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THE POWER OF LOVE LOVE REALLY CAN BE A DRUG

It's crazy to think that being head over heels, madly in love with someone can benefit your body in the same way that broccoli can, but it's true! Science has proven that being in love comes with myriad health benefits. Fewer colds and natural pain control? Yes, please!

Love triggers the "feel good" hormone, dopamine. When you first fall in love — and the butterflies are flying uncontrollably — dopamine is at very high levels, and mentally, you're happy, healthy, and positive. As the relationship matures, oxytocin, also known as the bonding hormone, blends with dopamine and reduces stress. We all know that stress can lead to a number of health complications, so, the less stress, the better!

New research has found that just being around someone you love can act as a natural pain reliever. Research has also determined that married people complain less about headaches and back pain. When

your mind is happy, your immune system is stronger, making you less prone to getting a cold or stomach bug. Some research has even shown that happily married couples live longer than those who are

not happily married. The hormone vasopressin helps to control your blood pressure. Being in love releases vasopressin into your body, keeping your blood pressure at a healthy level. Both your heart and lungs are also impacted by the love you have for another.

If you aren't in love, you can still reap the benefits through a strong and healthy social support system. When you have friends who bring you joy and happiness, even just a hug may help to release positive hormones and keep

your health on track. Take time to invest in positive relationships to keep your heart and body healthy and happy, both literally and figuratively.

So, what are you waiting for? Let the love flow!



FEELING STUCK LIKE 'GROUNDHOG DAY'? YOU CAN *STILL* TAKE CONTROL

After a life-altering accident, a person's typical routine is suddenly halted, and the days can feel like they're on "repeat." For my February article, I have decided to write about the noticeable resemblance between my clients' lived experiences and the movie "Groundhog Day."

In the movie, a cynical TV weatherman named Phil Connors (Bill Murray) goes to the small town of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to observe an old tradition: a groundhog "predicting" an early spring or six more weeks of winter. Connors is not particularly excited to be there — he shows blatant contempt for the small town and gives a half-hearted report of the event before he is begrudgingly forced to stay the night due to a blizzard. Somehow, instead of waking up the next day, he wakes up — hundreds of times — on the same day he'd just experienced — learning many lessons about himself along the way.

Connors, of course, has it easy compared to many of my clients, who suffer from serious or permanent injuries from their accidents. When talking with my clients, I often hear that the days are starting to "blur" or feel alike. When you used to be the breadwinner of your family, or had aspirations or hobbies that were only made possible by a certain

amount of mobility or executive function, how do you manage life after a traumatic injury?

For Phil Connors, time only finally moved forward when he accepted and grew genuine appreciation for a situation he never wanted to be in. Similarly, many of our clients have discovered deep gratitude for the joys and discoveries in their new life (rather than a hindered life). For them, it feels like their lives have drastically changed, but they can still continue to move forward with an understanding and acceptance of new physical limitations as well as gratitude for parts of life that are not hindered.

A fun February fact after some research is that gratitude is actually a proven, scientifically backed way of rewiring your brain to enjoy life. Multiple studies have shown that people with "gratitude practices" (e.g., writing a gratitude journal) feel more optimistic about their lives. In one study from University of California, Davis, participants who wrote about gratitude had "fewer visits to physicians" than those who focused on "sources of aggravation."

This aligns with other research suggesting that the benefits of gratitude are more physical than you'd think. Glenn Fox, an expert in the science of gratitude at the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business, told USC News, "Benefits associated with gratitude include better sleep, more exercise, reduced symptoms of physical pain, lower levels of inflammation, lower blood pressure, and a host of other things we associate with better health."



In the movie, once Phil accepts and appreciates his new reality, he is able to move forward with his life. Obviously, life doesn't work like a movie; we don't get stuck in fictional time loops, but the analogy is a positive one nonetheless — make the best of every day and appreciate the good in life, especially during times of turmoil or difficulty — you might see the world a little differently after.

It is of course easier said than done, as someone who is not currently injured or permanently impaired. I try to never forget how deeply grateful I am for my health because it can all change in a second. I do my best to remind clients who may be down on themselves or who describe a "Groundhog Day"-type of feeling, to always try to stay positive even in the most difficult situations. That's a lesson I have learned from many of my clients about how to master adapting to new realities, which is invaluable for any difficult situation life may throw at you.

-John G.
Papadopoulos



The Heroes of the Sea

Humpback Whale Saves Scientist

In the movie “Castaway,” we see a whale notifying Chuck Noland of a nearby ship. The whale continuously sprays him with water to get his attention. Although this is a fictional story, what happened in “Castaway” isn’t just movie magic. There are real-life stories about whales helping people in need.



In 2018, a marine biologist, Nan Hauser, was swimming in the waters off the Cook Islands when she noticed a 50,000-pound humpback whale near her. For 10 minutes, Hauser swam around the whale while it nudged her with its head, bumped her with its belly, and swiped at her with its fins. At first, Hauser thought the whale was trying to attack her. But actually, it protected her from a 15-foot-long tiger shark on the other side of the whale.

Hauser told the Daily Mirror, “I’ve spent 28 years underwater with whales and have never had a whale so tactile and so insistent on putting me on his head, belly, or back, and most of all, trying to tuck me under his huge pectoral fin ... I was sure that it was most likely going to be a deadly encounter.” Hauser didn’t know the whale wanted to protect her until she returned to her team’s research vessel. This is when she noticed the tiger shark creeping nearby.

This isn’t the first time a humpback whale has intervened to help another creature. In fact, the humpback’s altruism has been well-documented over the years to show how they benefit other species at their own cost.

In 2009, Robert Pitman took a photo of a humpback cradling a seal while rolling out of the water. The whale had protected the seal from a group of killer whales. Pitman, a marine biologist, has analyzed 115 interactions with humpback whales and concluded that they will travel long distances in order to prevent killer whales from attacking, regardless of what type of animal the killer whale is pursuing.

Whether this behavior is out of instinct, accident, or altruism, they have saved the lives of many aquatic animals and people. They are the heroes of the sea!

Don’t Be a Victim!

FOLLOW THESE SLIP-AND-FALL WINTER SAFETY TIPS

We recently served a client who suffered a slip-and-fall injury, which worsened her pre-existing back issues that included years of treatment and a prior surgery. A year after her fall, with her pain not improved, she required back surgery again, and she was not able to return to her job as a waitress. Four years after her fall, we were able to favorably settle her case. It was a long road, but after her case was resolved, she was thrilled to talk to us about her excitement for the 2021 holiday season, including her plan to buy extra gifts for her grandchildren.

To avoid going down a similar long road, you’ll want to step carefully this snow season! Here’s what you need to know in case it snows:

Wear appropriate footwear. If your shoes don’t provide traction, consider safer shoes! Even if they’re “meant” for cold weather, look again. If you don’t feel like your shoes provide adequate traction against slipping on ice, don’t go outside with them. Rubber soles and boots or shoes with grip and texture can help you stay stable on ice or snow, especially while it begins to melt.

Keep your hands free. Besides a helmet, your hands are a frontline defender against serious head injury while falling. They can help you catch your fall or protect your head where necessary. So, make sure to wear gloves to keep your hands warm and out of your pockets — don’t use your phone while walking on ice either!

Take shorter, smaller steps while walking for stability. Just like how we often have to drive slower in the ice, it’s safer to take smaller strides when navigating icy or snowy sidewalks. If you can, walk on grass or gritty surfaces rather than smooth surfaces.

If you do fall, try to take pictures where you fell if possible. After an injury, it’s crucial to take care of yourself first and call 911 or get to a hospital as soon as you can if needed. However, you should also try to take a picture of what you slipped on, or ask someone to get that picture for you. A picture of black ice can often be the difference between proving negligence and recovering from an injury or not getting a settlement for the injury at all.

If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to call our legal team! After an accident, it can feel like the ground was swept from under you. We’ll be there to help you back on your feet.



Have you ever intended to eat healthy meals throughout the week, but as the days went on, you either ran out of time or patience and picked up unhealthy eating habits? We’ve all been there, but if you find yourself falling into this routine regularly, you might want to give meal prepping a chance.

Meal prepping has gained popularity over the past few years, and social media has been flooded with images of fitness gurus’ meal-prepping habits. To properly meal prep, you need to plan and shop for your meals in advance. You then need to cook all of your meals for the week and store them for easy access. This way, you won’t be tempted to eat fast food or other unhealthy options since your meals will already be prepared and ready to eat.



This viral TikTok pasta has you covered for Valentine’s Day!

Ingredients

- 4 cups cherry or grape tomatoes
- 1 shallot, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Salt, to taste
- Red pepper flakes, to taste
- 3 sprigs of fresh thyme
- 1 8-oz block of feta cheese
- 10 oz pasta of choice
- Lemon zest to taste

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 400 F.
- In a large pan, combine tomatoes, shallot, garlic, olive oil, salt, red pepper, and thyme.
- Place the cheese block in the center of the pan and bake for 40 minutes.
- Cook pasta according to box instructions. Save 1/2 cup of pasta water before draining the noodles.
- When the tomato and feta cheese mixture is done, add the cooked pasta, pasta water, and lemon zest, stirring until completely combined.

While there are many benefits to meal prepping, there are three that stand above the rest.

You’ll cut food costs.

Eating out at restaurants several days a week can get incredibly expensive. Even fast food can quickly burn a hole in your pocket. By going to the grocery store and getting the ingredients to prepare your meals in advance, you will be saving money. And you will never ask yourself, “What should I have for dinner tonight?”

You’ll save time.

Our days are already hectic and busy enough, and more often than not, cooking after working or running errands seems like just another chore. With meal prep, you can spend the time you would have spent cooking on hobbies or relaxation since your meals will already be cooked and prepared. It’s a great way to make more time for yourself.

You’ll be eating healthier.

Eating out at restaurants, especially if it’s fast food, can be quite unhealthy. You may find yourself putting on weight if you’re eating out every other day. By meal prepping, you can introduce more home-cooked meals into your diet. You can choose healthier foods, and your portion sizes will be limited since the food is already made. This way you won’t overeat, and you can enjoy fresh and delicious meals every day of the week.

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SOLUTION