

Ithaca Health Alliance Newsletter



Research Shows Pleasant Ways to Reduce Stress

by Diane Hecht

There are many ways we can reduce stress in our lives, but one of the most powerful is to become aware of our attitudes and how we think and speak to ourselves. We can change our thoughts about ourselves and others to be more gentle, loving, compassionate, and less judgmental. We can shift our focus from what's "bad" in our lives to what's "good," creating more feelings of gratitude and contentment. By being aware of our thoughts, *moment by moment*, we can *choose* to change those self-defeating, negative thoughts into more positive in-the-moment affirmations and bring ourselves to a more peaceful state.

Reducing stress in our lives is not necessarily about removing or insulating ourselves from those situations we may think of as "negative," unless they are clearly abusive. What seems to give us a better quality life is to be able to find tools or ways, such as meditation and yoga, to help us to be more calm, happy, and balanced. The less stress we react with in all situations, whether we think of them as positive or negative, the more energy and clarity we will have to take more positive actions in our lives.

Daniel Goleman (2003) writes in "Destructive Emotions — How Can We Overcome Them?" about new research on meditation. Studies that included thousands of people showed that when they reported feelings of sadness, anxiety, and anger, a spot in the right prefrontal cortex of their brains lit up with activity, and when they reported feelings of happiness and enthusiasm, a spot in their left prefrontal lobes was active. A meditating monk was tested by

MRI and EEG machines. As soon as he began *meditating on sending compassion out to others* his brain activity shifted from his right prefrontal lobe to his left, and he began feeling contented and happy. Another research project involved measuring different physical parameters of people when they spent one minute thinking about things they loved — things that touched their hearts and made them feel joyful. *One minute* of thinking about joy and love released endorphins in their brains, relaxed their hearts, and increased their number of T-cells, the white blood cells that go after bacteria and viruses.

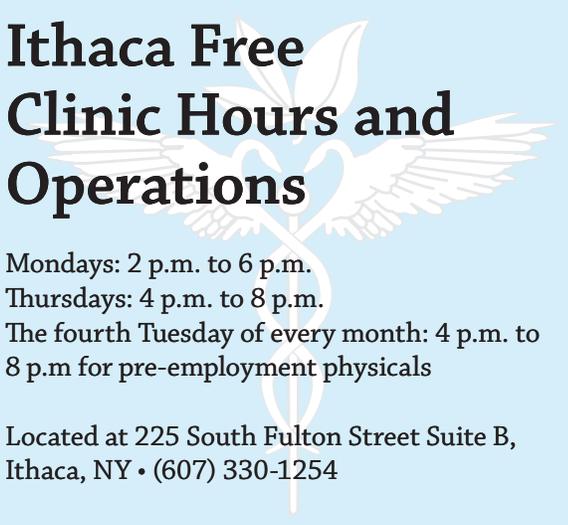
How great that in the middle of an Ithaca winter, we can choose to take a minute to visualize joyful things such as lying on a beach in Hawaii, or meditate on sending love and compassion out to others, and by so doing, change our brain chemistry, boost our immune systems, and create happiness for ourselves as well.

Diane Hecht owns a business called "The Joy Within." She is a certified meditation/stress management instructor and has taught mind/body connection and meditation/relaxation stress management courses and workshops for many area schools.

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Ithaca Free Clinic Hours and Operations



Mondays: 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Thursdays: 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
The fourth Tuesday of every month: 4 p.m. to 8 p.m for pre-employment physicals

Located at 225 South Fulton Street Suite B,
Ithaca, NY • (607) 330-1254

The Ithaca Free Clinic is a project of the **Ithaca Health Alliance**. More than 95 percent of the work we do in the community is through volunteer efforts. If you're looking for volunteer opportunities, call 330-1254 and ask to speak to the Clinic Coordinator.

The Ithaca Health Alliance

(IHA) was founded in 1997. Our mission is to facilitate access to health care for all, with a focus on the needs of the un- and underinsured.

Become a member!

IHA members receive discounts from participating health providers, and are eligible for financial assistance with preventive and emergency care through the Ithaca Health Fund. To join, call 330-1253 and ask for IHA's office manager, or visit our web site for more information. The IHA office is located at 225 S. Fulton Street, Suite B, Ithaca, NY.

Ithaca Health Alliance

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Feel the Joy

by Shawn Tubridy

In this time of shorter days and longer nights, it is easy to slip into our darker feelings. The winter blues and blahs can be hard to avoid, but feelings of joy are possible. There are many ways to promote joy in your life.

Be grateful for what you have. Often people put so much energy into fretting about what they want and don't have that they miss out on the many gifts in their lives. If you have food, clothing, and shelter, you are more fortunate than most people in the world. If you have a hard time believing that, volunteer to help others. Value your body for the many things you can do. If you are unhappy with your current state of wellness, work on improving your health. The body has a miraculous ability to heal itself. Friends and family, including your pets, are gifts, even when they bring you challenging lessons.



Get outside every day. Just as you can get a suntan on a cloudy day, you can also get enough natural light to help counteract seasonal affect disorder. While you are outside, take the time to appreciate nature. Listen to the birds. Feel the wind on your face. Look for animal tracks in the mud or snow.

Appreciate the moment. The past has passed and dwelling on it will not change things. Learn what you can and move forward. The future is will take care of itself when the time comes. The present moment is a present. When we are able to live in the moment without past regrets and future anxieties, joy is much easier to feel.

Here and now you have everything that you really need. Realize how lucky you are! What you pay attention to is what you see more of. Look for the joy in our life. Start now!

Shawn Tubridy is a local herbalist, an activist, and a long-time volunteer with the Ithaca Health Alliance.

Vitamin D: “The Sunshine Vitamin,” but what if there’s not much sunshine?

by Julia Lapp



Vitamin D is unique among the vitamins because our bodies can synthesize all we need with the help of exposure to sunlight. Some nutritionists would argue that, in theory, vitamin D may not be an “essential” vitamin (meaning that we need to ingest it through the foods we eat) at all, particularly since many of its actions are more hormone-like.

However, living north of 40 degrees latitude in the winter months presents severe limitations to sun exposure and needed UV light. Foods that are naturally high in vitamin D, such as fatty, cold water fish, like salmon, sardines, mackerel, or herring, are not consumed in high amounts in the U.S. This led the US government to initiate its program of fortifying milk with vitamin D to ensure adequate intakes, particularly in children, for the prevention of *rickets* or soft, poorly mineralized bones. Prior to that, a daily dose of cod liver oil was the thing to take to get vitamins A and D for strong bones and healthy immunity, particularly in the winter months.

Rickets rarely occur in the U.S. today, but a spate of vitamin D research in recent years has shown that preventing rickets is certainly not all there is to the vitamin D story. Vitamin D appears to play many roles in the body that may influence risk of many diseases, and even with the milk fortification program, people living north of 40 degrees latitude may still be coming up short on their intakes.

Since the 1980s, several studies in both animals and humans have shown an inverse relationship be-

tween vitamin D status, often as indicated by sunlight exposure, and cancer occurrence. In addition, more recent evidence has indicated that vitamin D may be a reason why some autoimmune conditions, like *multiple sclerosis*, have higher prevalence in northern climates. Vitamin D appears to reduce the endogenous production of inflammatory proteins such as *cytokines*. This “inflammatory response” to exposure to dietary components, stress-hormones, infection, or other toxic substances has become the leading explanatory model for how conditions like diabetes, heart disease, autoimmune diseases, and cancer arise.

Because of its hormone-like action in the body, vitamin D has also been shown to play a role in neurotransmitter production in the brain and in the GI tract. Do your bowels act up when you’re stressed or emotional? The *enteric nervous system* is the gut’s own nervous system that produces some of the exact same chemicals found in the brain, like *serotonin* and *acetylcholine*. Vitamin D plays an important role in the regulation of chemicals such as these, and as a result, has been found (in humans) to have implications for disorders ranging from *Seasonal Affect Disorder* (SAD) down to *Irritable Bowel Syndrome* (IBS). For example, in a study of individuals with SAD, researchers found that after one month of treatment, participants experienced significant improvement with a vitamin D supplement over phototherapy treatment.

At this point, evidence is still mounting on the research front to revise the DRI recommendations for vitamin D (currently set at 5 ug/day or 200 IU/day). Many nutritionists recommend that people (northerners, in particular) consider getting additional vitamin D by eating more fish (as mentioned above) or taking a fish oil supplement that contains vitamin D (10–20 ug/day or 400–800 IU/day). Caution should be taken when supplementing with vitamin D, however. Intakes of over 50 ug/day (2000 IU/day) have been associated with mineralization of soft tissue, leading to liver, heart, or other tissue damage. If you’re interested in learning more about vitamin D in your diet, contact your local nutritionist or dietitian.

A registered dietician and assistant professor of nutrition at Ithaca College, Julia Lapp also volunteers with the IHA’s education subcommittee.

Oatmeal Pancakes

Servings: 6

Ingredients:

- 2 cups fat free or 1% milk
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups old fashioned oatmeal, uncooked
- 2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/3 cup oil
- Nonstick cooking spray

Instructions:

Pour the milk over the oatmeal in a mixing bowl. Let stand for 5 minutes.

In a separate bowl, mix together the flour,



baking powder, salt, and sugar. Stir the beaten eggs into the oatmeal-milk mixture. Add the dry ingredients. Stir in the oil.

Coat frying pan with nonstick cooking spray. Heat the pan until a drop of water will bounce around. Spoon or pour about 1/4 cup of batter onto the hot pan. Cook until the edges are full of broken bubbles and before the center bubbles break, about 2 or 3 minutes.

Turn the pancake over with a spatula. Cook the second side until the edges are dry, about 1 or 2 minutes. Serve pancake while hot. To store leftovers, wrap the pancakes; refrigerate no longer than 1 week.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 2 4-inch pancakes	
Calories: 314	% Daily Value
Fat Cals.: 136	
Total Fat 15g	23%
Saturated Fat 2g	10%
Cholesterol 61mg	21%
Sodium 416mg	17%
Total Carbohydrate 35g	12%
Dietary Fiber 2g	
Protein 10g	
Vitamin A 27%	Vitamin C 1%
Calcium 37%	Iron 33%

Vegetable Strata

Servings: 12

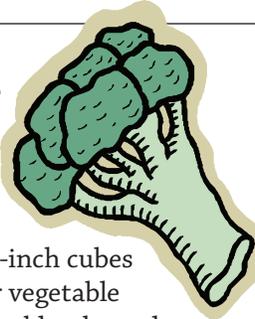
Ingredients:

- 6 eggs
- Stale bread, cut into approximately 1-inch cubes
- 1 bunch broccoli, asparagus, or other vegetable *or* one 10-ounce package frozen vegetable, thawed
- 2 cups milk, skim or 1%
- 1 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese

Instructions:

Wash vegetables. If using fresh broccoli, peel stems taking off tough outer layer, and slice into quarter-inch slices. Cut tops of broccoli into small flowerets. Steam or boil broccoli starting with the stems. When they can be just pierced by the tip of a sharp knife, add tops. Steam until just tender. Drain and immediately plunge into cold water to stop cooking and retain bright green color. Drain when cool.

Layer the bottom of a 9x13 inch pan with stale bread cubes. Beat eggs, add milk, and combine well. Pour egg and milk mixture over bread. Cover with broccoli. Sprinkle cheese on top. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or



overnight. Uncover and bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until egg is thoroughly cooked in the middle. Cut into 12 rectangles and serve.

Variations:

- May add cubed ham, crumbled cooked sausage, or crumbled cooked bacon.
- May use leftover cooked vegetables instead of, or in addition to, broccoli or asparagus.

• Any stale bread product may be used, including leftover pizza.

Note: To lower cholesterol to 58mg per serving, use 3 whole eggs and 4 egg whites. This also lowers fat by 2gm per serving.

Recipes: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1/12 of recipe	
Calories: 137	% Daily Value
Fat Cals.: 54	
Total Fat 6g	9%
Cholesterol 105mg	35%
Sodium 194mg	8%
Total Carbohydrate 12g	4%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 3g	
Protein 9g	17%
Vitamin A 14%	Vitamin C 16%
Calcium 16%	Iron 6%
Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	9/01



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension



Thumbs Up! To Gorges Web Sites

The Ithaca Health Alliance wishes to recognize the donated time and expertise of Gorges Web Sites, a web site development and internet service company located in Ithaca, NY. Business owner Chris Grant approached the Community Relations Committee of the IHA with the offer of pro bono design services to achieve a website overhaul.

Staff from Gorges Web Sites and the IHA have collaborated in adding information, functionality, and ease of use for our IHA members, clinic visitors, and interested community members! We are proud to share our new and improved version at www.ithacahealth.org.

Gorges Web Sites is located at 109 N. Aurora Street in Ithaca. They can be reached by email at info@GorgesWebSites.com or by calling 607-280-2010.

VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER

From the Clinic Operations Committee

Lou Munchmeyer, M.D., has been a volunteer with the Ithaca Free Clinic since it opened in 2006. What's more, he was one of the first physicians in the community to voice his support of the Clinic. Always diligent in his follow-up in response to the needs of patients, he has shown himself to be a tireless advocate of the un- and underinsured residents of Tompkins County.

In addition to the many hours he has given to the Clinic and the IHA, he has been generous with funds to purchase office and medical equipment. Other volunteers praise Dr. Munchmeyer's collegiality, intelligence, and sensitivity in all of his interactions at the Ithaca Free Clinic. Thank you, Dr. Munchmeyer, for emphasizing care and service in the delivery of health care!

Compiled and reported by Brooke Hansen and Bethany Schroeder

Spirituality & Humor: Studies Confirm Health Benefits

In this era of high-tech medicine and the proliferating pharmaceutical market, we should not forget some of the basics of what can keep us healthy. The health promoting qualities of spirituality and humor were confirmed again in recent issues of the peer-reviewed journal, Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine. Fitzpatrick and colleagues conducted a study of 900 HIV-positive adults and the impact of spiritual activities (e.g., prayer and meditation) and psychological techniques (e.g., support groups and visualizations).

The researchers found that people using psycho-spiritual practices experienced beneficial clinical outcomes and a reduced risk of death. Last summer, Sahakian and Frishman reviewed the literature on humor studies, from the 1970s to 2006, and summarized repeated outcomes showing the beneficial effects of laughter. Mirth has been linked with decreased levels of cortisol and epinephrine (associated with stress responses) and improved cardiovascular circulation. A scientific organization has even arisen to promote the humor of everyday life, the *Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor*. The group's website (www.aath.org) provides numerous resources for healthcare practitioners to get caught up on how to use humor in healing activities. For the rest of us, winter is a great time to settle in with some funny videos and let the healing begin.

Fitzpatrick, L. J., Berger, J. S., & Kim, J. L., et al. (2007). Survival in HIV-1-positive adults practicing psychological or spiritual activities for one year, 13,5; 18-23.

Sahakian, A., & Frishman, W. H. (2007). Humor and the cardiovascular system, 13,4; 56-58.

Keeping Your Balance

According to Scott McCredie, a health and science writer who recently published Balance: In Search of the Lost Sense, the sense of balance deteriorates as early as one's 20s. Among other things, causes for a loss of balance include vertigo, low blood pressure, brain injuries, certain medications, and some chronic diseases. The effects of normal aging only make matters worse with the decline of vision, sensors on the bottoms of the feet that tell the brain about the body's position, and the tiny hairs in the canals of the inner ear that send information to the brain about gravity and motion. A loss of muscle strength and flexibility only add to the potential of losing one's balance.

*Mirth has
been linked with
decreased levels of stress
chemicals and improved
cardiovascular
circulation.*

In his quest to learn about balance, McCredie interviewed many experts who advised that the best way to preserve balance is to engage in simple activities or exercises, such as walking heel to toe or standing on one foot. McCredie's survey of balance-related information includes descriptions of how to test balance, how to compare balance performance with that of others, and how to build motor skills. McCredie noted that tai chi is an especially effective method for maintaining or improving balance.

J. E. Brody. (2008). The New York Times, January 8, Preserving a fundamental sense: balance.



Brooke Hansen is associate professor of anthropology at Ithaca College, and Bethany Schroeder is a local writer and healthcare consultant. Both are volunteers with the Ithaca Health Alliance.

HANNA SOMATIC EDUCATION + IHA MEMBERSHIP = SUCCESS!

In an effort to build IHA membership and teach community members a body/mind skill, Richard Eshelman, an IHA provider, is offering a one-year membership in the IHA and, at the same time, the chance to learn Hanna Somatics. (Membership in the IHA is \$100 a year. The additional cost of the class will cover room rentals and classroom expenses.)

Contact Richard Eshelman at 607-280-6788 or by email at upstatehse@gmail.com. This 8-week guided movement class begins February 28 and lasts through April 17, 2008. It meets from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings at the Foundation of Light (391 Turkey Hill Road).

To learn more about Hanna Somatics, visit <http://www.ithacahealth.org/forms/IHAfall06news.pdf> on the web, or you can listen to a description at <http://www.somatics.com/MP3/Head-to-Toe9.mp3>.

Come and Celebrate!
The Ithaca Health Alliance
 invites you to the

**Third Annual
 Ithaca Clinic Gala Benefit**

Saturday, March 22, 2008 at Olivia Restaurant
 5-6pm VIP Cocktail Hour • 6-9pm Gala Benefit

Elegant Food, Drink, and Music

Tickets
 \$50 for members • \$100 for friends/supporters • \$200 for VIP tickets

For tickets, call 607-330-1253
 or visit us on the web at www.ithacahealth.org/gala08

The Ithaca Free Clinic
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Newsletter

Winter 2008



Vitamin D in Winter: Where's the Sun?

A Healthy Set of Recipes

Joy, Mirth, Meditation & Health

Keeping Your Balance

Hanna Somatic Education • Free Clinic Gala

