



Wellbeing Insights

Living a Better, More Vibrant Life



In This Issue

April: Donate Life Month & Stress Awareness Month

Minimalism – Clear the Clutter & Your Mind.....	1
On the Menu: Arugula	3
Making Friends with Stress.....	4
It's National Donate Life Month.....	5
Mindful Minute.....	5
Parenting Corner: Teaching Emotional Coping	6

Minimalism – Clear the Clutter & Your Mind

The cycling trend to purge our lives of unnecessary belongings is in full force. Social media sites, newsstand headlines and TV media frequently plug the popular practice by touting buzzwords like minimalize, declutter, simplify and organize. Marie Kondo has become a household name, and her joy-sparking litmus test continues to be the topic of seemingly endless discussion in blogs, water cooler chats, talk shows and parent groups.

While the practice of the minimalist lifestyle is not new, it is growing in popularity. Some surmise this is due to its widespread appeal among Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) who comprise a quarter of the U.S. population and the majority of the workplace. Data shows that Millennials have less spending power than older generations, largely due to disproportionately lower pay and record student loan balances.

Minimalism – Clear the Clutter & Your Mind

Continued from page 1

Moreover, their values tend to be more aligned with purchasing experiences (travel, outdoor activities, escape rooms, charity walks, etc.) versus material goods. So, the appeal of tiny houses, ultra-organization of belongings, donating goods to charity, etc., all of which are practices of this trend, are gaining more awareness, including from other generations.

Regardless of the circumstances driving the actual trend of minimalism, research suggests that keeping your external environment, including car, home, computer desktop, etc., tidy and organized is good for your physical and emotional health, productivity and focus. One study found that participants whose houses were cleaner had better health and were more physically active than those whose houses were not, likely due to the physical exertion needed to keep their homes neat and clean. Another study found that female participants who perceived their homes to be cluttered had unhealthy cortisol

level patterns, which leads to higher incidences of depression and anxiety and decreased capacity to make decisions, stay focused and think clearly. Indeed, researchers in this study did find that these women reported higher rates of depression and fatigue than their study counterparts with reportedly more tidy homes.

Another study showed that participants were less irritable and more productive and focused in an organized, neat environment versus a cluttered environment where their stress increased. Researchers determined that clutter can overload the vision centers of our brain and make it difficult and exhausting to focus and process other information. Considering the brain's innate desire for order, providing a clutter-free environment gives the brain a break of sorts. Moreover, when trying to perform complex mental tasks, an orderly environment allows the brain to focus more attention on the task at hand without distraction, allowing you to complete the task more efficiently.

If you're considering making some changes to declutter your life, a simple Google search will yield thousands of videos, blogs and lists offering suggestions. Additionally, from this trend has emerged countless self-proclaimed organization specialists. Keep in mind that the mental overload of these choices alone can have the same effect on your brain and body as physical clutter. So, if you aren't up for being inundated with ideas, consider a simple approach to start decluttering:

- Select just one area where you frequently spend your time (e.g., your inbox, workspace or desk, kitchen).
- Observe what's getting in the way of a clear, neat, organized space and envision what order and simplicity might look like.
- Set a reasonable timeline to reach your goal and break the decluttering process down into very small steps. If you can't part with the clutter just yet, at least put it out of sight and keep it from piling up again.
- Take note of how you feel immediately after cleaning up, as well as over time, and let that intrinsic motivation be your guide.

While the effort to get and stay organized can seem insurmountable, the benefits have been repeatedly demonstrated. Human beings thrive in an orderly environment. Give it a try; you deserve it. Your mind and health will thank you for it!





On the Menu

All About Arugula

If you're looking for a way to spice up your salad greens, look no further than arugula. This leafy green, also known as rocket, has a distinct peppery flavor that makes it a great alternative to standard salad greens varieties like spinach, romaine and iceberg.

This spicy green has been around for quite a long time, even making an appearance in the Old Testament Book of Kings, suggesting that arugula has been harvested since as far back as 6th century B.C. Since then arugula has been mentioned in literature throughout the course of history, with claims of it being used as a sedative and prized as an aphrodisiac.

While modern science might no longer support the use of arugula for sedation, it still hosts a variety of valuable nutrients proven to be beneficial. This might be why it's so commonly found in the heart-healthy Mediterranean diet.

Here are five reasons why arugula should make an appearance in your next salad:

1. It's full of phytonutrients, including vitamins A, K and C and folate. It scored over 600 on the Aggregate Nutrient Density Index (ANDI), which is a tool that's used to rank food by nutrient density according to how many nutrients are delivered to your body per calorie consumed on a scale of 1 to 1,000, with 1,000 being the highest possible rating.
2. It's a great source of beta-carotene, which promotes healthy vision.
3. It contains significant amounts of magnesium, sodium and potassium – three very important minerals that aid in blood vessel relaxation, which is important for maintaining healthy blood pressure.
4. Similar to cabbage and collard greens, arugula is a member of the cruciferous family of vegetables. Cruciferous veggies are a great source of glucosinolates, which studies have shown can help with hormone activity and helping the body to rid itself of carcinogens.

Nutrition Info

Per Serving (1/5 batch)

Calories	99
Total Fat	8.7g
Carbohydrates	1.2g
Sugar	0.5g
Fiber	0.3g
Protein	4.6g
Sodium	219mg

Keep It Fresh

Keeping delicate, leafy greens fresh can be tricky. One tried and true method is to line a food-storage container with a paper towel, place the arugula on top, cover it with another paper towel and place the container lid on securely. Keep it in the refrigerator and use within 7 to 10 days.

Simple Arugula Salad

Ingredients:

- 5 cups arugula
- 2/3 cup shaved Parmesan cheese
- 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Pinch of salt and freshly ground pepper

Directions:

In a large salad bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Add the arugula and toss to combine. Top with shaved Parmesan and serve immediately.



Making Friends with Stress

The number one message that we receive about stress is that stress is our enemy! However, there are different types of stress, and while some are the undisputed enemy, others can be quite useful. First, the enemy – chronic psychological stress. Examples include constant worrying over money, daily anxiety and rage during rush hour. When these types of situations trip our stress response on a regular basis, the consequences are quite serious.

However, we also experience plenty of justifiable acute stress. For example, you have to present at an important meeting, an unexpected project pops up that requires a fast turnaround, etc. We've been taught that even in these highly stressful situations, stress is bad and we should try to calm ourselves down and suppress our response in order to handle it properly.

But what if the most effective stress management technique in these situations is actually to embrace the challenge? What if the most deadly ingredient in our stress response is actually our belief that it is bad for us? There is now solid evidence that this is precisely the case. The good news is that this means we can stop stressing about stress and instead make it our ally. The harmful effects of acute stress are not inevitable; however, how we think about it can have a profound impact on our body's response. Here's how ...

Embrace your stress response as beneficial.

Imagine you were just confronted with a stressful situation; your heart begins to race, your palms are getting sweaty and you're highly alert. How do you interpret this reaction? Is it anxiety or a sign that you're not coping well with the pressure? What if instead you viewed this reaction as helpful? Your body is energizing and



preparing you to rise to the occasion and meet this challenge. Truly, that is exactly what your body is doing, and embracing it may be the single best stress management tool you have.

Research suggests that not only will believing your stress response is helpful increase your confidence and performance in the moment, it also will completely neutralize the 43% increased risk of death associated with highly stressed people who believe that stress is bad for them. Talk about the power of positive thinking!

But this change in perspective doesn't only affect your conscious mind; it affects your physiological response to stress, as well. When we take a look at what's going on in the brains and bodies of people in stressful situations, those who believe the stress response is helpful actually maintained relaxed blood vessels and showed a physiological response almost identical to people experiencing moments of joy or courage.

Use your stress hormones to your advantage.

Let's start with understanding the hormonal response of stress. The best known stress hormones are cortisol and adrenaline. They are responsible for reactions such as increasing your blood pressure and

alertness and at the same time slowing down digestion, growth and reproductive systems. However, oxytocin is also released during your stress response. Nicknamed the 'cuddle hormone,' oxytocin is released when you feel connected to or are seeking connection to others, for example, when you hug someone. It also helps heal stress-induced damage. In other words, as your body experiences stress, it also provides a lifeline for stress resilience. This lifeline is human connection. It's often hard to think outside of ourselves during challenging times, but these are precisely the circumstances when our connection to others can offer the most benefit. In fact, our stress response is encouraging it by pumping out the cuddle hormone, along with adrenaline which motivates you to seek support.

Just as a belief that stress is helpful is protective against the negative effects of stress, so are meaningful relationships. These benefits are not only related to receiving support but also offering it to others. In studies, those who cared for others when they were stressed protected themselves completely from the increased risk of death seen in those who were highly stressed but gave little social support.

It's National Donate Life Month

Since 2003, April has been a month used to encourage Americans to register as organ, eye and tissue donors and celebrate those who have saved and healed lives through the gift of donation. In 2018 more than 36,500 organ transplants from 17,500 donors brought new life to patients awaiting transplant. The 2019 theme for National Donate Life Month is "Life is a Beautiful Ride."

As explained by Donate Life America, "Bicycles come in all styles, shapes and sizes, but each is comprised of the same components essential to supporting the rider and converting their energy into motion. Similarly, organ, eye and tissue donation offers many ways to give hope, support and strength to patients waiting, recipients and donor families. We each carry the potential to help make LIFE a beautiful ride for ourselves, and then for others by registering as a donor, considering living donation, being a caregiver and championing the cause."

There are more than 100,000 men, women and children awaiting lifesaving organ transplants, and every ten minutes another person is added to that list. Unable to keep up with the need, 22 people die each day because the organs they need are not donated in time.

However, just one donor can save up to eight lives, restore vision to two people and heal the lives of more than 75 individuals.

To learn more about donation, visit www.donatelife.net.

To register as a donor, visit www.registerme.org.



Mindful Minute



It's easy for most of us to find ourselves plowing through the day, full steam ahead, with family, work and related obligations taking priority over our own self-care. We may feel so beholden to our schedules that we neglect carving out time for attending to our personal needs, which can help replenish ourselves and better serve others. After all, as is often quoted, one cannot pour from an empty vessel.

If you find yourself feeling imbalanced with caring for others without focusing on yourself, here are some tips to help **make room for that much needed me time:**

- **Maintain boundaries.** If you're constantly being asked to do something and add more to your already busy life, it's okay to say no. By saying no you can regain control of your time.
- **Filter tasks.** Take a look at your typical routine to see if there maybe something not important that you can remove. Maybe you're spending what little spare time you have on things like social media or you're working through breaks.
- **Mark your calendar.** If you live by your calendar, go ahead and block off time for you. Even if it's only five minutes to listen to your favorite song, do some stretching or perform a quick mindfulness meditation, it's these little pick-me-ups that can really keep us grounded throughout the day.

Teaching Emotional Coping

One of the greatest, lifelong teaching opportunities we have with our children is the development of coping skills to overcome life's stressors and challenges. Early childhood is an especially good time to shape reactions and other behaviors as they manifest for the first time, though it's never too late to promote good habits. Consider integrating the following practices into your interactions with your child and educate your child's caregivers and teachers about what you find works well to help your child cope with his or her emotions.

1. Help your child name the emotion he or she is feeling and why, based on your observations. "It sounds like you're feeling sad that we can't play outside right now" or "I know you may feel angry when another child takes your toy away." When a child can understand what is happening to their physical body and mind, they are able to exhibit control over it to some extent.

2. Help your child understand that it is okay to feel an emotion they are experiencing and empower them to find positive ways to react to it. "It's okay to feel upset. It's a good choice to stop and take a deep breath if you're feeling upset instead of hitting people." "I know you're sad. It's okay to cry and ask for comfort." With your guidance in this practice, eventually your child will be able to self-regulate by choosing positive reactions to their emotions.

3. Help your child process their emotions by being present and modeling the desired behavior. By remaining calm and attentive in response to your child's reactions to their emotions, you're helping defuse the situation by keeping your own reaction under control. When children are misbehaving or seem out of control, these are times when they most need your guidance, support and positive modeling.

4. Consider if hunger or sleep are compounding the issue. Children and adults alike find it challenging, if not impossible, to keep emotions in check when their blood sugar spikes or plummets due to hunger and/or too much sugar and starch in their diets (and not enough protein, fat and fiber) or they aren't getting enough sleep.

While incorporating practices like these into your parenting can be beneficial, there are times when professional support is needed. Contact your child's pediatrician or a mental health professional if your child's behavior concerns you.



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Receive without conceit,
release without struggle.

- MARCUS AURELIUS

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