Compliments of Joseph C. Collins

start HEALTHY

ISSUE 54

self-care STAGING AT HOME



Joseph C. Collins
Insurance Associate

THINK YOU'RE COVERED?

AMERICAN
INSURANCE GROUP, INC.

SCAN TO SEE COMMON GAPS IN COVERAGE.

Front of Tear Out Card 1



AMERICAN
INSURANCE GROUP, INC.



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Back of Tear Out Card 1

RIGATONI
alla vodka

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

- 14 oz. rigatoni or penne
- 2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1½ tbsp. Calabrian chili paste
- ½ c. concentrated puree (tomato paste)
- ½ c. vodka
- 1 c. pouring cream
- ¼ tsp. white sugar
- ¾ c. finely grated parmesan, plus extra to serve

Recipe from ***Eat NYC: Iconic Recipes That Feed the City*** by Yasmin Newman. Smith Street Books, 2024. Photography by Alan Benson.

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Bring a large saucepan of salted water to the boil. Add the pasta and cook for 2 minutes less than recommended on the packet.

2/ Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a large deep saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes, or until soft. Season well with salt and pepper, then add the garlic and chili paste and cook, stirring, for 1 minute, or until fragrant.

3/ Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes, or until slightly darkened and thickened. Pour in the vodka and cook for 2 minutes, or until reduced slightly. Stir in the cream and sugar and cook for a further 2 minutes, or until well combined.

4/ Drain the pasta, reserving 1 c. of the cooking water. Add the pasta and half the cooking water to the sauce and bring to a simmer, gently tossing the pasta to combine. Add the parmesan and remaining cooking water and cook, tossing gently, until the pasta is al dente and the sauce is just thickened. Remove from the heat and season with salt and pepper.

5/ Divide the pasta among bowls and scatter with extra parmesan to serve.

*start*HEALTHY

ISSUE 54

Dear Bill and Judy,

As the fresh energy of the season settles into your routine, this issue of Start Healthy invites you to rethink what meaningful changes you can make in your life. Often, this doesn't require that you make sweeping changes but consistent, focused ones each day. Within these pages, you'll discover how small shifts rooted in intention can lead to meaningful, lasting well-being.

Rather than waiting for the perfect moment to overhaul your routine, consider focusing on how to build strength, balance, and resilience over time. As highlighted in the feature on daily movement, even small efforts, such as standing, stretching, and carrying groceries with intention, can shape how your body feels and functions.

This issue also reveals how different geographical areas, from coastal retreats to desert oases, can influence the way you rest and recharge. Whether you're traveling or simply seeking inspiration, these perspectives can help you create your own sense of balance wherever you are.

Closer to home, you'll find thoughtful ideas for self-care that can transform your everyday spaces into sources of comfort and renewal. The enclosed strategies encourage you to be more mindful about nurturing your health at home.

As you move through this season, may you welcome the ever-present opportunities to improve yourself. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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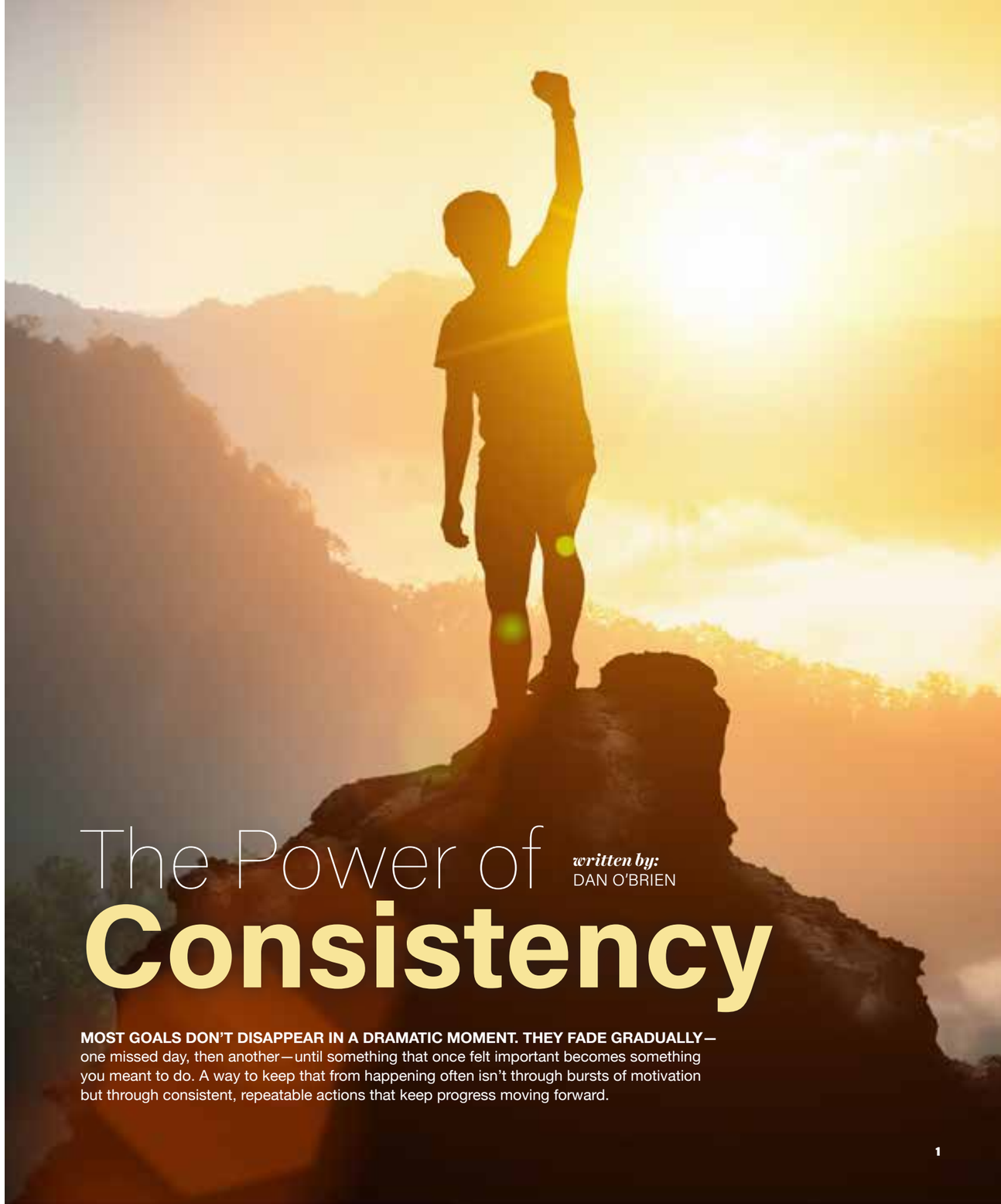

The Power of Consistency

written by: DAN O'BRIEN

MOST GOALS DON'T DISAPPEAR IN A DRAMATIC MOMENT. THEY FADE GRADUALLY— one missed day, then another—until something that once felt important becomes something you meant to do. A way to keep that from happening often isn't through bursts of motivation but through consistent, repeatable actions that keep progress moving forward.

HOW OBJECTIVES **WITHER**

In the beginning, your intention is clear. You imagine how the weeks ahead will look, and for a few days, that picture carries you. Then life gets in the way, as it always seems to, and your to-do list grows.

You tell yourself it's temporary. So you allow your ambitious goals to be put on hold for a while.

THE CRUX OF THE **PROBLEM**

This is the point where many goals just fade away. The reason? The plan often depends on perfect conditions: a full hour, the right time of day, or even just having enough energy to start. And when those conditions disappear, the enthusiasm disappears with them and a routine is never established.

Instead of abandoning your goals entirely, though, another option is to make the action more manageable. For example, rather than trying to commit to the gym five days a week, consider circling the block before coming inside or getting ten minutes of movement first thing in the morning.

While these alternatives don't resemble the ambitious version of the routine you imagined at the beginning, they serve a different, and important, purpose: keeping the line from going slack. Such actions maintain continuity and keep the habit alive long enough for life to settle again.

CONSISTENCY AND **ADAPTABILITY**

Over time, these seemingly minor efforts can change your day-to-day pattern. Weeks pass, and the routine stops feeling like something you're trying to start. It becomes something that simply happens. Eventually, your original goal returns.

Progress frequently survives through consistency, not perfection. When time disappears and energy runs low, the solution is to shorten the distance between intention and action.



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All photos inside are provided by Getty Images unless noted.

self-care *STAGING AT HOME*

written by: ANDRE RIOS

IF YOU THINK OF GOOD INTERIOR design as purely refinement, you may be surprised. Style can also be about surrounding yourself with the features that make you feel healthier and happier. Take a look at these ideas for imbuing your home with decorative objects and impactful elements that can help you live better.

Bring the indoors outside

Spending time in nature is unquestionably linked with better mental and physical health. In fact, the National Park Service reports that visiting a park for just thirty minutes can positively impact your heart health, circulation, and blood pressure. But you don't have to load up your car and a backpack to enjoy these nature benefits. If you have a backyard or balcony, you're footsteps away from fresh air.





Just take some indoor comforts outdoors so you feel more motivated to soak up its enriching vibes. Choose a scenic spot in your yard, and decorate it with some outdoor-safe furniture, an end table for setting down a drink or book, and an umbrella for shade. Select items in soothing, cool colors like white and blue for a relaxing ambience or vibrant, tropical ones like light green and sunny yellow for a hosting-ready space.

Give your bathroom a spa vibe

You don't have to check in to a hotel to get some R and R. In a few steps, you can bring that indulgent atmosphere into your own bathroom. Start by swapping your showerhead for a rainfall model, and make any repairs that might make the space feel less than luxurious, like reapplying tile grout or replacing lime-laden fixtures. And keeping the room clean and sanitized weekly will make it feel more comforting and preserve its materials' longevity.

Next, stock up on spa supplies, including a wooden bath caddy and waffle-weave bath sheets for wrapping yourself in a warm hug. Then dispense your soaps, shampoos, bath soaks, and other products into matching glass containers for satisfyingly neat style. Add aromatherapy via scent diffusers and calming music via a waterproof portable speaker, and your hygiene routine will feel like visiting a high-end resort (likely for less money too).

Include tech-free zones

As helpful as electronics can be for everything from work to recreation, you should carve screenless time into your routine. Unplugging can reset your mind throughout the day and improve your rest at night while also helping you detach from common sources of stress, like your work inbox or the news.

Although your bed is an obvious candidate for going tech-free, you'll need additional spots as well. According to sleepfoundation.org, extended use of blue-light devices doesn't just affect your rest right before bed; prolonged sessions, especially in the evening, can actually interrupt your sleep. So think of at least one other area of your home you can make screenless, such as your family dining table.

Create a reading nook

Here's an excellent idea for a tech-free zone. To keep your mind sharp and revisit a timeless hobby, craft a space dedicated to the written word. This can resemble anything from a minimalist spa to a traditional library, but you'll need these fundamentals: convenient access to your collection, a spot to set down a cozy drink like coffee or tea, and a comfortable seat with plush accoutrements that make you feel cozy. Drop in a few houseplants too; they create a naturally soothing ambience and may improve your mood.

If you aren't the most avid novel reader, this relaxation zone can still be useful! Dedicate it to an enriching hobby like knitting, sketching, or doing crossword puzzles instead.

Re-create childlike magic

Children of the '80s and '90s likely remember the whimsical trend of dressing their bedroom ceiling with a sea of glow-in-the-dark stars. And though those days may be long past, you can still recapture that magic in a more decidedly adult fashion.

Try adding imaginative touches to your home relaxation zone, such as colorful tapestries draped across the ceiling or neon LED wall panels in geometric patterns. If you have children, you also have every excuse to cuddle up with them in a play tent—a more permanent, better-structured version of the classic blanket fort—in a bedroom or play area. Finding ways to indulge your sense of wonder is an excellent way to bond with loved ones and de-stress from adult worries, allowing these feelings to slip away. It can even help with cognitive health as the years pass.



Self-care style secrets

Here are some soothing decor secrets that top design experts recommend:

- Add touches of bright color, like fresh flowers or gem-toned hardware, to each room for a joyful feel.
- Don't oversimplify—minimalistic rooms could feel clinical, so pepper in patterns and items of personal value into each space.
- Consider scent as an additional layer of design, including aromatic plants, diffusers, or even an occasional spray of perfume (a technique luxury hotels use!).
- Layer window treatments with sheer curtains or shades under thick drapes. That way, you can expose outdoor views, filter sunlight, or experience privacy depending on the time of day.

the geography OF WELLNESS

written by: ANTHONY COFFMAN

THE UNIQUE GEOGRAPHY OF THE United States does more than provide a backdrop for travel. It can also shape the way people rest, recover, and relieve stress. From the silent, sun-baked expanses of the Southwest to history-tinged, seasonal adventures in the Northeast, nature dictates the pace of restoration.

Whether you find peace in the stillness of a desert or clarity in the salt air of a coastal forest, the landscape serves as the primary architect of the experience. Take a look at how wellness varies alongside our nation's geography, with properties offering you calm, natural immersion with a distinct local personality.

COURTESY OF GOLDEN DOOR

Golden Door



The Ranch Malibu

the pacific coast:

TRANQUILITY IN WARMER TEMPERATURES

Out west, wellness takes on a different definition. Coastal and forested retreats look to lush nature and rich soil to inspire a sense of indulgent self-care. Along the California coast, retreats wash you in ultimate luxury. From the trees and rock formations to the rushing waves, nature is present virtually everywhere, granting visitors a sense of ease and treating them to wonderful local cuisine.

Golden Door

At this Southern California oasis, wellness is woven into six hundred acres of private gardens, trails, and minimalist architecture with Japanese influences. Daytime balances guided classes, spa treatments focused on beauty enhancements, and time for wandering outdoors, creating space for both structure and solitude. Meanwhile, nights are spent enjoying nutritious meals then resting in luxuriously appointed accommodations.

The Ranch Malibu

Follow the coast north to find an alternate site with a more immersive approach to wellness, pairing ocean-adjacent landscapes with a highly structured healing program. Visitors should be prepared for long hikes, mindful movement, and primarily plant-based meals designed to work in tandem, using the surrounding mountains and coastal air to support an expert-based approach to physical reset and mental clarity.

the southwest:

SERENITY IN THE STONES

In this warm and vibrant region, retreats build their desert sanctuaries for absolute stillness: a sense of quiet from visual noise and seclusion from urban stress. These regional accommodations rely on this calm ambience to encourage you to turn inward.

Castle Hot Springs

This Arizona oasis looks to some of nature's oldest tools for healing. Geothermal mineral waters bubble up from the earth, anchoring experiences that revolve around soaking, gentle-movement classes, and outdoor meditation. The surrounding desert and mountains keep distractions at bay, making it easier to settle into a slower rhythm and enjoy immersive activities on the property.

Amangiri

Farther north, near the Arizona border, a contemporary destination rises from the Utah desert as if carved directly from the landscape. Here, wellness unfolds against dramatic rock formations and expansive skies. Sunrise yoga and personalized spa treatments draw on the grounding qualities of the land, while the silence itself can feel restorative. Just as the desert sets a calm pace, you may feel unhurried and unhindered by the stresses of daily life.



Castle Hot Springs



Amangiri

COURTESY OF THE RANCH MALIBU, CASTLE HOT SPRINGS, AMANGIRI

Lake Austin Spa Resort

COURTESY OF LAKE AUSTIN SPA RESORT



Lake Austin Spa Resort

the rocky mountains:
HEALING THROUGH ACTION

Up in the elevated reaches of the continental United States, wellness is not necessarily about pure stillness. Rather, it asks something of you. Higher elevations can change how you breathe and move, and retreats here often lean into that awareness, making effort like rigorous hikes part of the healing process while following it up with intentional recovery.

Devil's Thumb Ranch Resort & Spa
Don't let the sinister name fool you. Located just forty minutes away from Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, this escape challenges you to find relief in exertion, enjoying alpine activities like horseback riding, zip-lining, and cross-country skiing seasonally. Once you've broken a sweat, cleanse and unwind in a spa featuring mineral therapy, a remedy soak, and more.

Sage Lodge
A self-proclaimed key to adventure, this Montana resort combines daytime experiences like tours of nearby Yellowstone with calming, restorative experiences, including infrared treatments and red-light masks. And while the geography here is rugged, many of the property's experiences look to the surroundings to inspire calm, including naturalist tours for learning about the landscape and stargazing under a tremendous sky.

the south:
RELAX IN TRANQUIL CALM

In this region, wellness is often characterized by old-fashioned hospitality. Retreats tend to feel nurturing, shaped by slower rhythms, a relaxed pace in the hot sun, and a preference for getting to know other guests.

Lake Austin Spa Resort
Located in Texas's famously floral and warm Hill Country, this retreat encourages you to reset by the water and strike up conversation with companions. Complement this time with group yoga sessions, sound baths, and spa treatments coupled with nourishing meals rooted in regional agriculture. The experience feels restorative while allowing you to explore the grounds, centering your overall experience in comfort and care.

Carillon Miami Wellness Resort
For a different energy, check into a tropical retreat that blends comprehensive wellness programming with ocean views and a vibrant coastal setting. Hydrotherapy circuits, private training classes, and curated whole-body treatments coexist with sunlight and sea air for a sense of community that feels distinctly Southern in spirit.

COURTESY OF LAKE AUSTIN SPA RESORT



the northeast:
STORIED SETTINGS, MINDFUL REST

Wellness in this region carries an especially thoughtful definition. Historic estates and forested preserves create venues that encourage pause, perspective, and nostalgic pondering. Leaning into the Northeast's sense of history, properties turn to ageless practices to provide relief to their guests.

Troutbeck
Based in New York's Hudson Valley, wellness programs here unfold on a storied property surrounded by rolling land. Troutbeck's popular yoga, meditation, and somatic practices feel naturally aligned with the area's sense of history and tradition, granting you a chance to reset from your routine and temporarily immerse yourself in a new way of living.

YO1 Longevity & Health Resorts
Try a more relaxed yet clinical approach to your well-being high up among the Catskill Mountains. YO1 turns to long-relied-upon approaches for relief. featuring personalized wellness programs aimed at supporting relaxation and sleep—all set against a panorama of mountains and winding trails.

A COUNTRYWIDE MAP OF RESTORATION

Wellness travel in the United States is defined by variety. Desert stillness, coastal ease, mountain resilience, ageless forests, and Southern warmth each invite you to craft your own personal path to renewal. Among these travel options, the best may be the one based on what you need now, whether that's a restorative spa treatment or an active wilderness retreat. Luckily, each of these destinations grants you the opportunity to tailor your visit to what you seek, while the natural setting tailors you to its own refreshing rhythm.

cold-weather
CAR CARE

written by:
ALEXA BRICKER

WHEN THE TEMPERATURE TURNS CHILLY, it's not just rough on us—winter weather can do a number on our cars, too, especially for those in more northern climates. If you typically experience such elements in your region, here are a few steps you can take to help ensure that you and your vehicle both make it through the season unscathed.

Maintain your tires

Considering they're what carry you over ice and snow, your tires should be a top maintenance priority. Look for signs they may be in poor condition, such as low tread and uneven wear, and have them rotated or replaced if needed; you could also temporarily swap them for winter ones, which handle particularly well on icy roads. Another pro tip: Tire pressure tends to drop in the cold, so check it about every two weeks and refill your tires as necessary.

Repel road salt

Full of chemicals designed to eliminate ice from streets, road salt and other melting agents can stain and scratch your vehicle, possibly leading to corrosion. Applying a layer of wax to its lower areas like the grille and wheel wells, where these substances tend to accumulate the most, can help prevent such damage. And make sure to visit the car wash regularly (depending on the weather) to remove any salt buildup on both the exterior and undercarriage.

Expect the unexpected

Having an emergency kit in your vehicle is particularly essential in winter. Stock your trunk with water, a flashlight, flares, a first aid kit, warm clothing, nonperishable snacks, and a bag of sand or cat litter for traction. You can also prevent unexpected problems by checking your auto's vital parts, including its fluids, brakes, hoses, battery, and wipers. With such tactics, you can rest assured that you are well prepared for anything Old Man Winter throws your way.



WINTER RESET RITUALS

Written by **Andre Rios**

When people set challenges for themselves this time of year, it's widely assumed that they'll fail to do so for a significant amount of time. Often, the problem is that resolutions force you to make strict adjustments to your routine (e.g., longer sessions at the gym or no more chocolate).

Instead, consider doing a reset in the new year. The following ideas are pleasant additions you can make to each day that can help you feel more grounded, refreshed, and—most importantly—eager to stay on course as 2027 progresses.

Block time for bonding

One of the simplest and most heartwarming ways to change up your lifestyle is to prioritize the people who matter most to you. Set aside time at least once a day for intentional and meaningful social connection with your romantic partner, children, parents, siblings, or friends.

Throughout each week, mix up quick, low-effort activities with creative ones that every participant will enjoy. This could include something as small as a check-in call or an adventure as exciting as a midweek visit to a local museum.

Naturally, your weekends may be easier to schedule around. But making a daily effort to converse, soak up entertainment, or make valuable memories with your loved ones can help you foster stronger relationships and decompress from life's stressors.





Create relaxing indoor rituals

Your home is more than just a place to decorate. It's also your retreat from the outside world—everything from your work to-do list to local traffic. The ideal antidote to all this negativity is to weave more self-care into your home environment.

That could mean taking a long bath with salts and essential oils or propping up a seat by the window to read and drink tea. Just make sure to dedicate at least one area of your home for a little R and R. Even just ten minutes of watching funny videos at your kitchen bar can help you live in the moment and forget all about what's on the calendar first thing tomorrow.

Enjoy the outdoors

The National Park Service reports that visiting nature for just half an hour can positively impact your cardiovascular health, including your circulation and blood pressure, your glucose levels, and inflammation. So when the occasional sunny, warm winter afternoon arises, bundle up for a walk in nature. Just be sure to wear winter-safe clothing, whether that's high-traction boots for icy surfaces or sunglasses for bright snow. (And don't forget the sunscreen for sunny conditions, even in winter.)

If you'd rather wait out the cold, you don't have to shun the outdoors altogether. In the meantime, open your window treatments to let some sunshine into your interiors; this is especially beneficial on chilly, gloomy days. Any way you

can incorporate fresh air, natural scenery, and sunlight into your daily routine could transform your life and wellness. Then set a firm reminder for a spring day to visit a local park, take a cycling session through a forested trail, or simply jog around your neighborhood.

Add, don't subtract

Dieting is a classic New Year's resolution, and it's famously one of the least adhered to. That may be due to its restrictive regulations and renouncing of beloved foods. These changes won't necessarily make you happier, even if they stand to make you healthier.

If you're eager to transform your diet in a way that you're more likely to enjoy and stick to, consider nutrition as a form of addition, not subtraction. In other words, try to include more healthy foods—such as nuts, green vegetables, and lean protein sources—into every meal. If this still doesn't excite you, remember that the internet is packed with ideas for making these foods as flavorful as they are beneficial. Even better, as you make more space in your diet for more nutrient-packed eats, you might save less room for dessert.

Schedule hobbies and interests

This year, try to make more time for the things you enjoy—and perhaps even take up some new pursuits. For example, read at least one new book a month. Don't feel pressured to choose highbrow novels if you'd rather take up page-turners like celebrity biographies, art books, or other special-interest works. Anything that helps you avoid the stresses of everyday life and offers an opportunity to unwind will suffice.

What if you have trouble making time for these activities (perhaps because a child's constantly tugging at the bottom of your shirt)? Consider scheduling them like appointments in your calendar. Dedicating even just an hour to partake in healthy, enjoyable activities—maybe including said child—can help you overhaul your routine in ways you'll look forward to every day.



THE GIFT OF DONATING

written by **DAN O'BRIEN**

The holidays arrive with familiar pressure: to spend more, give more, and do more. Yet for many households, generosity doesn't come from excess. It comes from fulfilling the essentials. Food pantries fill faster; people look to shelters for warmth. Families seek small comforts that matter. When approached with care, donating can become a regular part of your domestic life, helping you extend more kindness outward without overwhelming yourself.



FOOD

Most residences contain opportunities for generosity waiting to be noticed, such as food staples bought with good intentions and set aside for later. A good look often reveals soups, grains, and canned goods ready to move on. Checking dates and choosing items that would still be served at one's own table sets a simple, respectful standard.

The way these items are gathered matters; small acts of care travel with the donation. Grouping similar foods and packing boxes with order rather than haste turns the task from disposal into offering.

CLOTHING

As temperatures drop, outerwear becomes more than clothing; it offers much-needed protection. In addition to sweaters and other cold-weather options, check your closets and storage for forgotten or ill-fitting coats and jackets that could be passed along. Just remember: If it wouldn't stand up to a cold walk outside, it isn't ready for donation.

TOYS

These items often require a different kind of attention because they hold memories and have sentimental attachment, marking stages of childhood and growth. As a result, letting them go can be difficult. However, inviting your children to participate can make the transition smoother while also teaching them an important lesson: that joy can be found as much in giving as in receiving. When deciding which toys to give, make sure that you're sorting complete sets and intact pieces and that items are safe for others. Placing small parts in labeled bags and taping instructions to the box also makes it easier for recipients.

Clearing out spaces like pantries, closets, and playrooms benefits everyone living in your home. Practiced thoughtfully, small donations become a seasonal habit rather than a scramble, a reminder that what is already present may be exactly what someone else needs.



WHEN DECIDING WHICH TOYS TO GIVE, MAKE SURE THAT YOU'RE SORTING COMPLETE SETS AND INTACT PIECES AND THAT ITEMS ARE SAFE FOR OTHERS.

facts about

POPULAR FOODS

written by: ANDRE RIOS

ALMOST NOTHING IS AS HEARTWARMING AS ENJOYING A GREAT meal, especially when you share it with the people you love. But as emotionally and mentally satisfying as food can be, sometimes our comforting favorites aren't the best for our long-term wellness. Some—even ones that seem to be healthy—could also carry nearly immediate consequences.



Food-based ambiguities may be unsettling, but don't fret as you pick up your fork for your next meal. First, check out these answers to common nutrition questions.

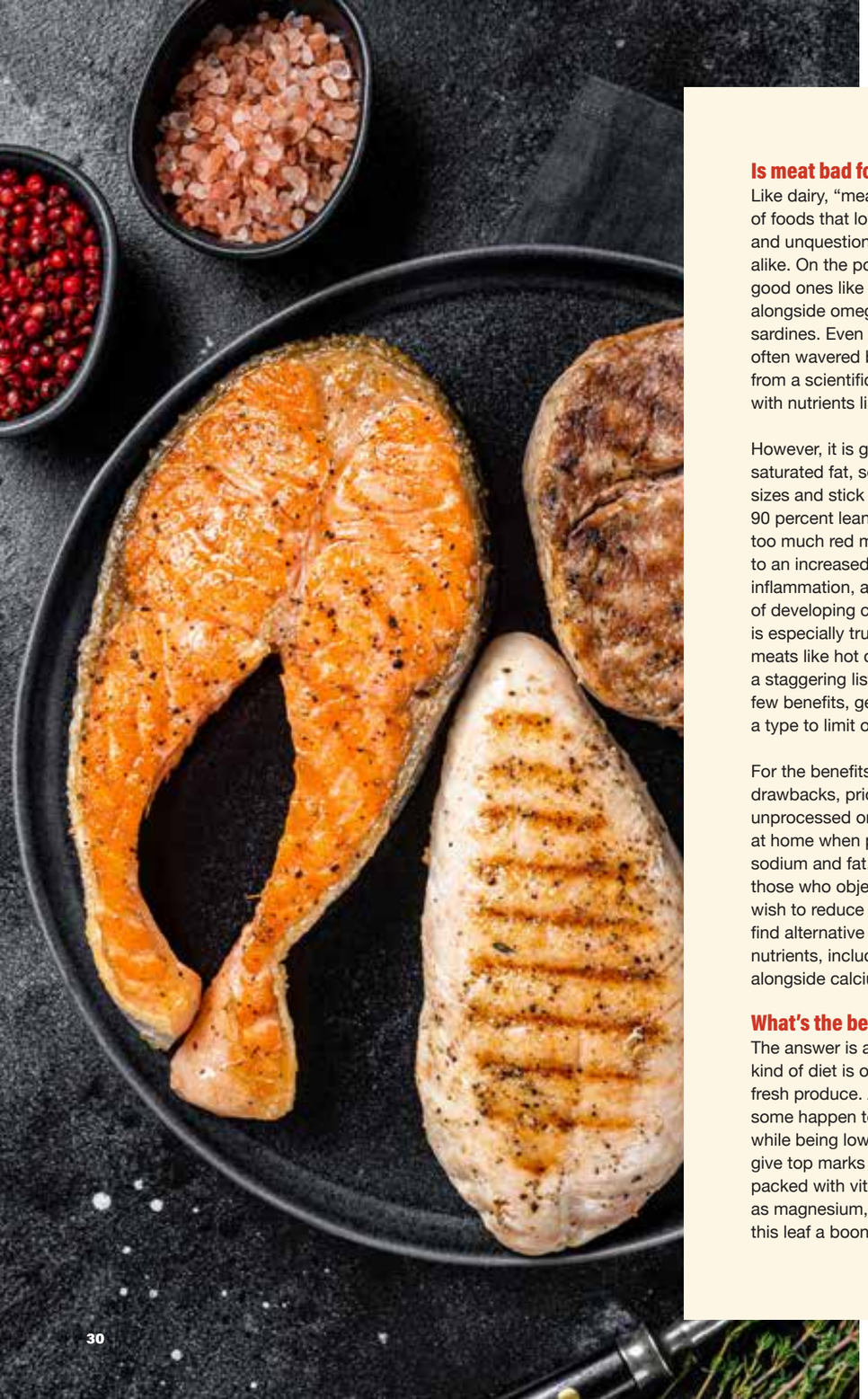
Is cheese good or bad?

This depends largely on the type you're eating. For example, mozzarella typically contains around 85 calories, 6 grams of protein, and 11 percent of your daily value of calcium per one-ounce serving while being relatively low in sodium. Add to that probiotics that aid digestion, alongside tryptophan (which is associated with serotonin production), and it's safe to say this cheese has many beneficial traits.

That is, if your digestive system can handle it. Cheese, like all dairy, can cause trouble for individuals living with a condition like IBS and, in some instances, those with celiac disease. It may also trigger nondigestive reactions for many. For example, some research associates it with worsened acne, an effect attributed to the hormones found in most dairy foods.

But even dairy-tolerant individuals should mind their cheese servings. Some varieties may contain especially high levels of saturated fat and sodium—with hard selections like cheddar being among the worst offenders. Even mozzarella may take up to 20 percent of your daily saturated fat per serving.

And don't let its relatively nutritious perks persuade you to overindulge. Always read the nutrition facts on dairy products before you buy, opt for lower-fat varieties whenever possible, and consume them in moderation by following the recommended serving sizes on each product's nutrition facts label. If you're looking to enjoy a protein-rich, low-calorie meal with less trepidation, you'd be far better off basing one on lean meat like fresh turkey.



Is meat bad for you?

Like dairy, "meat" is a broad category of foods that loops in highly beneficial and unquestionably poor options alike. On the positive end, you have good ones like white-meat poultry alongside omega-3-rich salmon and sardines. Even red meat, which has often wavered between good and bad from a scientific perspective, is loaded with nutrients like protein and iron.

However, it is generally higher in saturated fat, so limit your portion sizes and stick to trimmer cuts like 90 percent lean ground beef. After all, too much red meat has been linked to an increased risk of heart disease, inflammation, and a greater danger of developing colorectal cancer. This is especially true of ultra-processed meats like hot dogs. These foods carry a staggering list of consequences with few benefits, generally making them a type to limit or avoid altogether.

For the benefits of meat with fewer drawbacks, prioritize eating healthier, unprocessed ones, cooking them at home when possible to limit sodium and fat. And, of course, those who object to eating meat or wish to reduce their intake can easily find alternative sources of its best nutrients, including protein from nuts alongside calcium and iron from tofu.

What's the best vegetable to eat?

The answer is all of them! The best kind of diet is one that features a mix of fresh produce. As with cheeses, though, some happen to be higher in nutrients while being lower in calories. You could give top marks to spinach, which is packed with vitamins A and B_9, as well as magnesium, fiber, and more, making this leaf a boon for whole-body wellness.

There is some controversy surrounding certain plant foods, though, including many starchy ones like potatoes and corn, which have a higher glycemic index, meaning they can raise your blood sugar. However, these options are also high in nutrients like fiber. In reality, the cooking method is just as impactful as the vegetable itself. No one would expect french fries or corn tortillas to be health foods, but roasting each of these veggies whole with a touch of light oil and seasoning makes for a beneficial and filling side dish.

And remember that restaurants often use egregious amounts of salt, butter, and other offenders to make their veggie dishes taste better. So if you really want to eat healthy, cook more vegetables at home!

What does a balanced diet look like?

In general, the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2025–2030* champions us to:

- Focus on eating vegetables and fruit
- Get more whole grains (complex carbohydrates like whole oats and wild rice) than simple carbs (breakfast cereals and products sweetened with corn syrup)
- Eat healthy proteins, such as seafood, lean meats, and nuts
- Limit intake of sodium and added sugars

While this advice is a good start, you may want to seek more specific guidance from your doctor and perhaps a dietitian. Together, they can help you create a nutrition plan based on your exact caloric needs, weight goals, digestive wellness, food preferences and sensitivities, and much more, making these worthwhile steps toward crafting a healthy lifestyle for you and your family.





SMALL STEPS, *big effects*

written by: DAN O'BRIEN

MASSIVE HOME OVERHAULS MAKE GOOD TELEVISION; however, most homes don't improve that way. Instead, they become easier to live in through small daily choices. And when you build simple habits—like clearing surfaces, making beds, and putting items back where they belong—you can reduce clutter, strain, and preventable risks.

RESET SMALL SPACES

You can make your home easier to manage by merely completing one quick action in an area as you leave it. This also saves you effort later. For instance, make your bed before leaving the bedroom in the morning. When you pass the doorway later, you'll notice the room feels calm and finished. Because the bed is already straightened, you're less likely to toss clothes or bags onto it.

In the kitchen, wipe the counter before you turn in for the night. The next morning, you can set down a mug or a pan without first clearing space. Here's another tip: If you push chairs back under the table after a meal, the room feels more open.

These choices take only a moment, but they reduce stress the next time you use the space.

GIVE EVERYDAY ITEMS A PLACE

You can further simplify your routines by deciding where frequently used items belong. Start by choosing a spot near the front door for your keys. In addition, hang your coat instead of draping it over a chair, or put your bag in the same place each day. Before you know it, you will be automatically reaching for where you expect these things to be.

The same pattern helps with maintenance. Sweeping near your home's front door so grit doesn't travel farther inside helps keep your entryway clean. If you rinse the sink immediately after you use it, stains are less likely to set in.

Whichever action you choose, the result is the same: Each mini action today prevents a bigger chore tomorrow.

A TASTE OF THE BIG APPLE



New York City is renowned for many things, including its iconic food, which you can sample with these selections from the *Eat NYC* cookbook.

SCAN THE QR CODE
to get the full cookbook.

Recipes from ***Eat NYC: Iconic Recipes That Feed the City*** by Yasmin Newman. Smith Street Books, 2024. Photography by Alan Benson.



RIGATONI
alla vodka

The creamy tomato pasta with a hit of chili and booze, penne alla vodka has many origin stories. None are definitive, but it gained a foothold in America in the 1970s and 80s and now proudly claims a position among the most loved pasta dishes in the country. Deglazing with liquor is common in cookery, but the combination of clean-tasting vodka with sweet, acidic, savory tomatoes heightens the flavors; the alcohol also binds the flavorful cream fat for a glossy, emulsified finish.

In New York, penne alla vodka is a faithful addition to Italian-American menus, and is done with class. The recipe below is inspired by the one served at Carbone's restaurant, with a juicy, oil-slicked Calabrian chili paste imparting more dimension than dried chili flakes, and tossed through rigatoni for more pasta bite.

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

14 oz. rigatoni or penne
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1½ tablespoons Calabrian chili paste
½ cup concentrated puree (tomato paste)
½ cup vodka
1 cup pouring cream
¼ teaspoon white sugar
¾ cup finely grated parmesan, plus extra to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Bring a large saucepan of salted water to the boil. Add the pasta and cook for 2 minutes less than recommended on the packet.

2/ Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a large deep saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes, or until soft. Season well with salt and pepper, then add the garlic and chili paste and cook, stirring, for 1 minute, or until fragrant.

3/ Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes, or until slightly darkened and thickened. Pour in the vodka and cook for 2 minutes, or until reduced slightly. Stir in the cream and sugar and cook for a further 2 minutes, or until well combined.

4/ Drain the pasta, reserving 1 cup of the cooking water. Add the pasta and half the cooking water to the sauce and bring to a simmer, gently tossing the pasta to combine. Add the parmesan and remaining cooking water and cook, tossing gently, until the pasta is al dente and the sauce is just thickened. Remove from the heat and season with salt and pepper.

5/ Divide the pasta among bowls and scatter with extra parmesan to serve.

Recipe by **YASMIN NEWMAN**
Photography by **ALAN BENSON**



CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES *for days*

If there was one flavor that elicits Gotham's devotion, it's chocolate chip. This cookie—generous in size, perfectly round, chewy yet soft, and studded throughout with chocolate—follows in these footsteps, with an addictive sprinkling of hazelnut meal and roasted hazelnut chunks.

Makes 10

INGREDIENTS

7 oz. unsalted butter, melted
10½ oz. brown sugar
⅓ cup superfine (caster) sugar
1 egg
2 teaspoons natural vanilla extract
1⅔ cups all-purpose (plain) flour
1 cup hazelnut meal
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon fine sea salt
7 oz. dark chocolate, roughly chopped
⅓ cup roasted skinless hazelnuts, roughly chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Using a stand mixer or electric beaters, beat the melted butter and sugars in a bowl until well combined. Add the egg and vanilla extract and beat until glossy.

2/ Sift the flour, hazelnut meal, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into a separate bowl and mix well. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and beat on low speed until just combined. Add the chocolate and roasted hazelnuts and stir until just combined.

3/ Line two baking trays with baking paper. Using a large ice-cream scoop or spoon, measure out the dough into 10 balls, weighing about 4½ oz. each. Place on the baking trays 2 in. apart. Refrigerate for 20 minutes to firm up.

4/ Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350°F.

5/ For perfect circle-shaped cookies, place each dough ball in a 4 in. metal egg ring and press the dough right to the edge. Bake for 14 minutes, or until the tops are golden. Remove from the oven and gently work any cookie that's risen over the edge back into the ring, so it's easy to remove once cooled.

6/ Alternatively, bake as balls for 14–16 minutes, until golden and crisp around the edges.

7/ Cool on the baking trays for 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Remove the rings from the cookies and serve.

Recipe by **YASMIN NEWMAN**
Photography by **ALAN BENSON**



PANCAKES *on Sundays*

A fixture on menus across the city, New York pancakes range from fluffy mile-high stacks to Dutch babies and thick old-school griddle cakes. While no one version reigns supreme, all conjure comfort, especially for brunch, when restaurants pull out all the stops. These Sunday-style flapjacks are light-as-air, drowned in syrup and finished with whipped salted honey butter—with a distinctive crisp edge from cooking in a generous pool of butter.

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1 cup all-purpose (plain) flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
2 tablespoons superfine (caster) sugar
½ teaspoon fine sea salt
2 eggs
1 cup buttermilk
2 teaspoons natural vanilla extract
4½ oz. unsalted butter, melted warm
Maple syrup, to serve

Whipped honey butter

2½ oz. unsalted butter, chopped, softened
1 tablespoon honey
Large pinch of sea salt flakes

INSTRUCTIONS

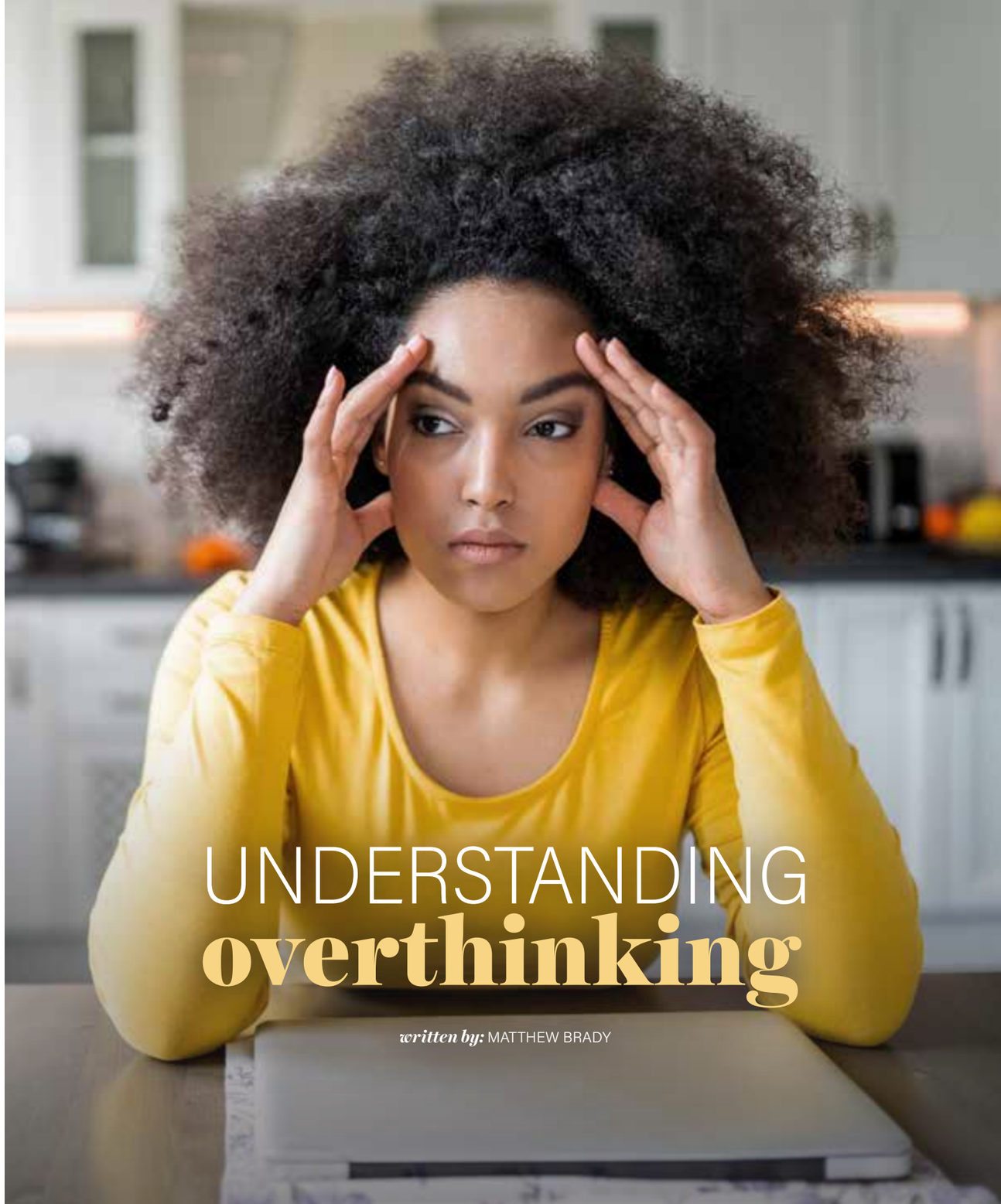
1/ Place the whipped honey butter ingredients in a large bowl. Using electric beaters, whisk until light and fluffy. Alternatively, whisk by hand.

2/ Sift the flour, baking powder, sugar, and salt into a large bowl. Whisk the eggs, buttermilk, and vanilla extract in a separate bowl until smooth. Slowly whisk the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until combined, then whisk in 2 tablespoons of the melted butter.

3/ Heat an 8 in. heavy-based frying pan over medium–low heat until hot (to ensure the pancake edges crisp up). Add 1 tablespoon of the melted butter, then add ½ cup of the batter. Cook for 2 minutes, or until the top of the pancake starts to bubble and the edges are slightly crisp. Carefully flip the pancake and cook for 1–2 minutes, until puffed and golden. Transfer to a plate and repeat with the remaining melted butter and batter.

4/ Stack two warm pancakes on each plate and top with a spoonful of the honey butter. Pour over maple syrup to drown and serve immediately.

Recipe by **YASMIN NEWMAN**
Photography by **ALAN BENSON**



UNDERSTANDING *overthinking*

written by: MATTHEW BRADY

YOUR HOUSE IS CLEAN—THE COUNTERS are clear, the pillows straight, and the floor finally vacuumed—yet your mind won't stop. It scans for the next loose thread, perhaps turning to work: recalling emails, mentally preparing for tomorrow's meetings, or remembering the text you forgot to answer hours ago. Stress and unresolved concerns can even carry into your sleep, contributing to restless nights or worry-themed dreams.

Welcome to the world of the classic overthinker, where your brain runs on a loop, often burning energy without producing anything valuable. It can interfere with your focus, working memory, patience, and more. But it can also be conquered.

A truly human malady

The tendency to dwell isn't a new phenomenon, of course. The problem is that twenty-first-century living makes that strain so much easier to sustain. For many, the nine-to-five norm of clocking out at the same time every day are gone. And when you get home from work, phones may be lighting up left and right, even during dinner. Frequent notifications, especially work-related ones, can elicit stress responses and keep your mind in a state of alert.

Granted, some of the noise that overthinkers experience is purely internal. Perfectionism has a nasty way of stretching small decisions into drawn-out internal debates, sometimes repeatedly. For instance, you might rehearse conversations that very well may never happen or delay choices because the pros and cons seem so even, no matter how much you ruminate over them.

Other potential triggers are physical, though. You may be tripped up by something as seemingly innocuous as unopened mail sitting on the counter, a disheveled desk, or a half-finished project collecting dust in your garage. Research suggests that such unfinished tasks can actually cling to memory more stubbornly than completed ones, a dynamic that psychologists call the Zeigarnik effect. When everything is half-finished, your home and job can feel like a list that never ends.



Build boundaries

You cannot control every thought, but you can reduce the cues that keep causing them. If you work from home, restrict your tasks to a defined location, even if it is only one end of a table. When you step away from that space, try to be firm that the work is over. Clear boundaries improve psychological detachment from work, which is linked to lower stress and better recovery.

You should consider lowering the visual noise as well to prevent your eyes from scanning a field of (over)thinking fodder. Open that pile of mail, and get rid of junk. Clear that desk of yours, relegating loose items to drawers or baskets. Similarly, consider designating one device-free place (a guest room, perhaps) and/or time (such as dinner), and cherish the experiences there.

Establish habits

Oftentimes, establishing positive behaviors can be life-changing, as evidenced by the wild success of the book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. You can take inspiration from its first chapter, "Be Proactive," by proactively managing your invasive thoughts. Set a brief window to worry, such as a ten-minute period in the late afternoon. Write down what is bothering you, and identify a next step, if one exists. When a nagging thought resurfaces—and it will—tell it, "Not now."

Journaling can also help ease overthinking. Before bed, empty your head onto paper, listing tasks and unresolved details so your mind does not rehearse them overnight. And be sure to keep one trusted system for documenting these thoughts rather than scattering them across apps and sticky notes.

Take an honest look

Occasional overthinking is common and can create a sense of mental gridlock or emotional unraveling, but by taking certain steps, you can regain control of your thoughts instead of letting them control you.

That said, if your worry is constant, intrusive to your everyday life, or physically distressing, seek professional support. After all, rearranging a room can help, but it cannot treat clinical anxiety.





MOVE MORE, *not harder*

written by:
MATTHEW BRADY

IN LIFE, MAKING A BIG SPLASH USUALLY CAPTURES THE MOST ATTENTION, whether it's an important announcement, a majestic house, or a flashy car. When it comes to your health, though, small, consistent steps usually make more of a difference than dramatic changes—and are usually safer for beginners.

Think about this in terms of your home life. How often do you get things out of cabinets, stand at the counter washing dishes, or carry groceries? The truth is, such common movements, also known as microhabits, can help shape not only your overall health but also your strength and mobility.

Piling up progress

Spending hours sitting each day comes with a cost. At some point, you've likely experienced some common effects of being stationary for long periods, such as stiff joints and reduced energy. Most people know what they should do for better well-being: get more active. The stumbling block is usually consistency, which is thwarted by distractions and overloaded schedules.

Take advantage of gaps in your busy calendar since the body adapts remarkably well to frequent, low-level activity. Muscles and joints, for example, respond to regular use, even without pumping iron in the gym. Your strength and balance can contribute to improvements, especially for beginners or sedentary individuals.







Strength

When people hear this word, they usually picture barbells. However, a gym membership isn't absolutely necessary since strength is required for common movements. Lugging laundry baskets (everyone's favorite chore) works the arms and core, especially going up the stairs. Reaching for a pot in an overhead kitchen cabinet requires balance (more on that later) while challenging shoulder stability. Merely standing up from a chair engages the legs and hips.

The key is making small adjustments, which turn such routine actions into strength-building opportunities. For example, stand up a little slower and hold your posture for a breath. Place those groceries down deliberately instead of rushing to drop them on the counter. In doing so, you begin to notice how you move, which demands more control and stability. While daily movements won't fully replace structured strength training, they can help maintain functional strength and reinforce good movement patterns.





Balance and mobility

Having a sense of healthy physical balance and mobility usually falls into the "use it or lose it" category, especially as life becomes more sedentary and predictable—which tends to happen with age. However, research shows that measurable improvements can occur within a few weeks of regular practice, depending on your starting point and consistency.

There are plenty of simple changes you could make to improve your balance, such as standing on one foot while brushing your teeth and shifting weight slowly while waiting for the kettle to boil. Likewise, keeping your joints frequently in motion can aid your mobility, so try rolling your shoulders after waking, turning your neck gently before sitting down, and stretching frequently at your desk. Slow, intentional activity helps maintain joints' range of motion and provides a good reminder that they're meant to move. Such moments require little effort, carry minimal risk for most healthy adults, and can help maximize your health when done repeatedly.

As a bonus, sharpening these qualities makes you more confident in your movements, which tend to feel easier and safer, especially as you age. For instance, balance itself is often minimized to merely being a means for preventing falls when, in reality, it can be a tool that helps you move through life more easily.

Designing for microhabits

Your home either encourages motion or shuts it down; it largely depends on how you lay it out. Start by arranging spaces to invite standing and walking. Clear pathways in your hallways that encourage movement between rooms. Also, choose firm seating that allows easy standing rather than sinking too deeply. If it's too soft or low, it can influence how much getting up and sitting down impacts joints and muscles, especially for older adults. Finally, consider placing frequently used items where they require a reach or a step (as long as it doesn't put you at risk for injury).

> There are plenty of simple changes you could make to improve your balance, such as standing on one foot while brushing your teeth and shifting weight slowly while waiting for the kettle to boil.

You don't necessarily need drastic changes to improve your health—often, the key is to just stay more active. By being aware of already existing microhabits and adding new ones to your everyday life, you can foster a routine that makes a noticeable difference in how you feel. The body keeps score of what you repeat—so make sure it's movement.

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Back of Tear Out Card 2

MAKES 10

CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES *for days*

INGREDIENTS

- 7 oz. unsalted butter, melted
- 10½ oz. brown sugar
- ⅓ c. superfine (caster) sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 teaspoons natural vanilla extract
- 1⅔ c. all-purpose (plain) flour
- 1 c. hazelnut meal
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. fine sea salt
- 7 oz. dark chocolate, roughly chopped
- ⅓ c. roasted skinless hazelnuts, roughly chopped

Recipe from ***Eat NYC: Iconic Recipes That Feed the City*** by Yasmin Newman. Smith Street Books, 2024. Photography by Alan Benson.

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Using a stand mixer or electric beaters, beat the melted butter and sugars in a bowl until well combined. Add the egg and vanilla extract and beat until glossy.

2/ Sift the flour, hazelnut meal, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into a separate bowl and mix well. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and beat on low speed until just combined. Add the chocolate and roasted hazelnuts and stir until just combined.

3/ Line two baking trays with baking paper. Using a large ice-cream scoop or spoon, measure out the dough into 10 balls, weighing about 4½ oz. each. Place on the baking trays 2 in. apart. Refrigerate for 20 minutes to firm up.

4/ Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350°F.

5/ For perfect circle-shaped cookies, place each dough ball in a 4 in. metal egg ring and press the dough right to the edge. Bake for 14 minutes, or until the tops are golden. Remove from the oven and gently work any cookie that's risen over the edge back into the ring, so it's easy to remove once cooled.

6/ Alternatively, bake as balls for 14–16 minutes, until golden and crisp around the edges.

7/ Cool on the baking trays for 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Remove the rings from the cookies and serve.

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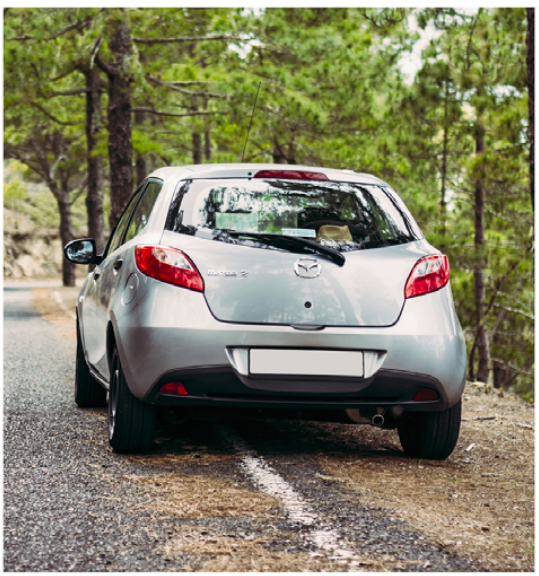



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