

NIRVANA

Tips and tricks for mind, body and spirit

Well-being columnist **Alison Canavan** looks at a stubborn virus of the mind that many of us suffer from, and she encourages us all to walk more



Self-care corner: Movement is essential

So often, we put movement on the bottom of our list, but even walking for 30 minutes every day has enormous health benefits. Not only does it get your energy moving, but it also boosts immunity, encourages clearer thinking and increases confidence. So take the stairs, park further away from the door at the shops, and forgo 30 minutes of evening TV in exchange for a walk around the block. Your health will thank you!



Julianne Hough's gratitude ritual sets up the day the right way

Dancer and actress Julianne Hough, pictured left, chooses to start her day, every day, on a positive note. Each morning, right after waking up at 6:30am, she sits up in her bed and thinks of five things she's grateful for. She chooses things that have either already happened to her, or that she wants to do that day. She also sets some small spiritual goals, such as making 10 people smile throughout the day, for example. Only after this does she get out of bed, brush her teeth, and proceed with her other morning routines.

Don't let another day just pass

And just like that, as you lie in bed, you realise that another day has passed. How many moments did you savour? How many moments of beauty were there? Or did it just pass? Did it pass while you were waiting for a better day, a brighter future, until you achieved more, received more, believed more? Did you allow the day to pass while you worried about the future, worried about all the things that might never even happen? Then your mind shifts to its protective and defensive mode: "I have every right to worry because my life is hard and unfair, and what do they know, as I'm sure they don't even have a fraction of the worries that I do. I have been dealt a far more difficult hand, so I would like to see them be more positive if they had my life."

This way of thinking is a virus of the mind, a virus that completely took over my mind for a large part of my own life. The great thing about this particular virus is that, although stubborn at times, it can be removed, and eventually healed. We remove it with good nutrients for the brain in the form of better thoughts. We begin to provide our mind with the antidote of gratitude, and bit by bit, as we administer an increasing dose of gratitude, our neuropathways heal, and wake up to a new way of thinking and living. This medicine for our mind needs to be administered daily and consistently, but the beautiful part of this antidote is that one day you will find yourself in bed, as another day has passed, feeling nothing but gratitude for all that happened that day.

Book of the week The Angel Experiment

Since I was a young girl, I have always been fascinated by angels. From my own experience, I have found that the more you tune in, the more you can feel them. Whatever your beliefs, Corin Grillos's new book is a stunning 21-day adventure on inviting the divine into your daily life. I invite you to keep an open mind and try this book out for yourself. It is probably the best angel book I have read, and I have read a lot! In just five to 10 minutes a day, listen to that small still voice within, and be guided by it.

Right: *The Angel Experiment* by Corin Grillos, published by New World Library



Quote of the week

"You cannot expect to achieve new goals or move beyond your present circumstances unless you change"
— Les Brown, self-help author



DID YOU KNOW?

Do you hold stress in your digestive tract?

I have been struggling with my tummy of late, and always do during stressful times. I've begun drinking German chamomile tea. There are many varieties of chamomile, but German chamomile is one of the best herbs for those of us who struggle with stress in our digestive tract. Its anti-spasmodic effect quiets an irritable bowel, and it is actually the primary herb used for infant colic.

MINDFUL MOMENT

Sit comfortably and notice your body. Gently scan from your head to your toes. Notice where your clothes touch your body, the chair you are sitting in — simply just begin to notice more closely, and just be in that moment.

Rude health Wounding words

It's all too easy for medical terminology to morph into careless terms of abuse, writes **Maurice Gueret**, as he recalls a famous rivalry between Dublin surgeons

Hurting terms

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. School-going children know the folly of those lines. 'Spa' was the big word in my boys-only day-school. Short for spastic, as doctors describe a muscle spasm. Spa was a word for non-sporting boys who could be relied upon to drop any ball that was passed to them. In broader use, it was liberally applied to class outsiders, unwelcome in childhood cliques. The urban dictionary suggests the word originated in Dublin's north city in the 1980s, but I clearly remember it being used frequently almost a decade before. Sometimes use of the word was accompanied by flexion of the fingers and wrist muscles, facial grimacing and unintelligible speech. The sort of thing President Trump does when he wants to insult somebody with a disability.

On the spectrum

One feature of our election campaign was the aberrant use of the word 'autistic' by a senator (Catherine Noone, pictured right) to describe her party leader. It filled the airwaves, letter pages and leader columns for days with apologies, platitudes and general tut-tutting at the use of a medical diagnosis to describe a Taoiseach. Nobody seemed to be too bothered that his senator also called him wooden. Whenever I hear the word autistic, I am reminded of the letter written by the father of a severely affected child who helped found the National Autistic Society in the UK. He suggested that the concept of an autistic spectrum may be having a detrimental effect on

children who display classic autism — severe lack of speech, bizarre mannerisms and social unresponsiveness. He was clear that the focus of support groups and health authorities has become too much centred on those at the 'higher functioning' side of the spectrum, which means resources like specialised schools, intensive speech therapy and adult residential units are still not available to those in greatest need. Something other than careless words to consider in a new programme for government.

Waxy remedy

Continuing our rummage through the medicine chest, today it's the drops we use to coax wax from the ear. They are known as cerumenolytics — cerumen is the medical term for earwax; lytic is a suffix implying breakdown. Waxsol, Exterol and Cerumol are commonly available brands in Ireland. I favoured Cerumol, because I liked its name. They all work well at loosening up wax, and doctors prefer to syringe ears that have been treated with a cerumenolytic first. Ingredients do differ. Cerumol is made up mainly of arachis oil, which is similar to olive oil, except for a nutty smell. It derives from peanuts, so avoid its use in patients with this allergy. Waxsol contains a softening ingredient known as dioctyl sodium sulphosuccinate, thankfully now shortened to docusate. Wax is a perfectly natural secretion offering a protective coat to the meatus — the opening of the ear canal. The only reason we remove it is if it causes deafness, or obstructs a good view of the eardrum.



Rival snots

Stokes Books is a rare old antiquarian bookshop in Dublin's market arcade off South Great George's Street. I called in before Christmas to pick up a nice second-hand copy of *Oliver St John Gogarty — The Man of Many Talents*. It was written by an old professor of mine, the late JB Lyons, who taught us neurology at Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital. Gogarty was a testy character — a veteran of Ireland's closeted literary, legalistic and surgical worlds. He also served time in Irish politics as a senator. His medical speciality was ear, nose and throat (drum, sniff and gargle). Sinuses were Gogarty's hobby-horse, and his most lucrative operation was to wash them out, especially if they belonged to celebrities. Rural health services were few and far between a hundred years ago, so Dublin specialists had a

virtual monopoly. True to form, there were rivalries among them. Gogarty's foe in the ENT world was PJ Keogh, a formidably stout surgeon and clay-pigeon shooter from St Vincent's. He once charged 17 pounds, 4 shillings, 10 pence to take a train to Kildare to lance a badly infected tonsil. When asked how he arrived at the figure, he said it was all the money they had in the house. Gogarty had a personal put-down for Keogh. He called him a 'snot doctor' and on one occasion suggested that any patient with a hole in their hard palate either had a gumma caused by syphilis, or had their adenoids taken out by Mr Keogh. No love quite like that between rival surgeons. **■**

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