

# Reader's

JUNE 2017



# digest



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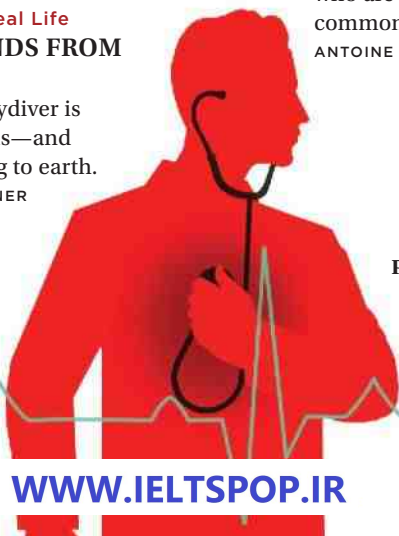
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PHOTOGRAPH BY DALE MAY

SET STYLIST: PETER GARGAGLIANO; HAIR AND MAKEUP: ALLISON BROOKE USING FACE ATELIER COSMETICS



# Dear Readers

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**W**E WERE FACING A 90-minute late-afternoon drive along a winding mountain road with our carsick-prone ten-year-old daughter, Rachel. Wanting things to go smoothly, my wife, Susan, and I took the Florence Nightingale route. “Here’s something, honey,” I said from the driver’s seat. It was industrial-grade Dramamine to help her not turn green.

Within minutes, though, my exhaustion changed our plans. If you are a parent, you’ve been there: Four days of family car camping through California lava country had fried my wires. I decided to pull into the next campsite, and I sent Rachel and her younger brother, Neil, to play down by the stream.

Grimly setting up, I realized I wasn’t hearing the kids, so I went to look. Rachel stood like a crumpling statue a few boulders north of Neil, a six-year-old precariously skipping stones. She stared off into the hills, oblivious. In my delicate condition, I may, just may, have reacted a tad more LOUDLY than a good parent should have. “Rachel!” I shouted. “Make sure he’s OK!”

Like a zombie, she barely acknowledged my yelling from 30 yards above her. When we got back to camp and served up the grub, she laid her head on the table. That was enough for suddenly Napoleonic me. “Go to your tent!” I bellowed, putting a coup de grâce on Day 4.

In the morning, I awoke at dawn with a sick feeling. “Sweetie.” I jostled Susan. “I just remembered—we gave her that pill!”

“Oh my God,” Susan muttered, having the same flashback.

“Yeah, I remember that trip,” Rachel says today. At 22, she’s a real Florence Nightingale, headed for a master’s in nursing.

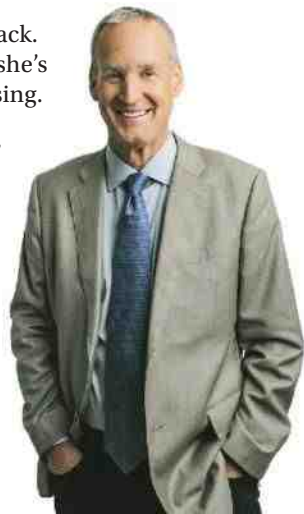
“That was hilarious. You drugged me unconscious with Dramamine, then screamed at me for not watching Neil.”

At least the forgotten dosing gave us a funny and enduring story, which just may be the best kind of vacation souvenir. Want to hear another one? Turn to page 66.

Rachel certainly enjoyed how it ended. “You felt so bad,” she says, her eyes twinkling at the preteen memory, “the rest of the trip I got away with anything!” **R**



Bruce Kelley, editor-in-chief  
Write to us at [letters@rd.com](mailto:letters@rd.com).





DIANE LANE

ARNAUD VIARD

AND ALEC BALDWIN

**"A DELICIOUS ROMANTIC BON BON.  
DIANE LANE IS IRRESISTIBLE.  
A ROAD TRIP THAT SHIMMERS WITH SO  
MANY ENTICING TEMPTATIONS YOU MAY  
WANT TO LICK THE SCREEN."**

-Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE

**"BUOYANT AND LIGHT-HEARTED.  
DIANE LANE IS A PLEASURE THROUGHOUT."**

-Todd McCarthy, THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

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# Letters

COMMENTS ON THE APRIL ISSUE

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## 50 Everyday Mistakes and How to Fix Them

For years, I have read my *Reader's Digest* from first page to last, all in order. Your April issue shook up my routine. I got to page 4, and I was hooked by Marc Peyser's editor's letter, in which he admits to making several of the mistakes in "50 Everyday Mistakes." I grabbed a pencil and hurriedly leafed to that story. I compared my numbers with Mr. Peyser's. To save face for both of us, I am not disclosing the results.

JO ANN CARMAN, *Findlay, Ohio*

## When Norah Met Mr. Dan

What a wonderful story of a preciously outgoing little girl, a delightfully responsive older man, and a very thoughtful mother willing to take time to listen. Thank you for inspiring kindness in us all, Norah!

REBECCA DOWLING, *Hampden, Maine*

My wife and I had been married for 56 years when she passed away three years ago. When Mr. Dan mentioned



that he had not had an uninterrupted night's sleep since his wife died, I was reminded of the many times I have said that. I have resigned myself to being alone for the rest of my life because at age 80, very few opportunities remain for remarriage. I wonder if there is an opportunity for foster grandfathering. Maybe that could be an answer.

RICHARD ROREX, *Apple Valley, California*

## Saving Your First Life

This article by an EMT was of particular interest to me. A truck ignoring a stop sign totaled my motorcycle and almost killed me. EMTs were on the scene in minutes. After several operations and months of rehabilitation, I was finally able to walk. I went to thank the EMTs who saved my life. They told me they rarely hear the outcome of their calls, and it's even more rare for anyone to come by and thank them. I urge anyone who has ever needed the service of any of our first responders to go thank them. The reward will be felt both ways.

MARK KUHLMANN, *San Antonio, Texas*



## Almost Ready to Do My Taxes!

Reading about how easily Emma Rathbone gets distracted, I felt not only that I knew her but also that I was married to her—and was impatiently waiting in the car with the engine running, wondering why we were going to be late this time.

DAVID HOGANSON, *Keyport, New Jersey*

## When Insurance Stops Paying

I read through tears the story of Stephanie Peirolo and her son, RJ. It was agonizing that her son was in a terrible accident, but to then be put through the wringer with the insurance company! Stephanie is one brave mother.

HOLLY BORGHELLO, *Millbrae, California*

## The Pig That Changed My Life

I had to laugh when I read that the pig's owners became vegans so their diet would be "Esther-approved." They might not be aware that pigs are naturally omnivores, like bears and humans. Pigs can survive on a vegan diet, but I have no doubt that Esther would be thrilled to

have a cheeseburger and milk shake if she had a choice.

EMILY MARTIN HALL, *Potsdam, New York*

## 100-Word True Stories

I related to the mom who asked her daughter what she would do if she couldn't wake her up. I had a similar experience with my very independent kindergartner many years ago. Her response when I asked what she would do if she couldn't wake me was "I would walk to school myself." I joked with family members that I hope she would at least call 911 on her way out the door!

R. T., *Lancaster, Pennsylvania*

## HO, HO, HO—IT'S CHRISTMAS IN JUNE

Is it too early to start dreaming of the holidays? Never! We are starting to collect your stories about your most memorable encounter with Santa—as a child or as a grown-up.

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# EVERYDAY HEROES



A boy's bravery saves a little girl  
from the unimaginable

## Stopping A Kidnapper

BY ALYSSA JUNG

 IT WAS A SCENE Norman Rockwell might have painted: three kids laughing as they took turns riding a scooter on their quiet street. Last December, on a crisp Saturday afternoon in Wichita Falls, Texas, 11-year-old TJ Smith had just jumped off the scooter as his neighbor Kim,\* age 7, claimed her turn and her sister Julie,\* 9, looked on. Kim straddled the scooter and paused to catch her breath. That was when the bearded man with a head of messy curls appeared. The kids didn't see where

he came from, but they know exactly what happened next: Without uttering a word, he picked Kim up off the scooter and calmly strode away.

"He cradled her like a baby and just walked down the street," says TJ. In fact, the composed way the man held Kim led TJ to believe he must have been a relative. But something wasn't right. "I could see her face," TJ said. "She was scared."

Kim's fear escalated into sobs, then pleas for help. She began kicking and flailing, trying to get free of the man's grip. "What are you doing?" Julie shouted. But the man, unfazed, ➡

*\*Names have been changed to protect privacy.*



*Though he admits  
he was scared,  
TJ says he never  
thought about the  
danger to himself.*

walked the length of the block until he reached an alley and disappeared.

TJ's first impulse was to chase after them. But what was a four-foot-tall, 70-pound kid going to do to stop a grown man? "I wanted to help, but I couldn't do it myself," he says. So he ran to his grown-up neighbors' home.

Brad Ware and his wife were relaxing on the couch in their living room when their front door burst open.

"Brad!" yelled TJ. "A man just picked up a little girl and took her into the alley!" And just like that, TJ was gone, back on the street sprinting after his abducted little friend. "I ran back to where I saw him take her to see if they were still there," says TJ. Ware and his wife jumped into their car and trailed close behind.

TJ ran to the end of the street and turned the corner. He had no idea what to expect or who might be waiting for him. But he needed to find Kim. If he lost her, TJ feared, she might never be found alive.

Once TJ hit the alley, he spotted the man a couple of blocks down, standing in front of an abandoned white house—its windows busted, doors boarded up, and yard overgrown. He was shoving the panicked girl through a window.

Just then, Ware and his wife pulled up. "Stay here," Ware told TJ as he took off toward the house. With Ware now bearing down on him, the man let go of Kim in the window frame and walked away, almost nonchalantly, before breaking into a run. Ware caught up with him. They struggled. Ware kicked the man in the groin and wrapped him in his arms. The man squirmed free and fled across the street. When he stumbled, Ware lunged and tackled him.

Alerted by Julie and other neighbors, the police and the victim's mother had arrived on the scene. Kim dashed

into the safety of her mother's arms, and the two cried and hugged.

Meanwhile, officers cuffed and arrested Raeshawn Perez, 26. He was charged with aggravated kidnapping and was being held on \$50,000 bond as this issue went to press.

There were a few heroes that day, but Ware insists that the quick-thinking, dogged 11-year-old deserves most of the credit. "You know, he's the one who more or less saved the girl," Ware told KFDX.

That news came as no surprise to TJ's mother. "This is exactly his character," says Angie Hess Smith. "His first thought is not of himself. It's always of others."

**“Brad!” yelled TJ. “A man just picked up a little girl and took her into the alley!”**

# The Cover-Up

BY ANDY SIMMONS

THE MAN WHO walked into Dave Cutlip's tattoo parlor, in Brooklyn Park, Maryland, in January was tough to miss. His face bore a gang tattoo. The man sought Cutlip's help in literally covering up his violent past. "I could see the hurt in his eyes," Cutlip, 49, told the *Washington Post*.

Cutlip couldn't help the man—the tattoos were too close to the eyes. But it got him thinking. Many young people get tattoos that they come to regret. A few, like the gangbanger's, can mark them for the rest of their days. Then they're "always going to be a victim," said Cutlip. "If I can help, that's my ultimate goal."


Inking over a tattoo costs hundreds of dollars, and getting one removed by laser is even pricier. So Cutlip decided he would help by hiding racist or gang-related tattoos for free. He put the word out via Facebook: "Sometimes people make bad choices and sometimes people change. We believe there is enough hate in this world, and we want to make a difference."

One man, Casey Schaeffer, showed up with the word *white* on one forearm and *power* on the other. He'd served a year in prison on assault charges, he told the *Post*,



*Dave Cutlip inks an eagle over a client's offensive tattoo.*

and had hooked up with a white supremacist group there because they "took care of me. I thought of it as paying them back." But potential employers would take one look at the tattoos and turn him down. So he had Cutlip obscure one of the words with a heart and roses and tattoo a hawk over the other.

Cutlip has done nine such jobs, each of which took several hours. He told *People* that a client let him know that he quickly found a job once his tattoo was obscured. Such victories prompted Cutlip to found the Random Acts of Tattoo project with three like-minded tattoo studios from around the country, and now hundreds of potential clients are on a wait list. As he told NPR, "If we can just erase hate one tattoo at a time, then we're doing something." 





“Bye, bye, frequent heartburn.”

BECKY LONDON, ACTUAL PRILLOSEC OTC USER



#1

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# VOICES & VIEWS

Department of Wit

## Allow Me to Stipulate My Demands, Daddy

BY SEAN WILLIAMS  
FROM SLATE.COM



### ARGUMENT 1

**Child:** Can I have this?

**Me:** No.

**Child:** Ah, perhaps I've miscommunicated. I'm asking for it because I want it.

**Me:** I understood that, actually.

**Child:** I think maybe you're not hearing me. I'd like it because I want it.

**Me:** I've heard you quite well. I'm saying that's not actually an argument.

**Child:** PERHAPS IF I SAID IT LOUDER.

**Me:** There's no problem with my hearing. The problem is that your argument is, as the Romans would say, *circulus in probando*.

**Child:** Well, then, let me offer this new information: I want it.

**Me:** That's the same information. ➤➤

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (WILLIAMS)



SEAN WILLIAMS  
is a writer and a theater  
producer for Gideon  
Productions. He lives  
in New York City.

That's what you just said, and it's also the information I assumed when we started.

**Child:** Well, can I watch YouTube?

**Me:** You also can't watch YouTube.

**Child:** If I can't watch YouTube, then can I have it?

**Me:** No! Sorry. No.

**Child:** Can I have part of it?

**Me:** No. The having of it is what I'm saying no to. Having part of it is the same as having it.

**Child:** So can I have all of it?

**Me:** No! I'm answering the same question. The answer is no.

**Child:** Why not?

**Me:** BECAUSE I— Look. No.

**Child:** But, OK, look, here is some new information.

**Me:** Yes. What is it?

**Child:** I *need* it.

## ARGUMENT 2

**Me:** Put your shoes on.

**Child:** In the vacuum of space, are there free-floating molecules?

**Me:** Put your shoes on.

**Child:** Did you know that we don't actually vote for president—we vote for *people* who vote for president?

**Me:** I don't care. Put your shoes on.

**Child:** I am.

**Me:** You're not.

**Child:** Why do we have shoes, anyway?

**Me:** Just put your shoes on.

**Child:** That reminds me. Where are my shoes?

**Me:** What? They're right there! Right next to your feet!

**Child:** Oh, these shoes?

**Me:** YOU ONLY HAVE ...

I'm sorry. Yes. Those shoes. Your only shoes.

**Child:** I can't. I'm not wearing socks.

**Me:** Did you take your socks OFF?

**Child:** Well, I'm not wearing them anymore, so it's a fair bet.

**Me:** Put on your socks, and then put on your shoes.

**Child:** I am!

**Me:** You're not! You're just sitting there!

**Child:** This is me putting on my shoes! This is part of it! All of this—this is the putting on of the shoes. It says in the *I Ching*—

**Me:** NO. NO MORE I FRIGGIN' CHING. PUT YOUR ... I'm sorry. Just ... If you put your shoes on by the time I count to five, I'll let you choose what we do next. One ...

**Child:** (*With socks and shoes already on*) YouTube.

## ARGUMENT 3

**Child:** Where is Mom?

**Me:** Why do you need her?

“*I think maybe you're not hearing me. I'd like it because I want it.*”

**Child:** Sometimes one just needs one's mother.

**Me:** I'm standing right here. Perhaps I can help you.

**Child:** This falls under Mom's purview, so ...

**Me:** She's busy right now, and I'm taking care of you.

**Child:** Busy where?

**Me:** Upstairs. But don't go there.

*(Child leaves room)*

*(Long pause; muffled discussion from upstairs)*

*(Child returns)*

**Child:** I spoke with Mom.

**Me:** So I gather.

**Child:** Mom says to ask you. Where is the thing from before?

**Me:** The thing I wouldn't give you before?

**Child:** Yes.

**Me:** Why do you want to know?

**Child:** I'm a curious person. I thirst for knowledge.

**Me:** But you can't have it.

**Child:** Boy, you are really jumping to conclusions here! I know I can't have it! I'm just curious.

**Me:** If I tell you where it is, will I find out at some future time that you have the thing?

**Child:** Does anyone truly know what the future holds?

**Me:** So there is a future where you've gone and gotten the thing.

**Child:** Hold that thought.

*(Child leaves room)*

*(Long pause; muffled discussion from upstairs)*

*(Child returns)*

**Child:** Mom says she's busy and that you should just tell me where the thing is because I promised not to get it.

**Me:** You promised.

**Child:** As Mom is my witness.

**Me:** The thing is on top of the refrigerator.

**Child:** Why did you put it there?

**Me:** Because I don't trust you.

**Child:** But ... how is that possible? I trust YOU.

**Me:** Thanks.

**Child:** I trust you so much that I know when I go and get a stool and bring it over by the refrigerator and climb up it, the thing will be there.

**Me:** You promised you wouldn't do that.

*(Child leaves room)*

**Me:** DO NOT GO TO THE KITCHEN. I SWEAR TO GOD, IF I HEAR THAT STEP STOOL—

*(Child comes back into room)*

**Child:** Why are you yelling at me?

**Me:** I'm sorry. I shouldn't have yelled.

**Child:** Can I play on the computer?

**Me:** Yes.

*(Child opens laptop and begins watching videos on YouTube)*

*(Mom walks downstairs)*

**Mom:** I specifically told you not to get on the computer.

**Child:** Dad said I could.









# PHOTO

OF LASTING  
INTEREST

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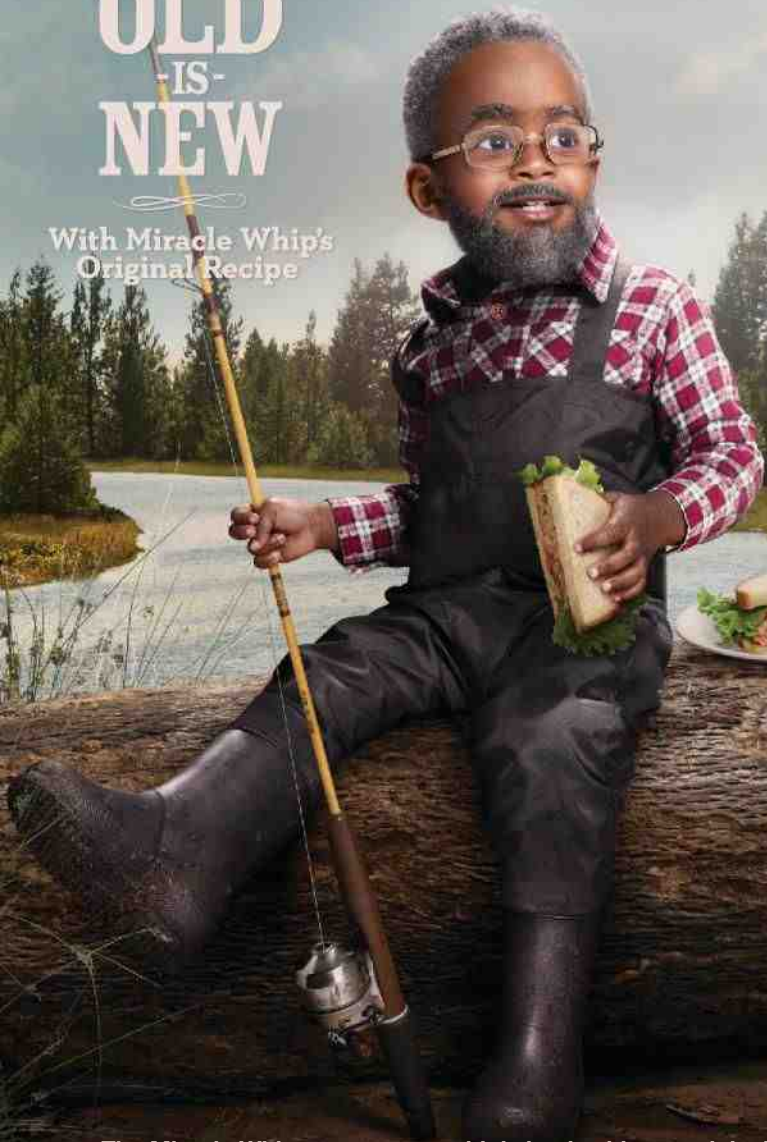
## Splish Splash

Even tigers need to beat the heat. Fortunately, eight-year-old Akasha has a backyard pool—her yard being located at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo, California. Tigers are actually the rare large felines that like to swim (those scaredy-cat lions generally avoid the water). Akasha can lounge in the pool for hours, and when her trainer supplies a fleshy incentive, she's also an excellent diver, with her ears tucked, teeth bared, and wide-open eyes on the prize.

**PHOTOGRAPH BY  
JUSTIN SULLIVAN**

# OLD -IS- NEW

With Miracle Whip's  
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The Miracle Whip you grew up with is back with our original gold standard recipe that brings that one of a kind taste to all your salads and sandwiches.

A would-be groom cancels the wedding—in a text message. Does that tacky move mean his ex-fiancée can keep her diamond?

# The Case of the Ring and The Broken Engagement

BY VICKI GLEMBOCKI

THEY MET AT A golf tournament in 2009. He was a New York restaurateur. She was a nail technician. Two years later, during a spring vacation in Florida, Louis Billittier Jr. proposed to Christa Clark with a whopper of an engagement ring—a 2.97-carat diamond worth \$53,000. Clark said yes. They set the date for September 15, 2012.

The couple lived together in Billittier's Hamburg, New York, home as they prepped and planned for the wedding. Billittier paid for Clark's cell phone and for her car and health insurance. In fact, according to the *Buffalo News*, he'd been generous throughout their relationship, taking her on trips and buying her a diamond necklace and diamond-and-sapphire earrings.



But on July 1, 2012, with the wedding just two months away, Billittier broke it off. The night before, the couple had been on the phone discussing whether they should split because Clark wouldn't sign a prenuptial ➔

agreement. That was the last time the two ever had a discussion. In fact, when Billittier decided to call off the wedding, he sent her a text.

“You’re doing this through a text message?” Clark, 36, wrote back. “I’m not even worth a conversation?” Billittier, 53, responded, asking Clark to return that supersize ring. She texted back a terse “No.” He didn’t put up much of an argument; in his next text, he agreed that the rock would be “a \$50,000 parting ring ... enough for a down payment on a house.”

Clark moved her stuff out of his home, and Billittier reimbursed her about \$9,500 for the money she and her family had already spent on the wedding. He never asked her to return the other jewelry he’d given her, but in a subsequent text to Clark, he threatened to take the engagement ring back. Finally, in a July 31 text,

he demanded once more that she return the ring. “You by law have to give it back,” he wrote.

When she didn’t, he sued her.

Clark and Billittier were the only two people who testified in front of Justice Russell P. Buscaglia of the Supreme Court of the State of New York in November 2013. Clark maintained that after Billittier broke off the engagement, he had given her the ring as a gift. Billittier claimed that he was “being sarcastic” when he’d called it a “parting ring.” He cited New York Civil Rights Law Section 80b, which states that any gifts given during the engagement period are “given solely in contemplation of marriage” and should be returned if that marriage doesn’t happen.

*Should a jilted fiancée be forced to return the engagement ring?  
You be the judge.*



## THE VERDICT

Not in this situation. Most cases like this in New York—and nationwide, for that matter—require that the parties be restored “to their pre-engagement status by returning the engagement ring to its donor,” as Buscaglia noted in his verdict. But the justice ruled that Clark could keep the ring because of Billittier’s breakup text calling it a “parting ring.” Billittier’s subsequent texts threatening to take the ring back and asking Clark to give it back reinforced that the ring had, in fact, been a gift. And according to Buscaglia’s decision on March 31, 2014, “Once a gift is given, it is irrevocable.” **R**



1. Underneath blue chair. 2. Underneath sofa pillows. 3. On back of sofa.



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# Points to Ponder

**WHAT I REGRET MOST** in my life are failures of kindness. Those moments when another human being was there, in front of me, suffering, and I responded sensibly. Reservedly. Mildly.

**GEORGE SAUNDERS,**  
*writer*, in a graduation speech

**THE ONE THING** you think you can do better than everyone else—go out and do that. The light shining out of your eyes should blind people. You should be on fire all the time.

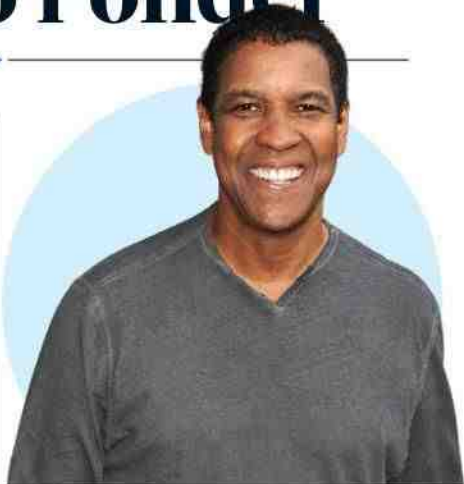
**GARRETT OLIVER,**  
*brewmaster of Brooklyn Brewery*, in *Fast Company*

**CHURCHES ARE GOOD** for prayer, but so are garages and cars and mountains and showers and dance floors.

**ANNE LAMOTT,**  
*author*, in her book *Plan B*

**WHY DO YOU GO AWAY?** So that you can come back. So that you can see the place you came from with new eyes and extra colors.

**TERRY PRATCHETT,**  
*author*, in his book *A Hat Full of Sky*



People say you should have something to fall back on, but if I'm falling, I want to fall forward.

**DENZEL WASHINGTON,**  
*actor*, in *O*, the *Oprah Magazine*

**YOUR OPPONENTS WOULD** love you to believe that it's hopeless, that you have no power, that there's no reason to act, that you can't win. Hope is a gift you don't have to surrender, a power you don't have to throw away.

**REBECCA SOLNIT,**  
*writer*, in her book *Hope in the Dark*

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Melinda Gates explains why she has taken up an especially difficult cause in India, and why hope is her most potent weapon

# Don't Look Away

BY MELINDA GATES



MELINDA GATES is a philanthropist and cochair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

TEN YEARS AGO, I traveled to India with friends. On the last day there, I spent some time meeting with prostitutes. I expected to talk to them about the risk of AIDS, but they wanted to talk about stigma. Most of these women had been abandoned by their husbands, and that's why they'd gone into prostitution. They were trying to make enough money to feed their kids. They were so low in the eyes of society that they could be raped and robbed and beaten by anybody—even by police—and nobody cared.

Talking to them about their lives was so moving to me. But what I remember most is how much they wanted to touch me and be touched. It was as if physical contact somehow proved their worth. As I was leaving, we took a photo of all of us with our arms linked together.

Later that day, I spent some time in a home for the dying. I walked into a large hall and saw rows and rows of cots. Every cot was attended except for one far off in the corner that no one was going near, so I walked over there. The patient was a woman who seemed to be in her 30s. I remember her eyes. She had these huge, brown, sorrowful eyes. She was emaciated, on the verge of death. Her intestines weren't holding anything, so they had put her on a cot with a hole cut out in the bottom, and everything



just poured through into a pan below.

I could tell she had AIDS, both from the way she looked and the fact that she was off in the corner alone. The stigma of AIDS is vicious—especially for women—and the punishment is abandonment.

When I arrived at her cot, I suddenly felt totally helpless. I had absolutely nothing I could offer her.

I knew I couldn't save her, but I didn't want her to be alone. So I knelt down next to her and reached out to touch her—and as soon as she felt my hand, she grabbed it and wouldn't let go. We sat there holding hands, and even though I knew she couldn't understand me, I just started saying, "It's OK. It's not your fault. It's not your fault."

We had been there together for a while when she pointed upward with her finger. It took me some time to figure out that she wanted to go up to the roof and sit outside while it was still light out. I asked one of the workers if that would be OK, but she was overwhelmed by all the patients she had to care for. She said, “She’s in the last stages of dying, and I have to pass out medicine.” It was getting late and the sun was going down, and no one seemed willing to take her upstairs.

So finally I scooped her up—she was just skin over a skeleton, just a sack of bones—and I carried her up the stairs. On the roof there were a few of those plastic chairs that will blow over in a strong breeze. I set her down on one, helped prop her feet up on another, and placed a blanket over her legs.

And she sat there with her face to the west, watching the sunset. I made sure the workers knew that she was up there so they could

come get her after the sun went down. Then I had to leave her. But she never left me.

Sometimes it’s the people you can’t help who inspire you the most. I knew that the sex workers I linked arms with in the morning could become the woman I carried upstairs

that evening—unless they found a way to defy the stigma that hung over their lives.

Optimism for me isn’t a passive expectation that things will get better. It’s a conviction that we can make things better—that

whatever suffering we see, no matter how bad it is, we can help people if we don’t lose hope and we don’t look away.



*Since 2003, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has donated \$258 million toward HIV-prevention programs in India. This is an excerpt from Melinda Gates’s speech at Stanford University’s graduation in 2014.* **R**

“  
*I knew I couldn’t  
save her, but I  
didn’t want her  
to be alone.*”

STANFORD UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS (JUNE 15, 2014). REPRINTED COURTESY OF MELINDA GATES.  
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## WHO’S WALKING WHOM?

Military service dogs always outrank their handlers.

Source: army.mil





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FINISH THIS SENTENCE

# If I had an extra

Everett, WA

## Binge watch

old *Gunsmoke* reruns, eat pizza, and drink beer.

HARRY KAUTZMAN

Saint Ignatius, MT

## Go fishing

in Glacier National Park.

JASON JURY

West Fargo, ND

## Go to Las Vegas.

With any luck, I would win big and have MORE vacation days!

APRIL NETTUM

Yuba City, CA

## Visit every lighthouse

I could see in a day.

GLYNIS BUSCHMANN

## Read

in a king-size bed with my two sons and husband, like we did before my husband downsized us to a queen.

SAMANTHA ADAMS

Juneau, AK

# vacation day, I would ...

## Watch

my niece's three children and give *her* a vacation day.

JAN ORR SHAFFER

## Spend it in New York City

because the energy there makes me feel young again!

BARBARA COHEN

## Volunteer

at the shelter one more day.

JEFFERY MAZURKIEWICZ

## Go to the museum

or somewhere quiet to get away from the stress.

MONICE GREEN

## Stay in my own hometown

and do one really touristy thing!

JENNIFER BARTHEL

## Head to the spa

so I could recover from all the fun I had on my vacation.

LINDA LAWSON

Bellevue, NE

Brecksville, OH

Reading, PA

Plainview, NY

Hudson, NC

Winter Haven, FL

👉 Go to [facebook.com/readersdigest](https://www.facebook.com/readersdigest) or join our Inner Circle Community at [tmbinnercircle.com](https://tmbinnercircle.com) for the chance to finish the next sentence.

# Your True Stories

IN 100 WORDS

## A PURR-FECT ANSWER

As a kindergarten teacher, I work with students of different reading abilities. One day, I was helping a student who was struggling to learn the letter sounds. I used flash cards with letters and pictures to help. I showed him the letter *s* and a picture of a snake to emphasize the sound. Sss, snake. Next came the letter *c*. He couldn't remember the sound, so I showed him a picture of a cat. When I asked him to tell me the sound of *c*, he looked puzzled and said, "Meow?"

AIMEE ASHBY, McAllen, Texas

## PIANO WOMAN

When I rescued a piano from an old house, I had not considered that I would need assistance moving it from the back of my pickup truck into my home. Consequently, I had to drive around with it for several days. One day, a police officer pulled me over. He had seen me before and asked why I was driving



around with a piano in my truck bed. I told him that my car radio had broken and I couldn't afford a new one. He laughed—and he let me go without a ticket.

PEPPER RAE,  
Junction City,  
California

## SEE DAD RUN

Like most dads, I imagine, I'd

always assumed that my three-year-old son looked up to me as he would a superhero. Until one day, that is, when, having picked him up from nursery school, I saw that we were about to miss our bus and decided to make a run for it. Once we were safely aboard, I noticed that my son was staring at me intensely with his big blue eyes. "What's the matter?" I asked him, still out of breath. He leaned into my ear and whispered, "Daddy, I didn't know you could run."

TANNI HAAS, New York, New York

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# Life

IN THESE UNITED STATES



*"I guess we'll never know why they beach themselves."*

**WE HAD JUST MOVED** to the country from the city when our neighbor came by. "Several of my hogs have gotten loose," he said. "Have you seen them?"

My concerned husband responded, "What do they look like?"

**BETSY SMITH**, Whitwell, Tennessee

**AT THE SUPERMARKET**, I searched high and low for canned peanuts, with no luck. Spotting an elderly clerk stocking shelves, I asked,

"Where do you hide the nuts?"

Looking around, she grumbled, "I don't hide them anywhere. They're all over this place."

**JOE BALDIZZONE**, New York, New York

**STEPPING UP** to the counter at a fast-food restaurant, I asked for a baked potato with butter on the side. With the gusto of someone newly employed, the teenager taking my order asked, "Which side?"

**ELIZABETH JONES**, Marble Falls, Texas

## I BROKE IT OFF BECAUSE ...

- “She wore the same deodorant as my mother.”
- “She pronounced it ‘cold slaw.’”
- “His head was just waaaaay too big for his body.”
- “She ate her peas one at a time. One at a time!”

Source: 9gag.com

**I CAME HOME TO FIND** my husband sitting on the couch watching TV.

“I thought you were going to mow the lawn,” I said.

“I’m waiting on a part,” he replied.

“What part is that?”

“The part of me that wants to do it.”

**BETH MADDEN**, *Seattle, Washington*



## WORDS OF WISDOM FOR LESS EXPERIENCED DADS

**You can never have too much fun with your kid:** “When I have a kid, I wanna put him in one of those strollers for twins, then run around the mall looking frantic.”

*Comedian STEVEN WRIGHT*

**Always set aside time for you and your angels:** “Well, it’s one a.m. Better go home and spend some quality time with the kids.”

*TV dad HOMER SIMPSON*

**Might as well have a gaggle of kids:** “The man with six kids will always be happier than the man with six

million dollars because the man with six million dollars always wants more.”

*Attributed to author WILLIAM FEATHER*

**Gush over every gift your child bestows upon you:**

“I have mixed emotions when I receive my Father’s Day gifts. I’m glad my children remember me; I’m disappointed that they actually think I dress that way.”

*Comedian MIKE DUGAN*

**Devise a plan to deal with your future grumpy adolescent:**

“When your children are teenagers, it’s important to have a dog so that someone in the house is happy to see you.”

*Writer NORA EPHRON*

**You’re the gate-keeper:** “Pretty sure my main job as a father of daughters is to make sure none of them become contestants on *The Bachelor*.”

*@ANDREWOSENGA*

**If there’s only one thing you learn:** “Never change diapers in midstream.”



*Humorist HARRY GILBERT*

Got a funny true story about family or friends? It could be worth \$\$\$.  
For details, go to page 7 or [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).

Americans' faith in institutions—from banks to Congress to the media—is near its lowest point in three decades, so we asked professionals in the most respected fields what they do to earn people's confidence

# Whom Do We *Trust?*

BY JENN MORSON

 TRUST IS A RARE COMMODITY THESE DAYS, which is all the more reason to celebrate it. Forty years ago, Gallup began asking Americans which professions they consider to be the most honest and ethical. Health-care workers dominated the 2016 list—nurses have been number one for the past 15 years—but the top eight (listed here in order) include some surprises. To get a sense of why these professions have retained the public's confidence, we asked individuals in these top-rated fields what they do to establish trust with the people they serve. Maybe the rest of us can learn from their examples. 



## NURSES

**Rich Bluni**

**Age: 49**  
**Orlando,**  
**Florida**



I became a nurse because of my dad. He was diagnosed with cancer, and I just saw with my own eyes the people who made the most difference: They comforted him, caught mistakes, and helped ease his pain. I wanted to be a part of that.

Trust in nursing is almost on a spiritual level. The people we care for are the most frightened and most vulnerable. They trust that you will give everything you have and that you will be there for them physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

A parent of a child I was taking care of on and off for several months came up to me when I was clocking in one day. She said she had requested that I take care of her son that night. I said of course, and I looked at her and could tell something was wrong. When I asked her, she told me he was going to die that night and she wanted me to be present for them.

That night, she held his right hand and I held his left. She insisted I stay until he left. She told me he loved me. It was such a sacred moment, that this mother thought of me not only as a caregiver and a nurse but also as someone she trusted so much that she wanted me to be there with

her and her son when he took his last breath. I don't think you could feel more trusted than that.

## PHARMACISTS

**Sally Rafie**

**Age: 34**  
**San Diego,**  
**California**



Where else can you walk down the street and get health advice for free? No other health-care professionals are in a position to do that. We make ourselves available to people—both to our patients and to those who are not patients—and we do it right in their own community.

Every decision I make is about putting patients and their families first. For instance, as part of my training I had to work at a clinic that was held in a church that didn't want us to discuss birth control because it was contrary to the church's teachings. I chose not to take part because I was unable to fully give my professional opinion to the patients. (My professor arranged an assignment in a different location.) As professionals, we have so much pride in our knowledge and expertise on prescriptions, immunizations, and complicated health and medical information. Still, our patients don't always need to hear that. Sometimes they just need a shoulder to cry on. I try to keep in mind that it's not about me



or proving I am knowledgeable but about meeting their needs. That's true whether you're helping a patient, a friend, a client, or a family member.

## MEDICAL DOCTORS

**Jack Jacobou**  
Age: 44  
Fountain Valley, California



When I became a doctor, I wanted to make a difference. The people I most respected and was most impressed with were the oncologists in my program. The conditions I work with have scary and concerning issues. I try to introduce myself in a pleasant way. I sit down; I don't stand. I make good eye contact with the patient and his or her family. I like to learn more about them before I get to the issue of why they are seeing me. Communication skills are key, as well as showing empathy, understanding, and availability.

A week or so ago, a nurse that I've known for many years was diagnosed with breast cancer. She could have gone anywhere; she could have chosen not to be treated close to home with people she knew. She chose to come see me and is now in treatment. For a physician, the single most rewarding thing is when someone you work with—someone whom you've worked with for years and who has seen your body of work—chooses you.

## ENGINEERS

**Chrissy Keane**  
Age: 41  
Crofton, Maryland



I don't know that being an engineer means you are automatically trustworthy. However, I do think that most engineers like to follow rules and be organized. They tell you what they think, whether you want to hear it or not. Those are important elements in building trust.

I focus on electrical and civil engineering, generally overseeing water mains and building renovations. I deal with a lot of property owners, and it takes genuine concern and understanding to allow them to trust that I am not trying to inconvenience them or destroy any of their property. I first make sure that I take care in my work and that I have explanations and backup to validate it. But the biggest thing is follow-through, meaning if I say I will do something, I need to do it. I think you have to want to be trusted, to want to do a good job, and I think you have to genuinely care about your work. That is innate. But I do think you can learn how to get people to trust you. I think you can learn to be organized better, learn from experience that you need to be honest—even if it is not what your boss or client wants to hear.

## DENTISTS

**Joseph M. Vargas**  
Age: 37  
Baltimore, Maryland



I grew up in a household with health-care providers (both of my parents were physicians), so I always knew I was going to be in some form of community service in the health fields. I want to help people through my work, and trust is the basis of my relationship with patients. They put their well-being in my hands, and I try to describe exactly what I am doing. For those who want an explanation as I work, I provide that. Some people want to know; some people

don't. I tell them they are in control. My goal is to keep them as comfortable as possible. I try to tailor my treatment to their specific needs. There is no better compliment than when patients recommend you to their friends and family—or when they send thank-you notes.

## POLICE OFFICERS

**G. M. Cox**  
Age: 64  
Fort Worth, Texas



From my perspective as a police officer, trust means

that I have the best interests of the people I serve in my heart and in my actions and that I'm going to treat everyone the same way. Some



## THE COMPANIES YOU WANT TO KEEP

What are the most trusted brands in America? For the third year in a row, *Reader's Digest* teamed up with research firm Ipsos Connect to find out. We asked more than 5,000 Americans which brands they trust the most in 40 categories. Here are the winners. For more information on them, go to [rd.com/trustedbrands](http://rd.com/trustedbrands).

**Apple**  
Mobile phone

**Bank of America**  
Bank

**Campbell's**  
Soup

**Carnival**  
Cruise line

**Claritin**  
Allergy relief

**CVS Pharmacy**  
Pharmacy/  
drugstore

**Dasani**  
Bottled water

**Dell**  
Computer

**Dove**  
Soap/body wash

**Fidelity**  
Investment  
firm

**Folgers**  
Coffee

**Ford**  
Car

**Ford**  
SUV/crossover

**Glade**  
Air freshener/  
deodorizer

**Hilton**  
Hotel/resort

**Kellogg's**  
Cereal

people mistrust police. I can understand that to some degree. I worked with several cops who had a different attitude—they saw their authority rather than their personality as their power base. But mostly they are good people. Trust can be taught, but you gotta want to learn it.

To me, being a public servant is a two-way street. I always want to go up to people and talk to them in a professional manner—be personable, empathetic, don't talk down to them. It might be the only time that a person has been spoken to with respect. You have to establish and maintain that trust. Be equal. Transparent. Communicate fairly and honestly. Most of what we do is service. It's not crook catching. Your job as a peace officer is to be neutral. Listen.

## COLLEGE TEACHERS

**Rebecca Bratten Weiss**  
Age: 43  
Hopedale, Ohio



In my years of teaching, I have had so many students confide deeply personal matters that they had shared with no one else. This always feels like an honor, and it's something with which I have to be cautious, because when a young person is depressed or traumatized, his or her sense of identity can be fragile.

So trust means something that goes beyond professional ethics. It has to do with how we relate to others. One has to work diligently to develop a moral code, an ethical character. The

### KitchenAid

Small kitchen appliance

### Kraft

Salad dressing

### Listerine

Mouthwash

### L'Oréal

Hair color

### Lysol

Household cleaner

### McDonald's

Fast food/casual dining

### MetLife

Life insurance

### Nature Made

Vitamin/herbal supplement

### Nature Valley

Nutrition bar

### NIVEA

Body lotion/moisturizer

### NyQuil

Cold and flu remedy

### Olay

Facial cream/moisturizer

### Purina

Pet food

### Southwest

Airline

### State Farm

Automotive insurance

### Tide

Laundry detergent

### Tropicana

Juice

### Tylenol

Headache/pain reliever

### Verizon

Wireless provider

### Visa

Credit card

### Visine

Eye-care product/eye health

### Walmart

Mass merchandiser retail store

### Weight Watchers

Weight-loss system

### Yoplait

Yogurt

ideals of honor, magnanimity, and justice, which were valued by the ancients, have relevance today. If I behave unjustly toward someone, I am not trustworthy, even if I try to adorn myself in a disguise of trustworthiness. I keep in mind that my students are the entire reason I am here. If I think they're just wasting my time or forget that my responsibility is to their flourishing as individuals, I am not doing my job.

My advice: Do no harm. If more people took this simple mantra to heart, we might have a human community with greater bonds of trust.

## CLERGY

**Rabbi Norman Patz**  
Age: 79  
North Caldwell,  
New Jersey



In a professional sense, when people talk to me in confidence, no one finds out about it unless I get permission. That's the very first thing I start with. On the broader end, trust is the basis of every civilized society. If we can't trust the government or the people we deal with to

carry through on their promises, then society is undermined from within. It is hollowed out. Trust explicitly includes dependability and predictability—people come to rely on that, and on you.

Relationships that are built on trust have as their components honesty, tact, timing, and being as open, honest, and transparent as possible without unloading your own griefs and aggravations. Rabbis have an annual convention, and we save the complaining for those times!

You learn how to trust. You learn whom to not share with or collaborate with. An elderly man in my congregation was dying. I called his daughter. I'd done her wedding, and I'd named her baby when he was born. I knew the man's doctors had recommended hospice. She said she would never have hospice for her father, that she would keep him alive no matter what. So I said, Listen. You have to balance and make a call between your personal feelings and your father's physical condition. There's going to be a time when you have to let him go. How are you going to let him go? She listened because of the many years built on trust. **R**



## EXTRA CHEESY

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THE TASTE OF APPLES AND STRAWBERRIES.  
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"HECK" MET "YEAH."



An aerial photograph of a person in a brown vest and white shirt working in a flower bed. The flower bed is filled with vibrant red flowers and some yellow ones. The person is kneeling on a green lawn. In the foreground, a white dustpan and a rake are lying on the grass. A green ribbon graphic is positioned vertically in the upper center of the page.

# ART *of* LIVING

## 9 Easy Eco-Friendly Backyard Tips

BY RACHEL LISKA  
FROM *BIRDS & BLOOMS*

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO BREAK** your back to create a yard that's both beautiful and kind to Mother Nature. These environmentally smart ideas will turn your home turf into a little slice of Eden. Many will save you money too.

### 1 LET THE GRASS GROW

Mowing less often, so your lawn gets a few inches longer than you're accustomed to, will help it survive dry spells in warmer months. That's because roots will grow deeper and lawns thicker, which means fewer pests, less disease, and a decreased need for chemical intervention.

### 2 GROW LOCAL

Native plants are accustomed to their area's growing conditions and so, once established, will generally require less water and have fewer pests and diseases than non-native plants. Check with your local nursery to see which species are appropriate in your neck of the woods.

### 3 WATER THE RIGHT WAY

Water before 10 a.m., when the air is cool and not as much moisture will be lost to evaporation. Watering in late afternoon is the next-best option, though be sure that foliage has time to dry before damp nighttime temperatures (and fungal diseases) set in. Water near the base of plants rather than from overhead—soaker hoses are ideal, as they save water by slowly delivering the good stuff right to the roots. For lawns, water long and deep once a week.

### 4 GET KEEN ON COMPOSTING

Compost isn't called gardener's gold for nothing. It keeps kitchen leftovers out of landfills and enriches soil with much-needed nutrients. It also reduces dependency on chemical fertilizers and improves drainage, water retention, and soil texture. Veggie and fruit scraps, tea bags, coffee grounds, eggshells, shredded newspaper, dry leaves, and untreated grass clippings are all fair game.

### 5 BE EFFICIENTLY WILD

Take a corner of your lawn and replace the grass with something that requires less watering: a bed of pretty native plants, mulch that can be used to anchor a kids' play set, a fairy garden full of frilly ferns (perfect for an area that receives a lot of shade), or a rain garden (if it's a low-lying, waterlogged spot). Living in the desert? Use cacti and stone to build a water-efficient landscape.

### 6 MULCH FALL LEAVES WITH YOUR MOWER

Forget all that raking, blowing, and bagging. Let fall leaves lie and cut them into tiny bits with a mulching lawn mower instead. This saves your back, and the leaf fragments add nutrients to the soil as they decompose.

Shred leaves when grass is poking through them (don't let the leaves completely bury the grass, though). If you don't have a mulching mower, look into a leaf vacuum with mulching capabilities.

## 7 SAVE WITH SOLAR LIGHTING

Make the backyard as beautiful in the dark as it is in the daytime. With solar-powered spotlights, deck lights, and path lights available in various sizes—some even have colored lights—it's easy to find a style that suits your landscape. They don't need wires or extension cords, so you can put them in any sunny spot.

## 8 GIVE BEES THE GREEN-CARPET TREATMENT

According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, honeybees, butterflies, and hummingbirds help pollinate 75 percent of our flowering plants and nearly 75 percent of our food crops. There is increasing evidence

that many of these vital pollinators are in decline. Creating a garden that includes plants that flower at different times of the year will provide nectar and pollen sources for pollinators throughout the growing season. Whenever possible, choose native plants with a variety of flower colors and shapes. See [fws.gov/pollinators](http://fws.gov/pollinators) for more information.

## 9 OPT FOR EARTH-FRIENDLY OUTDOOR FURNITURE

When you're shopping for wood benches or tables, check to make sure they are certified as sustainable. A hardwood such as acacia, which grows in abundance and is considered invasive in many regions, is a good choice. So is teak that comes from plantations managed for long-term preservation. If you prefer aluminum or plastic patio sets, look for pieces that are made from recycled material. **R**



## NEW WORDS FOR HIGHLY SPECIFIC THINGS

*Funeral* and *badminton* should just swap their first three letters.

@PERRYFELLOW (NICHOLAS GUREWITCH)

Pigeon: the distance a pig travels in one eon.

@MISFARBER (DROPPED MIKE)

They should make erasers for Crayons called Crayoffs.

@JB4REALZ

You don't want to annoy your friends and coworkers, do you? Surveys reveal that these online practices are the ones to avoid.

# Delete These E-mail Habits

BY TERESA DUMAIN

**You leave the subject line blank.** Or you fill it with *Hey* or *FYI*, which completely defeats the purpose of the subject line. Give people a hint.

**You type in color.** You also think that Times New Roman is so yesterday and multiple font sizes are better than one. Save your creativity for another medium.

**Your signature is a mile long.** It's fine to introduce yourself, so include your name, your title, the company you work for, your phone number and e-mail address, and your website, if you have one. Skip social network links, chat handles, and quotes.



**You "reply all" all the time.** Would you like to be notified about 15 different messages, 14 of which don't apply to you? Unless everyone in that group e-mail really needs to see what you say, reply only to the sender.

**You cry wolf.** In e-mail-speak, that's marking your message urgent when it's not.

**You love all caps.** That's nice, except you're effectively screaming from the screen. If you want to say CONGRATS, that's one thing. But everything else can be sufficiently emphasized with boldface or italic. And go easy on the punctuation: One exclamation point conveys excitement; 17 is over the top.





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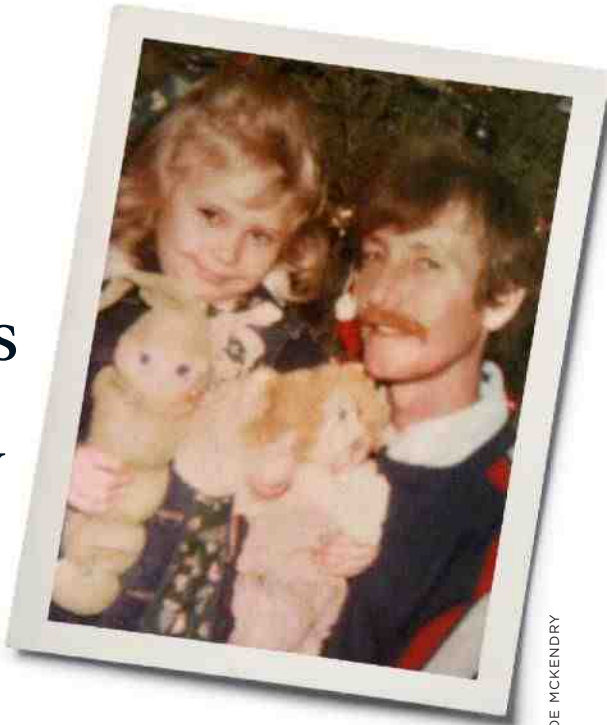
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A woman sees her 11-year-old self now, through kinder eyes

# The Things I Wish My Dad Knew About Me Before He Died

BY SUSANNAH B. LEWIS FROM WHOASUSANNAH.COM



SUSANNAH B. LEWIS is an award-winning writer. Find her at [whoasusannah.com](http://whoasusannah.com).

EVERYTHING CHANGED when I was 11.

When I was 11, I had a whiny southern twang that was much more annoying than the whiny southern twang that I am blessed with today.

When I was 11, I was short and round, sans a waistline. I had unruly hair and thick bangs that curled under in the exact shape of a large-barrel curling iron.

When I was 11, I was going through a terribly awkward and ugly phase, and I watched the popular, pretty girls whisper and snicker as I walked past them in the middle school hall.

When I was 11, I was sure that I'd be loud and annoying and ugly and awkward for the rest of my life.

When I was 11, my awkward bangs and chubby face were the last thing my father saw. My whiny, southern-twangy voice was the last thing my father heard.

Years after he passed away, I began to wish he were there to see the person I was becoming.

I wished he had been there to see the awkwardness fade and the weight fall off and my height increase by 12 to 14 inches by the time I was 13.

I wished he had been there to see that those stupid bangs grew and I traded the curling iron for a straightening iron.

I wished he had been there to know that I eventually killed the pretty, mean bullies with kindness and then might or might not have stolen their boyfriends.

I wished he had been there to know that I finally got the hang of the piano and that I stuck with the writing hobby that I loved so much as a child.

I wished he had been there to hear that my voice lost some of its pitchiness and whiny twang.

I wished he had been there to see that I fell in love with a good kid who reminds me of him—tall and skinny with a love of shooting pool, singing Bob Seger, and water-skiing barefoot.

And now I wish he were here to see these beautiful children that I bore and named after him.

If my dad were alive today, I know we would do awesome things together. He was hilarious, creative, and talented. I'm pretty sure we'd do something epic and probably be the most famous father-daughter duo since Billy Ray and Miley Cyrus.

(For the record, my father never had a mullet, and although he had a heart attack, it wasn't due to anything being achy or breaky. Also, I'm way cooler than Hannah Montana.)

I wish that my face, now without the stupid bangs, and my voice, now without the whiny discontentment, were the last things he had seen and heard. The present me, not that embarrassing kid I was 20 years ago.

**I'VE THOUGHT THIS WAY** for years: If only he could see me now, he'd be proud.

I've been sure he worried that I would always be the subject of ridicule, with my round body and round hair.

And then I had a thought that I couldn't possibly have had until I had my own children.

My daughter is six. When she looks back at her first-grade photo, she will probably grimace at the missing teeth, the baby curls that frame her face, her chubby cheeks.

And when I look back at this photo, I will think her smile is precious and her curls are beautiful. Her gorgeous face will take my breath away.

So here is my new thought: On my father's last day on this earth, as that fat little girl hovered over him, with her fluffy, unruly hair and her annoying voice, he didn't see a disappointment. He saw his daughter. His perfect daughter. And he was proud. **R**

Tired of filling the doctor's proverbial "eight glasses a day" prescription with just water?

# Delicious Hydration Tips

BY LAUREN DIAMOND

## Make Your Own Sports Drink

Coconut water contains natural electrolytes, including potassium and sodium, which are critical to proper nerve and muscle function. Instead of grabbing a commercial sports drink that contains unnecessary sugar, calories, and artificial dyes, mix equal parts coconut water and fresh-squeezed juice (and a dash of raw honey, if you like it sweet) for an all-natural version.

## Freeze Fruity Pops

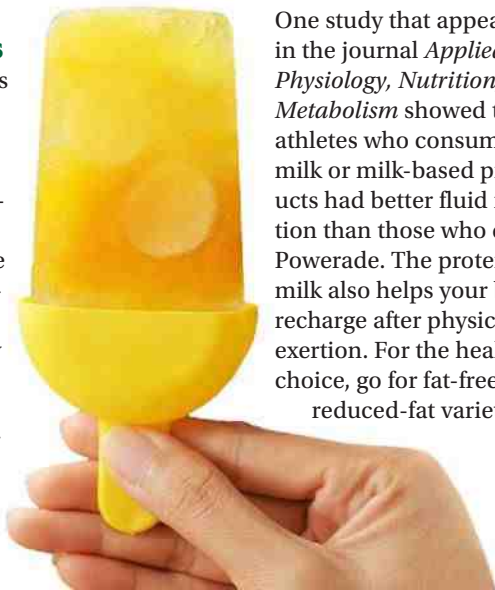
Turn these summer treats into a refueling tool. Blend a hydrating fruit such as watermelon (which contains 91.5 percent water) with lemon juice (an excellent source of potassium). Add coconut water for an electrolyte boost and raw honey for a touch of sweetness, if you like. Then fill ice-pop molds and freeze for about an hour.

## Sip Some Summer Soup

No one wants hot soup on a summer day. Instead, make a classic gazpacho by blending tomato (which contains 94.5 percent water) and cucumber (which contains 96.7 percent water) with a little garlic and sea salt. Or experiment with cold soups made from other foods with high water content, such as cauliflower, celery, spinach, berries, and zucchini.

## Refuel with Milk

One study that appeared in the journal *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* showed that athletes who consumed milk or milk-based products had better fluid retention than those who drank Powerade. The protein in milk also helps your body recharge after physical exertion. For the healthiest choice, go for fat-free or reduced-fat varieties. **R**



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Making friends isn't always easy, but it's worth the effort. Studies show that a social circle is good for the body as well as the soul.

## You Are Not Alone

BY MEGAN JONES

*✎* **SHARILENE ROWLAND** wasn't used to flying solo. She'd married young and had her first child when she was 25. But after she divorced and her two sons decamped from the nest, the 53-year-old caterer discovered that the only real social events she attended were the ones where she was hired to cook the food. She had maintained a few close friendships over the years, but the majority of her pals lived in other cities. Her typical evening went something like this: head home after work, make dinner, and ... sit around. "I was in my 50s, single, and very lonely," she says.

Unfortunately, Rowland has plenty of company when it comes to the solitary life. Midlife is when strong ties become both most important to

our health and most difficult to maintain. The 2010 census found that the older Americans are, the more likely they are to live alone; 18.6 percent of women and 15.4 percent of men ages 55 to 64 lived alone, for instance, but 47.6 percent of women and 27.2 percent of men ages 85 to 95 did. A 2012 study estimated that anywhere from 10 percent to 43 percent of adults 65 and older were socially isolated—that is, they didn't have many "fulfilling and quality relationships."

That is not good for our collective well-being. Studies have shown that friendships can protect older adults from depression, cognitive decline, and heart disease. People with sturdy



interpersonal connections tend to eat and sleep better and exercise more.

Yet, while many adults crave new friendships, building those links can feel daunting. “We’re much more self-conscious than children. We’re afraid we’ll be rejected,” says Irene S. Levine, a New York-based clinical psychologist who has written extensively about aging and friendship.

The process can be especially difficult for men, who are often taught that emotional vulnerability—key in forming close relationships—is a form of weakness. “We’re told we’re supposed to act in a stereotypically masculine way: not to share our feelings,” says Geoffrey Greif, a professor at the University of Maryland School of Social Work. “We’re raised to compete with other guys, and that makes it hard to learn to trust them.”

Robert Johnson, 52, has noticed the pressure on men to act “masculine.” When the accountant moved to a new city for work, he was single and knew few locals. He was apprehensive about going out to meet new people. “We’re not supposed to admit we can be as anxious and nervous as the next person,” he says.

Instead of sitting at home, Johnson cofounded a social group that hosts various kinds of outings, such as trivia

nights and yoga classes. He has met hundreds of new people, especially women, who regularly outnumber men at the events he organizes.

Over time, Sharilene Rowland has also managed to build an enviable social life. In a typical week, she spends four evenings attending street

festivals, wine tastings, and more. She has made a number of close friends, and they’ve become travel buddies, cheerleaders, and confidantes. Last year, when Rowland was considering surgery to alleviate back pain, these friends were her sounding boards. Then they kept her company

during her recovery. “My friends have made my life more full,” she says.

How did her success story and that of Robert Johnson come about? What do experts advise when you feel unsure about reaching out? We’ve collected seven simple tips:

■ **RESIST INSECURITY.** Many of us fall victim to catastrophic thinking before we ever leave the house, says Janna Koretz, a Boston-based psychologist who specializes in relationships. “You might say, ‘I could say something stupid, and I’ll never make any friends,’” she explains.

To overcome self-doubt, Koretz suggests assessing whether your fears

“  
*People with sturdy social connections eat and sleep better and exercise more.*



are realistic and thinking through how you might recover if you do get tongue-tied. Being prepared will give you a measure of security.

■ **JUST DO IT.** The more you try to socialize, the easier it may become. That was true for Rowland. After months of feeling inadequate, she signed up for an art class and later joined a “50 and Fabulous” group.

As she connected with people, her depression lifted. “You realize you’re not the only person without a big circle of friends,” she says. “And suddenly you’re not blaming yourself.”

■ **USE THE INTERNET.** When Johnson decided he needed to make new friends, he tried meetup.com, where people connect to participate in local activities. He loved the experience. In fact, his current social group started on meetup.com.

Look for sites geared toward adults seeking platonic relationships, such as girlfriendsocial.com, which connects women searching for friends and has 500,000 users across North America. “Having friendships gives you reassurance that you matter,” Johnson says.

■ **LOOK FOR SHARED INTERESTS.** This gives you a simple point of connection, Levine says. Join a book club, a church group, or a cooking class. You can find local options online and through libraries and community

centers. Pick an activity that involves spending time, week after week, with the same people. Just as scheduled classes made developing friendships easier back in school, Levine says, the continuity increases your chances of forming bonds.

■ **BE A PAL.** Of course, hangouts don’t automatically lead to lasting friendship. One-on-one time is necessary for a relationship to grow, but asking for it can feel awkward.

The solution is easier than it seems: Listen carefully. If your new acquaintance mentions a love of biking, suggest going for a ride. If you learn of an impending birthday, follow up with a greeting or a card. When Rowland wanted to get to know someone she’d met at an event better, she’d offer the person a lift home.

■ **PLAY HOST.** As Johnson discovered, holding your own get-togethers and gatherings can be the best way to meet new people. You might feel more comfortable on your own turf.

■ **BE PATIENT.** When Rowland took her art course, she had trouble connecting with her classmates, many of whom were retired and older. When she eventually got to know other women in their 50s through meetup.com, they bonded.

“It’s like shopping,” Koretz says. “Sometimes you look at 100 shirts, and the 98th one is perfect.”





# SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME IN THE BATHROOM?

If you're spending too much time in the bathroom, you're not alone. Your symptoms may be caused by a digestive condition called EPI, or exocrine pancreatic insufficiency. Even if you have just one of these symptoms, you could still have EPI.

- **Frequent diarrhea**
- **Unexplained weight loss**
- **Oily, foul-smelling stools that float**
- **Gas and bloating**
- **Stomach pain**

**EPI is a manageable condition**, so don't keep a lid on it. Go to [CouldItBeEPI.com](http://CouldItBeEPI.com), complete the symptom checker, and talk to your doctor about your symptoms. Find out if it could be EPI.



ALL IN

# A Day's Work



*"I believe the old lady was ahead of you."*

**A LATE ARRIVAL** at the Nashville airport left me in front of a car rental agent one night. In a heavy southern drawl, she asked, "Can Ah help y'all?" After processing my order, she said, "I have an accent. Is that OK?"

"I don't mind at all," I said. "Being from New England, I have one too."

She waited a minute before replying, "I meant the car. I have a Hyundai Accent." **JOSEPH FERRI, Gray, Maine**

**NEED AN EXCUSE** for being late to the office? Don't try these—they didn't work the first time.

■ "I forgot it wasn't the weekend."

■ "My dad offered to make me a grilled cheese sandwich, and I couldn't say no."

■ "I had to watch a soccer game that was being played in Europe."

■ "My mother-in-law wouldn't stop talking."

Source: [careerbuilder.com](http://careerbuilder.com)

**I'M PRETTY SURE** the dinosaurs died out when they stopped gathering food and started having status meetings to discuss gathering food.

🐦@MEETINGBOY

**HAVEN'T THESE PEOPLE** ever been told "Don't bring your job home"?

■ "I work around horses. I catch myself touching people's backs when I walk behind them so they don't get spooked and kick me."

■ "I'm a meteorologist. Someone once pointed out to me that I refer to ages the way people refer to temperatures. For example, I wouldn't say 'I'm in my early 30s'; I'd say 'I'm in my lower 30s.'"

■ "As a McDonald's employee, about half the conversations I have with people in my life end in 'Is that all today?'"

Source: reddit.com

**I WAS SUPERVISING** some prospective employees at our construction company as they filled out their application forms. Everyone was busily writing away except for one guy, who appeared stumped. He turned to his friend and whispered, "Hey, George, what's my maiden name?"

RICHARD L. HORTON, *Sahuarita, Arizona*

**MY DAUGHTER WAS TYPING** up a test for a religion class she teaches. The answer to one question was "Joseph of Arimathea." The computer obviously disagreed and, thanks to spell-check, changed it to "Joseph of Aroma Therapy." RUTH ANN CAMPBELL, *Carpentersville, Illinois*

Anything funny happen to you at work lately? It could be worth \$\$\$\$. For details, see page 7 or go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).

## YOUR DAILY WORKOUT



# World of Medicine

BY SAMANTHA RIDEOUT

## In the Heat, Ice Really Is Nicer to Your Body

When you're exercising in warm weather, it's both the amount of water you drink and its temperature that are important. University of Montana scientists monitored people walking briskly on a treadmill in a temperature of 88°F. During the three-hour test, they alternately refreshed themselves with ice water slurries or lukewarm water. Exercisers had to drink twice as much warm water as ice water to maintain a healthy heart rate, core body temperature, and skin temperature.

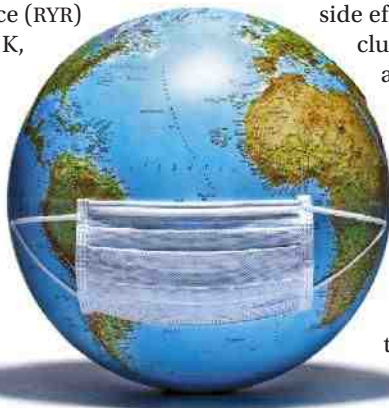
## Yellow Light on Red Yeast Rice

Because red yeast rice (RYR) contains monacolin K, a compound chemically identical to the active ingredient in the cholesterol drug lovastatin, it has become a popular dietary supplement, taken in pill form. The good news: RYR may lower

cholesterol. The bad news: An Italian survey has found that RYR carries some of the same risks as statins, namely muscle damage and liver injury. And while a patient with a statin prescription will be under a doctor's care, RYR is usually self-prescribed. Before using RYR to combat high cholesterol, talk to your doctor and ask him or her to supervise you.

## More Support for Simply Monitoring Prostate Cancer

When nonaggressive cancer is discovered in the prostate, one option is "active surveillance" (AS). As long as the tumor stays harmless, the patient doesn't undergo radiation or surgery—or suffer any of their side effects, which can include bladder problems and impotence. A recent study of 82,429 Swedish men showed no significant difference in the mortality rate a decade after diagnosis between those who chose AS and those who received treatment.



## Don't Bring "Super Bacteria" Home with You

Traveling abroad this summer? If you end up with dreaded traveler's diarrhea, you may want to steer clear of taking antibiotics for it. A Finnish study found that antibiotics multiply your chances of getting colonized by bacteria that produce extended-spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL), itself an intestinal bacteria that's resistant to penicillins and other antibiotics. Kids and the elderly are most at risk for getting sick from ESBL. Instead, soothe your tummy by drinking a lot of water and taking an antimotility medication such as Imodium.

## Cocoa + Coffee = Mood and Energy Boost

How's this for some delicious health news? Researchers measured the mood and cognitive performance of 24 people after they drank caffeine dissolved in water, cocoa, both of those substances combined, or a placebo. The best results came from the blend: The cocoa seemed to take the anxiety-producing edge off the caffeine while supplementing its attention-enhancing powers. Yes, the study was sponsored by Hershey, but it was a randomized control trial, research science's gold standard, and it appeared in the peer-reviewed journal *BMC Nutrition*. So drink up. **R**



✓Yes



✓Yes



xNo



✓Yes



✓Yes



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In clinical trials, those taking Myrbetriq made fewer trips to the bathroom and had fewer leaks than those not taking Myrbetriq. Your results may vary.



**You may be able to get your first prescription at no cost with Momentum.\* Visit [Myrbetriq.com](http://Myrbetriq.com).**

## USE OF MYRBETRIQ (meer-BEH-trick)

Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) is a prescription medicine for adults used to treat overactive bladder (OAB) with symptoms of urgency, frequency, and leakage.

## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

Myrbetriq is not for everyone. Do not use Myrbetriq if you have an allergy to mirabegron or any ingredients in Myrbetriq. Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood pressure worse if you have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq.

**Please see additional Important Safety Information on next page.**

\*Subject to eligibility. Restrictions may apply.



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### **IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION (continued)**

Myrbetriq may increase your chances of not being able to empty your bladder. Tell your doctor right away if you have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream.

Myrbetriq may cause allergic reactions that may be serious. If you experience swelling of the face, lips, throat or tongue, with or without difficulty breathing, stop taking Myrbetriq and tell your doctor right away.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take including medications for overactive bladder or other medicines such as thioridazine (Mellaril™ and Mellaril-S™), flecainide (Tambacor®), propafenone (Rythmol®), digoxin (Lanoxin®). Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Before taking Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney problems. The most common side effects of Myrbetriq include increased blood pressure, common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis), urinary tract infection, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, and headache.

**For further information, please talk to your healthcare professional and see Brief Summary of Prescribing Information for Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) on the following pages.**

**You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit [www.fda.gov/medwatch](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch) or call 1-800-FDA-1088.**

 **Myrbetriq®**  
(mirabegron)  
extended-release tablets  
25 mg, 50 mg



## Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) extended-release tablets 25 mg, 50 mg

### Brief Summary based on FDA-approved patient labeling

Read the Patient Information that comes with Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This summary does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment.

#### What is Myrbetriq (meer-BEH-trick)?

Myrbetriq is a prescription medication for **adults** used to treat the following symptoms due to a condition called **overactive bladder**:

- urge urinary incontinence: a strong need to urinate with leaking or wetting accidents
- urgency: a strong need to urinate right away
- frequency: urinating often

It is not known if Myrbetriq is safe and effective in children.

#### Who should not use Myrbetriq?

Do not use Myrbetriq if you have an allergy to mirabegron or any of the ingredients in Myrbetriq. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients in Myrbetriq.

#### What is overactive bladder?

Overactive bladder occurs when you cannot control your bladder contractions. When these muscle contractions happen too often or cannot be controlled, you can get symptoms of overactive bladder, which are urinary frequency, urinary urgency, and urinary incontinence (leakage).

#### What should I tell my doctor before taking Myrbetriq?

Before you take Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you:

- have liver problems or kidney problems
- have very high uncontrolled blood pressure
- have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if Myrbetriq will harm your unborn baby. Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if Myrbetriq passes into your breast milk. You and your doctor should decide if you will take Myrbetriq or breastfeed. You should not do both.

**Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take**, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Tell your doctor if you take:

- thioridazine (Mellaril™ or Mellaril-S™)
- flecainide (Tambocor®)
- propafenone (Rythmol®)
- digoxin (Lanoxin®)

#### How should I take Myrbetriq?

- Take Myrbetriq exactly as your doctor tells you to take it.
- You should take 1 Myrbetriq tablet 1 time a day.
- You should take Myrbetriq with water and swallow the tablet whole.
- Do not crush or chew the tablet.
- You can take Myrbetriq with or without food.
- If you miss a dose of Myrbetriq, begin taking Myrbetriq again the next day. Do not take 2 doses of Myrbetriq the same day.
- If you take too much Myrbetriq, call your doctor or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.

#### What are the possible side effects of Myrbetriq?

Myrbetriq may cause serious side effects including:

- **increased blood pressure.** Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood pressure worse if you have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq.

- **inability to empty your bladder (urinary retention).** Myrbetriq may increase your chances of not being able to empty your bladder if you have bladder outlet obstruction or if you are taking other medicines to treat overactive bladder. Tell your doctor right away if you are unable to empty your bladder.
- **angioedema.** Myrbetriq may cause an allergic reaction with swelling of the lips, face, tongue, throat with or without difficulty breathing. Stop using Myrbetriq and tell your doctor right away.

The **most common side effects** of Myrbetriq include:

- increased blood pressure
- common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis)
- urinary tract infection
- constipation
- diarrhea
- dizziness
- headache

Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away or if you have swelling of the face, lips, tongue, or throat, hives, skin rash or itching while taking Myrbetriq.

These are not all the possible side effects of Myrbetriq.

For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

**Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.**

#### **How should I store Myrbetriq?**

- Store Myrbetriq between 59°F to 86°F (15°C to 30°C). Keep the bottle closed.
- Safely throw away medicine that is out of date or no longer needed.

#### **Keep Myrbetriq and all medicines out of the reach of children.**

#### **General information about the safe and effective use of Myrbetriq**

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in the Patient Information leaflet. Do not use Myrbetriq for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give Myrbetriq to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

#### **Where can I go for more information?**

This is a summary of the most important information about Myrbetriq. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about Myrbetriq that is written for health professionals.

For more information, visit [www.Myrbetriq.com](http://www.Myrbetriq.com) or call (800) 727-7003.

#### **What are the ingredients in Myrbetriq?**

**Active ingredient:** mirabegron

**Inactive ingredients:** polyethylene oxide, polyethylene glycol, hydroxypropyl cellulose, butylated hydroxytoluene, magnesium stearate, hypromellose, yellow ferric oxide and red ferric oxide (25 mg Myrbetriq tablet only).

#### **Rx Only**

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 **Myrbetriq**<sup>®</sup>  
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extended release tablets  
25 mg, 50 mg

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# Vacation!

*From Disney disasters to beach flops, your most memorable (i.e., hilarious!) family travel snafus*









## Seeing America

When I was a child—one of five—our parents left nothing to chance when preparing for our summer vacation. Lists were made and trunks packed weeks in advance. On the morning of the trip, a final check was made. When everything was deemed ready, we piled into the station wagon and began the six-hour drive. Then, sometime into the trip, our mother realized that something was missing: one of my sisters. We drove back home, where my father found her sitting on the toilet.

**GEORGE DOSCHER,**  
*Hillsborough, New Jersey*

After my husband and I were married, my in-laws offered to pay for our honeymoon. Visions of Hawaii or Mexico came to mind. Not quite. They told us we were heading to Disney World. Not only that, but since they'd always wanted to go, they were coming along. Turns out, my mother-in-law's two best friends also always wanted to go to Disney World, as did their three kids, not to mention my sister-in-law and her husband. I can't say a lot of honeymooning went on.

**CRISTINA BEITZ,** *El Cajon, California*  
*from Budget Travel*

*"I haven't  
been  
everywhere,  
but it's on  
my list."*

SUSAN SONTAG

Throughout our tour of an early American bathhouse in Hot Springs, Arkansas, I explained to my four-year-old grandson what people once did there. When we came upon a mannequin at a desk, I told him, "She was probably writing a letter home to her friends telling them about her vacation to Hot Springs."

My grandson asked, "And then she died and they stuffed her?"

**CYNTHIA FRANKLIN,**  
*Grenada, Mississippi*

I was looking forward to the trip to New Orleans my mother and I were taking until we reached the airport. Suddenly I had a panic attack at the thought of having to fly. Dad, bless his heart, did everything he could to calm my nerves. "You know, you're safer in a plane than you are in a car," he reminded me. That reassurance eventually worked. He gave me a loving kiss on the head, then asked my mother, "Did you buy flight insurance?"

**DONNA SONNENLITTER,** *Struthers, Ohio*

On our trip to California, we visited the Getty Museum. After a while, my bored ten-year-old, Nick, was flagging. "If you're tired, find a place to sit," I told him. I then went back to the portraits.

Minutes later, alarms went off and security guards were scrambling. Turns out, Nick had found a place to get comfortable. He'd crawled under a velvet rope into an exhibit and perched on a priceless Louis XIV, with his legs up on the armrest.

JULIE LYNCH, *Ithaca, New York*

I was buying airplane tickets when my eight-year-old asked, "Can a baby be considered a carry-on?"

Before I could respond, my husband mumbled, "Well, it can definitely be considered baggage."

BRIDGET SLAYDEN, *Rogersville, Missouri*

Uncle Bart was a city boy whose familiarity with wildlife began and ended with pigeons. One time he joined us at our cabin in the woods.

*"The best time to go to Disney World, if you want to avoid huge crowds, is 1962."*

DAVE BARRY

*"If God had really intended men to fly, he'd make it easier to get to the airport."*

HUMORIST  
GEORGE WINTERS

In the evening, he opened the door to let our cats in. The first cat walked in; then the second. Bart stood there coaxing the third cat to come, which we found strange—we had only two cats. The third cat was a possum.

JONATHAN HAKULIN,  
*Baltimore, Maryland*

We waited on line to enter the Space Mountain ride at Disney World alongside a woman and her son. The boy wasn't tall enough to go on the ride, but his mother had a solution. She took a pair of high heels out of her backpack and forced him to wear them.

Source: buzzfeed.com

My son took his first flight at the age of four. He was scared about flying, so he called the attendant over and told her that he wanted the plane not to "flight" but just to get "going on the road!" The flight attendant played along and agreed. As the plane sped down the runway, my son called back to her, "I told you by road, but not so fast!!!"

ANA CAROLINA CARRILLO,  
*Campeche, Mexico*

After a long drive to Canada, border patrol agents asked my father the name of us five kids in

*"Making my kids watch Friday the 13th  
so they'll be my advocates in the  
'no camping ever' campaign."*

🐦 @ANAGUNNATELYA



the back. Dad was so tired that he drew a blank. The brief lapse resulted in Dad being hauled in for questioning.

After convincing them that he hadn't kidnapped us, he was released—15 hours later.

Source: cafemom.com

**Arizona:**  
*"Where a baby's first words are, 'But it's a dry heat.'"*

DENNIS MILLER

overhead luggage, his pants slipped down to his knees. A woman asked, "Can I help you?"

"Yes," he said. "I'll grab the luggage; you pull up my pants."

JEANNE GEMLER,  
 Erie, Pennsylvania

**D**riving across California, we stopped at a red light in a beautiful old western town. As I admired the elegant storefronts and beautiful scenery, I didn't notice that the light had turned green and back to red again. It was then that a police officer tapped on my window and said, "That's all the colors we got here."

YEFIM BRODD, *Tacoma, Washington*

**"A**AAHHHHHHH!" That was my sister's way of letting the world know she'd just seen a mouse inside her Adirondack Mountains cabin. Her husband set a trap, and a while later they heard it snap shut. As he carried the trap to the garbage, my sister scrutinized the little beast, then shook her head. "No," she said, "that's not him."

PATRICIA CHESTER, *Suffern, New York*

**B**efore our trip to Las Vegas, my husband lost quite a few pounds. This came into play on the airplane. As he was grabbing our

## Not Everyone's a Happy Camper

Suggestions to improve our parks left on Forest Service feedback forms by helpful visitors:

- "The coyotes made too much noise last night and kept me awake. Please eradicate these annoying animals."
- "Need more signs to keep area pristine."
- "A small deer came into my camp and stole my bag of pickles. Is there a way I can get reimbursed? Please call."
- "Trails need to be wider so people can walk while holding hands."
- "Trails need to be reconstructed. Please avoid building trails that go uphill."
- "A McDonald's would be nice at the trailhead."
- "Too many rocks in the mountains."
- "Found a smoldering cigarette left by a horse."

Source: thechive.com

Heading toward a family reunion, some of us met up at a Denny's, where we found my uncle digging through the Dumpster out back. He finally got out and showed us a wad of napkins: "Granny wrapped her teeth up, and I threw them away." For the rest of the trip, he was referred to as the tooth fairy.

ANN SWANN, Odessa, Texas

"Miami  
Beach is  
where neon  
goes to die."

ATTRIBUTED TO  
LENNY BRUCE

As my husband and I were leaving a Las Vegas casino a few dollars lighter, I noticed the number of slot machines that were based on TV shows: *Wheel of Fortune*, *Deal or No Deal*, even *Gilligan's Island*. "I wonder what TV show they'll base the next slot machine on," I said. He responded, "*The Biggest Loser*."

DEBRA BARRICKMAN, Ashtabula, Ohio

RD CLASSIC

## The Rest Stop Road Trip

BY MARY ROACH



A family is a collection of people who share the same genes but cannot agree on a place to pull over for lunch. Ed and I, plus his parents and sister Doris and eight-year-old niece Alisha, are on a road trip to Yosemite. Poppy wants Subway, Ed wants In-N-Out Burger, Mary wants Sonic. In the end, we compromise on McDonald's, where Alisha will get an action figure that will come in handy later for breaking the heater vent of our rented minivan.

It's a three-hour drive to Yosemite, but we're taking a little longer, as we're working in a tour of Highway 80's public restrooms. As the saying goes, "Not one bladder empties but another fills." I am reminded of that track-and-field event

wherein one person runs for a while and then hands off the restroom key to the next person, who runs until she's done, and then another person runs. Unhappily, many of these restrooms belong to gas stations. Gas station customers, perhaps inspired by the nozzles on the pumps outside, are prone to dribble and slosh. Though I almost prefer this to the high-tech humiliation of air travel, where the toilets flush mere seconds after you sit down. It's like having your plate cleared before you've even salted your potatoes.

We get back on the road. Poppy's driving now. We've entered the road trip doldrums, the point when all the cheesy tabloids have been read and the travel Etch A Sketch has grown boring and anyone under age 12 is required to say "Are we there yet?" at ever-shortening intervals. Ed and his sister, two middle-aged adults, are playing with the highway bingo set. Alisha is making her action figure fight



Upon arriving at our beach-house rental, I noticed that it was filthy. So I grabbed the cleaning supplies and proceeded to scrub the toilets, floors, bathtubs, and kitchen cabinets. I was so upset that the house was not ready for guests. Later, my family and I discovered that we were supposed to be staying at the house next door. I had “white-gloved” the wrong place.

**TANYA LELAND,**  
Greenville, South Carolina  
*from Real Simple*

On our way to go spelunking, we got lost on a country road. We stopped to ask a farmer, “Is this the road to Waynesville?”

“Yes, it is,” he replied. As we started to drive away, we barely heard him add, “But you’re going the wrong way.”

**DOUG HISSONG,** Cypress, Texas

Now we know what happens to people who don’t pay their motel bills in Texas. A sheet of safety tips for travelers in our motel

with Poppy’s earlobes. Doris covers the bingo square that says *motel*. “BINGO!” “No way,” says Ed. “A motel is only one story high and has a swimming pool full of algae. That was a hotel.” “Same diff,” says Doris. “MA! Doris is cheating!” Alisha kicks the back of Poppy’s seat. “Are we there yet?” If by *there* she means the end of our rope, then, yes, we’re pulling in right now.

Just outside Manteca, California, we stop for coffee. Coffee is an important feature of the restroom-relay regimen. Without it, the chain could be broken, the gold medal lost. At a Starbucks checkout, Ed buys a CD of Joni Mitchell’s favorite musical picks. The hope is that it will have a calming effect. The first cut is by Duke Ellington. Alisha makes a face. “It’s not my favorite Ellington number,” agrees Nana. The CD returns to its case, pending the day Joni

Mitchell joins us on our annual vacation.

As we pull back onto the highway, it starts to pour, which at least quells the debate over whether to have the windows open. Depending on whom you ask, the temperature inside the minivan is either “freezing” or “so hot I’m going to suffocate.” Then something amazing happens. As we climb the Sierras, the rain turns to snow. The pines are flecked with white. We’re struck dumb by the scene outside. For a solid 15 minutes, everyone forgets about their bladder, their blood sugar, the temperature in the van. Alisha has never seen snow, so we pull over to make snow angels and catch falling flakes on our tongues. Then Ed realizes we need tire chains, and we have to turn back and drive 30 miles to Oakhurst. “Good,” says Poppy. “There was a very nice restroom there.”

*As the saying goes, “Not one bladder empties but another fills.”*



room in Llano suggested, “For additional security, utilize the dead-beat provided on your door upon entering.”

**FRED WILSON**, *San Angelo, Texas*

**O**n a trip with my Florida-based church to support a Blackfeet Nation mission in Montana, I accidentally disturbed a hornets’ nest. My zigging and zagging to evade the angry swarm prompted a nickname for me, Dances with Bees.

Cut to two years later, and I’m working on another project, this time alongside a missionary from Washington State. As I told the story, he suddenly stopped and said, “You’re Dances with Bees! I heard about you on a fishing trip in Idaho!”

**CHRISTOPHER PARMLEY**,  
*Murfreesboro, Tennessee*

## Innocents Abroad

**W**hen my sister’s friend Stephany was caught texting “WTF,” she had to think fast. “It means ‘With the Family,’” she told

her mother. Mom, a social media newbie, bought it.

A few months later, their family took a vacation to Paris, where Stephany’s mom gushed, “I can’t believe all these Facebook likes I’m getting about our trip.”

“Why, what are you saying?” Stephany asked.

“Nothing special. ‘In Paris WTF.’”

**AVIAD MATAROSO**,  
*Beverly Hills, California*

*“I still enjoy traveling a lot. I mean, it amazes me that I still get excited in hotel rooms just to see what kind of shampoo they’ve left me.”*

**BILL BRYSON**

**D**uring our trip to the Vatican, we had tickets to see the Pope say Mass, and my five-year-old daughter was extremely excited. Sadly, she fell asleep before he came out and didn’t wake up until the event had ended. When she did, the first thing she asked was, “Did I miss the pimp?”

**MADELINE SWEENEY**, *New York, New York*  
*from Budget Travel*

**T**unisian, I’ve learned, are known for being generous with compliments. As I walked along the harbor with my husband one day, a Tunisian man shouted to him, “Hey, you a very lucky man! Your woman has big legs!”

I could have done without such flattery.

Source: [travelmatch.co.uk](http://travelmatch.co.uk)

*"'Baggage carousel' sounds a lot more fun than it actually is."*

@INGRIDMUSIC



## Tortured English From Around The World



- In a Norwegian cocktail lounge: "Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar."
- In a Nairobi restaurant: "Customers who find our waitresses rude ought to see the manager."
- On a Korean flight: "Upon arrival at Gimpo and Gimhae International Airport, please wear your clothes."
- In a Hong Kong supermarket: "For your convenience, we recommend courteous, efficient self-service."
- At a Budapest zoo: "Please do not feed the animals. If you have any suitable food, give it to the guard on duty."
- In a Bangkok dry cleaner: "Drop your trousers here for best results."
- On a highway sign in Kenya: "Take notice: When this sign is under water, this road is impassable."
- On a car-rental brochure in Tokyo: "When passenger of foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage then tootle him with vigor."
- In a Copenhagen airline ticket office: "We take your bags and send them in all directions."
- At a Korean restaurant in Auckland, New Zealand: "We do not reuse the food."

Source: [linguagrecia.com](http://linguagrecia.com)

**W**e were at a poolside table on Grand Cayman eating lunch when a huge bird swooped down and whacked my son in the back of his head. My son was so startled, he dropped his french fry. Before it could hit the ground, that same bird snatched it out of the air and flew off to a nearby branch. It swallowed the fry whole, then sat there daring my son to pick up another fry so it could whack him in the head again.

**DEBORAH SAYRE,**  
*North Haven, Connecticut*

**W**hile shopping in India, I asked the store owner for any locally made yarn. The merchant brought down a skein that was clearly marked "Made in China." I pointed it out, but he insisted I was wrong.

"Oh no," he assured me. "Only the label was made in China."

**JANE GELMAN,** *Atlantic City, New Jersey*

**J**ust as we were about to board our plane en route to Europe, my sister went missing. Mom sent me out to look for her. The first place I searched was the bathroom. Not there. I tried the café. Nothing.

I finally found her in the gift shop. One problem: The gate was down, the owner had left, and my sister was locked inside. We had less than an hour until our flight, and we needed every minute of it to find the person with the key and make our plane.

**MELISSA STUCKI,** *Medford, Oregon*

**D**uring a train ride in Italy, my new husband and I chatted up an elderly couple with the help of our trusty Italian phrase book. I quietly practiced the pronunciation for “We are on our honeymoon,” then confidently exclaimed, “*Siamo allupato!*” The couple’s jaws dropped, and the blood drained from their faces. I rechecked the book and realized I had told this lovely couple that we were—how should I put this?—in an amorous mood. From then on, my husband held on to the book.

**ANDREA PALUMBO,**  
*Fall River, Massachusetts*  
from *Real Simple*

**O**ur family was on vacation in the Virgin Islands, and I went on a walk with my six-year-old grandson,

*“No matter how many times I visit [New York City], I’m always struck by the same thing—a yellow taxicab.”*

SCOTT ADAMS

Matteo. We saw a tree at the side of the path that we’d never seen before, with spiky thorns that climbed up along its slender trunk. It looked like a dragon’s back. Matteo pointed at it. “How did it get like that?” he asked. This was a chance to introduce him to the idea of evolution. We sat on the ground and talked about natural selection, adaptation—the whole thing. For 45 minutes. It was glorious. The next day, he was swimming with his cousin and asked her a question, and she said, “That sounds like a science question. Why don’t you ask Grandpa?”

He said, “I’m not making that mistake again.”

**ALAN ALDA,** from his book *If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on My Face?*

## RSVP YESTERDAY

On June 28, 2009, theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking held a party open to anyone, complete with hors d’oeuvres and champagne, but sent the invitations only after it was over so that only time travelers would know to attend.

Sadly, nobody showed up.

Source: *Scientific American*

A man who has been waiting years for a heart transplant teaches his young doctor a lesson in resilience, optimism, and faith

# My Patient Benny

BY MATT MCCARTHY, MD,

FROM THE BOOK *THE REAL DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU SHORTLY*



MATT MCCARTHY, MD, is a physician at New York-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City and an author.

**TWO WEEKS AFTER I GRADUATED** from medical school, I began my internship at Columbia University Medical Center in New York City. It was the summer of 2008. My first assignment was a monthlong rotation in the cardiac care unit. All the patients in the unit were on ventilators except one, a large Hispanic man named Benny\* who was riding a stationary bicycle and watching *Judge Judy* in his room. He was in his 40s, stocky, barrel-chested, and broad-shouldered. Unlike other patients, he was not in a hospital gown; instead, he wore a New York Giants T-shirt and jeans.

I discovered that Benny was living in the hospital, waiting for a heart transplant. He'd been in the same small room for months, rotating through a series of activities to pass the hours: watching talk shows and sports, reading under the fluorescent lights,

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\*Name has been changed to protect privacy.





jotting in a journal, and allowing new doctors like me to examine him. He'd seen so many students and residents during his stay that he felt comfortable giving tips to the nervous young men and women who poked and prodded him in an effort to keep his condition stable as he waited for his new heart.

Although the turnover in the cardiac care unit was dizzying, one constant was Benny. At the time, the median wait for a heart transplant was around six months, but his large size and rare blood type complicated his case. There he was, day after day, riding the cycle or watching *Judge Judy*, as though he were someone whose apartment just happened to be in a hospital.

"You good?" I asked one day, a week or so into my internship, giving him the thumbs-up sign as I stuck my head in the door.

"I suppose."

"Excellent." I looked down at my list—there were 13 more things to do before rounds—and started to close his door.

"You got a minute?" he asked.

"I have a minute. Less than minute."

Benny muted the TV. "Matt," he said as I cautiously approached him, "I see a new group of interns in here every month. And when the moment strikes me, I like to offer feedback. Just sitting

here, waiting, I encounter all types. Good, bad ... Mostly good ..." His voice trailed off. "Matt, you come across like you're always in a hurry."

"That's because I am." My spine unconsciously stiffened.

"Seems like talking to me or to just about anyone is another box to check for you." He lowered his head. "I'm just saying this because I know you're young."

"And impressionable," I whispered. This kind of criticism was hard for me to take. Not knowing stuff as a young, inexperienced doctor was one thing, but no one wants to hear that his patients think he doesn't care

about them. Still, Benny's comment didn't feel like a dressing-down; his voice had an off-the-record feel that put me at ease. I sat down in the chair next to his bed and exhaled. "No, you're right," I said. "The truth is, I feel completely overwhelmed."

"It kinda shows."

I shook my head. "I suppose I should just get here even earlier."

"It's not about that. Not about that at all," Benny said. "Take a look at what you're doing. You're sitting down, and we're having an actual conversation. Normally you just—"

"Plan an escape route the moment I enter the room."

"Yeah. And half the time you're

“  
I found myself  
stopping in to  
see Benny often,  
not just to  
examine him  
but to talk.”

looking at your papers or over your shoulder and not listening.”

“But I am listening,” I insisted.

“Perception is reality, Matt.”

“Thanks for looking out for me,” I said as I backed out the door.

After that encounter, I found myself stopping in to see Benny often, not only to examine him but also to talk about my shortcomings and how I was struggling as a new doctor. Long after my assignment in the cardiac care unit was over, I went back to him, and together we watched countless hours of terrible daytime television.

As the months passed, I tried to convince myself that Benny’s progress mirrored my own, and I liked telling myself that when I finally mastered all the qualities necessary to make me a good doctor, Benny would get his heart. But as my difficult intern year wore on, I realized this was unfair. Through sheer repetition, I was becoming a more competent physician, but the changing of the calendar brought nothing for Benny. He simply waited and waited. Some days he moved up on the transplant list; on others he slid down, depending on the conditions of other potential transplant patients. It seemed as if he were stuck in an absurdist play.

I’d often joked with Benny that while I felt as if I lived in the hospital, he actually did. Our roads were diverging, and the notion I’d created about our simultaneous journeys was breaking down. One evening in late

December, I took a break and popped in to see him. I couldn’t resist asking. “Anything going on with the wait list?”

“No news is bad news,” he said softly, like air being let out of a balloon. “But I have faith. I know God has a plan.”

He had said this many times before, and it was, strangely, the biggest chasm between us. At first, it embarrassed me; then it angered me. How could he believe that this was all part of a master plan, that a supreme being was choosing to confine him to a hospital, waiting for a heart that might never come? Eventually I came to see that, our care notwithstanding, his faith was the primary thing keeping him alive. His perpetual good nature, his resilience in the face of near-fatal setbacks—all was built on the foundation of his belief that God would take care of him. I had to admire the intensity of his belief, even if I couldn’t share it.

“It’s not fair” was all I could answer.

“What?” he asked. “What’s not fair?”

“Medicine,” I said, feeling my voice tighten, “is the only place I can think of where everyone is miserable. Doctors are miserable, patients are miserable, support staff are—”

“I’m not miserable,” he said. He locked eyes with me. “Really, I’m not.”

I knew he was telling me the truth.

As I neared the end of my intern year, Benny was still in the hospital with no end in sight. On my final day, I sat on the edge of his bed.

“So this is it,” he said. “Last day, right? You made it through.”

"I did. It was crazy. And pretty amazing."

"Proud of you, Matt."

I wanted to tell him that he was the embodiment of courage and patience—a kind man who had been given a raw deal and rarely complained. I wanted to say something we'd both remember.

But I didn't. Instead, I repeated the phrase that I had said so often to him—words I'd tossed off to countless patients, colleagues, and myself: "You're gonna get through this."

"I'm sure I'll see you around," he said, extending a fist.

I stayed on at Columbia for my three-year residency. As time passed, I resigned myself to the fact that I'd get my board certification—the sign that I was a real doctor—before Benny would get his transplant. By the spring of 2011, his heart had regained enough strength to allow him to move out of the hospital while he waited. One afternoon as my residency neared its end, I felt my pager vibrate: HE GOT THE HEART.

I was in the middle of a classroom teaching a medical student about cardiac resuscitation. I dropped my marker and sprinted down a flight of stairs to the cardiothoracic intensive

care unit, nearly trampling a couple along the way. I quickly scanned the area. No, nope, not him, not him, nope, no, no, YES! Benny! YES!

I sidled up to the team of surgeons and anesthesiologists standing in front of his bed. Benny was unconscious; he was attached to a venti-

lator and had a dozen tubes going into his arms. An intern was presenting his case.

"Do you guys know this patient's story?" I asked, butting in to their horseshoe. "Do you know anything about this guy, Benny Santos?"

They did not.

"I've known this guy a long time," I said. I was

hoping to come up with an anecdote that offered a glimpse into the life of this remarkable person, but how could I possibly explain what he had been through or what that struggle meant to me? I turned away from the doctors and took a few steps closer to Benny, and I smiled. The stories could wait. "Take good care of this guy," I said softly. "I'm not his doctor anymore. Now ... just a friend."

Before I left, I picked up the remote control from the nightstand next to Benny's bed, turned on the TV, and flipped through the channels until I found *Judge Judy*. R

“  
*He was the  
embodiment of  
courage and  
patience—a  
kind man given  
a raw deal.*”

ADAPTED FROM *THE REAL DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU SHORTLY*.

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\*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

# That's Outrageous!

ONE-OF-A-KIND SUMMER CAMPS

**GAME OF THRONES:** Technically, the Arcâtheos Boys' Camp near Calgary, Alberta, is designed to prod a boy's "journey towards genuine manhood." But the vehicle is decidedly medieval, complete with catapult-launched water balloons, bows and arrows, and jousting, all set, according to the brochure, "beyond the natural reach of mortals [in] an ancient realm known as Lumenorus." Also, this is a Catholic camp (for ages 7 to 12), so while there's plenty of emphasis on knights, shackles, and darkness, expect salvation to carry the day. A weeklong session is \$429.


**EXPLOSIVES:** "High school students gain hands-on experience with explosives: the first and only camp of its kind!" Gee, why is there only one Explosives Camp? Oh yeah, because most mothers don't trust their kids to boil pasta, let alone blow things up! But that's exactly what they learn at this Rolla, Missouri, getaway, which costs \$1,450 for a week of "detonators,



high explosives, and demolition." Just for the record, applicants have to write an essay and need a teacher's recommendation confirming that the prospective camper isn't, well, dangerous.

**ETIQUETTE:** Good Manners Camp doesn't sound as fun as, say, Blow Things

Up Camp. But we bet Seattle's Essential Manners for Modern Children campers get asked to more cotillions. For \$359 per session, 7- to 12-year-olds learn why a fork isn't a shovel, how to extend and accept invitations, handshaking dos and don'ts, and "navigating the place setting."

**CARNY SKILLS:** Have you ever wanted to learn how to look as if you were hammering a 20-penny nail into your skull? So have we! Counselors at this adults-only camp, held over three days on world-famous Coney Island, teach the fundamentals of fire eating, sword swallowing, glass walking, snake charming, and more. Pay your \$1,000 and step right up! 



## The New Testament Modern Evangelical Version

Robert Thomas Helm  
www.xlibris.com

\$34.99 hc | \$23.99 sc | \$3.99 eb

The Modern Evangelical Version utilizes the English of the 21st century, as the New Testament is intended to communicate to common people. God's Word has never been translated so clearly for modern-day readers.



## The Success Process Handbook

Tony Fielek  
www.xlibris.com

\$15.99 hc | \$12.99 sc | \$3.99 eb

*The Success Process Handbook* is author Tony Fielek's detailed program that uses motivational and persuasive methods to show you how you can influence the key people who are important to your success in your social life, career and personal relationships.



## Spaces In Between Collection of Poems

by Gil Saenz  
Gil Saenz

www.authorhouse.com

\$21.95 hb | \$9.95 sc | \$3.95 eb

*Spaces in Between* is a collection of poems written from 1985 to the present. The title poem refers to all those idle moments that are spent by most of us as we wait somewhere for something.



## Successful Recovery and Relapse Prevention

Bill McCausland Ph.D.  
www.xlibris.com

\$29.99 hc | \$19.99 sc | \$3.99 eb

This workbook addresses several concepts about recovery and prevention of relapse. It shows how to develop support systems for maintaining recovery that contribute to successful recovery and how executive functioning of the brain can get impaired with addiction.



## Promises Never to be Forgotten

Linda Kirk  
www.xlibris.com

\$37.99 hc | \$23.99 sc | \$3.99 eb

Defying the hardships of War World II, Renee' Gilbier leaves the safety of Hawaii to return to the Solomon Islands deep in the war-torn Pacific. What will she discover upon her return? Join her in *Promises Never to be Forgotten*.



## Party Girl Nurse's Journey

Victoria Godwin  
www.xlibris.com

\$29.99 hb | \$19.99 sc | \$3.99 eb

*Party Girl Nurse's Journey* follows a young woman who was born with a silver spoon in her mouth, with a perfect family and childhood. Then gradually she found herself in a foreign world learning a foreign language—the drug world.



A wonderful gesture—call it a slice of nice—in tiny Wild Rose, Wisconsin, helps soften the sadness on a lousy day

# The Priceless Car Loan

*Todd Steinkamp (far right) snaps a selfie with his selfless new pal, Glenn Geib, in his service station.*



BY MARISSA LALIBERTE  
AND ASHLEY LEWIS

**A**FTER A LONG DRIVE and precious little sleep, Todd Steinkamp left his Wisconsin motel around 5:30 a.m. to make it to a funeral near Green Bay. Not long after, he started to hear a grinding sound coming from his front tire, and it kept getting louder. He finally pulled into Lauritzens BP & Sports shop in Wild Rose, Wisconsin, hoping to find help. It was only 7 a.m., and he still had 75 miles to go.

As luck would have it, Steinkamp found Glenn Geib stocking oil on the

shelves. The mechanic checked out the car and gave Steinkamp some bad news: The wheel bearing was failing and needed to be repaired right away. Fixing it would take a few hours. Geib then looked Steinkamp up and down and asked why he was so dressed up. Steinkamp explained that he was going to the funeral of his boss's wife.

Geib checked the one rental car agency in town, but it was sold out (it has only one rental car in its fleet). The next closest rental agency was 40 miles away. "I must have looked pretty stressed out at this time," Steinkamp wrote later on Facebook. Geib noticed, and he was determined to help.

With a population of 699, close-knit Wild Rose has a reputation in central Wisconsin for kindness. Seniors gather at the Wild Rose Community Center for free midday meals. The local Lions Club chapter collects used eyeglasses for folks who can't afford them, part of the Lions Recycle for Sight program.

But kindness in Wild Rose doesn't come just from organizations. Kent Barnard, the town library director, remembers a high school kid who walked into Patterson Memorial Library needing gas money. Barnard happily gave it to him, and the guy

went on his way. A couple years later, that man came back. "You gave me \$10 for gas when I was in high school," he said, and Barnard was repaid.

"People are not well-off, but they're taking care of each other," says Jerry Apps, a local author who lets the library sell his books and DVDs and keep some of the proceeds to fund its programs.

So, faced with a stranger in need at the service station, Glenn Geib did what came naturally. He reached into his pocket, pulled out his keys, and said, "Take my truck. Fill it up with gas, and get going." With a smile, Geib added that the truck could go 120 miles per hour if needed.

The men had met just ten minutes ago. They didn't even know each other's names. But Geib insisted. Steinkamp hopped into the 1999 Chevrolet Silverado, with Geib's tools and piles of split wood in the back, and made it to the funeral. He came back to the garage seven hours later with a heavy but thankful heart.

"The 74-year-old mechanic with a grip of steel turned a terrible day into a good one, with a great lesson," Steinkamp wrote on Facebook. The lesson could be the Wild Rose motto: "Just be kind, and help if you can." **R**



Go to [rd.com/nicest](http://rd.com/nicest) by May 31 to nominate a neighborhood, community, or gathering place you know and love for our Nicest Place in America Contest. Check back on June 21 to see the finalists and vote.



Unconscious and plummeting to earth,  
the novice skydiver was just ...

# 50 SECONDS FROM DEATH

BY ROBERT KIENER

DRAMA IN REAL LIFE



Christopher Jones is packed tightly into a Cessna 182 with a dozen or so other trainee skydivers as they fly over the Australian countryside just south of his hometown of Perth. It's shortly after 4 p.m., and this will be Jones's fifth jump in his accelerated freefall training program and his first time jumping solo, without being tethered to an instructor.

**A** **S THE PLANE** climbs through the clear, crisp November sky, Jones, 22, goes over today's procedure in his mind. His heart is racing, but he's confident that he's ready for his first solo jump. Stay calm, he tells himself as he sits in the back of the plane mentally ticking off the maneuvers he has to make.

Just after the plane reaches 12,000 feet, a green light begins flashing on the wall directly in front of him, a signal that the pilot has given his OK for the jump to proceed. Though Jones will be managing his parachute by himself, he will not be alone. Veteran parachutist Sheldon McFarlane, who has 25 years and some 10,000 jumps under his belt, will be right behind. McFarlane slides open the plane's side door and motions for Jones to take up the ready position near the door.

Although he is protected by a helmet, goggles, his jumpsuit, and two parachutes (a main and a reserve), Jones winces as he feels the cold air

rush into the plane. The whipping wind is so noisy that he can hear nothing but his own heartbeat. He is nervous but focused on McFarlane, who will guide him through a prescribed set of maneuvers using hand signals and radio commands via the headsets they both wear. McFarlane will also film the jump so that Jones can watch it later.

As Jones clammers into position, holding on tightly to a rail above the open door to brace himself, he begins the pre-jump cadence he has learned: "Check in," he says with a thumbs-up to McFarlane, indicating that he's ready to jump.

"OK," answers McFarlane with a return thumbs-up.

Fighting the strong buffeting winds, Jones looks down at the green-and-brown checkerboard pattern of the countryside. In the distance, he sees the bright blue of the Indian Ocean.

"Sky!" he shouts, indicating that he knows in which direction to jump and has gotten his balance. McFarlane gives him another thumbs-up.

**T**ODAY'S SOLO skydiving jump is the culmination of a lifelong dream. Jones fell in love with flying after going out in his uncle's small plane. He loved it so much, he'd planned to become a pilot when he grew up. But his hopes were dashed when he was diagnosed with epilepsy at age 12. Doctors told him that his condition would prevent him from ever getting a pilot's license.

Years later, after skydiving in tandem with an instructor in Europe, he fell in love with the sport. Free-falling through the sky was exhilarating, almost like flying. He was hooked. He told his parents, "If I can't fly a plane, I'll jump out of one instead."

As a rule, epileptics aren't allowed to skydive alone. But Jones hadn't had a seizure in more than six years, so his doctor gave him a letter stating that he was fit to sign up for lessons. The recent university graduate sailed through the classes at the WA Skydiving Academy in Jandakot, a suburb of Perth.

"A star pupil," one of the instructors, Donna Cook, called Jones. Other staffers agreed. Jones's tandem jumps, for which he was tethered to an instructor, had gone off without a hitch. He was ready to solo.

So today, at last, he's about to step out of an airplane by himself. All told, the jump should take about two minutes, from leaving the shelter of the plane to landing on the ground some 12,000 feet, or two miles, below. This is how it went:

**12,000 Feet.** As Jones prepares to jump, he missteps and nearly slips out of the Cessna. That's a bit messy, thinks McFarlane, though this kind of stumble is not unusual for first timers. But Jones catches his balance and turns his back to the bright sky, grabs onto the hanging bars on either side of the door, and arches his back into the jump position. He shouts to McFarlane, "Up! Down! Hard arch!"—skydiving lingo for "Ready, set, go!"—and leaps out of the plane.

Jumping just seconds behind Jones, McFarlane reaches him and is relieved to see that he has recovered from his clumsy exit and is free-falling in the perfect "box man" position: belly to the ground, his body arched upward with arms and legs spread for stability and control. Both skydivers are free-falling and will continue to plunge without their chutes until they reach 5,000 feet, in less than a minute. (It typically takes ten seconds to free-fall the first 1,000 feet, then five and a half seconds per 1,000 feet after that; skydivers plunge at a speed of approximately 120 miles per hour.)

McFarlane points to the altimeter on his wrist. Jones follows his cue to check his own. So far, so good, thinks McFarlane. He flashes a thumbs-up.

**9,000 Feet.** As both jumpers free-fall, McFarlane signals Jones to begin an aerial left-hand turn. The jumper starts to make the turn but



suddenly stops and is buffeted to the right. Not good, thinks McFarlane. Jones continues to drift right as McFarlane wonders, What the heck are you doing?

**8,000 Feet.** Jones fails to recover from his missed left turn and is not following McFarlane's other commands. The veteran instructor quickly realizes something is wrong.

However, that usually occurs on one of a student's first tandem jumps, and Jones completed his without a problem. But this is a solo jump, and, of course, the stakes are higher: Jones's life is on the line.

"Come on, Christopher!" McFarlane shouts out loud this time. Unaware that his student has epilepsy, he doesn't know that Jones is suffering a seizure and has blacked out. He is



*12,000 feet: The skydivers exit the plane.*



*8,000 feet: Jones is out of position. No one realizes that he is having a seizure.*

Suddenly Jones's knees come up into his chest, and he flips over like a turtle onto his back. His arms flail as he falls through the sky. He's losing it, thinks McFarlane.

Come on, Christopher, he says to himself. Right yourself!

**7,000 Feet.** Jones continues to fall, spinning helplessly on his back. McFarlane has seen other first timers suffer from sensory overload and become incapacitated. He thinks this may be what Jones is experiencing.

unconscious, unable to open his parachute, and falling as fast as a speeding race car to the ground below.

**6,000 Feet.** Jones continues to plummet, spinning and spiraling out of control, now with his head pointed downward. McFarlane knows he has to act fast. Although Jones, like every WA Skydiving student, is fitted with an Automatic Activation Device (AAD) that will automatically open his main parachute at 2,000 feet above the drop zone, McFarlane realizes

that would give the first-time solo jumper little time to regain control. He could easily fly into a tree, river, or power line or, worse, break his neck in an uncontrolled landing. Also, McFarlane knows that AADs have failed on occasion.

**5,000 Feet.** *Beep, beep, beep.* McFarlane's preset audible altimeter begins beeping in his ear, signaling

into Jones or that Jones might suddenly pull the rip cord and entangle both of them, he aborts the effort. Jones is still on his back, unconscious, and falling uncontrollably.

**4,500 Feet.** *BEEP, BEEP, BEEP.* McFarlane's altimeter alarm is beeping even louder as he pulls on both toggles to slow his chute, a step known as flaring, to buy him a few more seconds



*8,000 to 4,500 feet: Jones free-falls uncontrollably.*



*4,500 feet: McFarlane reaches Jones and pulls his parachute's release cord.*

that it's time to deploy his main chute for a safe landing. He ignores it as he makes the decision to free-fall down to Jones, grab him, and open his parachute for him. McFarlane lifts his chin and swoops his arms back, speeding toward his student like a hawk pursuing its prey. It's a risky maneuver. He has to avoid becoming entangled if Jones's chute opens in the wrong direction. In that worst-case scenario, both men could fall to their deaths.

McFarlane soon realizes that he's coming in too fast. Afraid he will crash

as he descends. But he's running out of time to deploy his own parachute. Even highly skilled skydivers don't open their chutes any lower than 2,000 feet, and McFarlane will reach that height in just 14 seconds.

Still, he decides to dive again to try to reach Jones. This time he swoops like Superman and manages to grab Jones's harness and roll his body sideways. It's crucial to get him in the proper position before pulling the rip cord, or his chute could entangle them both. Holding tightly to the harness with his right



*Back on the ground, instructor Sheldon McFarlane (left) and his grateful student Christopher Jones*

During any jump, an instructor is stationed on the ground to watch the action and radio commands to the jumpers. Today's drop zone safety officer, Donna Cook, has been radioing Jones but getting no response. When his chute opens, she is relieved. "Way to go!" she tells him.

But Cook's relief quickly turns to concern as she again gets no response and sees Jones drifting far off course. She radios him again: "Keep yourself upwind of the target. Turn right." As Jones continues to move away from the drop zone, Cook realizes something is seriously wrong.

hand, McFarlane uses his left to grab Jones's chute handle and then pulls it hard. The main parachute billows out and up, swinging Jones around so that he is sitting upright in the harness.

Thank God! thinks McFarlane as the force of air filling the chute sends Jones upward into the sky. But Jones is still unconscious, still unaware that he is falling to the earth, though more slowly now, beneath his billowing yellow canopy. A crash landing could easily kill him.

**4,000 Feet.** McFarlane opens his own chute, then executes a series of midair turns to speed up his descent.

**3,500 Feet.** Cook watches Jones fly farther off course. Maybe he has blacked out or become incoherent. Maybe his radio has failed. Whatever the problem is, Jones isn't following any of her commands. But she continues to guide him on the radio, praying that he can somehow hear her: "Turn right, Chris! Turn right!"

**3,000 Feet.** Slumped over in his parachute, Jones regains consciousness. He feels as though he is waking from a deep sleep. But as he comes to, he sees the ground beneath him coming closer and closer. He lifts his head and is amazed to discover

that he is drifting down to earth under an opened parachute canopy.

How the ... ? he wonders. He realizes he has blacked out, and his skydiving training instantly kicks in. He checks his altimeter, which reads 3,000 feet. The last time he remembers checking it was at 9,000 feet, following McFarlane's instructions. He doesn't know how long he has been out, but he knows he has to act fast.

Check the canopy, he tells himself. He looks up to see that it is open and none of his lines are twisted.

Orient yourself, he tells himself next, and he looks for the drop zone, a white fabric arrow far off to the west. Before he can run through the other landing procedures, he hears the one-way radio in his helmet crackle.

"Chris! Chris!" he hears Cook say. "Fly toward the ocean. To your right!" He sees that he is far off course and tugs hard on his steering handle.

**2,000 Feet.** As the wind helps carry him, Jones pulls on the parachute toggle to direct him closer to the drop zone, which he can now see beneath him. He's back on course. Seeing Jones finally responding to her commands, Cook is ecstatic. "Great!" she radios him. "You're doing great!"

"Turn your back to the ocean," she says. Jones follows her directives.

"That's it! You're doing it!" Cook tells him. Afraid of losing contact with him again, she keeps radioing Jones commands.

**1,000 Feet.** McFarlane, who has already landed, shouts to Cook, "This was one of the worst stage-five jumps I've ever seen!" He still has no idea that Jones had a seizure. (Although Jones and his doctor can't say for sure why he had a seizure that day, a lack of oxygen at high altitudes and stress can bring one on.)

**300 Feet.** Jones prepares to land close to the drop zone. As he nears the ground, he mentally runs through the steps he has learned to touch down safely. Like a veteran skydiver, he flares his chute moments before his feet hit the ground running. Perfect!

Cook keeps up her radio chatter. After Jones executes a faultless two-point landing and begins gathering up his chute, she is close to tears.

"You did great!" she radios to Jones.

The first thing Jones does upon landing is to go to McFarlane and hug him tightly.

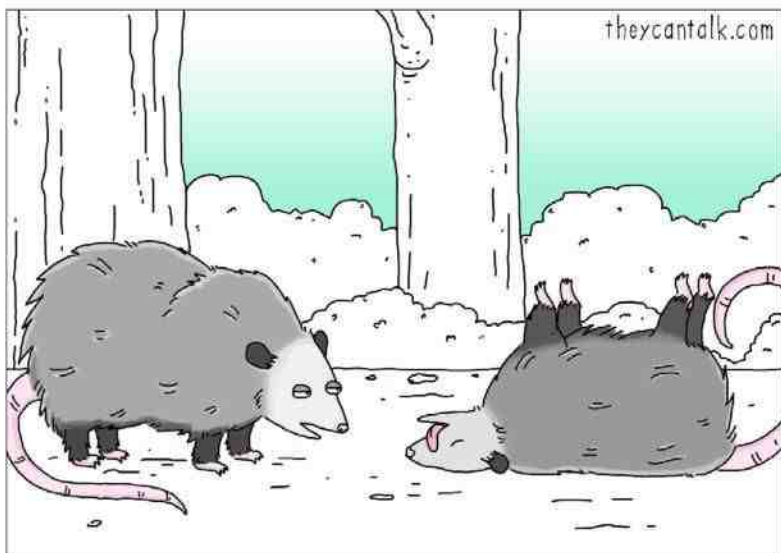
"Thank you very much," he says, explaining that he suffered an epileptic seizure. "You just saved my life."

*For his quick thinking and courageous actions, McFarlane was awarded the Gold Cross from the Royal Life Saving Society, Western Australia. Although Jones hasn't had a seizure since that day, he says his skydiving days are over. **R***

To watch the video of the jump and rescue (shot from McFarlane's helmet camera), go to [rd.com/skydiver](http://rd.com/skydiver).

# Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



*"You can play dead all you want. We're still going to see my parents."*

**WHILE IN SURGERY** following a heart attack, a middle-aged woman sees a vision of God by her bedside.

"Will I die?" she asks.

God says, "No. You have 30 more years to live."

With 30 years to look forward to, she decides to make the best of it. So while in the hospital, she gets breast implants, liposuction, a tummy tuck, hair transplants, and collagen

injected into her lips. She looks great! The day she's discharged, she exits the hospital with a swagger, crosses the street, and is immediately hit by an ambulance and killed.

Up in heaven, she sees God. "You said I had 30 more years to live!"

"That's true," says God.

"So what happened?"

God shrugs. "I didn't recognize you."

Source: ecclezzia.com

**I DELETED AN E-MAIL** with the subject “three-second joy exercise,” and I think I found a new three-second joy exercise. *Comedian* **MARK CHALIFOUX**

**SCENE:** Two old friends sitting on a park bench

**First friend:** I got a nice insurance settlement. My house burned down.

**Second friend:** Funny, I just got a nice insurance settlement. My house flooded.

*(Pause)*

**First friend:** How do you start a flood?

*Submitted by* **EVELYN PAINTER**,  
*Grants Pass, Oregon*

### PSYCHED OUT

■ If you're thinking what I'm thinking, here's my therapist's number.

🐦@TOPAZ\_KELL

■ My shrink is not very perceptive. I've been in therapy for eight years, and he still thinks I'm there for “a friend.”

*Attributed to comedian* **RONNIE SHAKES**

■ If my psychiatrist said “There's really nothing more I can do for you,” that means I'm cured, right??

🐦@LANIELALABUGS

■ My therapist and I got stuck in the same elevator and pretended we didn't know each other. Next week's session writes itself.

🐦@APARNAPKIN (APARNA NANCHERLA)

**Your funny joke, list, or quote might be worth \$\$\$.** For details, see page 7 or go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).



### PI A LA MOAN

The problem with math puns is that calculus jokes are derivative, trig jokes are too graphic, and algebra jokes are formulaic. But these jokes are guaranteed to multiply your enjoyment.

■ **What do you get when you take a bovine and divide its circumference by its diameter?**

A cow pi.

■ **Why don't calculus majors throw house parties?**

Because you should never drink and derive.

■ **What do you call a number that can't keep still?**

A roamin' numeral.

■ **Did you hear about the statistician who drowned crossing a river?**

It was three feet deep, on average.

■ **Old mathematicians never die.**

They just lose some of their functions.

■ **Why do teenagers travel in groups of three?**

Because they can't even!

■ **Why should you never mention the number 288?**

It's two gross.

From [rd.com](http://rd.com)



Heart disease kills more Americans than all cancers combined. Here's how healers beat the odds in their own lives.

# 40 THINGS CARDIOLOGISTS AND OTHER DOCTORS DO TO PROTECT THEIR HEARTS

BY CHARLOTTE HILTON ANDERSEN

## 1 I eat eggs.

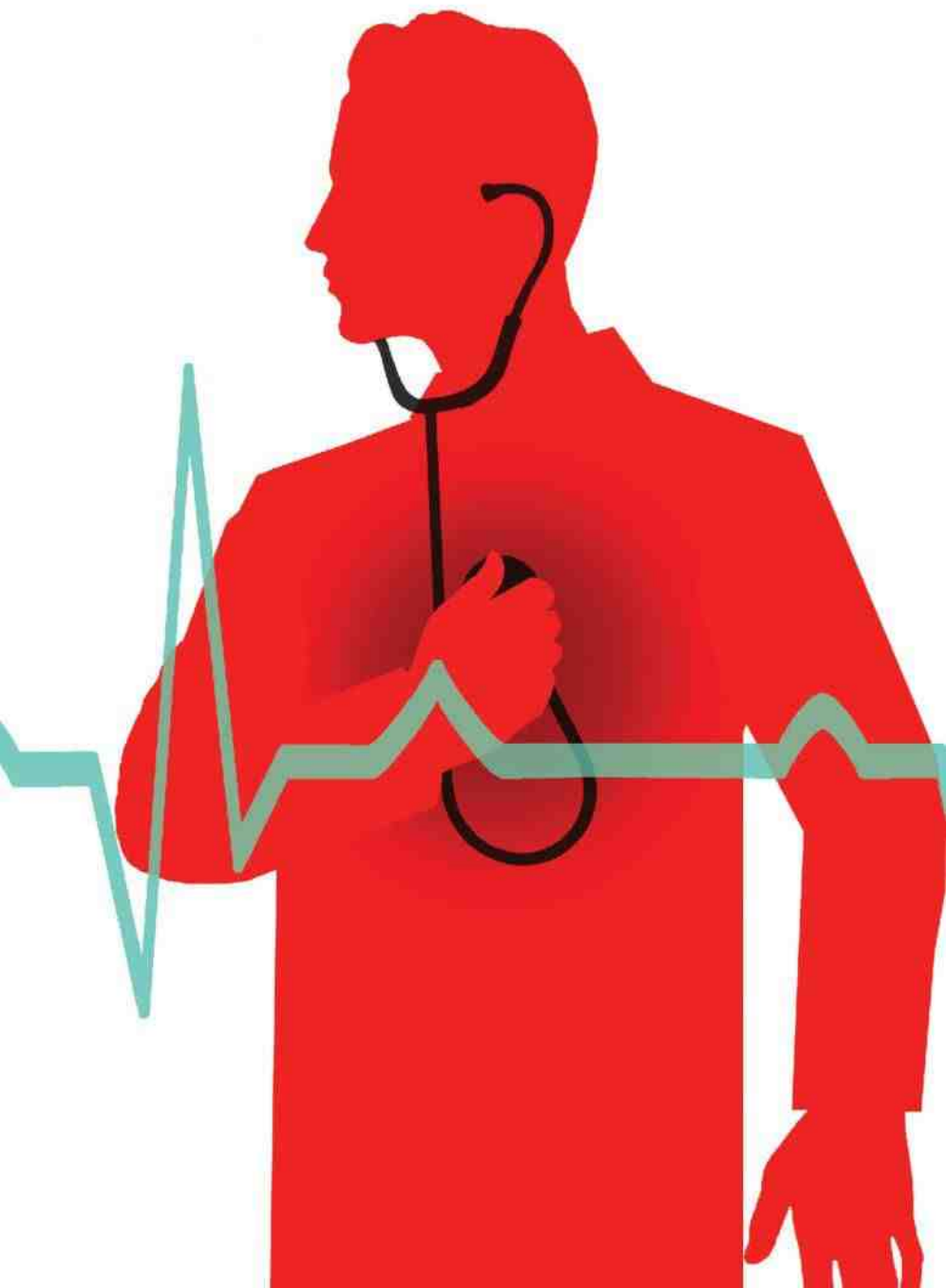
"The science shows that a diet without cholesterol does not necessarily lower a person's cholesterol. In fact, when the cholesterol in a food is high, it is often acting as an antioxidant. Eggs are a great food, full of satiating protein and essential fats."

**CAROLYN DEAN, MD, ND,**  
*author of Atrial Fibrillation:  
Remineralize Your Heart*

## 2 I get eight hours of sleep a night.

"Poor sleep is linked to higher blood pressure, a risk factor for heart disease. I try to get to bed by 10 p.m. I don't watch television right before bed, and I keep my room dark. I also never drink caffeine after 10 a.m., and I avoid alcohol on work nights."

**JENNIFER HAYTHE, MD,** *cardiologist and  
assistant professor of medicine at  
Columbia University Medical Center*



**3 I take the stairs.**

"It is no surprise that the number of heart attacks has increased in our modern age, thanks in no small part to modern conveniences such as elevators and escalators, which reduce the amount of exercise we get on a daily basis. To counteract this, I take the stairs at every opportunity."

**RICHARD WRIGHT, MD,**  
*cardiologist and chairman  
of the Pacific Heart Institute  
at Providence Saint  
John's Health Center*

**4 I meditate.**

"Stress can cause catecholamine release—also known as the fight-or-flight response—and that can lead to heart failure and heart attacks. I have found a great sense of comfort in 20 minutes of meditation daily. It gives me the reset I need when pressure is rising."

**ARCHANA SAXENA, MD,** *cardiologist at  
NYU Lutheran Medical Center*

**5 I use a meal-delivery service.**

"I often miss meals and end up grabbing junk food during the day. A meal-delivery service helps guarantee that I will have healthy meals and snacks."

**NICOLE WEINBERG, MD,** *cardiologist at  
Providence Saint John's Health Center*

**6 I do CrossFit.**

"Exercise blunts the 'cortisol spike,' the rush of stress hormones that has been linked to increased risk of a heart attack or a stroke. CrossFit is my favorite."

**ADAM SPLAVER, MD,** *cardiologist and  
cofounder of NanoHealth Associates*

**7 I take a personalized multivitamin.**

"A 2015 study in the *Journal of Nutrition* showed that women who took a multivitamin for more than three years significantly reduced their risk of heart disease. Even though I try to eat a well-balanced Mediterranean diet, I know there are certain nutrients on which I fall short. I take a multivitamin tailored to my specific needs based on my

answers to questions about my diet, lifestyle, and health concerns as well as health markers. I even created my own company to help others find which vitamins work best for their needs.”

**ARIELLE LEVITAN, MD,**  
*cofounder of Vous Vitamin LLC, a company  
that creates personalized vitamins,  
and coauthor of The Vitamin Solution:  
Two Doctors Clear the Confusion About  
Vitamins and Your Health*

## 8 I'm always finding something to laugh about.

“Seeing the humor in everyday situations helps me maintain perspective. Laughing dilates the arteries and keeps blood pressure down.”

**SUZANNE STEINBAUM, MD,**  
*cardiologist and spokesperson  
for the American Heart Association's Go  
Red for Women movement*

## 9 I take care of my teeth.

“Good oral hygiene can lead to less systemic inflammation in the short term. While more research is

needed to determine whether this decreases heart attacks or strokes—the link has been debated for decades—having a healthy mouth is important to overall wellness.” **JULIE CLARY, MD,**  
*cardiologist at Indiana University Health*

## 11 I eat berries.

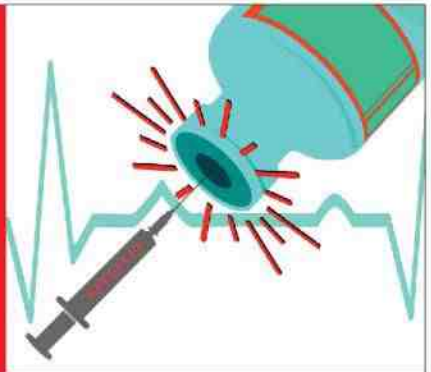
“Berries have natural antioxidants, such as vitamins C and E, and anthocyanins, the pigments that give berries their color, both of which help the heart. The Kuopio Ischemic Heart Disease Risk Factor Study showed significantly lower cardiac deaths in men who ate 400 grams, or about three cups, of berries per day. The Iowa Women's Health Study of 35,000 women showed significant reduction in cardiac mortality with strawberry intake over 16 years. So I eat fresh or frozen berries regularly.”

**NITIN KUMAR, MD,** *gastroenterologist and  
expert in cardiometabolic risk at the  
Bariatric Endoscopy Institute*

## 10 I get the flu vaccine every year.

“Getting a flu vaccination is especially good for people with heart disease and heart failure. The vaccine has recently been shown to offer protection against new-onset atrial fibrillation (irregular heart rhythm).”

**JASON GUICHARD, MD,**  
*cardiologist in Birmingham, Alabama*



**12 I respect the power of blood pressure.**

"In 2015, we did a study that found that lowering systolic blood pressure (the top number) to 120 mm Hg reduced rates of death due to cardiovascular disease, heart failure, stroke, and heart attack by 25 percent. It's important to keep it in check by eating a healthy diet, being physically active, and maintaining a healthy weight."

**CORA E. LEWIS, MD,**  
*epidemiologist and professor at  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
School of Medicine*

**13 I eat lots of protein.**

"Since the heart is a muscle, it needs daily lean proteins. I eat grass-fed meat and wild-caught fish along with heart-healthy olive oil, nuts, and vegetables. And I make sure to avoid meat that contains antibiotics or hormones."

**AL SEARS, MD,**  
*antiaging specialist and author of  
15 books on health and wellness*

**14 I have my hormones tested.**

"Higher hormone levels in women, particularly estrogen, can affect how blood vessels stretch and contract, which can make them more vulnerable to arterial tears and blood clots. The risk of heart problems is slightly higher for women who are on hormonal birth control, undergoing hormone replacement therapy, or pregnant. Ask your doctor about

alternate methods of birth control or hormone therapy. Another way to keep estrogen levels within the heart-healthy range is to maintain a healthy weight."

**NICOLE WEINBERG, MD**

**15 I choose my cooking oils carefully.**

"There has been a lot of research recently into how different oils affect our heart health, and it goes far beyond olive oil. I avoid products with palm oil and look instead for those with canola oil. Coconut, avocado, and almond oils are also good choices."

**JONATHAN ELION, MD, FACC,**  
*cardiologist and associate professor of  
medicine at Brown University*

**16 I make time for my loved ones.**

"Heart disease has been associated with job strain and psychological distress at any point in life—both things that good friends and family can help with."

**JASON GUICHARD, MD**

**17 I'm on alert for high blood sugar.**

"In adults with diabetes, the most common causes of death are heart disease and stroke, according to the National Institutes of Health. I avoid junk food, particularly soda, and other foods that lead to high blood sugar and insulin resistance, the precursors to diabetes."

**RICHARD WRIGHT, MD**



## 18 I spend time outdoors.

“Recently I realized I had been indoors too long, so I ‘prescribed’ myself a hike! This nature hack relieves stress and allows me to get vitamin D from the sunshine.”

MONYA DE, MD, MPH, *internal medicine physician in Los Angeles*

## 19 I do intense aerobics.

“Frequent, intense, prolonged cardiovascular exercise lowers blood pressure, increases good cholesterol (HDL), reduces bad cholesterol (LDL) and triglycerides, and stabilizes blood sugar. I try to do a 45-minute session nearly every day in which I burn about 750 calories.”

PAUL B. LANGEVIN, MD, *associate professor in the department of anesthesiology and perioperative medicine at Drexel University College of Medicine*

## 20 I eat a Mediterranean diet.

“Instead of grabbing chips when I get home hungry at the end of the day, I slice up half an avocado and drizzle on some olive oil. Delicious and filling, this quick snack is part of a Mediterranean diet, which has been scientifically proven to be heart healthy.”

GLENN RICH, MD, *an internist specializing in endocrinology, obesity, and weight management in Trumbull, Connecticut*



## 21 I take a vitamin K2 supplement.

“Recent studies indicate that vitamin K2 is critical to heart health. It works by shuttling calcium into your bones instead of letting the calcium clog your arteries. There are also studies that indicate vitamin K2 may reverse coronary calcification, the disease that causes blockage of your arteries.”

ADAM SPLAVER, MD

## 22 I recommend lots of lovemaking.

“Sex is like interval exercise, which is very good for the heart. One easy and fun way to help your heart is to have more sex!”

RICHARD WRIGHT, MD

## 23 I ask for a heart scan.

“Obtaining a screening test called a coronary calcium CAT scan enabled me to determine whether I was developing early heart disease. This test is simple, widely available, and relatively cheap (insurance may cover it, but it’s still quite affordable—between \$100 and \$400—without it). It can find signs of heart disease before you even feel the symptoms.”

GLENN RICH, MD

## 24 I skip the hot dogs.

“According to a Harvard University analysis, there is strong evidence for association between the consumption of processed red meats, such as sausage, hot dogs, and lunch



## 25 I lost weight.

“About ten years ago, I found myself 40 pounds overweight. I also had not been to a doctor for many years at that time. I made an appointment to see my doctor but not until I went on a diet, joined a gym, and over a year lost the 40 pounds.” A 2016 study found that being overweight could take one to three years off your life, while being obese may take as many as eight—and the effect is three times worse for men than for women.

MARK GREENBERG, MD,

*director of the White Plains Hospital Catheterization Lab and medical director of interventional cardiology at Montefiore Health System*

meat, and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and early death.”

**MICHAEL FENSTER, MD,**  
*interventional cardiologist, chef,  
and author of The Fallacy of the  
Calorie: Why the Modern Western Diet Is  
Killing Us and How to Stop It*

## 26 I try to schedule exercise.

“I often hear my patients say they don’t have time to exercise or say they had no idea that they had gained weight. This is why I schedule my exercise sessions just as I would schedule a business meeting or any other event.”

**STEVEN TABAK, MD, FACC,**  
*medical director for quality  
and physician outreach at Cedars-Sinai  
Heart Institute*

## 27 I eat dairy instead of taking calcium supplements.

“Many Americans buy vitamin and mineral supplements when their money could be better spent purchasing high-quality foods. We recently conducted a study that found that taking calcium in the form of supplements may raise the risk of plaque buildup in arteries and heart damage. But the good news is that a diet high in calcium-rich foods may be protective.”

**ERIN MICHOS, MD, MHS,** *associate  
director of preventive cardiology and  
associate professor of medicine at the  
Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of  
Heart Disease at the Johns Hopkins  
University School of Medicine*

## 28 I got tested for sleep disorders.

“Sleep apnea, one of the most common sleep disorders, causes you to take long pauses in breathing during sleep. This can starve your organs of oxygen and wreak havoc on your heart health, potentially causing heart attacks, arrhythmias, heart failure, strokes, and high blood pressure.”

**ADAM SPLAVER, MD**

## 29 I take probiotics.

“Certain kinds of probiotics, such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium lactis*, have been shown to significantly decrease bad cholesterol and inflammatory markers that may lead to heart disease.”

**NICOLE VAN GRONINGEN, MD,**  
*internal medicine physician at  
UCSF Medical Center*

## 30 I drink alcohol in moderation.

“Moderate drinking (one to two servings a day) can offer protection from heart disease. But if you do not drink at all, keep it that way. If you drink more than one or two drinks in a single occasion, it can increase your risk of a stroke.”

**SAMUEL MALLOY, MD,**  
*medical director at drfelix.co.uk, an  
online doctor and pharmacist*

## 31 I make sure to get plenty of vitamin D.

“Studies have shown that having low vitamin D levels is a significant

predictor of cardiac death, heart attack, and stroke. Low vitamin D is also associated with high blood pressure and blood sugar, which are risk factors for heart disease. Have your doctor check your vitamin D level and supplement up to normal with high doses if needed.”

**NITIN KUMAR, MD**

### **32 I tried a vegetarian diet.**

“Last year, our cardiology group started an Ornish Reversal Intensive Cardiac Rehab, a specialized program developed for cardiac patients to help prevent future problems. The outcomes for our patients have been dramatic. So we doctors decided to ‘walk the walk’ and follow the program ourselves. One part of the program is eating a vegetarian diet for three months. I was surprised at how much better I felt. I explored exciting and delicious new foods and felt less bloated and tired after meals.”

**JOSEPH A. CRAFT III, MD, FACC,**  
*cardiologist at the Heart Health  
Center in St. Louis*

### **33 I practice gratitude.**

“One study showed that volunteers who were asked to focus on feelings of deep appreciation had increased heart-rate variability (HRV); high HRV is associated with decreased death from cardiac disease. Another study found that patients who kept gratitude journals for two months had lower levels of inflammatory biomarkers that could lead to cardiovascular

disease. It has become clear to me that gratitude isn’t just good for the soul; it’s good for the body too.”

**NICOLE VAN GRONINGEN, MD**

### **34 I mix magnesium powder into my water.**

“If sufficient magnesium is present in the body, cholesterol will not be produced in excess. So I supplement with magnesium citrate powder, an absorbable form of magnesium. Mixed with water, it can be easily sipped throughout the day.”

**CAROLYN DEAN, MD, ND**

### **35 I recommend aspirin, but only for some people.**

“Contrary to popular belief, the heart itself is not improved with aspirin treatment. If you’re healthy, there is no preventative benefit in taking aspirin. But for people who have already experienced a heart event or those with diseased arteries, a low-dose aspirin a day is very helpful at preventing a future heart attack.”

**RICHARD WRIGHT, MD**

### **36 I take an herbal sleep aid.**

“Believe it or not, the average person gets up to two fewer hours of sleep per night than people did 100 years ago. This decrease in sleep has been linked with an increased risk of heart disease. Unfortunately, insomnia has also increased. So I recommend small doses of melatonin and 5-HTP



### 37 I drink a ton of water.

"Drinking five or more glasses of water a day can lower the risk of heart disease death, as dehydration leads to increased hematocrit (the ratio of red blood cells to blood volume) and increased blood viscosity or thickness, both of which have been associated with cardiovascular events."

JASON GUICHARD, MD

supplements, which have been very effective in helping me get to sleep and sleep through the night."

WESTIN CHILDS, DO,  
an internist practicing  
in Gilbert, Arizona

### 38 I eat a "no-white" diet.

"Instead of avoiding fat, I stay away from the 'whites': white sugar, white flour, white bread, and white rice."

ADAM SPLAVER, MD

### 39 I do yoga.

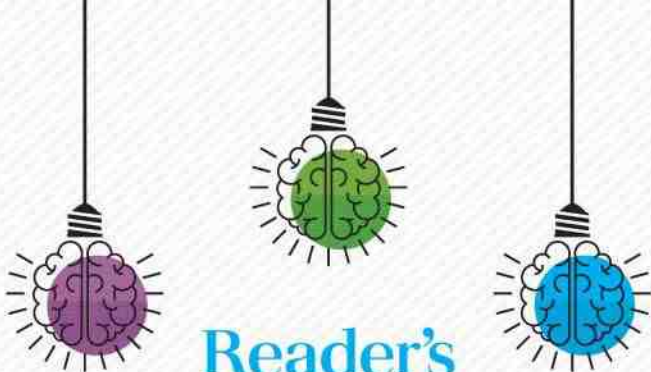
"Not only can severe stress directly harm your heart, but high levels of anxiety lead to other behaviors that are bad for your heart, like smoking, alcohol use, and eating cookies and pizza. I reduce stress through yoga; it helps me unwind, find balance, and escape for a short time every day."

JENNIFER HAYTHE, MD

### 40 I eat dark chocolate.

A 2016 study found that a daily dose of dark chocolate helps prevent diabetes. The good news doesn't stop there. "It is a source of polyphenols, which may improve arterial elasticity and help lower blood pressure. When looking for the perfect dark chocolate, keep an eye out for at least 75 percent cocoa, and then savor an ounce or two."

CYNTHIA GEYER, MD,  
medical director of Canyon Ranch in  
Lenox, Massachusetts



Reader's  
digest

# May We Borrow Your Brain?

Choose our covers, share ideas with staff,  
and judge what stories merit publishing by joining  
our exclusive inner circle of readers.

**Just for participating, you will have a chance to win prizes,  
including books, DVDs, gift cards and more!**

Go to **TMBINNERCIRCLE.COM** to see if you qualify



# Laugh Lines

VA-CAUTION

There ain't no surer way to find out whether you like people or hate them than to travel with them.

MARK TWAIN

Last year, complaints about airlines increased 22 percent. There were probably more complaints, but the airlines lost them. [@CONANOBIEN](#)

Good thing most planes have TVs. Nothing's worse than having to look out the window at Earth's sacred majesty from the point of view of angels. [@PHARMASEAN](#)

Fun tip: Instead of going on vacation with a baby, stand outside until you're sunburned, then light \$1,000 on fire.

[@JULIUSSHARPE](#)

My wife takes 13 bikinis for a four-day beach trip. Meanwhile, I'm rocking the swimming trunks my mom bought at Kmart in 1991. [@BIGHEB7](#)

Kilometers are shorter than miles. Save gas; take your next trip in kilometers. GEORGE CARLIN





# LETTING A *Wildfire* BURN OVER YOU

BY BRIAN MOCKENHAUPT FROM THE ATLANTIC

AMERICA'S DEADLIEST WILDFIRE in recent years started off as a small brush fire, ignited by a lightning strike. It occurred on June 28, 2013, outside of Yarnell, Arizona, population 543. Within hours, it grew from a manageable fire into a raging, unpredictable inferno, trapping a team known as the Granite County Hotshots, 19 men and women trained to fight forest fires.



As the blaze changed direction with unexpected ferocity, the crew members had one chance for survival: lying facedown on the ground, covering themselves with thin aluminum fire shelters, and letting the fire burn over them. Some made it into their shelters, but it didn't matter; the speed and intensity of the fire were too much, and all 19 were killed.

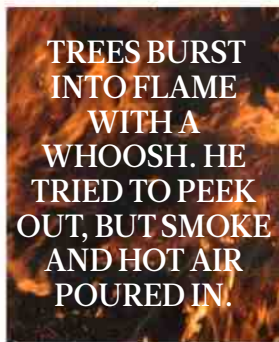
Fire shelters are a last resort. They're made of an outer layer of aluminum foil, backed by a silica weave that reflects heat. When deployed, they are shaped like large cocoons, in part to trap breathable air inside. If you have to use one, chances are you're already in trouble. But fire shelters have saved the lives of hundreds of people and spared hundreds of others from serious burns. Unfortunately, they are also increasingly in demand. Tens of thousands of wildfires crop up each year across the United States, mostly out in the West. Small firefighting crews will easily extinguish the majority. But, as in Yarnell, even minor brush fires can quickly turn into deadly conflagrations.

Lathan Johnson knows all too well how to outmaneuver a wildfire. He is a Colorado firefighter who survived a shelter deployment during the Little Venus Fire, which burned deep in the backcountry of Wyoming's

Shoshone National Forest in July 2006.

"You're not always going to be able to outsmart a fire," Johnson said. "I thought for sure I'd never have to use a fire shelter, and then one day I found myself shaking out one."

It happened when Johnson was overseeing a group assigned to relieve another crew that was monitoring the fire several miles up a river valley. Johnson's crew got a late start and didn't arrive at their destination until the afternoon, the most dangerous time for a wildfire, when the sun is hot, relative humidity is low, and the winds are high. "That's when



bad things happen on a fire," Johnson says. "We call it the witching hour."

In fact, the Wildfire Lessons Learned Center in Tucson, Arizona, studied 115 instances of firefighters trapped by wildfires over the past 20 years and found that half occurred between 2 and 5 p.m. and all but 12 happened between noon and 6 p.m.

Johnson also knew a weather front would pass through sometime in the afternoon, which usually means a shift in wind direction. But spotty radio communication deep in the valley kept him from grasping the change in fire activity until he turned a corner on the trail and saw a massive plume of black smoke several hundred yards



*A firefighter who'd survived under his shelter took this shot of the Little Venus Fire.*

up the canyon. The fire was coming for him and his crew, tearing through stands of bug-killed trees.

Johnson did a quick head count and came up one short. He hadn't noticed that one of his firefighters had panicked and split off from the group a few minutes earlier. They didn't have time to look for her—they couldn't outrun the fire, and if they waited any longer to deploy, they might not have enough time to get under their shelters before the wall of flame washed over them. Between them and the fire was a 30-foot rock face, which would give some protection from the heat and flame.

"We're going to deploy here," Johnson told the crew. For a moment, he saw their fear and disbelief. But then they set to work, reverting to

procedures that they knew well from annual training exercises. Offering the illusion of control, the familiar routine seemed to calm them: Unzip the carrying case, pull out the shelter, and shake it open. Step into it, pull it over your head, and lie down with your face close to the ground, where the air is cleanest and coolest. Use your elbows, knees, and feet to pin the shelter down to counteract winds created by the fire, which might top 60 mph.

A minute or so after Johnson worked himself into his shelter, the first wave of heat and flame and noise swept over him. It lasted about five minutes. The shelters did their jobs well, deflecting most of the fire's radiant heat. He and the others left their shelters to put out some spot fires and to burn other areas of brush to better protect themselves.



Another wave of fire was coming, and they knew it would last much longer than the first. They covered themselves once more. Embers and chunks of debris rained down on Johnson's shelter. From inside, he tried to knock them off while constantly shifting his weight to keep his shelter edges pinned down.

He heard nearby trees burst into flame with a whoosh. He tried to peek out of the shelter, but smoke and hot air poured in. He thought about his missing crew member. How would he explain to her parents that he had let their daughter die?

The firefighters had packed close together, which reduced their overall exposure to heat and put them near enough to talk over the roar of the fire. They tried calming a frantic crew member who wanted to flee, convinced he'd burn to death and would be better off trying to outrun the flames—or just getting the inevitable over with more quickly.

This has happened before, many times. In the midst of a burnover that

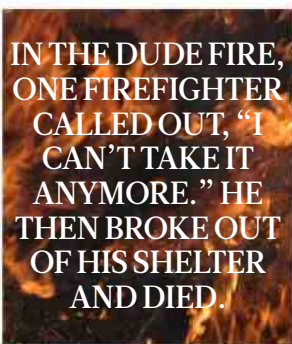
lasted for 15 minutes in the 1990 Dude Fire near Payson, Arizona, firefighter Curtis Springfield called out to his colleagues, "I can't take it anymore." He then broke out of his shelter, sucked hot air into his lungs, and died. The Dude Fire killed five other firefighters who left their shelters or hadn't fully

deployed them. Four firefighters who stayed under their shelters during the burnover survived, most with minor burns.

During the Little Venus Fire, after the flames passed through Johnson's deployment site along the creek, the heat ebbed and the smoke cleared.

Forty-five minutes after the second wave of fire hit them, the nine firefighters emerged from the shelters relatively unscathed, with only a few minor burns.

The missing firefighter had actually deployed her shelter in a rocky streambed, and although she had faced a more intense wall of flame, she was unhurt. **R**



IN THE DUDE FIRE,  
ONE FIREFIGHTER  
CALLED OUT, "I  
CAN'T TAKE IT  
ANYMORE." HE  
THEN BROKE OUT  
OF HIS SHELTER  
AND DIED.

ATLANTIC (MAY 23, 2014), COPYRIGHT © 2014 BY BRIAN MOCKENHAUPT, THEATLANTIC.COM.



## I WROTE A HORROR STORY

It's called "I just lost my phone in my blankets for six minutes."

 @HASHTAG\_STACKS (SAMI STACKS)

# Ask the Expert

## COCHLEAR IMPLANTS – LIFE BEYOND HEARING AIDS

### **Straining to hear each day, even when using powerful hearing aids?**

Feeling frustrated and sometimes even exhausted from listening? Whether it happens suddenly or gradually over time, hearing loss can affect you physically and emotionally.

Cochlear implants work differently than hearing aids. Rather than amplifying sound, they use sophisticated software and state-of-the-art electronic components to provide access to the sounds you've been missing.



*Dr. Thomas Roland, a cochlear implant surgeon and medical advisor to Cochlear, the world leader in cochlear implants, answers questions about cochlear implants and how they are different from hearing aids.*

### **Q: How are cochlear implants different than hearing aids?**

A: Hearing aids help many people by making the sounds they hear louder. Unfortunately as hearing loss progresses, sounds need to not only be made louder but clearer. Cochlear implants can help give you that clarity, especially in noisy environments. Hearing aids are typically worn before a cochlear implant solution is considered.

### **Q: Are cochlear implants covered by Medicare?**

A: Yes, Medicare and most private insurance plans routinely cover cochlear implants.

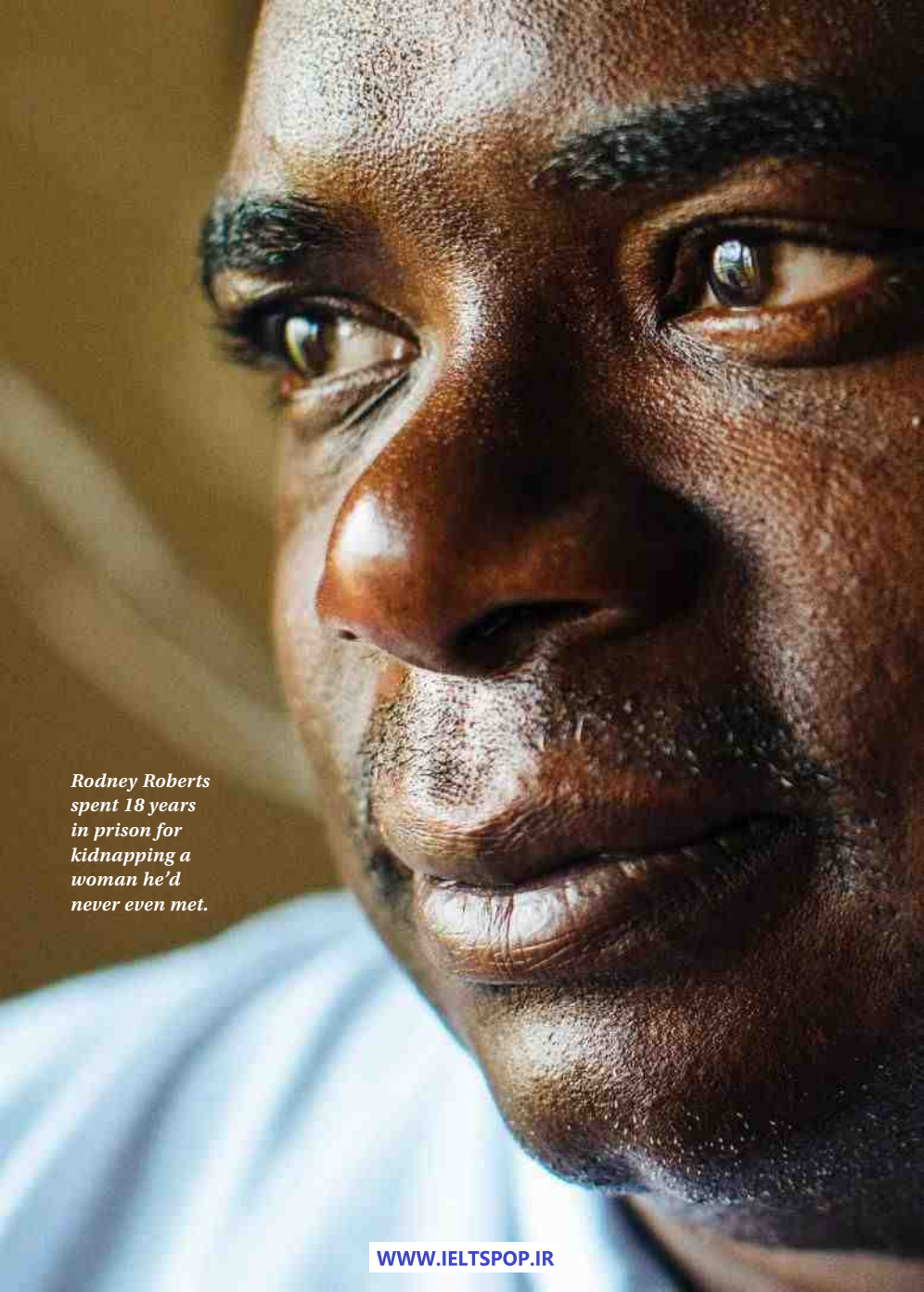
### **Q: What does a cochlear implant system look like?**

A: There are two primary components of the Cochlear™ Nucleus® System, the implant that is surgically placed underneath the skin and the external sound processor. Cochlear offers two wearing options for the sound processor, one that's worn behind the ear – similar to a hearing aid – and the new Kanso™ Sound Processor which is a discreet, off-the-ear hearing solution that's easy to use. The Cochlear Nucleus System advanced technology is designed to help you hear better and understand conversations.

Call **1 800 836 2905** to find a Hearing Implant Specialist near you.

Visit **Cochlear.com/US/RDdigest** for a free guide.



A close-up, high-angle portrait of a Black man with a serious expression. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of his skin and the intensity of his eyes. He is wearing a light blue collared shirt.

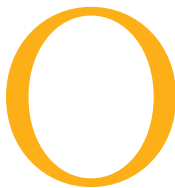
*Rodney Roberts  
spent 18 years  
in prison for  
kidnapping a  
woman he'd  
never even met.*

Plea bargains are surprisingly common—and far from a perfect tool. As many as 160,000 people behind bars may have admitted to crimes they didn't commit.

# WHY DID THIS INNOCENT MAN PLEAD GUILTY?

SARA NAOMI LEWKOWICZ

BY ANTOINE GOLDET FROM *REVEAL*



**ON A STIFLING AFTERNOON** in the summer of 1996, Rodney Roberts pleaded guilty to a kidnapping. He had never met the victim, let alone held her against her will. Yet this is what he told the judge in the cramped Essex County, New Jersey, courtroom. His court-appointed defender had convinced him his only other choice was life in prison.

The state, Roberts was told, had overwhelming evidence that he had raped a teenager. Plead guilty to the lesser charge of kidnapping, he remembers his public defender saying through the bars of the court's packed holding cell, and the charge of aggravated sexual assault will be dropped.

Roberts thought about the jury that had found him guilty—in the same courthouse—of sexual assault and sent him to prison ten years earlier. If he pushed for a trial this time, he feared he would be sent away for decades. He felt trapped by the system, by his past.

"I knew I was innocent," Roberts says today, "but I had to choose the lesser of two evils. It's like you got to pick between Satan and Lucifer."

Roberts's case is far from unique. The year he pleaded guilty to a kidnapping he did not commit, 92 percent of convictions at the criminal court of Essex County rested on plea agreements, according to court data. By the time Roberts had spent 18 years behind bars, that number had risen to 98 percent, meaning that just 2 percent of defendants exercised their constitutional right to a trial by a jury of their peers.

Today, more than 2 million Americans are incarcerated following a plea

agreement. Although the issue has not been widely studied, criminologists estimate that between 2 and 8 percent of convicted felons—from 40,000 to 160,000 people—are innocent of the crimes to which they pleaded guilty, according to federal judge Jed S. Rakoff.

Wrongful convictions like Roberts's aren't the only tragedy in such cases. His plea to a reduced charge of kidnapping closed a case of aggravated sexual assault, and police stopped searching for the perpetrator. That left the 17-year-old victim continuing to walk the same streets as her rapist.

**THE CASE BEGAN** in the early morning hours of May 8, 1996. A teenager—identified as S. A. in court documents—was walking down a street in Newark toward her aunt's house when she sensed she was being followed. As she continued along the edge of Fairmount Cemetery, a man put his hand over her mouth, grabbed her neck, and, she later told police, threatened to "blow her head off" if she screamed.

The man dragged her into an empty parking lot and raped her, said the teen. She described her attacker as a

dark-skinned man, 170 pounds and 20 years old, wearing a black-and-red T-shirt, a black hat, and brown boots, according to the police report.

Seventeen days later, police arrested Roberts a few blocks away from the crime scene. At that time, Roberts, 29, worked part-time in a law office and also as a salesman.

A street-racing enthusiast, he and a friend recently had gone in on a secondhand yellow-and-black Kawasaki. They soon argued over who owned the bike. Tensions rose. A police car pulled up in front of the two men. ("I'm actually the one who called the police," Roberts says today.) The officer asked the pair for their names and walked back to his patrol vehicle. When he returned, his tone had changed.

"Put your hands behind your back! You're being arrested," Roberts remembers the officer shouting at him.

Roberts was handcuffed and pushed into the squad car. At the police station, an officer said he was being detained for a parole violation. About a week later, Roberts was transferred to the county jail.

**H**E WAS FAMILIAR with captivity. At 19, he had been convicted of aggravated sexual assault. That victim, a 32-year-old

Newark woman, testified that Roberts was one of three men who stole her new car and raped her in January 1986. Today Roberts maintains he was the lookout, but a jury found him guilty. He got 20 years and was paroled after seven.

After he was released, Roberts moved in with his girlfriend and their son, Rodney Jr., born while his father was behind bars.

Starting a new life in New Jersey proved difficult. Roberts moved to North Carolina and found a job unloading trucks for a tire company on Fayetteville's docks, which helped him build

a small nest egg.

On his return to New Jersey a few months later, he found a paralegal position and worked at a menswear store on the side. But since leaving for North Carolina, Roberts had failed to report to his parole officer, a condition of his early release.

Now, under arrest, he knew he could be reincarcerated for the parole violation (the sentence would have been 20 months). But he hoped working two jobs and taking care of his son might be mitigating factors.

It was not until police took him to the Essex County Courthouse for arraignment that Roberts began to realize his predicament was far worse: A

“*I knew I was innocent,” Roberts says, “but I had to choose the lesser of two evils.”*”

grand jury had indicted him not only for violating parole and stealing the motorcycle but also for sexually assaulting a teenage girl.

From his hallway holding cell, he told anyone who would listen that the police had arrested the wrong guy.

When the time came, Roberts refused to enter the courtroom, but from the hallway he could still hear the judge read the charges against him. He entered his plea from the hallway too: not guilty. Bail was set at \$50,000.

**A FEW WEEKS LATER**, he was on the jail bus headed back to the Superior Court of New Jersey. A public defender, Charles Martone, introduced himself through the holding-cell bars.

Roberts asked Martone the basis for the sexual assault charge. Martone asked him what kind of plea deal he would accept. "I'm not taking a deal; I'm not guilty," Roberts responded.

Martone returned 20 minutes later with bad news. He had just talked with the teenage rape victim. She knew Roberts from their Newark neighborhood, Roberts recalls Martone saying, and had identified him as her rapist in a photo lineup.

She's inside the courtroom, Martone added, ready to testify against you. His attorney made Roberts's choice clear: We work out a deal or you go to jail for the rest of your life.

Roberts remembered the stern faces of the jury when another judge read a

guilty verdict back in 1986, convicting him of sexual assault at 19. He felt he had lost the presumption of innocence.

The Essex County public defender's and prosecutor's offices both declined to comment on Roberts's case. But Georgia State University law professor Russell Covey, an expert on pleas, said this is a common quandary for past offenders.

"Prosecutors can induce those with criminal records to enter guilty pleas in cases where the evidence would not be strong enough to convince a first-time offender to give up his right to trial," Covey said. As Roberts understood the deal being offered to him, the prosecutor would dismiss the sexual assault charge and downgrade the kidnapping charge.

"My attorney said the judge would put on the record that no one got hurt," he says. "That was the part that made me consider pleading guilty to a crime I didn't commit."

The sentence, seven years in prison, was handed down by the judge on October 17, 1996.

**AFTER HIS PLEA DEAL** and conviction, Roberts's life changed overnight. The mother of his son broke up with him. His son began struggling with depression. Rodney Jr. says now, "I believed the whole point of him staying locked up was because he didn't want to deal with me."

A few months into his sentence,

Roberts found something disturbing in his paperwork: The prison had classified him as a sex offender.

He started asking prisoners for advice. Word spread rapidly, and groups of inmates started calling him names, isolating him, and beating him up, as they did with others identified as child molesters. Roberts fought back. As a result, he estimates he spent more than 700 days in solitary confinement.

His first parole hearing came three and a half years into his term, in May 2000. He was brought into a room where two people sat on one side of a long table while a third observed him remotely, via videoconference.

When the parole board member on the small screen alluded to the sexual nature of his crime, Roberts answered that the judge had dismissed the sexual assault charge.

"I didn't plead guilty to that," Roberts remembers protesting.

"This is what we have to go by at this point," replied another panelist, pushing a copy of the police report of the 1996 rape across the table toward Roberts.

Roberts would not admit to the crime or express remorse, both things parole boards listen for as they assess whether prison time has changed a person. His parole request was denied.

Back in his prison cell, Roberts felt as though he had been double-crossed by the justice system. He decided to take matters into his own hands. In January 2001, more than

halfway through his seven-year sentence, he filed a motion to withdraw his guilty plea.

"I had no faith in public defenders at that point," Roberts says. "I had to be my own lawyer." Using the prison library's IBM typewriter, he had copied the format of a model motion from a law textbook. Within a few days, the motion was denied.



*Essex County  
Courthouse in  
Newark, New Jersey*

## PLEADING OUT

■ In Essex County, New Jersey, where Roberts was charged, 98 percent of federal criminal defendants plea-bargain, about the same as the average nationwide.

■ Plea bargains are widely considered a by-product of overtaxed courts. To combat that, New York City capped the number of cases (400 misdemeanors or 150 felonies) assigned to any one lawyer in a year.

■ Another solution: Unclog the courts by focusing on mental health and drug treatment for low-level offenders. That's the mission of Law Enforcement Leaders, an organization of police chiefs, district and U.S. attorneys, and other top law enforcement officials.



Realizing he might have to serve the whole term, Roberts began spending most days at the library, studying for a paralegal degree from a distance-learning school and contesting his sex offender status.

**I**N 2003, now at the end of his seven-year sentence, Roberts stood in the courtyard outside his cell with other inmates waiting to be released. When a warden called out a name, that prisoner stepped to the side and walked to freedom.

Name after name was called. Finally, Roberts alone was left. He asked the guards sitting in the glass booth that controls the prison's doors: "Did you forget me?"

He would not learn until the next day that the civil division of the attorney general's office of Cumberland County, New Jersey, had lodged a detainer against him—a red flag suggesting he should not be released.

Instead, he was shackled and driven to a prison unit in Avenel, New Jersey, that housed criminals deemed too sexually dangerous to be free. A new, indefinite civil commitment was the price for his steadfastly refusing to admit remorse for a rape he didn't commit.

After two years in Avenel—now nine years behind bars—Roberts got

his first piece of genuinely good news. An investigator from the office of the public advocate named Ronald Price had unearthed a new lead: He had tracked down S. A., the rape victim, and interviewed her.

She had told him that she "did not even know anyone had been arrested for the crime" and denied ever having identified Roberts as her attacker from a mug shot or a lineup, according to the transcript of her interview.

Going through the case, Price also noticed the police report mentioned a rape kit. There was no record of what was found in it or of

Roberts being asked to supply a DNA sample.

Once again, Roberts got to work. In 2006, he filed a petition with the Essex Vicinage Superior Court asking to withdraw his guilty plea to the kidnapping charge based on new evidence—or actually the lack of physical evidence tying him to the related rape that had landed him in a sex offender civil commitment program. Once again, the judge denied his motion.

It took two appeals and two more years of Roberts toiling away in the Avenel prison library for the court to agree to reassess the validity of his conviction "in the presence of all parties." That meant that the victim and



*The choice  
was clear:  
Work out a deal  
or go to jail  
for the rest of  
your life.*

the man who had been convicted of charges related to her rape would face each other in court for the first time.

**W**HEN THAT DAY CAME, in 2010, S. A. said she didn't recognize Roberts.

"I want to know: Why did you confess to something that you didn't do to me?" she asked him. The court's rules prevented him from answering her.

The public defender who had represented Roberts in 1996 also testified. Charles Martone recalled the large backlog at the pretrial disposition court, but he didn't remember anything about Roberts or his case.

"I was assigned to go through that backlog, offer plea offers that the state gave me to the individuals, advise them that this was the lowest plea offer," he testified. "If they were guilty, they could decide to take it. If they were not, to take the case to a trial."

His workload was overwhelming, he said, forcing him to divide his attention among up to 120 cases on any given day. But Martone said he never would have misled a client.

For the third time, Roberts appealed. The case was assigned to a new judge and finally to a new lawyer. In 2013, Roberts—now 17 years behind bars—met Michael Pastacaldi, a young private attorney who handles cases from the state on a contract basis. He wasn't convinced of Roberts's innocence.

"Why would someone plead guilty to something they didn't do?" he remembers thinking. "It sounded like sour grapes."

But the lawyer put aside his skepticism. He called the prosecutor's office to ask whether a rape kit existed.

"He was the most persistent lawyer I ever had," Roberts says.

On May 16, 2013, the Essex County prosecutor's office ordered investigators to look for the missing rape kit. Just a month later, they hit pay dirt at the New Jersey State Police lab: the original kit, still sealed.

Three months later, Pastacaldi received a call from the prosecutor's office: The tests were positive for semen, but it had never been tested for DNA. Pastacaldi filed a motion for DNA testing, and in September he got the call that would change everything. The DNA wasn't Roberts's.

**O**N MARCH 14, 2014, Roberts was finally freed. When he talks today about the police who arrested him, the public defenders who failed to prove his innocence, and the judges who kept him locked up for 18 years, no sign of resentment crosses his still-boyish face. Instead, to Roberts, the system that by design deprives the vast majority of defendants of their right to a trial—not its foot soldiers—is the guilty party. "Over the years, it started to become less and less about me," he says. **R**

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# WHO ? KNEW

## 13 Things Pet Stores Won't Tell You

BY MICHELLE CROUCH

**1** Yes, that guinea pig or hamster is relatively inexpensive, but if you buy a \$20 animal, we know you will probably spend another \$100 on the cage or tank, grooming tools, food, bed, toys, and treats—plus you'll be back every month to restock.

**2** Animals pee and poop in our store all the time—that's why all the products on our lower shelves are sealed in plastic! We don't mind—as long as you tell us. You wouldn't believe how many people let their pets make a mess and just keep walking.

**3** It's true: You may find lower prices for pet food in big-box stores or online (though beware of shipping fees that hike up the price).



But most of us have great sales and loyalty programs, and many stores (including PetSmart) will match prices for identical products.

**4** Do as we say, not as we do. Many cages and tanks in stores are overcrowded or smaller than what we recommend. We justify this because the animals are small when we get them and don't stay with us for long.

**5** Unless your dog or cat has allergies or a medical condition, it probably doesn't need a premium, higher-priced pet food. If you truly want to ensure your pet's long-term health, focus more on how much you feed it (and keeping it at a healthy weight) and less on the label.

**6** Don't handle your small animal (hamster, bird, etc.) for a few days after you get it home. Give it time to adjust to its new environment.

**7** If we sell puppies, chances are they came from a puppy mill, even if we say our animals come from "USDA-certified" breeders. (USDA standards are minimal, and the department rarely cites violations, according to a 2010 review by its Office of Inspector General.) About half of the 2 million puppies bred in mills are sold in pet stores, according to the Humane Society of the United States.

**8** Animals do escape. When our juvenile ball python got out, it took us five hours to find it and coax it back into its cage—while the store was open. Of course, we didn't speak a word of that to our customers.

**9** Don't be surprised if the pet we sold you has parasites, a respiratory infection, or a more serious disease. Animals often won't show symptoms until you get them home.

Many states have "lemon laws" to protect owners, and some stores have warranties or return policies. So it's a good idea to get your animal checked out by a vet right away ...

**10** ... But maybe not by one of ours. Some vets who are contracted to work with pet-store chains (or even offer free exams at the pet shop) may be hesitant to point out health issues because they don't want to lose business from the store.

**11** Our employees might tell you that this animal is the sweetest or that one is the most playful, but keep in mind there's a lot of turnover and most stores have weekly or monthly sales goals. Take what the staff says with a grain of salt, and interact with the animal yourself.

**12** Want to save money on food or bedding? Ask us for a bulk discount. Some of us will give you a deal, especially if you're a regular.

**13** Please don't look at the rats with disgust. They have great attitudes, love interaction, and really bond with their owners. They're one of the best small pets we carry. **R**

Sources: Eden Strong, a former employee of two pet stores in Chicago; Jorge Bendersky, a groomer and former employee of an independent pet store; a former employee of a large pet-store chain; a current employee of a large pet-store chain; an assistant manager at a pet nutrition store; and an employee of an independent pet store in North Carolina



# The Truth About That White Dress (and 7 Other Wedding Traditions)

BY BRANDON SPEKTOR

■ **Why do brides usually stand on the left?** The popular theory points back to ancient Greece and the days of marriage by capture, when a groom literally stole his bride from her family home. The groom typically held the bride with his left hand, keeping his right hand free to draw his sword. Even today, bride-napping remains a problem in some countries.

■ **Why is he called the *best man*?** The groom had help in his escapades. Some grooms purportedly assembled raiding parties, often composed of fellow bachelors and

their trusted best pals to take charge of the abduction. The best man was literally the best man with a sword, whose sole purpose was to aid and defend the groom during the risky capture attempt.

■ **Why do bridesmaids dress alike?** In Roman times, bridesmaids reportedly dressed not only like one another but also like the bride. The goal was to camouflage the bride among her maids to better protect her from being captured on her wedding day—or from evil spirits attempting to crash the party and poison her union.



### ■ Why do brides wear veils?

If an evil spirit did come looking to curse the couple, a veil helped hide the bride's identity. It also hid her face from her husband. In cultures in which arranged marriages were standard, it didn't hurt to conceal a bride's identity from her betrothed until the deal was sealed, just in case he had second thoughts at the altar.

### ■ Why do brides hold bouquets?


What's more romantic than roses and lilies? How about garlic and dill? Bridal bouquets used to be all herbal, likely originating in the time of the Great Plague, when daily health rituals included clutching garlic-scented cloths over one's nose and washing one's clothes in garlic vinegar to repel disease. Over time, as hygiene improved, brides added better-smelling blooms to their arrangements.

### ■ Why do brides wear white?

Queen Victoria can be thanked for popularizing the Christmas tree, the

catchphrase "We are not amused," and, yes, the white wedding dress. It had long been a tradition among British nobility to wear fabric embroidered in silver and gold on one's wedding day. Victoria bucked the trend by commissioning an extravagant white gown ornamented with flowers, probably to stand out in the crowd and show off her intricate lace embellishments. Her bridesmaids followed suit, and an engraved portrait of the ceremony helped spread the queen's fabulous image far and wide.

■ **Why does the father "give away" the bride?** Once upon a time, women were considered chattel, or human property. In some societies, a prospective groom paid a price to the lucky lady's parents in order to liberate her from their ownership. The custom of the father walking the bride down the aisle symbolized the transfer of authority from father to husband.

■ **Why did the fourth digit come to be the "ring finger"?** Egyptian rings of love were worn on the fourth finger of the left hand, which was believed to have a vein, later named *vena amoris*, that ran directly to the heart. (This is no great achievement; all veins in the hand connect to the heart.) Other names for this finger throughout history: heart finger, annular finger, and leech finger. Dearly beloved, take your pick. 



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# Word Power

*With springtime buds galloping toward the summer growing season, we decided to look at words related to forward movement and progress. See how much headway you can make, then proceed to the next page for answers.*

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

**1. expedite** ('ek-spuh-dite) *v.*—  
A: speed along. B: diversify.  
C: transport.

**2. catalyst** ('ka-tuh-lihst) *n.*—  
A: great leap. B: milestone.  
C: agent of change.

**3. anabasis** (uh-'na-buh-sis) *n.*—  
A: military advance. B: ground-  
breaking idea. C: executive decision.

**4. fructify** ('fruhk-tuh-fie) *v.*—  
A: branch out. B: skyrocket.  
C: bear fruit.

**5. instigate** ('in-stih-gayt) *v.*—  
A: incite. B: set goals.  
C: enact as law.

**6. synergy** ('sih-ner-jee) *n.*—  
A: enthusiasm for change.  
B: combined action. C: lack of drive.

**7. watershed** ('wah-ter-shed) *n.*—  
A: sudden loss. B: turning point.  
C: reserve of strength.

**8. precipitately** (prih-'sih-puh-  
tayt-lee) *adv.*—A: very cautiously.  
B: sequentially. C: with reckless  
haste.

**9. entrepreneur** (ahn-truh-preh-  
'nyoor) *n.*—A: gatekeeper.  
B: business starter. C: social  
climber.

**10. stratagem** ('stra-tuh-jem) *n.*—  
A: level of success. B: smooth move.  
C: clever plan.


**11. aggrandize** (uh-'gran-dize) *v.*—  
A: enlarge. B: inspire with words.  
C: replace.

**12. vaticinate** (vuh-'tih-sih-nayt)  
*v.*—A: steer to completion.  
B: predict. C: become holier.

**13. avant-garde** (ah-vahnt-'gard)  
*adj.*—A: fearless. B: on the leading  
edge. C: well-planned.

**14. incremental** (ihn-kruh-'mehn-  
tuhl) *adj.*—A: time-saving. B: step-  
by-step. C: using brain waves.

**15. propagate** ('prah-puh-gayt) *v.*—  
A: support. B: prosper. C: spread.

 To play an interactive version of Word Power on your iPad, download the Reader's Digest app.

## Answers

- 1. expedite**—[A] speed along. Would a note with Mr. Hamilton's likeness *expedite* the delivery?
- 2. catalyst**—[C] agent of change. The ambassador's speech was the main *catalyst* for this peace agreement.
- 3. anabasis**—[A] military advance. The general's brilliantly planned *anabasis* forced the enemies to retreat.
- 4. fructify**—[C] bear fruit. "Our efforts will *fructify*," said Holmes to Watson, "if we trace these footprints."
- 5. instigate**—[A] incite. My sister is the most argumentative person I know—she's always *instigating* a fight.
- 6. synergy**—[B] combined action. All the king's horses and all the king's men are working in *synergy* to reassemble Humpty Dumpty.
- 7. watershed**—[B] turning point. Kira's divorce was a *watershed* in her life—not long after, she changed careers and moved across the country.
- 8. precipitately**—[C] with reckless haste. In a three-legged race, it is never wise to start *precipitately*.

### GO FARTHER OR GO FURTHER?

These near-synonyms cause a lot of confusion, but here's an easy way to know which to use: If you're talking about measurable, physical distance, use *farther*, as in, "How much farther is the station?" But if you're talking about a figurative distance, use *further*, as in, "If you pester me any further, I won't drive you any farther."

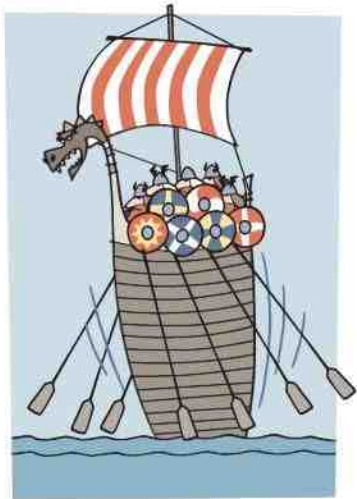
- 9. entrepreneur**—[B] business starter. An *entrepreneur* even as a toddler, Nicki once sold her dollhouse to a schoolmate for \$100.
- 10. stratagem**—[C] clever plan. Harold tried various *stratagems* before he finally caught the raccoon that was eating his garbage.
- 11. aggrandize**—[A] enlarge. Carlos used his hefty bonus to *aggrandize* his collection of Rolex watches.
- 12. vaticinate**—[B] predict. It's so difficult to *vaticinate* the weather this time of year, so I always carry a sweater.
- 13. avant-garde**—[B] on the leading edge. Is Elaine's writing style *avant-garde* or just incoherent?
- 14. incremental**—[B] step-by-step. The pharaoh was impatient with the *incremental* progress on his latest pyramid.

- 15. propagate**—[C] spread. Uncle Joe is having a tough time *propagating* his flat-Earth theory.

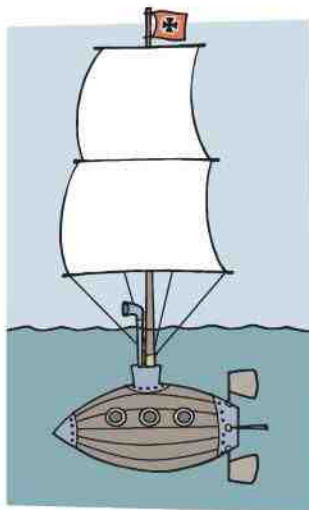
### VOCABULARY RATINGS

- 9 & below:** getting started  
**10-12:** chugging along  
**13-15:** smooth sailing

# Humor in Uniform



*The Viking tall ship, created in AD 50, was one reason the Viking Age didn't begin until several centuries later.*



*Despite the Germans' legendary engineering, their U-boats in the Age of Sail were, frankly, not very stealthy.*

*The Marines have drill instructors, the Army has drill sergeants, and the Navy has chief petty officers. Whatever the name, they all specialize in making their recruits' lives interesting.*

**I WAS MOPPING** the squad bay when the drill instructor ran in. He stopped short, stuck his hand into the bucket of sudsy water, took a taste, and barked "Needs more soap" before running off.

**MY D.I. PUT** the whole "no such thing as a stupid question" thing perfectly. He told us, "There's no such thing as a stupid question, but some questions come with push-ups."

**A RECRUIT** interrupted roll call to observe, "Chief, there's a bunny rabbit behind you." Chief, teeth gritted, responded, "Is it armed?" Source: reddit.com

**Your military anecdote might be worth \$\$\$! For details, go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).**



# Quotable Quotes

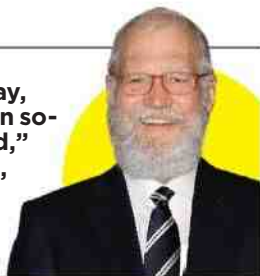


Lately all my friends are worried that they're turning into their fathers. I'm worried that I'm not.

**DAN ZEVIN**, author

Somebody will say, "Remember when so-and-so happened," and I'll say, "Jeez, I sure don't."

**DAVID LETTERMAN**, comedian



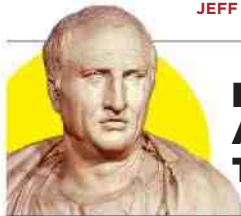
My grandmother always used to say, "If you've got a dollar, there's plenty to share."

**RIHANNA**, musician

Don't laugh at other people. When you do, the people around you naturally wonder whether you sometimes laugh at them.

**JEFF HADEN**, writer

IF PEOPLE FOUGHT SIN AS HARD AS THEY DO MIDDLE AGE, EARTH WOULD BE A MORAL PARADISE. **HAL BOYLE**, columnist



**IF YOU HAVE A GARDEN AND A LIBRARY, YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED.** **CICERO**, Roman philosopher

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# AMANDA QUICK

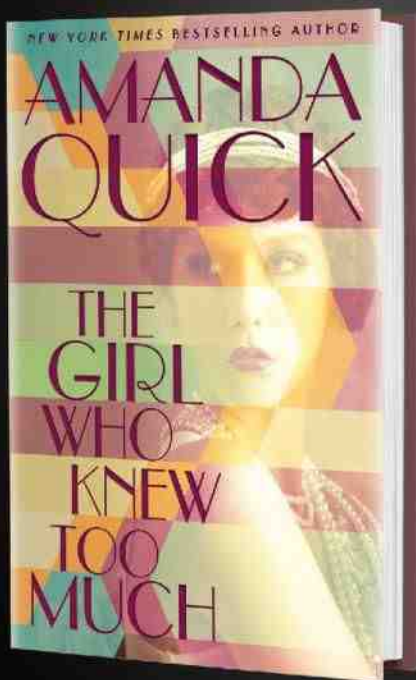


Photo: Marc von Borstel

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