

Your

Healthy & Happy Home News™



From the Desk of Roy & Pam Wood

May 2017

QUIET! Our Noisy World Is Harmful to Our Health

It's well-known that exposure to excessive noise can damage one's hearing. But did you know that everyday noise can be harmful as well?

Most of us are constantly bombarded by noise and have come to accept it as part of life. At some point, we cease to pay attention to the audio commotion that surrounds us. Yet chronic noise affects us in profound ways. Studies have found correlations between exposure to chronic noise (such as from nearby highways, railroads, and flight paths) and high blood pressure, insomnia, heart disease, and elevated levels of stress hormones.

Not surprisingly, ambient noise can also be detrimental to thinking and learning as well as to health. Studies of developmental and academic progress in elementary schoolchildren found that chronic noise was linked to delays and deficiencies in retention, problem-solving, language acquisition, and cognitive skills acquisition. While there are more than 59 million hits when you search the Internet for ways to escape noise, the fact is you really can't.

However, "relative" silence will give the brain a break from external stimulation and the audible and non-audible effects of sound waves. Shutting out the daily assault of auditory stimulation is one of the best ways to tune in to the brain's ability to focus, problem-solve and be creative. Sit quietly, without TV, pinging phones, or even relaxing music. It may feel uncomfortable at first. Stay with it. It's giving your mind a chance to reset.

Soon you'll discover that silence is indeed golden, just as your second-grade teacher said it was.

It's a Strange Old World: Bizarre News You Might Have Missed

Veterinarians in Tel Aviv recently rescued an unlikely creature: a snail whose shell had been accidentally broken by a pedestrian. After realizing what she had stepped on, the pedestrian rushed him to the clinic.

What would you do for expensive drum equipment? If you're this Florida resident, you pose as Nickelback drummer Daniel Adair. He used a fake email address with Adair's name to try to order \$25,000 worth of drum equipment.

Oops! On the 60th birthday of Mark E. Smith, front man of the British band The Fall, an employee of BBC Music's Twitter account accidentally posted "RIP" beside Smith's photo.

People in the Philippines' Dinagat Islands were intrigued but confused when a six-meter-long (19.7-ft.) hairy, white carcass washed up on their beach. Scientists have determined it was some sort of whale.

Love 'Em or Hate 'Em, Those Annoying Passwords R Us

Passwords are supposed to ensure computer safety and security, but just how good are they? Computer experts tell us that a good password should be hard to guess. They suggest a random, meaningless string of characters, and then they recommend we have a different password for every account. And whatever you do, don't write them down.

Lorrie Cranor, a computer science professor at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University, recommends using a computer program to create your passwords. As hackers have no trouble guessing passwords that are based on such evident and easily obtained information as your name or address.

Then there are commonly used terms. As researchers at Carnegie Mellon found in sifting through 32 million stolen passwords, "love is all around": the most common passwords used some form of the word *love*.

Recently, *New York Times* reporter Ian Urbina found out how many feel about computer passwords by approaching strangers and asking them about theirs. Amazingly, many people frequently, and even eagerly, revealed their passwords ... plus the stories behind them.

Why play so fast and loose with their security? Reporter Susan Spencer theorizes in a recent CBS News report on passwords, "People are so fed up with creating and remembering the things that revealing them feels a lot like revenge." Passwords may eventually give way to some other form of computer security, such as fingerprint recognition or a form of biometric identification.

But for now, let's just consider them a necessary spin-off of the tech age.



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Thanks!

For All The Kind Words

"My rug looks great!"

Sharon G

"Carpets were cleaned well, dried quickly and smelled nice."

Kelsey W

Worth Quoting

This month, some famous quotes on the topic of words:

For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice.

T.S. Eliot

I like good strong words that mean something...

Louisa May Alcott

I know nothing in the world that has as much power as a word. Sometimes I write one, and I look at it, until it begins to shine.

Emily Dickinson

Handshakes: Maybe It's Time to Rethink a Fading Symbol

The handshake—that universal greeting between two individuals—isn't what it used to be. According to a recent study, our handshakes are wimpier now than they used to be.

The 2016 study of 237 millennials assessed participants' grip strength. The study's author, occupational therapist Elizabeth Fain, found that strength scores are significantly lower now than those in the 1980s when a baseline was established. Hence our weak handshakes, suggests Tom Vanderbilt in a recent article in Nautilus titled "Raising the American Weakling."

The handshake has been around since at least the 5th-century BC, when a funeral stone showed two soldiers shaking hands. But in our society, a handshake is more than a handshake. It's an icon, a symbol of potency and vigor. A handshake connotes strength of purpose and power. So those

weak handshakes somehow imply a lack of inner strength and power. As Vanderbilt notes in addressing Fain's findings, "The idea of a loss in human strength ... seemed to hint at some latter-day version of degeneration."

In our connected life, we're losing much of our power to robots ... and now, a wimpy handshake. What's next ...? Well, there's the bro-hug, described in a CBS News report as a "hybrid handshake-hug," complete with backslap, demonstrating not strength so much as solidarity. Then there's "dapping"—an exuberant greeting of hand slaps, high-fives, and hugs that's growing in popularity across North America. And fist bumping ... etc.

All celebrate a different kind of strength—perhaps a good thing in today's complex society. So who needs handshakes anyway?

This Month's Sudoku

4				8	1			
5						7	6	
		3			6			1
8		1	3	2				
	9		1		4		3	
				9	8	1		5
9			7			6		
	6	5						7
			8	6				4

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(You know you'll miss them!)

Eat Veggies and Meat The Solution: Flexitarianism

More people, even foodies, are making a conscious effort to eat less meat. But not everyone has it in them to be a vegetarian.

Enter flexitarianism—eating mainly, but not exclusively, as a vegetarian. Voted 2003's most useful word by the American Dialect Society, flexitarianism offers an alternative to other, sometimes strident, anti-meat movements. The concept was also given a boost recently when Whole Foods, the well-known purveyor of healthy food, dubbed flexitarianism the top food trend of 2017.

This recent development has further fueled the popularity of a related phenomenon: Meatless Mondays. The meatless movement has roots stemming

back to World War I, when North Americans were encouraged to participate in "Meatless Monday" and "Wheatless Wednesday" in order to conserve resources and reduce consumption.

However, it wasn't until 2003 that Meatless Mondays became a certified movement with a simple message: once a week, don't eat meat. It was reintroduced as a public health awareness campaign in an effort to combat the rising number of preventable illnesses linked to excessive meat consumption. (The Meatless Monday website says the average American eats "as much as 75 more pounds of meat each year than in generations past!") Since this reinvention, Meatless Monday has become a global mainstay for menu planners, with participants ranging from individuals to

hospitals to schools and even corporate cafeterias.

Meatless Mondays are popular with families, as reducing meat consumption is as beneficial to our wallets as to our bodies. And rather than pushing back, most family members are now enthusiastic when meatless dishes are added to the weekly meal plan. Why? Online, on-air and in-restaurant chefs are constantly devising and sharing new and delicious vegetable-based recipes.

Finally, the Meatless Monday concept ties in well with other eat-healthy initiatives, including grow-your-own food, shop local, and of course, the significant trend of this year—flexitarianism.

Symphony in F Flat: Ding, Click, Beeeep

You start your car. It dings repeatedly until you fasten your seatbelt. You open the door, and you hear an alerting chime. You might have hit that deer, but your car's collision warning alarm shrieked at you.

Did you know car manufacturers invest significantly in choosing these sounds? They're not simply random noises added to your vehicle. According to CBS News, it's someone's job to find just the right tick, click, or beep for each situation. These "vehicle harmony engineers" hope to ensure the noises you associate with their vehicles enhance their brand; if you find your car's chirps annoying, your next vehicle may be from another manufacturer.

As cars become more complex, these noise engineers have their work cut out for them. Today's vehicles require a lot more than turn signal clicks and horn honks. Advanced safety alerts and luxury climate systems all add new pings and pongs to the musical melody of your car's interior, and manufacturers may spend up to a year trying for the perfect sound. They even consult Hollywood sound engineers to produce these ideal jingles and jangles. So remember, the next time your car clicks, time and money went into that noise.

Dictionaries: Get Your Hot New Words Here!

Sometimes emerging from necessity, sometimes from technology, new words are introduced regularly into dictionaries, reminding us our language is ever-evolving.

Recently, "more than one thousand new words have been added, including ... words from tech, medicine, pop culture, sports, and everything in between," says online dictionary Merriam-Webster.

For example, take the word "botnet"—"computers infected by worms or Trojans

and taken over surreptitiously by hackers and brought into networks to send spam, more viruses, or launch denial of service attacks."

Notes the Oxford Dictionary: "New words reflect the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of the past twelve months."

So be sure to check online dictionaries regularly for the next batch of hot-button words.

Broccoli with Chickpeas and Tahini Sauce

Serves 4

2 tablespoons coconut oil
5-6 cups bite-size broccoli florets
1 can chickpeas, drained
Salt and pepper to taste
3 tablespoons tahini
4 tablespoons fresh-squeezed lemon juice
3 tablespoons water

Directions

Preheat a large frying pan over high heat.

Add coconut oil to pan. When it begins to shimmer, add the broccoli and cover immediately to sear the broccoli from the bottom and steam the top.

After 2 minutes, remove the lid and stir. Cover again and cook for an additional 2 minutes. Add chickpeas and stir. Cover and cook for another minute.

When broccoli is tender, remove pan from heat and season with salt and pepper. In a separate bowl, whisk tahini, lemon juice, and water into a smooth sauce. Drizzle tahini sauce over the broccoli and chickpeas to serve.

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Worth Reading

Against Willpower

By Carl Erik Fisher
Nautilus

Society's feelings about personal willpower need to change, argues Carl Erik Fisher. He says viewing willpower as a limited resource requiring discipline to master neglects other factors influencing people's decisions. Will you need willpower to read this? Try it and find out.

More:
<https://tinyurl.com/Feelings1-May-2017>

When Things Go Missing

By Kathryn Schulz
The New Yorker

Here, writer Kathryn Schulz reflects on two types of losses: one, a laundry list of lost items; the other, a series of lost people. She combines wit (passwords, she writes, "are to computers what socks are to washing machines") with reflection ("our problem is not that we put too many things into the category of loss but that we leave too many out"). Fortunately, you probably won't find reading this a loss of time.

More:
<https://tinyurl.com/Feelings2-May-2017>

The "Untranslatable" Emotions You Never Knew You Had

By David Robson
BBC.com

If you know the word, you might experience "natsukashii," happiness at having a special memory with sadness that the memory-creating event is over. It's just one of many non-English words that University of East London Professor Tim Lomas has collected from other languages that describe emotions more precisely than do English words. Better describing emotions may help us better respond to life's ups and downs.

More:
<https://tinyurl.com/Feelings3-May-2017>

Address Your Credit Score before You Start Home-Hunting

Your credit is among the most confusing topics related to personal finance. Yet it's extremely important—particularly if you're planning to buy a house, and especially if you're a first-time buyer. Your credit score is one of the first things a lender will look at when you apply for a mortgage. To cut through all that confusion, here are five tips you can act on right now to identify and address any problems with your credit:

- Check your credit reports for free once a year through the three credit bureaus: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. Why all three? Because the information in each bureau's report can differ. If one or all reports include mistakes, your credit score may be negatively affected, and you may need to address the errors before going house-shopping.
- Be strategic with credit card use: the percentage of your credit limit that you use every month can affect your score. Make sure your balance doesn't come too close to your limit.
- The simplest and most important tip? Pay off your balance each month. To maintain a healthy score, pay it off before the due date. Anything after 30 days post due date can spell very bad news for your score.
- Be consistent: good credit behavior over the long term will keep your score high.
- Don't take on more credit. If you apply for several different credit cards, you're sending a message that you may have maxed out your other accounts.

Who Wants To Win a FREE Gift Card!!

Take my *eTrivia* Challenge and you could be a winner

I love this part of the newsletter! Each month I'll give you a new *eTrivia* question, and all clients who email me at abrighterday@chemdry.ca with the correct answer will be entered to win a...

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This month's *eTrivia* question is...

What flower was worth more than gold to the 17th-century Dutch?

a) The Lily b) The Rose c) The Tulip

General Knowledge Quiz. Answers below.

What flower is related to apples and almonds?

Saffron comes from what flower?

What is the world's oldest flower?

Orchids get nutrients not from the soil, but from what?

(Answers: Rose; crocus; *Archaeofructus sinensis*, said to be 125 million years old; air)