

## Humor and Our Health

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH



*don't miss out on something that could be great just because it could also be hard.*

### CHOOSE A CAUSE & PARTICIPATE IN AN ACTIVITY THAT RAISES AWARENESS

#### THIS MONTH...

- National Alcohol Awareness Month
- National Humor Month
- Stress Awareness Month
- April 7: World Health Day
- April 14: International Moment of Laughter Day
- April 18-24: National Volunteer Week
- April 22: Earth Day



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# LAUGHTER IS THE *Best Medicine*

With so much power to heal and renew, the ability to laugh easily and frequently is a tremendous resource for surmounting problems, enhancing your relationships, and supporting both physical and emotional health. Best of all, this priceless medicine is fun, free, and easy to use.

## LAUGHTER ...

- Relaxes the whole body: A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.
- Boosts the immune system: Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.
- Triggers the release of endorphins: the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.
- Protects the heart: Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.
- Burns calories: Okay, so it's no replacement for going to the gym, but one study found that laughing for 10 to 15 minutes a day can burn approximately 40 calories —which could be enough to lose three or four pounds over the course of a year.
- Lightens anger's heavy load: Nothing diffuses anger and conflict faster than a shared laugh. Looking at the funny side can put problems into perspective and enable you to move on from confrontations without holding onto bitterness or resentment.
- May even help you live longer: A study in Norway found that people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who don't laugh as much. The difference was particularly notable for those battling cancer.



## HOW TO BRING MORE LAUGHTER Into Your Life

Laughter is your birthright, a natural part of life that is innate and inborn. Infants begin smiling during the first weeks of life and laugh out loud within months of being born. Even if you did not grow up in a household where laughter was a common sound, you can learn to laugh at any stage of life.

Begin by setting aside special times to seek out humor and laughter, as you might with exercising, and build from there. Eventually, you'll want to incorporate humor and laughter into the fabric of your life, finding it naturally in everything.

### HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO START:

- **Watch a funny movie, TV show or Youtube video**
- **Invite friends or co-workers out to a comedy club OR invite employees to a comedy night**
- **Read the funny pages of the newspaper**
- **Share a good joke or funny story**
- **Check out your bookstore's humor section**
- **Host game night with friends (in-person or virtually with the app 'Houseparty')**
- **Make time for fun activities (bowling, miniature golfing, karaoke)**



An essential ingredient for developing your sense of humor is to learn not to take yourself too seriously and laugh at your own mistakes. As much as we'd like to believe otherwise, we all do foolish things from time to time. Instead of feeling embarrassed or defensive, embrace your imperfections.

**Laugh at yourself:** Share your embarrassing moments. The best way to take yourself less seriously is to talk about times when you took yourself too seriously.



**Attempt to laugh at situations rather than bemoan them:** Look for the humor in a bad situation, and uncover the irony and absurdity of life. When something negative happens, try to make it a humorous anecdote that will make others laugh.



**Find your inner child:** Pay attention to children and try to emulate them—after all, they are the experts on playing, taking life lightly, and laughing at ordinary things.



**Deal with stress:** Stress can be a major impediment to humor and laughter, so it's important to keep your stress levels in check. One great technique to relieve stress in the moment is to draw upon a favorite memory that always makes you smile—something your kids did, for example, or something funny a friend told you.



# HUMOR AND *Stress*

A good laugh has great short-term effects. When you start to laugh, it doesn't just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body.

Laughter can:

## SHORT TERM EFFECTS:

### STIMULATE ORGANS:

Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.

### ACTIVATE & RELIEVE YOUR STRESS RESPONSE:

A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response, and it can increase and then decrease your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling.

### SOOTHE TENSION:

Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which can help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.



## LONG TERM EFFECTS:

### IMPROVE YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM:

Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can affect your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity. By contrast, positive thoughts can actually release neuropeptides that help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses.

### RELIEVE PAIN:

Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers.

### INCREASE PERSONAL SATISFACTION:

Laughter can also make it easier to cope with difficult situations. It also helps you connect with other people.

### IMPROVE YOUR MOOD:

Many people experience depression, sometimes due to chronic illnesses. Laughter can help lessen your depression and anxiety and may make you feel happier.



# Earth Day 2021

Here are 9 actions and tips to make a difference every day of the year:



Passionate about certain environmental issues? Volunteer at [EARTHDAY.ORG](http://EARTHDAY.ORG) and participate in our many initiatives, both local and global, to Restore Our Earth.

Unsubscribe to catalogs and donate to The Canopy Project to save the trees! For every \$1 that is donated, one tree is planted!

Enjoy spending time outside? Support the Great Global Cleanup and pick up trash while enjoying your outdoor activities. It is a great way to save that plastic bottle cap from the landfill while you are on your morning walk!

Be a part of the change. Change your diet to fight climate change! Try participating in meatless Mondays!

Try a foodprint calculator to find out exactly how your meals impact the planet.

Plastic pollution is one of the most important environmental problems that we face today. Calculate your personal plastic consumption, then use our tips to help break free from single-use plastics!

Individual and small group cleanups can have a major positive impact on your community. For us to make global change, we must have local action.

Most people by now know that single-use plastic grocery bags are going the way of the dinosaurs. Although they are billed for their “convenience,” they are extremely inconvenient for the planet. Pledge to use a reusable grocery bag.

Fight food waste by composting!



# Mindful Moments

## WHY MENTAL FITNESS MATTERS IN THE WORKPLACE

In the past, many organizations believed that by focusing benefits on an employee's physical health and fitness, they were offering holistic tools for overall well-being. However, it's become apparent that to create a healthy and resilient workforce, organizations must also think about mental fitness in the workplace. Mental fitness is much more than a buzzword—offering tools for emotional and mental well-being isn't just a nice-to-have. In today's climate of uncertainty and mounting stress, it's essential.

Omar Dawood, Chief Medical Officer and Head of Sales at Calm, has seen the benefits (and necessity) of tuning mental fitness muscles throughout his life. This constant practice of honing inner strength has shaped his leadership style and the workplace culture at Calm. He shares his learnings about mental fitness, why it's something all companies should invest in, and how to build mental fitness both individually and across an organization.

### well-being beyond physical fitness:

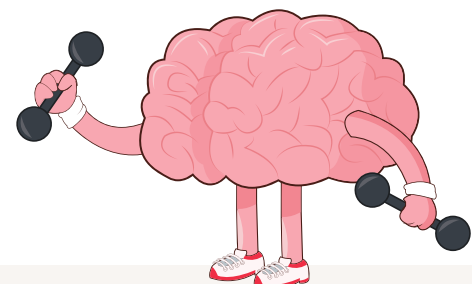
Caring for the needs of your brain and emotions may not be as widely recognized as the need to move your physical body with regular exercise, but one doesn't function as well without the other. As a clinician and entrepreneur, performing at a high level has always been top of mind for Dawood. "I learned at an early age, because of points of adversity that I met as a teenager with stage four cancer, that you can tune your body as much as you want—but you'll never really reach peak performance without having a strong mind and a true practice around mental fitness," he recalls. "Mental fitness became central to me early on, and has permeated my entire life." Dawood defines mental fitness as the practice of strengthening your mind to be able to deal with the stresses and anxieties that life has to offer, and notes it's an ongoing practice that requires everyday work.

### mental fitness for an optimized workplace:

When management demonstrates and leads with a mentally fit mindset, that consciousness permeates throughout the organization. The more self-aware, mindful, and focused a company, the more successful. Many people practice aspects of mental fitness without labeling it (or even knowing it!), especially in the workplace.

#### Examples of mental fitness at work:

- Take a deep, grounding breath before an interview or a presentation to calm thoughts and train your focus.
- Concentrate on simply listening during a meeting or 1:1, drawing awareness to a single topic and truly hearing what another has to say—without the distraction of thinking what you'll say next.
- Take a deliberate pause after receiving an email with an idea you don't agree with before responding, to allow for less reactivity.



*Nourish*

## HIGH PROTEIN BAKED OATS

Recipe From: [wellandgood.com](http://wellandgood.com)

### ingredients

- 1/2 cup rolled oats or quick oats
- 1 ripe banana
- 1 egg
- 1 Tbsp peanut butter
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- Pinch salt
- Cooking spray

***perfect for  
breakfast if  
you're craving  
something sweet!***



### recipe preparation

- Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a ramekin or oven-safe pan with cooking spray.
- In a blender combine all the ingredients until smooth and well-blended, about one minute.
- Transfer the batter into the prepared ramekin. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out with just a couple of crumbs. Allow it to cool in the pan for 10 minutes before serving.

# Question of the Month

## WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE 'MACROS'?

**"Macros" is short for macronutrient. Macronutrients are the 3 types of nutrients that provide you with most of your energy: carbohydrates, protein and fat.**  
(Micronutrients are the types of nutrients that your body uses in smaller amounts like vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and phytochemicals.)

### WHAT IS THE 'MACRO DIET'?

The idea behind the macro diet is pretty simple. Instead of staying under a calorie threshold, you focus on getting a certain number (usually in grams) of macronutrients – proteins, carbohydrates and fats.

Most foods have two or even all three different macronutrients, but they're categorized by the macronutrient of which they contain the most. For instance, chicken is a protein even though it also has some fat, and sweet potatoes are considered a carb even though they have a bit of protein.

Not all macronutrients are created equal. "The quality and amount of different macronutrient groups might determine if your blood sugar falls or stays stable, if you have steady energy or are all over the place, and how much you eat at a sitting," says registered dietitian Amy Goodson, R.D., C.S.S.D. All of those things factor into how well you're able to stick to your healthy eating plan.

For example, here are some healthy choices in every macronutrient category:

- **CARBS:** Healthy carbs typically contain lots of fiber, including whole grains, legumes, leafy greens, potatoes, and fruit.
- **PROTEINS:** Good picks for healthy, lean proteins: chicken, turkey grass-fed beef, fatty fish (like salmon and mackerel), eggs, and plant-based options like beans and chickpeas.
- **FATS:** Satiating, healthy fats include olive oil, avocado, nuts, and seeds.

### BENEFITS:

- It may help you make more nutritious choices by forcing you to consider the quality of your food.
- If weight loss is your goal, counting macros has one major benefit – people following a macro diet tend to eat more protein, which requires more energy to digest and dampens your appetite.
- You have the flexibility to choose foods you truly enjoy as long as it fits into your macro plan.

### DOWNSIDES:

- In some cases, counting macros is easier than counting daily calories, but not always.
- The macro diet also tends to turn meal and snack time into a puzzle. It can make it difficult to try to find something to fill in exactly what you need for one macro without going over on the others.

### EASIEST WAY TO COUNT MACROS:

1. **Figure out your calorie needs:** This depends on your age, size, and activity level. You can use the National Institute's of Health's Body Weight Planner to calculate this,
2. **Tally up your macros:** Once you've got your calorie count, you can use your macro ratio to determine exactly how many grams of protein, fat, and carbs to eat each day. This involves a little bit of math, but you can save time by using a macro calculator, like the one from freedieting.com.
3. **Use an app to track your macros:** Now that you know how much of each macro you need, you'll have to keep track of the amounts that you're actually getting from your meals and snacks. Just like with calorie counting, the easiest way to do this is with a food tracker app. Try "My Macros+" or "My Fitness Pal"