a subject's experiences of pain. The researchers delivered a burning sensation to their subjects' arms and asked them to rate how strong it was. The volunteers also viewed a series of hash marks representing how previous participants had rated their pain. For the same stimulus, the subjects reported feeling higher or lower levels of pain based on what they were told previous participants had felt.

Tests of the subjects' skin conductance responses—involuntary changes in how the body is conducting elec-

tricity—showed that they were not just reporting what they thought the researchers wanted to hear; they were actually responding less to pain. Koban goes so far as to say that social information might be more powerful in altering the experience of pain than both conditioning and subconscious cues.

“Information we take from our social relationships has really profound influences, not only on emotional experiences but also on health-related outcomes such as pain and healing,” Koban says. “And we are only beginning to understand these influences and how we can harness them.”

NOWHERE IS THE power of group belief more evident than in religious pilgrimages—whether it’s the Catholic trek to Lourdes, the annual hajj pilgrimage of Muslims to Mecca, or the Kumbh Mela, which regularly draws tens of millions of Hindus to Indian cities along the Ganges. Or the pilgrimage to Altötting where I met Richard Mödl. The first documented healing in Altötting was in 1489, when a drowned boy was said to have been

miraculously brought back to life. Today the Black Madonna attracts about a million visitors a year.

The pilgrims I joined were chatting happily on a cold Bavarian morning. I had been nervous about the trip because of an ankle surgery I’d had three months before. But in that merry throng of believers, my pain faded away. “The group carries you,” said Marcus Brunner, a cheery priest and 27-year veteran of the walk.

When we arrived in the Chapel of Grace, home of the Black Madonna, we found it covered with pictures representing miracles spanning hundreds of years and showing every imaginable ailment. Propped against the walls were crutches and canes left behind by parishioners and pilgrims whose suffering was relieved by the Black Madonna. The expectation of healing continues unabated.

“There is a different way of thinking here,” said Thomas Zauner, a psychotherapist and deacon who had moved to Altötting to seek a supportive community for his developmentally disabled child. “Prayer seems to actually work.” **R**

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WIT AND WISDOM

Things could be worse. Suppose your errors were counted and published every day, like those of a baseball player.

ANON

Daniel Miller had promised his wife, Saimaa, he'd never leave her. But could he stay alive until help arrived?

One Breath Away

BY HELEN SIGNY

WHEN SAIMAA MILLER FIRST SET EYES ON her future husband, Daniel, she was attracted by his stoicism. A friend of her builder in Bondi outside of Sydney, Australia, he'd joined them for drinks the day his dog had died. *He is the sort of man I'd like to be with*, she thought. A few months later, she walked out of her Bondi naturopathy practice and he was standing outside, waiting for her. She knew at that moment he would be her partner for life.



*Daniel at his
Charlotte Bay
home, in New
South Wales,
Australia.*

They soon moved in together and before long, in 2007, had found the perfect property in Charlotte Bay, on the New South Wales mid-north coast. Daniel, a qualified builder and landscaper, could develop the land into a yoga retreat and one day they could imagine their children running around its grassy paddocks.

“Don’t you die before me,” Saimaa would often joke. Her mother had passed away when she was just 13, and it was unimaginable that she could be left alone again.

“I promise,” Daniel replied.

Several years later and the dream had come true. Their children, Kalan and Leilani, were nine and four, and the family had made the property their permanent home, with Saimaa commuting three hours each week to see her clients at her Bondi clinic.

That’s where she was that day in February last year. With the children at day care and the school swimming carnival, Daniel, 45, thought he’d finish the landscaping around a dam about 50 metres from the house. He’d been meaning to tidy up an old rock garden against the dam wall.

Using his three-ton mini-excavator, Daniel started to shift some of the larger boulders and plants. It hadn’t rained for a long time and the water in the dam on the other side of the wall was very low. He steered the excavator to the edge of the dam and lowered the bucket to drag out a load of mud.

Just then, the excavator started to

slide with the weight. Used to working with heavy machinery, Daniel wasn’t alarmed when the excavator slipped in its tracks. He quickly lowered the bucket to the ground to act as a counterweight and stabilize the excavator. As he did this, the wall gave way and the excavator slid towards the water.

In sheer panic, Daniel pushed himself away from the machine to try to get clear of its weight. Man and machine crashed into the muddy floor of the dam, the excavator tipped on to its side and the roll bar landed on his back just below his shoulder blades. He was pinned down under the water.

I’ve got to get out of here, Daniel screamed to himself, pulling his body forward with all his might to try to get his head above water. He wriggled and squirmed until the roll bar was across his lower back, but he couldn’t get it past his buttocks.

Jamming his hands into the mud, Daniel arched his back and pushed as hard as he could until his head was above water. He then grabbed a full breath of glorious air. *I can’t die first* was all he could think.

DANIEL WAS fortunate to have landed facing the dam wall, with his chest on a step where the water was only 60 centimetres deep. Towards the centre of the dam, his legs were floating in deeper water. Still, he couldn’t move and 60 centimetres was plenty deep enough to drown in.

Daniel's arm was wedged under his chest in a push-up position, similar to an upward dog in yoga. If he pushed himself up with all his strength, he could just get his chin out of the water.

He had to calm himself. A surfer of many years, he knew the only way to survive in the water was to slow down and think rationally. He pushed away the panic and began to think.

The excavator was still running, spewing hydraulic oil and diesel into the water. Eventually the oil would flood the engine and the noise would stop. *Then who would notice?*

No one else was on the property. Saimaa was 300 kilometres away in Sydney, and Mel, the next-door neighbour, about 500 metres away, would be at the swimming carnival. He cursed himself for cancelling the guy who was supposed to come and mow the grass that day. *Maybe he would turn up anyway? Were there any courier deliveries due?* he wondered.

Most likely, the first people to miss him would be his son's teachers when he didn't show for school pick-up. They wouldn't come to the property to look for him; they would just send Kalan to after-school care, and the alarm wouldn't be raised until after 6 p.m. It was the same with Leilani's preschool. It was now just past

11:30 a.m. *That means I have to stay alive for six or more hours,* he thought.

Mel might come home around 3 p.m. Could he hold on till then?

The weight of the roll bar didn't seem to be evenly distributed along Daniel's back and he didn't feel like he was carrying the full weight of the excavator. That might mean he could dig himself out. As he propped up his body with one hand, he used the other to dig underneath his pelvis and legs, pushing the mud to the side.

It was a near-fatal mistake. The machine sank further as he dug, and Daniel realized with horror that now he could only manage to raise his eyes and nose above the waterline. If he used all his strength he could lift himself far enough up to clear his mouth, but he couldn't do that for

more than a few minutes at a time, it was too painful. He had to conserve energy. Daniel knew he could be here for a long, long time.

His options were simple. He could either fight or die. If he died, the carers at his daughter's day care would bring her home. They'd see the excavator overturned in the dam, perhaps his boots would be floating on the surface. He could not let that happen. As excruciating as it was to keep pushing himself high enough to

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**AS PAINFUL AS
IT WAS TO KEEP
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BREATHE,
THERE WAS
NOTHING ELSE
HE COULD DO.**

breathe, there was nothing else he could do.

Daniel wasn't new to endurance. He had done years of open ocean paddling. The trick was to chunk the pain into manageable blocks. To last in this position for six hours was unimaginable. But he could do it for 60 seconds. So he started to count.

He set his hands in one position, counted to 60 and waved one hand back and forth in the water to pass time and keep calm. At 55 seconds he'd allow himself the luxury of knowing there were only five seconds to go. Then he'd shift his weight into a different position and start again. It was like Daniel was giving himself a break every minute.

As the engine finally sputtered and cut out it became very peaceful in the dam. With his ears submerged, all Daniel could hear was the rapid ticking of the machine. The sun shone on his head, his lips were at the waterline and he could see the oil and fluids floating on the surface. When debris came too close to his nose he'd blow a bubble to gently push it away.

The counting worked. For more than an hour, Daniel watched a grasshopper walk up a blade of grass and down the other side. Letting his thoughts wander, he played out differ-



The scene that greeted emergency workers was of Daniel submerged, with his nose just above the waterline.

ent scenarios of how someone might find him. He thought about the sump pump, less than 100 metres away, that could drain the dam and save him. He willed different people to come, even trying telepathy for someone to pop in for a visit. Above all, he thought, Saimaa must not hear he was dead.

Saimaa had often nagged him about taking up yoga. He'd always insisted that after 10 minutes he was bored. Now, his arched back was screaming and his arms were throbbing. *How long has someone stayed in an upward dog position before?* he wondered. It was best not to think about the pain.

As the time dragged on and the excavator continued to slowly sink, Daniel felt a slow rising panic, made worse when he remembered that rain was forecast that day. Just 20 milli-

metres would be enough to kill him. He could fight for hours, but there were some things over which he had no control.

But there's no use dwelling on them, he told himself. If he could stay calm and make good decisions, he would have a reasonable chance of staying alive.

At times emotions would well up and he'd laugh hysterically. Was he really going to die in the mud at the bottom of his own dam? But then he'd calm himself, breathe through his nose and get back to counting.

The engine continued to softly tick.

BY WHAT must have been around 2.30 p.m., staying alive had become almost robotic. Breathe, count, stay calm. Daniel's ears were full of water and oil, and he could only just hear the engine ticking. He had no idea where the neighbours were, but he was getting tired. He would have to start calling for help. He'd give it another few blocks of 60 seconds and then have a go.

At the appointed time, Daniel summoned all the strength he had left to push himself high enough out of the water to clear his mouth. He yelled at the top of his lungs for 10 minutes. "Help, help, help!"

Shouting was exhausting. He stopped, full of adrenalin, bursting with anger. He struggled to free his pelvis, furious no one could hear him.

Then, out of the corner of his eye,

he caught a movement. He turned his head and, sure enough, he could make out his neighbour Mel's blue sedan approaching along the driveway. He imagined her parking her car, getting out and looking around. He pushed himself up and yelled again. There she was, running around the corner with her phone in her hand.

That was when he knew. *Thank God. You're going to live, man.*

Mel rushed down to the edge of the dam. "What do I do?" she cried.

Daniel pushed his mouth out again. "Ring Reg, get the neighbours!" he shouted, then resumed his position.

The nearest emergency services were 30 minutes away in Forster but Reg, another neighbour, was close by. Within minutes he arrived and jumped into the dam to hold Daniel's head. Another neighbour who'd been alerted by Mel arrived and ran to fetch a snorkel from the house, but it was impossible for Daniel to breathe through it.

Mel used her phone to google "What to do when someone is trapped in a dam". At the top of the list was the instruction that no one else should enter the dam—it was too unstable. Reg got out as other neighbours arrived.

On a nearby property, real estate agent Charles Degotardi's pager went off. As captain of the local Rural Fire Service, he rang the station and was told someone in the area was trapped under an excavator in a dam, just up the road from the property he was

now inspecting. *He's probably already dead*, Charles thought.

There was no time to fetch the fire truck, so he phoned his senior deputy and drove around the corner to the Miller property. He was the first emergency services officer to arrive. He could not believe the scene that greeted him. A bunch of people were gathered at the dam, all staring at Daniel's nose and eyes sticking out of the brown water.

The local fire truck arrived within seven minutes. The absolute priority was to lower the water in the dam, so Charles and his colleagues grabbed the portable pump and set up the hoses over the side of the dam. As the pump kicked into action, they manoeuvred the truck to the side of the dam and inserted a larger-volume pump as well.

Within a few minutes, the water level had dropped below Daniel's nose and ears, and he could hear what was being said. Everyone was concerned about the excavator moving and crushing him further. It had fallen on to a boulder, which was keeping it from sliding to the bottom of the dam. But with only a few centimetres to go,



Back home with his family, Daniel says that his options were simple: he could either fight or die.

it was clear the three-ton excavator was about to slip off the large rock.

Police and ambulance began to arrive, followed by Fire and Rescue from Forster. Daniel watched them as they approached the edge of the dam one by one—the look of total disbelief on their faces that he was still alive.

As the water dropped, it became clear how incredibly lucky Daniel had been. Had the boulder not been there, he would have been crushed. As it was, he was pinned in soft mud, yet miraculously, the full weight of the machine was not on him.

In a rescue operation that lasted more than an hour and a half, emergency services fixed a cable on to the boom of the excavator to stabilize the

machine, and then winched it to lift the weight off Daniel.

By the time the water level reached five centimetres above his pelvis, the pumps were beginning to clog with mud, but there was enough visibility to start digging Daniel out. They cleared the mud from underneath his legs then hauled him out by his shoulders.

Daniel was hypothermic, completely caked in mud and his lungs and ears were full of oil and diesel. But he was euphoric. He was alive.

SAIMAA WAS in Bondi seeing clients when she noticed a missed call from her neighbour Mel. *I'll call back later*, she thought. Then another came from a second neighbour, Julie Henry. Something must be wrong.

"Something's happened to Daniel," Julie told Saimaa, who could tell by her voice that it was serious.

When she learnt what had happened, Saimaa remained calm. Daniel had promised he would not die first. She knew he would be OK.

Saimaa called her mother-in-law and then spoke again with the neigh-

bours Julie Henry and her husband John Henry. It was as if the whole community were working as one. The kids were picked up and taken to Mel's, while Saimaa jumped in her car to meet Daniel at their local hospital.

Daniel spent three days in the trauma ward. He had swelling in his back and an infection from the fluids he'd inhaled, but he was otherwise unharmed. His back pain lasted several weeks. Saimaa got her wish and he started yoga to help release the knots, and before long he was back to work and surfing.

Looking back, the Millers see that day as a positive experience. They were overwhelmed by the dedication of their local community and the emergency services. "There is so much negativity in the world at the moment, but this was a story of believing in life and wanting to live," says Saimaa. "It's about people helping each other. It's about mateship."

Daniel feels like the luckiest man alive. To survive in the dam was a massive feat of endurance, and he was victorious. He beat the odds.

And all because he promised Saimaa he wouldn't die first. **R**

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* *

GRAMMATICALLY FUNNY

Question: Why do words, phrases and punctuation keep ending up in court?

Answer: To be sentenced.

A close-up photograph of a cat's face, focusing on its right eye which is a striking green color. The cat has white fur with some darker patches on its head. The background is a plain, light blue-grey color.

Bad Puns

**Are
How
Eye
Roll**



Inside the hyper-competitive, sometimes groan-inducing world of pun competitions

BY PETER RUBIN FROM WIRED

ON THE SURFACE, THE GUY wasn't particularly fearsome—pudgy, late 30s, polo shirt, plaid shorts, baseball cap. He looked completely at ease, one hand in his pocket, the other holding the microphone loosely, like a torch singer doing crowd work. And when he finally began talking, it was with an assurance that belied the fact that he was basically spewing nonsense.

"I hate all people named John," he said with bravado. "Yeah, that's right, that was a John diss!" The crowd roared. *John diss. Jaundice.* A glorious, groan-inducing precision strike of a pun.

If you're a basketball rookie, you really don't want to go up against LeBron James. Anyone's trivia night would be ruined by seeing Ken Jennings on another team. And if you find

yourself at the world's biggest pun competition, the last person you want to face is four-time defending champion Ben Ziek. Yet that's exactly where I was, on an outdoor stage in Austin, Texas, US, committing unspeakable atrocities upon the English language in front of a few hundred onlookers.

The rules of the 39th annual O. Henry Pun-Off World Championships 'Punslingers' competition are simple: Two people take turns punning on a theme in head-to-head rounds. Failure to make a pun in five seconds gets you eliminated; make a non-pun or reuse a word three times, and you've reached the banishing point. Round by round and pair by pair, a field of

"That was a measle-y pun," fired my opponent during a round on diseases.

32 dwindles until the last of the halved-nots finally gets to claim the mantle of best punster in the world.

My first-round opponent froze when his turn came to pun on waterborne vehicles. Seriously, yacht a word came out. Canoe believe it?

Eventually, there we stood, two among the final eight: me, a first-timer, squaring off against the Floyd Mayweather [boxer] of the pun world. I'd been a little jittery in my first couple of rounds, sure, but now I was punning above my weight, and I knew it. Once

the judges announced that we'd be punning on diseases, we began.

"Mumps the word!" I said, hoping my voice wasn't shaking.

Ziek fired back: "That was a measle-y pun." Not only was he confident, with a voice that was equal parts game show host and morning radio DJ, he was nimble enough to turn your own pun against you.

"Well, I had a croup-on for it," I said. Whoa. Where'd that come from?

"There was a guy out here earlier painted light red," Ziek said. "Did you see the pink guy?"

"I didn't," I responded. "Cold you see him?"

Again and again we pun-upped each other. From AIDS to Zika we ranged. Almost five minutes later, we'd gone through 32 puns between us, and I was running dry.

Ziek, though, had a seemingly endless stockpile and tossed off a quick alopecia pun; I could have bald right then and there. As far as my brain was concerned, there wasn't a medical textbook in existence that contained something we hadn't used. As I stood there, silently sweating, the judge counted down, and I slunk offstage to watch the rest of the competition—which Ziek won, for the fifth time.

Knowing I'd lost to the best cushioned the blow, but some mild semantic depression lingered. When I was growing up, in the 1980s, my



The author, standing at top left, among his fellow Bay Area punslingers.

father's favourite (printable) joke was "Where do cantaloupes go in the summertime? Johnny Cougar's Melon Camp" [a play on musician Johnny Cougar's last name Mellencamp]. This is proof that I was raised to speak two languages, both of them English. See, there's the actual words-working-together-and-making-sense part, and then there's the fun part. The pliant, recombinant part. The part that lets you harness linguistic irregularities, judo-style, to make words into other words. It's not conscious, exactly, and whether this is nature or nurture, the result is that I'm playing with language all the time.

"I can't listen passively to someone speaking without the possibility of puns echoing around in my head," says Gary Hallock, who has been producing and hosting the O. Henry Pun-Off for 26 years. He's seen the annual competition grow from an

Austin oddity to a national event.

It's almost surprising that it took so long. Verbal puns may date back to at least 1635 BC, when a Babylonian clay tablet included a play on the word for wheat. Humour theorists generally agree that comedy hinges on incongruity: When a sentence or situation subverts expectations, that's funny. (Also, yes, humour theorists are a thing.) And of the many kinds of wordplay—hyperbole, metaphor, even letter-level foolery such as anagrams—nothing takes advantage of incongruity quite like puns.

They come in four varieties. In order of increasing complexity, you've got homonyms, identical words that sound alike but differ in meaning ("Led Zeppelin's guitarist was interrogated, but detectives weren't able to turn the Page"); homophones, which are spelt differently but sound the same ("I hate raisins! Apologies if you're not into curranty vents"); homographs, which

sound different but look similar (“If you’re asking me to believe that a Loire Cabernet is that different from a Napa Cabernet, then the *terroir*-ists have won”—*terroir* being the French word for the environment in which wine grapes are grown); and paronyms, which are words from different languages that sound similar and often come from the same Latin root (“I ate so much cucumber chutney at the Indian restaurant that I have raita’s block”).

Simply put, a good pun is a joke that hinges on wordplay. A truly formidable punner knows that and frames a sentence to make the pun the punchline. But was I a truly formidable punner? I’d thought so—

After a muggleful of Harry Potter puns, I find myself in the semi-finals.

my lifelong dream is seeing Flavor Flav [rapper] and Ellen Burstyn [actor] co-hosting a talk show so it can be called *Burstyn with Flavor*. But after Austin, I had my doubts. I’d cracked under pressure; until I tried again, I’d never know fissure.

THE BAY AREA PUN-OFF is just one of a handful of competitive punning events popping up across the United States, such as Punderdome 3000 in New York City,

Pundamonium in Seattle and the Great Durham Pun Championship in Durham, North Carolina. (No experience is necessary—you just sign up and hope your number gets picked.) On this Saturday night, a week after O. Henry, I am in a high-ceilinged performance space in San Francisco’s Mission District, looking for redemption. We commence with a marathon on tree puns designed to winnow the field of 12 down to eight.

“I’m just hoping to win the poplar vote,” one woman says.

“Sounds like a birch of contract to me,” says someone else.

A lanky British guy I’ll call Chet rambles through a shaggy-dog story involving a French woman and three Jamaican guys to get to a tortured “le mon t’ree” punchline. The crowd eats it up.

After someone delivers a good line, I admit that I end up being pretty frond of it. Things go oak-ay, and I’m on to the next round.

After a muggleful of Harry Potter puns, I find myself in the semi-finals against an engineer named Asa. The host scribbles the mystery topic on a chalkboard hidden from sight, then turns it around. It says ... *diseases*. The same category that knocked me out in Austin? The category I dwelt on for the entire flight home, thinking of all the one-liners that had eluded me?

This time, there’s no running dry. Not only do I remember all the puns I used against Ben Ziek, I also

remember all the puns he made against me. So when Asa says, “I’m really taking my mumps,” I shoot back with, “That’s kinda measles-y, if you ask me.” I reprise puns I’d made in Austin (“Did you see that Italian opera singer run through the door? In flew Enzo!”); I use puns that I’d thought of since (“My mum makes the best onion dip. It’s HIV little concoction you’d love”).

Asa fights gamely, but I have innumerable disease puns at my fingertips, and it’s not much longer before the round is over.

And then there are two: me and Chet. And I’m locked in. No nerves, no self-consciousness, just getting out of my brain’s way and letting the connections happen. When the host announces the theme—living world leaders—I don’t even try to stockpile puns. I just wait, and they come.

Chet opens the round: “Ohhh, BAMA. I don’t know anything about world leaders.”

Hearing *Obama* conjures up a mental image of Justin Trudeau. Before the laughter even dies down, I nod my head encouragingly. “True, though—that was a decent pun!”

It’s Austin all over again, just in reverse. Now I’m the quick one, and Chet’s the one who has to scramble. My turn? No problem: “I am Bushed.”

Chet has used three US presidents and two British prime ministers; meanwhile, I’ve been from South Korea to Germany, by way of Canada.

Even better, I’ve got another continent in my pocket. “Have you guys been to Chet’s farm?” I ask the audience. “He has this group of cows that won’t stop talking.” I wait a beat before taking the audience to Africa with a nod to Zimbabwe’s president. “They are seriously moo-gabby.”

What happens next is a blur. I can’t even tell you what comes out of Chet’s mouth, but it’s either nothing or it’s the name of someone dead. Either way, the Bay Area Pun-Off is over.

This may be my only taste of victory in the world of competitive paronomasiacs (a fancy word for pun addicts), and I may never know the secret to the perfect pun. But as long as I’ve got the words to try, one thing’s for sure: I’ll keep using them to create incongruity.

Or maybe I’ll just plead raita’s block. **R**

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*
* *

WHAT DO THESE WORDS HAVE IN COMMON?

abhors

begins

chimps

almost

biopsy

chintz

Answer: With six letters apiece, they’re among the longest English words with every letter in alphabetical order.



The key to staying together?
It's not what you think

Happily Ever *After*

BY CHARLOTTE ANDERSEN

ANALYTICS AND DATA don't sound like a formula for romance, but John Gottman has devoted more than 40 years to figuring out the maths that makes relationships work. In his "Love Lab" at the University of Washington, in Seattle, USA, he has analyzed how couples communicate verbally and non-verbally and followed them for years to find out if their relationships survived. More than 200 published articles later, he claims to be able to predict the outcome of a relationship with up to 94 per cent accuracy. Dubbed "the Einstein of Love" by *Psychology Today*, Gottman—with Julie, his wife of 30 years and research partner—now teaches other marriage therapists the most common misunderstandings about love. They, along with Chennai-based psychiatrist Dr Vijay Nagaswami and Mumbai-based clinical psychologist Seema Hingorrany, offer us some valuable advice.

MYTH: MARRIAGE SHOULD BE FAIR.

Couples who engage in quid pro quo thinking—if I scratch your back, you should scratch mine—are usually in serious trouble, John says: "We become emotional accountants only when there's something wrong with the relationship."

"We've found in our research that the best marriages are the ones in which you're really invested in your partner's interests, as opposed to your own," Julie says. Negotiating from a position of pure self-interest is dysfunctional;

the happiest couples give without expecting anything in return because they can rely on their partner to operate with their best interests in mind. "The term equal is hard to define in any relationship, but for it to be fair, it has to be equitable," adds Nagaswami. However, he says, this can be particularly challenging in an Indian set-up that has traditionally been "patriarchal, hierarchical and political". Because of improved awareness and exposure, young couples are now taking the first steps towards equitability. "This means conceiving of a relationship as encompassing three spaces—two personal spaces and one relationship space. Your interests are important, but even as you put them first, try and make sure that your relationship space is not compromised," he says.

Urban Indian women, too, are trying to bring balance to their relationships, turning to therapy to better understand ways to negotiate traditional conflicts, for instance with their in-laws. "A little self-love and self-care also go a long way, because if you're unhappy, you won't be able to keep everyone else around you happy. While being respectful with your in-laws is important, you must also define your boundaries," advises Hingorrany.

MYTH: YOUR PARTNER ISN'T A MIND READER, AND YOU SHOULD ALWAYS TELL THEM EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT. Make no mistake: Open communication is an essential tool for a

happy relationship (see box). But the Gottmans have found that successful couples are better at being available and responding to each other's subtler needs for attention, support, empathy or interest—even by simply turning away from the smartphone or TV screen to respond to a spouse's comments. One of John's studies found a correlation between dissatisfied marriages and the husband's deficient ability to interpret his wife's non-verbal cues.

MYTH: COUPLES WHO HAVE SCREAMING FIGHTS ARE HEADED FOR DIVORCE. “Volatiles” have been flagged by the Gottmans as one of three types of “happy-stable” relationships. (The other two, if you're curious, are “validators” and “conflict avoiders”.)

In fact, the average happy-stable couple has at minimum a five-to-one positive-to-negative ratio during con-

flict—meaning they have five times more positive feelings than negative ones, even while fighting—which John has found to be the marker of a healthy relationship. In contrast, couples headed for divorce have a ratio of 0.8 to one, with far less positive emotions for each negative interaction. The difference is that happy couples are able to offset arguments with laughter and fun; indeed, in neutral circumstances, their ratio spikes to 20 to one.

“Conflict avoiders have a peaceful existence, but on the other hand, they can wind up leading parallel lives in which they're very distant from one another,” John says. However, “passionate couples who argue a lot run the risk of devolving into constant bickering”.

Nagaswami adds, “Screaming fights are exhausting and unproductive and raise the toxicity in the marriage, more so when they become the only

‘WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?’

Seema Hingorany outlines the rules for a happy marriage: “Avoid sulking or stonewalling, no matter how irrational whatever you have to say is, you must convey it.” Communication and transparency, she says, are fundamental so that you are not confronted with a “why didn't you ask” from your partner.

Indian women often feel isolated. They strike a delicate balance, often dealing with changing roles, an extended family and their expectations all on their own. Certain aspects like visiting in-laws and social gatherings can get one bogged down and worn out. “In case your spouse turns around and says ‘why didn't you tell me ...’ it's because they are unaware of the pressures that you have to deal with,” she says. Maintaining an open dialogue becomes vital in such cases.

pattern of fighting between partners.” However, he points out that “civil disagreements” may not always be possible, with fights happening in even the best of relationships. But both partners, he says, should be “committed to understanding their fights and changing the patterns from ‘fighting hard’ to ‘fighting smart,’ so that they can use the fights to grow”.



REALIZE THAT A
DIALOGUE ABOUT YOUR
CONTRASTING
PERSPECTIVE IS MUCH
IMPORTANT THAN
TRYING TO SOLVE
DISAGREEMENTS.

MYTH: TALK THINGS OUT UNTIL YOU AGREE WITH EACH OTHER.

Sixty-nine per cent of marriage problems are managed through dialogue rather than being definitively solved, according to John’s research.

Most disagreements arise from personality differences between partners, so the conflict’s not resolvable. The key is to avoid a “gridlocked conflict,” in which you can’t make headway in a recurring fight. At the bottom of these issues, the Gottmans have found, are core differences—anything intrinsic to a partner’s belief system, history or personality, from a closely held

value to an as-yet-unfulfilled dream. For instance, a fight about finances might not be just about the cash, but also about the meanings of money, power, freedom and security. The goal is to realize that a dialogue about your contrasting perspectives is much more important than trying to definitively solve enduring disagreements.

MYTH: GENDER DIFFERENCES ARE BEHIND YOUR MEGA-FIGHTS.

Men aren’t from Mars, and women aren’t from Venus; we’re all just from Earth. As it turns out, “men are just as in touch with their emotions as women,” Julie says. “On the other hand, some women are very reluctant to express their negative emotions, so it balances out. There are more similarities than the culture generally believes.”

However, gender roles can become contentious in Indian marriages. “For example if a man is seen picking up his wife’s plate in public, he can be judged and labelled as ‘henpecked’ by some,” points out Hingorrany. According to her, while both sexes are emotional, Indian men are culturally conditioned to express less than women. “Often suppressed emotions can lead to anger and taking refuge in alcohol abuse,” she says.

MYTH: YOU REPEAT YOUR PARENTS’ RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS.

How you carry your childhood baggage is more important than the fact that you have some. “Nobody escapes child-

hood without some crazy buttons and triggers, but it doesn't mean you can't have a great relationship," John says.

Tom Bradbury, a psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, coined the phrase "enduring vulnerabilities" to describe these historical triggers. Certain words and actions might dig up old feelings and provoke a reaction. Make sure you and your partner understand what sets the other off and avoid picking on those weaknesses.

Circumstances from your past could also prompt what psychologists call projective identification. An example is taking something you resent from your childhood and applying it to your significant other. If you had a distant, cold parent, for instance, you might assume your partner is being distant and cold too. Instead of blaming the person you're with, explain how the actions make you feel and what he or she can do to help you feel better; listen compassionately and remind yourself that there's no such thing as "objectively correct" or immaculate perception.

"The average young Indian doesn't tend to form many significant premarital attachments. When they do get married, they haven't had the benefit of a relationship training ground," says Nagaswami.

He adds: "Indian children remain 'children' chronologically much longer than children in many Western cultures, and as a result, the 'marriage template' that the average Indian is exposed to is that of their parents. I be-

lieve it's always useful for couples to look critically at their respective parents' marriages and learn from them so that they may create a relationship template that works for both partners."

But often, in India, there are men who compare their wife with their mother. "There has to be an understanding that your mother belonged to a different generation altogether," says Hingorrany. "This pattern is extremely distorted and needs to be reprogrammed and stopped."

MYTH: OPPOSITES ATTRACT. The idea that one partner's strengths compensate for the other's weaknesses and vice versa sounds good, but the Gottmans say their research provides no support for this. John's analysis also indicates that similarity in core beliefs is not an important predictor of, or influence on, a couple's prospective happiness. "The major incompatibility we've found that's really predictive of divorce is how people feel about expressing emotion," John says. For instance, if one person wants to talk about anger and sadness while the other thinks you should keep negative feelings to yourself, both partners may start to resent one another. If you're having an argument, the Gottmans have this reminder: It's easier to move from disagreement to mutual understanding when a relationship feels safe and one partner expresses a clear interest in the meaning behind their partner's behaviour.

—WITH INPUTS FROM AYUSHI THAPLIYAL **R**

After 53 years of severely impaired vision, I learnt of an operation that promised to restore my sight—though it wasn't without risks

I WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE

BY ROZINA ISSANI FROM *TORONTO LIFE*



WHEN I WAS EIGHT months old and starting to crawl, I began bumping into things. It was 1962, and we were living in Karachi, Pakistan. When my parents took me for my first eye exam, at age two, the doctor said the problem was likely caused by optic nerve damage at birth. He told my parents that my vision would probably improve over the next few years as the nerves repaired themselves.

Aside from my bad eyesight, I had a happy childhood. My father, Essa, ran a successful exporting business. My mother, Fatma, stayed home with me and my older brothers, Jalaludin and Hussein Ali. We lived in a three-bedroom apartment in a middle-class neighbourhood.

Growing up, I had about 10 per cent vision. Everything was blurry, but I saw shapes and could differentiate between light and dark. In 1960s Pakistan, we didn't have many specialized schools. No one carried white canes or owned service dogs. I could memorize the layout of a room, and I was able to detect where something was by assessing the volume and direction of the sound that bounced off it. It was my own version of echolocation.

AS THE TIME CAME for me to sign up for kindergarten, my father was afraid that other kids would bully me, that I'd hurt myself and that I'd fall behind,

so I was home-schooled.

My doctor encouraged my parents to give me a formal education. When I was eight, they finally relented. That September, I enrolled in Grade 2 at an all-girls academy near my house. Though my parents told my teachers about my impairment, my eyes looked normal, and no one believed I was blind. Once, on a dark and rainy day, the light wasn't strong enough for me to write a test. The instructor accused me of lying and smacked me on the forearm with a wooden ruler.



I HAD NO CAREER PROSPECTS AND NO HUSBAND. WHEN MY PARENTS DIED, I WOULD BE LOST.

AROUND MY 20TH BIRTHDAY, the reality started sinking in. In the Pakistani Muslim tradition, parents arranged all marriages, and they were determined to find the ideal woman for their sons: gorgeous, educated, family-oriented. Blindness didn't fit the bill.

I had little education, no career prospects and no husband—when my parents died, I would be lost. My two brothers had gone to school in Canada, married and started new lives. My father decided we should immigrate and join them.

We arrived in Toronto in June 1983, when I was 22. I stayed with my brother Hussein Ali, his wife and their 17-month-old daughter, while my parents lived with Jalaludin's family. I spent the first few months immersed in soap operas, hoping to pick up some English.

Within eight months, I saw an ophthalmologist, who referred me to a retinal specialist at the Hospital for Sick Children. I learnt that I'd been born with a degenerative eye condition called retinitis pigmentosa, which causes a slow, progressive loss of vision. The retina is equipped with millions of receptors called rods (which receive light) and cones (which take in colour). Retinitis pigmentosa causes those receptors to wither away until they disappear.

Then the doctor confirmed my fears: "Unfortunately, there is no cure. Your vision will continue to deteriorate until you are completely blind."

My world crumbled. In Canada, I thought I might attend college. I wanted to travel. I wanted to live by myself. Every night I'd sob in my room after everyone else had gone to bed. *What was my life going to be like?*

THE NEXT TIME I saw my doctor, in 1985, he referred me to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). They taught me how to use a collapsible cane to navigate stairs and public transit. The staff, who were mostly blind, helped me realize I could even-



The author at age seven, in Karachi

tually become independent. I signed up for courses through the organization's career centre.

In 1991, I got a call from a friend at the CNIB telling me that a local foundation was looking for a receptionist. When I got the job, my parents were thrilled—especially my dad. He'd left everything behind in Pakistan in the hope that I might have my own life one day.

Though I was nervous, things at my new job went better than I'd hoped. I organized the photocopy room so I'd know where each type and colour of paper was. I memorized extension numbers and learnt to identify board

members by voice. A few months after I started, my parents and I moved to a new apartment.

SIX YEARS LATER, TRAGEDY struck. A week before Christmas, my father started having chest pain. Within a few minutes, he was unable to move. He'd had a massive heart attack, and he died later that day. He was 71 years old.

I went back to work after a month of mourning, but my mother never recovered. Nine months later, in September 1997, she had a heart attack and died within a week. Losing both of my parents in a year was devastating. Even worse, my eyesight was deteriorating. Within nine months of my mother's death, I had lost 100 per cent of my vision. I couldn't even detect the shifting of the light. I was 35, blind and an orphan.

IT TOOK A MOVE to help me snap out of my depression. I'd been staying with my brother Hussein Ali since my mother died, but a friend suggested I live by myself on a trial basis. I listened. In the spring of 1998, six months after moving in with my brother, I returned to my own apartment.

I had to learn how to do everything my parents had taken care of. I registered for my first bank account. I figured out how to use a coin-operated washing machine and dryer.

Those first few weeks at the apartment were strange. The place was so empty without the familiar sounds of



The Argus sends data from camera-equipped glasses to a retinal implant.

my father and mother. I'd never been alone before. I placed fuzzy stickers on my oven and microwave so I would know which buttons to push. Accepting my blindness was liberating. I was finally independent.

IN NOVEMBER 2014, I heard a radio interview with Dr Robert Devenyi, the ophthalmologist-in-chief at the University Health Network in Toronto. He was talking about the Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System. The implant, also known as the bionic eye, can help restore a blind person's vision. At the time, only a handful of people had undergone the operation. And Dr Devenyi had brought the procedure to Toronto. I called the doctor's office and made an appointment for the earliest time available—January 2015.

Here's how the Argus works: During surgery, doctors place an implant on the patient's retina. It contains 60 electrodes to replace the damaged photoreceptors, along with a receiver chip that resembles a watch battery. After recovery, the patient wears glasses equipped with a camera. A unit at the patient's waist processes the footage and sends it wirelessly to the retinal implant. The receiver then transmits an electrical signal to the brain, and this produces an image.

I endured tests to confirm I had no functional vision. In this case, my failure was my success. The results showed that I was a perfect candidate for the Argus II. Dr Devenyi explained the risks. My eyes could start bleeding or become infected. My body might reject the implant. At worst, my retina might detach from my eye. I didn't care. I was 53 and completely blind—I had nothing to lose.

ON 30 MARCH 2015, at 7 a.m., I went to Toronto Western Hospital for the operation. It lasted four hours, and when I woke up, I had a patch over my left eye. We had to wait for it to heal before we could activate the Argus with the accompanying glasses.

Three weeks later, it was time. I was terrified. *What if it didn't work?* I put the glasses on my face. The technician gradually increased the electrical impulse. And then it happened: I saw light for the first

time in 15 years—a soft, radiant glow. I burst into tears. I could make out Dr Devenyi, the technicians, the nurses, my friends. Though they were just dark shapes, without detail or definition, I was able to perceive people moving around. I didn't detect any colours, just black and white. But I could see!

THE MORE I USE the device, the better my brain can interpret what the Argus sends it. I see something new almost every day—my vision has improved, and I explore the world more than I used to. The first week, I was out walking and saw what looked like a fuzzy black tower on the street. It was a traffic light. Then I spotted the button you press to change the traffic light. I had no idea what it was; my friend had to explain it to me. On a clear night, I even gazed at the moon.

I will never see perfectly. Objects are still often a few centimetres away from where my eye tells me they are. I have to grope around for my phone, for food at restaurants, for the door-knob whenever I enter my house. I will have to use my cane for the rest of my life, but it's been more than a year since my operation and I've regained more of my vision than I ever thought possible.

I am 54 years old as I write this. People have always told me we live in a beautiful world. I'm glad I finally get to see it for myself. **R**



Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



"It's true—we do have 100 words for snow, but most of them are curse words."

AS THE HEDGE FUND manager gets out of his brand-new Porsche, a truck goes racing by, taking off the door. "My Porsche! My beautiful silver Porsche is ruined!" he screams.

A police officer on the scene shakes his head in disgust. "I can't believe you," he says. "You're so focused on your possessions that you didn't even realize your left arm was torn off when the truck hit you."

The hedge fund manager looks

down in absolute horror. "Oh no!" he screams. "My Rolex!" Source: rolexforums.com

I JUST GOT DIAGNOSED as colour-blind! I didn't expect that—it came straight out of the purple!

Twitter: @ANTARES_912

THE GUYS are playing poker when Fred loses \$1,500 on a single hand, clutches his chest and drops dead. Realizing Fred's wife needs to know,



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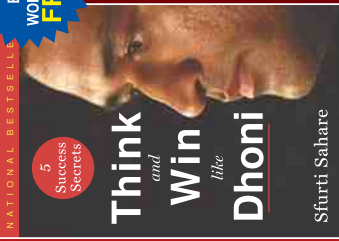
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and
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Bob agrees to tell her.

“Be discreet,” the guys tell Bob.

Bob goes to Fred’s home and knocks on the door. When Fred’s wife answers, he says, “Fred lost \$1,500 playing poker and is afraid to come home.”

“Tell him to drop dead!” she yells.

Bob nods. “OK. I’ll tell him.”

DONALD DAWSON

HUFFINGTONPOST.COM asked readers to update classics for millennials:

- *Jane Eyre*BNB
- *Alexa, Tell Me About Two Cities*
- *Charlotte’s Webcam*
- *Tinder Is the Night*
- *Tess of the d’Uberdrivers*
- *LOLita*
- *Meh Expectations*

JUST SOME of the gags that cracked them up at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe:

■ We called both our cats Socks. We had two, but we lost one in the dryer.

CAT FM

■ Dying is a lot like camping. I don’t want to do it.

PHIL WANG

■ I was struggling to make friends, so I bought a book called *How to Make People Like You*. Turns out it was all about cloning.

HARI SRISKANTHA

Source: telegraph.co.uk

Reader’s Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our jokes sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

DIETING HELP FOR THE NEW YEAR

Having trouble curbing your tendency to overindulge? Designer Katerina Kamprani’s *The Uncomfortable* collection might be just the crutch you need.



This fork ensures you’ll never load up on too much pasta.



Go ahead, try to have that extra cup of joe. In fact, these conjoined mugs may halt your caffeine addiction entirely.



Sodium level high? Try these hourglass salt shakers that dole out all the salt (or pepper) you want—one grain at a time.

Photographer Andy Seliverstov captures the joy and mutual confidence between ...

Little Kids & Their Big Dogs

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ANDY SELIVERSTOFF
FROM THE BOOK *LITTLE KIDS AND THEIR BIG DOGS*

*Matthew talks to
his big friend Misha,
a Saint Bernard.*



IN HIS WORK photographing dog shows in Russia and across Europe, Andy Seliverstov has access to many gorgeous dogs, including rare breeds. He says he has learnt that these dogs “aren’t just beautiful on the outside; they have amazing temperaments, and in particular the large and giant breeds have an innate gentleness that truly belies their stature.”

He became interested in photographing children and dogs when friends asked him to photograph their two-year-old daughter. “They showed up at the park with their Great Dane in tow,” he says. The St. Petersburg-based photographer was “blown away by the relationship between tiny Alice and gigantic Sean”, he says. He decided to incorporate him into the shoot.

Next came a photo session with a little boy named Theodore and Ringo the Newfoundland. “As with Alice and Sean, these photos touched me deeply,” he says. The images captured the special bond between children and dogs. “It’s a connection that doesn’t need words. Love, compassion, joy, trust, honesty and acceptance, to name a few, infuse the relationship. You can see it in their gestures, in their faces.” When he posted the photos on Facebook, he discovered that lots of other people felt that way, too.

In his 2017 book, *Little Kids and Their Big Dogs*, from which the photos shown here are taken, Seliverstov aimed to capture and transmit the state of endless joy and mutual confidence between the children and the animals. The one big message, he says, is this: “Love for dogs and children makes people kinder.” ➤➤



*Alexandra finds
a willing model
in her Great Dane,
Zarina.*



This page: Jay the Ridgeback dances at Dasha's command. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Alice with Sean, her Great Dane; Arther and his friend Zeus, a Komondor; Theodore with Ringo, a Newfoundland.

Little Kids and Their Big Dogs
is available from
Amazon.in as well as
revodanapublishing.com.





FROM *LITTLE KIDS AND THEIR BIG DOGS*, COPYRIGHT © 2017 BY ANDY SELIVERSTOFF, PUBLISHED BY REVODANA PUBLISHING, SEA CLIFF, N.Y. REVODANAPUBLISHING.COM

HONG KONG 20 YEARS LATER

A night view of the Hong Kong skyline from a boat. The city lights are reflected in the water. In the foreground, several people are sitting on the boat, looking towards the city. The sky is dark blue with some clouds.

It's been two decades since Britain handed over Hong Kong to China. Our writer, a former resident, returned to find the city as vibrant—and quirky—as ever

BY BONNIE MUNDAY

*View of Hong Kong Island from
Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade*

PHOTO: © ALESSANDRO DELLA BELLA/KEYSTONE/REDUX

VICTORIA HARBOUR is breathtaking, especially during the nightly laser show, when the pleasure junks, ferries and container ships seem to dance in the lights. On this warm April night, my husband, Jules, and I are standing at the rail of a rooftop restaurant on Hong Kong Island, in awe at the spectacular skyline. Brightly lit skyscrapers—some 1,300 of which are over 100 metres, by far the most of any city in the world—spike the night sky around us and across the teeming harbour on Kowloon peninsula.

As the breeze shifts our hair, we feel Hong Kong's energy. In the distance twinkle the lights of Tsing Ma suspension bridge, the world's longest for cars and trains, whisking people towards the modern 20-year-old airport on Lantau Island. Beyond it is a nearly completed multi-

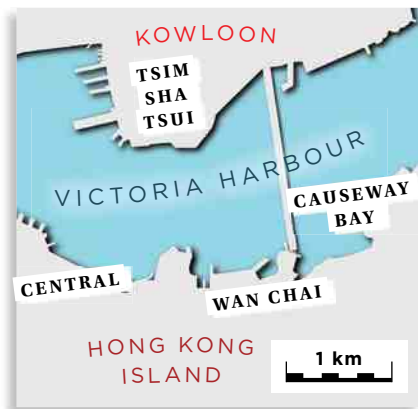
billion dollar bridge linking Hong Kong to Zhuhai in mainland China and the gambling haven of Macau.

It feels good to be back. Jules and I lived here in the 1990s, before Britain relinquished Hong Kong to China in 1997. Now, 20 years later, we've returned for 10 days to see how the city has fared. It's also our 20th wedding anniversary. Where better to celebrate it than in the city where we met?

NEXT MORNING, we leave our Causeway Bay hotel and walk towards Wan Chai, a district two kilometres away. Walking is the best way to experience Hong Kong's colourful sights, sounds and smells. First, we must negotiate throngs of Saturday shoppers here in this retail mecca.

We join the sea of people in a wide pedestrian crossing on Yee Wo Street that leads us past one of the city's largest department stores, Sogo, swathed in posters advertising designer labels. Young women sporting sleek heels and luxury handbags—a couple of them with beribboned apricot poodles tucked under an arm—are a common sight this morning.

By the time we reach Wan Chai, we've left the brand shoppers behind. This district is grittier than Causeway Bay, although its former reputation for girly bars has somewhat given way to shiny office towers. At Bowrington Road market, which spans a couple of blocks, housewives are haggling loudly over meat, fish and vegetables.





Street markets in the Mong Kok neighbourhood of Kowloon sell food and much more.

Street markets are a must-see in Hong Kong, but be prepared for the smells—meat, seafood, infamously stinky durian fruit—and a little gore: I watch a vendor prove to a customer how fresh his fish is by slicing along one side, folding the fillet back and exposing the still-intact beating heart.

Nearby, beneath an overpass, we encounter a curious sight: an elderly woman chanting while she beats a paper with a shoe. A customer has written on the paper the name of a person who has upset him, we learn. Afterwards, the paper is rubbed with pork fat and burnt. This ritual beats the ‘villain’ out of the customer’s life.

“Only in Hong Kong,” Jules says, laughing. Later we stop to check out the wares of a grey-haired woman

hanging men’s shirts on the metal grille of an office building. As Jules peruses the shirts, I ask her, “Do you feel Hong Kong has changed under Chinese rule?” She’s dismissive. “I’m just part of the little people,” she says. “I only want to make enough money. I don’t care if Britain or China is here.”

Other entrepreneurs we encounter seem to agree it’s business as usual. Before the handover, many people here feared Communist China would curtail the capitalism and human rights protections Hong Kong enjoyed under British rule, even though China promised self-rule—“one country, two systems”—for 50 years. But, as Christine Loh, a legislator here before and after the handover, expressed in an email to me, “The degree of freedom in Hong

Kong on a day-to-day basis remains very high.”

WE’LL HEAR a similar opinion over a lunch of dim sum—a local Cantonese speciality—in Kowloon, where we’re heading now on the Star Ferry. It’s been chugging across Victoria Harbour since 1888. The trip costs HK\$2.70 (₹22.89), a bargain in a pricey city. It’s a short walk to Serenade Chinese Restaurant; it’s vast, with huge windows overlooking the harbour.

There we meet my long-time friend Junko Watanabe. With her are Ronnie and Jennifer Ho, retired teachers in their late 50s who have just moved back from Boston to their home city after 23 years. Over bamboo baskets of *har gau* (steamed shrimp) and *siu mai* (pork dumplings) and an order of *yi mein* (egg noodles, fried), Ronnie and Jennifer tell us they’re delighted to be home. “We haven’t noticed many changes in daily life,” Ronnie says.

Their parents had fled poverty in China for colonial Hong Kong at a young age. Ronnie’s father encouraged the couple to emigrate before 1997. “Our parents knew China was to be feared,” says Jennifer. The 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre influenced their decision to leave. They returned to Hong Kong to be back among family. Says Ronnie, “We’re too old to worry about politics now.”

CLEARLY, HONG KONG is thriving. In a recent survey of the world’s cities

by human resources consulting firm Mercer, it ranked sixth for infrastructure, which includes such criteria as drinking water and public transit. It ranked 71st among 231 cities for quality of life—higher than the 11 other Chinese cities included.

The outlook for press freedom is less encouraging: A Reporters Without Borders (RWB) survey shows Hong Kong has slipped from 18th in 2002 to 73rd today (China ranked 176th.) RWB cites growing difficulty in covering sensitive stories about Hong Kong’s government and mainland China, and finds “extremely disturbing” the purchase of Hong Kong media by Chinese companies such as internet giant Alibaba.

Politically, Hong Kong residents use their right to protest when they perceive China to be overreaching. In late 2014, thousands took to the streets in a protest dubbed the Umbrella Movement when Beijing insisted on vetting candidates for chief executive. China got its way.

Another trigger for protests has been tourism from mainland China. Before 1997 most visitors came from Japan and Taiwan, but when Beijing relaxed its rules in the early 2000s, the number of mainland visitors jumped from about seven million per year in 2002 to a whopping 43 million by 2016. For some locals, that’s too many; they say the visitors are rude and loud. And they blame mainlanders for the scarcity of such necessities as baby formula and



Yung Shue Wan village is just a half-hour by ferry from Central but a world away.

medicines. Indeed, when Jules went to buy shaving cream, he was mystified to see drugstore staff unloading countless boxes of baby formula on to shelves. Mainlanders snap it up due to tainted baby formula scares in China. At a 2014 protest in Hong Kong, mainlanders were denounced as “locusts” eating the city’s resources. Signs read, “Go Back to China” and “Reclaim Hong Kong”.

Late one afternoon I meet up with Mark Sharp, a *South China Morning Post* editor and writer since before the handover, in the seaside town of Sai Kung, in the New Territories—the mostly rural region between Kowloon and mainland China. Over a beer ironically named Gweilo, a rude Cantonese term for “white person”, he confirms locals are more outspoken nowadays. “People worry that as more mainland Chinese come, Hong Kong will lose its identity.”

Young people, Sharp says, are especially vocal. They are Hong Kongers first: A recent Hong Kong University survey showed that only 3 per cent of people aged 18–29 identify as Chinese, an all-time low since the surveys started in 1997; back then, that number was 17 per cent.

Joshua Wong, 20, is the face of the generation that has known Hong Kong only as part of China. At age 14, he led a successful student protest against mandated “national education” courses. In his opinion, the courses were intended to create loyalty to the Communist regime. “We think that reduces freedom of thought,” says Wong.

As leaders of the 2014 Umbrella Movement, Wong and two others were jailed last August for six to eight months for their roles.



Dozens of burning incense coils scent the air inside Man Mo Temple in Central.

ON A SUNNY MORNING, we hop on to a ferry bound for Lamma Island. It's a 30-minute trip to Yung Shue Wan village—and a world away. Although Hong Kong isn't often associated with green spaces, there are many, and Lamma, where we lived, has some of our favourite hikes. We drop our bags at our guest house and walk for two hours on paths that wind down towards sandy beaches and steeply upward again.

At a hilltop pavilion, we buy refreshing pineapple slices from an old woman in a straw hat. From a nearby path we can see the fishing boats and stilted seafood restaurants of Sok Kwu Wan village below. Walking back, we

spot graves set into green slopes that face the sea for favourable fung shui. They are tidy. During the Ching Ming Festival two weeks earlier, families had swept loved ones' grave sites and burnt incense for departed spirits.

In Yung Shue Wan, we head to Andy's Seafood Restaurant on Main Street and find a table with a view of the sun setting over the sea. It's a slice of Hong Kong heaven to dine on grouper with soya sauce and ginger and razor clams in black bean sauce.

BACK ON HONG KONG island, we walk from the pier into Central and Sheung Wan. The walk is a few minutes longer than in the 1990s; the shoreline has shifted to accommodate new skyscrapers. One thing hasn't changed: Most high-rises under construction are clad in traditional scaffolding of bamboo tied with nylon strips.

We browse antique stores along Hollywood Road and Cat Street, looking for an anniversary gift to each other. The symbol for the 20th year is, fittingly, china, and we find the perfect thing: a gold-painted teapot with wicker handles, featuring the Chinese character for double-happiness, a wedding symbol. "It's HK\$150," the shopkeeper says. I offer her HK\$120 in cash; it's a deal.

The wrapped treasure tucked under Jules' arm, we pass galleries and, surprisingly, coffee shops with a hipster vibe: Winston's, The Cupping Room, Cafe Deadend. When I lived here,

tea shops were ubiquitous. Stores selling olive oils, vinegars, cheeses and wines also exemplify changing tastes; before 1997, we had to search those things out.

This evolution contrasts with Man Mo Temple, a Taoist and Buddhist temple dedicated to the gods of literature (Man) and war (Mo). Built in 1847, its sloping roof is decorated with carvings of dragons and human figures. The quiet, candlelit interior is scented with burning incense coils hanging from the ceiling. We watch worshippers set oranges and candles on a table, offerings to statues of the gods placed there.

Soon we rejoin the bustle of Hollywood Road.

TRAVEL TIPS

LODGING **IBIS Hotel**, Sheung Wan, from 85 euros, ibis.com; **The Langham**, Tsim Sha Tsui, from 190 euros, langhamhotels.com

DINING Dim sum at **Serenade Chinese Restaurant**, Tsim Sha Tsui, and **Maxim's Palace** at City Hall, Central, from 2.50 euros/basket; **Seventh Son**, Wan Chai, Cantonese dishes: crispy chicken, baked stuffed crab shell, 21 euros each; **Tin Lung Heen**, Ritz Carlton, Yau Ma Tei, Iberian barbecued pork with honey, 34 euros

INFORMATION: discoverhongkong.com

IT'S HUMID on our final day, and threatening to rain. We have time for a last lunch. In Sheung Wan, past the pungently scented dried-seafood stalls this district is famous for, we find a noodle house on Des Voeux Road. It's full of chattering office workers. At the front window, the chef is dropping fresh noodles into a huge pot of steaming broth.

"Sorry, no English," says the waitress as she drops two Chinese-language menus on the table. No problem; we point to bowls of noodles the chef has topped with barbecued pork and Chinese broccoli and hold up two fingers, then sip on tall glasses of sweet iced lemon tea while we wait. We copy the locals: stab at the lemon slices with a long spoon to squeeze out the juice, stir, sip, repeat.

On the street, it's raining. We sprint to our hotel, grab our luggage and hail a cab. "Central Station, please, Airport Express," I tell the driver, a man in his 60s. "Oh, you go home?" he asks. He says he loves showing visitors around.

As we weave through buses, trams and luxury cars, I point out to Jules an elderly man wearing a pointed straw hat riding a rusting bicycle. Tall propane tanks are strapped to either side, and he's negotiating traffic through the rain. Only in Hong Kong.

At the station, the driver points to where we can check our bags to the airport. "Make sure, come back soon!" he says, waving. "This is world's best city!" I couldn't agree more. **R**

€1 was ₹77.39 and HK\$ was ₹8.09 at the time of going to press.



*Lindbergh in the
cockpit of the
Spirit of St Louis,
just before take-off*

BONUS READ

Charles Lindbergh's bravery 91 years ago
opened a door to the future

FLIGHT OVER THE ATLANTIC

BY DAN HAMPTON

FROM *THE FLIGHT: CHARLES LINDBERGH'S 1927
TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING*

C **HARLES AUGUSTUS LINDBERGH** was a private, introspective man, and in later years, a controversial one. Son of a US congressman, he married socialite Anne Morrow. Their child was famously kidnapped, and found dead two months later. Lindbergh lived in Europe where he was criticized for opposing US involvement in World War II—although in the end he flew with Allied forces in the Pacific. After Lindbergh died in 1974, it was revealed that he'd had several extramarital affairs. He was a flawed hero, but a hero nonetheless, for nothing could take away from the sheer courage he exhibited over the Atlantic Ocean, 91 years ago ...

The cockpit reeked of gasoline and glue, but the pilot ignored both smells. Slowly pushing the throttle forward he brought the roaring engine to its takeoff revolutions. The aircraft strained against the wheel chocks, desperate to pull man and machine across the wet field. Leaning left against the fabric-covered fuselage, 25-year-old Charles Lindbergh peered through the open window and down the mud-soaked runway.

Not that there was much he could see on this drizzly morning in Long Island, New York. Shredded curtains of rain hung from low, heavy clouds, and he could barely see the treeline at the field's eastern edge.

The grass runway is soggy and the damp air is not giving as much power to the motor as it should. The tachometer, which measures engine revolutions per minute, is low. That worries him, as does the slight tailwind.

Lindbergh had planned a sunrise take-off into the night-time easterly wind, but now the breeze was from the west. His wet boots slipped a bit on the metal rudder pedals. With smooth foot movements he 'walked the rudder,' keeping the plane aligned on the runway, but without a view forward it wasn't easy.

The tall, lanky former mail pilot—inevitably known as 'Slim'—had the main fuselage gas tanks moved forward of the cockpit, which was safer in the event of an accident. This meant he had to use a three-by-five inch periscope to see straight ahead.

His eyes darted again to the tachometer. If anything was wrong with the engine it would show here first, but the needle is steady. The plane skidded a bit as Slim fought to keep it on the runway. The plane, called the *Spirit of St Louis*, held 1,700 litres of gasoline, producing a gross weight of over two and a half tons. It felt more like



Lindbergh and the plane he flew solo across the Atlantic, in an undated photo.

an overloaded truck than an airplane. Slim could feel the stick wobble in his hands. Faster ... he had to get the plane moving faster.

Just yards from where he'd started, off the edge of the runway, was a black scorched area. A bent propeller blade was stuck upright in the burn, marking the crash eight months earlier of French flying ace Rene Fonck, causing the deaths of two crewmen.

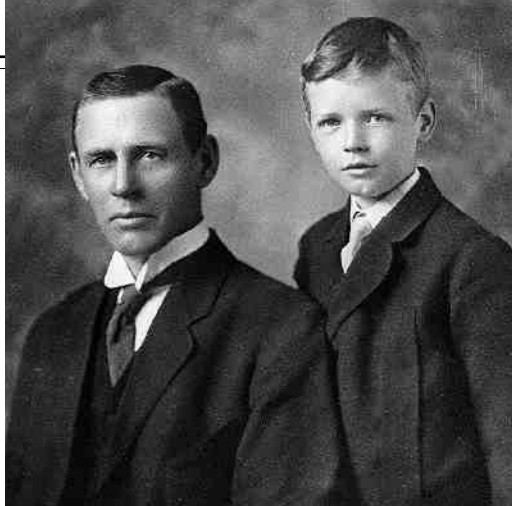
Charles 'Slim' Lindbergh bounced in his wicker seat. But he felt a difference. At 300 feet down the runway, the plane is faster. A thousand feet, and the stick is tighter. Slim felt air pressure pushing

on the rudder through his boots.

Lindbergh stared from the little window, searching for a white handkerchief he'd tied on a stick. It was there as a warning that half the runway was gone. Roosevelt Field was almost one and a half kilometres long, but was it long enough?

A white speck fluttering in the heavy air. The handkerchief! He should have been airborne by now. Was there too much fuel? He'd added an extra 95 litres, or 70 kg, at the very end. Was it the tailwind? Or the mushy runway?

The *Spirit* hits a puddle, splashing cold dirty water along the



Left: Lindbergh with his mother during a press conference before his flight. Right: at age eight with his father, Charles August Lindbergh, then 51, in a photo made about 1910.

cotton fabric fuselage. The wings wobble. Pull up!

The roar fills the cockpit. The wheels lift off, then settle. Lindbergh feels the mush again. But now it's different. The plane wants to fly, all 223 horses throbbing through the stick.

The propeller bites; the wings lift, and *Spirit* claws itself off the ground at 7:52 on that Friday morning, 20 May 1927.

The Course Is Set

He staggered into the air. The line of trees flashed beneath the gleaming wet wheels. Then, through the spinning eight-foot, nine-inch propeller he sees a hill ahead. There's not enough altitude. Tapping the rudder,

Slim gently nudges the stick to the right. The aircraft answers ever so slightly, and they barely clear the hill.

He climbs to a hundred feet. If the engine quits now, there's enough altitude and speed to make a controlled landing somewhere. He can breathe.

Lindbergh eases the throttle back to 1,800 rpm, then 1,750. He looks out the small windows and sees another airplane. It's full of reporters, cameras sticking out of every window. "Lucky Lindy," the press calls him. As if luck had anything to do with it.

LINDBERGH'S AMBITION, stubbornness and independent spirit went back to his grandfather, Ola Månsson, who was elected to the

Swedish parliament in 1847. He was outspoken and self-righteous, backing rights for Jews, women and the infirm, and he acquired enemies as a result. He fathered a son in an extramarital affair with a waitress, and was brought up on charges of violating bank regulations. Ola escaped his problems by emigrating to America with his waitress and young son. He changed his name to August Lindbergh, and became a farmer and blacksmith.

The son, Charles August, grew up on the farm in Minnesota, but went on to become a lawyer. After his first wife died, he remarried and had a son, Charles Augustus Lindbergh, born on 4 February 1902. The elder Lindbergh was elected to the US House of Representatives in 1907 and brought his family to Washington, D.C.

Young Charles grew up in Washington, D.C., but spent summers back in Minnesota, where he relished the outdoor life, fishing, camping and hunting. He was physically tough, mentally introspective and emotionally reclusive.

In June 1912 his father arranged for young Charles to attend the Army Aeronautical trials in Virginia. An airplane raced a motor car around an oval track. That was the moment Lindbergh realized he wanted to be a pilot.

The boy went to the University of Wisconsin to study engineering, but Lindbergh found the classroom stifling. He was a mediocre student, but excelled in the Reserve Officer Train-

ing Corps [a university-level training programme for officers of the United States Armed Forces]. He decided to go the Lincoln Flying School in Nebraska, where he learnt about aircraft design and maintenance and got his first opportunity to fly a plane.

PEERING OUT his window to compare landmarks against his Rand McNally [company] map, Lindbergh swept his eyes ahead over the Long Island shoreline. At 200 feet he faced about



TO MAKE LANDFALL
IN IRELAND, HE MUST
STAY CLOSE TO
THE ROUTE, BUT WINDS
COULD BLOW
HIM OFF COURSE.

five kilometres of visibility and patches of low fog. Scanning the gauges he saw the oil pressure was good, and the engine temperature was cool. Fuel pressure was steady. He had 1,700 litres of fuel in five different tanks, enough for 6,437 km, if headwinds weren't too stiff.

Lindbergh settled back in his wicker seat. Using his compass to navigate, he kept checking against the map across his knee. He knew if he was to survive the night, if he was to have a chance to make landfall in Ireland, he must stay as close as possible to the route he'd calculated weeks ago. His setting



Ready for take-off at Curtis Field, Long Island, New York, on 20 May 1927

now was 066 degrees, but winds could blow him off course. As long as he was over land, he would use dead reckoning—fly from landmark to landmark. But beyond Newfoundland lay open ocean, and no references at all.

The inside of the cockpit was completely exposed with no weight wasted for panelling or unnecessary finishes. Each ounce saved meant an extra ounce of fuel. For food he carried five sandwiches. When a reporter had asked if that was enough, Slim had replied, “If I get to Paris I won’t need any more, and if I don’t get to Paris I won’t need any more either.”

With the immense, curving fishhook of Cape Cod off his right wing, he tugs out the chart he’ll use for the rest of the flight. Called a Mercator Projection, it projects the three-

dimensional earth on to a two dimensional surface. The longitude and latitude lines appear straight, at right angles to one another, and though unrealistic it allows huge distances to be plotted on a chart.

Lindbergh couldn’t see it, but beneath him was a stone tower commemorating the *Mayflower’s* first anchorage. The Pilgrims spent two months at sea on a 100-foot ship, but he was going to cross that same ocean in 30 hours, in a 27-foot, eight-inch-long aircraft.

Slim nudges the stick and gently kicks the rudder, watching the compass wobble around to 071. He’ll hold this heading for the next 160 km, then check to the right, adjusting for the Earth’s curve. His Wright Whirlwind engine is steady at

1,760 rpm and the other gauges read normal as he switches to the nose fuel tank. Paris is still around 5,600 km away. But the course is set, the chart is open and ready, and *Spirit* is performing perfectly.

Sudden Turbulence

Nearly 320 km past Cape Cod and into the Gulf of Maine, Slim straightened his legs against the rudder pedals. He yawned and tried to stretch out the cramps. He hadn't slept much in the days leading up to takeoff. *I'm a little tired*, he admitted.

He noticed mud splattered under the right wing, then another clump under the left. How much did they weigh? How much drag did they generate? Even slight resistance was resistance; everything cost something in fuel and distance.

I'm half asleep. Stop it!

Slim stuck his hand out the left window. Fresh air hit him in the face. He should have slept more, but hadn't been able to. Too many details, too many interruptions ... and apprehension.

Wriggling in the seat he forced himself to look at the instruments, to the gauges, then the horizon. Reaching Nova Scotia is the first true test of navigation so he focuses on the Mercator chart across his knees. The wind was blowing steadily at 24 kmph, pushing *Spirit* to the south-east. He corrected as best he could by crabbing left, 10 degrees into the wind. That should

keep him on course, more or less.

At 11:52 a.m., there it was. Land. The Nova Scotia coastline. Squinting at his map, he matches printed lines against the land below and knows by its shape this must be St. Mary's Bay.

Relief envelops him—the relief only pilots and mariners feel when they find themselves exactly where they'd planned to be. This landfall proved that his instruments worked, that the course he'd pencilled in could bring him safely to land after hours over water.

Nova Scotia's harsh terrain unrolled beneath his wings. The wind suddenly



THE HORIZON
VANISHED IN A SOLID
WALL OF CLOUD.
THE *SPIRIT* BUCKED
AND YAWED IN THE
TURBULENCE.

catches his chart, lifting it towards the open window. Startled, Slim jerks it back and tucks it under his leg. That would be a calamity, to be forced back in failure because of a sheet of paper. He has two windowpanes stored in a rack behind his seat, and he slides them in.

Suddenly the plane bolted upwards and Slim's hand tightened around the stick. Everything loose in the cockpit bounced. He watched the

wing tips flex, and out of habit Slim's left hand went to the throttle, ready to power out of turbulence. Then the plane lurched back to level flight.

Ahead of the *Spirit's* nose the horizon vanished in a solid wall of cloud. Warm air was rising fast, and curtains of rain swept across the ground ahead. As *Spirit* bucked and yawed in the turbulence Lindbergh watched the wings. They were 10 feet longer than normal to lift around 1,130 kg of extra load, mostly fuel, needed for the approximately 5,810-km flight. But the longer wings would bend more as they protruded farther from the fuselage.



SLIM THREADS HIS WAY EAST THROUGH THE STORM. MAYBE BY AVOIDING THE WORST PARTS, THE WINGS WON'T COLLAPSE.

The storm tossed the aircraft up, down and sideways, all while blowing it farther south-east off course. Slim's eyes were wide as he fought for control. With rudder pedals smacking his soles, he grabbed the stick with both hands.

The squalls got worse. He could see through the first one, but others marched towards him across the sky like dark sheets. Water beats furiously

against *Spirit*, and the propeller is just a whirling silver disk with vapour spinning off the edges. Giving up on trying to hold a bearing, Slim threads his way east through the storm. Maybe the storm breaks up closer to the coast. Maybe by avoiding the worst parts, the wings won't collapse.

Suddenly *Spirit* shot into the clear, bright sunlight. The salty air was fresh, visibility now unlimited. Off to his left was the port of Sydney, and ahead was Scatarie Island, according to the chart, at the mouth of Mira Bay.

The sea is no longer a stranger and he revels in that thought. *As I struck Nova Scotia, I will strike Newfoundland. And as I strike Newfoundland, I will strike Europe.*

Nothing But Ocean

Flying alone had sounded so logical when he was in St Louis and New York. But now? Slim fights the overwhelming urge to let his head droop. He can feel the aircraft through the stick and the rudder pedals. The plane is banking slightly, air rushing over the cotton-covered fuselage.

Open your eyes!

Slim shifts position, leans forward and blinks rapidly. He checks the instruments. His back and shoulders ache. The sun is sinking behind him. *How can I get through the night?* he wonders. Not to mention the dawn, and another day.

He holds 153 mph for another hour. Below him the ocean's surface



Lindbergh's historic solo flight

shimmers in the setting sun, and he notices the strong west wind flattens the waves. This is good for him, adding a tailwind of maybe 15 knots, pushing *Spirit* along that much faster.

Craning forward, Lindbergh sees a brown coastline ahead. Newfoundland. The final great stepping stone before nearly 3,220 km of dark ocean. He passes over Placentia Bay, nudges higher over the Avalon Peninsula, then across Conception Bay to St. John's.

The buildings are colourful, painted yellow and red and blue. Slim pushes the stick forward and dives towards the rooftops. He levels off just above the chimneys. He sees scores of white dots below, faces turned upwards at the sight of the shiny airplane in the dying light. Hopefully someone will send a wire out, and the world will know where he was.

For the first 11 hours, covering

1,770 km, Lindbergh held the reassurance that he was never too far from land. But no more. From now until Ireland, nearly 3,220 km distant, there is nothing but ocean. Climbing to 800 feet Slim stared out his windows, but now it was too dark to gauge the wind.

Looking up through the skylight, Slim sees plenty of stars. He can find the North Star well enough, though celestial navigation by peering through the skylight of an aircraft is hardly accurate. Still, Europe is a continent. How could he miss it if he flies east long enough?

There's fog below, forcing Slim into a gradual climb up through 5,000 feet. The US Weather Bureau showed a low pressure area extending east from Newfoundland to the mid-Atlantic. High pressure from the south was supposed to push the front north, but what if it was stalled?

Levelling off at 10,000 feet, he flew among the rolling plateaus of clouds,

still correcting left, or north, for the winds. The air is thinner, so he burns less fuel. But it's cold too. He zips his flying suit across his chest, pulls on a wool-lined helmet and tugs leather mittens over his fingers.

Even at this altitude, shredded bits of cloud cling to his whirling propeller. It's time to go on instruments, to fly blind. Anything he sees outside now will just be a distraction. He must disregard his senses and put his faith in a few dials.



IT'S NONSENSE,
HE DECIDES, PURE
NONSENSE, TO BE
LURED OFF COURSE
BY FOG ISLANDS
IN THE OCEAN.

Suddenly everything beyond the windows vanishes. He's in the clouds now. Time passes. Ten minutes or 30, he's not quite sure. He pulls off his left mitten, sticks his arm out the window and feels sharp pinpricks. *Oh no, not that!* He grabs his flashlight and aims the beam outside. He squints at the bottom of the wing. The leading edges are bright with ice.

Ice can kill. It disfigures the wing, disrupts airflow and causes a stall. He must get back into clear air.

Left boot forward against the pedal. He nudges the stick forward and left.

He shoves the throttle forward. The *Spirit* bobbles its way through a turn, descending ... skidding. Add power, pull back on the stick. He rolls the wings level. The airspeed is steady. But the compass is swinging wildly. Rough air.

What's that? Slim's eyes shift outside. The *Spirit* is no longer wrapped in grey. The cloud's drooping wet fingers have released him, and the sky is clear above.

"Which Way Is Ireland?"

For the next hour he just flies, concentrating on his instruments. He can see well enough to avoid the big cloud masses, and it's warmer in the cockpit. He may have crossed into the warmer waters of the Gulf Stream.

The *Spirit* wings eastward through the night at 10,000 feet until there is depth to the sky. There is colour, a faint streak of pink. Dawn.

The dread of night is over. Yet his whole body screams for sleep. Holding the stick between his knees, Slim pumps his arms as if running. He pulls his canteen off the rack and takes a swallow. He's had no food, but he's not hungry, and besides, eating might make him more sleepy.

Shoving the stick forward, he dives through a cloud then pulls up sharply into clear air on the other side. Physically flying helps keep him awake.

Slim resets the throttle, then realizes he is not alone. There are human shapes beside him. They are talking

about navigation. *Who are these phantoms? Are they here to keep him awake? He wonders if he is dead. Am I crossing the bridge, he asks, beyond the point from which I can bring my vision back to earth and men?*

Suddenly he stiffens, eyes wide with shock. Land!

It can't be. He's still over the Atlantic. But through the window he peers at a haze-covered coastline. It's purple and rocky.

He shakes his head, rubs his eyes. It's still there. Could it be Greenland, or Iceland? Could his navigation be that far off? He gropes for his chart, starts to bank left. Then he stops. It's nonsense, he decides, pure nonsense, to be lured off course by fog islands in the ocean.

Slim has been flying for over 24 hours. There is a constant burning deep behind his eyes. He drops down towards the ocean again, sticks his face outside and fills his lungs with salt air. He feels better, except for a layer of clouds forming off to the north-east. Another storm maybe.

Weather had always been a problem when Slim flew the mail. He had spent a year in US Army flight training, but the Air Service was so small there was no need for new pilots. So Slim found himself in St. Louis, flying the mail. Air mail pilots used all sorts of tricks in the fog, including dropping a flare and using the light to land in a field. It was during one of those air mail flights that he began to plan this trip.

Slim tries to relax, but no posi-



Flying above welcoming crowds at Croydon aerodrome in South London, following his transatlantic crossing

tion is comfortable. He looks outside again and for a moment sits perfectly still. There, a few kilometres away: a bobbing dark speck on the waves. His eyes widen. A boat. Several small boats. He aims *Spirit* towards the little vessels. Levelling off at 50 feet he skids the plane sideways for a better view. Fishing vessels. Far too small to be hundreds of kilometres out to sea.

He circles. A face appears from the cabin porthole. Slim shouts, "Which way is Ireland?"

No response.

He makes three cycles around the boat. The face doesn't move. He wants to remain close, see more men, but

that is not possible. Rolling out a hundred feet above the waves, Slim sets a new course. Land must be close. It would be possible if the winds blew him farther eastward during the night.

Looking north-east from his left window, Slim notes that the horizon has ominously darkened with low clouds. Or maybe fog. Or ...

Slim hunches forward. Can it possibly be land? He blinks, looks away and stares again. He wonders if it could be a mirage like he saw earlier. He banks up to the left. No, it is definitely land. But where? Ireland?

The Future Has Changed

Craning his neck left then right, Lindbergh can see an island on the south side of a long, tapering bay. He studies his chart. There's a place where it all fits. Dingle Bay and the island of Valentia.

Slim drops the nose, presses the left rudder and spirals down over the little town. People run out to the streets and wave. Slim levels off at 100 feet, stretches out the window and grinning ear to ear waves back.

The wicker seat doesn't seem so hard anymore. The Whirlwind's throbbing is comfortable. He continues south-east across County Kerry and Cork, then on to Plymouth, England. He knows he now has plenty of fuel left—he estimates at least 570 litres, or over 10 hours of flying time. And he thinks of all the others who tried to make this same crossing,



After arriving in Paris, with the American ambassador at right

especially the two Frenchmen, Charles Nungesser and Francois Coli, who'd vanished over the Atlantic less than two weeks ago.

Out ahead, past the blur of the propeller, the eastern horizon is darkening slightly. He heads east across the English Channel until he spies the coast of France. He cuts across the Baie de la Seine and he follows the great river all the way to Paris. He is nearly three hours ahead of schedule, and wonders if anybody will be waiting for him at Le Bourget. Flying at rooftop height, he sees yellow squares of light from windows, and below him people run out of their homes to see what is making that great noise. He goes back up to 4,000 feet and sees a glow rising over the horizon. Tiny hard points emerge

and then an unmistakable column of lights: the Eiffel Tower!

He knows Le Bourget lies somewhere about 9.6 km north-west of the city. Holding 145 kmph, he sees a black patch lined with lights. Is this the right place?

He flies on a few kilometres more, but the lights thin out. There is nothing ahead but the scattered yellow dots of farms. That had to be Le Bourget.

Slim dips the wing and boots the rudder and takes a descending turn to 2,500 feet. When the lights are visible again he squints down and sees buildings. One is unmistakably a hangar. He takes a low pass to make sure the surface is clear. He then makes a standard rectangle above the airport, to get enough height and distance to turn back for the landing.

The plane pitches as he aims for the grassy field. The surface does not look flat. Slim holds the nose a few feet off the ground, then jams the throttle forward. The *Spirit* lurches forward and soars away from earth.

He checks the gauges one last time.

He summons all his conviction that this is the correct field, that he has to land, that he has made it to Paris. About 90 metres to go. One wing down, then up, then dropping again towards the line of cars. Airspeed 129 kmph. He can see the patch of ground beyond the hangars.

Thirty feet. Hangars flash by both ways. The wheels touch at 10:22 p.m. The tail drops and makes contact. Slim taps the rudder pedals to keep the nose straight. He's down!

He slows, then loops the aircraft back towards the buildings. Rolling forward slowly, he peers ahead. Thousands of people. A surging wall of people running towards him.

Lurching to a stop, Charles Lindbergh and the *Spirit of St Louis* are once again part of the human world—a world that has just contracted beyond belief or expectation. They have thrown open a window that will never close. And for those who witnessed history in Paris on 21 May 1927, and for all of us yet to come, the future has changed forever. **R**

FROM THE FLIGHT: CHARLES LINDBERGH'S 1927 TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING. © 2017 BY DAN HAMPTON. PUBLISHED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH WILLIAM MORROW, AN IMPRINT OF HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS. HARPERCOLLINS.COM

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* *

BEING, CONSIDERED

Life is a shipwreck, but we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats.

VOLTAIRE

I don't want to earn my living; I want to live.

OSCAR WILDE

WHO ? KNEW

13 Things Genius Scientists*



Wish You Knew About Cancer

BY MICHELLE CROUCH

1 New treatments are saving lives.

Cancer indices are increasing in developing countries like India, with data from Indian Council for Medical Research indicating that by 2020, India is likely to have over 17.3 lakh new cancer cases. But there is hope. Cancer death rate in the USA has declined 23 per cent since its peak in 1991. In fact, currently, America's biopharmaceutical companies are working on more than 800 cancer medicines. "If you walk the corridors

of any hospital studying cancer today, the excitement is palpable," says Dr Daniel Haber, the director of Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center and an oncology professor at Harvard Medical School.

2 Please ask for genetic screening.

"One of my early ovarian cancer patients told me her mum and grandma had both died of

**Scientists quoted here are all associated with research teams funded by Stand Up to Cancer.*

ILLUSTRATION BY SERGE BLOCH
SUSAN_SM/GETTY IMAGES

ovarian cancer, yet her doctor had never said, 'Have you considered genetic testing?'" recalls Dr Elizabeth Swisher, a gynaecologic oncologist at the University of Washington. "By the time she came to me, it was too late. But before she died, I tested her to identify the mutation that had caused her cancer. Afterwards, I helped her daughter get that same test and removed her ovaries as a preventive measure. She'll likely be the first person who doesn't die of cancer in four generations of women in her family."

3 Therapies targeting a cancer's individual profile are working.

By decoding the thousands of genes in someone's cancer cells, scientists can find out which mutations they carry and then match the important mutations to the right drugs. Haber began investigating this method a decade ago, when he read the story of a nurse who'd never smoked but had metastatic lung cancer: "She got into a clinical trial for a new targeted therapy (called Iressa). It was failing, but for 10 per cent of participants, it worked magically. She happened to be in that magical 10 per cent. We found a gene called EGFR in her tumour and in the other patients who had responded well." Today, targeted drug therapy is routinely used for many types of cancer, including lung, breast, colon and melanoma.

4 Every patient should get his or her tumour profile. "We had an 11-year-old girl with a rare form of leukaemia go through chemotherapy four times—yet her cancer kept coming back," says Dr Arul Chinnaiyan, a pathologist at the University of Michigan, USA. "Finally, we sequenced her tumour cells, and we found a genetic mutation that we knew was sensitive to a particular compound. We gave that drug to her, and she went into remission for more than 18 months. As we develop more and more targeted therapies, there will be hundreds of stories like that."

5 Forget needle biopsies. We've got a 'liquid biopsy'. In a development that may revolutionize cancer screening, scientists have developed a blood test that can identify biomarkers for a variety of stage I cancers in the bloodstream. Similar work is being done in India as well. "The same technology that can find your DNA at a crime scene can find a cancer's DNA in your body," says Dr William G. Nelson, director of the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Cancer centres are already exploring the use of the tests, but the hope is that one day, a simple blood draw at your annual physical would detect cancer before you show any symptoms.

6 We can help your immune system kill your tumour. Cancer cells use a type of 'brake' to turn off your immune system's natural response. Immunotherapy drugs release that brake, enabling the immune system's T cells to attack. The results have been staggering. In clinical trials, for example, almost 5,000 stage IV melanoma patients who weren't expected to live more than a year or two were given three immunotherapy drugs. Three years later, 20 per cent were still alive. "Many patients from that trial have now lived more than a decade with no sign of disease," says Tak Wah Mak, PhD, an immunologist and molecular biologist at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto, Canada. "It's a miraculous thing." The FDA has since approved more than a dozen different immunotherapy agents for a range of cancers.

7 Drug combinations may be a patient's best bet. "If we come in with just one drug, the cancer can mutate around it or become resistant," Chinnaiyan says. "But we're finding that using a cocktail of drugs—similar to the treatment HIV-infected patients receive—can be more effective."

8 Viruses are among our most secret weapons. "When we put a virus into a tumour, it makes cancer cells think they're infected,

so they commit suicide or display new antigens that signal your immune system to come in for the kill," says Peter Jones, PhD, chief scientific officer of Van Andel Research Institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The FDA recently approved a genetically engineered form of the herpes virus to treat melanoma. And at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, scientists are fighting brain cancer by injecting tumours with a genetically modified polio virus. Now Jones and his colleagues are working on a solution for tumours that can't easily be injected: epigenetics, a process that wakes up ancient viruses that are embedded in our human DNA. "We are making tumours visible [to your immune system] by turning on the viruses that are already there," Jones says. Early research indicates that combining epigenetics with immunotherapy drugs may be particularly effective.

9 Coming soon (we hope): a Pap smear that can detect ovarian cancer. "We have developed a test that can find genetic markers of ovarian and endometrial cancers in the cervical fluid collected during a routine Pap test," says Nelson. The research is in its early stages but it's an exciting development as often this cancer is diagnosed too late. Ovarian cancer is among the top five leading cancer sites among women in India.

QUALITY CARE FOR EVERYONE

With a vision to create a multi-speciality healthcare facility that would be a cut above the rest in terms of both quality and affordability, Dr Harmohinder Singh Nagpal and his wife Dr. Tajinder Kaur founded the highly esteemed Hartej Hospital in Amritsar about three decades ago.

While Dr Nagpal had a knack for bringing in revolutionary techniques to the people of Punjab, his dream for his hospital wasn't just about technology - it was about the people! Each and every person that walked through the doors of his "once a small rented" accommodation clinic, was treated with compassion. Even today, when it has transformed into a NABH-accredited, multi super-speciality hospital, the patient (regardless of their socioeconomic status) feels at 'home'.

Today, Hartej Hospital is the only private multispeciality hospital in Amritsar, which has got NABH accreditation, the highest for any hospital in India.

Elaborating on this, Dr Nagpal says, "The facilities that we provide at Hartej Hospital are well recognized in the field of General, Laparoscopic and Gynaecological Surgery, besides Onco Surgery, Neurosciences, Orthopaedics and Trauma Management.

THE BEGINNING

Like most Indian mothers, Dr Nagpal's mother wanted him to become a doctor. Following in the footsteps of his maternal uncle, who was doctor too, Dr Nagpal knew from the very beginning that he would find fulfilment in life by serving the people through the noble profession of medicine.

"At that time, becoming a doctor used to be a big thing – the top choice for any student. Moreover, this goal was so strongly ingrained that the thought of getting into some other field never crossed my mind," recalls Dr Nagpal who was born in Nabha (Patiala) to an engineer father, and did his schooling from Nabha, Ambala and Amritsar. He did his graduation and post graduation in surgery from Government Medical College, Amritsar.

Though he was well placed in a government job, he thought it was not his cup of tea and resigned to start his own small setup.

QUALITY WITH AFFORDABILITY

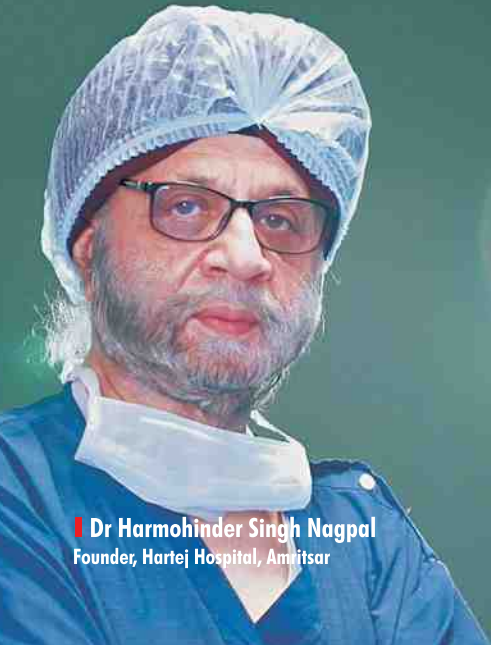
Soon after its inception, the hospital began functioning with the goal of providing quality treatment at affordable prices, especially aimed at the middle/lower-middle strata of the society. "Initially, there were not many private hospitals in Amritsar. Ours was the first one to bring world-class amenities to Amritsar," says Dr Nagpal.

It may be staggering to know that at Hartej Hospital, even after 40 years of experience, Dr Nagpal's own consultation charges remain only Rs 150 - in an era, where doctors half his age are charging more than triple!

Besides offering world-class healthcare, Hartej Hospital provides a peaceful, relaxed atmosphere for its patients. A team of well-trained medical staff, non-medical staff and experienced clinical technicians work round-the-clock to offer various services.

He also understands that to provide the best care for his patients; he must also continue to learn new trends and methods of treatment in his field. He regularly explores the continuing education opportunities that are available and teaches his colleagues and budding doctors whenever he gets time.

His son Dr Davneet Singh and daughter-in-law Dr Shivani, both surgeons, have joined him in providing quality services.



Dr Harmohinder Singh Nagpal
Founder, Hartej Hospital, Amritsar

10 We've built a chip that can find runaway tumour cells.

Cancer experts have known for 100 years that malignant cancers send free-floating cells into the bloodstream, creating new tumours in other parts of your body. But because there is about one circulatory cancer cell for every one billion blood cells, we haven't been able to capture the rogue cells—until now. “We have a device that can pull out those cells so pathologists can study them,” Haber says. “That’s important because the reason most people die of cancer is that it spreads to other places.”

11 Diagnosed? Make sure you see an oncologist and a surgeon.

“Surgeons have a financial incentive to recommend surgery,” Swisher says. “Many of us believe that’s part of the reason for the huge increase in double mastectomies in the United States.” (The rate has tripled over the past decade; more moderate treatments like lumpectomy that preserve the breast can be equally effective.) A medical oncologist can talk to you about the pros and cons of surgery and can share other alternatives such as treatment with just drugs and radiation, chemotherapy and more frequent screening.

12 Please make this simple change to your diet.

If you're overweight or diabetic, you're much more likely to get dangerous cancers. Many researchers believe that eating too much sugar and rapid-release carbohydrates is particularly dangerous. “Sugar makes your insulin levels spike, and insulin activates P13K, an enzyme that we have learnt is a major player in many human cancers,” says Lewis Cantley, PhD, director of Weill Cornell's Meyer Cancer Center in New York City, New York. “The evidence is strong enough that I try to avoid processed foods, especially those with added sugars.”

13 For many of us, this is personal.

“I decided to become a medical oncologist when I was 16 years old, after I'd lost both my parents to cancer,” says Patricia LoRusso, DO, associate director for innovative medicine at Yale Cancer Center in New Haven, USA. “I wanted to go after the thing that had destroyed my childhood.” Adds Jones, “I think about my research when I'm in the shower, while I eat lunch, and before I go to bed at night. I dream of actually making an impact on the survival rate of the disease.” **R**

*
* ***FOOD FRENZY**

I can't turn water into wine, but I can turn ice cream into breakfast.

 @LOUISPEITZMAN

MAX SUPER SPECIALITY HOSPITAL ON A LIFE-SAVING MISSION!

It was a lively, no-holds-barred chit-chat with the country's renowned cardiologist Dr Rohit Mody, Director (Cardiology), Max Super Speciality Hospital (MSSH), Bathinda, which turned out to be an engaging talking point on a range of cardiovascular and other complications; their timely treatment, prevention and so on. MSSH has emerged as the one-stop medical destination for patients, offering world-class healthcare services at affordable cost.



Hailing from the holy city of Amritsar, Dr Rohit was raised at Talwara, a bustling township in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab, where he had his school education. He did his Prep (Medical) from DAV College, Jalandhar. He went on to obtain his MBBS degree from Government College, Patiala in 1983, MD from JLN Medical college Ajmer (Rajasthan) in 1989, and DM degree from Ch. Harmohan Singh P.M. Institute, Kanpur in 2000.

Dr Rohit's brief service stint as an interventional cardiologist at Madras Medical Mission, Chennai, was followed by subsequent stints with some top-ranking hospitals at Jalandhar, Goa, Mumbai, et al. His commitment to the cause, coupled with an abiding passion to serve the suffering humanity, helped him achieve superior heights of success.

When asked about how Max hospital was a class apart, Dr Rohit said their highly efficient team of doctors with years of experience, state-of-the-art facilities and high-end procedures at an affordable cost made them stand out among peers. Their new Cath lab and CCU, equipped with latest technology, handled by MBBS and Postgraduate level

doctors, gave them an edge over others.

Dr Rohit has more than 12,000 angiographics and 5,000 angioplasties and peripheral angioplasties to his credit. He said, "When I took over as director of Cardiology a little over two years ago, few patients would turn up for treatment. As I took over the reins of the department, I spearheaded a sustained public awareness campaign to reach out to all categories and classes of patients by organizing free medical camps, which proved a boon for the patients. We offered them medical tests like blood, urine, Echo, TMT and blood pressure at nominal rates, which received a big thumbs up from them."

Talking about the latest strides in the field, Dr Rohit informed that though India had achieved milestones, much needs to be done to measure up to international standards. From balloon angioplasty to stents, finally ending up with angioplasty and New Generation Stenting and IVUS & FFR was a quantum leap indeed. "We have come a long way since the era of ballooning angioplasty and have improved on medical excellence. It is gratifying to note that that medical fraternity is working on making the treatment cost-effective. Trans-radial angiography and angioplasty are now sought-after procedures compared to the conventional ones," he said.

With a note of caution, the star cardiologist said a little check on our eating habits and a regular physical activity helps keep the heart ticking. "We need to abstain from smoking, alcohol, chewing tobacco as their consumption may lead to complications. High cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes are some of the major reasons for cardiovascular complications and other coronary ailments that have assumed epidemic proportions in the country," he said.

Dr Rohit cautioned that one needs to keep a constant watch on persistent mild ache in the chest, profuse perspiration and so on, and take them as warning signs of a possible heart attack. We need to get rid of our stressful and sedentary lifestyle. A regular brisk walk, workout, yoga, meditation and even listening to devotional music may help reduce chances of a heart attack and save us from other coronary complications.

Ever wonder why some people avoid black cats and broken mirrors?

Never Fear! There's History Behind These Superstitions

BY BRANDON SPECKTOR



SUPERSTITION: Black cats are bad omens.

THE BACKSTORY: Despite centuries of royal treatment (Egyptians worshipped them; the Norse goddess Freya rode in a chariot pulled by them), cats took a big hit to their reputation in the 1200s, when Pope Gregory IX, waging a culture war on pagan symbols, damned cats as servants of Satan. As a result, cats—

especially black ones—were killed across Europe. One unintended consequence, according to some historians: The cat-deprived continent may have allowed disease-carrying rodents to flourish and spread the bubonic plague of 1348.

Rumours that the feline's fangs and fur were venomous persisted, and by the witch-hunting days of the 1600s, many Puritans believed black

cats to be ‘familiar’—supernatural demons that serve witches—and avoided them (to borrow an apt phrase) like the plague.

SUPERSTITION: Never walk under a ladder.

THE BACKSTORY: Depending on your background, a ladder leaning against a wall can represent an honest day’s work, a textbook geometry problem or a symbol of the Holy Trinity that, if breached, will damn your soul. That last bit is what some ancient Christians believed—that any triangle represented the Trinity, and disrupting one could summon the Evil One. These days, our underladder phobia is a smidge more practical: Avoid it because you might get beamed by falling tools, debris or an even less lucky human.

SUPERSTITION: Break a mirror and see seven years of bad luck.

THE BACKSTORY: Numerous ancient cultures agree: Your reflection doesn’t just reveal whether you’re having a bad hair day—it also holds a piece of your soul. To break a mirror, then, is to fracture your very essence, leaving you vulnerable to bad luck.


So why should the sentence last seven years? Some writers cite the ancient Romans, who are said to have believed that the human body and soul fully regenerate every seven years. Any poor pleb who fractured his or her soul in the looking glass would

therefore have to endure the bad karma until the soul renewed again.

SUPERSTITION: A full moon brings out the crazies.

THE BACKSTORY: Ever wonder where the word *lunatic* came from? Look no further than *luna*, the Latin word for the moon. Many Greeks knew that the moon and its goddess, Luna, held the tides in their thrall, and Aristotle considered the human brain—the “moistest” organ—particularly susceptible to Luna’s pull. Ancient physician Hippocrates agreed, writing, “One who is seized with terror, fright and madness during the night is being visited by the goddess of the moon.” Today, some emergency room workers still believe the full moon means trouble.

SUPERSTITION: Say “God bless you” after a sneeze or risk something worse than a cold.

THE BACKSTORY: You’ve probably heard the myth that a sneeze stops the heart (it doesn’t) or separates body from soul (science declines to comment there). But to explain the ritual of post-sneeze “blessing,” we can look to another pope. During the first recorded plague pandemic, in the sixth century, severe sneezing often portended sudden death. As a desperate precaution, Pope Gregory I supposedly asked followers to say “God bless you” every time someone sneezed. Today, it’s just polite. 



Sudoku

BY IAN RIENSCHÉ

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

TO SOLVE THIS PUZZLE ...

You have to put a number from 1 to 9 in each square so that:

- every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numerals (1-9) without repeating any of them;
- each of the 3×3 boxes has all nine numerals, none repeated.

SOLUTION

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



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ALL IN

A Day's Work



“What do you mean I have an ulcer? I give ulcers, I don’t get them!”

IT'S GOOD TO ASK questions during a job interview. Just not these, shared by the executives who heard them:

- “What does your company actually do?”
- “When you imagine your business, what colour is it and what does it smell like?”
- “If there is another interview, do I really need to come back to this office? It’s just a bit far from my house.”
- “Can I come to work in my pyjamas?”

Source: businessinsider.com.au

MY CO-WORKER was very excited at the prospect of becoming an American citizen after passing her test and interview.

“I just have one more thing to do,” Pam said proudly. “I have to go to the courthouse in a few weeks and swear at the judge!”

YEFIM M. BRODD

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our jokes sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com



IT PAYS TO ENRICH YOUR

Word Power



This month we premiere an eclectic medley of musical terms—some classical, some modern and some slangy. If you're missing a few beats, waltz over to the next page for answers.

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

- 1. clam** (klam) *n.*—A: silent measure. B: wrong note.
C: set of maracas.
- 2. legato** (lih-'gah-toh) *adv.*—
A: smoothly. B: quickly.
C: loudly.
- 3. woodshed** ('wood-shehd) *v.*—
A: serenade. B: drum loudly.
C: practise an instrument.
- 4. busk** (busk) *v.*—A: sing baritone.
B: work as an accompanist.
C: play for donations.
- 5. ska** (skah) *n.*—A: hip-hop club.
B: microphone stand.
C: Jamaican music.
- 6. nonet** (noh-'net) *n.*—A: ditty for kids. B: composition for nine voices.
C: unrehearsed performance.
- 7. pipes** (piyps) *n.*—A: singing voice. B: tuba mouthpieces.
C: emcees.
- 8. da capo** (dah 'kah-poh) *adv.*—
A: from the top. B: uptempo.
C: raised a half step.
- 9. beatboxer** ('beet-bok-ser) *n.*—
A: band competition.
B: vocal percussionist.
C: instrument case.
- 10. barrelhouse** ('ber-el-haus) *n.*—
A: bass trombone.
B: rhythmic style of jazz.
C: drumroll.
- 11. tonic** ('taw-nik) *n.*—A: first tone of a scale. B: counterpoint.
C: harmony.
- 12. noodle** ('noo-duhl) *v.*—
A: change key. B: croon.
C: improvise casually.
- 13. hook** (hook) *n.*—A: stolen lyric. B: saxophone line.
C: catchy musical phrase.
- 14. skiffle** ('skih-ful) *n.*—
A: swing step. B: music played on rudimentary instruments.
C: fast tempo.
- 15. earworm** ('eer-wurm) *n.*—
A: bassoon. B: tune that repeats in one's head. C: power chord.

Answers

1. **clam**—[B] wrong note. Emmett's violin solo was going wonderfully—until he hit a *clam*.

2. **legato**—[A] smoothly. Lullabies should always be sung *legato*.

3. **woodshed**—[C] practise an instrument. If Asia wants to make it to Carnegie Hall, she needs to *woodshed* a lot more often.

4. **busk**—[C] play for donations. I'm between gigs right now, unless you count *busking* in the park.

5. **ska**—[C] Jamaican music. Stefan's *ska* band is holding open auditions for horn players this weekend.

6. **nonet**—[B] composition for nine voices. Our baseball team is also a singing group; we perform only *nonets*!

7. **pipes**—[A] singing voice. Bratin killed 'Livin' on a Prayer' at karaoke last night—who knew he had such great *pipes*?

8. **da capo**—[A] from the top. Even though the score said *da capo*, the bandleader enjoyed bellowing to his musicians, "Take it from the top!"

9. **beatboxer**—[B] vocal percussionist. Samar is such an amazing *beatboxer* that you'd swear there was a drummer in the room.

10. **barrelhouse**—[B] rhythmic style of jazz. Ahmad Jamal played an old *barrelhouse* tune on the piano.

11. **tonic**—[A] first tone of a scale. "This concerto is in C major, so the *tonic* is C," the professor explained.

12. **noodle**—[C] improvise casually. I was just *noodling* around on my guitar when I wrote this riff.

13. **hook**—[C] catchy musical phrase. The Beatles had an undeniable knack for melodic *hooks*.

14. **skiffle**—[B] music played on rudimentary instruments. Our family *skiffle* band features Mum on kazoo,

Dad on washboard and Uncle Pinto on slide whistle.

15. **earworm**—[B] tune that repeats in one's head. That TV jingle has become my latest *earworm*, and it's driving me crazy!

SING, SING, SING

Many vocal terms have their roots in the Latin verb *cantare* ('to sing'). *Cantatas* are pieces for singers, and *bel canto* (literally 'beautiful singing' in Italian) is operatic singing. A *chanson* is a cabaret song, and its female singer is a *chanteuse*. *Chants* and *incantations* are often sung. And a long poem, whether recited or sung, may be divided into *cantos*.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

9 & below: roadie
10-12: soloist
13-15: maestro

Me & My Shelf

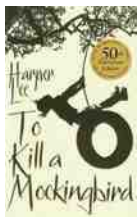
SRINIVAS REDDY'S CHILDHOOD FAVES



Scholar, translator and musician, Srinivas Reddy trained in classical South Asian languages—Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu—and literature. His books include the English translations of Krishnadevaraya's epic *Amuktamalyada*; and Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitram* and *Meghadutam*. Next up is a biography of the Vijayanagara emperor Krishnadevaraya. Reddy lives in Rhode Island and teaches at Brown University.

THE BOOK OF THREE, Lloyd Alexander, Square Fish, ₹530.

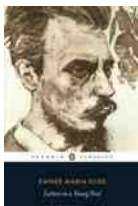
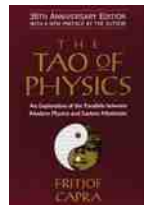
Filled with adventure, magic, myth and humour, this was my very first fantasy story and I was hooked. Part of The Chronicles of Prydain series, it's a classic coming-of-age story set in Lloyd Alexander's reimagined world of Welsh mythology.



TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, Harper Lee, Random House UK, ₹399. A quintessential American novel, and another moving coming-of-age tale. I read this classic as a boy but Scout, Atticus and Boo are still with me. Some characters truly become part of your childhood.

THE TAO OF PHYSICS, Fritjof Capra, Shambhala, ₹2,000.

My father gave me this book when I was a college student grappling with divergent interests in science, art and spirituality. Capra brought it all together into one harmonious vision of the universe.

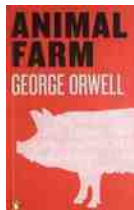
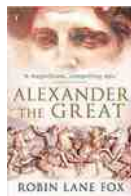


LETTERS TO A YOUNG POET, Rainer Maria Rilke, Penguin Classics, ₹450. Rilke deeply inspired me when I was a young artist; he exhorted: "Go into yourself. Find out the reason that commands you to write; see whether it has spread its roots into the very depths of your heart ..." This book of letters soon led me to his sublime poetry.



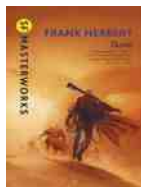
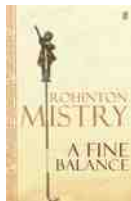
HYMNS FOR THE DROWNING, Nammalvar, translated by A. K. Ramanujan, Penguin Classics, ₹250. A. K. Ramanujan is one of my academic idols. This book, like many of his other works, showed me how deep and insightful scholarship could come together with artfully translated Indian poetry.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT, Robin Lane Fox, Penguin UK, ₹699. Telling the story of celebrated historical figures in a scholarly, engaging and readable manner is not easy, but Fox succeeds in spades. This book has been a model for my current biography of Krishnadevaraya.



ANIMAL FARM, George Orwell, Penguin India, ₹125. This simple yet profound book was my introduction to allegory. Orwell's well-drawn characters, his straightforward language and his deep critique of Stalinism left a lasting impression on my mind, and my politics.

A FINE BALANCE, Rohinton Mistry, Faber, ₹550. I remember reading this book in a cafe, and a man walking by said, "That's one of the saddest books I've ever read." He paused, turned and added, "It's also one of the best." I think he was right on both counts. This book also served as a poignant way to introduce my students to India during the Emergency.



DUNE, Frank Herbert, Orion Publishing Group, ₹599. This is one of the most powerful sci-fi novels I've ever read. Herbert combines high adventure with a profound sense of philosophy, spirituality and social commentary. "I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer."

SRIMAD BHAGAVAD-GITA, Swami Chinmayananda, Chinmaya Prakashan, ₹145. I first read the Bhagavad Gita with my grandfather who was also my first Sanskrit teacher. Every time I return to this seminal text I discover something new, something beautiful and something perplexing.



—COMPILED BY SUCHISMITA UKIL

Book prices are subject to change. All book details are as seen on Amazon.in.



Entertainment

OUR TOP PICKS OF THE MONTH

Films

Travel to the fictional, isolated African nation Wakanda in the first and most anticipated superhero movie of 2018. *Black Panther* (Chadwick Boseman, Lupita Nyong'o, Danai Gurira), features Marvel's original black superhero with an almost all-black star cast, and starts up where *Captain America: Civil War* left off. Rapper Kendrick Lamar has written, performed and curated the soundtrack.

Rani Mukherjee is back with *Hichki*, under the Yash Raj banner, in a heartwarming tale of a teacher with Tourette's syndrome and her oddball students.

Watchlist: Guillermo del Toro's *The Shape of Water* received high praise when author Neil Gaiman said, on Facebook, that it's one of the best films he has seen since *Pan's Labyrinth*. Don't miss the brilliant black comedy *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* starring Frances McDormand.



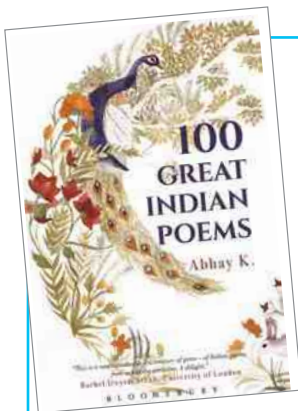
Above: Chadwick Boseman as Black Panther; **Right:** Rani Mukherjee in *Hichki*



EVENTS

Art lovers and aesthetes rejoice. Head to Delhi for the India Art Fair, or soak in some culture with the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival (Mumbai). Revel in classical dance against the stunning backdrop of Khajuraho at its annual festival or celebrate Sufi music at the Sur Jahan World Peace Music Festival (Kolkata and Goa).

BOOKS



This Valentine's Day, tear away love's strait-jacket with *Eleven Ways to Love* (Penguin Random House), a compilation of 11 essays that redefine the emotion, broaden-

ing it to include queer and transgender love, body image, disability and singledom. With a foreword by Gulzar, it features works by Indian authors and poets of note. Then there is poet-diplomat Abhay K.'s *100 Great Indian Poems* (Bloomsbury), an anthology that ranges from Dilip Chitre to 12th-century Kannada poet Basavanna and Urdu pioneer Mir Taqi Mir. Kalpana Swamina-

than's 60-year-old, silver-haired detective Lalli returns in *Murder in Seven Acts: The Lalli Mysteries* (Speaking Tiger), seven complex cases, all waiting to be solved.

Also for the bookshelf: *The Free Voice: On Democracy, Culture and the Nation* by Ravish Kumar, *Prison Days* by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (Speaking Tiger) and *The Boy on the Bridge* by M. R. Carey (Hachette).

BOOK COVER COURTESY: BLOOMSBURY

Small Screen

How long does it take to bury the truth, asks the trailer as it zooms out to reveal a looming Statue of Liberty and blood-splattered snowy terrain. Netflix's *Seven Seconds* is an icy, racially charged crime thriller by Veena Sud (who also developed *The Killing*), based on the Russian film *The Major*. Then there is *Looming Tower* (Jeff Daniels, Alec Baldwin), on the events leading up to 9/11, based on Pulitzer Prize winner Lawrence Wright's book of the same name. **Returning:** Claire Danes as Carrie



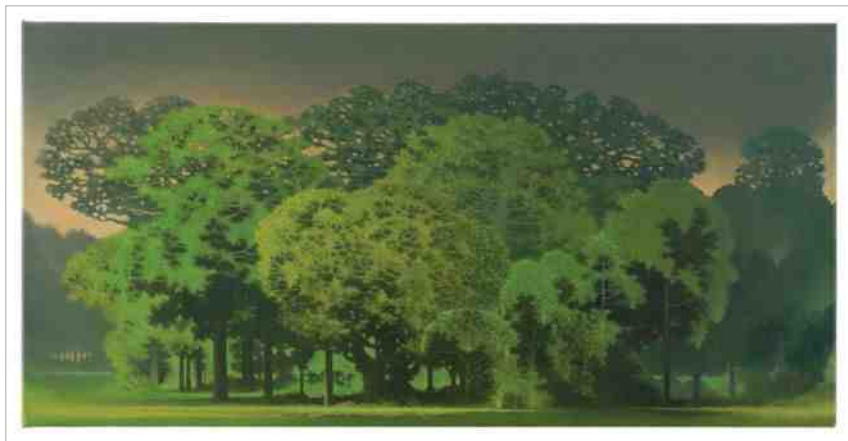
Mathison is back with *Homeland*, this time to save the US President.

—COMPILED BY CHITRA SUBRAMANYAM **R**

All release dates are subject to change.



Studio



UNTITLED (2017), BY AJI V. N.
OIL ON CANVAS, 45 × 91 CM

Born in Kallissery, Kerala, Aji V. N. is known for his intense, imagined landscape paintings. With a bachelor's degree in fine arts from the College of Fine Arts, Thiruvananthapuram, and a master's from the College of Art in New Delhi, his first solo exhibit was shown in 1995 in Amsterdam. Over the years, he's travelled around the globe with his work—from Amsterdam, Perth, Madrid, Moscow and Paris to his home turf in Kochi, Kerala.

Inspired by nature and its elements, Aji says, "I have always liked thickets of trees, as it brings peace and tranquillity ... it feels like home." He created this painting as a refuge for himself. To capture his distinct other-worldly, muted texture he uses a technique called glazing—where he layers several thin, transparent coats of paint to get the desired effect.

"Landscape paintings can convey all kinds of emotions and ideas. I am interested in abstraction and figuration, and landscapes help satisfy both my interests," says Aji.

The goal and purpose with this work is to invoke the love of nature in any person who comes across it.

—AYUSHI THAPLIYAL 

Quotable Quotes



FOR ME, IT'S EITHER YOU'RE PART OF CREATION OR YOU'RE PART OF DESTRUCTION.

MADONNA, *singer*



THE HISTORY OF LIFE ON EARTH REFUTES THE CLAIM THAT IT'S BETTER TO BE SMART THAN STUPID.

NOAM CHOMSKY, *linguist*



BANANA REPUBLICS ARE RUN ON CRONYISM.

RATAN TATA, *industrialist*

I think a lot of people are afraid to apologize. I love to apologize. I was raised to apologize.

LARRY DAVID, *comedian*

My daughter started making fart noises with her mouth and then laughing. And I was like, 'Oh, well, I've taught her everything I know.'

ANDY SAMBERG, *actor*



Those who stand for nothing fall for anything.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON, *statesman and one of the Founding Fathers of the US*

There is a determinable difference between the apparent casualness of mastery and the carelessness of ignorance.

CHARLES B. ROGERS, *artist*

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