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BOOMERS, ELDERS & MORE

*A Monthly Elder Care Newsletter of The Vanderbilt Child &
Family Center*



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Compassion Burnout*
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***"One person caring about another represents life's
greatest value." -Jim Rohn***

A Note from the Coordinator

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Greetings! I want to take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Toya Cobb and I am serving in the role of Family Services Coordinator for the Vanderbilt Child and Family Center. I look forward to connecting with you personally during our monthly events that will resume this fall. In the meantime, if you have any questions or suggestions for our program for the upcoming year, feel free to contact me at any time.

Warmly,

Toya Cobb



VANDERBILT

Child and Family
Center

Top 5 Foods to Feed Your Brain

Memory-boosting nutrients to work into your diet

by Rachel Meltzer



Think about it: The foods you eat have a huge impact on your body, from your energy level to your heart health and beyond. Your brain is no exception, and research shows that things like the MIND (Mediterranean — Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) diet, which focuses on specific brain-beneficial food groups, is linked with better brain health as well as dementia prevention.

Research also shows that the same benefits can't be obtained from consuming the same nutrients through supplements. While the reasons for this aren't completely understood, experts believe they may lie in how pills and foods metabolize in different ways in our bodies.

Here are what experts say are the top five foods you should be eating for brain health, and easy ways to make room for them in your diet.

Leafy greens

Of all of the foods included in the MIND diet, which was developed by researchers at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, leafy green vegetables stand out as an especially important category. People between the ages of 58 to 99 who ate a heaping half-cup of cooked leafy greens, or a heaping cup of uncooked greens like lettuce each day, had less cognitive decline — the equivalent of 11 years less — than those who hardly ate any leafy greens, say researchers in one study published in the journal *Neurology*. MIND diet researchers recommend getting at least six such servings per week.

Get more: Start your day with a kale and mushroom omelet; mix a cup of baby spinach into pasta; dress your dinner plate with a handful of arugula before placing your entrée on top.

Berries

While all fruits pack some nutritional benefit, only berries seem to wield power when it comes to improving brain health. Women age 70 and older who ate one or two half-cup servings of blueberries and strawberries per week had brains that performed as much as two-and-a-half years younger than women who hardly ate any berries, according to a study published in the journal *Annals of Neurology*.

Researchers say the flavonoid compounds in berries, especially the anthocyanidin pigments that have powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties and give berries their beautiful hues, may be responsible. Consistent with this research, the MIND diet researchers suggest eating berries two or more times per week.

Get more: Blend frozen blueberries into smoothies; slice strawberries into a salad with avocado and walnuts; mash raspberries on toast with peanut butter in place of grape jelly.

Fish

Eating seafood as little as once per week can protect against cognitive decline, according to a 2016 study published in the journal *Neurology*. When researchers tracked more than 900 men and women in their 70s and 80s for around five years, they found that those who ate more fish saw fewer declines in memory and other measures of brain health compared with people who rarely ate seafood. One reason, say scientists — the omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, which previous research has found can protect the brain in a number of ways.

Omega-3s aren't the only brain-healthy fats, though. Researchers have found that extra virgin olive oil, for instance, contains compounds that help clean up tiny tangles and plaques in the brain, slowing disease progression.

Get more: Have tuna instead of a ham sandwich; swap salmon for grilled chicken on a Caesar salad; make fish tacos with mango salsa for Taco Tuesday.

Nuts

When it comes to eating for brain health, it's okay to go a little nuts. Researchers recommend that you eat five or more servings of nuts like almonds, walnuts and pistachios per week. Women age 70 or older who ate five or more servings of nuts per week, for instance, scored higher on cognitive tests compared with women who didn't eat nuts at all, according to a Harvard University study. The researchers say this may be due to the high concentration of nutrients in nuts; previous research has linked them with reduced inflammation, decreased insulin resistance and improved levels of fats in the blood, which can all contribute to brain health.

Get more: Sprinkle walnuts onto your morning oatmeal; toss sliced almonds into a salad instead of croutons; eat a handful of cashews along with a small apple for an easy snack.

Cocoa

Preventing cognitive decline can be as easy as adding an herb or spice to your food. Cocoa beans are a top source of flavonoid antioxidants, which have long been found to have heart health benefits. Newer research is finding that the flavonoids found in cocoa can also accumulate in the brain, particularly the regions involved with learning and memory, and can prevent damage and protect brain health over the long term. Another spice to include: turmeric, a potent source of the easily absorbed compound curcumin, which may reduce inflammation in the brain.

Get more: Sprinkle cocoa powder into plain yogurt and top with slices of banana; blend into a smoothie for an instant chocolate treat; enjoy two squares of dark chocolate for a rich, satisfying dessert.



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Ways to Eat Well As You Get Older



Know what a healthy plate looks like

See how to build a healthy plate at ChooseMyPlate.gov

1



Look for important nutrients

Eat enough protein, fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and Vitamin D.

2



Read nutrition labels

Be a smart shopper! Find items that are lower in fat, added sugars, and sodium.

3



Use recommended servings

Learn the recommended daily servings for adults aged 60+ at heart.org

4



Stay hydrated

Water is an important nutrient too! Drink fluids consistently throughout the day.

5



Stretch your food budget

Get help paying for healthy food at BenefitsCheckUp.org/getSNAP

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How to Avoid Compassion Burnout

Two experts offer insight into how to keep giving, with boundaries

By Patricia Corrigan

Caregivers, both professional and personal, often suffer from compassion fatigue — a syndrome also known as “secondary trauma stress.” But navigating any close, personal relationship also can lead to emotional stress and burnout.



As a self-described former “black-belt people pleaser,” the Venerable Tenzin Chogyi, a Buddhist nun, says: “Burnout may be a reflection of a society that so often looks to women to comfort those in need to the point of ignoring their own needs, or it may be misplaced expectations. But compassion doesn’t mean doing whatever anybody wants you to do 24/7. People can extend compassion to others without losing their own identity or an awareness of their own needs.”

How? By establishing compassion boundaries.

We’re not talking about putting up a brick wall, but something more on the order of a permeable cell membrane, a boundary that can move as needed to allow for more sustainable relationships,” says Chogyi, who is also an activist and Buddhist retreat leader and teacher in Soquel, Calif.



“Your feelings come from whether your needs are being met, and so much of our humanity is impacted when our needs are not met.”

Chogyi changed from being that black-belt people pleaser, and has the credentials to prove it. Through the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) at the Stanford University School of Medicine, Chogyi has completed Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT™), an international program developed by contemplative scholars, clinical psychologists and researchers at Stanford. She also completed the CCT™ teacher-training program, which now has more than 400 graduates.

Compassion May Save Our Species

Dr. James Doty, a clinical professor of neurosurgery at Stanford, founded CCARE in 2008. He says that acts of compassion “result in pleasure, decrease stress and promote the immune system.” He also thinks they may be what will save our species if we reject exclusionary policies when dealing with our fellow humans.

“If you look at most of the problems in the world, they are a result of the ever-decreasing lack of empathy and compassion,” Doty says, “especially the idea of populism or the ‘Me First’ attitude.” That narrative, he adds, “depersonalizes and objectifies others, as if they were less than human.”



Chogyi has seen evidence of that. “In my teaching, I’ve found that some hold back from showing compassion to anyone not in our ‘group,’ people who don’t necessarily look, behave or think like we do,” she says. “It is imperative to extend the scope of our compassion beyond those whom we identify with personally.”

Also, some people think that extending compassion will make them soft or allow people to take advantage of them. That's why establishing compassion boundaries is such a useful skill.

Eager to learn more, I recently attended a daylong workshop facilitated by Chogyi and Sunil Joseph, a longtime student of a communication philosophy and practice called “nonviolent communication,” on how to set these boundaries in such a way that we can, as Joseph says, “hold ourselves with care while helping others.”

Step Up, Speak Out and Set Limits

During the workshop, held at the Tse Chen Ling Center in San Francisco, participants learned it is important to step up, speak out and set limits that allow us to give what we can – but not give so much that either person is harmed emotionally.

In discussion and role-play exercises, Joseph and Chogyi illustrated how this practice can:

- Provide clarity in relationships
- Allow us to own our integrity
- Put a stop to a cycle of reactivity that can leave both parties angry

“In Buddhism, we talk about balancing both wisdom and compassion,” says Chogyi. “Just as a bird needs two wings to fly, we need both wisdom and compassion. Many of us need training in wise compassion, and the permission to manifest it in our actions.”

At the workshop, Joseph recalled an argument with his father. “I grew up in urban India, where we didn't know what boundaries were,” he said. “Years later, one day in the car, I just snapped after hearing another of my father's controlling remarks. There was a sudden shift from what I always thought I should do to what my needs were.”

Joseph was prepared for the difficult conversation that followed. Since 2004, he has studied and taught nonviolent communication techniques to help people realize when they are saying “yes” when what they really want to say is “no.” He says, “Your feelings come from whether your needs are being met, and so much of our humanity is impacted when our needs are not met. Just knowing that helps you get out of blaming.”

A Boundary Successfully Changed

What was the result of Joseph’s conversation with his father?

“After I said what I had to say, I stayed with my father in his need for respect,” Joseph says. “Our conversation opened something for both of us, and changed a boundary. At first, having a challenging conversation can feel like going backwards. But acknowledging and expressing your own needs can move a relationship to a new place. It’s hard work, but it can be a beautiful process.”

How do you begin? Once you have acknowledged your own needs and the importance of the consideration due them, Chogyi and Joseph recommend negotiating what might move the relationship forward. “Identify what’s working,” Chogyi says, “and know that it’s okay to be clear about what you’re capable of giving and what you can do – and what you can’t.” It’s fine to say you want to be heard, respected and acknowledged, and do try to keep nervous laughter bottled up. “Don’t try to negate the seriousness of the conversation,” Chogyi says. “Maybe all along you’ve been trying to do what you think other people want, but how do you really know? Sometimes, people are happier when you assert yourself, and thrilled to learn how to find a better balance.”

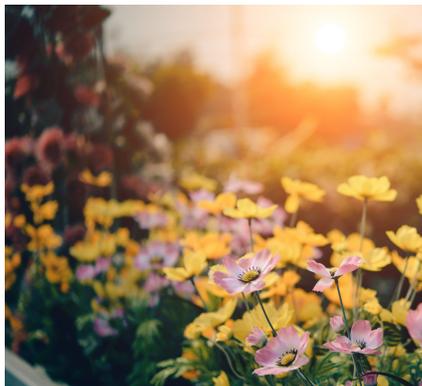
Joseph and Chogyi add that what’s most important is to start the conversation. “It’s easy to feel overwhelmed at first,” Chogyi says. But just keep showing up, because if you get the balance right, you don’t have to burn out.”

In and Around the Town Community Events August 2019



August 3-4, 2019

Half-Price Weekend at Cheekwood is Saturday to Sunday, August 3-4, 2019, from 9:00am to 5:00pm. In celebration of Cheekwood being named the 6th best botanical garden in the U.S. by USA Today, they are offering half-price admission and free parking. Guests can enjoy garden tours, house and history tours, food trucks, and storybook houses.



August 6, 2019

AARP CAREversations: A Family Caregiving Event will take place on Tuesday, August 6, 2019 at 6:00pm. Join us for this lightly facilitated conversation about family caregiving. Discover five key steps to aid you in your caregiving journey. Connect and exchange tips and ideas with fellow caregivers. Explore local caregiving resources available in your community.

For questions about this workshop call 1-866-740-6947



August 9-10, 2019

The 16th annual Tomato Art Fest returns to the Five Points area of East Nashville on Friday and Saturday, August 9-10, 2019. Last year attendance hit over 60,000, making it one of Nashville's most popular free festivals. Throughout the two-day event, there are tomato-themed activities, contests, vendors, drinks, live music, art, and all-around good times.

