

Milk Myths

“The countries with the highest rates of osteoporosis are the ones where people drink the most milk and have the most calcium in their diets. The connection between calcium consumption and bone health is actually very weak, and the connection between dairy consumption and bone health is almost nonexistent.” ~Amy Lanou Ph.D., nutrition director for the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine in Washington, D.C. [[source](#)]

Myth #1: Milk is the best source of calcium

Orange juice, figs, chia and sesame seeds, tofu, and spinach have almost as much *or more* calcium-per-serving as milk. It has also been argued that children should only drink their mother’s milk only up until they are three years old, as at that age they no longer produce the enzyme lactase, which means they [cannot digest milk and cannot break down the casein](#) (milk proteins), thus are not able to absorb calcium from milk.

This [study from Sweden](#) traced over 100,000 men and women over 20 years to show that higher consumption of milk resulted in higher mortality and hip fractures among women.

Studies in the field of exercise show that weight-bearing and balancing exercises such as running, walking, dancing, yoga, and tai chi are actually *beneficial* to maintaining strong bone health.

Myth #2: Milk makes our bones stronger

This is probably the worst myth out there. [This article](#) is a must read. It explains how milk actually depletes the calcium

from your bones.

Your body maintains a a level of calcium in the blood, and when your body doesn't get enough calcium from your diet, then it starts to pull calcium from the bones. If you eat enough calcium from other sources, you don't have to worry about drinking any milk.

Furthermore, it is suspected that the high protein in milk can actually lead to osteoporosis, due to its increase of acidity in the blood. Our bodies are complex. Not everything is as simple as a commercial makes it seem.

Myth #3: Milk is natural and "healthy"

If you consider that milk is a processed food and couple that with the absolutely unnatural diet cows are being fed, you might reconsider how natural milk really is.

Milk-free kids are shown to be less likely to develop colic, ear infections, asthma, and [Type 1 Diabetes](#)! The American Academy of Pediatrics doesn't recommend cow's milk for children younger than one.

Milk's high levels of saturated fat in fact make it one of the worst things to include in your diet. Dairy products contain dietary cholesterol, which increases the risk of heart disease, and the added calories of milk doesn't help in the problem of childhood obesity.

It might take some time to get used to it, but you'd be well to start replacing your cow's milk with a plant-based variation so that you can keep your body at its optimal health.

3 Truths You Need to Know to Be Happier

We all want to be happier. It is built into our human wiring. Yet it is increasingly challenging to achieve that state in our highly competitive society. And what's more, some people are confused about what happiness even entails.

Truth bomb #1: Happiness is not measured as being less miserable.

Nancy Etcoff gives a great TED presentation [Hooked on a Feeling: The Pursuit of Happiness and Human Design](#).

She explains that people are using medication to keep anti-depressed, and illegal drugs to elevate their situation. If we could only see that positive thoughts and remarks are the key to counteract all the negative floating around.

We must understand the depths of emotions and recognized that emotions are not just feelings. When we label, describe, and discuss our emotions, it helps us regulate them.

Are you experiencing one of these emotions? Anger, anxiety, concern, contempt, content, depressed, disgust, excited, fear, frustrated, irritated, joy, loving, sad, satisfied, shocked, surprise, tense.

If you can identify a particular emotion you are feeling, how much more deeply can you describe your emotional experiences and how many subtle variations do you use?

[Eric Barker shares research results](#) of a neuroscientist who studied how to reverse depression. Among the small changes you can make are:

- Regularly ask yourself “What am I grateful for?”
- Label your negative emotions.
- Be ok with “good enough.”
- Connect with people directly.

Truth bomb #2: Nature makes us happy

It shouldn't come as a surprise that cities are incorporating more trees and green spaces as they are building up.

People generally slow down when they are in nature, they are usually *not* at work, and the fresh green air certainly helps relax the mind.

I was so surprised to read in [National Geographic](#) that studied housing projects with more trees had lower crime rates and lower rates of aggression. It isn't the oxygen that helps; it is the community that a courtyard creates, where neighbors know neighbors and are connecting socially.

Truth bomb #3: Being connected to a community helps us feel we belong

Having a tree to congregate under isn't the only way we get connected these days. We can find communities of like-minded folks on the internet in all sorts of bundles.

We see community centers and libraries providing various community engagement opportunities, while pop-up free yoga sessions and concerts in the park are keeping people connected on other levels as well.

While we need to be content with ourselves to find true happiness, it turns out having others around us is huge as well (as noted in this [Psychology Today](#) article).

When you can find people who support you as well, the sky is really the limit to your happiness.

Take time to recognize and note what you are grateful for in your life. Connect with other good people, identify your emotions, and don't get caught up in perfection.

Your higher purpose is to be good and to be happy. Embrace it and allow it to flow into your life.

5 Eye Exercises to Improve Your Vision

This article isn't for everyone, like those with unresolvable eye issues. It is for people who have either lived with for a while, or are now starting to experience blurry vision – both nearsighted or farsighted.

I am excited to share with you some tips on how eye exercises can strengthen your eyes and improve your vision. I've been fortunate to have good vision for most my life. In graduate school, when I was spending a significant number of hours reading and writing on the computer, I noticed that I couldn't see far away as clearly as I had in the past.

My yoga teacher at the time showed us a few techniques for relieving stress in the eyes. Because she was amazing and brought so many good things to my life, I thought, yeah, I'll give it a try. I proceeded for the next several weeks to dedicate a short time every day to performing a regimen with my eyes.

Long story short: I started leaving my glasses at home when I went to my classes. My sight had improved enough that I could

see the blackboard clearly, even from the back row.

Our modern life is full of reasons why our vision is failing: spending hours and hours on the computer or phone, watching TV, spending long periods under fluorescent lighting.

Glasses and contacts are an amazing invention, but once you start wearing them, your eyes don't have to work as hard, which in turn worsens your vision.

Give these exercises a try for a month and watch how strong your eye muscles can be!

1. Palms

Rub the palms of your hands together fast for a few seconds to generate some heat. Then cup your hands around your orbital bone (the bone around the eye socket) and leave them there for 30 seconds. While your hands cover your eyes, keep your eyes closed. Enjoy the break your eyes receive. Warm your hands and cup your eye sockets three times.

2. Clock

Seated comfortably and without moving your head, move only your eyes to look up as high as you can – that's 12 o'clock. Then move your eyes clockwise to go all the way around the clock: from 1 o'clock, back up to 12. Keep your eyes looking as far to the edges as you can. Go 3 times around clockwise, then 3 times around counter-clockwise. This should be done as slowly as possible.

3. Focus

By mixing up what you are looking at helps improve your eye muscles. Bring a pen to just in front of your eyes with your right hand, then hold another pen with your left hand at arm's distance. Focus on the close pen, then the pen a couple feet away, then on a point across the room, and then at a point outside a window. Position yourself so that you don't have to

move your head for this. Look at each of the four spots for two seconds, and rotate through these points for about 2 minutes total.

4. Zoom

Extend your arm out while holding a pen. Slowly bring the pen to 2-3 inches away from your face, all the while keeping the pen in focus. Slowly move the pen back to an arm's distance, again, keeping your eyes focused on the pen. Repeat this several times.

5. Blink

I was surprised to learn that when we are looking at a computer/phone screen or reading we blink less than when we are looking at things further away. [[Check out this cool study on spontaneous eye blink rate.](#)] Dry eyes can lead to blurry vision. You can help your keep your eyes moist by blinking several times very quickly. Blink 10 times, then sit with your eyes closed for 20 seconds. Repeat this exercise 5 times.

Train your eyes to use their full functioning and you will be surprised how how strong you can make them! There is also the 20-20-20 rule... Every 20 minutes look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This helps to give your eyes light exercise throughout your day.

Keep your eyes strong and in good health and before long, you too, might be able to ditch those glasses!

Build Your Desired Reality

Before I started holding Vision Board workshops, I did a lot of research on the topic so I would be best equipped to share valuable techniques with the participants.

At some point in the research, I stumbled upon a video featuring the multi-talented [Patti Dobrowolski at a TED talk](#) she did in Rainier several years ago. If you have 10 minutes, I recommend checking out the powerhouse in this video where she shows us simply how to draw our own desired future.

It is really so simple: first get clear on your current reality. If you are working for someone else who does not value your contribution to the team, or if you have a non-ideal relationship, or even if you just want to find friends with whom you can “have more fun,” envision your life void of soul-crushing situations.

Next: Draw out your current situation. Then draw your ideal, desired reality. Once you have those two basic drawings, Dobrowolski outlines the (simple) three bold steps you must take to step into your desired reality.

1. See it.
2. Believe it
3. Act on it.

It is seriously so simple. Know what *specifically* you want to have in your future. Drawing it helps you to visualize it. Even if your people are stick figures, those sticks are powerfully representative for your mind.

As any good Law of Attraction student, you know that if you step into your desired self from time to time, that desired outcome is more likely to happen.

Know what you want and it shall come to you. The more specific

and descriptive (colorful) you can be with the image of your future self, the more likely you will manifest all your desires.

Take time to watch the video, then get ready to draw all your desires!

Slow Wins the Race – 7 Tips to Win at Being Bored

It might be my age, but probably has just as much to do with the age in which we live, that sometimes I just want to slow down, take a breath, and soak up all that is going on around me.

Before my eyes, my baby grows into an adult. There is so much to do for him, to teach him, to learn from him.

In the midst of helping to raise the next generation, there is so much information out there for us to take in and so many people to interact with. Educational, child rearing, career building, shopping, or even gossip, searching can be quite consuming, not to mention most of us have a day job!

We *all* need a break from the bombardment to all senses. No wonder the meditation industry is booming as people seek out ways to slow down. We are all so busy, like [Omid Safi writes](#), that is almost too difficult to make playdates for our children. The need to be busy actually [drives some people to therapy](#).

Our children get easily “bored” and can we blame them that they feel that way? It is the way society operates. We all have a golden voice within, a voice that has all the answers,

but we are so distracted by the movement around us that we continue to look outward for answers.

Find your inner voice. Listen to it. Hear it. Feel it. Embrace it.

Here are some ideas to help you slow down today:

1. Sit on your couch or comfortable chair for 15 minutes every day. But don't watch TV, don't look at your phone, don't put on any music, don't read or eat. Just sit there and allow yourself to *be* with your thoughts. Being bored while sitting outside is ok, but truly take the challenge to do this in a very normal place so you aren't "entertained."
2. Make (and live by) with a daily schedule for when you check your email. Also make times for emailing replies and drafting new correspondances. Keep to your schedule and don't waiver.
3. Turn off pop-up notifications on your computer. Seriously, the info can probably wait. Make a list of what you want to check and then make a schedule if it is really important to you.
4. Remove the FaceBook app from your phone. Schedule time(s) each day to check in via computer. And Log off the site when your allotted time has passed.
5. Walk slowly from one destination to another. After you park the car, walk with slow intention to the grocery store. When you are inside, engage your senses to see more colors, smell more fragrances, and hear more sounds than you do when you are rushing to get items to check off your list.
6. When you are outside, just look up at the sky. This one takes almost no effort whatsoever.
7. Live with plants in your home. Take care of them. Talk to them.

Finding Deep Release in Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Fold)

When I first started doing yoga asanas, I remember my teacher telling me I must have been a yogi in a past life as the poses came so naturally to me.

It wasn't that I was the most flexible student, but he noticed in me a true dedication and passion for the experience and how even the first time learning an asana series, I seemed to intuitively know what to do.

I found great relief in many of these poses, and always felt a great lightness when the practice was over. Most people have one or two poses that are difficult to master. This is no different for me, even after all these years of practice.

Even though I'm not really very good at it, in terms of gently gliding my forehead to my shin, I love Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Fold). I love it because it gives me a sweet relief, even if bittersweet, that very few things in life can.

I humbly bow down in this pose because when I really get into it, an emotional tightness is released and, at those times, tears flow from my eyes, down my shins and drip to my mat. Tears likely come from from the primitive gestalt; with my head bowed, I let go of the past and stretch into the future, while being aware in that very moment.

After you have warmed up with a few Sun Salutations, sit in [Dandasana](#). Bring the flesh away from your sits bones and get really grounded. Keep your feet flexed, legs straight and

thighs activated, shoulders back, and belly pulled in toward the spine. As you reach forward, hold your big toes with your thumb and forefingers, or wrap your palms around the sides of your feet.

For the first few breaths, your gaze is on your big toes. With each inhalation stretch your spine longer, bringing the crown of your head farther from your sits bones. On the exhale, fold down a little further. After you've done this 3-4 times, keeping your back as straight as possible, on your next exhale, allow your forehead to come to rest on your shins.

Of course if this is the first time you are doing this pose, you may not make it that far. That's ok. Fold down as far as you comfortably can. And breathe. Allow yourself to relax but also keep engaged. Remember to keep your shoulders relaxed and your back straight. Breathe here for at least 5 full breaths, then on an inhale lengthen your torso upward slowly and on the exhale release your hands and come to sit.

The intense stretch that this pose gives to your entire body helps improve digestion by stimulating the liver, kidneys, ovaries, and uterus; it soothes headaches and anxiety as well as reduces fatigue; it helps keep blood pressure down, insomnia at bay, helps relieve mild depression; and more.

[source](#)

This amazing pose can bring you a deep sense of inner calm.

What Can You Do For Your

Community? Organizations that Help you Help Others

Have you heard that expression “The more you give, the more you get”? I think it is a phrase that just doesn’t get said enough or practiced enough in our society. Collectively we are becoming more selfish, more entitled, less considerate, and generally disrespectful of each other’s needs.

When we take an hour (or more!) each week to give back to the community, we take back the power to be good to each other. Some of us may have to put in a few additional hours to offset the negative impact of the selfish in society.

Fortunately volunteering has recently been seen as a *good* thing, which provides a huge relief in this age of people seizing opportunities.

With the increasing rate of hungry and homeless people, there are that many more opportunities to serve locally. But you don’t just have to work at the homeless shelter. You can connect with troubled youth, homebound elderly folk, non-English speakers, provide service cleaning up nature, hosting exchange students, serving in schools, donating blood, or building houses.

Giving money is one wonderful option people choose to help their community, but I believe that by getting your hands dirty and sacrificing your even more valuable time is a way to truly give. Here are three sites that will help you find a place to start volunteering:

[Just Serve](#) is an online service organization that helps link up volunteers with like minded organizations. While this site is organized by Church of Latter-day Saints, it works with all types of organizations, from food pantries to senior centers to libraries.

[Volunteer Match](#) allows you to search for just the right fit via location. You can search your hometown for opportunities to serve, or you can look at your next vacation destination to see if there are chances to help for an hour or two. Non profit organizations list their needs and you can find just the right match.

[Habitat for Humanity](#) allows you to learn while you give. Habitat for Humanity works with volunteers to build homes for families in all 50 United States and in 70 countries around the world. Habitat homeowners work alongside volunteers to build their homes and pay an affordable mortgage.

You can also find apps to log and track your volunteer hours. These are useful for youth who are building up service hours, for non profit organizations to track how much work individuals are doing for them and reward them as such, and for those who find a reward system makes them inclined to do more good.

[Reward Volunteers](#) provides a great tracking system, as do [Track it Forward](#) and [Volunteer Mark](#).

Collectively we can do so much good in the world, we can overpower the negativity. Finding the goodness in volunteering, in helping others, seeing the positive change we can make in the world makes the good stronger.

With just one it is 10 hours. With hundreds doing the same, it becomes thousands, and then millions. Let us join hands to help one another as best we can in order to make our society collectively stronger, better, and more full of love.

If you already serve, please share your experiences below.

Vision Board as Inspiration

There is power in your vision. It sets the course of where you will go. You can determine the outcome of your life if you just allow yourself to see it. A vision board provides a physical reminder daily (or hourly depending on where you place your vision board) of what you want in life.

It should come as no surprise that successful people create and use vision boards to help manifest their destiny.

To make a board, people typically cut images and words from colorful magazines and paste them to a board which they then pin to the back of a closet door, or on the wall next to the bathroom – somewhere they will see the board once or twice a day. The idea is that every time you look at your board, you are reminded to visualize your ideal life.

It is important to be centered and focused when you create your vision board. It helps a lot to be gathering nice magazines in the weeks prior to assembling your board so you have plenty of options to choose from.

But what is even more important is to take time to consider what do you want in your life. Who do you want to be? What do you want to do? What do you want to have? Before you answer, remind yourself to dream, and to dream big.

This is your chance to imagine yourself living on the beach, flying a plane, running an empire, *or* winning an award. Envision the most amazing dream life for yourself and put it on your board.

Vision boards come in various forms. Mostly they are on 20×24 inch white poster board, but can also come much smaller, put on canvas frames, or one amazing vision board I saw was made into an accordion fold-out that sat on my friend's desk.

Your vision board is *yours*, so you should make it uniquely your own. If that means decorating with paint or glitter glue, or even printing stock photos since you can't find just the right thing in magazines, then go for it. You may end up writing out the words or phrases you just can't find in magazines.

You should strive to make something so beautifully inspirational that you will want to see it often throughout your day and even allow others to share your vision.

Give your vision the power it deserves. Give it focus and attention by creating a vision board. Set your intention to succeed, or get fit, or have love, or whatever it is you seek; as you should have it. It is there for you, you just need to show yourself the way to it.



Create Your Vision Board

14 page step-by-step guidance on making your Vision Board

[Download ebook](#)

Your Fitness Friend: The Medicine Ball

I love my home gym. It isn't terribly fancy, but it is awesome to have most of my favorite workout gear available at any hour. After a few months of CrossFit training, I realized a medicine ball was a must have.

It is so versatile, and you can get many different benefits from various exercises that incorporate the medicine ball. If you don't have a medicine ball in your home gym, or haven't tried one at your local gym, I strongly suggest you pick one up and try one or more of these impactful exercises.

Slams

This one is great if you are having a particularly stressful day. Start by holding the ball over your head and use all your force to slam it into the ground. Squat to pick it up, raise it over head, and slam it again. Do this for three minutes and then take a 30 second break before doing it another three minutes.

Balancing Burpees

In a traditional burpee, you put your hands on the ground and jump back. Using a medicine ball between your hands and the ground means you have to really be able to balance well. Which means you have to have a strong core. Do circuits of 15-20 of these in a row, with a 30 second break in between for 5 minutes.

High-Low Chops

Start by holding the ball over your head with both hands, arms straight and torso twisted to the right. As you bring the ball down towards the floor to the left of your left foot with your arms extended, come into a squat (be sure your knees don't extend out past your toes). Keeping the medicine ball away from your center of gravity makes this an intense move, so you may want to start out with a lighter ball. Reach the ball up as you twist back to the right. Do this at least 10 times on each side to start, and work your way up to more repetitions.

Cross-Behind Lunge

To cross-behind means to do a squat like a curtsy – with your right foot coming behind and to the left of your left foot. The medicine ball is held in your arms and as you go down for

the lunge, you raise the ball up to shoulder height. Come back to stand bringing the ball back down to hip level. Repeat on the other side by lunging your left foot back and to the right of the right foot and bring the ball up to shoulder height, arms still extended. Do this as many times as you can, and hope to feel the healthy burn tomorrow (as sure sign you are doing it right!).

Twister

This one will strengthen your core, and build up those biceps! Start seated on the ground with your legs in front of you, knees bend about 90 degrees. Hold the medicine ball just above your knees and while keeping your arms straight, move the ball to the left of your hips. Bring the ball back to above your knees and then bring it down to the right of your hips. As you twist, concentrate on making it an effective twist to not only build that core strength, but it also helps with digestion. Start with 30 second intervals and build up to 60 seconds at a time.

This short video by [Popsugar Fitness](#) that shows you 5 more exercises to get your whole body fit with just a medicine ball. Happy balling, and be sure to let me know which is your favorite medicine ball exercise!

The Natural Bacteria Killer: Tea Tree Oil

I love learning about (new to me) alternative natural remedies, especially when it is something really simple, easy to find, relatively inexpensive, and nearly miraculous in all

the benefits it provides.

The tea tree is native to Queensland and New South Wales, Australia, and for at least 100 years has been used by Aborigines to treat common ailments from coughs and colds to bacterial and fungal skin conditions.

Essential oil can be extracted from the leaves, and applied (in low doses because it is toxic in high quantities) to the skin. It is known to help reduce inflammation and to be a bacteria killer. It can be used to help treat acne, fungal nail infections, athlete's foot, lice, and ringworm, and has many other beneficial uses.

Natural Deodorant

It isn't your sweat that stinks, it's the bacteria on your skin that gets broken down into acids. Your armpit has a lot of sweat glands, which is why it can get so smelly there. Tea tree, as mentioned, kills bacteria and can keep those smells at bay. Check out this nice [natural deodorant recipe](#) using tea tree oil.

Fight Acne

Again with the bacteria killer. Tea tree oil comes also in the form of an acne gel and has been shown to be as [effective as benzoylperoxide](#) in treating acne. It is possible to make your own acne-fighting solution by combining one part tea tree oil with nine parts water and use a cotton swab to apply the mixture to problem areas one or two times daily.

Hand Sanitizer

There are many conveniences of hand sanitizer, but who wants to keep rubbing alcohol on their skin?! Studies of tea tree oil have shown it "has the ability to kill a wide range of medically important micro-organisms," ([source](#)) which makes it a natural at sanitizing. Here is a great recipe to make your own [tea tree oil hand sanitizer](#).

Fight Toenail Fungus, Ringworm, and Athlete's Foot

Again the bacteria killer strikes! Even abolishing smelly feet! Use a clean cotton swab and put 2-4 drops of undiluted tea tree oil on the affected area. Apply a few drops every day for a month and you'll see the effects. [Here is a tutorial](#) on how to make it work.

Dental Plaque

The natural disinfectant strikes again. This time in the mouth. Tea tree oil can be used to prevent plaque, eradicate bad breath, and guards against gum disease. It can also help fight against mouth sores! You can make your own mouthwash by adding 4 drops of tea tree oil into a small glass of water and swish in your mouth once or twice a day. You can also apply a few drops onto your toothpaste before you brush your teeth. And here is an article that outlines [how to banish toothaches for good!](#)

This amazing stuff can also be used as insect repellent, antiseptic for minor cuts and scrapes, kill mold around the house, relieve cough, freshen laundry, improve hair health, treat stye, helps prevent bladder infections, strengthens nails, treats ear infections and vaginal odor, help remove make up , and more! This extensive article includes instructions on [how to make tea tree oil at home](#).

If you decide to buy tea tree oil, be sure to look for 100% pure essential oil, and in addition to choosing an organic label, ensure that the bottle lists the correct species name – *Melaleuca alternifolia*. Keep creative and natural in keeping yourself healthy year round!