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Volume 10 • Issue 2

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FROM OUR PUBLISHER



HAPPY VALENTINES! 2026 STAYING ON COURSE, ITS ONLY FEBRUARY

By ANGEL CHAVEZ

It's only February and staying focus is mandatory weather you are a mature Christian or a brand-new baby. Staying focused until you enjoy the journey is a must. It doesn't take too much effort, only a few minutes daily preferable as soon as you wake up. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Colossians 3:1-4

APPEARING IN GLORY WITH JESUS is a present & future daily event. Your mind will not understand this right away but keep reading and accepting the Word in your heart. When The Word reaches your spirit, it (HE) brings revelation to your mind, not the old head but the new mind, the mind of Christ that you have received when you accepted Jesus as your Savior.

Some Christians become religious and postpone everything for when they die, please don't do that; Or you will never become the light of the world and the salt of the earth: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men... You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." *Matthew 5:13-14*

STAY ON COURSE UNTIL YOU FIND HIS PLANS: "I KNOW THE PLANS THAT I HAVE FOR YOU... SAYS THE LORD"

I know most of us are very focused on our own plans and needs, please don't make the same mistake over and over again. Your own plans will never match the originals. Find

the originals by navigating into the deepest compartments of your spirit, [The Word of God is your traveling vessel] those plans were written by God Himself. Your success depends on finding them.

I you develop your life with Jesus and for His Glory, you are accumulating blessed riches here and most important, riches in Glory that will last forever. There is a big difference between His Plans and your own make up plans. Growing up and developing His original plans for our life comes with win-win benefits: You will be more than a conqueror in this life here on earth, with supernatural health, joy, peace, purpose and riches in heaven, including the salvation of your own household. The enemy won't be able to steal a penny from you.

STAYING ON COURSE TILL YOU FIND DELIGHT IS KEY: God's purpose for our life is a perfect deal: "Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart." *Psalms 37:4* Read your Word daily till you experience that His Word is sweeter than honey in your mouth.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." *Jeremy 29:11-13*

WHEN YOU ARE OCCUPIED ON HIS PURPOSES FOR YOUR LIFE, HE KEEPS YOU COMPLETE: When you begin to understand it with your spirit, the journey gets easier and delightful: GOD HIMSELF WILL KEEP YOUR

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ANGRY KIDS:

Dealing With Explosive Behavior

Source: CHILDMIND.ORG

When a child — even a small child — melts down and becomes aggressive, they can pose a serious risk to themselves and others, including parents and siblings.

It's not uncommon for kids who have trouble handling their emotions to lose control and direct their distress at a caregiver — screaming and cursing, throwing dangerous objects, or hitting and biting. It can be a scary, stressful experience for you and your child, too. Children often feel sorry after they've worn themselves out and calmed down.

So what are you to do?

It's helpful to first understand that behavior is communication. A child who is so overwhelmed that they are lashing out is a distressed child. They don't have the skill to manage their feelings and express them in a more mature way. They may lack language, impulse control, or problem-solving abilities.

Sometimes parents see this kind of explosive behavior as manipulative. But kids who lash out are usually unable to handle frustration or anger in a more effective way — say, by talking and figuring out how to achieve what they want.

Nonetheless, how you react when a child lashes out has an effect on whether they will continue to respond to distress in the same way or learn better ways to handle feelings so they don't become overwhelming.

Behavioral techniques for anger management

Here are some pointers to help kids learn techniques to regulate their emotions:

- Stay calm. Faced with a raging child, it's easy to feel out of control and find yourself yelling at them. But when you shout, you have less chance of reaching them. Instead, you will only be making them more aggressive and defiant. As hard as it may be, if you can stay calm and in control of your own emotions, you can be a model for your child and teach them to do the same thing.
- Don't give in. Don't encourage them to continue this behavior by agreeing to what they want in order to make it stop. Praise appropriate behavior. When they have calmed down, praise them for pulling themselves together. And when they do try to express their feelings verbally, calmly, or try to find a compromise on an area of disagreement, praise them for those efforts.
- Help them practice problem-solving skills. When your child is not upset is the time to help them try out communicating their feelings and coming up with solutions to conflicts before they escalate into aggressive outbursts. You can ask them how they feel and how they think you might solve a problem.
- Time-outs and reward systems. Time-outs for nonviolent misbehavior can work well with children younger than 7 or 8 years old. When using time-outs, be sure to be consistent with them and balance them with other, more positive forms of attention. If a child is too old for time-outs, you want to move to a system of positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior — points or tokens toward something they want.
- Avoid triggers. Vasco Lopes, PsyD, a clinical psychologist, says most kids who have frequent meltdowns do it at very predictable times, like homework time, bedtime, or when it's time to stop playing, whether it's Legos or video games. The trigger is usually being asked to do something they don't like, or to stop doing something they do like. Time warnings ("we're going in 10 minutes"), breaking tasks down into one-step directions ("first, put on your shoes"), and preparing your child for situations ("please ask to be excused before you leave Grandma's table") can all help avoid meltdowns.

What kind of tantrum is it?

How you respond to a tantrum also depends on its severity. The first rule in handling nonviolent tantrums is to ignore them as often as possible, since even negative attention, like telling the child to stop, can be encouraging.

But when a child is getting physical, ignoring is not recommended since it can result in harm to others as well as your child. In this situation, Dr. Lopes advises putting the child in a safe environment that does not give them access to you or any other potential rewards.

Critics of time-outs argue that they can be emotionally isolating for kids, but research shows that they are effective and do not cause children harm. (For more on the debate around time-outs, read our full article on the topic.) However, it's very important to use them as just one technique in a nurturing, supportive parenting strategy. Be sure to balance use of time outs with lots of praise for kids' positive behaviors. It's also important to manage your own stress so that kids can learn how to regulate their emotions from your positive example.

see "ANGRY KIDS" on page 20



From the Sheriff

by NOEL E. STEPHEN
Okeechobee County
okeesherriff.org

Public Safety Issues for Okeechobee

As we move into February, I want to address a public safety issue that directly affects the financial security, health, and overall well-being of our residents: fraudulent contractors operating in our communities. These individuals often pose as legitimate home repair or construction professionals, collect money upfront, and then fail to complete—or even begin—the promised work.

Law enforcement agencies across Florida continue to see an increase in these cases, particularly following storms, seasonal weather changes, or periods of economic strain. Scammers frequently target homeowners by offering quick repairs, discounted pricing, or claiming they have “leftover materials” from nearby jobs. Once payment is made, the contractor disappears or delivers substandard and unsafe work.



The impact extends beyond financial loss. Incomplete or improper repairs can create serious safety hazards, including structural damage, electrical risks, mold growth, and water intrusion—issues that can directly affect physical health, especially for older adults and those with underlying medical conditions.

Residents can reduce their risk by taking a few important precautions. Always verify that a contractor is properly licensed and insured through state or local authorities. Obtain written estimates from multiple contractors and be cautious of prices that seem unusually low. Avoid paying large sums upfront, insist on a detailed written contract, and take time to check references. Door-to-door solicitations should be treated with particular caution.

If you suspect fraudulent activity, report it immediately to local law enforcement and your county building department. Early reporting not only helps protect you but can prevent others from becoming victims.

Staying informed and vigilant is one of the most effective ways we can protect our homes, our health, and our community. ♦



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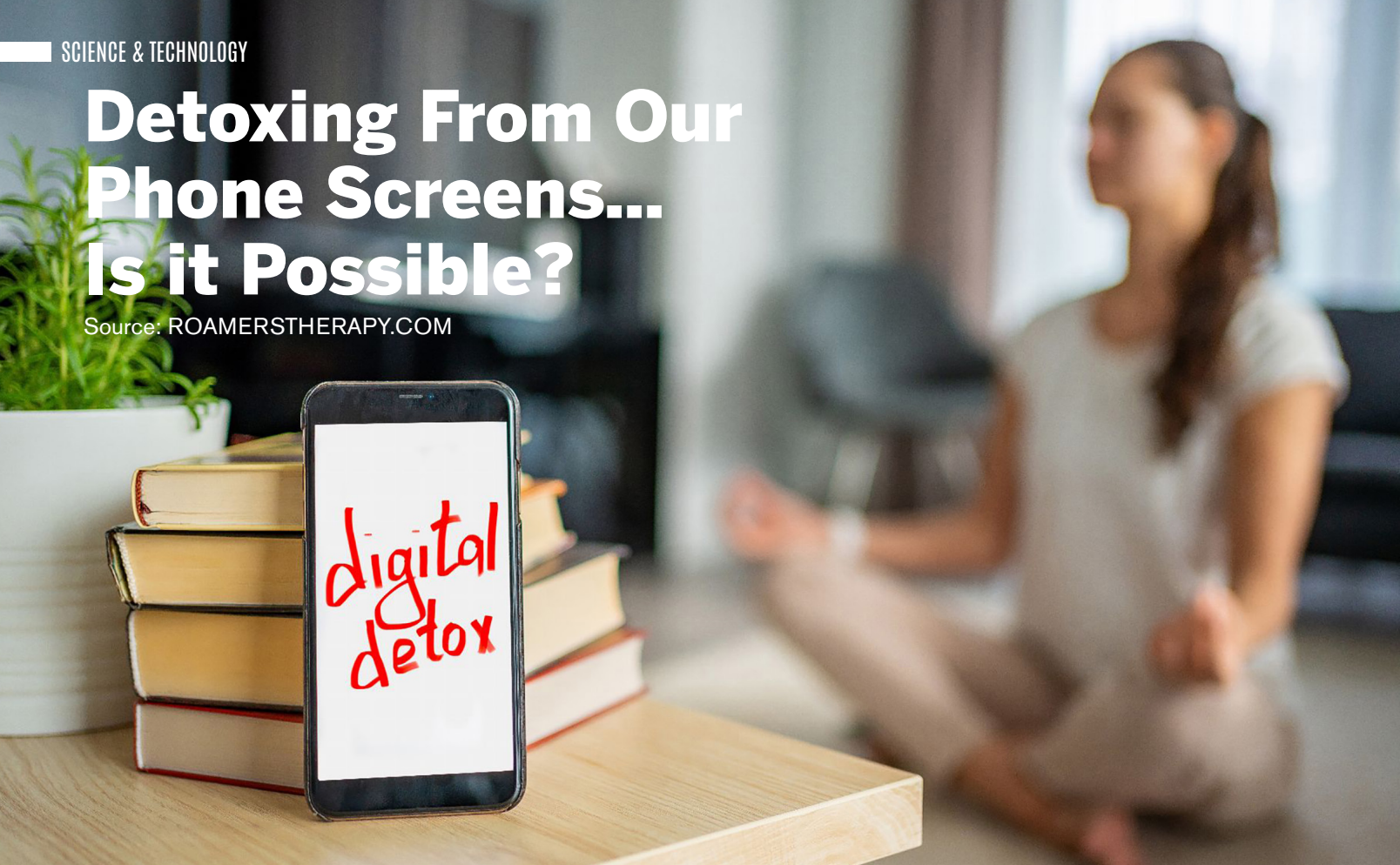
Johana Negrón

President / Lead Immigration Paralegal



Detoxing From Our Phone Screens... Is it Possible?

Source: ROAMERTHERAPY.COM



Our phones are the center of our lives right now. It is not just a tool to help us communicate with others. It is a tool that lets you reach out to places around the world, order whatever you need or want, connect with strangers, and access any kind of information. And that is not limited to our phones; other digital devices are also so-called smart nowadays. You might even notice that only one screen is not enough anymore. You can use your phone, television, and PC all together and all connected. That might help you transfer information quickly and make your life easier. Yet, you might also notice that sometimes you are picking your phone up for no reason, or you might not remember why you picked it up in the first place. The urge to scroll through social media can present with tiredness, or more negative feelings like guilt, anxiety, and anger at the same time. The need for digital devices might feel too much. Yet, it is hard to balance the need to use digital devices, which make life so easy and relatively enjoyable, with the need to be without screens. That might lead you to search for the ways that can help, and one of the things you will see in this literature would be “digital detox.” Digital detox means disconnecting from technology for a certain period of time. This could be a day, a week, or just a few hours. Even though it sounds like a quick fix for digital exhaustion, it’s way harder than it sounds. And maybe the real question is how feasible and sustainable this is in today’s digital world?

What makes us seek detox from the digital world?

Digital detox is a concept that emerged in the early 2010s with the frequent use of technological devices. After digital devices became more common, the researchers found a profound negative effect of them on individuals’ mental health. Several

studies reported increased anxiety, mental exhaustion, attention deficiencies, and severe dependency on digital devices. Moreover, individuals reported feeling constantly on edge because they must split their attention between the digital and physical worlds. That affected not only the individuals’ inner world but also important areas such as school, work, hobbies, friendships, and relationships.

Digital Overexposure

Digital overexposure is what happens when your mind is asked to hold too many lives, too many crises, and too many opinions at once. You open your phone to relax and end up absorbing grief, outrage, beauty, success, and catastrophe in the same five minutes. It’s often associated with feeling emotionally flooded without knowing exactly why.

Digital Fatigue

After hours of emails, messages, and video calls, your body may be sitting still, but your nervous system feels like it’s run a marathon. It’s commonly linked to a sense of dullness, irritability, or the feeling that even rest doesn’t feel restorative anymore.

Notification Anxiety

Notification anxiety is the tension of waiting for something to happen on your phone, even when nothing is happening. You check your screen not because it buzzed, but because it might, which is often associated with anxiety.

Hyperconnectivity

Hyperconnectivity means being reachable all the time and forgetting what it feels like not to be. Messages, calls, video

meetings, or app notifications come in at all hours, and silence starts to feel like neglect or avoidance.

Fear of Missing Out

Fear of missing out, or FOMO, is the anxiety that something meaningful is happening and you are missing it somehow. So, scrolling becomes a way to reassure yourself that you're still "in the loop". Ironically, it deepens the sense of exclusion because you are not physically present. It's often tied to social comparison and a fragile sense of belonging.

Nomophobia

Nomophobia is the fear that shows up when your phone isn't somewhere near you. In this concept, your phone stops being just a tool and starts functioning like a safety object. It's commonly associated with anxiety regulation.

Netlessphobia

Netlessphobia is the fear of being without internet access. It's not about communication with a specific person, but about losing the sense of orientation that being connected provides. This often manifests as restlessness or disorientation in offline settings.

Phubbing

Phubbing is what happens when the person across from you slowly disappears behind a screen. You can see that what you just talked about is not heard, eye contact is lost, and the connection becomes only physical. It affects relationship satisfaction drastically.

How do digital devices reshape our brains?

Researches show that digital devices interact directly with the brain's reward and regulation systems. Social media apps, notifications, and endless scrolling are designed to trigger dopamine release. The way these platforms are designed offers novelty, unpredictability, and quick response from others. Over time, our brains can begin to crave this constant stimulation, making stillness, boredom, or slower activities feel uncomfortable.

At the same time, frequent exposure to LED screens, especially in the evening, interferes with melatonin production, the hormone that regulates sleep-wake cycles. Blue light and cognitive stimulation delay sleep onset and reduce sleep quality. This can affect cognitive processes like attention, mood regulation, and emotional resilience the next day. Together, disrupted dopamine reward patterns and altered melatonin rhythms can leave the brain feeling overstimulated yet exhausted.

How to do Digital Detox?

Digital detox may be worth considering if you experience negative well-being outcomes after using digital devices most of the time. There are many ways to start digital detox, as you can see from different resources. However, please keep in mind that not every plan might align with your reality and your needs. Therefore, starting the digital detox process begins with clearly understanding the place of technology and media in your life. At this point, you can develop awareness in the following key areas:

see "DETOXING" on page 22

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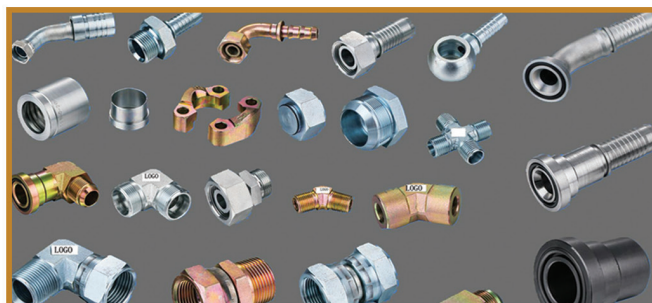
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Your Guide to HEALTHY EATING HABITS That Stick

Source: HEART.ORG

Making small, simple changes to your overall eating pattern can help you and your family stay healthy. Learn the basics of good nutrition and making healthy food and drink choices.

Eating healthy can help reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke and many other diseases and conditions. The good news is, eating right doesn't have to be hard or require you to give up all the foods you love. And it can be easy, affordable and delicious.

Here are some ways you and your family can adopt a healthier eating style:

Power Your Plate

- Fruits and vegetables contain a wide variety of vitamins and minerals. Try to fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables. They can be chopped up and added to many dishes and are a good replacement for less healthy sides such as chips or fries.
- Whole grains are high in dietary fiber and can help lower cholesterol and improve heart health. Easy examples include oats, corn tortillas and pre-cooked brown rice without salt added.
- Beans and legumes and other plant-based proteins can help lower your risk of heart disease and obesity. Try adding beans such as black, kidney, or pinto to your dishes to bulk up both protein and fiber in your meals. Other examples include tofu, lentils, and unsweetened soy milk.
- Nuts like unsalted almonds, walnuts, pistachios, pecans and hazelnuts contain healthy fats, protein and key nutrients that support heart and brain health.
- Fish such as salmon, mackerel, cod, herring, trout, and fresh yellowfin tuna are rich in omega-3 fatty acids that can support heart and brain health and should be eaten without breading or frying at least twice a week as a replacement for less healthy options like fatty meats.
- Lean meat from chicken, beef, pork or turkey are other good examples of protein-rich foods that are also important sources of B vitamins and iron. Trim visible fat from beef, pork and poultry in addition to removing any skin.

continued next page

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eating habits cont.

- Dairy foods and dairy alternatives including low fat and fat free milk, yogurt and cheese give you protein, calcium and vitamin D to keep your heart and bones healthy. For plant-based milk alternatives, choose products that have been fortified with calcium and vitamins A and D, such as soy or almond milk.
- Healthy Fats like those in some cooking oils can help lower your bad cholesterol when used instead of less healthy fats. They're better for your heart than solid fats including butter or tropical oils like coconut oil.
- Seasoning your meals using salt-free spices and herbs like cilantro, oregano or garlic isn't only about taste. Herbs and spices, whether fresh or dried, can support good heart health, including being a great substitute for salt.



Limit for Heart Health

- Sugar-sweetened drinks
- Sodium and salty foods
- Saturated fats
- Fatty or processed red meats (If you choose to eat meat, select leaner cuts)
- Refined carbohydrates including added sugars and processed grain foods
- Full-fat dairy products
- Tropical oils such as coconut oil and palm oil

Healthy Eating Begins with Everyday Choices

- Choose mindfully, even with healthier foods. Ingredients and nutrient content can vary a lot.
- Read labels. Compare Nutrition Facts labels on food products and select products with the lowest amounts of sodium, added sugars, saturated fat and no trans fat, or no partially hydrogenated oils.
- Eat reasonable portions. Often this is less than you are served, especially when eating out.
- Cook and eat at home. You'll have more control over ingredients and preparation methods. ♦

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Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) Foods to Avoid and foods to Eat

Source: PLUSHCARE.COM



American social culture often revolves around eating and drinking: dinner parties, happy hours, team lunches, catered networking events, and so on. Sufferers of irritable bowel syndrome not only have to deal with the unpleasant, uncomfortable symptoms of the disorder, we also must contend with the potential embarrassment of having an IBS flare up while at these social gatherings. Navigating the buffet line or hors d'oeuvres platters can feel akin to navigating a field of landmines. For patients who have only recently uncovered a diagnosis of IBS, it can seem like there is no rhyme or reason to the causes of IBS. However, research by dietitians in recent years has led to the uncovering of certain foods that cause IBS symptoms in a majority of sufferers, as well as an elimination diet that can provide significant relief and a life changing guide to what to eat for IBS. Read on to learn about IBS, the FODMAP elimination diet, other IBS trigger foods, and foods that promote a healthy gut.

What is IBS?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a chronic disorder that describes symptoms caused by the malfunctioning of the gastrointestinal tract. The symptoms and severity can vary wildly from person to person, with some people having episodes or flares followed by periods of remission, and some being afflicted by the symptoms daily. Rather than a clearly defined medical condition in and of itself, IBS is often called a diagnosis of exclusion. When other major diagnoses can be excluded (e.g. Chron's or ulcerative colitis, celiac disease, gallstones) and no damage to the gastrointestinal tract is visible, IBS is often diagnosed. IBS is generally classified as one of three categories:

- **IBS-C.** IBS-C is primarily characterized by constipation.
- **IBS-D.** IBS-D is primarily characterized by diarrhea.
- **IBS-M.** IBS-M is characterized by a mix of both constipation and diarrhea. Sometimes also referred to as IBS-A.

Symptoms of IBS include:

- Changes in motility (i.e. diarrhea and or constipation)
- Bloating / distention of the abdomen, especially after eating
- Abdominal pain or cramps
- Urgency
- Mucus in stool
- Feelings of incomplete emptying during bowel movements

IBS Causes: An Evolving Landscape

The exact causes of IBS are unknown, and the condition itself is not well understood. Current understanding of the condition is that IBS is multifactorial, influenced by dysfunctions in the brain-gut communication axis caused by a combination of excess fermentation/gas production in the intestines, alterations in the gut microbiome, impaired transit of intestinal gas, increased visceral sensitivity, and genetic variations.

Can Stress Make IBS Symptoms Worse Even if I Avoid Trigger Foods?

Yes, stress can significantly worsen IBS symptoms, even if you're following a strict low FODMAP or trigger-free diet. IBS is closely linked to the gut-brain axis, meaning psychological stress and anxiety can directly impact gut motility and sensitivity. Many people find that flares are more frequent or severe during periods of high stress, regardless of what they eat. Incorporating stress management techniques—like mindfulness, yoga, therapy, or regular physical activity—may help reduce symptom intensity and improve overall quality of life.

How is IBS Diagnosed?

There are no tests to confirm a diagnosis of IBS. Instead, a thorough medical history is often the first step toward a diagnosis. Depending on the severity of symptoms, a variety of tests may be done to confirm that there are no other, potentially life threatening, illnesses masquerading as IBS. These tests can include:

- **Endoscopy:** used to identify the presence of ulcers, stomach cancer, or other abnormalities of the stomach and duodenum (the beginning of the small intestine)
- **Colonoscopy:** can show any abnormalities of the large intestine, such as damage and inflammation related to Chron's disease or

continued next page

ulcerative colitis, diverticulitis, or colon cancer

- Gallbladder ultrasound: can confirm or deny the presence of gallstones
- Celiac blood test: identifies whether a patient is allergic to gluten
- Stool test: used to identify any abnormalities, such as blood, *H. pylori* (bacteria that causes ulcers), or improperly digested fat
- Gastric emptying study: abnormal results can indicate gastroparesis, also known as delayed stomach motility or digestion
- Hydrogen breath test: used by some physicians to diagnose small intestine bacterial overgrowth (SIBO) but many medical facilities do not perform this test since there is debate regarding standard hydrogen levels

FODMAPs and the Elimination Diet

Many IBS sufferers find that avoiding some or most FODMAPs in their diet provides them with significant relief from their symptoms. FODMAPs stands for Fermentable Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides, And Polyols. These are short chain carbohydrates and sugar alcohols that are generally poorly digested and absorbed by the gastrointestinal tract. These molecules act as fast food to the bacteria that live within your intestines – the bacteria rapidly break down (ferment) the undigested material, which leads to the uncomfortable symptoms that accompany IBS.

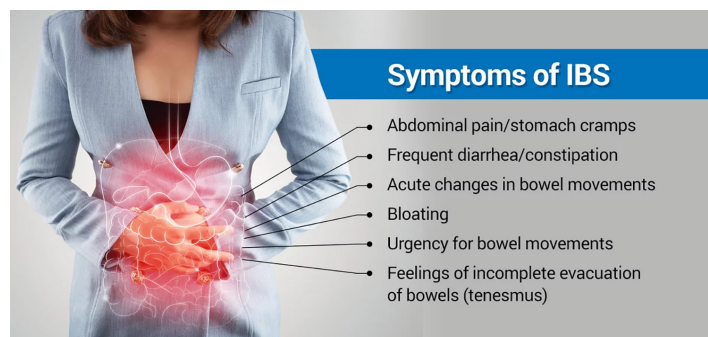
- Oligosaccharides – Oligosaccharides are molecules made up of multiple sugars. These include fructans and galacto-oligosaccharides (GOS), most commonly found in garlic, onions, wheat, rye, and beans.
- Disaccharides – Disaccharide are double sugar molecules. This includes lactose, most commonly found in dairy products such as milk and yogurt.
- Monosaccharides – Monosaccharides are single sugar molecule. This includes fructose, which is found in many fruits, honey, and especially in high fructose corn syrup.
- Polyols – Polyols are sugar alcohols. These include sorbitol, mannitol, maltitol, xylitol, and isomalt, which are found in certain fruits and are used as artificial sweeteners in products such as sugar-free gum.

This information was originally discovered by a research team at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia and has gained wide popularity among IBS sufferers. The elimination diet is done in two phases:

- **Phase 1:** All high FODMAP foods are restricted for 4 to 6 weeks. It is recommended that you consult with a dietitian to ensure you are still getting an adequate amount of nutrition during this phase. It is important for you to keep track of any symptom changes or improvements during this period.
- **Phase 2:** During this phase, each category of FODMAP is gradually reintroduced one at a time. Your dietitian may recommend a specific order to do the elimination diet in, otherwise you can choose whichever order you would like. When reintroducing a food group, you should begin with a small amount (e.g. add dairy to one meal), and work your way to whatever a “normal” amount of that category would be for you (e.g. if you would normally have milk with every meal and have ice cream for

dessert, you should work up to this amount). The goal is to find the level at which each FODMAP can be tolerated in order to create the least restrictive long term diet possible. A detailed journal should be kept during this phase in order to document symptoms. Before you move on to the next FODMAP category, you need to return to phase 1 for one week in order to re-establish a symptom free baseline.

It is important to note that, while the FODMAP elimination diet produces life changing results for many IBS sufferers, it is not universal and some patients do not see their symptoms improve.



Other IBS Trigger Foods

In addition to the high FODMAP foods described above, there are several other triggers that may aggravate IBS symptoms, including:

- Spicy foods – foods that are heavily spiced, especially with chili peppers that contain capsaicin, tend to irritate the stomach lining and contribute to IBS abdominal cramps and diarrhea.
- Fatty, fried, or greasy foods – fats are one of the strongest stimulators of the gastrocolic reflex. The gastrocolic reflex controls peristalsis, which is the involuntary contraction of the intestines during the digestive process. For individuals who already have dysfunctional peristalsis, foods that are high in fat often increase the dysfunction of the contractions, and contribute to abdominal pain and changes in motility.
- Alcohol – alcohol is a strong stimulant and irritant to the digestive tract. In addition, the carbonation that is found in beer tends to further irritate the stomach and contribute to the buildup of excess gas.
- Coffee/ Caffeine – caffeine, especially consumed when drinking coffee, acts as a stimulant to the intestines and produces a well-known laxative effect. This can be particularly problematic for IBS-D sufferers. Caffeine also stimulates the nervous system, increases stress hormones, and acts as a diuretic – all of which can negatively affect digestion.
- Soluble and insoluble Fiber – fiber is necessary as part of a healthy diet and can play a beneficial role in IBS management, but it can also greatly exacerbate symptoms, depending on the type of IBS that you have. Soluble fiber acts to slow down colonic transit times and allows for greater water absorption – this can be beneficial to IBS-D sufferers, while causing painful problems for IBS-C sufferers. Conversely, insoluble fiber acts to speed up colonic transit times, which can either improve constipation or worsen diarrhea.

see “IBS” on page 23



Perhaps you've heard the news: pickleball is popular. Like fastest-growing-sport-in-America popular, with a 21% increase in players between 2019 and 2020. Or, once-in-the-morning-and-once-at-night popular. And, planning-my-vacations-around-it popular. Suddenly this quirky, fun sport is being played by just about everybody, everywhere.

Its addictive nature is often chalked up as the reason for its popularity. It has a way of burrowing under your skin and making itself comfortable there. You move quickly from playing the very first time to routinely picking up your paddle as you walk through the house and practicing your groundstrokes.

While the addiction is real though, that's just the underlying context. So is the fact that it's amazingly fun. I think there are two powerful but slightly less obvious reasons for the sport's seemingly unprecedented popularity.

It's made for learners.

We are born learners. We come into the world and immediately start soaking up intelligence about how the world works. We have an innate drive to learn new things, and ultimately to perfect them. There's a reason why most of us walk a bit differently than we did when we took our first steps.

Well, Pickleball is all about learning. You have to learn the scoring system, which even the most savvy players will admit was more than a bit befuddling when they first stepped onto the court. Zero zero what?

You have to learn how not to pop the ball up in the air, because when you do you will routinely eat it when your

opponent takes that simple mistake out on you. Fortunately it's "just" a whiffle ball, said the guy with ball marks indented into his forehead.

You have to learn how to use that mystical seven foot wide area on either side of the net to your distinct advantage. Wait, when can I go in there again? And why is it called "the kitchen"??

And, you have to learn to bounce back from failure, again and again. Pickleball gives you an immediate feedback loop: Hit a poor shot, lose the point. Improve that shot the next time, lose the point. Really improve that shot, win the point. Learn, rinse, and repeat.

continued next page

As Big Bird, LeVar Burton, and Mrs. McFeely all taught us, learning is fun.

It's by and large a utopian society.

Speaking of common ground, pickleball has a unique way of blinding you to the even more "stark" differences between you and your fellow players: gender, race, age, sexual orientation, or just about anything else. It is routine to play with the opposite sex and folks 30 years your senior all in the same game.

The sport, particularly in its bedrock principle of "open play" requires us to work together, often with people we have never met, or whose political perspectives we couldn't possibly care less about in the midst of a game. In open play you show up at the courts and play with whoever else shows up at the courts.

Once on the court, we lose all sense for whether someone is left, right, red, or blue. What we care about is not who they voted for, but whether they can hit a buttery third-shot drop that falls dangerously in the deep corner of the kitchen, forcing the opponent to bend themselves in half just to keep the ball in play.

While we are complicit in the polarization of America, deep down we abhor it. It's exhausting to be angry at your fellow human all the time. It's not that much of a stretch to believe that we could apply pickleball's inherent focus on collaboration to our myriad off-court challenges...

It's liberating to shed our biases, alter our sometimes painful reality, and work together in an illusory oasis. The sport may not solve all of the world's problems, but it sure puts them on pause until one of the teams makes it to 11, win by two.

In other words, pickleball breaks down barriers and places

us squarely on the common ground that we wish we were on in "everyday" life.

So...Funny Name, Major Benefits

Pickleball's gentle learning curve means that everybody can play it. And that's who you see on the court, everybody. But it's not just about seeing them, it's about playing with them side by side.

In addition to the inherently fun, addictive nature of the game, it's these two things that will both hook you and keep the sport growing for a very long time. The benefits of that growth include healthier, more socially connected people, more vibrant communities, and maybe, just maybe a society that's slightly more utopian. ♦

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ZEN MEDICINE

Interview with

CASEY THOMPSON



Well, as many of you readers guessed, its time for an update from Zen Medicine of Okeechobee!

Hello my name is Casey Thompson and I am the owner and Nurse Practitioner honored to serve Okeechobee residents at Zen Medicine. For those of you just joining the conversation, I've been speaking to iCare's readers since 2023 about the our treatment modalities and advancements in Functional Healthcare offered here in our hometown. It has been a privilege to do so and I love seeing my community transform, one person at a time. Our office is filled with stories of healing, relief, weight loss, personal accomplishments, medical freedom, and insight. People are finally understanding their health and are being empowered to make decisions about it! I thank God everyday for this gift.

Many of you know my story, but for some of you I'd like to share my background. I'm a Florida gal, I was born in Fort Pierce but the wild west (of Fort Pierce) has always called to me. I remember rodeos, Cattleman's parades, and Swamp Cabbage Festivals from an age when sitting on the curb left my feet nearly dangling. I made it official and put down roots here in 2021. It should have been the most exciting time in the world until I tragically lost my father during the pandemic. I was so lost. I had over a decade in Nursing, I had faith in medicine, in the system, in the scientific process and protocols... but they failed me. They failed many of us, too. But then I finally understood the truth. If you're not the right voice narrating, your story will never be heard. I had to find out how to gather evidence that the CDC, FDA, AMA, and the former WHO wouldn't acknowledge and disseminate the truth to anyone who sought help.

This radical transformation taught me to look at the causes of disease, not just it's symptoms, appreciating Western Medicine AND holistic approaches together. I have found hundreds of people in our town tethered to their medication lists like shackles, and no healthier with them. I've listened to their stories and I've given them a space to chose care that they understand and trust. Since 2023 I've offered weight loss, hormone replacement, IV hydration, consultations with our Medical Marijuana physician, medical ketamine therapy,

plant based medicine, detoxification, PEMF and red light therapy as well as treatment for PTSD, anxiety, treatment-resistant depression, metabolic disorders, autoimmune diseases, neurological disorders, endocrine disorders, and so much more! We even added HIFEM body sculpting this past year.

I'll be honest with you all and say it upfront... hormone therapy has been my absolute favorite. It makes a miraculous difference to my thousands of hormone patients. Hormones change your disease risk and immunity (including, cancer, stroke, diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimers, autoimmune disorders, just to name a few), your mood, your body composition and weight, your sleep, your sexual health, your energy, your skin... need I say more?

Without this misunderstood component of our health, we are ticking time bombs.

This journey has taught me so much about people's perception, their basic needs and their all-too-common deficiencies. Sometimes these deficiencies are nutrients, sometimes its a deficiency of compassion. I can assure you I have an answer to both but the one that's made a true difference in our community has been my colleague and office manager, Veronica Garcia, a resident of Okeechobee and a parent to two amazing young girls. She has offered her heart and soul to each patient and they can all attest to this for me. Each person is greeted by name and treated as an individual. She makes light work of making others feeling important. I can't say enough what a difference-maker she is!

Now with this being the February edition I'll raise the call to action and remind us of love. Love yourself enough to take personal inventory. Are you happy with your quality of life? Are you comfortable with how others perceive you? What changes do you plan to make? And lastly, how can I help? Thank you.

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Live A Healthy Life In The Modern Age

Source: NEWLIFEVISIONFOUNDATION.ORG

What if you could transform your life today and start feeling better tomorrow? What if it wasn't that big of a deal to do so? And what if you didn't need to spend a fortune to get there either? You know what would also be nice? If you could transform not just your physical appearance, but also the way you think about yourself and your life. This can seem like an overwhelming commitment at first, but once you break it down and think about it as a holistic process rather than a giant leap, it seems much more achievable. After all, we're talking about 5 minutes per day. That's all it takes!

Exercise daily

Exercise is the ultimate way to increase your metabolic rate and burn fat while improving your health and well-being. Whether

you choose to go to the gym, run around the block, or climb a tree, the most important thing is to do something. The best part is that even if you aren't that great at it, doing something will give you a sense of accomplishment and increase your confidence. There's really no excuse for not being active. All you need is a pair of comfortable shoes and about 30 minutes a day.

There are so many benefits to being active, including:
Better Sex - Increased Energy - Improved Mood - Improved Mental Health - Lower Risk of Heart Disease - Increased Immunity - Greater Sex Drive - Stronger Bones - Stronger Muscles

Eat healthy

Eating healthy is crucial for boosting your metabolism, building strong bones and teeth, and preventing heart disease and many cancers. It's also essential for maintaining a healthy weight, and for keeping your energy levels up too. It can be difficult to know what to eat, especially when you're throwing yourself a party. This is why it's important to have a healthy diet that consists of a variety of fresh produce, wholegrains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy products. You should also limit your intake of sugary drinks, processed foods, saturated fats, salt, and sugary snacks. There are so many healthy food options that you can choose from, such as: Fresh Fruit Nuts and Seeds Low-Fat Dairy Products Lean Proteins wholegrains.

Learn something new

If you think about it, we're all in this thing called life for a reason: to learn, grow, and experience new things. There's no way you're going to be able to do that if you're constantly worried about money and your bills. The best way to learn new things and expand your knowledge is by getting inspired by other people and what they've achieved. There are so many different ways you can do this. You can watch documentaries, read blogs, attend seminars, or simply listen to what other people have to say. The more you do this, the more you'll realize how much you don't know and how much there is still to learn. This will boost your confidence, give you the ability to understand new concepts, and make you feel more optimistic about the future.

Sleep better

Sleep is essential for regulating hormones and building memory. Not sleeping well can lead to poor diet, fatigue, and a lack of confidence. While it can be difficult to change the number of hours you sleep, it's much easier to adjust the amount of sleep you get. Try and keep a regular sleep schedule so that your body is conditioned to expect the amount of sleep it needs. You should also try to reduce stress in your life and make sure you're not eating anything that's going to keep you up at night. If you're feeling anxious, try and identify what's causing it and try to eliminate it from your life. Make sure you have a regular time to relax and take care of yourself, like when you're sick or when you're just out of the blue feeling down.

Connect with people

The modern world is incredibly isolating, which isn't great for your mental health or your relationships. You don't have to put yourself out there in a big way either. Just make sure you're grabbing coffee with a friend every now and then, sending a quick text message, or saying hi to someone on the street. Doing this will not only boost your social confidence, but it'll help you get to know the people around you better. It'll also help you to make new friends when you move cities or even just when you decide to open up a little more.

It's always good to have a few people in your life that you can connect with, whether it's a close friend, family member, or even a stranger.

Take a deep breath and relax

Life is happening really quickly. You have to make decisions quickly and try to find time for everything. It can be really easy to get hurried, anxious, or stressed out. This is never going to get you anywhere so try to put the brakes on it. Take a few deep breaths, try and identify what's stressing you out, and try to work out a way to deal with it. This doesn't mean that you have to do something that you don't want to do, but you have to have some kind of plan in place. Then, when you're feeling rushed and short of time, you can use that plan to help you to calm down. This doesn't mean you have to let everything get to you. It just means that you have to let yourself have a little more control and that you don't have to be rushed all the time.

Stay positive

Finally, it's important to remember that you're not going to get anywhere if you're not having fun. If you're feeling down, try and find the funny side of things and try to look at it from a different perspective. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't take things seriously and work hard, but try and find a happy medium. It can be really easy to get trapped in a negative spiral where you're constantly worrying about the things that are stressing you out. You have to find a way to anchor yourself and stop that spiral from continuing. There are many ways you can do this, like writing them down, visualizing them, or talking to a friend or family member. There are many different ways you can anchor yourself and stop the negative spiral from continuing. This will help you to stay positive, optimistic, and relaxed while you're navigating life's challenges. ♦

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angry kids cont.

If the child is young (usually 7 or younger), try placing them in a time out chair. If they won't stay in the chair, take them to a backup area where they can calm down on their own without anyone else in the room. Again, for this approach to work there shouldn't be any toys or games in the area that might make it rewarding.

Your child should stay in that room for one minute and must be calm before they are allowed out. Then they should come back to the chair for time out. "What this does is gives your child an immediate and consistent consequence for their aggression and it removes all access to reinforcing things in their environment," explains Dr. Lopes.

If you have an older child who is being aggressive and you aren't able to carry them into an isolated area to calm down, Dr. Lopes advises removing yourself from their vicinity. This ensures that they are not getting any attention or reinforcement from you and keeps you safe. In extreme instances, it may be necessary to call 911 to ensure your and your child's safety.

Help with behavioral techniques

If your child is doing a lot of lashing out — enough that it is frequently frightening you and disrupting your family — it's important to get some professional help. There are good behavioral therapies that can help you and your child get past the aggression, relieve your stress, and improve your relationship.

You can learn techniques for managing their behavior more effectively, and they can learn to rein in disruptive behavior and enjoy a much more positive relationship with you.

- **Parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT).** PCIT has been shown to be very helpful for children between the ages of 2 and 7. The parent and child work together through a set of exercises while a therapist coaches parents through an ear piece. You learn how to pay more attention to your child's positive behavior, ignore minor misbehaviors, and provide consistent consequences for negative and aggressive behavior, all while remaining calm.
- **Parent management training (PMT).** PMT teaches similar techniques as PCIT, though the therapist usually works with parents, not the child.
- **Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS).** CPS is a program based on the idea that explosive or disruptive behavior is the result of lagging skills rather than, say, an attempt to get attention or test limits. The idea is to teach children the skills they lack to respond to a situation in a more effective way than throwing a tantrum.

Figuring out explosive behavior

Tantrums and meltdowns are especially concerning when they occur more often, more intensely, or past the age in which they're developmentally expected — those terrible twos up through preschool. As a child gets older, aggression becomes more and more dangerous to you, and the child. And it can become a big problem for them at school and with friends, too.

If your child has a pattern of lashing out it may be because of an underlying problem that needs treatment. Some possible reasons for aggressive behavior include:



- **ADHD:** Kids with ADHD are frustrated easily, especially in certain situations, such as when they're supposed to do homework or go to bed.
- **Anxiety:** An anxious child may keep their worries secret, then lash out when the demands at school or at home put pressure on them that they can't handle. Often, a child who "keeps it together" at school loses it with one or both parents.
- **Undiagnosed learning disability:** When your child acts out repeatedly in school or during homework time, it could be because the work is very hard for them.
- **Sensory processing issues:** Some children have trouble processing the information they are taking in through their senses. Things like too much noise, crowds and even "scratchy" clothes can make them anxious, uncomfortable, or overwhelmed. That can lead to actions that leave you mystified, including aggression.
- **Autism:** Children with autism spectrum disorder are often prone to meltdowns when they are frustrated or faced with unexpected change. They also often have sensory issues that make them anxious and agitated.

Given that there are so many possible causes for emotional outbursts and aggression, an accurate diagnosis is key to getting the help you need. You may want to start with your pediatrician. They can rule out medical causes and then refer you to a specialist. A trained, experienced child psychologist or psychiatrist can help determine what, if any, underlying issues are present.

When behavioral plans aren't enough

Professionals agree, the younger you can treat a child, the better. But what about older children and even younger kids who are so dangerous to themselves and others that behavioral techniques aren't enough to keep them and others around them safe?

- **Medication.** Medication for underlying conditions such as ADHD and anxiety may make your child more reachable and

continued next page

teachable. Kids with extreme behavior problems are often treated with antipsychotic medications like Risperdal or Abilify. But these medications should be partnered with behavioral techniques.

- **Holds.** Parent training may, in fact, include learning how to use safe holds on your child so that you can keep both them and yourself out of harm's way.
- **Residential settings.** Children with extreme behaviors may need to spend time in a residential treatment facility — sometimes, but not always, in a hospital setting. There, they receive behavioral and, most likely, pharmaceutical treatment. Therapeutic boarding schools provide consistency and structure around the clock, seven days a week. The goal is for the child to internalize self-control so they can come back home with more appropriate behavior with you and the world at large.
- **Day treatment.** With day treatment, a child with extreme behavioral problems lives at home but attends a school with a strict behavioral plan. Such schools should have trained staff prepared to safely handle crisis situations.

Explosive children need calm, confident parents

It can be challenging work for parents to learn how to handle an aggressive child with behavioral approaches, but for many kids it can make a big difference. Parents who are confident, calm, and consistent can be very successful in helping children develop the anger management skills they need to regulate their own behavior.

This may require more patience and willingness to try different techniques than you might with a typically developing child, but when the result is a better relationship and happier home, it's well worth the effort. ♦



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detoxing cont.

- **Time spent in front of the screen:** Ironically, you can use the screen time tracking tools on your phone to find out how much time you spend on your screen each day.
- **Check out how technology makes you feel:** Which digital habits are good for you? Which ones lead to stress, guilt, burnout, or feelings of inadequacy?
- **Determine problems caused by the use of technology:** Insufficient sleep, weakened social relationships, procrastination, neglecting self-care, or physical health issues... These are important clues showing how digital habits affect your quality of life.
- **Priorities in life:** Are the things you value most compatible with the time you spend in front of a screen? For example, spending time outside with friends may be more valuable to you than spending time on your phone or in front of a screen. However, despite this, you may still spend more time in the digital world. Taking a step back and evaluating is an important step towards more conscious technology use.

After understanding your technology use pattern, the next step is to set goals because change begins with clear yet achievable goals. Completely disconnecting from technology is neither possible nor necessary for most of us. Therefore, choosing one behavior and focusing on changing that behavior might be more goal-oriented and achievable. For example, setting a concrete and achievable goal such as "I will not use my phone after 9:00 PM" makes the process easier. Here are the next steps for your plan:

- Writing down your goal can increase your motivation.
- You can consider the following suggestions:
 - You can turn off all screens at a specific time.
 - Leave your phone in another room while you work.
 - Reduce the time you spend on social media apps or delete some of them.
 - You can set a limit on your daily screen time.
- Note what benefits you expect from this change.
- Determine the detox period according to your needs: one week, two weeks, or a month. However, be patient, as it may take time for habits to change permanently.
- At the end of the detox period, it is very valuable to evaluate the process, even you accomplish your goal or not. You can ask yourself the following questions:
 - Which changes were good for me?
 - What were the difficult points?
 - Did I achieve a balance in my relationship with technology?
 - Did I see improvements in my sleep, mental health, and overall well-being?

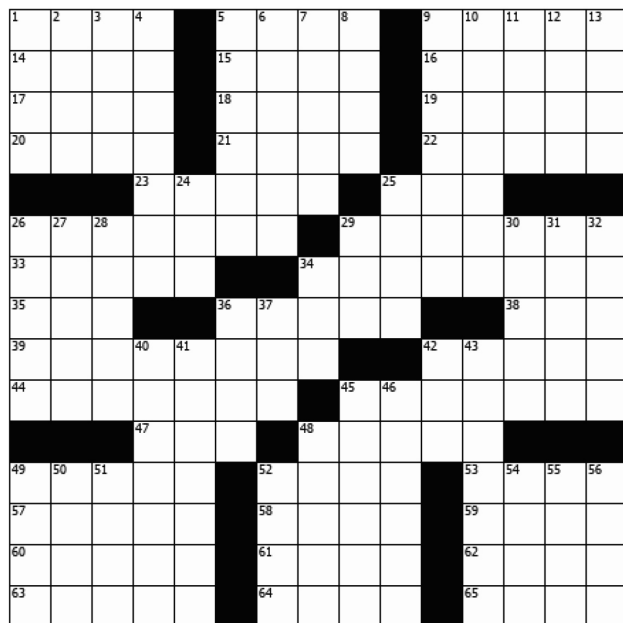
Take-away:

- Digital devices and social media apps don't just reshape our daily routines, our inner worlds, and our relationships; they also reshape our brains by altering our reward systems and melatonin production.
- Digital detox may be worth considering if you experience negative well-being outcomes after using digital devices most of the time. Yet, please note that completely disconnecting from technology is neither possible nor necessary for most of us.
- Not every digital detox plan might align with your reality and your needs. Therefore you might need to better understand your habits and set realistic goals. ♦

FEBRUARY 2026 CROSSWORD

Across

1. Penny
5. Pinnacle
9. Solemn
14. Cake decorator
15. Wild pig
16. Chest
17. Biblical "you"
18. Columbus's state
19. Consumed
20. Many years
21. Lions' lairs
22. Road curves
23. Yonder
25. Fitting
26. Pacify
29. Quick tempo
33. Ventured
34. Regal
35. Rhyming boxer
36. Motorist's aid
38. Total up
39. Statue base
42. Bert's buddy
44. Capital of New Jersey
45. Member of Congress
47. Knock
48. Adjust again
49. Nasal sound
52. Small arrow
53. Monthly expense
57. Blender setting
58. Mental image
59. Tavern drinks
60. Utopian
61. Rave
62. Snip
63. Grouchy
64. Wood source
65. Snaky fishes



Down

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Quote | 24. Owned | 41. Majestic |
| 2. Reverberate | 25. Heidi's mountains | 42. Compass dir. |
| 3. Bright sign | 26. Conform | 43. Daily grind (2 wds.) |
| 4. Board member | 27. More ashen | 45. Unruffled |
| 5. Homes | 28. Vanity | 46. Landed manor |
| 6. Stick together | 29. Medical group (abbr.) | 48. Plane spotter |
| 7. Bangor's state | 30. Huge | 49. Roasting rod |
| 8. Greek deity | 31. AM-FM ____ | 50. Unclothed |
| 9. Church tower | 32. More antiquated | 51. Mine products |
| 10. Breakfast appliance | 34. Under the weather | 52. Soil |
| 11. Liberal ____ | 36. Over | 54. She, in Nice |
| 12. Understood! (2 wds.) | 37. Summer shade | 55. Astronaut ____ |
| 13. Puts on | 40. Beseech | 56. Recipe abbr. |

Find the solution at
onlinecrosswords.net/69931

staying on course cont.

SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY HOLY. "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it." *1 Thessalonians 5:23*

EVEN THE PLANS AND WORKS THAT GOD HAS DESIGNED FOR YOU TO PERFORM WHILE ON EARTH WILL BE MANIFESTED AND YOU WILL PERFORM IT UNDER GOD'S DIRECTION (Your own plans, will never produce the satisfaction and sense of completion your heart needs and is always longing for): "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

MY FRIEND, JUST HUMBLE YOURSELF BEFORE THE ALMIGHTY GOD AND BE REAL TO FIND REAL ANSWERS. IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO HUMBLE YOURSELF, BE HONEST AND ASK HIM TO HELP YOU AND HE WILL.

START TODAY IF YOU HAVEN'T STARTED YET, BY DIVING IN HIS WORD, YOU ARE DIVING INTO THE SUPERNATURAL AND ETHEREAL... "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." *John 6:63*

Listen to Jesus and receive your salvation today: ACQUIRE HIS NATURE BY PRAYING OUT LOUD: Lord, I do believe that Jesus of Nazareth took my place in the Cross. Lord, I am sorry for all

see "STAYING ON COURSE" on page 30

IBS cont.

Foods to Promote a Healthy Gut

Reviewing the list of foods you should remove from your diet can be daunting and leave you feeling like what food can you eat? While each person's body is unique, some great foods to promote a healthy gut include:

- **Soluble and insoluble fiber** – as described above, whether a certain fiber will be harmful or helpful to you personally depends on the type of IBS that you have. IBS-D sufferers should focus on increasing soluble fiber, while IBS-C sufferers should increase their intake of insoluble fiber, in order to help regulate dysfunctions in motility.
- **Fermented food** – foods such as kimchi (fermented vegetables), sauerkraut (fermented cabbage), and yogurt (fermented milk) contain the bacteria *Lactobacillus* which produce lactic acid and are shown to improve the digestion of lactose and stimulate the gut immune system.
- **Probiotics** – similar to eating fermented foods, taking probiotic supplements may contribute to a healthy, diverse gut microbiome and a reduction of IBS symptoms. However, it is important to note that long term symptom improvement have not been effectively proven. Additionally, since dietary supplements are not regulated as drugs in the United States, patients should carefully research any probiotic and their manufacturer before beginning treatment.
- **Water** – staying well hydrated helps to promote a healthy gastrointestinal tract, as well as helping to combat constipation. ♦

It is important to consult a physician for an accurate diagnosis before starting any treatment. Depending on the severity of your condition, you may require medication in addition to the diet modifications outlined in this article. If you or a loved one are experiencing IBS-like symptoms, you can book an appointment with your primary care physician or visit an urgent care center in order to be evaluated and diagnosed.

Healthy habits for successfully aging in our 60s, 70s & beyond

Source: MED.STANFORD.EDU



Anyone in their 60s, 70s or beyond knows what it feels like to notice changes in their body. Maybe they're not quite as steady on their feet or they're forgetting names more often than they used to. Some of these changes are normal with aging; others can be minimized with the right habits to keep us healthy, sharp and mobile.

The choices we make at this stage can have a profound impact on how we age. While we can't turn back the clock, research shows that it's never too late to adopt habits that can help maintain our independence, protect our cognitive health and improve our quality of life well into our 80s and beyond.

"It's never too late to start," said Abby King, PhD, a Stanford Medicine professor of epidemiology and population health and a faculty member at the Stanford Prevention Research Center, who served as co-chair of the 2018 U.S. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee. King has spent decades studying health

behaviors across the lifespan. "We have a number of studies showing that even people who were very inactive were able to gain fitness and wellbeing benefits by increasing their regular physical activity levels in ways that fit their abilities."

Speaking to King and other Stanford Medicine health experts about the most important habits to prioritize in our 60s and 70s, their recommendations vary from staying mobile and mentally engaged to catching health problems early. Whether someone has been healthy their whole life or they've dealt with chronic conditions, these habits can help maintain independence and vibrance.

1. Strength and power training to stay independent

As we age, exercise isn't just about staying fit; it's also about daily functioning and quality of life. The ability to get up from a chair without using our hands, carry groceries or catch ourselves if we stumble can mean the difference between living on

our own terms and needing assistance with daily activities.

Even if we've been relatively inactive for most of our life, integrating small bits of movement into our day can make a difference at any age, said Silvia Tee, MD, a clinical associate professor of medicine and a geriatrician at the Stanford Senior Care clinic.

"With age, muscles can get weak very easily," Tee said. Just a few days of inactivity, she pointed out, can trigger long-term mobility challenges. On the flip side, a regular exercise routine can also help people stay healthy and independent.

"There's been a push, particularly for women, to lift heavier weights as they age," said Michael Fredericson, MD, a professor of physical medicine & rehabilitation and director of Stanford Lifestyle Medicine. "But a lot of people don't like lifting heavy weights, and that scares them away from doing any resistance training at all. You can absolutely get the same benefit by lifting lighter weights and doing more reps, provided you push to failure."

For her patients who are unable to carry out more complex exercises, Tee often tells them to try sit-to-stand exercises, in which they lower yourself up and down from a chair 10 to 15 times, gradually making it more challenging by using less hand support or a lower chair.

2. Balance training for fall prevention

Even if someone doesn't feel frail, the 60s and 70s are the ideal time to start working on balance. The better our balance, the less likely we are to fall — and falls are a leading cause of injury and loss of independence in older adults. One study showed that people aged 51 to 75 who could stand on one leg for just 10 seconds had an improved mortality rate.

"When I talk to older adults, I recommend to start with simple static balance training exercises, like single-leg stands or corner stands," Tee said. She suggests to hold the countertop or a chair while standing on one leg and aim for 10 to 20 seconds at a time, switch legs, and repeat 5-10 times per leg. For a corner stand, position yourself with feet together and your back toward the corner of a room — so you have support in multiple directions — with hands on the wall and eyes closed to practice balance.

continued next page

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3. Optimize nutrition as you age

Nutrition becomes increasingly critical in these years — not for weight loss, but for maintaining our strength, independence and quality of life. As we age, our body's ability to build and maintain muscle declines significantly, meaning we need more protein and nutrients even if we're eating fewer total calories. Nutrients can mean the difference between staying active and independent versus becoming frail and dependent on others.

Research shows that healthy older adults benefit from approximately 1.0 to 1.3 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight daily. For a 150-pound person, that's about 68-88 grams of protein per day. For individual of this size, you can hit this by eating three meals that contain 20 to 30 grams of protein — a 3-to-4-ounce chicken breast, one cup of Greek yogurt or cottage cheese, a can of tuna, three eggs, or 5 ounces of tofu. Beyond protein, experts recommend following a Mediterranean-style diet, which has consistently been shown to reduce the risk of chronic diseases including heart disease, diabetes and cognitive decline.

King also emphasizes moving away from ultra-processed foods that are high in salt, sugar and saturated fats.

"Focus on whole foods," she said. "It doesn't have to be complicated. I'm encouraged by the fact that the food industry is making eating healthier a lot easier than it used to be with things like grab-and-go fresh salads and healthier frozen options."

4. Keep your brain sharp with cognitive and social habits

One of the biggest health concerns as people enter these decades is cognitive decline and dementia. While genetics play a role, many of the most important risk factors are ones we can influence with our habits — including exercise, diet, sleep and stress management. But research also shows that staying mentally and socially engaged can make a meaningful difference in protecting brain health.

Mental stimulation through activities like crossword puzzles, learning new skills or engaging in complex conversations appears to help maintain cognitive function, though the evidence comes primarily from observational studies rather than randomized trials.

Perhaps even more important than doing mental puzzles: staying socially connected. Studies have found that people who

are more socially connected have better cognitive function and memory.

When we're socially engaged, we're also mentally engaged. Conversations require us to listen, process information, remember context and respond appropriately — all activities that keep the brain active.

5. Prioritize preventive care and monitoring

As we age, preventive screening becomes more personalized, and what our doctor recommends may vary from what they tell others our age. While we may have graduated from some routine screenings, others become even more important, and the decision often depends on our overall health and life expectancy.

"For a lot of screening recommendations, we consider whether we think patients have 10 years or more to live," Tee explained.

Some of her healthiest 80-year-old patients continue with regular colonoscopies or mammograms if they have a strong family history or previous abnormal results and maintain good overall health, she says. But for a 75-year-old with complex medical conditions, she may recommend against such procedures.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends several key screenings for people in their 60s and 70s:

- Annual blood pressure checks — hypertension often has no symptoms but significantly increases your risk for heart disease, stroke and cognitive decline
- Regular cholesterol screening to assess cardiovascular risk
- Diabetes screening, as risk increases with age
- Bone-density screening for osteoporosis, particularly for women over 65 and men over 70 with risk factors
- Vision and hearing tests, as both can significantly impact quality of life and fall risk
- Annual influenza vaccines and updated COVID-19 vaccines

Beyond screenings, scheduling annual physicals with your primary care provider will help with tracking your own health risks and goals. For many older adults with chronic conditions, more frequent visits — every three to six months — may be appropriate to monitor multiple conditions and medications. ♦



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Real Estate Investing Basics: 8 Types of Investments

Source: BUTTERFLYMX.COM



Real estate investing can be a highly rewarding endeavor that requires both as much and as little effort as you want to put into it. There are many different types of real estate investments and not every investment type will be a great fit for you.

In this article, we'll go over some basic questions that you may have about investing in real estate. Next, we'll go over how you can invest in real estate. Finally, we'll review a few of the different types of real estate that you can invest in.

What is real estate investing?

Real estate investing can involve either buying, developing, selling, or renting out property to make a return on investment. Real estate investments can be as simple as buying, renovating, and reselling a house.

However, they can also be more complex and time-consuming when buying and managing multiple multifamily and commercial properties in order to earn rental income.

Is it a good idea to invest in real estate?

Real estate investments are a good idea if you have enough capital to support the phases of your investment. The real estate market is consistently growing.

Furthermore, 36% of Americans rent, which means rental properties will always be in demand. The only reason that real estate investing might be a bad idea is if your personal finance doesn't include the funds to invest.

Is \$5,000 enough to invest in real estate?

\$5,000 can be enough to invest in some real estate as a down payment, depending on the financial loans you manage to secure. However, you'll likely want to have access to more funding in order to avoid taking unnecessary risks with your personal finance. Owning real estate likely involves more startup funds.

\$5,000 and similar low amounts are probably best put towards real estate projects such as REITs (real estate investment trusts), which we explore a little further along in this article.

How to invest in rental property

One of the best ways to invest in a rental property is to purchase either a single-family, multifamily, or commercial property and rent out individual units for a monthly or yearly rent. Your ROI (return on investment) will come from rental income.

When investing in rental property, there are a number of crucial steps to take:

- Find a worthwhile property
- Secure financing
- Purchase/develop your property
- Managing your property

How to invest in real estate with no money

When investing in real estate with very little start-up capital, you will have to become a savvy investor and rely on creative financing if you want to start investing. Creative financing can involve:

- Real estate crowdfunding
- Borrowing substantial capital from private lenders
- Forming partnerships with multiple real

estate investors and embarking on fractional ownership

How to invest in real estate for passive income

Rental properties of all types, such as college-town rentals, are one of the best ways to earn passive income when real estate investing. If you hire a property manager, you won't have to worry about the day-to-day operations at your property.

Investing in real estate stocks such as REITs is also a great way to earn passive income.

Real estate investing groups

There are ways to get involved in real estate investing without having to physically purchase — or handle — any property at all. One of the best investment strategies is to go through a real estate investing group.

The two most common ways to do this are through:

- Real estate syndications.
- REITs (real estate investment trusts).

How to invest in real estate through stocks

Investing in real estate through stocks most commonly involves buying stock in REITs. Recent data shows that REIT companies own over 535,000 properties and over 15 million acres of land.

Online real estate platforms for investing

Platforms for real estate on the internet often take the form of software that provides you with tools to extensively research the real estate market. Online platforms such as **Flipperforce**, **Property Evaluator** and **Popstream** are beneficial because they:

- Show you how to calculate a good initial investment.
- Help you decide on which development projects are worth pursuing.
- Provide beginner knowledge for new investors and real estate developers who are looking to start investing in real estate assets.
- Provide high-quality data such as up and-coming areas, real estate values, local market data, undervalued properties, price appreciation, and prospects for potential renters.

see "INVESTING BASICS" on page 28

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investing basics cont.

8 types of real estate investments

Different types of investment properties come with their own risk and reward systems. Some properties are better for beginner investors, while others are better suited for investors with more experience. Almost all of the following properties provide great tax benefits and are an essential step if you want to build wealth.

1. Senior housing

- Assisted living facilities
- Retirement homes
- Nursing homes

Benefits include:

- Consistent demand.
- Safe investment.

Senior housing does have a few cons, including:

- Staffing. Most senior housing properties require highly trained professionals. Keeping these professionals staffed at all times can be challenging.
- Regulations. Because many senior housing properties are also medical facilities, they face heavy regulations that you, as the property owner, must be aware of.

2. Short-term rental

Short-term investment rentals are properties that are rented nightly or weekly, with Airbnb rentals being a top example. They are a great idea when investing in a rental property for beginners.

Short-term rentals can involve investing in real estate with no money if you rent out a spare room at your otherwise single-

family residence. They can also be more complex if you purchase or develop a four-bedroom beachfront property and rent out each room individually.

The primary cons of short-term rentals are that you have to deal with a high volume of different renters, often with minimal background checks.

3. Multifamily properties

Multifamily properties are one of the top properties for many investors. Why?

- Rental income
- Constant demand
- Endless renovations

Multifamily properties can consist of two-unit duplexes and also 200-unit high-rise apartments. There are tons of legal loopholes that can work multifamily properties in your favor, such as making a unit in a multifamily building your primary residence.

4. Commercial buildings

Similar to multifamily properties, most commercial real estate buildings offer units (or floors) for rent to companies for offices. Companies pay rent on a set basis. Because of how much bigger commercial spaces are compared to apartments, you can typically charge much more for rent.

A con of commercial spaces, however, is that they're less in demand than multifamily rental units. This is especially true with remote work being more popular than ever. However, there will always be businesses that need in-person employees. Bigger commercial deals can result in a ton of capital gains if planned out accordingly.

5. Student housing

Thanks to record attendance at colleges and universities around the country, student housing is in constant demand. Student housing investments are similar to multifamily investments in that they involve purchasing a property with multiple rental units. However, the benefits of catering specifically to students are massive. The benefits of investing in student housing include:

- Consistent students.
- Most students have their parents co-sign their lease, guaranteeing steady income.
- Organized lease cycles.
- Students don't require luxurious spaces.

6. Tiny homes

Tiny homes are a form of investment that doesn't require a lot of management. As the name suggests, tiny homes are small properties similar in size to mobile homes. They can be rented out as short-term rentals or for more long-term residents.

What's great about tiny homes is that, because of their small stature, they're very cheap to purchase and maintain. As a result, they're great for first-time investors.

7. Mobile home park investing

Mobile home parks are a surprisingly simple investment. They involve purchasing or developing land that's zoned for mobile homes (or tiny homes). You earn on this investment by charging rent for each occupied lot.

Residents pay for the upkeep and maintenance costs of their own trailers, while all you have to worry about is

see "INVESTING BASICS" on page 30



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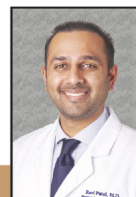
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Okeechobee with the company's family motto of “Quality Eye Care you can Trust!”

Dr. Brennan recently retired to spend more time with his grandchildren; along with more time to go fishing and hunting. Everyone knows Dr Brennan enjoys telling a good fish or hunting story. He has been serving the community and surrounding area for many decades and has passed that passion of serving, to his daughter.

Dr. Christine Bishop has been the president of the Treasure Coast Optometric Society for the past 10 years, which provides indigent eye care to our poorest residents. She is Vice President of the Health Council of SouthEast Florida, appointed by Okeechobee County Commission, to serve on this board and to represent Okeechobee in the five county coalition. Dr. Bishop is also the Membership Chair for the Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Bishop has a passion for education and the children in our community. In August of 2022, she was elected to the Okeechobee County School Board and presently serves as the President of the Education Foundation of Okeechobee. Dr Bishop's most favorite activities are spending time with her husband and three beautiful daughters, along with serving at More 2 Life Church in Okeechobee. When you ask Dr. Bishop, how does she balance family, work, and community service? Her gentle smile and kind demeanor replies with a shrug saying “We are only given one life and my desire is to serve my family and community as Christ does, with love.”

Dr. Bishop has also begun lecturing around the state of Florida to her colleagues, using her real life experience and knowledge to provide insightful continuing education hours to fellow optometrists. She is thankful that through the years Brennan Eye Care has continued to offer the newest technology with a personalized small-town feel and she continues to strive to have you feeling like family when you walk in the door. You will leave knowing you have had the most thorough and comprehensive eye examination presently available to Optometrists today.

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investing basics cont.

maintaining the grounds themselves and the electric/sewage hookups for each mobile home.

The low maintenance is a great deal for mobile home parks, which makes them an easier investment than most other property types.

8. Sale leaseback agreements

A sale leaseback real estate agreement is one in which a company sells its property to an investor before then entering a lease with that new property owner. In other words, the owner sells the property to an investor while continuing to occupy it. As a result, the seller becomes the lessee and the buyer becomes the lessor.

Benefits of entering into sale leaseback agreements include increasing working capital, maintaining property control, and creating long-term investment relationships. However, drawbacks include tax liabilities and a possible loss of benefits.

As with all real estate financial decisions, you should consult with a broker before entering into a sale leaseback agreement. ♦

staying on course cont.

my sins against you and against my own life, please forgive me. I believe Jesus was raised on the third day for my justification. Jesus, I receive you as my Lord and Savior. Your Holy blood cleanses my soul right now and BY YOUR STRIPES I RECEIVE COMPLETE HEALING OF MY BODY, And God gives me a new heart and eternal life. Now my name is written in the book of life, guaranteed by the following written law:

“That if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”

Romans 10:9-10

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Blue Ocean Dermatology prides itself on staying at the forefront of dermatological advancements. From acne and eczema to psoriasis and Mohs surgery for skin cancer, their dermatologists have the expertise to deliver the highest standard of care. In addition to medical dermatology, they offer an array of cosmetic services to help patients look and feel their best. Whether it's rejuvenating treatments like Botox and dermal fillers, laser hair removal or chemical peels, the clinic's skilled professionals tailor each procedure to meet the unique needs of every individual.

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