Puppy love: life and relationship lessons from dogs

Take cues from canines on how to live a more fulfilling life.

- Be excited to see those you care about. Imagine greeting a loved one with the enthusiasm a dog shows when its owner gets home. Imagine how loved that person would feel.

- Stop and sniff around. Take a dog for a walk, and he takes time to check out everything along the way. He explores the world around him. Imagine if you paid more attention to your surroundings. You might notice beauty you never knew existed and better appreciate the little things.

- Express yourself. When a dog wants outside, he whines and may paw at the door to let a human know. Imagine how much better life might be if when you needed something, you simply asked for it and didn’t expect others to read your mind.

- Don’t take yourself too seriously. A dog doesn’t care how silly he looks with his head hanging out of the car window or while romping around in the park. Imagine if you didn’t care what others thought of you as you tried a new fitness class at the gym.

Quick-Read!

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“Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn, or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude.”

— Denis Waitley
Spicy Citrus Roasted Carrots

- 2 1/4 pounds carrots, raw
- 1/4 tsp. lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp. lime juice
- 1/4 tsp. orange juice
- 1/4 tsp. curry powder
- 1/4 tsp. paprika
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper, ground
- 1/4 tsp. onion powder
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

Directions: Preheat oven to 350° F. Peel, wash, and cut the carrots into 1/4-inch slices. Add the cut carrots to a large bowl. Add all the juices, oil, and spices. Mix well. Spray a baking sheet with cooking spray and spread the seasoned carrots evenly on the baking sheet. Roast for approximately 20 minutes. Serves 6. Per serving: 90 calories, 1.2 g fat (0.2 g saturated fat), 0 mg cholesterol, 145 mg sodium, 18 g carbohydrates, 2 g protein.

Note to self: Drink more water

How much water you should drink varies depending upon your size, level of activity, health condition, and weather. As a general rule, many experts recommend drinking six to eight 8-ounce glasses of water daily.

Note: A variety of liquids count toward meeting your water needs, including coffee, tea, and fruit juices, in addition to pure water.

Here’s an easy way to drink more water and track how much you still need.

• Get four 16-ounce clear, plastic water bottles.
• Use a permanent marker to write numbers 1-4 on the lids.
• Draw a line around the middle of each bottle.
• Write times of the day above each line and near the top of each bottle showing by what time you need to drink each cup of water. You could shoot for a cup every two hours.
• At the end of every day, rinse/wash the bottles, fill them with water, and place them in the fridge for the following day.

You can cut the amounts of fat, sodium, and sugar in recipes by a quarter to a half and still retain the flavor.

Figuring out phytonutrients

The compounds that give plants their color also help their immune systems and could possibly help yours, too.

Phytonutrients protect plants (including fruits and vegetables) from ultraviolet (UV) radiation, insect attacks, and other potential harms. Although phytonutrients aren’t really nutrients — meaning you don’t need them to survive — eating foods containing phytonutrients (also called phytochemicals) may provide you with antioxidants, and have anti-inflammatory and other health-promoting effects.

Studies have linked fruit and vegetable consumption with lower risks for chronic diseases, including specific cancers and heart disease. Research is ongoing into the specific roles that phytonutrients may play in reducing certain diseases.

Phytonutrients can be found in:
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole grains
- Legumes/beans
- Nuts and seeds
- Herbs and spices

One way to figure out which foods are rich in which phytonutrients is by the food’s color. Different phytonutrients have been linked to different benefits.

• Flavonoids: Blue or purple foods, such as blueberries, blackberries, and red cabbage.
• Beta-carotene: Yellow-orange foods, such as carrots, winter squash, papaya, and melon.
• Lycopene: Red or pink foods, such as tomatoes, guava, and watermelon.
• Chlorophyll: Green foods, such as kale, spinach, and collard greens.
• Sulfide: Off-white foods, such as garlic, onions, and leeks.

Sources: whfoods.org; U.S. Department of Agriculture
Get Moving:

Change things up. Period.

If your current workout routine no longer provides you with the results you want, it could be that your body has gotten used to your exercise. Adopt the “periodizing” approach.

Periodizing involves changing your training program at regular intervals or “periods” rather than doing the same routine month after month, year after year. Using the periodizing strategy, your body works harder while still getting enough rest.

You can change up your strength-training program by altering:

• The number of repetitions per set, or the number of sets of each exercise
• The amount of resistance used
• The rest period between sets, exercises, or training sessions
• The order of the exercises, or the types of exercises
• The speed at which you complete each exercise

You can switch up your cardiovascular workout, too. If, for example, you’re a runner, don’t run the same route or with the same intensity every time. Allow for flat, easy runs, as well as some that incorporate hills and others that focus on speed and strength.

Separating fitness fact from fiction

Many people operate under false assumptions when it comes to exercise. As a result, some individuals don’t exercise at all, shy away from certain exercises, or exercise incorrectly. It’s time to set the record straight.

Exercise will NOT make you tired. Yes, you may feel fatigued if you push yourself too hard; however, exercise typically gives most people more energy throughout the day and relieves stress. What’s more, regular exercise can help you sleep better at night, so you may wake up more refreshed.

Weight training will NOT bulk you up. It can help you to develop a sculpted, toned appearance. It can also help to burn excess fat, protect your body from injury, and prevent osteoporosis.

The more exercise, the better, isn’t always true. Working your body too hard can result in exhaustion and lead to injury. Allow your body time to rest and recuperate. Many health experts recommend 30 to 90 minutes of daily exercise, depending on your goal.

Source: Calories Control Council

Exergaming — the future of fitness?

If you’re the techie type who enjoys playing games on your TV, computer, tablet, and/or smartphone, think about trying exergaming.

Exergaming, or active gaming, is technology-driven physical activities that require individuals to exercise to play the game. Many popular gaming systems, including Xbox and Wii, offer active games.

For a safe, fun exergaming experience:

• Stretch and prepare as you would for any light to moderate workout.
• Be sure you have enough room.
• Take breaks and drink plenty of fluids regularly to decrease the risk of fatigue and dehydration.
• Get family members, friends, or co-workers to play with you.

Source: The American Council on Exercise
Extinguishing the flames of inflammation

Most people know about acute inflammation, whether they know it by that name or not. Acute inflammation happens when you injure yourself and experience pain and swelling.

This is normal, beneficial inflammation — part of the body’s natural healing process.

There is a different inflammation that isn’t normal, and most people don’t know about it, but many have it. It’s chronic inflammation, and it can occur deep within your body and often doesn’t cause any noticeable symptoms.

Chronic inflammation can contribute to heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. High blood pressure, obesity, smoking, and stress can contribute to chronic inflammation. Another big inflammation contributor: what you eat.

**Inflammation starters:**
- Saturated fats — found in red meats
- Trans fats — found in processed foods
- Refined carbohydrates — found in processed foods
- Sugars

**Inflammation fighters:**
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Herbs and spices
- Whole grains
- Olive oil
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Legumes

Source: The Cleveland Clinic

An alternative to BMI

*The news on obesity is full of talk about body mass index (BMI).*

If you score above a certain number, you’re considered overweight, an even higher number and you’re obese. Along with the classification comes an increased risk of certain diseases, according to many experts.

However, not all medical professionals put that much weight on a person’s BMI score, saying a number of factors can affect the number, and that BMI was never intended to determine weight-health issues. (Many healthy professional athletes are considered overweight or obese based on their BMI scores).

If you want an alternative measure to judge whether you need to address health and lifestyle issues, consider waist size. To measure your waist size (circumference), place a tape measure around your bare abdomen just above your hip bones. Be sure the tape is snug, but does not compress your skin, and is parallel to the floor. Relax, exhale, and measure your waist.

You may be at higher risk for certain health problems if:
- You are male with a waist greater than 40 inches.
- You are female (and not pregnant) with a waist greater than 35 inches.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Earwax explained

*Earwax is healthy — in normal amounts. Its protective, lubricating, and antibacterial properties keep your delicate, intricate ear canal and eardrum safe.*

Ideally, the ear canals should never have to be cleaned. Ears should only be cleaned if enough earwax gathers to cause symptoms such as:
- Earache, fullness in the ear, or a sensation that the ear is plugged
- Partial hearing loss, which may be progressive
- Tinnitus, ringing, or noises in the ear
- Itching, odor, or discharge
- Coughing

Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology — Head and Neck Surgery

For more on ear wax, go to Feb.HopeHealth.com
Conversations starters for talks about mental health

If you’re worried that someone you care about may have a mental-health issue, it can be tricky to know how to talk about it. To start the conversation, try asking these questions, then actively listen to the response.

- I’ve been concerned about you. Can we talk about what you’re experiencing? If not, whom are you comfortable talking to?
- I care and want to listen. What do you want me to know about how you’re feeling?
- Who or what has helped you deal with similar issues in the past?
- Sometimes talking to someone who has dealt with a similar experience helps. If you know others with similar experiences, who are they?
- It seems like you are going through a difficult time. How can I help you to find help?
- How can I help you find more information about mental-health problems?
- I’m concerned about your safety. If you ever have thoughts about harming yourself or others, whom could you contact for help?

Generally, questions that allow “Yes-No” answers are not as useful as more open-ended questions.

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Liar, liar

What are some common ways liars use words and tone to obscure the truth when answering questions? Be on guard when people:

1. Repeat a question verbatim. They may be stalling for extra time to prepare a dishonest reply.
2. Take a guarded tone.
3. Don’t use contractions when they deny an allegation.
4. Tell stories in strict chronology. To keep their stories straight, liars tend to stick to chronological order when relating an event. When people are telling truthful stories, they do so in the way they remember the event, not in strict chronological order.
5. Use softening language in a response. Instead of saying “I didn’t steal your lunch,” they may say “I didn’t take your lunch.”
6. Overemphasize their truthfulness with phrases such as “To tell you the truth...”, “Honestly...”, or “I swear to you...”

Sources: TED, LieSpotting.com

Tricks to make a new, healthy habit stick in 30 days

Take a 30-day pledge:
Vow to stay with your change for 30 days.

- Commit to the habit daily: If you want to exercise, do it daily during the 30-day time commitment.
- Be consistent: During the 30 days, try to do the habit at the same time each day and in the same place.
- Cut off negative thoughts with “but”: Any time you start to talk yourself out of your new habit, interrupt the thought with “but.” “I don’t have time to exercise, but I will find time because exercising is important to me.”

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Where did I put that statement? Have you ever been unable to locate an important document that you put in a safe place but now can’t remember where?

To prevent future panic attacks and wasted time on a scavenger hunt, create a records management system.

Gather all important papers and documents. Put them in three piles:

1. **Active files** — documents and records you deal with regularly and need to reference frequently, such as appliance manuals, warranties, service contracts, bank statements, bills to be paid, credit-card information, family health records (*including vaccination histories*), health-benefit information, insurance policies, loan statements and payment books, password list, receipts for items under warranty, and receipts for charitable tax deductions

2. **Dead storage** — all active file papers older than three years, except for items such as appliance manuals and other documents that you still reference regularly

3. **Items to shred** — canceled checks for non-tax-deductible expenses, expired warranties, and pay stubs

Now, create a filing system. Designate one person to serve as file manager and keep the filing current and consistent.

Source: usa.gov

For worksheets on locating important financial records and creating a home filing system for your piles of papers, go to Feb.HopeHealth.com

Making ‘cents’ of money apps and privacy

Use of financial apps — including those for mobile banking, product price comparisons, credit-card purchases, and budget tracking — is on the rise.

Apps can save you time and money, but be careful, particularly with free apps that don’t come from your financial institution.

Read the privacy policy before downloading and using an app. The privacy policy can be long and complex, but it will tell you how the app maintains accuracy, access, and security. The policy also should outline how it uses the personal information it collects and whether it provides information to third parties.

To save energy, draw curtains to keep in heat on cold days.

Romance without ruining your financial health

With Valentine’s Day this month, many people are making special plans for their sweethearts. You want to show that certain someone just how much he or she means to you, but that doesn’t mean you must spend a lot of money on lavish gifts and fancy dinners. Consider starting low-cost traditions.

- **Make a video slideshow** featuring the two of you or put together a music mix, either of your favorite “together” songs or ones the person could listen to while working out.
- **Write a poem** or a list of all the things you love about the other person.
- **Cook a homemade dinner** — together.
- **Find an inexpensive activity**, such as ice skating, bowling, or going to a movie.
- **Compose a scrapbook of photos**, ticket stubs, and other reminders of the special experiences that you have enjoyed since Valentine’s Day last year.
PiYo, anyone?

Jennie Schuman is probably a lot like you. She juggles work and family commitments, and tries to squeeze healthy living into her hectic schedule when she can. Follow along on Jennie’s Health Journey.

Do you know what PiYo is? No, it isn’t a place where you put your favorite toppings on frozen yogurt (However, that does sound pretty good right now!). PiYo is a new fitness trend that combines Pilates and yoga, and cranks up the speed to include full cardio.

Crossword Workout —
Find out how well you know the health topics covered in this issue of the newsletter.

ACROSS
2. How many servings of fruits and vegetables you may want to get daily for healthful eating
3. A word to use to cut off a negative thought
5. Chronic inflammation can contribute to this condition
6. The compounds that give plants their color
8. For an alternative to Body Mass Index (BMI), measure this
9. Many liars don’t use these when denying an allegation
10. Technology-driven physical activity
11. Read this policy before downloading a financial app
12. A fitness program that combines Pilates and yoga

DOWN
1. How much water you need to consume daily can depend on this
2. A source of phytonutrients
3. An inexpensive Valentine’s Day date
4. A term for changing your training program at regular intervals
7. Documents that should be part of your active files

For the crossword puzzle answer key, go to Feb.HopeHealth.com

Even in winter, remember to wear sunscreen and lip balm with an SPF of at least 15 whenever you’re outside.
**Your Health Matters:**

**Showing some love**

There are many simple ways to show people that you love them. It really is the thought that counts. Here are a few ideas to try this month with your significant other, children, parents, siblings, friends, etc.

**Feb 1 – 7:** Write (don’t type) someone a note recounting a special time you shared with him/her or how that person has positively impacted your life. Thank that special someone for being part of your life.

**Feb 8 – 14:** Make someone a favorite meal from scratch.

**Feb 15 – 21:** Do a chore for someone else — something that the person really dislikes doing.

**Feb 22 – 28:** Spend quality time just chatting with someone. Be sure the TV is off and phones are nowhere in sight.

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**Weight Control:**

**The one-step-at-a-time approach**

If you’ve had trouble sticking to a healthful eating strategy, it could be that you’re trying to make too many changes all at once.

Let your body get used to one change, then add another. Here are some one-step ideas to incorporate. Practice each until it becomes a habit, then add another.

- Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- When you eat salad, have your dressing on the side and stick to the serving size (usually two tablespoons). Dip your fork into the dressing before you take a bite of salad.
- If you eat white bread, switch to 100% whole-wheat bread or one made with grains such as brown rice, buckwheat, sorghum, millet, or quinoa.
- Measure your servings of starchy foods (potatoes, rice, pasta, corn), and limit your portions to one-half cup.
- Use a small food scale to weigh meat, poultry, and fish. Limit your daily intake to no more than six ounces (cooked weight).
- Limit fried foods.
- If you get hungry between meals, eat a piece of fruit, a container of low-fat yogurt, or a serving of nuts (be sure to measure out the nuts so you don’t eat too much).
- If you snack at night, plan to stop eating at a specific time, such as 7:30 p.m.

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“Silent’ and ‘listen’ are spelled with the same letters.”
— Author Unknown

“Change is inevitable — except from a vending machine.”
— Robert C. Gallagher

“Do not repeat anything you will not sign your name to.”
— Author Unknown

“Without Valentine’s Day, February would be... well, January.”
— Jim Gaffigan

“Love one another and you will be happy. It’s as simple and as difficult as that.”
— Michael Leunig