



# Your Source of Mental Health Information, Entertainment & Critical Thinking



## NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

January 31, 2007

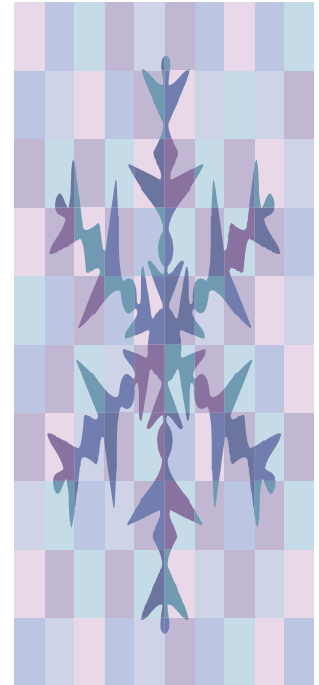
Hi there everyone! I'd like to wish everyone in our 20 counties & beyond old friends, new friends & the ones I look forward to meeting: may 2007 be your most prosperous & rewarding year ever! It's been both an honor & privilege to be part of the Peernetworking Group in my new position as President/Chairman of the board as well as my capacity as acting Executive Director, "ED." (& as said at the last meeting since I'm as "Ed" already, the transition won't be difficult!) We have a number of very capable applicants who we'll be interviewing this last week of January...& with "a little help from my friends", this process will surely lead to a most capable new Executive Director, who will be likely transitioning into PNG in the coming weeks ahead. I'm

sure that any & all of us will do what it takes to make them feel very welcome to PNG CNY! That said...as I've been coming up to speed w/PNG duties & responsibilities, I want to personally thank everyone & anyone who has assisted me/us with this process...& obviously since there is no "I" in "PNG." A big thanks to Maria: from the frozen cornfields of Iowa, wishes us all here at PNG the best year ever, enjoys hearing of PNG's ongoing progress, as well as helping along this transition in some most valuable ways. And many thanks to our fiduciary Bill/board members past and present: Harold, Rebecca, Sheila, Donna, Dan, Brian and Phil...who's input has been invaluable during this transition period...as well as office staff, including Tina's behind the

scene's office assistance on a regular basis: YaYa & all other friends too numerous to mention. Thanks so much for your assistance.

We are also constantly working on updating our information on services and events important for peers in each of the counties we serve. If you have any happenings that might be of interest to the rest of the PNG members, please send them to PNG at [png@northnet.org](mailto:png@northnet.org) or call us at (315) 473-11544, and we will distribute your announcement between our members. We are looking forward to seeing you at our next meeting

Ed Livingston



## PRESENTING February 1st . . .

### Language Matters: Recovery/Growth/Transformation

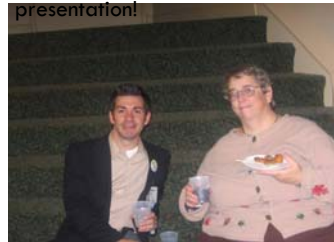
It seems that most of the problems that people face day-to-day lives among each other come from miscommunication. You, probably, can think of a situation or two when the language used was a cause of disruption or offense. Why then people do not avoid using words that hurt? - That would make us all get along.

Even though there are times when particular words intentionally used

negatively affect the situation, quite often misunderstanding comes from differences in people's perceptions and lack of knowledge. When you don't know that an expression can offend another person, you might use it without realizing the damage that you cause. Being more sensitive and thinking from a perspective of your conversation partner may be good ways to start using language in a positive way.

Join **Daniel Hazen, Regional Coordinator for the Alliance Empowerment Coalition**, in discussion on language and it's meaning in the communication process at our February 1st meeting. As a regional coordinator **Daniel** has an

opportunity to met individuals from different backgrounds and experiences: he has presented at PNG, NYARPS, state, local conferences, and small groups with equal success by using language in a positive way to reinforce personal and organizational partnerships.. Do not miss this interactive presentation!



Daniel Hazen and Joanne Kline NYAPRS 2006

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# Marriage Hand Holding Calms Nerves

## Exercising the Body Keeps the Mind Fit



What if one therapy could help ward off addiction, depression, stress and even Alzheimer's, all the while keeping you slim and feeling great?

That mental-health "treatment" is as close as your own two feet—exercise.

"Exercise improves blood flow to the brain, it helps the body detoxify, it puts you on a better cycle of physical behavior, and it leads to decreased stress. It also improves thinking and mental function and decreases your tendency toward addiction," says Dr. Marc Siegel, an professor of

### Health Day News

Medicine at the NYU School of Medicine in New York City.

With each new study, experts are getting a better understanding of the intimate connection between the health of the body and that of the mind. And exercise—the body's key method of staying healthy—appears to be crucial to mental health, too.

For example, "there's evidence that exercise is maybe the best non-pharmacological antidepressant we have—studies have shown that it works better than some drugs. It's also a

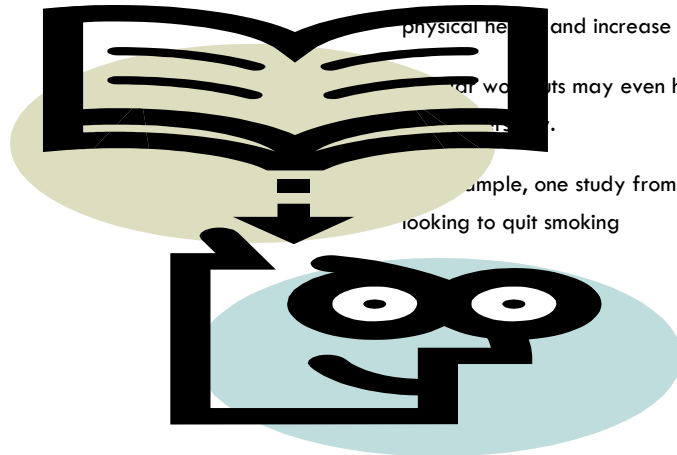
anti-anxiety intervention," said James Maddux, a professor of psychology at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., and an expert on the mind-body health connection.

Aerobic exercise such as running or swimming can lead to a healthy release of the body's natural opiates, petrochemicals called endorphins. These are natural stress-busters, Siegel said, but exercise's impact on stress goes "way beyond endorphins."

"Exercise is a ritualistic activity that redirects your energy," said

Siegel, Alarm: The Truth About the Epidemic of Fear. "Stress is a build-up of inactivity, of over-thinking without release,"

he said. "But exercise gives you a physical release that diminishes that psychic frustration. "For many people, exercise also provides a valuable sense of control over their physical health, "It's that sense of a lost of control that can lead to stress," Siegel said. And



when individuals join sports clubs, teamwork and increase socialization, which has been proven to be more than twice as likely to have stayed away from cigarettes for at least

one year, compared to women who simply took part in a smoking-

For example, one study from Brown University found that women looking to quit smoking Cessation program without exercise.

The Brown team believes that exercise may have helped smokers deal with the stress of



An added bonus, the study also found that exercising ex-smokers were able to stave off much of the weight gain typically associated with quitting smoking.

A fit, active body may even help reduce risks for Alzheimer's disease by improving

"There's no question that exercise improves blood flow to the brain," Siegel explained. One recent U.S. study found that seniors who engaged in some form of minimal exercise at least three days a week cut their risk of developing Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia by as much as 30 percent to 40 percent.

So, the advice from experts;

Get out there, and get active.

"Exercise is clearly a discipline or ritualistic activity that you can use to break your cycle of worry and get on a path toward better health."

## Marriage Hand Holding Calms Nerves

By: Kathleen Doheny,

HealthDay Reporter

If you're a woman stressed out from work, holiday shopping, the kids or even too much traffic, grab your husband's hand for instant relief. And if you're spouse-less? Holding any male's hand is better than none. That's the conclusion of a study published in the December issue of the journal *Psychological Science*.

"Hand-holding is second nature for kids" when they're under stress, said James A. Coan, assistant professor of psychology and neuroscience at the University of Virginia, who led the study. "This can also work for adults."

The happier the marriage, the

stranger's hand can help reduce stress, he said.

For the study, Coan recruited 16 married women who scored high on his marriage satisfaction quiz and gave them magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans of their brain when confronted with stress. He subjected them to a very mild electric shock in three situations: by themselves not holding anyone's hand; holding their husband's hand; and holding the hand of a male stranger.

"First, we wanted to know what the brain is doing when the women were completely alone," he said. "We got a baseline of how the brain responds to stress."

Then, the researchers looked at the MRI images of the brain when the women held their husband's hand or the stranger's hand. "When your brain is under stress, it has to work hard, it has all these different problems to

solve," Coan said. "It doesn't matter whose hand it is."

But a husband's hand provided the greatest benefits. "Both hands calmed the bodily reaction to stress," Coan said, "but only the spousal hand can calm the mind, only a husband's hand calmed down the region of the brain that keeps your emotions in check."

And the happier the marriage, the greater the benefits. Among couples in the study who scored the highest on marital satisfaction survey; pairs that Coan termed "super couples" - - the women got even more benefit from spousal hand-holding than did the other women.

Coan found that the region of brain thought to be associated with experience of pain quieted down even more in those women. "If you are in a 'super couple,' hand-holding serves as a kind of analgesic," he said.



## Social Support

Whatever the amount of benefit, Coan said he believes "the brain works a lot less hard when there is someone else helping us cope. One of my students said, "It's like the brain is contracting out some of the work; keeping our brain less stressed."

Dr. Charles Goodstein, a psychoanalyst at New York University Medical Center and clinical professor of psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine, said the study gives scientific credence to long-time observations. "Interaction between members of a species can have a momentous impact on emotion, and emotion can have a profound impact on bodily functioning," he said.

Often, Goodstein noted, medications are used to provide relief from anxiety and anticipated anxiety. "This study shows that there is a better way."

Just as a ship is protected by the rubber bumpers that separate it from a hard wooden dock, so too, do people benefit when social buffers soften the inevitable bumps and bruises of life. Studies show that social ties— at least those that represent positive relationships—significantly protect health and well-being.

In Sweden, researchers following more than 17,000 men and women for six years found that the group that reported the most isolation and loneliness had almost four times the risk of an early death as those with good social networks. California researchers who tracked roughly 7,000 Alameda County residents for nine years found that a lack of strong community and social bonds multiplies the likelihood of dying by nearly two to three times.

Confidants, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, relatives, and spouses or companions weave a life-enhancing social net. Their support may involve outright assistance or may be largely emotional. Studies show that people who have greater social support fare better on measures

of immune function when faced with stressors as diverse as caregiving, surgery, exams, and job strain. For example, women with breast cancer who felt they had high-quality emotional support from an intimate relationship, social support from a doctor, and nourishment from other connections had more natural killer cells—capable of destroying virus-laden cells and certain tumor cells—than those who lacked these advantages.

Not surprisingly, the quality of relationships counts. Research suggests negative ones—an embattled marriage or a straining caretaking arrangement—can be more harmful than helpful.





## PNG 2007

We have accomplished many of the goals set forth in the last year: our first annual picnic, first conference, second annual dinner, collaboration and cooperation with agencies throughout Central New York and beyond. After such a successful year, PNG Staff and Board of Directors are looking forward to the New Year 2007 that is promising to be exciting and full of events. One of the events that we are looking forward to this year is hiring of the PNG Executive Director. The application process is going well and ended on January 17, 2007. The Search Committee will conduct interviews with qualified candidates by February 1st. We are planning on welcoming our new leader in early February. In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding PNG, you can address them with Ed Livingston, PNG Board President

## January 4 Meeting

January 4th PNG had yet another successful meeting. Jody Szczech from the CNY Field Office discussed the final report on the survey conducted by the Office of Mental Health. The survey was distributed throughout the state in 2005-2006 to evaluate the state operated facilities. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the published report, please call Jody at (315) 426-3937. Participants received some information on two other reports (*Technical Report on Smoking Policy and Treatment in State Operated Psychiatric Centers and Morbidity and Mortality in People with Serious Mental Health Illness.*) These reports have valuable recommendations on integration of alternative wellness approaches and community resources into existing programs to achieve the best possible results. The reports are available from the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors at [www.nasmhpd.org](http://www.nasmhpd.org).

Les Cook, Executive Director, and Debbie Calkins, Technical Operator, from Dream Weavers Peer Support <http://dreamweaverspeersupport.org/> in Orange County did a presentation on Tenants and Landlords; rights and responsibilities. Such issues as availability of an apartment check list, ability to protect your rights, ability to have certain necessities (such as a service animal), etc... were discussed. Debbie and Les also talked about how it is important to know your rights whether you are a tenant or a landlord to avoid complicated situations.

We would like to thank Les, Debbie and Jody for their presentations and PNG members for participation in the meeting.

## From Oswego County:

### Bright Horizons News

The next Guidelines meeting will be held Wednesday January 31st at 1:00 pm For the Winter Time there will be different hours. The Clubhouse will only be open on Wednesdays from 9:00 am to 3:00pm and Friday from 10:00 am- 4:00pm.

### Landlord & Tenant Laws

If repairs are needed tell the landlord and make sure you mark down the times and dates that you called. If the Landlord does not follow through call the repairman yourself. If still no results of repairs being made than put request in writing (date, subject, mention the dates you have asked for this same results.) Send it to your Landlord and KEEP A COPY FOR YOURSELF. Get a date of when the repair should take place and get this information in writing. When you first move in make sure you take lots of pictures of your apartment (with dates on pictures if possible). This will address the issue of your damage deposit so that issues of faults will not be your responsibility and full refunds can take place. Should still no repairs be made or attempts of repairs being made you can then call City Hall and speak to a Code inspector to make a formal complaint. There is also the option of calling HUD so that they can make the inspection themselves or at least inform you of a process that they would take to help your situation. 1st for legal reasons, should this go to court, put the repair and rent money in escrow. This shows the judge that you are willing to pay but you are serious about getting your repairs made and money will be released when the repairs are completed on your property. 2nd pay for repairs yourself and take before and after pictures of items needing repairs. It especially important to take pictures of items with dates on them if possible, of how things looked when you first moved into your apartment. This will prove that you did not do the damage yourself and will guarantee you get your damage deposit when you leave the apartment or house. If you plan to do work yourself and the Landlord knows about this work or agrees GET IT IN WRITING. Also take before and after pictures of the repairs. 3rd sue the Landlord for repairs. **\*See Oswego County Peer Advocates for complete "Renter's Checklist" before you rent & the "Tenant's Rights Guide" for those who are already renting.**

By: Leslie James



# Healthy Football Eats

## Expert Blogs: Joy's Healthy Bite

Football, pizza, wings, and beer seem to go hand-in-hand. Sadly, traditional Super Bowl fare is loaded in saturated fat, calories, and added salt. Resisting the unlimited supply of snacks and treats at the buffet tables can be a real challenge to your New Year's health resolutions. With a few healthy substitutions and creative ideas, however, you can still enjoy your favorite game-day snacks and keep the pounds off.

### If you're hosting the game, serve some of the following healthier options:

Make your own pita chips by baking fresh whole-wheat pitas and cutting into wedges. Serve with hummus, salsa or dips prepared with non-fat yogurt or reduced fat sour cream.

Prepare vegetarian bean chili instead of regular beef chili, or substitute lean ground turkey meat for ground beef.

Make nachos with baked tortilla chips, reduced-fat cheese, salsa, and fat free sour cream.

Instead of chicken wings, enjoy grilled chicken tenderloins or shrimp skewers with hot sauce and low-calorie Blue Cheese dressing.

Crunchy carrot sticks, celery slices, bell pepper strips sliced cucumbers with fat-free or low-fat dressings, salsa or yogurt dips.

Lite microwave or air-popped popcorn topped with cinnamon, parmesan cheese, curry powder or garlic powder.

Serve baked chips instead of regular chips

Make a sandwich platter with lean deli meats such as turkey and ham, and low-fat cheeses. Serve with whole-grain hoagies and assorted vegetables {lettuce, tomato, pickles, roasted peppers, etc.} Hold the mayo and use mustard or hummus instead.

When ordering pizza, ask for less cheese and order vegetable toppings instead of meat, or make your own healthy pizza using pre-baked whole-wheat crust, marinara sauce and fat-free or low-fat shredded cheeses. Top with numerous vegetables such as spinach, broccoli, onions and mushrooms.

Cold shrimp with cocktail sauce, Edamame {serve steamed soy beans in the pod}, Cold pasta salad tossed with veggies and light Italian dressing, Fresh fruit platters, Diet sodas, seltzer, and water

### If you're watching the game at a buddy's house, try the following 4 tips:

Hit the gym before you hop on the couch, Don't go hungry, Watch your portions, Watch the alcohol

### Vegetarian Chili

#### Ingredients:

1/2 cup textured vegetable protein {tvp}

1/2 cup canned white beans, rinsed and drained

1/2 medium red bell pepper

1 small onion

1 clove garlic

1/2 cup tomato sauce, low sodium

1/2 tsp. chili powder

1/4 tsp. cumin

1/3 crushed red pepper flakes

2 oz. low-fat or non-fat shredded cheddar cheese

2 Tbsp. low-fat or non-fat sour cream

2/3 tbsp. olive oil

#### Directions

Combine textured vegetable protein {TVP} with enough very hot water (about 1/2 cup) to moisten well; let stand 5 minutes; press out excess water with a spoon and set aside. Rinse and drain beans; set aside. Rinse and chop pepper and onion; until onion is translucent for about 3 minutes. Stir in TVP with tomato sauce and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the beans and spices, mixing well; cover and simmer for about 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Top with shredded cheese and sour cream and serve. **Source: eDiets .com**



## Strategies for De-Stressing: Marriage Hand Holding Calms Nerves

If you're like most people, you've learned to bottle up "unacceptable" emotions, such as anger, fear, frustration, and grief. Sometimes, of course, the cap slips off. Then these emotions are let loose at high intensity, through not necessarily in the right direction. One safe way to decant any emotions—even the most hurtful, terrifying, or sad feelings—is journal writing. A blank sheet of paper and a pen can offer enormous release and, possibly, insight into hidden conflicts.

Writing about traumatic events can have physical benefits, too, according to psychologist James W. Pennebaker, who began studying this issue in the late 1970's. A series of studies required one group of people to write down their deepest thoughts and feelings about the most traumatic event they recalled. A control group wrote only about trivial events. Both groups wrote for 15 minutes a day for four days. In one study, the group that expressed deep emotions reported feeling better and also had significantly fewer doctors' visits and symptoms of illness for nearly half a year afterward. After a similar experiment, the group that revealed deep emotions had livelier immune system defenders called T cells for the next six weeks. Research shows people with asthma and arthritis benefit from journal writing too.

Why does writing about emotional issues make a difference in physical and emotional health? Pennebaker theorizes that confiding bottled-up feelings can relieve stress, which ratchets up blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension.

### Writing It Out

Clinicians at the Mind/Body Medical Institute have found that the following journal exercise helps relieve ongoing sources of stress. A single attempt is not enough, though. When you first sit down to write about a problem, you may feel more anxious. The wound, once exposed, may initially hurt more than it did while hidden. But continuing to write about the same problem over the course of several days often enables you to work through difficult emotions and reach resolution or acceptance.

Here's some advice before you begin:

Deeply troubling events and situations, such as domestic violence, rape, or direct exposure to acts of terrorism or war, are best explored with an experienced therapist. For other situations you can proceed on your own and seek professional help only if you feel you need assistance.

- If you're physically healthy, choose the most stress event or problem you currently face. It's usually one that you frequently dwell upon. Or, if you think your current problems stem from past circumstance, write about traumatic events in your past.
- Truly let go. Write down what you feel and why you feel that way.
- Write for your self, not others. Don't worry about grammar or sentence structure, if you run out of things to say in the time allotted, feel free to repeat yourself.
- Do this exercise for 15-20 minutes a day for three to four days or as long as a week if you feel writing continues to be helpful.

### Mini-Relaxations:

The best-written book on stress control is no help to you if you can't find time to read it. If you only have a short while to spare, dip into the stress-busting suggestions described in this section. Whether you have one minute or half an hour, you'll find ways to ease your day.

Mini-relaxations can help allay fear and reduce pain while you sit in the dentist's chair or lie on an examining table. They're equally helpful in thwarting stress before an important meeting, while stuck in traffic, or when faced with people or situations that annoy you. Here are a few quick relaxation techniques to try.

#### When you've got 1 minute:

Place your hand just beneath your navel so you can feel the gentle rise and fall of your belly as you breathe. Breathe in slowly. Pause for a count of three. Breathe out. Pause for a count of three. Continue to breathe deeply for one minute, pausing for a count of three after each inhalation and exhalation.

Or alternatively, while sitting comfortably, take a few slow deep breaths and quietly repeat to yourself "I am" as you breathe in and "at peace" as you breathe out. Repeat

slowly two or three times. Then feel your entire body relax into the support of the chair.

#### When you've got 2 minutes:

Count down slowly from 10 to zero. With each number, take one complete breath, inhaling and exhaling. For example, breathe in deeply saying "10" to yourself. Breathe out slowly. On your next breath, say "nine," and so on. If you feel lightheaded, count down more slowly to space your breaths further apart. When you reach zero, you should feel more relaxed. If not, go through the exercise again.

#### When you've got 3 minutes:

While sitting down, take a break from whatever you're doing and check your body for tension. Relax your facial muscles and allow your jaw to fall open slightly. Let your shoulders drop. Let your arms fall to your side. Allow your hands to loosen so that there are spaces between your fingers. Uncross your legs or ankles. Feel your thighs sink into your chair, letting your legs fall comfortably apart. Feel your shins and calves become heavier and your feet grow roots into the floor. Now breathe in slowly and breathe out slowly. Each time you breathe out, try to relax even more.

#### When you've got 5 minutes:

Try self-massage. A combination of strokes works well to relieve muscle tension. Try gentle chips with the edge of your hands or tapping with fingers or cupped palms. Put fingertips pressure on muscle knots. Knead across muscles, and try long, light, gliding strokes. You can apply these strokes to any part of the body that falls easily within your reach. For a short session like this, try focusing on your neck and head.

- Start by kneading the muscles at the back of your neck and shoulders. Make a loose fist and drum swiftly up and down the sides and back of your neck. Next, use your thumbs to work tiny circles around the base of your skull. Slowly massage the rest of your scalp with your fingertips. Then tap your fingers against your scalp, moving from the front to the back and then over the sides.
- Now massage your face. Make a series of tiny circles with your thumbs or fingertips. Pay particular

- lar attention to your temples, forehead, and jaw muscles. Use your middle fingers to massage the bridge of your nose and work outward over your eyebrows to your temples.
- Finally, close your eyes. Cup your hands loosely over your face and inhale and exhale easily for a short while.

#### When you've got 10 minutes:

Try imagery. Start by sitting comfortably in a quiet room. Breathe deeply for a few minutes. Now picture yourself in a place that conjures up good memories. What do you smell—the heavy scent of roses on a hot day, crisp fall air, the wholesome smell of baking bread? What do you hear? Drink in the colors and shapes that surround you. Focus on sensory pleasures: the swoosh of a gentle wind; soft, cool grass tickling your feet; the salty smell and rhythmic beat of the ocean. Passively observe intrusive thoughts, and then gently disengage from them to return to the world you've created.

#### The Benefits of Massage

A massage at the hands of a skilled practitioner can be rejuvenating. Research shows massage has a physiological impact, too.

A 2005 review of research studies involving massage therapy showed that massage consistently lowered levels of cortisol while increasing activity of pleasure-related brain chemicals in patients with a broad range of physical and psychological conditions. Massage also lowers blood pressure and heart rate and may enhance certain measures of immune function. A 2005 study showed that women with breast cancer who participated in massage therapy three times a week for five weeks showed more immune system activity and reported less depression, anxiety, and fatigue than the women who didn't receive massages regularly. Some studies have found that massage is also beneficial in boosting the immune systems of people with HIV.

Whether it's for therapeutic reasons or purely for pleasure, massage offers the comforts of a warm touch and release from muscle tension. There are currently no national licensing requirements or standards for massage therapists. Experienced practitioners can be found through professional organizations, such as the American Massage Therapy Association (888-THE-AMTA) and the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (800-296-0664).

#### Affirmations:

Affirmations are statements that express love, acceptance and, often, a joyous vision for your self and your life. A stream of positive thoughts can drown out more negative ones. Try incorporating simple affirmations, such as "I breathe in healing" or "I breathe out tension," into relaxation techniques. Or paste them to your mirror or another prominent place where you can read them several times a day. The more often you repeat an affirmation, the more likely you are to believe it and act on it.

Whether you write your own affirmation or borrow one from a helpful bumper sticker ("One day at a time"), the words should resonate for you. When creating an affirmation, choose a stressful aspect of your life and decide what a positive present-tense statements:

- "I can do this."
- "I am doing my best."
- "I am clam."
- "I deserve respect."
- "Week by week, I am growing healthier and stronger."
- "I can relax my body."
- "I am a loving , caring person."

Imagine these techniques and self-nurturing acts as dry seeds for a garden. Lush growth rewards those who do more than scratch the earth, toss in a few seeds, and step back to see what comes up. Dig deep. Water frequently. Remove choking weeds from the plot when necessary. Combining the richness of your past experiences, a willingness to expand your current boundaries, and a desire to fill your life with courage, love, and joy can make a great deal of difference in what you reap.

#### Power of Prayer:

Several large studies suggest that people with an active religious life tend to stay healthier, love longer, and be happier. For example, a review article published in 2000 in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* cited an international study of nearly 170,000 men and women from 14 countries that found religious affiliation and attendance at services significantly increased the likelihood of happiness and satisfaction. Twelve years of data from 2,800 older adults enrolled in the Yale Health and Aging Study, reported in 1997 in the *Journals of Gerontology*, showed members of religious congregations had a slower onset of physical disability. Other studies on how religion affects health have noted less hostility and anxiety, lower blood pressure, and better quality of life among people with strong beliefs.

But the power of prayer is not easy to document. A 2002 study in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* sifted through research claiming religion and spirituality have positive effects on cardiovascular disease and hypertension. The investigators disputed these results, citing numerous flawed or irrelevant supporting studies.

But prayer offers solace and comfort to many people. Religious communities can be part of a larger social network that keeps a person afloat with emotional support and outright assistance (see Social Support). By reinforcing positive emotions, religious belief might stimulate healthy physiological though complex nervous systems pathways much as a constant flood of negative thoughts may set the opposite reaction in motion. And, of course, certain religions encourage better health habits, such as avoiding alcohol and tobacco.

If prayer is meaningful to you, it can enhance the relaxation response and perhaps your health as well. You may want to use your favorite prayer or a phrase from it to help you focus.

#### Strengthening Your Social Bonds:

Given the pleasures and benefits of social ties, why not grasp opportunities to expand your social circle and deepen the ties you've already made? Here are some ways to do just that.

- If you normally wait for others to reach out, pick up the phone and propose a date.
- Explore some of the many volunteer opportunities available, from wielding tools to spruce up affordable housing to mentoring a child or business-person. Check with <http://www.volunteermatch.org> or <http://www.seniorcorps.org> or call your local chapter of the United Way for opportunities that fit your talents and interests.
- Harness the warmer side of technology. E-mail and telephones extend your reach around the world. Libraries and senior centers may offer free online time and may even help you set up a free e-mail account.
- Find like-minded people through intriguing classes, organizations, and your community newspaper.
- Share a confidence. Doing so can turn a friendly relationship into an even deeper one.
- If depression, low self-esteem. Or social phobias affect your ability to make connections, seek help.

Partnership \* Empowerment \* Equal Opportunities

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## YOUR CORNER

This month's birthdays:

**Ralph Blackshear 1/3**  
**Harold Mellen 1/8**  
**Sue Morrow 1/10**  
**Joann Smith 1/24**  
**John Cruden 1/25**

*Happy Birthday  
Ralph, Harold, Sue,  
Joann and John*



### Capricorn

General Features:

Earth sign ruled by Saturn. Capricornia's are ambitious, resolute, cold minded, melancholic. Fatigue never makes them afraid; they work hard and are ready to sacrifice themselves, if necessary. They plan patiently and carefully all their objectives and the way to reach them. To achieve their results they are ready to do anything, without asking any help. They are reserved and introverted, but sometimes they live sudden moments of impulsiveness. Their main characteristics are shyness and insecurity, which disappear when they realize of being loved and appreciated. Suited jobs are politician, entrepreneur, insurer, estate agent, banking employee.

### Aquarius

General Features:

Air sign ruled by Saturn and Uranus. Aquarians are sincere, altruistic, free and active. Usually, they are quiet, but sometimes they can be extremely nervous or strained. They ask a lot from other people, and when they are disappointed, they suffer and bear grudge against them. Aquarians are vain; they love compliments and never leave anything to chance. They are intuitive, fanciful and critical. They can be good and pleasing friends as well as passionate lovers. They have lots of interests and creative ideas. Suited jobs: poet, astronomer, actor, pilot and smith.

Taken from:  
[www.horoscopefree.com](http://www.horoscopefree.com)