

**NORTH CENTRAL**

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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

1. LET'S KEEP STUDENT ATHLETES SAFE
2. HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM YOUR HEALTH CARE  
GOING BACK TO SCHOOL LATER IN LIFE
3. APPS THAT HELP YOU SNACK SMARTER  
TOMATO AND WATERMELON SALAD (YES, REALLY!)
4. THE BENEFITS OF SOUND BATHS

**MEDITATION NOT WORKING FOR YOU?**

*TRY A SOUND BATH*

As is the case with many self-care trends like yoga and meditation, what's old is new again. The latest relaxation practice with ancient roots to make waves in modern times is sound baths. Celebs from Charlize Theron to Laurence Fishburne say they help promote relaxation and reduce stress. Kendall Jenner, who's been public about her struggles with anxiety and sleep paralysis, also swears by the practice's healing powers and has even started creating her own sound baths and sharing them on Instagram.

While you *can* create a sound bath experience at home, most practitioners "bathe" at in-person sessions with "sounders" — those who create the soundscape. These sessions typically last 45-60 minutes. The idea behind the sonic experience is that bathers sit or lay in a relaxing position while gently focusing on the sounds they are immersed in. Sounders commonly use singing bowls, chimes, gongs, and other instruments to create a meditative and relaxing vibe.

In fact, sounders say the vibrations of some instruments facilitate relaxation by literally changing the brainwaves. Health practitioners put it differently, saying that the practice



promotes a parasympathetic autonomic nervous system response, aka a stress reduction response. Either way, the practice is a nice alternative to standard sitting meditation, which often focuses on the breath and can be difficult, especially for new practitioners.

While there hasn't been a lot of medical research done to test the efficacy of the practice, it is becoming a more widely used supplemental treatment for stress, anxiety, addiction, and post-traumatic stress disorder. If you get the chance to experience one yourself, try to approach it with an open mind and open ears. You just might be surprised.

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**LET'S KEEP STUDENT ATHLETES SAFE**

**WHY GO BACK TO SCHOOL WITH A LIBERTY PLAN?**

Unless you have students in the house, it can be easy to forget that this is an exciting time of year for a lot of American families. We're fortunate to have regular contact with students here at Liberty Rehab, usually high school or college athletes dealing with sports-related injuries and itching to get back on the track, into the pool, or on the field. But as exciting as it is to work with bright young people with a future ahead of them, it's almost always because of an injury — sometimes, the kind of injury that jeopardizes that same bright future.

The good news is there's a different way for us to see student-athletes, and that's a training program that helps us address the ways they *could* get injured, instead of only being able to treat the injury after it occurs. And we think it's really going to take off this school year.

When a student's coach trains them, he or she is putting them through a series of exercises designed to improve their performance. For runners, that might be cardio endurance, "burst" speed off the starting line, or breathing patterns that maximize oxygen delivery. Coaches do worry about injury — nobody wants to see a young person hurt — but preventing and treating injury is not their primary concern. That's okay because it *is* our primary concern

Our plans aren't too dissimilar from exercises that a student-athlete might encounter during a "gym day," but our focus is on not getting hurt. Sometimes, injury is out of our control. But most of the athletes we treat aren't in contact sports. They're swimmers and runners who could have had regular sessions focusing on the mobility, flexibility, and muscle groups that prevent injuries, instead of sessions rehabilitating an injury after the fact.

If there's a student-athlete in your house, chances are they could benefit from injury-prevention sessions, as well. Many schools lack the funding, the knowledge, or both to handle this side of training themselves. There's a difference between knowing which training exercises are most likely to result in injury and knowing how to train to actively discourage an



injury from occurring at all. With a wide background in all kinds of sports, especially swimming and running, as well as decades of education and experience in physical therapy, our team members are uniquely qualified to handle the latter.

Last but not least, because many of our injury-prevention plans focus on economy of motion and physical efficiency, students often see an improvement in their performance as well.

Due to the popularity of our free workshops, we're developing a sports injury workshop similar to the lower back pain and sciatica workshops we've offered in the past. It will be a great way to learn more about the most common sports injuries, as well as ways to protect vulnerable areas before something bad can happen (runners' knees come to mind).

You'll also learn more about getting a student-athlete set up with an injury prevention plan specific to their sport and medical history, like the ones we've been talking about here. If you'd rather not wait, we welcome any and all questions that are emailed to us or called in to the office.

Have a great back to school season,

*Dr. Mary Lou Lugo*

## WANT TO GET THE MOST FROM YOUR HEALTH CARE?

### TRY THIS UNDERUSED TOOL

When you're sitting in your doctor's office feeling unwell — your pain compounded by anxiety from researching your symptoms — it's easy to assume the worst. You may be worried about whether your insurance will cover necessary medications or procedures and wonder if there are any good options that will actually help.

These worries are normal and understandable, but there's a rather simple way to ease your mind. To feel empowered to make the right health care decisions for yourself or your loved ones, you need to gather information, and that starts with asking good questions.

#### What are the benefits and the risks?

To make an educated decision about your health care, you need to know the good, the bad, and the ugly of treatment options your practitioner presents. Since you want to get better, it's easy to remember to ask how suggested procedures or medications will help. But don't forget to ask about the downsides, risks, or potential complications.

**Pro tip:** To humanize the situation and help you understand how to think through a given decision, ask your provider: "What would you tell your family member about the benefits and risks of this procedure if they were considering it?"



#### Are there alternatives to consider?

Sometimes, the most common treatment isn't necessarily the best one for you. If you're hesitant to take a new medication because of the side effects, for example, ask about alternative medications or therapies. Be prepared that some alternative treatment options may require a greater commitment to lifestyle changes to see results.

**Follow-up question:** Asking "Why do you recommend this procedure/medication over the other options?" will help you understand the factors your doctor has considered when making their recommendation to you.

#### What results can I expect, and how long will it take?

This is an often-overlooked question. Say you tell your doctor you have back pain, and they recommend physical therapy. You may be expecting to be pain-free ASAP, while they may think that a successful treatment will yield increased mobility and reduced pain over the course of a few months.

It's important to be on the same page about what to expect and how long it will take to see improvements.

A healthy dose of curiosity may be all you need to get more from your health care and feel confident in your decisions.



Sometimes going grocery shopping can leave you feeling more like a detective than a human just trying to feed yourself and your family. Sleuthing down the snack aisle brings up questions about whether gluten-free means "good" and whether no added sugars means "nutritious."

The foundation of healthy snacking includes fresh fruits and vegetables, but how can you make smart (or smarter) choices when buying packaged snack foods? New smartphone apps mean the answer is just one bar code away.

## IS THIS GOOD FOR ME?

### APPS TO HELP YOU MAKE SMART FOOD CHOICES

#### Switch It Up

FoodSwitch is a mobile app developed by an international health advocacy group, The George Institute for Global Health. Even packaged foods that purport to be healthy can have high levels of salt, sugar, and saturated fat. While valuable information appears on nutritional labels, they can also leave you more mystified than empowered.

In that case, simply open the FoodSwitch app, scan the bar code of the item you're interested in, and get instant nutritional information and options for healthier alternatives. Each item gets a Health Star Rating from .5-5, making it easy to understand where the item falls on the health spectrum and how it compares to other brands. If that item doesn't meet your dietary needs, let FoodSwitch recommend an alternative.

#### In a Snap

If you're already a dedicated Snapchat user and don't want to add another app to your phone, you're in luck. Snapchat has recently implemented a scanning technology powered by the nutrition-tracking app Yuka. While it has similarities to FoodSwitch, the format Snapchat uses lays out the nutritional pros and cons of each item and gives each item an overall rating on the traffic-light system. Green means good to go, yellow means proceed with caution (moderation), and red means reconsider or only eat this item rarely.

With these two apps, you can put down your magnifying glass and pick up your smartphone. Making healthier snack choices is right at your fingertips.



While you may be happy for the years of wisdom you've gained since being in your 20s and 30s, you might be missing the mental sharpness you once had. Why not have the best of both worlds?

Scientists have found that the human brain changes with age — neurons fire more slowly, for example, and short-term memory recall can be more challenging — but that we often underestimate our capacity to continue learning as we grow older. Negative stereotypes about aging can reinforce these beliefs.

However, new research is showing that older adults who've committed to immersive study of a new subject show brain function akin to someone 30 years younger. This goes beyond the tired advice to do a crossword puzzle or work a sudoku puzzle every day. The participants in this research study were

## STAY SHARP AS YOU AGE

### BY GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

learning entirely new-to-them subjects, like how to speak a foreign language, use a new piece of technology, or make art.

**Convinced of the benefits but not sure where to turn to learn? Try these two sources.**

Most colleges are designed with the traditional, 20-something college student in mind, which may not appeal or be a great fit for adults in their 50s, 60s, and beyond. But many universities are starting to cater to an older crowd with lifelong learning programs. One example is the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Washington (UW). UW's program offers a full course schedule on subjects in the arts, sciences, and current events taught by qualified faculty and provided at an affordable rate. There are over 100 such programs at universities across the U.S.

Have a longtime dream to write children's books? UC San Diego Extension has a certificate program for that! If you're looking to dive into a single subject or perhaps you'd like to continue working in retirement or shift gears later in your career, certificate programs are a great option. No previous education is required. Most certificate programs are open to all, typically run for less than a year, and easily accommodate part-time learners.

Celebrate your years of hard-earned wisdom but commit to keeping your brain young by going back to school this fall.

TAKE A  
BREAK!



## TOMATO AND WATERMELON SALAD (YES, REALLY!)

Inspired by BonAppetit.com

*Bon Appétit* magazine calls tomato and watermelon "soul mates," and they're right! This surprising gourmet salad will be a hit at your next barbecue.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 tsp peppercorns, coarsely crushed
- 1 tsp coriander seeds, coarsely crushed
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1/4 cup coconut oil
- 4 cups seedless watermelon, rind removed and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 heirloom tomatoes, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 8 ounces feta cheese, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- Sea salt, to taste

#### DIRECTIONS

1. In a small saucepan, sauté spices and herbs in the coconut oil for 3 minutes over medium heat to create turmeric oil. Take the pan off of the heat, then let it cool.
2. Combine the watermelon, tomatoes, and feta on a large platter or in a bowl. Drizzle with cooled turmeric oil. Now, simply sprinkle with sea salt and enjoy!