

Reader's Digest

JULY 2021

₹100



**WHAT OUR
PLANET
NEEDS NOW**

**Eco-Experts Explain
How You Can Help**



HEALTH

**How Anxiety
Harms Your
Body and Mind**

BONUS READ

**Can an Unloved
Child Learn to Love?**

OPINION

**Let Science
Show Us
The Way**

**8 Ways To Lift
Your Own Spirits**

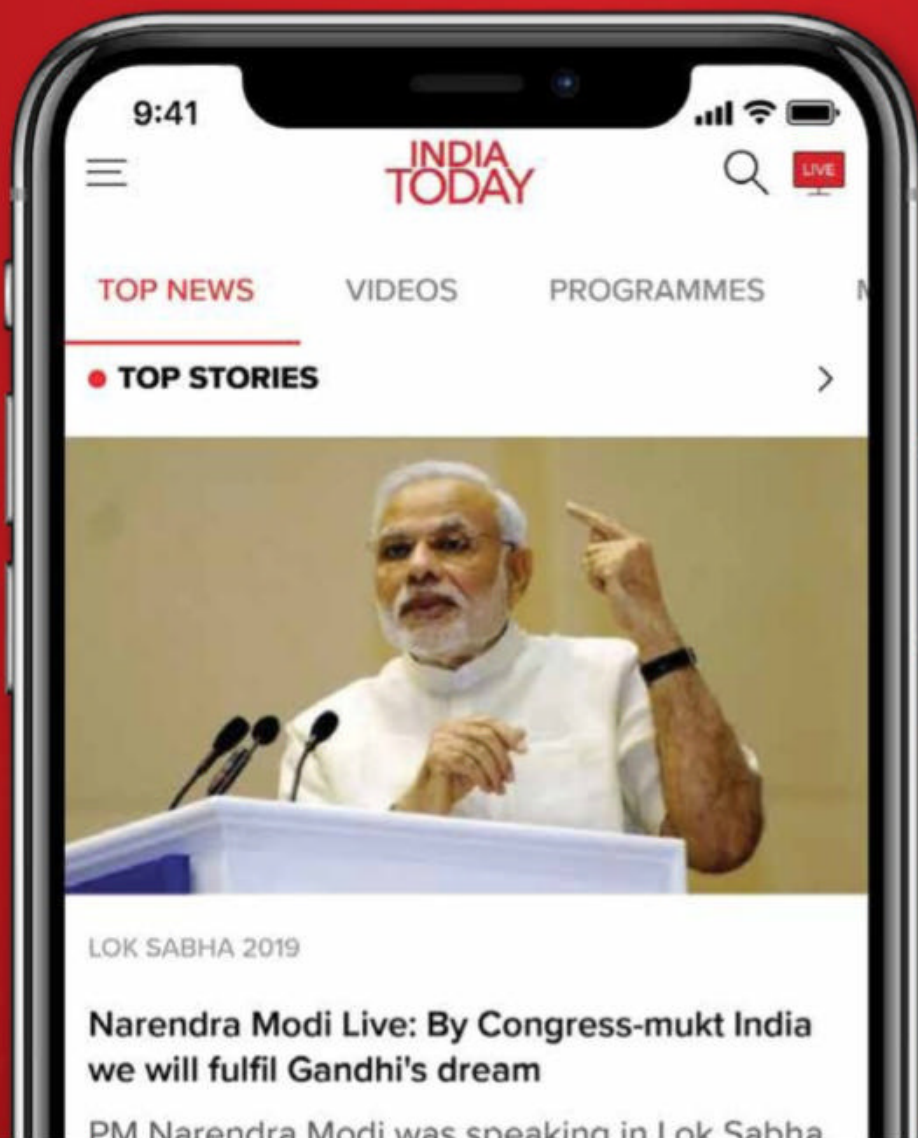
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**In Conversation
with Neena Gupta**

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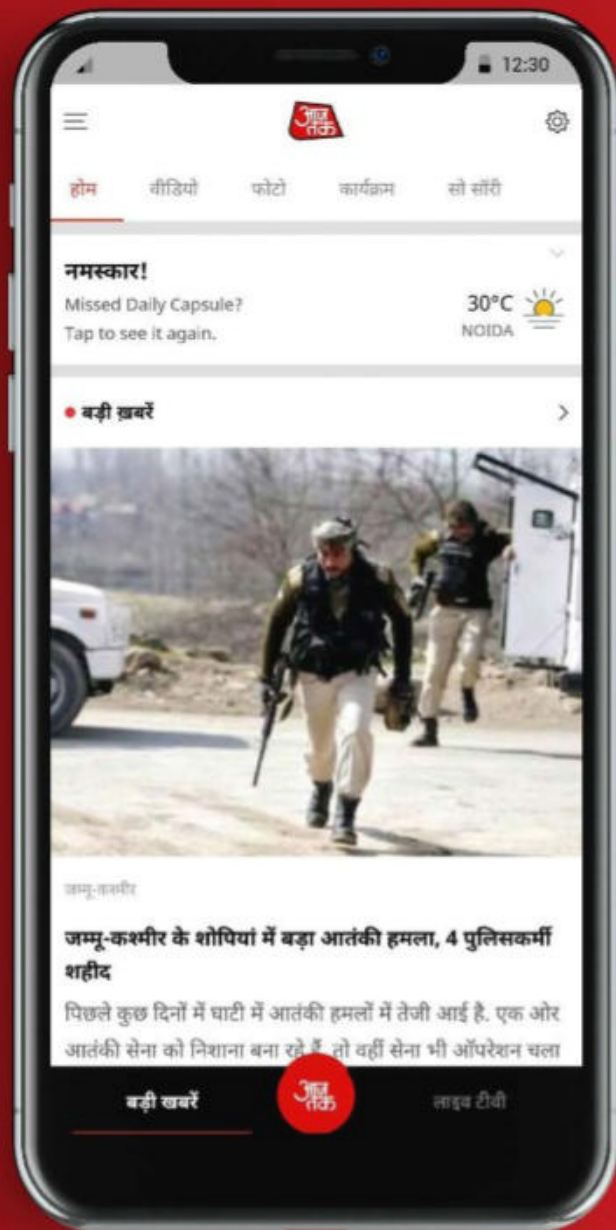
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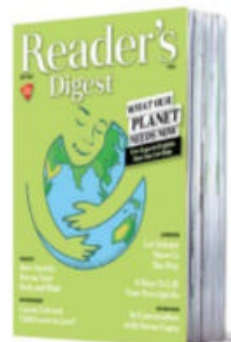
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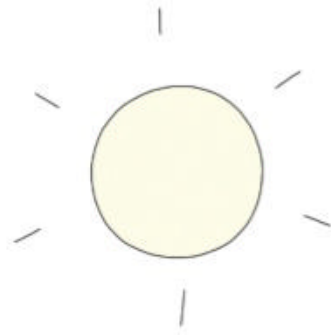
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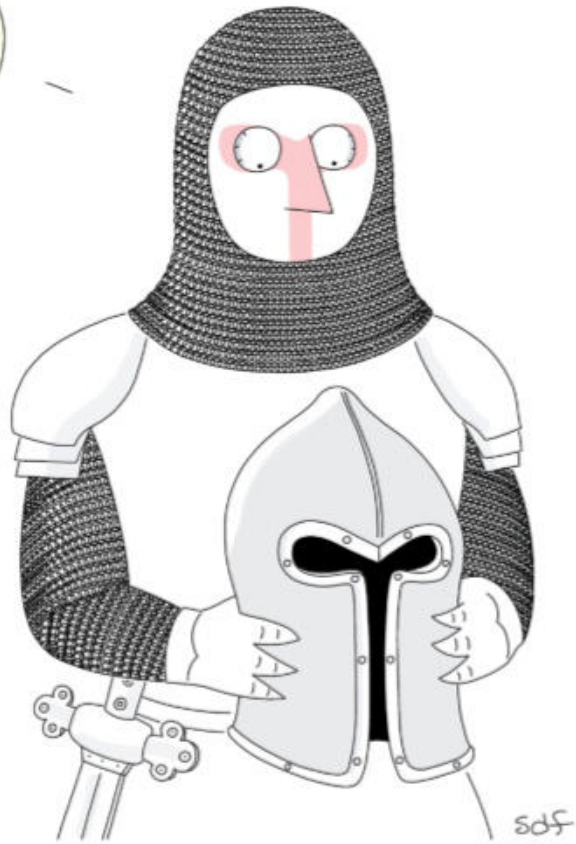
HUMOUR *in*
UNIFORM

I knew my young wife was not up to speed with military protocol when we drove to the base commissary. Still, I was dismayed when she parked in the general's reserved parking space—something she mentioned she'd been doing for the past year.

As a newly minted second lieutenant, I knew that was a big no-no. Even colonels couldn't park there, so I asked why she would do such a thing.

She said, "I thought that the sign meant for anyone in general."

—ALFRED LUDWIG



Stationed in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm, I found myself in a world that had changed little since Biblical times. With so few creature comforts available, packages from home containing cookies and canned goods were received with great anticipation.

When I got a box from my sister, I happily tore into it, only to dis-

cover just how far from home I really was. She had filled it with packages of microwave popcorn.

—ROBERT T. SIMS
via gcfl.net

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

OVER TO YOU

NOTES ON THE
May ISSUE



Making Aristotle Your Life Coach

Good Aristotelians acknowledge both their best and their worst moral characteristics and work continuously at self-improvement. They try to develop habits of generosity, fairness and good humour. The result is a comforting moral self-sufficiency that even bereavement, bankruptcy or sheer bad luck can't take away. Aristotle's common-sense prescriptions for happiness offer hope for the wider community. When he said that we are political animals, he meant that we flourish by cultivating the virtues in relation not just to ourselves and our families, but also to our friends and fellow citizens. He offers us a way to pursue individual happiness, but his principles can help us make the public arena a better place as well.

—SANJAY CHOPRA, *Mohali, Punjab*

Sanjay Chopra gets this month's 'Write & Win' prize of ₹1,000. —EDs

This article reminded me of the poem *The Miller of the Dee* by Charles Mackay. The poem tells the tale of a happy miller. Such was his joyfulness, that even the king of the land was envious of him. One day the king met him and enquired about the cause of his happiness. He answered that he was happy because he had enough to eat, he loved his wife and children and was never in debt. True happiness is often of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise. It arises, in the first place, from the enjoyment of one's self and

in the next, from the friendship and conversation of a few companions; it loves shade and solitude.

M. V. APPARAO,
Hyderabad

Let Us Meet on the Bridge

Consoling desolate friends and dear ones who lost either their parents or children to COVID-19, I have often sometimes morosely contemplated which of the two is a greater loss. Xu and Qian's heart-wrenching decision to abandon their second infant due to China's one-child policy was no less painful than bereavement.

What if they had never reunited with Kati?

While this hopeful story felt like warm sunshine in this hapless time, it is imperative that governments change the way they function. The world doesn't require policies that ruin families, neither does it need inaction or indifference resulting in life-altering

situations. But, despite everything the human spirit has never known to give up. Heroes have always emerged in dire situations—be it the Holocaust, the two World Wars, under tyranny or COVID-19.

RIDHIMA CHOUDHRY,
Gurugram

If Not Now, When?

Surgeon duo Kalpish Ratna's eye-opening article has several firsts to its credit. No other article in recent memory has opened with such a thundering word—'omnishambles'! The second is the distinction the article draws between the virus and its effect (inflammation). The third is the reminder that we are not just dealing with the inflammation of lungs but many other organs like, heart, liver and kidney. It goes further to underline the importance of comorbidities like diabetes and arthritis (with the all-important obesity in the background). The final factor that makes it unique is the

warning on the Air Quality Index. Medical misinformation creates panic and terror. This article clears all misconceptions and gives hope.

DR N. GOPALAKRISHNAN,
Bengaluru

Bring Back the Handkerchief!

A handkerchief is an all-weather friend; you use it in summer to wipe off sweat, in the rain to wipe off water. It comes handy to wipe away the tears of distressed near and dear ones. While driving a two-wheeler a hanky tied across the face under the helmet provides extra protection from the wind and dust. And during the pandemic, if one happens to forget the mask at home, the handkerchief comes to the rescue. I have been using handkerchiefs since my school days and continue to do so even at the age of 70. Incidentally, a few years ago an Indian cricket player misused the handkerchief to signal

spotfixing and he was rightly booked and punished!

K. V. DHARMARAJAN, *Pune*

Telepathy with My Dog

The story bought an instant smile to my face. With monotony of work-from-home setups and enjoying no visitors or outings due to the lockdown, it felt like life had nearly come to a standstill. One evening, much to our surprise, a kitten was found sleeping on our doorstep. Kitten Roger, as we call him, enters our house only when asked to come inside and eats only from his designated plate. Our sole visitor Roger has quickly become a stress buster for my family. Roger made us realize the worth of having pets, ridding us of our pet-phobia.

PREETHA RENGASWAMY,
Chennai

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Science Must Prevail

Overcoming the problem of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in India

BY Dr Abhay Shukla



Today, hesitation regarding COVID-19 vaccination is a significant barrier to achieving rapid vaccine coverage in many parts of India.

Massive shortage in availability of vaccines and issues regarding its distribution are, of course, major factors holding us back in many states, but reluctance towards the vaccine also makes the task of ensuring immunity among the majority of our population difficult. But moving beyond ‘victim blaming’, we need to dig deeper and understand the underlying reasons for vaccine hesitancy so that it can be minimized. Addressing this issue is as much an essential step as is stepping up steady vaccine supply and delivery.

We regularly read stories about people, particularly in rural areas, who

are reluctant to approach vaccination centres, even actively avoiding vaccination staff visiting their homes. Before rushing to dismiss them as being ‘unscientific’, we need to understand that scientific attitudes among the public are shaped in a social context. We need to reflect on how rational thinking in India has been undermined in various forms, especially in recent years.

One does not have to look too far to understand the roots of growing irrational beliefs. Take the example of a chief minister who persists in hosting the massive Kumbh mela in his state during the second COVID wave, encouraging lakhs of people to bathe together without any precautions and declaring that “Maa Ganga’s blessings are there in the flow ... So, there should be no Corona”; a vocal MP claims that drinking cow urine can ‘cure Corona’; a minister advises people to burn cow dung to ‘sanitize’ the environment. And





when a prominent 'godman'-turned-businessman publicly dismisses modern medicine as being 'stupid science', yet no action is taken against him, we begin to understand just how deeply entrenched the systematic undermining of scientific ethos in India is. When irrational messages by such 'opinion makers' are showcased as 'solutions' on social media, the stage is naturally set for popular opinion to become less receptive to scientific measures.

The spread of irrational beliefs alone does not explain people's hesitation about COVID-19 vaccines. A WHO document analyzing vaccine hesitancy has identified lack of trust as being a crucial factor in shaping this phenomenon. Inadequate trust in health-care systems can lead people to become reluctant, even suspicious, when they are offered services in certain situations. Such weakening of trust, especially in north India, can be traced back to the family

planning programme of the 1960s and 70s, which included coercive measures and even forced sterilizations. Public-health staff, themselves under pressure to achieve targets, began to be shunned as agents of a hostile scheme. Subsequent poor functioning of public health systems due to underfunding, understaffing and political neglect have also contributed to breaking public confidence in these services. Often there is also concern about the motivations of private health-care providers, due to large-scale commercialization and frequent patient experiences involving overcharging and irrational care.

Supporting this explanation is a national study on COVID vaccine hesitancy among Indian states, in which Kerala was found to have the least vaccine reluctance. This reflects higher public trust and a more positive perception of the state's primary health-care system, allowing it to effectively reach a population already motivated and willing to use various public-health services.

A third important factor here is social grounding of mass communication. While routine messages promoting COVID vaccination have been broadcast across India, field-level observations tell us that, until now, such official communications have not been sufficiently impactful. In contrast, consider the story of a cluster of tribal villages in Maharashtra's Amaravati district, where local staff developed and displayed a series of videos in Korku, the indigenous language of the area's residents, to convince them

to take the COVID vaccine. Combined with organizing gram sabha meetings, and actively involving local people in culturally relatable messaging, this has led to four tribal villages achieving 100 per cent COVID vaccination. There are similar experiences of locally rooted communication strategies leading to markedly improved vaccination coverage from other states too.

Given this complex interplay of factors, an integrated approach is required to minimize vaccine hesitancy in India. Firstly, governments across India need to partner with diverse civil society groups and community leaders, to reshape and refine communication strategies. Vaccination messages must be locally contextualized, and shared in language and idioms ordinary people can relate to. Secondly, trust in public-health services must be greatly strengthened, so that people regain confidence in these systems. As part of the long overdue agenda of upgrading public-health infrastructure, a number of steps could be taken immediately to rejuvenate people's trust. This may include setting up help desks in all medical facilities to assist and guide patients, improving the honorarium and morale of frontline health staff such as Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers as well as rapidly orienting them to better communicate with communities and form

coordination committees along with civil society initiatives and bodies at various levels, to enable positive feedback and social mobilization.

Finally, we need to remember that it was Jawaharlal Nehru who coined the term 'scientific temper'—defined as an internalized attitude of logical and rational thinking; not merely parroting science lessons for examinations, but applying scientific thinking in our daily lives. Today, as citizens, we should demand that political leaders at all levels set the right example by standing up for socially relevant science, which is

LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS MUST SET THE RIGHT EXAMPLE BY STANDING UP FOR SCIENCE.

the foundation of public health. This must be done not just in words, but through concrete decisions and actions to curb all kinds of obscurantism, even if it emanates from the powerful.

Overcoming vaccine hesitancy is not just an issue of broadcasting routine information, it involves rallying people to join the movement towards collective health and welfare; it requires better trust and communication between public agencies and citizens; it is about strengthening scientific attitudes and deepening public dialogues, which lie at the heart of a functioning democracy. **R**

Dr Abhay Shukla is a public health professional and health activist. He is the National Co-convenor of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan.

ALL
in a Day's
WORK



“OK, I messed up. He didn’t have to rub my nose in it.”

My husband is a physician and uses a dictation service to transcribe his oral notes. On occasion the typists have accidentally altered the sentence structure or words, resulting in something my husband had not necessarily intended.

For example, one transcriber wrote, “The patient is recently married; otherwise, he is normal and healthy.”

—ELAINE EHRENPREIS

In case you’re wondering how being manager is going ... no one showed up today because I forgot to make this week’s schedule.

—[@ARIIGONZALEZV](https://twitter.com/ARIIGONZALEZV)

As finishing her dinner, my stuffed granddaughter turned to her mother and declared, “Mom, you make hamburgers so good, you could work at McDonald’s!”

—LINDA RAUCH

I realized just how long we’ve been working from home the day a package was delivered and my husband referred to the entrance of our house as “the lobby”.

—KIM SCHAFER

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

ASK AN EXPERT

Why Do People Fall for Conspiracy Theories?

We quiz Ghayda Hassan, psychology professor

BY Courtney Shea

ILLUSTRATION BY *Lauren Tamaki*



Not that long ago, conspiracies were for wing nuts in tinfoil hats. Now they're everywhere. What happened? We've definitely seen them gain a lot of momentum in the last few years—the last year, in particular, with COVID-19 and the divisive political climate. Conspiratorial thinking becomes more popular during times of strife and instability. People are scared and they're looking for explanations.

What's the distinction between a conspiracy theory and healthy skepticism?

Broadly speaking, a conspiracy theory is a belief that explains an event or a set

of circumstances as the result of a secret plot, usually by a powerful organization. In the case of QAnon, it's the belief that there's a secret cabal of Satanist pedophiles running a global child sex-trafficking ring and plotting against Donald Trump.

It's healthy to question authority, but with conspiratorial thinking you get people ignoring evidence and misinterpreting facts. For instance, Pizzagate—a precursor to QAnon—is the belief that

Hillary Clinton's emails contained codes about a secret child sex ring run out of a pizza restaurant in Washington. It's true that Clinton did have emails that were under investigation, but that is not evidence of a child sex ring.

It all sounds so preposterous. How do people get sucked in?

Most people don't wake up one day believing that, for example, the moon landing was staged in a television studio. Instead, it's more of a grooming process. A person feels dissatisfied or alienated and maybe they watch a video on social media about the landing being a hoax. Certain ideas are normalized, and it's a slippery slope from there.

Are popular conspiracy theories always political?

They often are, but not always. For instance, there's one that the underwire in bras causes cancer and another that Bill Gates wants to use vaccines to install tracking devices in humans.

Are there characteristics that make a person more likely to fall for them?

There are, but they're not necessarily what you would think. People have this idea that it's more common among less educated people, but that's not really the case. We know that access to broad sources of information is beneficial, which may relate to a person's level of education, but far more often we see a connection to life events: a job loss, the

end of a relationship, a death. These may lead to isolation, and when a person is isolated they become far more susceptible—particularly if they're spending a lot of time online.

How can you help a loved one to not get caught up in a conspiracy theory?

We want to talk about prevention rather than interruption, because once a person gets entrenched, pulling them

IT'S HEALTHY TO QUESTION AUTHORITY, BUT WITH CONSPIRATORIAL THINKING, PEOPLE IGNORE EVIDENCE AND MISINTERPRET FACTS.

out is a lot more complicated. It's important to understand that you don't have to debate the conspiracy theory. In fact, that can be counterproductive because it can make the person feel more isolated. The best way to help someone is to address the circumstances that have made that individual vulnerable—checking in on them regularly and encouraging social connections and community ties. **R**

Ghayda Hassan is the director of the Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence



25-year-old Archie Sen on one of her daily food drives for stray dogs in Ranchi's Morabadi.

GOOD NEWS

FOR A
Better Planet

Food for Furry Friends

ANIMAL WELFARE Stray animals were hit hard by the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, but one family's efforts have given pups a new lease of life in Ranchi's Morabadi. 25-year-old Archie Sen and her father, Sanjeet have been running a feeding drive for around 160 dogs every day since last year. The duo ensures that the dogs are fed, watered and vaccinated, and have even fitted more than a hundred with reflective collars to avoid run-ins with passing vehicles. To offset the financial weight of their work, they started the 'Street Dogs of Ranchi', an online

community for animal lovers and others to donate money, material or medicines for the dogs every day. The Sens have also helped some of the dogs find forever homes through legal adoption. "Everyone talks about animal welfare, but very few want to really do something for them. I appeal to everyone to come forward and feed at least one animal every day as they are also a part of our society," Archie says.

The Walking Librarian

SERVICE When 61-year-old P. Sukumaran packs two bags and sets off for his 12-km walk across Karuvatta and Kumarapuram gram panchayats in Alappuzha, Kerala, he is thinking of more than just physical fitness. His daily stroll in fact takes him to the doorsteps of the area's residents to whom he delivers books and reading material as a way of encouraging a love for the literary. Sukumaran joined the

Kumarapuram Public Library at Karuvatta South as a librarian in 1979 and began the practice in response to the poor reader turnout at the library.

“What makes me happy is that a lot of people have become avid readers after reading books given by me,” says Sukumaran. The sexagenarian visits around 30 houses and shares more than 1,000 books on foot every month.

The ₹3,100 paid by the Library Council, along with a 30 per cent commission on book sales supports his wife and 12-year-old child. “I may not be earning much, but I am proud to say I make a living as a librarian,” he says.

Healthcare for All

HEALTH After a terrible accident in 2008, Ayush Mishra was left with an amputated leg and a troubling realization: What if his family didn't have the necessary connections that got him the quality, life-saving care he received in Delhi? What if, like so many others, the sub-par treatment in his college city of Jaipur or hometown in Bareilly was all he had been able to access? Would he have lost more than a limb?

Mishra's traumatic experience led him to create Tattvan E-Clinics in 2018 in an effort to connect people from smaller towns with the high healthcare standards provided in bigger cities. The tele-medicine outfit allows residents of remote, rural areas to consult qualified doctors, and even specialists, for timely healthcare at

subsidized costs. “Even in a city like Bareilly, finding an endocrinologist was very hard. In villages, patients go back to old grandmother remedies, increasing risk of hospitalization. We work to reduce this risk,” he tells *The Better India*.

Help for Young Orphans

COMMUNITY COVID-19 deaths around the country have left hundreds of children orphaned, many of them from disadvantaged backgrounds. But good Samaritans are stepping up to fill the void. While various government



Jai Sharma, founder of the NGO JOY

efforts have been set up, Dehradun resident Jai Sharma, founder of the NGO Just Open Yourself (JOY) revealed his intention to adopt 100 orphans bereft of care due to the pandemic. JOY has already begun offering financial support to 28 of them. “We aim to finance the education of these students for the next two to three years till they become self-reliant,” Sharma told *Times of India*.

—COMPILED BY ISHANI NANDI

POINTS TO PONDER

One of the greatest handicaps is to fear a mistake. You have stopped yourself. You have to move freely into the arena, not just to wait for the perfect situation, the perfect moment ... If you have to make a mistake, it's better to make a mistake of action than one of inaction.

Federico Fellini, filmmaker and screenwriter

I have no hesitation in accepting that I too belong to the majority of commoners who are yet to comprehend homosexuality completely. Ignorance is no justification for normalizing any form of discrimination.

Anand Venkatesh, Madras High Court Judge

It seems reasonable to believe—and I do believe—that the more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for the destruction of our race.

Wonder and humility are wholesome emotions, and they do not exist side by side with a lust for destruction

Rachel Carson, marine biologist



What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candour
and more unashamed conversation.

Glenn Close, *actor*

For every policeman who raises a stick to the brave young feminists, the anxiety he is dealing with is real. For, in them, he sees the paths his daughters will surely take as they begin to assert themselves and assume control, and he begins to lose it. It's time we took our young feminists seriously, and started listening to them.

Urvashi Butalia, *writer and activist*

It is likely that some troubles will befall us; but it is not a present fact. How often has the unexpected happened! How often has the expected never come to pass! And even though it is ordained to be, what does it avail to run out to meet your suffering? You will suffer soon enough, when it arrives; so look forward meanwhile to better things.

Seneca, *philosopher*

FROM LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK, PURUSHOTTAM DIWAKAR, SHUTTERSTOCK



Glenn Close



Urvashi Butalia



Seneca

It Happens
ONLY IN INDIA



“Damned the inflation. All my dough is worthless.”

No Cell Phones Please

Dear women, dump your cellular devices, lest, you be held responsible for actively encouraging any sexual misdemeanours that come your way. Before you get mad, allow us to quickly direct you to the source of such cretinism—Meena Kumari,

member of the Uttar Pradesh Women’s Commission. There is much to rage over—from her call to block girls’ access to phones as a way of curbing sexual assault, prescribing surveillance as a quick-fix to keep girls from eloping and squarely laying all blame on mothers

for such acts. But, the language of outrage over thinly disguised misogyny is so wearied by repetition ad nauseam, we scarcely have words left to register this fresh transgression.

Source: IndianExpressOnline

Foot on the pedal

Sky-rocketing fuel prices

straining your purse? Madhya Pradesh Energy Minister Pradhuman Singh Tomar has just the prescription for you: Cycle your way out of the surge and into health, and tackle air pollution to boot. In light of the frequent hikes in fuel prices—16 times in June alone—Tomar held himself up as a champion of this new lean petrol-diesel diet, and offered details of his green routine for the last 30 days as proof. With petrol prices touching record highs, Indian citizens feeling the pinch might just have to resort to making the best of their legs.

Source: *Indianexpress.com*

Busy Bee

Aam Aadmi Party MLA Shiv Charan Goel is a hard-working man who leaves no stone unturned, no task undone and no speed breaker 'un-inaugurated'. The MLA took to social media to share pictures of him doing 'development' work, surrounded by over 20 people as-

sembled to inaugurate a speed breaker at Moti Nagar, Delhi. Busy day at the office, eh?

Source: *financialexpress.com*

Rule of Law

In a rather queer turn of events, it turns out the state machinery has been overzealous in implementing the letter of the law. Except, the section in question—Section 66A of the IT Act—was scrapped in 2015. The Supreme Court expressed shock that its judgement striking down the law hadn't been implemented, and issued a notice to the Centre on the use of the section. The Attorney General of India, K. K. Venugopal offered a preliminary explanation for the disregard displayed for the Supreme Court judgement: The post judgement publications of the IT Act contained the section, with only an asterisk to indicate a footnote that says deleted by order of Supreme court and "no one reads the footnote." As of March 2021,

a total of 745 cases are still pending before the district courts in 11 states, wherein the accused are being prosecuted for offences under the same section.

Source: *indiatoday.in* 

For Your Eyes Only

Women in the system of arranged marriages are often located, to put it baldly, between a rock and a hard place. So, when Archana, from Kanpur decided to call off her wedding after the discovery that her groom suffered from terrible eyesight—a fact that was hidden from her—we find it hard to fault her. The bride's family had gifted the groom a motorcycle and cash—so its only fair the bride too get her wish: a man who can read without glasses.

Source: *timesofindia.com*

—COMPILED BY NAOREM ANUJA

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

YOGI IN MISSION MODE TO

Coronavirus infection was at its peak on 30th April during the second wave of COVID-19 in Uttar Pradesh.

And it was the same day when Covid-19 test report of chief minister Yogi Adityanath fighting this pandemic from the last 2 weeks came negative. Immediately, Yogi Adityanath came into action with the mission to save the lives of people. He prepared the strategy to save the people from the pandemic and at the same time started inspecting hospitals and visiting villages. He organized team 9 comprising senior officials at state level and on the same line constituted a team 9 in every district to strengthen the fight against Coronavirus. The strategy of trace, test and treat broke the chain of COVID-19 infection. It was the result of the perfect strategy of Yogi Adityanath that within 35 days of reaching its peak the COVID infection rate in the state declined to 0.2%. Along with saving the lives of citizens of state Yogi Adityanath is also fighting on war-footing to save the livelihood of people during Covid Times. After controlling the second wave of Corona, Yogi has started the mission of strengthening health services in the state so that the possible third wave can be effectively controlled in time.

The speed of COVID-19 infection was curbed swiftly because of the successful decisions taken by head of the state Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Active Covid cases have reached below 600 in all districts of a state because of the day and night efforts of Yogi Adityanath. That is why the success of the UP COVID-19 model of Yogi is being discussed in other states also. When the covid cases reached its peak in April in the state, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasized on supply of Oxygen and medicines to all government and non-government

hospitals, expansion of beds, testing and vaccination. The result of these efforts is that within one and half months the recovery rate from coronavirus has reached above 98% in the state. 'UP model' is number one in the country because of the Yogi's strategy of aggressive testing and contact tracing. State is conducting 10 times more COVID-19 tests daily than the standard set by the World health organisation. WHO has given a target of 32,000 covid tests daily but more than three lakh tests per day are being conducted in the state. 31 contact sample tests are

being conducted on each positive case in the state which is above the WHO standard. WHO also praised the micro management of Uttar Pradesh during the first wave and second wave of COVID-19. The micro containment zones formed after directions of CM Yogi have broken the chain of infection. Rapid response teams and Surveillance committees have tested a large number of people in villages. After 31st March, 70% covid tests have been conducted in rural areas of state. Uttar Pradesh has conducted the highest number of COVID-19 tests in the country and more than 5.41 crore samples have been tested so far.

'MISSION JUNE' CAMPAIGN OF YOGI BECAME PRECEDENT

Uttar Pradesh has become the first state of the country to provide the fastest and highest number of vaccinations to the youth. CM Yogi launched a free vaccination campaign in the state to provide vaccines against COVID-19 to the people aged between 18 to 45



SAVE LIVES AND LIVELIHOOD



The way Uttar Pradesh government is distributing medicines door-to-door in cities and villages by creating micro-containment zones on the principle of 'where sick-there treatment', is a very good initiative."

— Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

years. The special vaccination campaign launched under 'Mission June' name is getting tremendous success across the state. Despite being the highest populated state, more than 58 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been given to the beneficiaries of this age group under the leadership of CM Yogi. To expedite the vaccination campaign CM Yogi Adityanath has directed to increase the present vaccination number of 4 lakhs doses daily to 5 to 6 lakh doses per day and on the other hand target has been given to increase the daily vaccination capacity to 10 to 12 lakhs per day in the month of July. After completion of 'Mission June' Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has decided the target of administering 10 crore vaccine doses in the next three months.

YOGI GOVERNMENT MAKING ALL POSSIBLE ARRANGEMENTS FOR TREATMENT

DOOR TO DOOR SURVEILLANCE

More than 73000 active monitoring committees are conducting door to door surveillance in Uttar Pradesh. With this surveillance system, corona screening has been conducted over a population of 18 crore people out of the total 24 crore population of the state.

EMPHASIS ON SANITISATION

To break the chain of infection campaign for fogging, sanitisation and cleanliness is being conducted in rural and urban areas during the weekend restrictions. Around 86700 workers in rural areas and 82000 workers in urban areas are involved in this campaign.

WOMEN VACCINATION CENTERS

From 7th June special 'pink booths' for women vaccination have been established in each district of the state. Two women special vaccination centers have been established in district women hospitals and joint hospitals.

FEVER CLINIC

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered to start fever clinics and flu clinics at all divisional and district hospitals, community health centres and primary health centres. These

centres are a must where patients with symptoms of COVID-19 will be tested and provided proper treatment.

MEDICINE KIT

The Yogi government has started the campaign for door-to-door distribution of medicine kits from 15th June for the treatment of viral fever in children with the help of more than 73000 monitoring committees active in the state.

TELECONSULTATION SYSTEM

Teleconsultation facility has been started in District Hospitals and Medical Colleges of state. Through this facility general patients are getting better health services while being at their homes. Such a mechanism has been activated that only the serious patients should reach hospitals during Covid times.

AYUSH KIT

After the direction of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Ayush department has reached approximately 23 lakh people in the state during Covid times. The department has distributed free covid kits to more than 20 lakh people. Apart from that more than 3 lakh people have taken tips from social media platforms and Ayush kavach app.



CHILDREN WILL BE SAVED FROM CORONA ON THE LINE OF ENCEPHALITIS

Experts are saying that the impending third wave of Covid will be more sensitive towards children. Keeping in mind these apprehensions the government under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has started preparations on war-footing to save children from any such kind of impending wave. Just after reaching at the helm of affairs in March 2017, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath started his efforts on war footing to stop the untimely death of children from Encephalitis. Infrastructure of health services were strengthened at PHC (primary health centers) and CHC (community health centers) keeping in mind the encephalitis disease. Special awareness campaign regarding cleanliness and hygiene was launched in three dozen sensitive districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh for containment of the disease. The result is that encephalitis is almost on the verge

of ending in these districts. Now the experience gained during the elimination of encephalitis is being used by the Yogi Government to save the children from the third wave of COVID-19. The pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) project, which played an important role during control of encephalitis, is now implemented across the state to save the children from the possible third wave.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed to prepare 100 bedded ICU for children in all medical colleges of state. Chief minister has also asked to set up 100 bedded ICU at every division level and 25 bedded ICU at district hospitals. Along with it directions have been given to officials for arrangement of necessary and skilled human resources in a certain time period. The doctors of Baba Raghav Das medical College Gorakhpur and King George medical University Lucknow, who have an experience of four

decades in saving the children from deadly disease encephalitis, will impart training to other doctors and paramedical staff of the state for operating the PICU. It should be kept in mind that more than 95% decrease has been registered in the deaths of children from encephalitis, which was taking lives of children in around 3 dozen districts of states especially in all districts of Gorakhpur and Basti division from the last four decades.

CONSOLIDATED EFFORTS OF AYURVEDA HOMEOPATHY AND UNANI

Consolidated efforts have started to save the children from the probable third wave of Covid. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asked experts of Ayush to treat the infected patients of covid with age-old traditions of Ayurveda. The Ayush department has also started preparations to fight with the impending third wave of covid. Ayush department is going to form help desks in all its hospitals which will be focused on the health of children. Along with it Ayush kavach app will also add a new feature which will be related to the health of children. This feature will answer various questions like how to take care of the health of children according to the different seasons, how to increase the immunity of children and which home remedy can improve their health. Ayush department is continuously distributing Kadha and ayurvedic medicines for home isolated patients. Ayush kavach mobile app has also become quite popular among the public during

covid period. Currently more than 3 lakh people are using it. Ayush department has around 2104 hospitals across the state, out of which 8 big hospitals are in cities like Lucknow Banaras and Pilibhit. All these hospitals will have a help desk focused on the health of children where doctors of Ayush department will provide information to the general public about the health of children and how to increase their immunity. Apart from it, medicines which will increase the immunity of children will also be distributed.

YOGI GOVERNMENT TO TAKE CARE OF THE CHILDREN WHO LOST THEIR PARENTS

The Yogi government has started working on implementation of 'Uttar Pradesh Mukhymantri Bal seva Yojana' at ground level after it was approved by the cabinet. The scheme is meant for the children who lost either both their parents or one of them in covid period which will be counted from March 2020. Responsibility has been fixed of the officials who will implement this scheme to the ground level in the districts and do listing of children and terms of eligibility. The motto of the scheme is to provide immediate help to the children in distress and save them from going into the wrong hands. The scheme takes complete care of the health, education and maintenance of the children. District level task force will identify the legal guardian of the beneficiary and the district level child care unit and child welfare committee will also keep an eye over the overall development of the children.

HOSPITALS ARE GETTING READY TO DEAL WITH THE THIRD WAVE OF COVID-19

COVID CARE CENTRE

4 community health centres situated in far flung areas of all districts of state are being converted into L1 category covid care centres. At these health centers numbers of beds are being increased from 30 to 50. All beds will have the facility of Oxygen and out of these 10 beds will remain reserved for pediatrics.

OXYGEN CONCENTRATOR

The Yogi government is purchasing 17000 oxygen concentrators to provide oxygen supply to all beds of those CHCs which are being converted into L one category covid care centres. Health department will fix the oxygen concentrators in all hospitals by the end of June.

OXYGEN GENERATION PLANT

Sugar mills of Uttar Pradesh are setting up oxygen generation plants in hospitals in 40 districts and in 35 districts this work is being done through distilleries. These plants will be made in more than 100 L1 covid care centers which are being established in rural areas.

They can provide oxygen 24/7 to 100 patients at a time.

DEPLOYMENT OF DOCTORS

Seven doctors will be deployed in each Covid Care Centre which is being prepared in rural areas. Out of these, two will be emergency medical

officers, 1 medical superintendent and 4 specialist doctors of different fields. 12 medical staff including 6 nurses and 4 pharmacists will also be deployed.

TRAINING PROGRAM

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed to impart training of covid vaccination to the trainee nurses of all nursing colleges of the state. 3-day training program has been initiated to train the doctors and paramedical staff for operating the pediatric intensive care unit.

RECRUITMENT OF DOCTORS

The Yogi government has started the procedure for recruitment of 3620 doctors under the medical and health services cadre PMS. Maximum number of 600 pediatricians will be recruited and 590 posts are for general physicians and the same number of posts for general surgeons and gynecologists.

DISASTER EXPERTS

The Yogi government has decided to appoint disaster experts on contract basis in 62 districts of state to deal with any kind of disaster. They will get a remuneration of 50,000 rupees per month. All those experts who were working in 13 districts of state have been given an extension of one-year service.



financial assistance one time.

FOOD GRAINS FOR POOR

To give relief to the needy and poor people in conditions generated due to covid pandemic, the state government is providing 2 kg rice and 3 kg wheat per unit free of cost for 3 months to the holders of Antyodaya and ration card holders. In this way per unit 5 kg free of cost food grain is being provided to the needy persons. This is benefitting around 15 crore population of the state. This ration is in addition with the central government's announcement of free ration. On the other hand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already announced to extend the present help of free ration under PM Garib Kalyan scheme to the month of November. This announcement is going to benefit maximum to Uttar Pradesh. In Uttar Pradesh the beneficiaries of this scheme are around 15 crores. Last year during covid period, the government provided financial assistance and free ration to each member of the family of all poor people, people under Antyodaya scheme, construction labourers, rickshaw pullers and Street vendors. Along with it, the government abolished the necessity of ration cards and provided ration two times in a month, once under Pradhan mantri Garib Kalyan scheme and second time through public distribution system. This should be kept in mind that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has been committed towards poor people from the beginning. He has announced quite earlier that wherever the labourers will work

CM YOGI BECAME SUPPORT OF EVERY NEEDY DURING COVID PANDEMIC

Global pandemic covid affected every class of the society. Since the second wave was 30 to 50 times more infectious than the first one therefore its impact was also accordingly. This unprecedented and unexpected pandemic has hit the deprived section of society mostly which depends completely on the daily income of its family head. This section includes street vendors, small roadside shop owners, rickshaw and three wheeler pullers, barbers, washer men, tailors, cobblers, and fruits and vegetable vendors. Apart from it a large portion is of those labourers who are associated with construction work. During the first wave of covid infection also Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath came forward for every possible help of this most deprived section of the society. This continues during the second wave also. To safeguard the life and livelihood of people during covid pandemic financial assistance of 1000 rupees has been provided to those working in

urban areas as daily wage worker like Street vendors, small shopkeepers, street shop owners, daily labourers, rickshaw and e rickshaw pullers, labourers and traditional workers like barbers', washer man, cobblers, confectioners. This is a great support for them during this emergency period. This assistance has given relief to around 91 lakh poor people. During the first phase of covid pandemic around 11 lakh Street vendors got 1000 rupees as financial assistance. In the next phase around 80 lakh registered and non-registered labourers were also given this facility. Uttar Pradesh was the first state which provided this financial assistance through online mode to Street vendors, rickshaw pullers, labourers, coolies and daily wage workers. Later many state governments also followed the suit. Workers from the organised sector got this assistance two times and the workers from the unorganised sector received this

their children will read in the nearby Atal boarding school. UP has also created a record in the government procurement of food grain which is later distributed among poor people. The Yogi government is making records every year in the purchase of food grains. Over 55 lakh metric tons of wheat has been purchased in Uttar Pradesh till date which is a record. Payment has been made directly into the accounts of more than 12 lakh farmers for wheat purchase in the state.

COMMUNITY KITCHEN MODEL PROVIDING RELIEF TO POOR

Uttar Pradesh has become a state which is providing free of cost cooked food daily to lakhs of people during covid period. The positive step taken by Yogi Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to support the needy persons by opening community kitchens in all districts of state with the motto that no one should sleep empty stomach in the state and daily wages must not face any problem of cooked food has become great support to the needy people. Government has started 416 community kitchens in 75 districts of the state. Food packets are being provided to people free of cost with the help of these government community kitchens. Many private institutes are also voluntarily associating the government in this initiative. They have started operating 158 community kitchens in the state. 416 government community kitchens have provided food packets to 513730 people in 6116 areas and mohallas of the state till date.

FAST MOVING ON THE PATH OF DEVELOPMENT DURING COVID TIMES ALSO

INVESTOR'S CONFIDENCE

During covid times also investor's confidence remained intact in Uttar Pradesh. During this crisis period also the state received 96 investment proposals worth rupees 66000 crore. Out of these, the procedure of land allocation has been completed for investment proposals of 8 investors worth 16000 crore rupees.

DEDICATED HELP DESK

After directions of the Chief Minister, continuous communication is being maintained with investors and all possible encouragement and facilities as per the policies are being provided to them. The dedicated helpdesk established last year for the convenience of investors is being operated actively.

LOAN DISTRIBUTION

More than double the amount of loans were distributed compared to last year under one district one product financial assistance scheme. During this period loans worth 380 crore rupees were provided to artisans and entrepreneurs.

100% PROGRESS

Working in a systematic manner, 10 days free training and free tool kits were made available to artisans and handicraft workers under ODOP training and tool kit scheme during lockdown which is hundred percent completion of the target of 16 thousand set

during last fiscal year.

OXYGEN POLICY

To make the state independent in the field of industrial and medical oxygen Yogi Government has implemented Uttar Pradesh oxygen production promotion policy 2021. Because of the attractive provisions of the policy many reputed companies related to oxygen production have shown interest in setting up their plants in Uttar Pradesh.

COVID HELPDESK

More than 1,14000 covid help desks have been established in industrial units and institutes. More than 6700 beds are also established in 2719 covid care centres. Chief minister has directed that all established covid help desks and covid care centres must operate continuously.

MGNREGA EMPLOYMENT

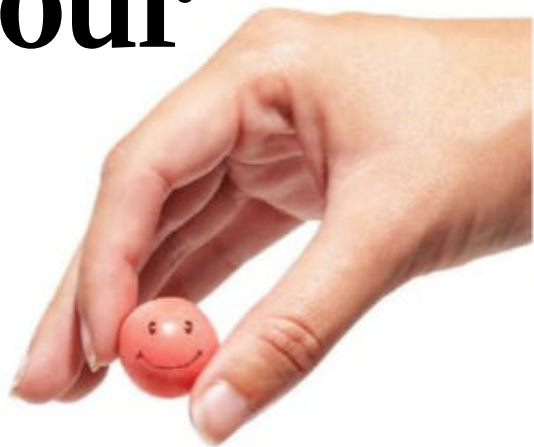
Employment under MGNREGA scheme has increased during the second wave of covid. While only 249428 labourers were working in 17980 gram panchayats on 10th May, the number increased to 1408615 on 6 June.

MY VILLAGE-CLEAN VILLAGE

The Yogi government launched a 10 days 'Mera Gaon, Corona Mukta Gaon' campaign in all revenue villages of the state from 9th June. Under the scheme soak pits and compost pits will be constructed for liquid and solid sewage management in every revenue village.

How to Lift Your Own Spirits

We all feel down now and then, especially lately. These techniques can help you bounce back



BY *Courtenay Smith*
AND *Samantha Rideout*



ON A FREEZING January evening, Ashley Austrew sat in her car in an Omaha, Nebraska, parking lot, working up the courage to go into a comedy improv class. For 20 minutes, the 33-year-old journalist and mom of two sat with swirling thoughts of self-doubt: “OMG, I can’t do this. I’ll be the worst one.” Then she turned off the engine, took a few deep breaths and went inside.

For Austrew, trying improv was the first small step to improve her self-esteem. “All my life, I’ve lacked confidence,” she says. “I didn’t have the courage to try anything new.” So she made a list of all the things she was afraid to attempt and then asked herself, What if I didn’t let my excuses win? Improv was her biggest target.

Her fear dissolved as soon as she walked into the class. Her classmates were also beginners, and she discovered that she was perfectly capable of earning a few laughs and making new friends. Over the next two years, Austrew went on to tackle other what-ifs, including writing a book. “Self-esteem is like a muscle—you have to work it constantly,” she says.

Some people are blessed with a seemingly unshakable positivity, but most of us need to learn how to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. Psychologists say we tend to experience our lowest self-esteem in adolescence and spend much of our adult lives slowly building it back up. Staying positive has been tough in the past

year. Since the pandemic began, three times as many adults have reported symptoms of depression or anxiety (the malevolent cousins to low self-worth) compared with 2019. Thankfully, like Austrew, we can learn to feel better about ourselves and strengthen our feelings of hope. (Of course, anyone experiencing severe or persistent symptoms should seek professional help.) Here are eight science-backed strategies to improve your relationship with the person in the mirror.

Embrace the Upside of Feeling Down

First, realize that negative emotions aren’t inherently bad—they can be useful. “That ping of anxiety gets my attention and says, ‘Hey, you need to focus on this,’” says psychologist Ethan Kross, author of *Chatter: The Voice in Our Head, Why It Matters, and How to Harness It*. If you need to deal with an immediate problem—say, reining in overspending—that call to focus is helpful. But negativity spirals into something harmful when a particular thought circuit just won’t shut off. If you can’t sleep because of it, feel physically stressed all the time, or keep rehashing the same situation, those are signs you need to employ tools to break the cycle, says Kross.

Engage in Smarter Self-Talk

In his lab at the University of Michigan, Kross asks subjects to talk to themselves in the second person,

and to use their own names. Instead of saying, “I’m so nervous about this meeting on Tuesday,” for example, say, “[Your name], you seem pretty nervous about this meeting.” Kross’s research shows that this simple shift in language gets people into problem-solving mode quicker. “They turn into coaches and start advising themselves, taking stock of the problem and figuring out if they have the resources to meet it,” Kross says.

Change Your View—Literally

If you are forlornly looking out the window lost in a thought loop, walk to a different window. Alternate perspectives help us digest our experiences, and changing our physical view intuitively jogs a different emotional one as well. “When I’m stuck feeling a certain way and I choose to walk away and look for something better—that’s a choice to do something good for myself. That itself is a treatment,” says Sasha Storaasli, LCSW, an end-of-life counselor to terminally ill transplant patients in New York City.

Repeat a Task You’re Good At

Canadian psychologist Patrick Keelan plays piano every day. It’s one way he practises what he preaches. When he’s helping people with low self-esteem, he suggests they routinely engage with activities that use or improve their skills. “When you’re doing something that you’re good at or getting better at, it gets harder to think negatively



about yourself,” he explains. So don’t wait until you’re feeling confident to work on your chess game, learn to build furniture, or try out a new recipe. According to a 14-year study of 7,000 volunteers, increasing the self-perception that you’re mastering an activity of interest to you can boost your self-esteem at every age.

Reminisce

While some research suggests happiness increases with age, studies also suggest that self-esteem peaks at age 60, then declines. As people get older, the loss of loved ones, professional identity or independence can threaten the sense of who they are. Telling someone stories from the past may bolster self-esteem at this key moment. In a 2015 study from Iran, a group of widowed men 60 and over shared memories of the events and life lessons that had shaped their lives.

This “promoted a sense of identity and a positive contribution to the next generation, and reaffirmed the meaning of their lives,” the researchers reported. Take a trip down memory lane by looking through a photo album with loved ones or playing music that reminds you of meaningful moments.

MUSIC THAT REMINDS YOU OF MEANINGFUL MOMENTS CAN BOOST YOUR SELF-ESTEEM.

Believe that You Matter

A 2020 study reveals that mattering—the bedrock belief that you are important and worthy of consideration—is linked to joy. Strong personal relationships are the best aids to believing you matter, says an article published last year in the *Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*. Spend time with loved ones, and remind them you offer a shoulder to cry on. “It’s nice to know that someone cares, and they in turn can count on me when they need help,” said one person who was interviewed. Maintaining a sense of control, especially over your health-care issues, also boosts that sense of importance. When you take the initiative to find medical providers attentive to your needs or ask family members not to bypass you when medical decisions are being made, you reinforce the feeling that you are worthy of attention.

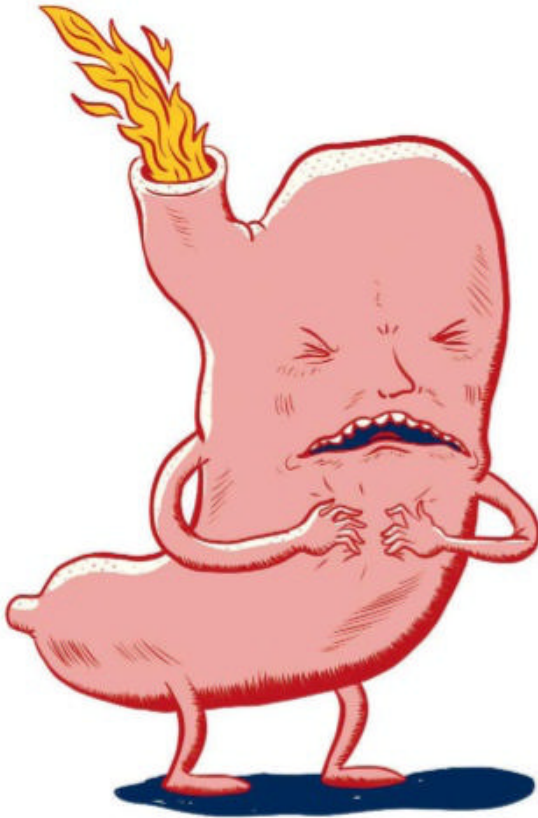
Share Your Feelings—Carefully

When we feel strong negative emotions, we often feel an urgent need to talk about them. Research shows that this doesn’t always ease our turmoil, nor do venting sessions where both parties complain. Such interactions can reactivate negative emotions, making us live through them again. What’s important is to get feedback that moves you beyond negative feelings, says Kross. “Talk about what’s bothering you, but be deliberate,” he says. “Go to someone empathetic, someone who doesn’t just listen but who gives you advice and helps you see the bigger picture.” Storaasli puts it bluntly: “You need people who lift you up. If you don’t have those people, find them.”

Get Moving

There’s no silver bullet for improving low morale, but exercise is the closest thing we have. Not only is it good for stress management and general mental health but it also provides a sense of competence and accomplishment. Over the years, dozens of studies have indicated that exercise has a significant impact on physical self-worth and other self-perceptions. The activity you choose matters less than enjoying it, sticking to it, and getting at least a moderate challenge out of it. If going to the gym is not an option or very enjoyable to you, then head outdoors for a run or a nice brisk walk. **R**

HEALTH



Fire in the Belly

More stress brings more heartburn, but there are easy ways to beat it

BY Viviane Fairbank

ILLUSTRATION BY *Jarett Sitter*

MORE THAN A year into the pandemic, many people have grown used to a new lockdown lifestyle: staying home, exercising less and eating more—all while experiencing greater levels of stress and anxiety.

“All of this contributes to worsening gut function,” says Christopher Andrews, the lead physician at the Calgary Gut Motility Centre, adding that heartburn is on the rise. Some experts have even given the trend a name—‘pandemic stomach’.

Heartburn, a fiery sensation in the chest or upper belly, is the painful effect of the stomach’s acid and digestive enzymes creeping into the oesophagus. When you swallow food or liquid, your oesophageal sphincter, the muscle around the bottom of your oesophagus, relaxes to allow the contents to move down, then closes to prevent backup. But if that muscle weakens or is unable to close completely, stomach acid might rise, causing irritation.

Diet is the most common culprit: acidic foods such as grapefruits, hot sauce or coffee increase the amount of acid in your stomach, while chocolate, alcohol and high-fat foods, such as cheese or avocados, stimulate the release of hormones that loosen the sphincter. Spicy food can also increase uncomfortable sensations in the gut.

Heartburn occurs in bodies of all sizes, ages, ethnicities and genders, but researchers have found that overweight

people are more at risk. According to a major 2006 study, overweight and obese participants were two to three times more likely to experience frequent heartburn than those with a healthy weight.

This may be because of the increased pressure on the gut, Andrews says, which can push stomach acid up. Changes in diet, such as the recent tendency of people to lean on carbs and comfort food in lockdown, can also lead to more bloating and gas in the digestive tract—again putting a squeeze on the gut.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES CAN REDUCE HEARTBURN SYMPTOMS BY **40%**

Stress and anxiety are factors because the sympathetic nervous system—which triggers the body's 'fight or flight' response—also interacts with the enteric nervous system, which regulates digestion. In fact, during life-threatening situations, a person's digestion might slow down or even completely stop. At the same time, stress can leave the nerves in the gut overly sensitive.

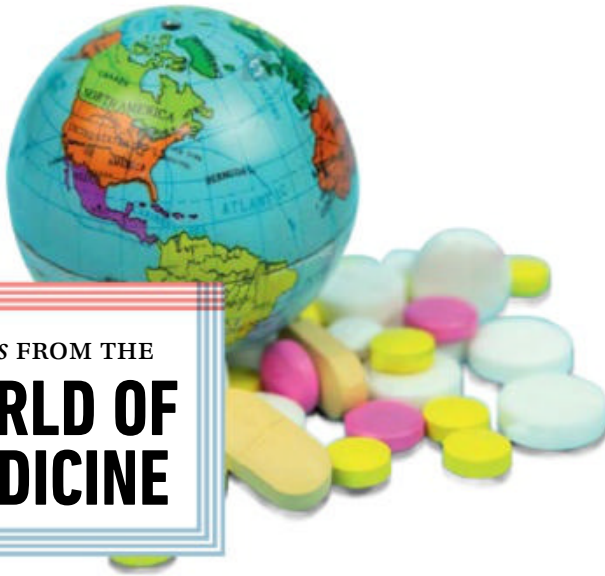
Occasional heartburn isn't a prob-

lem, but experiences of frequent indigestion should push you to prioritize a healthier lifestyle. According to a recent study of 9,000 heartburn patients, following a five-step health plan—maintaining a sensible body weight, eating well, exercising, not smoking and limiting coffee, tea and carbonated beverages—can decrease symptoms by 40 per cent. Andrews also tells his patients to avoid eating close to bedtime: "If you lie down when your stomach is full, it's much easier for things to come up."

Over-the-counter antihistamines can help by blocking the release of stomach acid, while antacid medications can temporarily relieve pain in the oesophagus. But if you experience heartburn more than three times a week over a long period of time, you should visit a doctor. Frequent acid contact might scar your oesophagus—and, if left untreated, increases your risk of oesophageal cancer.

You should also consult a doctor if, in combination with heartburn, you experience difficulty swallowing, vomiting, weight loss or anaemia. A physician can prescribe stronger medication or may recommend oesophageal surgery to repair or replace your damaged sphincter.

Though heartburn is currently on the rise, Andrews believes the uptick is short-term. "Once life comes back to normal, I'm optimistic about things getting better," he says. **R**



News FROM THE
**WORLD OF
MEDICINE**

WHY WOMEN SHOULD PUMP IRON TOO

On average, people lose three to eight percent of muscle mass over the course of each decade after their 30s. Strength training can slow this decline. In fact, according to a *Sports Medicine* review, all seniors—men and women—have a lot to gain from resistance exercises, whether they're pumping iron or simply doing squats, push-ups, and sit-ups. While men add more muscle overall from those activities, the benefits in women are proportional to their (usually smaller) sizes. Fighting off age-related muscle loss isn't the only perk: Resistance training can improve stamina, balance, flexibility and bone density, which can translate into a lower risk of falls.

The Best Shoes for Knee Osteoarthritis

If you suffer from osteoarthritis in one or both of your knees, you've probably heard conflicting advice about what kind of footwear will help you feel and function as well as possible. Some experts recommend stable, supportive shoes with cushioning, while others believe that flat, flexible, barefoot-style shoes are better at decreasing symptoms. When Australian scientists recently put both options to the test, users reported more pain reduction and fewer adverse events such as knee swelling and sore ankles when they wore shoes that were more stiff and supportive. Although the right shoes won't prevent those issues on their own, together with exercise, weight management and medication, they can help make it easier to live with osteoarthritis.

SENIORS ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO SUMMER HEAT

Seniors are at higher risk for heat-related illnesses than younger folks, and a new Canadian study has highlighted a fascinating reason why: They sweat more when they're running low on body fluids.

When it's hot out and you're being active, you start perspiring, which helps your body regulate its temperature downwards. It also makes you lose fluid, which in turn increases the concentration of sodium in your blood. When this concentration gets high (the body gets dehydrated, in other words), a younger adult will stop sweating as much, begin to feel overheated and thirsty and likely reach for a glass of water. But older adults' bodies tend to be less responsive to dehydration. A lot of sweating—and fluid loss—may continue without the warning of feeling uncomfortably thirsty. This ability to keep pushing may sound like a superpower, but it's actually a reason to be extra careful: It brings a higher risk of heat exhaustion, heat stroke and heat stress-related cardiovascular problems.

As a result, older people may need reminders to drink water while being active during a heat wave. It could be a good idea, for example, to set a recurring alarm on your watch or smartphone before heading out.

Also, since you can't necessarily rely on your thirst, watch for other signs of dehydration, including infrequent urination, dark-coloured urine, fatigue, confusion and dizziness.



A New Plant-Based Insect Repellent

Keeping mosquitoes and ticks at bay is about more than avoiding itchy bites. These bugs sometimes transmit serious infections such as West Nile virus and Lyme disease as well as dengue, Zika, malaria, and other diseases. If you're hesitant about using synthetic insect repellents such as DEET, you could instead try nootkatone, a compound found in grapefruit skin and Alaskan yellow cedar trees. Nootkatone is already used around the world as a food flavouring and a fragrance. The Environmental Protection Agency registered it last summer as an insect repellent, paving the way for new products to hit shelves as early as next year. Unlike other plant-based repellents such as citronella, which wear off quickly, nootkatone's effects can last for several hours. **R**

LAUGH LINES

I only use shampoo that smells like raspberries so people don't think it's weird when I have jam in my hair.

—[@Dawn_M](#)

Basically impossible to carry a watermelon around without seeming proud or ashamed of it.

—[@SamuelSaulsbury](#)

Grapefruit juice tastes like orange juice that just found out it has to work on its day off.

—[@JermHimselfish](#)

I buy seedless grapes because let's leave the grape-growing to the vineyards.

—[@Darlainky](#)

Do you think the guy who designed hand grenades really hated pineapples or really loved them?

—[@rachelle_mandik](#)

A cantaloupe is an antelope that doesn't.

—[@LeonEarlGrey](#)



Fruit Punch Lines

EVENT

**Reader's
Digest**

HEALTH

SUMMIT 2021

COPING WITH COVID-19: HOW TO SURVIVE THE GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS

INSURANCE
PARTNER



Milkar life aage badhaein

India saw 1,30,000 active COVID-19 cases in February this year—our lowest in eight months. Just as we began to sense a possible return to our pre-pandemic routine, the disease returned in full force. The second wave showed us clearly that COVID-19 is here to stay and will continue to take lives unless we protect ourselves. As scientists discover more about this virus and new variants emerge, we are all filled with questions on how to stay safe in the long term. At the Reader's Digest Health Summit 2021, we spoke to some of India's leading healthcare experts for answers. Here are edited excerpts of what they had to say.



Dr Randeep Guleria,

Director, AIIMS

It has become apparent that we will all have to learn to live with COVID-19.

In many ways it will change our policies, public behaviour and healthcare systems. While our focus was once on non-communicable diseases—diabetes, hypertension, cancer—the pandemic taught us that contagious infections have not gone away. The idea of 'one health'—considering not only human health, but also animal and plant health in an integrated manner—is vital because viruses are jumping species as was the case with SARS, H1N1, Ebola, Zika and MERS.

Behavioural changes—wearing masks and other infection control measures—will become the norm as will more health-conscious lifestyles. Teleconsultation and tele-medicine is on the rise. COVID also exposed the pros and cons of social media, including the so-called infodemic of

misinformation. Ultimately, living with COVID in the long term means staying ahead of the virus by developing vaccines, drugs and treatment strategies before it can evolve and cause new outbreaks and adjusting to the dramatic shifts in the business of everyday life.



Dr Sandeep Budhiraja,

Head of Internal Medicine, Max Super Specialty Hospitals

One and a half years into this pandemic, we are

seeing a huge burden of post-COVID syndromes—fatigue, brain fog, depression, anxiety and long-term effects on the heart, lungs, brain, kidneys. We have not yet found a specific solution in terms of an anti-viral for COVID and so all sorts of therapies are being considered, even repurposing of drugs. Ivermectin, for example, is a drug conventionally used for worms and parasites, but at high doses it also inhibited the growth of the COVID virus in culture

mediums. However its efficacy on humans remains doubtful. With COVID, our best bet is to educate people and encourage self-isolation, self-quarantine, staying hydrated, monitoring vitals, temperature and oxygen levels and staying alert to warning signs. Constant interaction between patients at home and medical professionals is important, as is detecting deterioration signs early for timely treatment.



Ashish Shrivastava,

MD and CEO, PNB Metlife

Greater awareness about financial planning and safety is one of the most notable outcomes of the pandemic. As an insurance company, our focus is always on physical as well as fiscal wellness and there is definitely increased customer awareness about this, especially among young adults. Website visits by those in their 20s have gone up from nine to 20 per cent, and queries about protection products are also higher. We've looked into the best ways to serve our customers during high-stress health crises, through maturity payments, claim settlements or even loans against policies. With 93 per cent of our customers reaching us digitally, we have continued to offer support even during the pandemic via online provisions—our AI-based app, 'Khushi' that processes claims and service requests 24x7, contactless

customer-agent virtual meets and OTP systems. These have simplified customer journeys so we can sell to, and serve customers in their time of need.




Dr Prof K. Srinath Reddy,

President, Public Health Foundation

The vaccines we currently have are all mostly effective against COVID.

While there may be a slight reduction in efficacy against some of the variant strains, this doesn't make them useless—they're still very protective. The idea is to get as much protection as possible, as soon as possible. But yes, we need to keep studying the new variants and adjust vaccines so they can overcome some of these mutations, or offer more broadband immunity.

Given that the virus is still around and some variants show higher transmissibility, we can anticipate that the virus will attack susceptible people, if they leave themselves exposed. The more we expose ourselves to risk—by not wearing masks, entering crowds, ill-ventilated places or super-spreader events—the more opportunities we give to the virus to invade our body. Even as we step up the pace of our vaccination, a third wave may come to be. But whether we can confine it to just a ripple, or let it grow into a tidal wave is up to us. 

WATCH THE FULL PROGRAMME ON READERSDIGEST.IN

COVER STORY



AT HOME IN A SHRINKING WILDERNESS

BY *Stephen Alter*

ILLUSTRATION BY *Nilanjan Das*

A flock of white-throated laughing thrushes arrive at the birdbath in our garden for their morning ablutions, splashing about with a flutter of wings. On a bush nearby, a pair of rufous sibilias await their turn while a hunting party of tits, warblers and nuthatches search for insects in the branches, leaves and bark of maples, rhododendrons and oaks. Langur monkeys lurk in the trees above waiting for me to step back indoors so that they can raid the beds of nasturtiums and other edible flowers. Overhead, griffon vultures and crested serpent eagles wheel about in the sky as a pair of yellow-throated martens slip through the underbrush at the edge of the yard, searching for eggs, fledglings and mice.

I am fortunate to have a home in the hill station of Mussoorie, where I can experience and enjoy the natural world, even if it is increasingly threatened by environmental degradation, climate change and pollution. The dense forests, steep grasslands and free-flowing rivers that I remember as a boy, growing up in these Himalayan foothills, seem to be shrinking every day. Conservationists use the term 'habitat compression' to describe the increasing pressure of human activity and pollution that endangers wild places. For me it is a very personal reality, as I find myself retreating into our garden and the few remaining acres of forest surrounding our house.

Many of the mountain paths I used

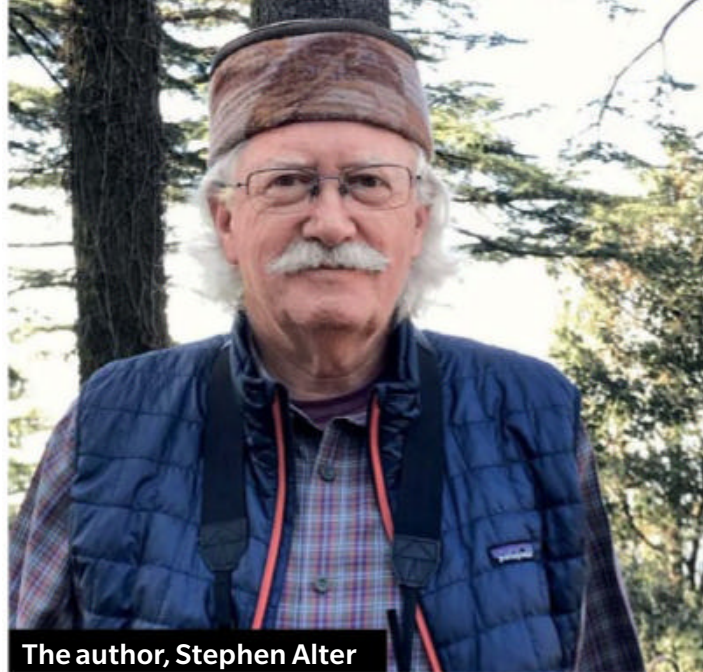
to walk less than 20 years ago have been widened into motor roads. Almost every level patch of ground along these routes is now the site of a makeshift settlement or Maggi Point, often illegally constructed, with no consideration for the natural environment. Of course, people in remote areas of the mountains need access to markets, medical care and education, which roads provide. Yet, the jeeps carrying passengers and produce from villages to towns also bring with them a number of unwelcome consequences from erosion and deforestation to exploitative property agents, who speculate on the value of agricultural land, buying up fields from subsistence farmers and selling them to wealthy clients from the plains who want to build holiday homes in the hills. Though I cannot begrudge villagers an opportunity to break out of the poverty and isolation of rural life, the incursion of poorly planned construction adds scars to the mountains and puts pressure on limited resources, especially water.

The loss of natural habitat for wild mammals, birds, reptiles and insects, reduces the diversity of species and cuts off migration routes, as well as access to food and water. This pressure is not just from human beings but also invasive or exotic plants that crowd out less resilient indigenous species. Even when I was growing up in these mountains, 50 years ago, no true wilderness areas existed near Mussoorie, unaffected by our human presence.

But now, even the most denuded and fragmented forests are threatened.

Being a longtime resident, I am often asked if I have observed any evidence of climate change during my lifetime. It's a difficult question to answer because there are so many factors at play, and environmental changes are never isolated events. The one example I often give is that certain species seem to have moved up to higher altitudes in recent years. The black kite is a common bird of prey on the plains, scavenging near rubbish heaps in cities like Delhi or Dehradun. Until two decades ago, I don't recall seeing the distinctive notched tail and dark brown silhouette of this graceful raptor circling over Mussoorie, but it has now become a familiar sight. Perhaps a rise in average temperatures may be responsible or, simply, a greater availability of garbage strewn about the town. Whatever the reasons, human beings have caused shifts in behaviour and distribution of birds and animals.

Another apparent symptom of climate change is an increase in forest fires throughout the lower Himalayas. This is probably connected to decreasing levels of humidity, reduced rainfall and warmer temperatures. Whenever the forests ignite, during the dry months of spring and summer, the first hint of danger we get is the scent of charred leaves in the air. From the edge of our yard, I can see dark skeins of smoke unraveling into the sky and advancing ribbons of fire at night. Chir



The author, Stephen Alter

**AS A SPECIES WE
NEED TO BE DEEPLY
CONCERNED ABOUT
SOMETHING AS
APOCALYPTIC AS
CLIMATE CHANGE.**

pine forests on the surrounding slopes are usually the first to catch because of dry needles and pinecones that act as kindling. These trees, planted by the forest department during the last century as a source of revenue, have flourished, taking over large areas of the mountains that were once covered with grass. The wildfires add to a feeling of being besieged with a suffocating haze of smoke.

It is important to remember that almost every fire is lit by human beings. Often, villagers burn off old grass, hoping for an abundant supply of fresh

PHOTOS: STEPHEN ALTER

fodder during the monsoon, and the fire spreads out of control. Sometimes, a carelessly discarded cigarette or *bidi* is responsible. I have even seen tourists starting fires intentionally for their own amusement. On rare occasions, lightning strikes can set a forest ablaze though I'm not aware of this happening in the Himalaya where thunderstorms are accompanied by rain or hail, which would douse the flames.

During the past three years, several ancient deodar and cypress trees near our home have been struck by lightning. More than a century old, they stood taller than any of the other trees nearby, but in a brief flash, lasting no more than a second or two, their massive trunks were splintered, as if by a giant axe. Dismembered branches were tossed aside, while long strips of bark peeled off as a powerful current of electrostatic energy surged through each tree. The blinding, white bursts of light were accompanied by explosions so loud they made the thick masonry walls of our house tremble. For several



White-throated laughing thrushes dip into a birdbath at Alter's Mussoorie home.

months after these strikes, the trees struggled to survive but eventually their green needles turned brown and they became skeletons of their former selves.

As a writer and naturalist, I've often puzzled over our impulse and motives for conservation, which is, at heart, a struggle against change, or at least those changes in the natural world that human beings have set in motion. It also comes from a desire and longing to restore denuded landscapes to their original state. As a species we may have dominated the earth but we are still subject to the laws of physics and the evolutionary imperatives of biology. That's why we need to be deeply concerned about something as apocalyptic as climate change as well as habitat compression. These days, as wild spaces shrink and disappear, I feel as if the man-made world is closing in around me.

Increasingly, it is obvious that our future as a species depends less upon human enterprise or industry and more upon accepting our responsibility for the pace and scope of environmental change—both global and local. We are an integral part of the earth's complex diversity and the urge to conserve nature is not just an altruistic ideal but also a practical and instinctual strategy for our own survival. **R**

Stephen Alter is the author of more than twenty books, including Wild Himalaya: A Natural History of the Greatest Mountain Range on Earth.

WHAT OUR PLANET NEEDS NOW

India's leading eco-experts explain our biggest environmental challenges and what we can do to make a difference

COMPILED BY *Team Reader's Digest*



BUILDING A CLIMATE- READY INDIA

**Dr Navroz Dubash,
Professor at the
Centre for Policy
Research**

India's climate ambitions are couched in 'co-benefits'—actions that bring development and reduce carbon emissions at the same time. This is a productive approach, but our current governance fails to encourage officials, businesses and communities to actively seek such opportunities. Nor do we think about development through the lens of what allows for a low-carbon future, which is essential for a rapidly developing country. How can we grow in carbon-friendly ways? How do we build livable yet carbon-efficient cities? We need to empower states to experiment with low-carbon solutions, by supporting them with knowledge, capacity and finance. India must be re-tooled to more aggressively address the challenges of climate change, both

in terms of reducing emissions and addressing impact.

The electricity sector is key to India's low-carbon future—our journey to zero net-carbon is paved by greater shares of renewable energy and shifting uses such as transport (especially public transport), cooking and, eventually, industries, to non-oil, non-coal and non-gas energy sources. However, 20th century problems of black-outs (despite a surplus), low bill collection and poor quality supply must first be fixed. One way is to improve peoples' capacity to pay for power, especially in rural areas, by subsidizing not consumption but productive equipment, creating a consumer base willing to pay for the transition to renewable energy. People will pay because their income and productivity goes up.

Individual contribution is important. As consumers, changing demand patterns, investing in energy-efficient appliances (which have higher up-front cost but pay for themselves quickly), choosing public transport, changing diets are important, but we must also

act as citizens, by demanding governments pay more attention to climate change. Most importantly, we must educate ourselves to understand that while transition is hard, living with the existential challenge of climate change will be much harder.



THE FUTURE IS SUSTAINABLE

**Dr Arunabha Ghosh,
Founder-CEO,
Council on Energy,
Environment
and Water**

You don't have to be a tree-hugger to believe in sustainable development. Today, there are more jobs created from renewables than from coal power. So, if you are an automobile engineer, you better be designing electric vehicles. No major automobile company in the world plans to have internal combustion engines after 2035. Yet, I think the most overarching roadblock is that we still treat sustainability as something on the margins of our overall economic development discourse. We have not realized that the only economic development pathway for us now is a sustainable one. Till we internalize that, we will not be able to build industries of the future.

India is leapfrogging to a cleaner energy future. We are the only G20 economy whose climate promises and climate actions are in line with keeping global average temperature rise under two degrees celsius. But there is more

that we can do as a people. We have to first bridge the gap between us as citizens and as economic agents. When we are citizens, we want clean air. When we are economic agents, we want to drive a diesel car. You can, of course, drive your diesel car, but you have to recognize that air pollution impacts the mental development of your child. The second step is to pay that extra premium for the slightly more expensive product that is sustainable. Someone earning ₹50 lakhs a year should certainly not be looking at a diesel car as their next vehicle purchase, and someone earning ₹5 lakhs a year should now be buying a bamboo toothbrush, not a plastic one. The point is that prices come down when scale economies are at play. We each need to make a start.



GREENER, SMARTER CITIES

**Jaya Dhindaw,
Director, Integrated
Urban Planning at
the World Resources
Institute, India**

With urban growth showing no signs of slowing down, cities have grown both in size and energy appetite, making them major contributors to climate change. Three things that need systemic change are urban planning, governance and capacity and finance.

Unchecked urbanization has pushed people to the peripheries of cities, and given rise to greater urban heat islands

(due to loss of vegetation), congestion and rising personal vehicle usage. This has led not only to inefficiency in resource use and allocation but also greater environmental impact by way of ecological degradation, human stress, ill-health from pollutants and lost hours of productivity. We need to plan better to ensure compact, connected, clean, equitable and resilient cities. Moreover, institutional fragmentation, overlapping mandates and lack of a unified vision cause inefficiencies in plans and projects across sectors. India has one of the world's least per capita municipal budgets, presenting deep concerns about infrastructure and utility provisioning to meet the water, housing, energy and transport needs for its people.

Innovative mechanisms for channelling finance from both private and public sector must be explored. Green finance for next-generation infrastructure, value capture for public goods and private investments directed at innovative, cost-effective and scalable solutions should be leveraged. As individuals, we can take steps towards building more environmentally efficient cities by opting for sustainable consumer choices and changing consumption patterns. We must demand accountability and transparency from the authorities. Remember that to build climate-compatible cities, every small effort counts—tree planting, cycling or taking public transport to work. Building community resilience and raising awareness can really make a difference.



NO TIME TO WASTE

**Wilma Rodrigues,
Founder-CEO,
Saahas Zero Waste**

We have seen the oceans bring back plastic. People living in cities are all familiar with waste burning. We read about landfill fires in the papers. I don't think it's a question of us not being able to see the problem of waste, it's a question of us ignoring it. Every day, India generates 1,47,613 tonnes of daily municipal solid waste—waste generated in our households—and only 25 to 30 per cent of it gets processed. The rest all goes into our dump sites and landfills.

Our consumption habits and the tendency to moving towards convenience and low cost have resulted in huge quantities of packaging waste. The first thing to do is reduce—whether it is paper-based packaging, or single-use plastic. Carrying your own shopping bag is absolutely basic. We should be carrying our own containers to grocery shops, refusing packaging for even things like rice. We should carry our own water bottles, instead of buying plastic bottles. Instead of relying on food aggregators, go to a restaurant with your own containers and get your own food. This all needs a behavioural change, but given the health and environment issues at stake, this is required.

We must also start segregating

waste at source. You need to have an understanding of wet and dry waste. You need to know how to keep the two separate. You then need to find a good waste management company who will take your segregated waste and make sure that it is properly recycled.

There are municipal rules for waste segregation that first came out in 2001. Today, as citizens, as consumers, we need to take responsibility for the rules not being implemented. This is our waste, our collective problem.



CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLIMATE ACTION

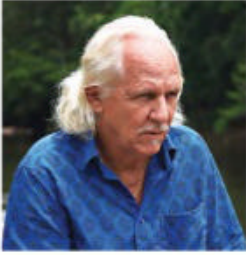
**R. R. Rashmi,
Distinguished Fellow
at The Energy and
Resources Institute**

For a developing country like India whose contribution to global climate change is almost negligible, the real challenge lies in preparing various sectors of the economy for low-carbon development without compromising on developmental goals. Emissions at the producer and consumer level cannot be held accountable without a national legal framework and regulations. Corporations must act as responsible economic entities and discipline themselves voluntarily in the interest of a global goal. Implementing this forcibly and transferring it into the international arena

raises issues of competitiveness, and places unfair imposition of costs on other players.

In India, the top 1,000 corporate entities listed on the stock exchange are mandated by the SEBI to file Business Responsibility Reports (BRR) under the National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental and Economic Responsibilities of Business. Recently, a group of about 38 major business and corporate leaders have come together to form a voluntary group with the objective of pursuing low-carbon goals. Eco-labelling of products is a good way of introducing responsibility norms in production patterns but there is increased cost in the process which affects poor consumers in the developing world. Changing lifestyles and reducing emissions through sustainable consumption and production in the developed world—where per capita use of natural resources and wastage is the highest in the world—is the biggest challenge. Citizen shareholders should insist that board decisions should comply with business sustainability norms.

We cannot solve global environmental problems without international cooperation. This involves a cooperative framework for development and deployment of climate-friendly technologies in which corporations play a useful, prominent role. Industrial transition to a low-carbon or zero-carbon future will need such technologies at scale.



**IN HARMONY
WITH THE WILD**

**Romulus Whitaker,
Herpetologist, wildlife
conservationist and
founder of the Madras
Snake Park**

Our biggest stride over the past decade is expounding the message of the importance of wildlife and wildlands and getting people excited enough to support it. We now have top scientists and activists working on all aspects of wildlife biology and conservation to counter the threats that government and corporate machineries impose on our remaining creatures and wild places.

However, while we have plenty of good, meaningful wildlife protection laws, their implementation leaves a lot to be desired. With the official emphasis on development, without the required care to safeguard our natural resources, now, especially, is the time for conservationists to take a much stronger stand to make sure development doesn't destroy the very biodiversity we depend on. The pandemic itself is indicative of this interdependency. It showed us how vulnerable humans are and how foolish we have been to continue being so blasé and selfish. We must consider the COVID-19 experience as a chance to drastically change our lifestyles in favour of the planet's welfare and our wildlife's survival.

To this end, probably the most important thing people can do is become better informed about what problems

our wildlife faces and how to mitigate them. There is plenty of misinformation floating around out there. Some 'experts' expound the dubious wisdom that wildlife can only survive in Protected Areas, which is rubbish. Take just one high-profile species—the leopard—alone: half of their population in the country live in human-dominated landscapes. The tolerance of wildlife by rural Indians is one of the best reasons why we have so much biodiversity left here. Let's all work together to make a real difference.



**FORESTS OF
THE PEOPLE**

**Dr Amrita Sen,
environmental
sociologist,
IIT Kharagpur**

Let's start with the Sundarbans. I have always been very interested to know what kinds of a relationship people here share with the forest. During my research, I learnt that for many communities, the forest was not a piece of nature. Rather, the forest was their habitation. It was sacred for them. It was cultural and social.

Similarly, in many parts of India, community-driven knowledge systems or natural resource management has been very deeply embedded. Over the years, however, legislations have led to abrupt eviction and dispossession. Communities have completely lost their existing rights to the forest—not only the right to livelihood, but also

the rights of conservation. As a result, there was community marginalization, yes, but we were also dislodging these communities without incorporating their knowledge system into our formal methods of forest conservation.

One of our biggest challenges today is the commercial exploitation of the forest, the continual diversion of fragile, vulnerable lands towards the use of commercial and industrial developments. As citizens, we need to sign up for more sensitization programmes that are being run by environmental organizations. They tell us why we need forests, and also why we need to value community knowledge in our conservation efforts. Together, we must make a collective plea to the government—the unilateral approach of western scientific conservation is not a one-size-fits-all landscape. We need multiple forms of knowledge, more participation.



AN OCEANIC AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

**Dr Victor Shahed
Smetacek, Professor
of Bio-Oceanography,
Alfred Wegener Institute**

We are over-exploiting the ocean, and the seas are all overcrowded now. Also, since we've taken out all the big animals, ocean ecosystems have collapsed. Big marine animals, including large swamp fish, were instrumental in maintaining productivity and structuring ecosystems because

they were recycling, too. We went out and captured them. Today, we talk about making marine protected areas, but the pressure is already unrealistically high.

I have a solution. We know the oceans cover 70 per cent of the earth's surface, but what isn't well known is that 70 per cent of that 70 per cent—roughly 50 per cent of the earth's surface—are ocean deserts or subtropical gyres. These exist on both north and south of the equator. We're not doing anything with them, because these are at the end stages in the normal succession of life in the ocean. I propose that we go to the subtropical gyres and establish fields over there by irrigating them. The pipes we use will be made out of seaweed, and with seaweed will come seafood—fish, mussels, etc. Also, because of its organic composition and strength, seaweed is a better alternative to plastic.

Upwelling deep, nutrient-rich water can be a nature-based solution for ensuring global food security, producing raw materials and carrying out massive carbon sequestration. But meanwhile it is important that we do our level best to reduce our CO2 footprint. We should already have embraced recycling and sustainability. There is, for instance, one mindset that says we shouldn't remove our garbage from the oceans because that will encourage people to create yet more garbage. We have to move away from these arguments and find newer ways of thinking. **R**



QUIETING

ANXIETY

Overlapping crises have made many of us jumpy. But how do you know when you have slipped into a more serious problem and need help?

BY *Rebecca Philips*

FIVE YEARS AGO, Meredith Arthur, a 45-year-old San Francisco resident and an employee of the social media company Pinterest, arrived at a neurologist appointment in a distraught state. She spoke a mile a minute, rattling through her extensive research on the vagus cranial nerve and explaining why she thought it might hold clues to her crippling shoulder and neck pain, frequent dizziness, nausea and chronic migraines. “I was presenting my inexpert case to an expert, who stopped me and said, ‘I know

what’s wrong. You have generalized anxiety disorder.’”

For Arthur, the diagnosis was a shock. She had been so focused on her debilitating physical symptoms that she hadn’t considered that they could be linked to her mental health. Almost immediately, it clicked.

“My brain was always in overdrive,” Arthur recalls. “I wanted to work all the time and solve everything.”

She would never have described herself as a worrier, however, and certainly didn’t connect her perfectionism to anxiety or its effect

on her body. But, in fact, physical discomfort—not distressing thoughts—is most often what drives people with anxiety to seek treatment.

“The diagnosis changed everything,” says Arthur. “It’s like somebody picked me up off the earth, turned me around 180 degrees, and put me back down. It was the same world, but everything looked a little different.”

Arthur is one of the millions of adults who experience an anxiety disorder—the most common form of mental illness—every year. But anxiety touches everyone to varying degrees. Typically, it’s intermittent and brought on by a stressful or traumatic event. Its core features are excessive fear and worry, and one of the major underlying factors is a feeling of uncertainty about situations that occur in daily life.

These are exceedingly uncertain times due to the combination of economic precariousness, social unrest, environmental catastrophes and the COVID-19 pandemic. Managing anxiety will ensure it doesn’t rule your life.

How Chronic Anxiety Harms the Body

Anxiety is part of your body’s stress-response system, and it can be uncomfortable, overwhelming and sometimes plain confusing.

“I describe anxiety as a future-oriented emotional response to a perceived threat,” says Joel Minden, PhD,

a clinical psychologist and the author of *Show Your Anxiety Who’s Boss*. “We anticipate that something bad will happen. Maybe we have evidence. Maybe we don’t. But we have a belief that something catastrophic might occur.”

Almost immediately, Minden says, your sympathetic nervous system, which controls involuntary processes such as breathing and heart rate, kicks into high gear. This leads your adrenal glands to release adrenaline and cortisol, two of the crucial hormones that drive your body’s fight-freeze-flight response and prompt anxiety’s physical symptoms. Your heart races, your blood pressure rises, your pupils dilate, you get short of breath and you break out in a clammy sweat.

Meanwhile, cortisol curbs functions that your brain considers non-essential: It alters immune system responses and suppresses the digestive system, the reproductive system and growth processes. This was helpful for our ancestors trying to outrun saber-toothed tigers but is not so much when you can’t stop ruminating about whether you might have caught COVID-19 when the guy behind you in line at the grocery store coughed.

For Arthur, chronic physical pain and discomfort were the most powerful manifestations of her disorder, but anxiety can show itself in many ways. You might perceive something as threatening even when it isn’t or go to great lengths to avoid uncomfortable situations. You might constantly

overthink plans or spend all of your time creating solutions to worst-case scenarios. Maybe you feel indecisive and fear making the wrong decision. Or you might find yourself restless, keyed up, and unable to relax.

Often, those symptoms last only as long as certain situations are present. (You may feel nervous about flying, but you do it and the feeling fades when the wheels touch down.) Other times, anxiety can tip into becoming a chronic anxiety disorder such as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder or a phobia.

The distinction between circumstantial or temporary anxiety and a more severe case isn't always easy to make, says clinical psychologist David Carbonell, PhD, founder of the Anxiety Treatment Center in Chicago.

"There isn't a blood test for anxiety. At some point, everybody experiences it," he says. "It becomes a disorder when it interferes with your behavioural choices and your ability to do as you wish in life."

That point could be when your job requires you to fly but you're too anxious to make it even as far as the airport, which ultimately puts your livelihood in jeopardy. More generally, you may find that anxious feelings last even after a problem has been resolved and that those feelings seem to arise from one situation to the next without relief.

Treat Anxious Feelings When They Persist

Despite the fact that chronic anxiety is very manageable with some combination of medication, therapy, and lifestyle adjustments, only about 37 per cent of affected people receive treatment of any kind. The rest try to battle their anxiety from within or suppress it.

"People spend too much time and effort trying to control anxiety," says Minden. "I encourage them to remember that anxiety is a normal emotional response." If you try to banish it, he adds, all you're doing is putting it more at the forefront of your mind.

Here are some tips to help minimize anxiety's negative effects:

1. Accept it

If you accept anxiety as part of life and part of everyone's lived experience, you can learn to relate to it with self-compassion and even with humour. This is a cornerstone of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), which has been gaining clinical validation, including by the American Psychological Association.

ACT guides people to see their unpleasant emotions as just feelings and to accept that parts of life are hard. Practitioners encourage patients to begin a dialogue with anxious thoughts, examining the causes of those feelings while also keeping in

mind their personal goals and values. Although anxious thoughts shouldn't be completely suppressed, sufferers can be trained to not allow anxiety to turn them away from what they want to do and who they want to be.

2. Be curious about it

Along with acceptance, a mindfulness approach to anxiety can be useful, especially when you're cycling through anxious thoughts and unable to think clearly or rationally.

In his book *Unwinding Anxiety*, psychiatrist and neuroscientist Judson Brewer, MD, recommends paying attention to the body sensations, thoughts and emotions that come as a result of feeling anxious or worried. When we notice and name the physical sensations that are arising in our bodies ("my face feels flushed"; "my breathing is shallow"; "my heart is beating quickly"), we are already less caught up in those anxious reactions, simply through that act of observation, writes Brewer.

Many mindfulness training apps can help, including one, also called *Unwinding Anxiety*, that Brewer developed in his lab at Brown University. After three months of using the app, test participants reported an average 57 per cent reduction in their anxiety.

Understanding exactly what was happening inside her body and bringing her awareness to it was a great tool for Arthur because her

'thinking brain' could then take over from her immediate fight-freeze-flight reaction to an anxious moment.

Over time, her symptoms became less acute and troublesome. She pictured the hormones hitting her body the same way an ocean wave hits the beach. The beach can't fight the wave, but it remains steady and allows the wave to wash over it and fall back.

3. Make lifestyle adjustments

Learning to live with anxiety is an individual process that requires trial and error to get just right. While acceptance is the first and most important step, some lifestyle changes have been proved to take the edge off as well.

Since fatigue and increased stress leave us more vulnerable to anxiety, a well-balanced diet, adequate rest and, above all, exercise can help us manage it better. One research study showed that regular vigorous workouts reduced the likelihood of developing an anxiety disorder over the next five years by 25 per cent.

Arthur also shares her experiences on the website *medium.com*. Openly discussing her anxiety has transformed her relationship with it. "I'm learning to live in harmony, as much as possible, with this thing that is a part of me," she says. "It's not always pleasant, but I accept and, to the extent that I can, take care of my anxiety." **R**


 AS KIDS SEE IT


“We had to read *Great Expectations* in English class. Honestly, I thought it would be a lot better.”

My five-year-old nephew came home after a fight with his friend swearing never to talk to him again. “Forgive and forget.” I told him, “that’s what I do when my friends hurt me.” We met the boy a few days later, and the two ignored each other. “What’s the

problem?” I asked. “Well,” he replied, “I forgave him. Now I’m trying to forget him.”

—NAMAN RAVI ARGEKAR,
Udupi

I live with a seven-year-old. She asked me what kind of pie I wanted from her

imaginary bakery. “Steak and mushrooms,” I said.

She replied, “Okay, but it’s going to be purple!”

—JON DORE, *comedian*

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



**“You’re more than just a patient to me, Mrs Melnik.
You’re a potential medical journal article.”**

LIFE'S

Like That

Every year for my birthday, my husband buys me a particular perfume that has a delicate floral scent that I especially love.

This past year, with

money tight, I told him not to bother getting me a gift. Instead, I asked that he handwrite a beautiful letter encapsulating our 25 years together.

My husband leaned in, gently took my hand, and begged, “Can I please just buy you a bottle of perfume?”

—LISA COLLINS

Scene: A morning with my six-year-old granddaughter, Emma

Me: Would you like bacon and eggs for breakfast?

Emma: I only like eggs when they’re mixed with something.

Me: Like omelettes?

Emma: No, like brownies.

—ELIZABETH COOPER

My mutant superpower is I can open any snack's packaging the wrong way so it's impossible to close it again.

—@APARNAPKIN

Spotted on the back of an Amish horse-drawn carriage in Pennsylvania, this handwritten sign: "Energy efficient vehicle: Runs on oats and grass. Caution: Do not step in exhaust."

—WILSON FRAMPTON

My favourite species of birds are the ones named by people who clearly hate birds.

- ◆ Drab seedeater
 - ◆ Goaway bird
 - ◆ Rough-faced shag
 - ◆ Common loon
 - ◆ Sad flycatcher
 - ◆ Little bustard
 - ◆ Perplexing scrub wren
 - ◆ Satanic nightjar
 - ◆ Monotonous lark
- @STU_BOT3000

My niece wants to know: If she donates her hair, and the recipient of her

hair commits a crime and leaves hair at the crime scene, will her DNA be found all over the crime scene and thus incriminate her? She's 12.

—@PHILNOBILEJR

While doing volunteer work, I began to sing a favourite song of mine to pass the time. Another volunteer perked his ears.

"Who sings that?" he asked.

"The Traveling Wilburys," I replied.

He nodded. "Well, let's keep it that way."

—CHRISTOPHER THORSEN

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LET'S SLEEP ON IT (IF WE CAN)

◆ My husband rolled over and open-mouth snored directly into my eyes last night if you're wondering how we keep the magic alive.

—@Maryfairybobby

◆ My wife is napping, and I have to sneeze. This is not going to end well for me.

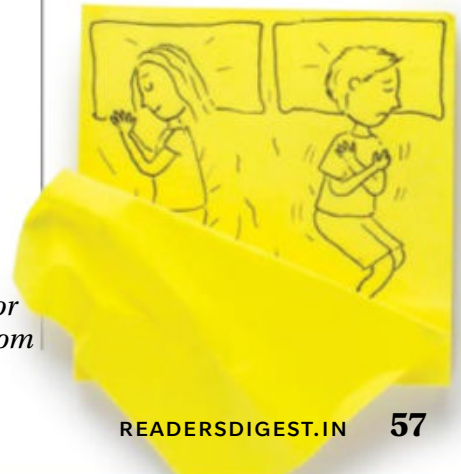
—@RodLacroix

◆ Sleeping under separate blankets should have been the marriage advice everybody gave me a year and a half ago.

—@iSmashFizzle

◆ It's funny that my wife thinks I have a 'side' of the bed. I think she means my 'sliver' of bed I've been allotted.

—@Cheeseboy22



MAN ON THE RANN

*Lost amidst the vast, salty marshlands of Kutch,
one woman must choose between confronting the
elements or trusting the unknown*

BY *Sunanda Satwah*

ILLUSTRATION BY *Siddhant Jumde*

Some time ago, as I sat clearing out my wardrobe, out tumbled an *ajrakh* scarf. As my fingers ran through the soft folds, memories of its strange origins came flooding back—an evening in the middle of a desert and an experience that has since reminded me of the important, life-saving, nature of an ordinary sense of compassion and faith in human decency. This is the story.

In October 2019, I was a professor of architecture visiting Gujarat as part of an academic programme. I was to play chaperone to the students

accompanying us on the trip, which was designed to introduce them to the architectural heritage of Bhuj. After a delightful afternoon in Gandhi nu Gam village, we set out for the Rann. The Rann of Kutch, a massive, stunning expanse of salty marshlands stretching across 18,000 square kilometres, shares vast stretches with Sindh, in Pakistan. As a politically sensitive area, there were certain rules to follow. We reached the Border Security Forces (BSF) checkpoint at 5 p.m. and were allowed entry into the *shwet rann* (white desert). A straight, narrow road led our bus four kilometres



into the desert to the designated drop-off point, marked by a watchtower with a viewing deck. It was my first time seeing this unique terrain—a desert that is arid for eight months and submerged under water for the rest of the year—and its sheer beauty took my breath away.

The students alighted from the bus, eager to make most of the next couple of hours—wear colourful *kutchi* turbans, buy souvenirs, go on camel rides, click selfies. I hung back cocking a hawk's eye on where each of them was headed. After a while, convinced that they were all reasonably safe and banded together in groups, I decided to explore the desert myself. Most of the visitors were congregated around the drop-off point. I like taking long walks and decided to indulge myself with a stroll along the road that brought us here. I set off, soon putting quite a bit of distance between me and the cacophony of giggling tourists, and savoured the exquisite silence that one can only experience in a desert.

The stretch was bereft of people, and the only discernible sounds came from the crunching of the salty sand under my sneakers and the occasional *click-clack* of a passing horse's hooves. I went into a serene, almost meditative state, lost in thought. As the white landscape began to blush into shades of pink, it suddenly struck me that I had lost track of how far I had walked, and the sun had started its downward descent. I quickly turned around and started heading back. The day was fast settling into dusk, and I needed to get

back to the bus before dark. A few cars passed by, their occupants casting curious glances at me. I was beginning to get anxious and quickened my pace. Just then a man riding a motorcycle drove past, going in the opposite direction, towards the BSF checkpoint. He stopped his bike and hollered, asking if I needed any help.

**MY HEAD THROBBED
FROM MOUNTING
WORRY—I HADN'T
INFORMED ANYONE IN
MY GROUP ABOUT MY
IMPROMPTU TREK.**



“No thank you, I'm good.” I replied with a wave. He nodded and rode away.

In truth, I was nowhere near ‘good.’ I had been walking for over an hour in a dry, unfamiliar climate. My head was throbbing by now, partly, I suspected, from dehydration, but also by mounting worry—I hadn't informed anyone in my group about my impromptu trek and the area had no phone network! I would have done well to follow the basics I had parroted to my students: Don't venture out on your own, never leave the group without informing someone—and here I was. Aargh! I could have kicked myself.

My anxiety began growing into full-blown panic when suddenly the man on the motorcycle returned. He parked

his bike next to me, and ventured, "Let me give you a ride to the watchtower," he said, pointing to it in the distance. My heart began to drum in my ears. "It becomes dark quickly in this region, and it could get dangerous to walk alone," he added.

The man looked to be in his late fifties and wore the traditional attire of the region—white cotton kurta-pyjamas, leather *jootis* and a crimson scarf around his neck. His face was leathery from too much sun. Rheumy eyes looked into mine, waiting for an answer.

Wary of strangers offering free rides, and fed on too many stories of hitchhiking gone wrong, I was certain I should decline his offer. Dark thoughts about all the things that could go wrong went into overdrive, but I couldn't fault his reasoning. There were no street lamps; I could stumble on the road or be hit by a passing vehicle full of rambunctious tourists. I didn't think my students disliked me enough to hit me with the bus, but, why take a chance?

On the other hand, we were on a straight road with clear visibility, heading towards a small crowd, some of whom were on the viewing deck, hopefully with binoculars in hand. The ride should take no more than a couple of minutes. I accepted his offer, reciting a silent prayer as I climbed on to the pillion of his bike.

We drove at a steady pace, as he made small talk about his wife and son. He didn't ask any questions, but kept up a steady stream of chatter. I could tell

he was trying to put me at ease. Not wanting to be rude, I told him about my students and that we were visiting from Mumbai. Before long, we had reached the deck and the sun had set. I could barely make out my students from their silhouettes in the dim twilight. Back on safe ground, I clambered off the bike and thanked him, awkward about my earlier misgivings. Feeling the need to say something, I pointed to the scarf around his neck and said, "That is a beautiful *ajrakh*." *Ajrakh* is a style of colourful block-printing on cloth, done by hand using natural dyes such as indigo and madder. This textile is indigenous to the nomadic pastoral Muslim communities in Kutch and Marwar.

The next moment, he pulled off the scarf from around his neck and extended it towards me, "Take it." Taken aback, I refused, but he insisted. "I would like you to have it as a memory of this evening in the *shwet rann*." Moved by his earnestness and not wanting to hurt his feelings, I accepted.

After all the students had boarded the bus, I spotted him in the distance and waved goodbye. He strode over and said, "Now that you are safely with your group, I will take your leave," and then he rode off, merging into the darkness.

I made my own way home from Kutch, emerging from the desert with memories of not only an awe-inspiring terrain but also of a fellow human being who reinforced my faith in kindness; memories just as beautiful and soft like the *ajrakh* scarf I held in my hand. **R**



RESCUE ON THE HIGH RISE BRIDGE

With his truck dangling 70 feet above a roiling river and a storm whipping 80-kph winds, a trapped driver's only hope is a team of trained emergency rescuers—who are stuck in traffic

BY Anita Bartholomew

The winds this April morning were giving Wayne Boone's massive 2007 Freightliner tractor trailer a good lashing. A driver for Butler Paper Recycling in Suffolk, Virginia, Boone steered the empty 18-wheeler up a stretch of Interstate 64 in Chesapeake toward Virginia Beach, about 40 kms away, where he would pick up his first load of the day.

The 53-year-old driver pulled into the eastbound left lane of the G.A. Treacle Memorial Bridge, known to locals simply as the I-64 High Rise, a four-lane drawbridge that traverses the southern branch of the Elizabeth River. On the span, the storm let loose its full force, finding no obstacles in its path but vehicles. Rain hammered Boone's windshield. Winds grew fiercer. Boone slowed, letting cars pass. It would be good to get to the other side.

At the bridge's crest, 70 feet above the rushing estuary, the concrete road gives way to steel decking. Even in perfect weather it's easy to lose traction on the grids. Boone's front wheels met the slick steel just as a powerful gust blasted the driver's side.

To Boone, it felt as if the wind lifted his truck clear off the surface. He could swear that he was floating for a second before being dumped into the right lane. He had no time to consider how such a thing could be possible. His cab barreled into the guardrail on the far right edge, mangling the metal barrier that protected his truck from pitching into the water below. He

struggled to regain control. His empty trailer, meanwhile, jackknifed to the left, skidding sideways at an angle to the cab.

Fighting both truck and weather, the steering wheel unresponsive, Boone was swept along about 200 feet, unable to get traction. Then a second gust, raging more violently than the first, blew through the open mesh of the bridge's steel grid. It slammed into the driver's side of the cab and simultaneously shoved it upwards from below, lifting the cab, with Boone inside, over the edge of the bridge before dropping it again.

If he had had any hope of survival before, it was gone. The cab was now aimed straight down toward the grey-black water.

LIEUTENANT CHAD LITTLE, 49, of the Chesapeake Fire Department, was on his way to conduct a CPR training class when an odd message popped up on his SUV's touchscreen: "Truck hanging over the bridge." He was only a minute or two away. He flicked on his emergency lights and siren and sped to the High Rise.

The traffic on the bridge was impassable. Little got as far as the draw-bridge's grid and no farther. When he stepped outside, the wind blasted him. He tucked in his chin, walked ahead about 65 metres, and radioed in his assessment. The front cab of a tractor trailer had gone over the High Rise, leaving its trailer still on the bridge. The heavy steel frame between the cab and the fifth wheel, where the cab couples with the trailer, had literally

WHATEVER HELD THE CAB ON THE BRIDGE, BOONE KNEW IT COULDN'T LAST.

folded, and the cab, bent at a 90-degree angle, dangled over the river. Engine, hood and fuel tanks had already fallen, leaving a slick on the water. The driver was trapped in the cab, hanging 10 feet below the roadbed.

"This will be a complex technical rescue incident," Little reported. That meant calling in Rescue 15, a team of highly trained firefighter-emergency medical technicians who respond when the unthinkable happens: an earthquake, a building collapse, a bombing or some other disaster. He then switched to another channel to request the largest fireboat in the region. Working over the water in this weather, he needed assets below

in case something—or someone—should fall.

Meanwhile, a bystander had tossed a rigging strap and the kind of harness a roofer would wear over the edge of the bridge to the driver. Police officers and civilians stood in a line holding the rope as if they were in a one-sided tug-of-war. Little appreciated that they wanted to help, but he explained that if they pulled the driver out of the truck without the proper equipment, he was likely to tumble to his death. Once Rescue 15 got there, the team members would anchor their specialized equipment for a complex rope rescue before trying to move him.

The first ladder truck arrived from the westbound side of the bridge, where traffic was still able to move. Running chains over the concrete barrier that separated the east- and westbound lanes, firefighters anchored their truck to the cab's back wheels.

WAYNE BOONE, THE driver, knew he should be dead. Busting through the guardrail and then literally flying through the air before nose-diving towards the river—it had all happened so fast. How was he still alive? Somehow, the back of his cab had snagged on the bridge's edge before it could complete its descent. Still strapped into his seat, he dangled at a 90-degree angle above the rushing Elizabeth River, swinging with each new gust. Whatever the force was that held the cab on the edge, he knew it

couldn't last. Gravity and wind would have their say.

Sticky red blood spilled into his eyes. He was injured, but his body had yet to fully register the pain. He forced himself to focus. If he had any chance of escaping the cab and surviving, he had to get free from his seat belt. The position of the cab gave little room to manoeuvre. The cracked windshield beneath him exposed the looming dark waters below. If he put any weight on the glass, he risked breaking through and falling the rest of the way. Under the howl of the wind, he heard voices from above. "It's about to go!"

EACH TIME HIS FEET MET THE WINDSHIELD, THE GLASS GAVE A LITTLE MORE.

Got to get free.

Releasing his seat belt, Boone tried to hang on to the seat, but he immediately slid into the windshield. The glass shifted in its frame. He scrambled upwards, doing his best to grab pieces of the shattered dashboard, aware that he was getting cut along the way. He slipped again. And again. Each time his feet met the windshield, the glass gave a little more. The next time could be the last. Summoning all his strength, straddling broken bits of truck, he pulled himself between the

seats and wedged himself back as far as he could behind the driver's seat. He had only inches of space; it would have to do.

Minutes passed—to Boone, it felt like hours—before he heard the approaching sirens. To his ears, the jarring wail could have been angels singing. Somewhere in the cab, his phone rang. He would have given anything for the comfort of another human voice, but though he reached around, searching as well as he could from the cramped position, the ringing's source eluded him.

From the bridge above, an onlooker tossed him a harness. Boone reached out his open driver's side window and pulled it inside the cab. That effort was all he could manage. Disoriented and weak, he could not figure out how to get it on his body.

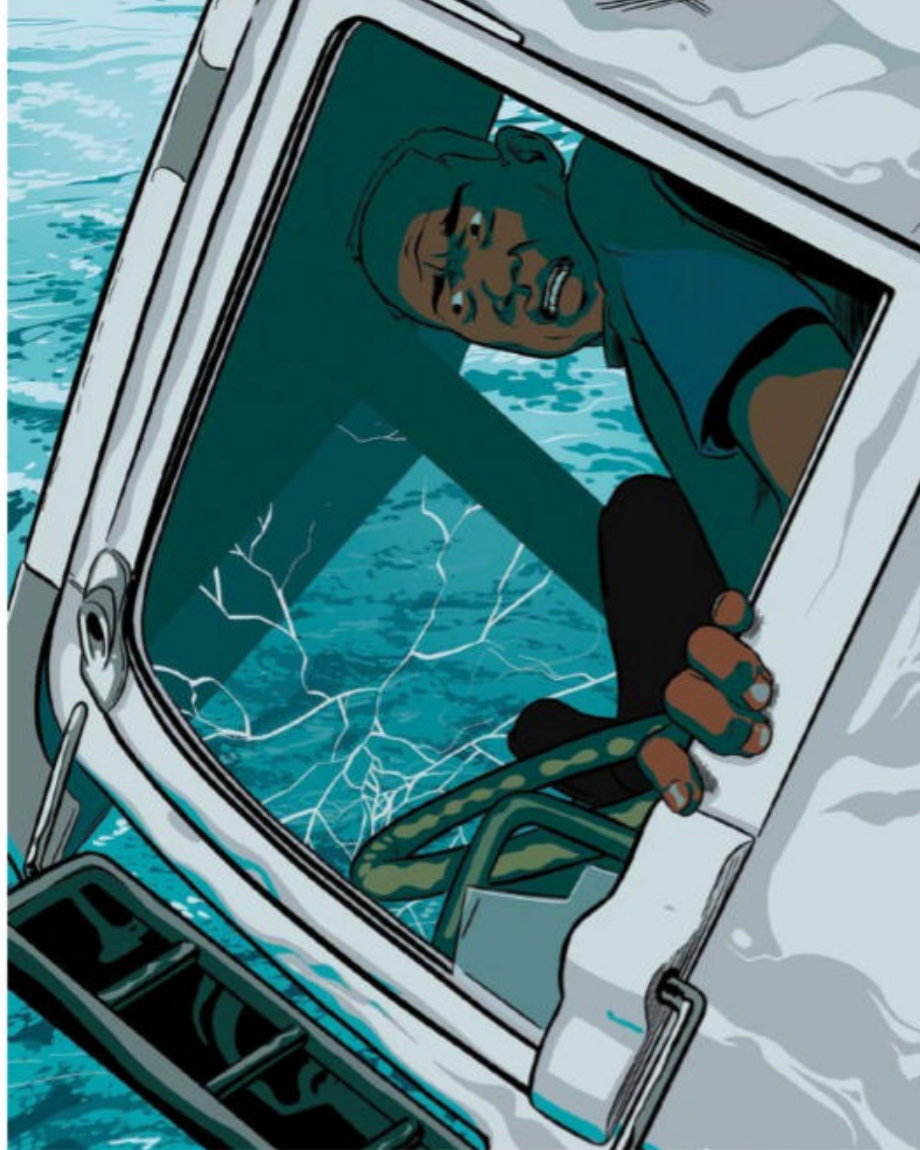
THE CALL CAME in to Rescue 15 at 8:43 a.m. The trio on duty at that time—Brad Gregory, 57; Justin Beazley, 25; and Mark Poag, 43—piled into the rescue truck that carried all their extrication gear and headed to the scene, running through various rescue scenarios to figure out what ropes they would need and where they should position the equipment.

But their first challenge was more mundane: the sea of red brake lights that greeted them on the bridge. If this were an ordinary road, vehicles would have made way for a fire truck. But because the bridge had, at most,

a two-foot shoulder, the cars had nowhere to go. Beazley jumped down, tapped on windows, and got a few vehicles to move in order to let the rescuers pass. As they inched forward, the clock ticked on the dangling trucker. Traffic filled in behind them, cutting off the possibility of backing up and approaching from the westbound lanes, which police had cleared. A couple of hundred yards from the accident, it was clear they would get no farther. Beazley grabbed the harnesses, rope, and

some other gear off the top of the rescue truck and hitched a ride on Ladder 12, a fire truck headed to the scene in the cleared westbound lane.

Poag and Gregory gathered the rest of the equipment they expected to need from their truck: more rope, a pulley system called a set-of-fours and a belay to anchor equipment to at the scene. As they marched toward the crippled tractor trailer, the wind grew more intense. Rain and sleet battered them sideways, soaking through



to the skin. About a dozen bystanders had left their cars, braving the storm's fury to stand vigil at the bridge's edge.

Gregory, Poag, and the crew members of the ladder truck quickly devised a plan: Beazley would rappel down to the driver from the extended ladder of one of the trucks, open the door, and secure the driver to himself, and then the two would be lifted to safety. By now, sustained winds were approaching 80 kph, with stronger gusts. Working shoulder to shoulder,

they had to shout to hear each other above the howling gales.

Beazley walked to the bridge's edge and tried to process what he saw. It was like no incident he'd ever responded to before. Spilled diesel fuel soaked everything on the ground, including their equipment. The cab appeared to be barely holding on.

Getting into his harness, Beazley checked the rope and rigging. He would be tied in with an elevated anchor to prevent him from falling into the river should anything go wrong. The ladder operator positioned the fire truck's extended ladder over the top of the crippled tractor trailer and then set it in place. Ordinarily, firefighters would not raise a ladder in such high winds. It could shake the truck and wear out the metal. In theory, the wind could even blow the fire truck over. But this was as far from *ordinarily* as it got.

Poag and another firefighter had command of the pulley system attached to the ladder. Beazley, in his harness, was fastened at the other end. Working the pulleys, they lifted Beazley over the bridge's edge, manoeuvred him above the cab, and slowly lowered him.

As he rappelled towards the truck driver, the wind tossed Beazley like a pinball. He grabbed on to the cab to avoid being blown into the bridge. He'd planned to open the door to extricate the driver, but now he saw that such a move risked putting more



Of saving the incapacitated truck's driver, Beazley told Virginia's WTKR television station, "It all happened so quick. You train for this, but you just never expect it."

downwards pressure on the vehicle. Any rescue attempt would have to be via the window.

The driver, Beazley realized, was in shock. After dangling in the wind for an hour, waiting to die, he was spent. But the relief in his eyes at seeing Beazley was evident. "My name's Justin," Beazley shouted. "What's yours?"

Boone replied, but Beazley barely heard him. "We're going to get you out of here," he said. He handed the harness through the open window and gave Boone step-by-step instructions for getting into it while he continued to grip the cab's side.

Boone fumbled with the apparatus. He was trying to do as Beazley instructed but was clearly too dazed to

assist in his own extraction. The wind, meanwhile, wanted to blast Beazley off the cab's door. The rescue became more precarious by the second as 80-to-95-kph gusts lashed at both the cab and the rescuer. Beazley realized there was no time left. He would have to get inside the cab.

Pulling his torso through the window, he worked quickly and methodically to get each of Boone's arms and legs through the loops of the harness, securing him to the rope system that effectively tethered them to each other. Beazley spoke reassuringly. "C'mon, you can do it," he said as he grabbed the pulley and hoisted himself and the bloodied Boone through the window and fully into the whipping winds. Poag and a second firefighter worked the pulleys to haul them back up. As driver and rescuer cleared the edge, cheers broke out from the crowd on the bridge. Three first responders bear-hugged both men and pulled them back over the guardrail. It was over.

Paramedics bundled the injured man into an ambulance, but the storm wasn't quite done. A gust rose up and, despite the securing chains, lifted one

side of Boone's empty trailer into the air and shoved it half a lane across the roadway, prompting the firefighters to evacuate the area.

BOONE WAS TAKEN to Norfolk Sentara General Hospital, having suffered lacerations and other injuries to his face, neck, shoulder, and knees. The worst damage was to his right ear, which was almost severed from his head in the crash, but doctors were able to save it.

Through it all, Boone had never panicked. He had accepted his fate. He was ready to go if that's what the man upstairs had in mind. But a stranger had risked his own life to save him. Hearing people shout with joy when they saw the firefighter deliver him to safety had been uplifting. In a world that could sometimes seem mean and lonely, people still cared. His heart was awash in gratitude.

Back on the bridge, once Boone was on safe ground, Beazley had reached out for a handshake. Naturally reticent and emotionally and physically drained, Boone had taken his rescuer's hand and hoped the gesture would say everything he couldn't. **R**



The Life Hack That Keeps on Giving

Enter a different birthday each time you sign up with a company online. This way, instead of being flooded with celebratory discounts that you can't take advantage of all at once on your real birthday, you'll get regular discounts throughout the year. It's totally harmless for you and the company, and it could even help protect your identity if its database is hacked.

ACCIDENTS Moments That Changed History

Altering the course of human events takes a grand idea and careful execution—most of the time. But at these fateful points, plans went out the window



BY *Jacopo della Quercia*

A melted candy bar helps create the microwave oven

Percy Spencer was so fascinated by the sinking of the *Titanic* that he became a scientist. He joined the Navy, trained as a radio electrician, and ultimately became a civilian expert on radar during World War II, earning the Distinguished Public Service Award for his

work. And he did it all without ever having graduated from high school.

After the war, Spencer worked for Raytheon Manufacturing, a defence contractor. As he was walking near the radar equipment one day, he absentmindedly stuck his hand in his shirt pocket—and found a gooey mess. Spencer often carried a



ist-one

Mr Peanut candy bar to feed the squirrels at lunch. He knew enough about radar to suspect that its heat-producing magnetron waves could be the culprit, but he wasn't sure. So he placed a bag of popcorn kernels in front of the machine—and they popped. Then came a raw egg, which dutifully exploded all over a skeptical colleague's face.

Spencer fine-tuned his discovery with Raytheon and marketed it to airlines, railways, restaurants and cruise liners as 'the Radarange'—or, as it's known now, the microwave oven. Fortunately, microwaves have come a long way since 1947, when they stood nearly six feet tall, weighed 340 kilos and cost \$3,000. That's roughly \$35,000 (₹25,97,656) today.

*** Dr Seuss and Stephen King are rescued from the ash can of history**

Different though they may be, Stephen King and Dr Seuss have two things in common. They are both among the most successful authors in history, and they both narrowly escaped a life of obscurity.

Theodor Geisel—the good doctor's given name—wrote his first children's book, *A Story No One Can Beat*, in the mid-1930s. Working as an advertising illustrator at the time, Geisel sent his whimsical manuscript to 27 publishers. They all rejected it. After the last cold shoulder, Geisel stomped down New York City's Madison Avenue,



determined to burn the manuscript and, perhaps, his writing career.

While he was out cooling off, he bumped into his old college roommate, Mike McClintock, who happened to edit children's books at Vanguard Press. Geisel shared his woes with McClintock, who asked to see the story. McClintock suggested a few changes, and Vanguard published

**KING'S WIFE FOUND
THE ASH-COVERED
PAGES IN THE
WASTEPAPER BASKET.**

the book in 1937 with a new title: *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*. According to Geisel: "If I had been walking down the other side of Madison Avenue, I'd be in the dry-cleaning business today."



Stephen King's first published book was about a bullied teenage girl who discovers that she has fantastic mental powers, which she uses to get revenge on her tormentors. King's worst critic wasn't the publishers—it was himself. He disliked his story so much that he threw it away after writing only three pages, according to his memoir *On Writing*. A few hours later, his wife found the pages crumpled and covered with cigarette ash in the wastepaper basket. She took them out and started reading, and she was hooked. "She wanted me to go on," King later wrote. "She wanted to know the rest of the story." And so he went on. *Carrie* sold over a million paperback copies in its first year.

*** A DA's slip about a glove flips the trial of the century**

It was bound to be a case for the ages even before the suspect parked his white Ford Bronco on that hot Los

Angeles night in 1994. OJ Simpson—football legend, rental car spokesperson, *Naked Gun* co-star—was accused of killing his wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and a local waiter, Ron Goldman, on the steps of Nicole's posh home in Brentwood, California. The evidence against OJ would appear to be damning, including blood in the Bronco and on a glove that matched one found near Goldman's body. 'DNA evidence' became a household term with the OJ Simpson trial, and it was not his friend. Neither was a man named Kato Kaelin, who was living in OJ's guesthouse and testified that he could not account for OJ's whereabouts at the time of the murders.

OJ Simpson's team had plenty of its own angles to work. The trial unfolded just a few years after the Los Angeles riots, and the racial polarization of the city was palpable. In fact, the defence team took pains to label one of the LAPD officers investigating the case, Mark Fuhrman, as having a history of making racial statements.

Still, many observers believed OJ would be convicted. And then the prosecutor asked him to try on the bloody glove found at the crime scene. The image of OJ Simpson attempting to squeeze his meaty hand into the snug leather fingers became a defining moment in the trial, as did the way defence attorney Johnnie Cochran described it in his now-historic closing statement: "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit." And the jury did.



*** A messy science lab harbours a miracle drug**

In the summer of 1928, Scottish physician Alexander Fleming was in such a rush to go on vacation that he accidentally left a stack of dirty petri dishes in his laboratory sink. As if this weren't already gross, the dishes were smeared with staphylococcus, a bacterium that causes boils, sore throats and food poisoning. (Let's hope the doctor at least washed his hands before he left.)



When Dr Fleming returned weeks later, he found something interesting in the mess in his sink: One of the petri dishes was dotted with bacteria everywhere except for where some mould was growing. The area around it was clear, as if protected by an unseen barrier. Upon closer inspection,

Dr Fleming realized that the mould, a rare form of *Penicillium notatum*, had secreted a 'mould juice' that killed several strands of deadly bacteria. Dr Fleming published his remarkable discovery—and almost no one noticed.

In fact, years later, Howard Walter Florey, an Australian pathologist, found Fleming's paper by accident while leafing through old medical journals. Along with biochemist Ernst Boris Chain, Dr Florey began to explore the therapeutic effects of the mould juice, and by 1941 they had collected enough penicillin to use on the first human subject, a 43-year-old police officer suffering from a terminal bacterial infection he'd contracted after scratching himself on rosebushes in his

MOULD JUICE IS PERHAPS THE MOST UNLIKELY LIFESAVER IN HISTORY.

garden. The results were astounding: The patient's fever dropped and his appetite returned, and the penicillin used to treat him was hailed as a wonder drug. Unfortunately, when supplies ran out, the officer's infection returned and he died.

Still, Dr Fleming shared the Nobel Prize with Dr Florey and Chain for their work on the magic med. "I certainly didn't plan to revolutionize all



medicine by discovering the world's first antibiotic," he remarked, "but I suppose that was exactly what I did."

*** A dog gives the world Velcro**

Swiss engineer George de Mestral was a natural inventor. When he was 12, he designed and patented a toy airplane. As he got older, he considered nature the greatest inventor on the planet, so he kept his eyes out for naturally occurring phenomena science could imitate. That's where his faithful Irish pointer came in.

After a day hiking in the Swiss mountains, de Mestral noticed that his dog was covered with spiky burs, as were his own pants. He put the burs under the microscope and found tiny 'hooks' at the ends of their bristles that seemingly latched on to

most any kind of fur or clothing. Since de Mestral was no fan of zippers—they tended to freeze in the Alpine winter—he spent the next 10 years trying to duplicate the burs' irresistible attraction to his hiking partner.

ZIPPERS CAN FREEZE IN THE COLD, BUT THESE 'VELVET HOOKS' WON'T.



After countless attempts and belly rubs, de Mestral found the right material for his invention: nylon, which was strong enough for the hooks to hold but pliable enough to be separated with the right tug. De Mestral submitted his patent in 1952, and it was approved three years later. He named his invention Velcro, a combination of *velvet* and *crochet*, the French word for 'hook'.

*** A note from Mum secures women's right to vote**

The road to women's suffrage in the United States was long and difficult. After the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1919, the measure needed to be ratified by 36 states to become law. By the summer of 1920, the amendment's advocates were one state from victory. Unfortunately, almost all the southern states opposed the amendment, and Tennessee was

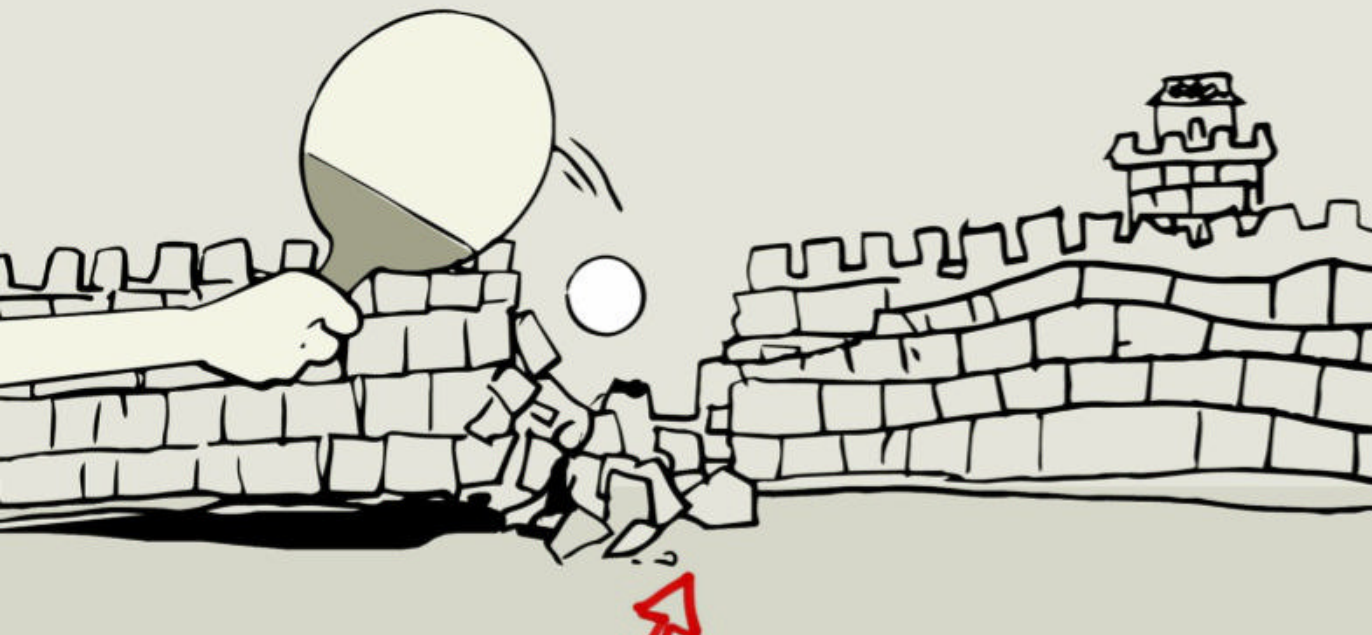




poised to join them because of a 48-48 tie in its state legislature.

A 24-year-old man named Harry Burn, the youngest representative in the state, was expected to be among those to vote ‘nay’—he was even wearing a red rose in his lapel, the symbol of the anti-suffragists. However, on the morning of the Tennessee roll call, Burn received a letter from his mother, Phoebe ‘Miss Febb’ Burn. She implored him

to “be a good boy” and support the measure. When Burn’s name was called, he voted ‘aye’ in a voice that was barely audible and yet shocking. He later declared, “I believe we had a moral and legal right to ratify” the amendment. He quickly fessed up to his mother’s influence on his vote. “I know that a mother’s advice is always safest for her boy to follow,” he said, “and my mother wanted me to vote for ratification.”



* Ping-Pong ball dents China's Great Wall

Glenn Cowan was practising for the 1971 World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan, one afternoon when he realized he was the only American in the room. He had missed the team bus back to the hotel! Undaunted, the 19-year-old Californian just hopped on to the shuttle with the Chinese national team. Most of the Chinese athletes watched the shaggy-haired American with suspicion—the United States had broken diplomatic relations with China way back in 1949, and the team had been forbidden to so much as speak to the Americans.

But Zhuang Zedong, the team's star player, stepped forward to shake Cowan's hand. The two spoke through an interpreter, and Zhuang presented the American with a silk-screen picture of China's Huangshan mountain range. Cowan, a self-described hippie, returned the gesture the next day by giving Zhuang a T-shirt featuring a peace symbol and the words 'Let It Be.'

After that spontaneous exchange of goodwill was beamed around the world, Chinese leader Mao Zedong invited the entire US team to visit. A year later, President Richard Nixon made his own historic trip to Beijing. **R**



There Otter Be a Law

Pennsylvania recently named an official state amphibian.

Even weirder than that: Its name is the eastern hellbender salamander.

Even weirder than that: Its common nickname is the snot otter.

NEW YORK TIMES



Thirty years after his adoption, Izidor still struggles with the emotional scars of his childhood.

Can an Unloved Child Learn to LOVE?

The Ruckel family opened their hearts to a boy from Romania's former 'child gulags', but they weren't prepared for the challenge of raising him

BY *Melissa Fay Greene*

FROM THE ATLANTIC

FOR HIS FIRST three years of life, Izidor lived at the hospital. The dark-eyed, black-haired boy, born 20 June 1980, had been abandoned when he was a few weeks old. The reason was obvious: His right leg was a bit deformed. After a bout of illness (probably polio), he had been tossed into a sea of abandoned infants in the Socialist Republic of Romania.

In films of the period documenting orphan care there, you see nurses like assembly-line workers swaddling newborns with casual indifference and sticking each one at the end of a row of silent, worried-looking babies. The women don't coo or sing to them.

In his hospital, in the Southern Carpathian mountain town of Sighetu Marmatiei, Izidor would have been fed by a bottle propped against the crib bars. Well past the age when children begin tasting solid food, he and his age-mates remained on their backs, sucking from bottles with widened openings to allow the passage of a watery gruel. Without proper care or physical therapy, the baby's leg muscles wasted.

At three, he was deemed 'deficient' and transferred to a Camin Spital Pentru Copii Deficienti, a Home

Hospital for Irrecoverable Children. The cement fortress emitted no sounds of children playing, though as many as 500 lived inside at one time. Izidor was served nearly inedible, watered-down food at long tables where naked children on benches banged their tin bowls. He grew up in overcrowded rooms where his fellow orphans endlessly rocked, or punched themselves in the face or shrieked.

Izidor was destined to spend the rest of his childhood in this building. Odds were high that he would die in childhood, malnourished, shivering, unloved.

COMMUNIST DICTATOR NICOLAE Ceausescu, who'd ruled Romania for 24 years, was executed on Christmas Day 1989. The following

year, the outside world discovered his network of ‘child gulags,’ in which an estimated 1,70,000 abandoned infants, children and teens were being raised.

Believing that a larger population would beef up Romania’s economy, Ceausescu had curtailed contraception and abortion, imposed tax penalties on childless people and celebrated women who gave birth to 10 or more children. Parents who couldn’t handle another baby might call their new arrival “Ceausescu’s child,” as in “Let him raise it.”

To house a generation of unwanted or unaffordable children, Ceausescu ordered the construction or conversion of hundreds of structures. At age three, abandoned children were sorted. Future workers would get clothes, shoes, food and some schooling in *case de copii*—‘children’s homes’—while ‘deficient’ children, even those with such treatable issues as crossed eyes or cleft lip, wouldn’t get much of anything in their Camin Spitale.

After the Romanian revolution, children in unspeakable conditions—skeletal, splashing in urine on the floor, caked with faeces—were discovered and filmed by foreign news programmes, including *20/20* in the United States, which broadcast ‘Shame of a Nation’ in 1990.



Children abandoned in Communist-era Romania lived in horrendous conditions in facilities such as this Home Hospital for Irrecoverable Children.

DANNY RUCKEL, A computer programmer, and his wife, Marlys, lived with their three young daughters in San Diego in the early 1990s. They thought it would be nice to add a boy to the mix, and heard about a local independent filmmaker, John Upton, who was arranging adoptions of Romanian orphans. Marlys called and said they wanted to adopt a baby boy. “There’s thousands of kids there,” Upton replied. “That’ll be easy.”

Undone by ‘Shame of a Nation,’ Upton had flown to Romania and made his way to the worst place

on the show, the Home Hospital for Irrecoverable Children in Sighetu Marmatiei. He went back a few times. On one visit, he filmed a bunch of kids for prospective adoptive parents. His video would not show children packed together naked “like little reptiles in an aquarium,” as he’d described them, but as people, wearing clothes and speaking.

By then, donations had started to come in. The staff skimmed the best items, but on that day, in deference to the American, nannies put donated sweaters on the kids. Upton and his Romanian assistant found it slow-going. Some children didn’t speak at all, and others were unable to stand up or to stand still. When asked the children’s names and ages, the nannies shrugged.

At the end of a wooden bench sat a boy the size of a seven-year-old—at age 10, Izidor weighed about 23 kilos. He knew about Americans from the TV show *Dallas*. On Sunday nights, ambulatory kids, nannies and workers gathered to watch *Dallas* on a donated TV. When rumours flew up the stairs that day that an American had arrived, the reaction inside the orphanage was, *Almighty God, someone*



Top: Izidor in front of his orphanage in June 1991, four months before the Ruckels adopted him.
Bottom: 11-year-old Izidor meets Marlys Ruckel for the first time in Romania, with one of the orphanage workers.

from the land of the giant houses!

Izidor knew the information the nannies didn’t. John Upton would ask a kid, “How old are you?” and the kid would say, “I don’t know,” and the nanny would say, “I don’t know,” and Izidor would yell, “He’s 14!” He’d ask about another kid, “What’s his last name?” and Izidor would yell, “Dumka!”

“Izidor knows the children here

better than the staff,” Upton grouses in one of the tapes. He lifts Izidor into his lap and asks if he’d like to go to America. Izidor says that he would.

BACK IN SAN Diego, Upton told the Ruckels about the bright boy of about seven. “We’d wanted to adopt a baby,” Marlys says. “Then we saw John’s video and fell in love with Izidor.”

In May 1991, Marlys flew to Romania. Just before travelling, she learnt that Izidor was almost 11, but she was undaunted. She travelled with a

interesting trade-off. He dryly replied to the translator: “We will see.”

That night, Marlys rejoiced about what an angel Izidor was. Debbie laughed, and told Marlys, “He struck me more like a cool operator, a savvy politician type. He was much more on top of things than Chippy.” Ciprian had spent the time in the office rummaging wildly through desk drawers and everyone’s pockets.

“No, he’s an innocent. He’s adorable,” Marlys said. “Did you see him pick me to be his mother?”

Years later, in *Abandoned for Life*,

“HE’S AN INNOCENT,” MARLYS SAID. “DID YOU SEE HIM PICK ME TO BE HIS MOTHER?”

new friend, Debbie Principe, who had been matched with a little blonde live wire named Ciprian.

In the director’s office, Marlys waited to meet Izidor. “When Izidor entered,” she says, “all I saw was him, like everything else was fuzzy. He was as beautiful as I’d imagined. Our translator asked him which of the visitors in the office he hoped would be his new mother, and he pointed to me!”

Izidor had a question for the translator: “Where will I live? Is it like Dallas?”

“Well ... no, we live in a condo, like an apartment,” Marlys said. “But you’ll have three sisters. You’ll love them.”

This did not strike Izidor as an

the memoir Izidor self-published at age 22, he explained that moment: “Marlys was the tall American and Debbie was the short American ... ‘Roxana, which one is going to be my new mother?’ I asked the translator.

“‘The tall American,’ she replied.

“When I picked Marlys, she began to cry, filled with joy that I had picked her.”

IN OCTOBER 1991, Izidor and Ciprian flew with Romanian escorts to San Diego. The boys’ new families awaited them at the airport. Izidor gazed around the terminal with satisfaction. “Where is my bedroom?” he



Top: Danny Ruckel and Izidor head for home after the boy's arrival in California. Bottom: Izidor takes Marlys's picture at the airport.

asked. When Marlys told him they were in an airport, not his new home, Izidor was taken aback. Though she'd explained that the Ruckels did not live like the Ewings in *Dallas*, he hadn't believed her.

In the car, when Danny tried to click a seat belt across Izidor's waist, he bucked and yelled, fearing he was being straitjacketed.

Marlys homeschooled the girls, but

Izidor insisted on starting fourth grade in the local school, where he quickly learnt English. His canny ability to read the room put him in good stead with the teachers, but at home, he seemed constantly irritated. Suddenly insulted, he'd storm off to his room and tear things apart.

"He shredded books, posters, family pictures," Marlys tells me. "If I had to leave for an hour, by the time I got home, everyone would be upset: 'He did this; he did that.' He didn't like the girls."

Marlys and Danny had hoped to expand the family fun and happiness by bringing in another child. But the newest family member almost never laughed. He didn't like to be touched. He was vigilant, hurt, proud.

"By about 14, he was angry about everything," she tells

me. "He decided he'd grow up and become the American president. When he found out that wouldn't be possible because of his foreign birth, he said, 'Fine, I'll go back to Romania.'"

"That's when that started—his goal of returning to Romania. We thought it was a good thing for him to have a goal, so we said, 'Sure, get a job, save your money and when you're 18, you can move back to Romania.'"

Izidor worked every day after school at a fast-food restaurant.

“Those were rough years. I was walking on eggshells, trying not to set him off,” Marlys says. “The girls were so over it. It was me they were mad at. They’d say, ‘Mom, all you do is try to fix him!’”

Danny and Marlys tried taking him to therapy, but he refused to go back.

“He’d say: ‘I’m *fine* when nobody’s in the house,’” Marlys says.

“We’d say: ‘But Izidor, it’s our house.’”

When banished to his room, for rudeness or cursing or being mean to

officer searched Izidor’s room, and found his savings-account book.

“We can’t take him,” the officer told the Ruckels. “He’s mad, but there’s nothing wrong here. I’d suggest you lock your bedroom doors tonight.”

The next morning Marlys and Danny offered Izidor a ride to school and then drove him straight to a psychiatric hospital instead. “We couldn’t afford it, but we took a tour and it scared him,” Marlys tells me. “He said, ‘Don’t leave me here! I’ll follow your rules.’”

“Back in the car, we said: ‘Listen, Izidor, you don’t have to love us, but

THE NEWEST FAMILY MEMBER ALMOST NEVER LAUGHED. HE WAS VIGILANT, HURT, PROUD.

the girls, Izidor would stomp up the stairs and blast Romanian music or bang on his door from the inside with his fists or a shoe.

One night when Izidor was 16, Marlys and Danny felt so scared by Izidor’s outburst that they called the police. “I’m going to kill you!” he’d screamed at them. After an officer escorted Izidor to the police car, he insisted that his parents “abused” him.

“Great,” said Marlys. “Did he happen to mention how we abuse him?”

Back in the car, the officer asked: “How do your parents abuse you?”

“I work and they take all my money,” Izidor hollered. In the house, the

you have to be safe and we have to be safe. You can live at home, work and go to school until you’re 18. We love you.’ But, you know, the sappy stuff didn’t work with him.”

Living by the rules didn’t last long. One night Izidor stayed out until two a.m., and found the house locked. He banged on the door. Marlys opened it a crack. “Your things are in the garage,” she told him.

Izidor would never again live at home. He moved in with some guys he knew; their indifference suited him. “He’d get drunk in the middle of the night and call us, and his friends would get on the line to say vulgar

things about our daughters," Marlys says. "Admittedly, it was finally peaceful in our house, but I worried about him."

On Izidor's 18th birthday, Marlys baked a cake and wrapped his gift, a photo album documenting their life together: his first day in America, his first dental appointment, his first job. She took the presents to the house where she'd heard her son was staying. The person who answered the door agreed to deliver them when Izidor got back.

Implicitly, poignantly: Can a person unloved in childhood learn to love?

In 2000, Charles A. Nelson III, a professor of paediatrics and neuroscience at Harvard Medical School and Boston Children's Hospital, and two colleagues launched the Bucharest Early Intervention Project (BEIP). It would become the first-ever randomized controlled trial to measure the impact of early institutionalization on brain and behavioural development and to examine high-quality foster care as an alternative.

"THESE CHILDREN HAD NO IDEA THAT AN ADULT COULD MAKE THEM FEEL BETTER."

"In the middle of the night," Marlys says, "we heard a car squealing around the cul-de-sac, then a loud thud against the front door and the car squealing away. I went down and opened the door. It was the photo album."

IN THE DECADE after the fall of Ceausescu, the new Romanian government welcomed Western child-development experts to help and study the tens of thousands of children still warehoused in state care. Researchers hoped to answer some long-standing questions, such as: If an institutionalized child is transferred into a family setting, can he or she recoup undeveloped capacities?

They worked with 136 children, ages six months to two-and-a-half years, from six Bucharest *leagăne*, baby institutions. None was a Home Hospital for Irrecoverable Children; they were somewhat better supplied and staffed. By design, 68 would continue to receive "care as usual", while the other 68 would be placed with foster families recruited and trained by BEIP. Local kids made up a third group.

"Our coders, unaware of any child's background, assessed 100 per cent of the community kids as having fully developed attachment relationships with their mothers," says Charles H. Zeanah, a child-psychiatry professor at the Tulane University School

of Medicine. “That was true of three percent of the institutionalized kids.” Thirteen percent displayed no attachment behaviours, such as seeking comfort for distress from a carer or exhibiting anxiety when separated from a carer.

“These children had no idea that an adult could make them feel better,” Zeneah told me. “Imagine how that must feel—to be miserable and not even know that another human being could help.”

As early as 2003, it was evident that the foster-care children were making progress. Glimmering through the data was a sensitive period of 24 months during which it was crucial for a child to establish an attachment relationship with a caregiver.

“Timing is critical,” the researchers wrote. Brain plasticity wasn’t “unlimited,” they warned. “Earlier is better.” After the researchers announced their results publicly, the Romanian government banned the institutionalization of children under the age of two.

Meanwhile, the study continued. At age three-and-a-half, the portion of children who displayed secure attachments climbed to nearly 50 per cent among the foster-care kids, but to only 18 per cent among those who remained institutionalized.

Unattached children see threats everywhere, an idea borne out in brain studies. Flooded with stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline,



By 1991, the Ruckel family had adopted two children: Izidor (front, left) and Izabela (in the wheelchair).

the amygdala—the main part of the brain dealing with fear and emotion—seemingly worked overtime in the still-institutionalized children.

Nelson cautions that the door doesn’t “slam shut” for children left in institutions beyond 24 months of age. “But the longer you wait to get children into a family,” he says, “the harder it is to get them back on an even keel.”

HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS FAN out from the Denver airport. In a rental car, I drive slowly around the semicircles and cul-de-sacs of Izidor’s subdivision until I see him step out of the shadow of a 4,500-square-foot house with

a polite half-wave. It's 2019 and he sublets a room here, as do others, including some families.

At 39, Izidor is an elegant, wiry man with mournful eyes. His manner is alert and tentative. A general manager for a fast-food restaurant, he works 60- to 65-hour weeks.

"Every time we got into another fight," Izidor remembers, "I wanted one of them to say: 'Izidor, we wish we had never adopted you and we are going to send you back to the hospital.' But they didn't say it."

Izidor had a happy day. A kind nanny named Onisa had started working at the hospital. "She loved to sing and often taught us some of her music," Izidor writes in his memoir.

One day, she intervened when another nanny was striking Izidor with a broomstick. To cheer him up, Onisa promised that someday she'd take him home for an overnight visit. Skeptical that such an extraordinary event would ever happen, Izidor thanked her for the nice idea.

A few weeks later, on a snowy

"IT WAS SIMPLER IN THE ORPHANAGE—EITHER YOU WERE BEING BEATEN OR YOU WEREN'T."

Unable to process his family's affection, he just wanted to know where he stood. It was simpler in the orphanage, where either you were being beaten or you weren't. "I responded better to being smacked around," Izidor tells me. "In America, they had 'rules' and 'consequences.' So much talk. I hated 'Let's talk about this.'"

"As a child, I'd never heard words like 'You are special' or 'You're our kid.' Later, if your adoption parents tell you words like that, you feel, *Okay, whatever, thanks. I don't even know what you're talking about. I don't know what you want from me, or what I'm supposed to do for you.*"

ONCE, WHEN HE WAS ABOUT EIGHT,

winter day, Onisa dressed Izidor in warm clothes and shoes, and led him out the front door and through the orphanage gate. She took the small boy, who swayed with a deep, tilting limp, into the town. "It was my first time ever going out into the world," he tells me now. He looked in astonishment at the cars and houses and shops. "When I stepped into Onisa's apartment," he writes, "I could not believe how beautiful it was; the walls were covered with dark rugs and there was a picture of the *Last Supper* on one of them. The carpets on the floor were red."

Onisa's children arrived home from school, and Izidor learnt that it was the start of their Christmas holiday.

He feasted alongside Onisa's family at their friends' dinner table that night, tasting Romanian specialties for the first time, including *sarmale* (stuffed cabbage), potato goulash with thick noodles and yellow sponge cake with cream filling.

On the living-room floor after dinner, the child of that household let Izidor play with his toys. Izidor followed the boy's lead and drove little trains across the rug.

The next morning, Onisa asked Izidor if he wanted to go to work with her or to stay with her children. Not wanting to be parted from her, he chose work.

"I got dressed as fast as I could, and we headed out the door," he remembers. "When we were near her work, I realized that her work was at the hospital—my hospital—and I began to cry ... Somehow I thought I was going to be part of Onisa's family now."

Through his own stupidity, he had let the most wonderful spot on Earth—Onisa's apartment—slip away. He sobbed until the other nannies threatened to slap him.

Today in his bedroom, Izidor has re-created the setting from the happiest night in his childhood.

"You see this?" he says, picking up a tapestry woven with burgundy roses on a dark, leafy background. "This is almost identical to Onisa's. I bought it in Romania for that reason!"

For Izidor, these possessions signify peace. "It was the first time I slept in a



At age 16, Izidor started work at a fast-food restaurant, with the goal of earning enough money to return to Romania.

real home. For many years I thought, *Why can't I have a home like that?*"

Now he does. But he knows there are missing parts.

AT 20, IN 2001, Izidor felt an urgent desire to return to Romania. Short on cash, he wrote to TV shows, pitching the story of a Romanian orphan making his first trip back to his home country. One took him up on it, and on 25 March 2001, a film crew met him at the Los Angeles airport. So did the Ruckels.

"I thought, *This is it. I'll never see him again,*" Marlys says. She hugged

and kissed him and told him, “You’ll always be our son and we’ll always love you.”

Izidor showed the Ruckels two family photographs in his wallet. “In case I do decide to stay there, I’ll have something to remember you by,” he said. Marlys was chilled by the ease with which Izidor seemed to be exiting their lives.

In Romania, the producers took Izidor to visit his old orphanage, where he was feted like a returning prince, and then they revealed that they’d found his birth family three hours away. They drove through a snowy

mother—and reached out to hug him. Suddenly angry, Izidor swerved past her. *How can I greet someone I barely know?* he remembers thinking. She began to wail, “*Fiul meu! Fiul meu!*” My son! My son!

The house had a dirt floor, and an oil lamp glowed dimly. The family offered Izidor the best seat in the house, a stool. “Why was I put in the hospital?” he asked.

“You were six weeks old when you got sick,” Maria said. “We took you to the doctor to see what was wrong. Your grandparents checked on you

MARIA—HIS MOTHER—REACHED OUT TO HUG IZIDOR. SUDDENLY ANGRY, HE SWERVED AWAY.

landscape and pulled over in a field. Wearing a white button-down shirt, a tie and dress pants, Izidor limped across the soggy, uneven ground to a one-room shack. He was shaking. A narrow-faced man emerged from the hut and strode toward him. They passed each other. “*Ce mai faci?*”—How are you?—the man mumbled as he walked by.

“*Bun,*” Izidor muttered. Good.

That was Izidor’s father. Two young women then hurried from the hut and greeted Izidor with kisses on each cheek; these were his sisters. Finally a short, black-haired woman not yet 50 identified herself as Maria—his

a few weeks later, but then there was something wrong with your right leg. We asked the doctor to fix your leg, but no one would help us. So we took you to a hospital in Sighetu Marmatiei, and that’s where we left you.”

“Why did no one visit me for 11 years?”

“Your father was out of work. I was taking care of the other children. We couldn’t afford to come see you.”

“Do you know that living in the Camin Spital was like living in hell?”

“My heart,” cried Maria. “You must understand that we’re poor people; we were moving from one place to another.”

Izidor and Marlys during a visit to Romania in 2015.



Agitated, Izidor got up and went outside. His Romanian family invited him to look at pictures of his older siblings who'd left home, and he presented them with his photo album: Here was a grinning Izidor poolside, wearing medals from a swimming competition; here were the Ruckels at the beach; here they were at a picnic.

When the TV cameras were turned off, Izidor tells me, Maria asked whether the Ruckels had hurt him or taught him to beg. He assured her neither was true.

"You look thin," Maria went on. "Move in with us. I will take care of you." She pressed him for details about his jobs and wages and asked if he'd like to build the family a new house. After three hours, Izidor was exhausted and eager to leave.

"He called me from Bucharest," Marlys says, "and said, 'I have to come home. Get me out of here. These people are awful.'"

A few weeks later he was back in Temecula, a Southern California wine-country town where the Ruckels, who have adopted five children from foster care in recent years, now live.

Friends told him there were jobs in Denver, so he decided to move there. Danny and Marlys visit him there and have gone on trips to Romania

with him. It's harder for him to come home to California, Marlys says. "Thanksgiving, Christmas—they're too much for him."

NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST RON FEDERICI was another of the first wave of child-development experts to visit the institutions for the 'unsalvageables,' and he has become one of the world's top specialists caring for post-institutionalized children adopted into Western homes. "In the early years, everybody had starry eyes," Federici says. "They thought loving, caring families could heal these kids. I warned them: These kids are going to push you to the breaking point. Get trained to work with special-needs children. Instead of 'I love you,' just tell them, 'You are safe.'"

But most new or prospective parents couldn't bear to hear it.

Federici and his wife adopted eight children from brutal institutions

themselves: three from Russia and five from Romania. In his clinical practice in Virginia, Federici has seen 9,000 young people, close to a third of them from Romania. Tracking his patients across the decades, he has found that about 20 per cent are able to live independently.

The most successful parents, he believes, were able to focus on imparting basic living skills and appropriate behaviours. “The Ruckels are a good example—they hung on, and he’s doing okay.”

Within his own family, Federici and

BY ANY MEASURE, Izidor—living independently—is a success story among the survivors of Ceausescu’s institutions. “Do you imagine ever having a family?” I ask. “You mean of my own? No. I have known since I was 15 that I would not have a family. Seeing all my friends in dumb relationships, with jealousy and control and depression—I thought, *Really? All that for a relationship?* No.”

He says he doesn’t miss what he never knew, what he doesn’t even perceive. He focuses on the tasks before him and does his best to act the way

“IT’S HARD ON PARENTS—THEY SHOW YOU LOVE AND YOU CAN’T RETURN IT,” IZIDOR SAYS.

his wife have become the permanent legal guardians for four of his Romanian children, who are now all adults. Two work, under supervision, for a foundation he established in Bucharest; two others live with their parents. (The fifth is a stirring example of the fortunate 20 per cent—he’s an ER physician.) Both of his adult sons who haven’t left home are cognitively impaired, but they have jobs and are pleasant to be around, according to Federici. “They’re happy!” he exclaims. “They’ve figured out ways, not to overcome what happened to them—you can’t really overcome—but to adapt to it and not take other people hostage.”

humans expect other humans to act. “I’m not a person who can be intimate,” Izidor says. “It’s hard on a person’s parents, because they show you love and you can’t return it.”

Sometimes, Izidor has feelings. Two years after the Ruckels kicked him out, Izidor was getting a haircut from a stylist who knew the family. “Did you hear what happened?” she asked. “Your mom and sisters got in a terrible car accident yesterday. They’re in the hospital.” Izidor tore out of there, bought three dozen red roses, and showed up at the hospital.

“We were in the truck coming out of Costco,” Marlys recalls, “and a guy hit

us really hard. After a few hours at the hospital, we were released. I didn't call Izidor to tell him. We weren't speaking. But he found out, and I guess at the hospital he said, 'I'm here to see the Ruckel family,' and they said, 'They're not here anymore,' which he took to mean 'They're dead.'

Izidor raced from the hospital to the house—the house he'd been boycotting, the family he hated.

He assumed Danny Ruckel wasn't going to let him in without a negotiation. "What are your intentions?" he would ask. "Do you promise to be decent to us?" Izidor would promise. Danny would allow Izidor to enter the living room and face everyone, to stand there with his arms full of flowers and his eyes wet with tears. Izidor would

lay the flowers in his mother's arms and say, with a greater attempt at earnestness than they'd ever heard before, "These are for all of you. I love you." It would mark a turning point. From that day on, something would be softer in him, regarding the Ruckel family.

But first, Izidor was obliged to approach the heavy wooden door, the door he'd slammed behind him a hundred times, the door he'd battered and kicked when he was locked out. He knocked and stood on the front step, head hanging, heart pounding, unsure whether he'd be admitted.

I abandoned them, I neglected them, I put them through hell, he thought.

And then they opened the door. 

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I Have an IKEA Joke, but It Needs Too Much Setup

The Internet loves a good joke—and many bad ones too.

Some of the most popular follow a pattern that starts “I have a joke, but ...” and ends with the ironic reason why the joke can't be revealed after all. These are some of the latest and greatest:

I have a prune joke, but it's dated.

I have a Stars Wars joke, but it's forced.

I have a nihilist joke, but who cares?

I have a joke about a broken clock, but it's not the right time.

I have a joke about cows, but I don't want to milk it.

I have a joke about Zoom meetings, but my Internet connection is unstable.

Huffpost.com AND Mashable.com

SAYING IT LIKE IT IS

In the midst of a vibrant second innings, actor Neena Gupta talks about battling stereotypes, being spoiled for choice at the age of 62 and her recently released autobiography

BY *Suhani Singh*

In July 2017, you tweeted: "I live in Mumbai, and I am working, and I am a good actress, *koe kam hai toe batao* (Let me know if there's any work)". Did you imagine that this tweet, when you had just 11,000 followers, would create such a shift in your career?

Never! In fact, I was scared that I had written something wrong, that my daughter, Masaba, would scold me for it and people would say that I am foolish for saying so. The reaction to it was huge but I still didn't think that it would materialise into work or that my life would change after it.

Bold choices have been a mainstay in your life and career, from quite early on. You wore a swimsuit and rode a bicycle in your first on-screen role in *Aadharshila*. Did you feel the choices you made were gutsy?

Back then, I actually wanted to mix my studies in Sanskrit and theatre and not act in films. When this offer came to me, I was very excited, even though I didn't know how to ride a bicycle. I would practise in a lane with the help of an actor who'd teach me. There is an interesting story behind the swimsuit that isn't mentioned in the



book. My mother didn't let me learn swimming because, of course, there'd be boys in the pool. But it didn't stop her from getting me a swimsuit from an auction in the American Embassy. It just lay in the house. So, when the director said I need you to wear a swimsuit, I remembered I had one. It was very stylish with tiger stripes. On the day of the shoot, I was very shy but my whole mental energy went into riding the cycle and ensuring that I don't fall. I didn't think of what is showing or how I am looking.

You were seen as 'lallu ladki' (a silly, vapid girl) after the film *Saath Saath*. How hard was it to get the work you wanted thereafter?

Look at Mehmood. I think he was a very good-looking guy and a great actor. But apart from comedy, did anyone give him a chance to do anything else? At the time, being typecast was the norm. I didn't let myself be typecast as a vamp or a comedian. If I had, I could have done much better and would have got something out of it. As a result, filmmakers didn't remember me and I wouldn't be approached for work.

In your autobiography *Sach Kahun Toh*, you write that 'behenji' and 'shameless'—two contradictory words—have been the most descriptive of your life. Tell us about that.

Back in Delhi, it was me trying to battle society's perception of how a

Hindi-speaking, Sanskrit-studying girl should dress and behave. These preconceived notions about a modern woman and a *behenji* still exist today. Dealing with them was a part of my life then. My progress was hindered because of them. [Through the book] I have shown the kind of hypocrisy people propagate in the guise of *sanskaar*. You will educate your daughters but ultimately you want them to get married, stay at home and raise kids.

Professional hardships and your weakest moments find a place in your book. Were you ever worried about divulging too much, or that people would judge you?

Actually, no. Once I started to write, I had absolute clarity on what should go in the book and what shouldn't. I have been vulnerable when people wrote lies about me. I didn't speak up because I was in no position to



Neena Gupta in a still from *Badhaai Ho*

defend myself. But success gives you confidence. Now my work speaks for itself. I have no fear. What will anyone say or do? My confidence has improved after the success I've had since *Badhaai Ho*. It was time I shared my true story. I didn't feel like hiding anything. What happened is what I am bringing out on page.

You have won a National Award not just for acting, but also for directing (the documentary *Bazaar Sitaram*). You have directed TV shows, as well. Is this something you'd one day like to return to?

Right now I am not thinking of anything but acting. Just look at my fate! The pandemic happened and all work came to a halt. I don't have as many years on me as younger actors do. I feel this time was precious. I could have done a lot of work. But I am content that I am still able to work.

You write that "... an industry is a business, and nobody is your friend". Is the industry finally befriending you and giving you your due?

What happened was that a director named Amit Sharma gave Neena Gupta a break that she was looking for with *Badhaai Ho*. It changed everything. What's important to remember is that nothing goes to waste in life. I think it was Tabu who suggested my name for *Badhaai Ho*. The makers initially said that, "No, she looks very hot, how will she fit the 'Mummy-type' figure?" But

when they saw the short film *Khujli*, that I had done with Jackie Shroff, they realised that I could do it. That is how I ended up with *Badhaai Ho*.

Are you spoiled for choice now? Do you end up having to say 'no' to work?

Yes, that is happening. Now, if a project doesn't touch my heart, I don't do it. Earlier, there was no such option. Whatever came my way, I'd do it because I needed the money. It feels good not to wake up feeling, 'Oh no, shooting *pe jaana hai*'. Now it's like 'let it be morning soon, so that I can head to the set'.

Have web shows like *Panchayat* and *Masaba Masaba* enabled you to reach a new audience?

It has changed things a lot. The main advantage of the medium is that people can watch you from the comfort of their home as many times as they want, and, sometimes, even after a year. A show like *Panchayat*, a simple story set in a village, is a great thing. I am looking forward to shooting the new season.

You are very candid about heart-breaks and your relationships.

What lessons do you hope readers take away from these experiences?

There's only one lesson in it—don't ever do what I did. I feel my judgement about people has not been very good. I should have waited, or should have seen through them and not fallen for them. **R**

LAUGHTER

THE BEST *Medicine*



“Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick.
Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick. Lick.
Then I thought, *Why not just take a bath?*”

A teacher giving a lesson on the circulation of blood says to her class, “Now, if I stood on my head, the blood, as you know, would run into it, and I would turn red in the face.”

“Yes,” the whole class agrees.

“Then why is it,” she continues, “that while I am standing upright, the blood doesn’t run into my feet?”

One little fellow shouts, “’Cause your feet ain’t empty!”

—*Innerworkspublishing.com*

For my Sunday sermon, I purposely buttoned my suit vest incorrectly to illustrate how difficult it is to fix things once you’ve started off on the wrong foot. So I stood before my congregation,

opened my suit coat, and asked, “Does anyone notice anything unusual about me?”

A child shouted, “Yes, your shoes are dirty.”

—LEWIS KUJAWSKI

Reading a letter at the breakfast table, a wife suddenly looks at her husband suspiciously. “Henry,” she says, “I



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WHO CHANGED
THE WORLD



Foreword: Elton Musk, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs,
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My stepfather doesn't like it when I call him my fake dad. He prefers *faux pa*.

—GLENN MOORE, *comedian*

just received this letter from my mother saying she isn't accepting our invitation to come and stay with us, as we don't appear to want her. What does she mean? I told you to write and say that she was to come at her own convenience. You did write to tell her this, didn't you?"

"Yes," says the husband. "But I couldn't spell 'convenience', so I made it 'risk'"

—Herway.net

Another Round of 'Guy Walks into a Bar' Jokes

◆ Charles Dickens walks into a bar and orders a martini.

The bartender asks, "Olive or twist?"

—PEREZGC on *reddit.com*

◆ An SEO expert walks into a bar, bars, pub, tavern, public house, Irish pub, drinks, beer, alcohol
—rd.com

◆ René Descartes walks into a bar. "You want a beer?" the bartender asks.

"I think not," says Descartes, and then he disappears.

—Gamertelligence.com

I just found out that I'm colour-blind. This came right out of the purple.

—Scarymommy.com

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

PAPER PUSHER

Many goods sold on *etsy.com* are masterpieces of craftsmanship. A user named MrImprov, however, sells 'Terrible Origami'. Here are a few of his creations.



Ghost
\$91 (₹6,753)



Horse
\$100 (₹7,420)



Snowplow
\$98 (₹7,273)



Fist
\$88 (₹6,530) [SOLD]

COURTESY TERRIBLE ORIGAMI

RD RECOMMENDS

Films

ENGLISH: Based on a JoJo Moyes novel, **THE LAST LETTER FROM YOUR LOVER** (Netflix) is about a journalist Ellie Haworth (Felicity Jones) who knows a good story when she sees one. Having discovered a stash of secret love letters from 1965, she starts to uncover secrets that Jennifer Stirling (Shailene Woodley), the wife of a wealthy industrialist, shared with Anthony O'Hare (Callum Turner). The film streams from 23 July.

In **JOLT** (on Amazon Prime Video from 23 July) Lindy (Kate Beckinsale) tries hard to hide her pain with sardonic humour. Her neurological disorder forces her to suffer rage-filled, murderous



The cast of *The Last Letter From Your Lover*

impulses that she can only control with the help of a special electrode device. Love becomes hard to find, but when she finally does, her partner is murdered. Also starring Susan Sarandon, the film sees Lindy exact her revenge.



Film poster for *Collar Bomb*

HINDI: Threatening to blow up a school, a suicide bomber demands that a much-glorified cop commit a set of heinous crimes. Racing against time, to complete this hellish scavenger hunt, the officer is forced to confront his own past, while seeing his idyllic hometown descend into chaos. Starring Jimmy Sheirgill and Sparsh Shrivastav, **COLLAR BOMB** premieres on Disney+ Hotstar on 9 July.

MALAYALAM: Fahadh Faasil plays Sulaiman Malik, a man who fights

political and police corruption to save his coastal village. Following him from the age of 20 to 57, **MALIK** (releasing on Amazon Prime Video on 15 July) does tell us Sulaiman's story, but more importantly, it tells us the story of a village in Kerala where minority communities constantly face the threat of displacement.



Fahadh Faasil in a still from *Malik*

#WATCHLIST: ON OUR RADAR

Never Have I Ever Season 2: As the second season of this Mindy Kaling show comes to Netflix on 15 July, we see that Devi (Maitreyi Ramakrishnan) has an altogether enviable love



A still from *Never Have I Ever 2*

life that leaves her spoiled for choice. Should she go for Paxton, her dreamy long-term crush, or should she instead choose Ben, her former rival who stood by her in the toughest of times? Will she make her mind up in time?

Making the Cut Season 2: Coming to Amazon Prime Video on 16 June is a fashion reality show that is made compelling by the star power of its hosts—Heidi Klum and



Heidi Klum and Tim Gunn

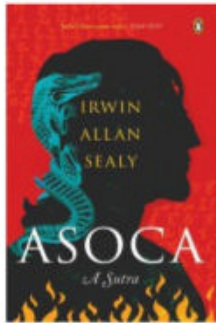
Tim Gunn. The show brings together 10 talented entrepreneurs and designers from around the world to compete for the biggest of prizes: a chance to take their brands to the next level and become a global phenomenon.

Books

***Asoca: A Sutra* by Irwin Allen Sealy, Penguin Viking**

Our history textbooks give us a broad outline of Ashoka's life. We know, for instance, that the emperor once ruled much of the Indian subcontinent.

We also know that he was overcome by great grief after having masterminded the bloody and brutal Kalinga War. His embrace of Buddhism and his vow of ahimsa are, of course, the stuff of legend. This informa-



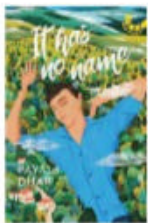
tion, sadly, is not knowledge enough.

With *Asoca*, Irwin Allen Sealy fills a gap. Separating man from king, this historical

novel tells us about both his demons and his dreams.

The scope, we are told, is epic and the drama Shakespearean. Coming from one of India's

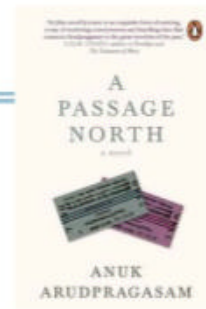
greatest living writers, the book tells us a story that history often only glosses over.



YOU MAY ALSO LIKE ... *It Has No Name*

by Payal Dhar (Red Panda): Sami has gotten used to people asking her if she is a boy or a girl, but much to her surprise, her new classmates in the town of Chandnisarai are somewhat indifferent

to her buzzcut. The cricket club is where Sami spends her days and friendships—both online and offline—are where she finds refuge. Old secrets and forgotten memories, however, interrupt this idyll, leaving Sami with difficult choices. This, in many ways, is the definitive gay coming-of-age novel.



Scope Out

A Passage North

(Hamish Hamilton): In Anuk Arudpragasam's novel, the traumas of Sri Lanka's 30-year-long civil war come alive as the protagonist makes sense of devastation, absence and longing.

The Tatas, Freddi

Mercury & Other Bawas:

***An Intimate History of the Parsis* (Westland**

Non-Fiction): Delving deep into the history of her community, Coomi Kapoor asks, "What does it mean to be Parsi?"

***Khwabnama* (Hamish**

Hamilton): Written by Akhtaruzzaman Elias and translated by Arunava Sinha, this magic-realist novel sees peasants demand two-thirds of the harvest they have produced.

Music

TUNE IN

Song: 'Mohabbat'

Artist: Arooj Aftab

Album: Vulture Prince

Originally written by Hafiz Hoshiarpuri, the ghazal 'Mohabbat Karne Wale' is familiar not just because its lyrics are hard to forget but also because it is sung often. Mehdi Hassan, Farida Khanum and Iqbal Bano all included it in their repertoire. Arooj Aftab, however, insists that her version must not be thought of as a cover. "It's very difficult to do this, it has taken a lot of time and energy as a musician. I am taking something that is really old and pulling it into the now," she recently said to an interviewer.

The instruments Aftab uses in 'Mohabbat'—the guitar, percussions



Singer Arooj Aftab

and harp—all add melancholy to a song that is already plaintive. Aftab's voice itself is both mournful and captivating. You have to keep returning to it in order to savour its sorrow. In 2018, Aftab, a Pakistan-born, New York-based musician lost her brother in an accident. She brings to 'Mohabbat' the pain of that loss, only to make it beautiful.

LISTEN



AUDIO-BOOK:

Nora Ephron's 1983 novel,

HEARTBURN, has it all—heartbreak, agony, comedy. Meryl Streep teases out each

emotion in her narration, but most often the actress leaves you in stitches.

PODCAST: A twice-weekly podcast about Roman and Greek myths, **LET'S TALK ABOUT MYTHS, BABY**, sees host Liv Albert

recount ancient stories and find in them room for feminists and queer activists.



—COMPILED BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

REVIEW

Into the Wild

In Amit Masurkar's *Sherni*, men are the real beasts

BY Shreevatsa Nevatia

With *Sherni* (streaming on Amazon Prime Video), director Amit Masurkar ticks some of the boxes he did with his 2017 film *Newton*. An upright government employee again fights that impossible fight—one against systemic apathy and corruption. Much like *Newton*, *Sherni* doesn't manipulate you into rooting for its protagonist. You want Vidya Vincent (Vidya Balan) to win, not because she is good or noble, but because Masurkar deftly shows how her work environment is riddled with injustice.

Having been recently posted in



Vidya Balan in *Sherni*

Madhya Pradesh as a Divisional Forest Officer, Vincent quickly finds her hands full. A tigress is terrorising the area, killing a villager every few days. Narratives of wildlife conservation and human-animal conflict seamlessly blend into the film's story as Vincent starts trying to protect T-12, the tigress everyone around wants her to catch. Her empathy for the animal is juxtaposed with the cruelty of Ranjan Rajhans (Sharat Saxena), a hunter desperate for his next trophy.

Nothing in *Sherni*

conforms to a formula. The performances, especially, are all more authentic than typical. Vijay Raaz plays zoology professor Hassan Noorani with a disarming earnestness. Saxena and Balan are both convincing, but it is Brijendra Kala, portraying Bansilal Bansal—Vincent's morally dubious boss—who proves to be truly memorable.

All the actors take ordinary situations and make them cinematic. Masurkar barely shows us the real tigress. He doesn't need to. Vidya Vincent is enough. **R**



Wave

By Parvathi Nayar

*Trash, metal fixtures,
PVC, sand and paint,
2018*

114 in x 192 in X 32 in

ARTIST PARVATHI

NAYAR points out that the 19th-century woodblock print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* is now so iconic that it has come to enjoy a rare distinction. "It's the

only artwork that has its own emoji," she says. With *Wave*, her trash-art installation, Nayar didn't just want to pay homage to that great piece of Asian art, she also wanted to make literal a line she sometimes heard in Chennai: "drowning in a wave of trash". The scale of *Wave* is staggering, yes, but it also gives value to that which is worthless.

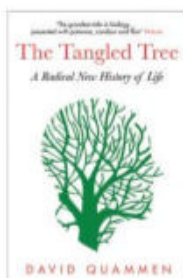
Having asked the people of Chennai to

contribute their white and blue trash, Nayar soon found herself wading through bottles of Harpic, detergents, shampoo and deodorant sprays. The installation, she says, soon became "a statement about how much we consume, and waste at home". Even more striking is the obvious message of this work: Our oceans and rivers will soon only have our plastic to throw up. **R**

— BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

ME & MY SHELF

Born in Trinidad, West Indies, **Peggy Mohan** has taught linguistics at Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Milia Islamia. Author of three novels, her most recent book, *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants*, tells the story of India through its languages.



The Tangled Tree: A Radical New History of Life

BY DAVID QUAMMEN,

William Collins, ₹599

David Quammen's most recent book discusses the role of viruses and bacteria in the evolution of more complex life forms. It was a wonderful lesson in how to delve into complex scientific topics while keeping the reader glued to the narrative. What he does when he discusses animal species and the natural environment is what I hope to do when I talk of language.

The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer

BY SIDDHARTHA MUKHERJEE,

Fourth Estate, ₹599

Siddhartha Mukherjee's first book is a brilliant blend of new and exciting scientific information nested in a walk

through the corridors of his hospital—the same kind of treatment that I also loved in Quammen's style.

The God of Small Things

BY ARUNDHATI ROY, *Penguin India*, ₹450

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* conjured a landscape and a childhood familiar to me from the Caribbean. I particularly admire her courage in taking on tough issues with firmness and grace.

The Kingdom of This World

BY ALEJO CARPENTIER, *Farrar, Straus and Giroux*, ₹21,444

Alejo Carpentier, a Cuban writer, captured the surrealism of the Afro-Caribbean world long before García Marquez. This novel is written as three vignettes of the time before, during and after the Haitian Revolution, and it has run through my mind as something precious for years after I read it.

The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948–2013

BY DEREK WALCOTT,
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, ₹2,650

I would read *The Schooner Flight*—a long poem by Derek Walcott, who I once called the heart and soul of the West Indies—aloud to my daughter just to hear how it made our Creole sound. It was like a journey home. As he recited it at his party for winning the Nobel Prize, she sat and recited it along with him!

Borderliners

BY PETER HØEG, *Picador, ₹1,679*

This book by Danish writer Peter Høeg read like an intense autobiography of a boy who grew up in an orphanage and then went to a chillingly cold school that wished to experiment by including children who were 'borderliners.'

Anansi Boys

BY NEIL GAIMAN, *Headline Review, ₹699*

As I read this book, I kept thinking that there was something crazily familiar about the language of the dialogue. Then I recognized my own Caribbean dialect. He had written a whole novel full of

Black Trinidadians without actually saying that this is who his characters were!



The Three-Body Problem

BY CIXIN LIU,
Head of Zeus, ₹599

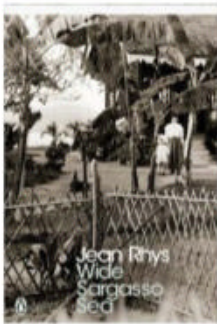
There is something intriguing in how this Chinese science-fiction writer projects China as

the epicentre of this planet—something only the West dared to do before—and all the confidence in his writing that makes the world feel like a larger, or at least different, place.

No Longer at Ease

BY CHINUA ACHEBE, *Penguin UK, ₹360*

Achebe is the one writer who, years ago, voiced his criticism of how Third-World writers were compelled to project their homelands and people in shades of mockery, which writers in the West are not made to do. I met him by accident on a 52-hour train ride to Mysore in 1981, where this book was my travelling companion. I still remember the surprise and delight in his eyes as he signed my copy.



Wide Sargasso Sea

BY JEAN RHYSS, *Penguin UK, ₹350*

This book won Rhys—who was born in Dominica, West Indies, but lived all her adult life in England—her first literary award at the age of 70. The colour and intensity of this novel, and Rhys' own compelling personality, captures the childhoods of so many Caribbean women, particularly those of us who ended up living our lives far away. The way she wrote, in the mid-20th-century, is timeless: everything could have been written yesterday. **R**

BRAINTEASERS

Pic-a-Pix: Penny

Moderately Difficult

Reveal a hidden picture by shading in groups of horizontally or vertically adjacent cells. The numbers represent how many cells are in each of the corresponding row or column's groups. (For example, a '3' next to a row represents three horizontally adjacent shaded cells in that row.) There must be at least one empty cell between each group. The numbers read in the same horizontal or vertical order as the groups they represent. There's only one possible picture; can you shade it in?

			3	2				2	3	2							
			4	6	3	2	10	10	2	3	2	0					
		2															
		6															
		8															
3	2	2															
	2	2															
	2	2															
3	2	2															
		8															
		6															
		2															



No More Scissors

Moderately difficult Maruf decides to create a variant of the game rock, paper, scissors. It will feature five elements. So far, she has decided that:

- ◆ Water puts out fire
- ◆ Fire melts metal
- ◆ Water rusts metal
- ◆ Air blows away earth

Maruf will ensure that the new game is balanced, meaning that each element wins against as many other elements as it loses to. Under this system, between earth and fire, who wins?

Eighty-Six the Toast

Difficult A diner offers three options for breakfast:

- ◆ bacon and eggs
- ◆ pancakes
- ◆ sausage and hash browns

If four college students come in, the waiter could get any of 81 different orders, since each person could ask for any one of the three things, and $3^4 = 81$.



Unlike the waiter, the cook doesn't need to know which customer gets what: he only needs to know how many of each breakfast plate to make (for example, three plates of bacon and eggs and one plate of pancakes). Considering this, and assuming that each student asks for only one breakfast plate, how many different possible orders are there that the cook could receive?

Treasures

Easy Can you locate 12 hidden treasures in the empty cells of this grid? The numbers outside indicate how many treasures are in each row or column. Each arrow points directly toward one or more of the treasures and does not share a cell with one. An arrow may be immediately next to a treasure it points to, or it may be further away. Not every treasure will necessarily have an arrow pointing to it.

	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1
2								
3								
2					↓	↖		
2	↘							
0	↗				↙			
2	↗							
0								
1			↗		↗			

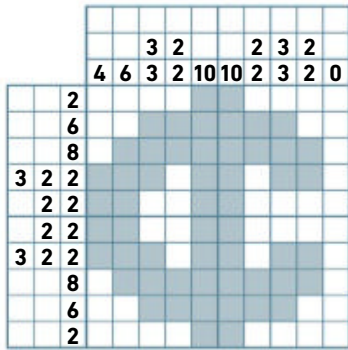
For answers, turn to PAGE 112.

(EIGHTY-SIX THE TOAST) DARREN RIGBY; (TREASURES) FRASER SIMPSON

BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

FROM PAGES 110 & 111

Pic-a-Pix: Penny



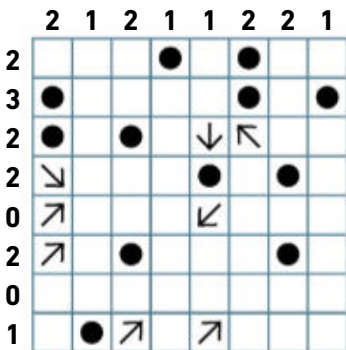
No More Scissors

Earth does.

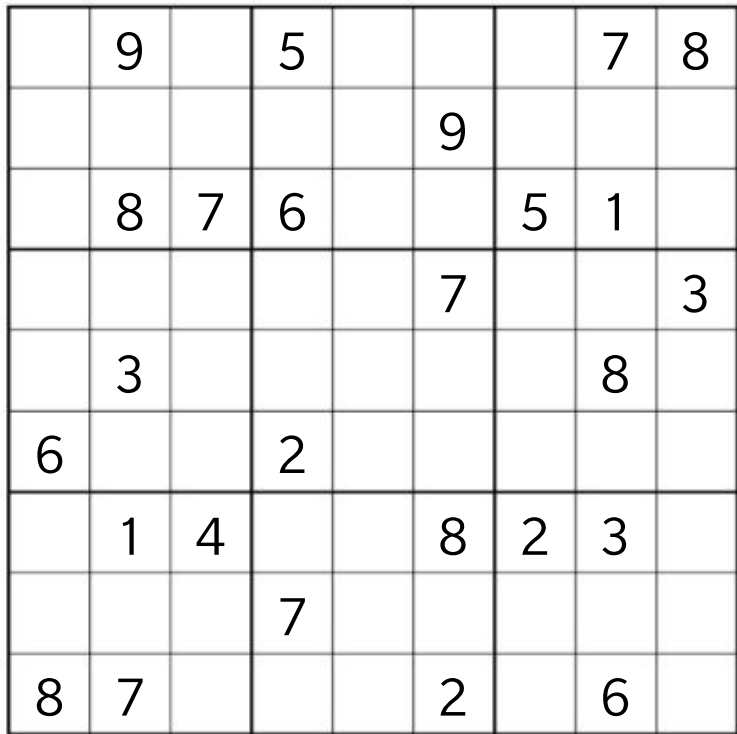
Eighty-Six the Toast

15.

Treasures



BY *Jeff Widderich*

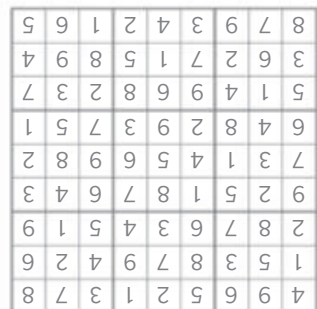


To Solve This Puzzle

Put a number from 1 to 9 in each empty square so that:

- ♦ every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numbers (1-9) without repeating any of them;
- ♦ each of the outlined 3 x 3 boxes has all nine numbers, none repeated.

SOLUTION





WORD POWER

For July, we've rounded up some four-letter words for your puzzling pleasure. No, not those words—literally, words that have only four letters! We swear you can use all of these in polite company, but can you guess the correct definitions? Keep it clean and turn to the next page for answers.

BY *Sarah Chassé*

1. coif *n.*

(kwahf)

- A snub.
- B hairdo.
- C sea snail.

2. awry *adv.*

(uh-'ry)

- A off course.
- B absentee.
- C ironically.

3. bilk *v.*

(bilk)

- A avoid.
- B duplicate.
- C cheat.

4. udon *n.*

('oo-dahn)

- A mob boss.
- B violent uprising.
- C Japanese noodles.

5. rapt *adj.*

(rapt)

- A suddenly loud.
- B deeply absorbed.
- C swaying slowly.

6. coda *n.*

('koh-duh)

- A final passage.
- B ancient scroll.
- C poisonous snake.

7. laud *v.*

(lahd)

- A tax.
- B praise.
- C roam.

8. ecru *adj.*

('eh-kroo)

- A violet.
- B teal.
- C beige.

9. deft *adj.*

(deft)

- A deceitful.
- B masterful.
- C peaceful.

10. lynx *n.*

(links)

- A wildcat.
- B golf course.
- C web language.

11. oust *v.*

(owst)

- A hurry along.
- B fight on horseback.
- C force out.

12. iota *n.*

(eye-'oh-tuh)

- A secret society.
- B tiny amount.
- C dead battery.

13. vile *adj.*

('vy-uhl)

- A contained.
- B foul.
- C charming.

14. espy *v.*

(eh-'spy)

- A catch sight of.
- B sneak around.
- C accuse.

15. brig *n.*

(brig)

- A major general.
- B temporary jail.
- C rifle barrel.

Swearing, Symbolically

Getting back to those not-fit-to-print four-letter words: You've likely seen a string of keyboard characters standing in for inappropriate language (e.g., %@\$&*!), but you might not know the word for it: *gawlix*. Cartoonist Mort Walker is credited with coining the term, though comic strips were using symbols or squiggles for swear words as early as 1902, long before Sarge was hurling obscenities at the hapless Beetle Bailey.



Word Power ANSWERS

1. coif (B) *hairdo*. Even on a windy day, Ravi's slicked-back coif doesn't budge an inch.

2. awry (A) *off course*. Our plans for a large wedding went awry because of the pandemic, so we had a private ceremony instead.

3. bilk (C) *cheat*. The hedge fund attempted to bilk investors out of millions of dollars.

4. udon (C) *Japanese noodles*. Hiro's restaurant serves udon in a savory broth, topped with steamed vegetables.

5. rapt (B) *deeply absorbed*. The rapt audience was mesmerized by the violin solo.

6. coda (A) *final passage*. "What a fitting coda to a terrible day—my tire is flat!" Sam grumbled.

7. laud (B) *praise*. Students and colleagues alike lauded Mr. Barua at his retirement party.

8. ecru (C) *beige*. "Should I paint my kitchen ecru or a bright green?" Niharika asked.

9. deft (B) *masterful*. Known for her three-point shooting and deft handling of the basketball, Khushboo was named rookie of the year.

10. lynx (A) *wildcat*. The lynx stalked its prey, ready to pounce.

11. oust (C) *force out*. After the fundraising scandal, Rachita was ousted from the PTA.

12. iota (B) *tiny amount*. "Algebra has never made one iota of sense to me," Jeff said with a shrug.

13. vile (B) *foul*. That vile odour can mean only one thing—Grandma burned the cabbage soup again.

14. espy (A) *catch sight of*. If you're sitting on the right side of the plane, you can espy the Statue of Liberty just after takeoff.

15. brig (B) *temporary jail*. The captain handcuffed the stowaway and escorted her to the brig.

Vocabulary Ratings

9 & BELOW: good

10–12: gold

13–15: god



BY *Beth Shillibeer*

- 1.** Prince William's Earthshot Prize promises one million pounds for solutions to what kind of global problem?
- 2.** Tunnels, road closures and human-assisted crossings aid the migration of what animals in Europe and Canada?
- 3.** What was distinctive about baseball pitcher Jackie Mitchell, who struck out Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig during a 1931 exhibition game?
- 4.** What fiction genre addresses the effects of climate change?
- 5.** What European country plans to house all of its residents by 2027?
- 6.** Which Star Trek actor stormed the beach at Normandy during World War II as part of the infantry?
- 7.** What British screen legend reads bedtime stories on her new podcast for families?
- 8.** Velocipede, penny farthing, gravel, randonneur and folding are all types of what?
- 9.** Which centenarian was featured on the cover of Guinness World Records 2021 after breaking two records in 2020 and passing away earlier this year?
- 10.** Astronauts have compared what attribute of outer space to hot metal, seared steak and raspberries?
- 11.** The proposed Jane Goodall Act seeks to ban all imports of what animal product into Canada?
- 12.** According to legend, Pharaoh Pepi II had servants cover themselves in what substance in order to lure flies away from him?
- 13.** At 4,528 metres, Mount Kirkpatrick is the highest peak of which mountain chain?
- 14.** Rubik's Cubes, magic squares and logic puzzles are examples of what branch of mathematics?
- 15.** In efforts to create bespoke products, some beauty companies are collecting DNA from clients to map the microbiome of what organ?



Answers: 1. Environmental issues. 2. Toads and frogs. 3. She was a 17-year-old girl. 4. Cli-fi. 5. Finland. 6. James Doohan (Scotty). 7. Julie Andrews. 8. Bicycle. 9. Captain Tom Moore. 10. It's smell. 11. Elephant ivory and trophies. 12. Honey. 13. Transantarctic Mountains, Antarctica. 14. Recreational maths. 15. The skin.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

In a room where people unanimously maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot.

Czeslaw Milosz, *poet*

Caring is all we have, I think. Cynicism is just a soft form of denial.

Jenny Offill, *writer*

What empty creatures we are! Our experiences and thoughts gain relevance only if endorsed by others; our lives lived only in the thoughts and memories of a handful of people who would also be dead and gone in a short period of time.

S. Hareesh, *author*

The world may be mean, but people don't have to be, not if they refuse.

Colson Whitehead, *novelist*

ALAMY (2); SHUTTERSTOCK



Czeslaw Milosz

Jenny Offill

S. Hareesh

Colson Whitehead



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