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Ready to Commit to Self-Improvement? Start With This Simple Trick

It's been nearly six months since the COVID-19 pandemic really threw our world off the rails. We've all faced new challenges, but we've also had the opportunity to pause and reevaluate our lives. We've been able to look at our careers, our commutes, our eating habits, and our fitness routines and ask, "Am I happy with the way things are?" If the answer is no, then now is the best time to start making some changes because September is National Self-Improvement Month.

Self-improvement goals don't have to be massive or life-changing to be worthwhile. They could be simple changes to our routine that make the day a little easier. For example, I've started trying to make sure I eat breakfast and do a morning meditation each day. These are things I tried to do before the pandemic hit, but I didn't always manage it. I would have crazy mornings trying to get myself ready and get the kids to school. By the time I reached the office, I was starving because I hadn't eaten anything yet.

When you have young children, you can't make your mornings any less hectic. Instead, I started waking up earlier so I would have a bit more time in the morning. I use an app called Calm on my phone to meditate for about 10 minutes and then get a little breakfast. Sure enough, by that time, someone pops into the kitchen and we're up and going for the day. It's nice to have a little time to yourself in the morning. Meditation helps me feel a bit calmer, and when I eat breakfast, I don't feel quite so rundown. These are small changes, but they make a difference.

I don't always get in that meditation or eat breakfast before things get crazy. It's hard to meditate for even 10 minutes when you hear a 5-year-old's feet pattering around



already. But self-improvement isn't about instant change or perfection. It's about the journey to better yourself. When I don't get a meditation in one morning, I know that I'll break out the app and try again tomorrow.

We all have areas that we'd like to improve, but it can be difficult to know where to start when we have so many things to juggle every day. The pandemic did provide an unexpected opportunity to pause and assess our habits. Recently, some friends of mine revealed that since the pandemic, the amount they spend at restaurants has gone down. They used to eat out all the time, but once they couldn't go to restaurants anymore, they found that they actually liked to be at home with the kids and cook together more. Even as things start to reopen again, they plan on eating out way less. Instead, they want to spend more time at home and teach their kids how to cook. If there hadn't been a forced pause, they might not have come to this decision.

You may find yourself wanting to improve in several areas, both personally and professionally. Whatever your self-

improvement goals are, if you want to achieve them, my advice is to write those goals down on paper. I have one notebook for my goals, another notebook for marketing ideas, and a bullet journal for everything else. Over the last few years, I've learned that putting things down on paper really helps. It cements goals in my mind and also allows me to look back at how far I've come.

I have a journal that I write in every day. At the end of each quarter, I go back over the previous 90 days to get a feel for where I've been. It really sheds a light on how much I've improved even when I wasn't consciously aware of it. I'm certainly in a better place now than I was six months ago.

If you look back at where you were in March and April when all this started compared to where you are today, I think you'll find that you've already come a long way. It's been a rough time, but we've managed to get this far. That's an improvement worth celebrating.

-Andrew M. Ayers

WHAT IS AGE BUT A NUMBER?

A Dutch Man's Quest to Change His Legal Age

In 2018, Dutch native Emile Ratelband was 69 years old. The thing was that the motivational speaker and founder of the Ratelband Research Institute didn't want to be 69. So, he went to a Dutch court and petitioned for the right to change his legal age. His intention was to change the year of birth on his birth certificate — bumping it up by 20 years. As a result, all records would show him as 49.

Why did Ratelband want to change his age?

He told the court he didn't feel like a man who was going on 70. He said he felt good — he felt like a man 20 years younger. He even said his doctors agreed and that they'd told him he had the body of someone younger.

But there was another major reason Ratelband wanted to change his age. He said doing so would increase his overall happiness and would be helpful on dating apps. He would no longer have to deal with the ageism that came with being 69. Ratelband even went as far



as to say he would be willing to delay his pension benefits another 20 years if need be.

In an interview with Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad*, Ratelband said, "When I'm 69, I am limited. If I'm 49, then I can buy a new house, drive a different car. I can take up more work. When I'm on Tinder and it says I'm 69, I don't get an answer. When I'm 49, with the face I have, I will be in a luxurious position."

Interestingly enough, Ratelband's request wasn't dismissed outright by the court. The judge found merit in the argument and said that people desire to change things about themselves all the time, adding that maybe age was one of those things we should consider — "maybe" being the operative word.

The court ultimately decided that "Ratelband is at liberty to feel 20 years younger than his real age and to act accordingly." But the judge added that changing his legal documents would have "undesirable legal and societal implications." The court added "[T]here are a variety of rights and duties related to age, such as the right to vote and the duty to attend school. If Mr. Ratelband's request was allowed, those age requirements would become meaningless."

Today, Ratelband is 71 and continues his battle to change his age. While he may have lost in his initial quest to legally change his age, according to NPR, he intends to appeal the decision.

Is Stress Harming Your Memory?

How to Cope With Daily Triggers

Stress can cause more than just a bad mood and low energy. Over time, mental exhaustion from stress can lead to forgetfulness and reduced cognition. This can hamper your ability to do your job and enjoy life. Though stress is unavoidable, there are steps you can take to mitigate some of the negative effects of mental exhaustion, including forgetfulness.

First, consider the source of your stress. These days, a common stressor is social media. If your feeds are full of bad news and negativity, shut them down. Many researchers suggest that spending less time on the internet leads to better health. Several studies have found that constant internet use, including time spent on social media, is negatively impacting our memories. Research from Harvard, Oxford, King's College London, and Western Sydney University all confirm this: Too much internet use is a bad thing.

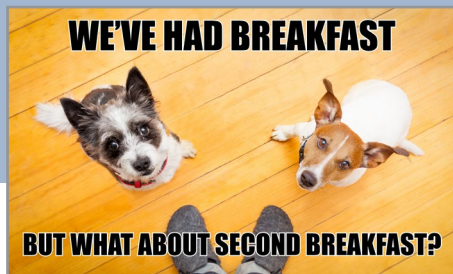
Of course, it can be easier to delete a social media app than it is to eliminate other types of stressors. Coping with a stressful coworker, for example, can be difficult. You have to figure out why they're causing you stress and how the situation can be remedied. Dealing with a work-related confrontation can be hard, but having that difficult conversation and resolving the problem can ultimately lead to less long-term stress and improve your mental health.

Another thing you can do to reduce stress is avoid multitasking. Taking on multiple projects or doing too much in too little time can leave you feeling overworked. Plus, studies have found that multitasking is not effective. You cannot deliver the same results when your attention is scattered as you can when you are focused on one thing. To make matters worse, multitasking takes a major toll on memory and cognition, according to a study from Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

If stress is impairing your memory, judgment, or cognition, take the above steps to reduce it. If you find your memory and cognition aren't improving, consider speaking with a mental health professional to discuss your best next steps. Mental health and stress management are important, and the more we do to improve these areas of our lives, the healthier and happier we will be.



TAKE A BREAK



DIY DOG-FRIENDLY DOUGHNUTS

Inspired by SunnyDayFamily.com

Want to show your dog that they're a very good boy or girl? Try this recipe for a tasty treat your dog will go nuts for!

Ingredients

For doughnuts

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup oats
- 1/3 cup coconut oil
- 1/2 cup **xylitol-free** peanut butter

- 2 eggs

For topping

- Greek yogurt
- Bacon bits

Special equipment

- Doughnut pan

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Lightly spray doughnut pan with cooking spray and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine all doughnut ingredients and mix well.
3. Transfer dough to doughnut pan. Use your hands to tightly pack each mold.
4. Bake doughnuts for 14 minutes. Carefully remove from the oven and allow to cool completely.
5. To decorate your doughnut treats, place Greek yogurt in a small, wide bowl. Dip each doughnut in yogurt and sprinkle with bacon bits.
6. Place decorated doughnuts in the freezer for 10 minutes for the yogurt to harden. Serve straight from the freezer to your hungry dogs.

11 DAYS DELETED FROM HISTORY

How the British Changed Their Calendar System and Caused Chaos

For centuries, Europeans used the Julian calendar, created by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. It was based on the solar calendar, so most of Europe thought it was the most accurate calendar. However, over the centuries, dates had "drifted," and many important days, like Easter and the spring equinox, were no longer falling on the dates they were supposed to.

To compensate, the new Gregorian calendar was developed and put to use by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. It helped put things back in order and eliminated the extra day every 128 years.

However, not everyone adopted the Gregorian calendar right away, such as the British. That meant that Europeans were using two diverging calendars for over 200 years. Talk about confusing! People realized that as the world started to expand and as countries became more connected, having a single calendar system was critical.

Finally, the British chose the year 1752 to make the change. But, in order to make it work, they had to "jump" forward. For instance, 1751 could only be 10 months long — starting with March and ending with Dec. 31, 1751. But even that adjustment didn't quite bring the English up to speed in time to make the shift. They also had to cut 11 days from 1752. The unlucky dates that were cut were Sept. 2–14, 1752.

The people were not happy. English historians found research that British citizens chanted "Give us our 11 days!" in the streets. The phrase became so popular that some politicians even campaigned with that as their slogan. Several other historical accounts state that many people were worried that by cutting the calendar, their own lives would be cut 11 days shorter. There was a lot of confusion and chaos, but over time, dates fell where they were supposed to, and everyone lived their full lives, those 11 days included.





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BEAM ME UP, LUCY How Lucille Ball Saved 'Star Trek' in the 1960s

Did You know that Lucille Ball — the iconic comedian best known for her 1950s show "I Love Lucy" — is the reason "Star Trek" exists today? Ball was a Hollywood force in the '50s and '60s, and she produced hit after hit with her production company.

In fact, Desilu, co-founded by Ball and her then-husband, Desi Arnaz, was responsible for hits like "The Andy Griffith Show" and "The Dick Van Dyke Show." The two were partners in the company until their divorce in 1960, and in 1962, Ball took over Arnaz's share.

In that moment, Ball became one of the most powerful women in Hollywood, and Desilu, one of the biggest independent production companies at the time, had a lot of pull in the industry. In 1963, one of Desilu's biggest hits was coming to an end. "The Untouchables" was a crime drama starring Robert Stack. Ball needed

a replacement, and two potential shows hit Ball's desk: "Star Trek" and "Mission: Impossible."

In 1965, Ball took the pitches to her longtime network collaborator, CBS. They said no to "Star Trek" (but yes to "Mission: Impossible"), but Ball wasn't about to give up on this new science fiction show, so she took it to NBC. The network was skeptical at first but ordered a pilot.

The pilot starred Jeffrey Hunter as Captain Pike and Leonard Nimoy as Mr. Spock. There was no James T. Kirk to be found — not yet, anyway. The pilot, titled "The Cage," was a disappointment. NBC executives weren't about to put it on air, but they decided to order a second pilot after Ball agreed to help finance it.

The second pilot starred William Shatner as Captain Kirk, and he was joined again by



Leonard Nimoy as Spock. NBC executives liked what they saw. The new pilot, titled "Where No Man Has Gone Before," was put on NBC's fall schedule, though it wasn't the first episode aired on NBC. That honor went to the episode titled "The Man Trap," which aired on Sept. 8, 1966.

While Gene Roddenberry's original "Star Trek" only lasted three seasons, it went on to become a major TV and film franchise. One of its recent iterations, "Star Trek: Discovery," is about to enter its third season on the streaming service CBS All Access — all because Lucille Ball saw potential in a little show back in 1965.