



FREE

Happy Mother's Day

Reflect on Life Lessons Taught
by Moms Throughout WNY

Lupus Awareness

Understand the Significance
of this Disease and its Symptoms

Memorial Day 2024

Learn Different Ways to
Give Back to Those We Lost

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Our Mission

Your Bliss Magazine explores the power of overall wellness. We look to push past the boundaries of physical health and explore the aspects of mental health, financial health, and health of the spirit. Our goal is to bring you information that you can use to live a happy, healthy, and spirited life. We find tips for the short term as well as more expansive information for the long term.

With the ever-expanding technology, knowledge, and evolution of the health field, there is a growing supply of data to take from. With Your Bliss, we find the information for you and put it all in one place. Every month we bring you new articles on a wide range of topics so you can live a more fulfilled and whole life.

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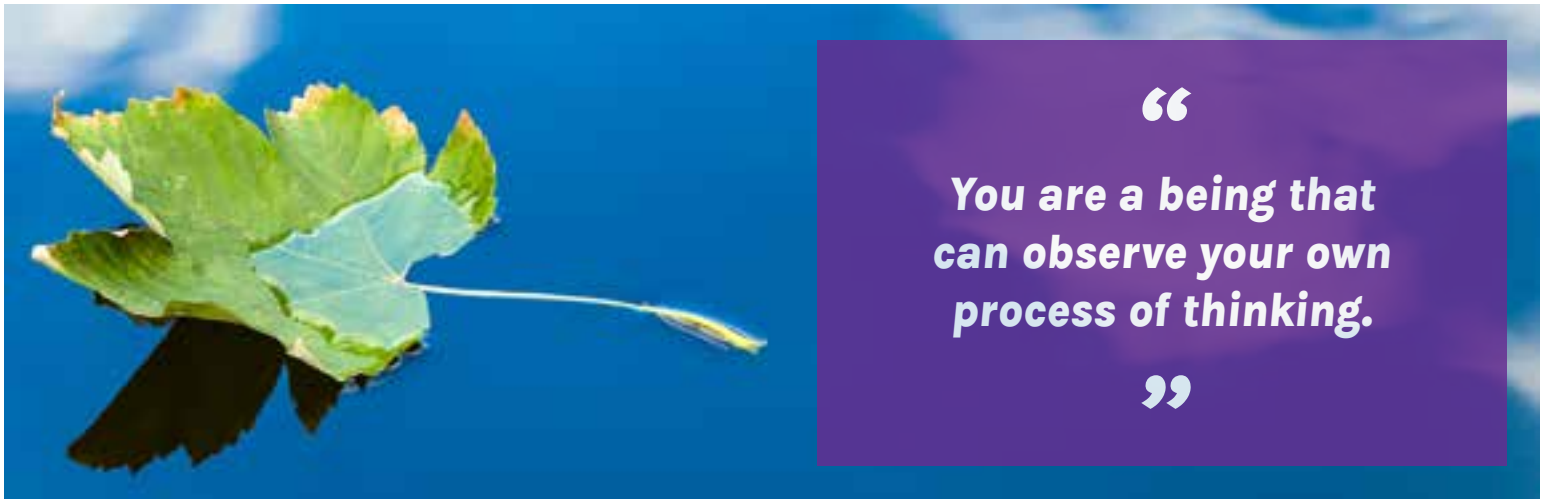
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Bringing Your Therapy Home With You

By: Sue Perbody



Therapy teaches us a lot about our internal and external struggles, as well as various techniques to overcome these problems that we face in our everyday lives. A portion of the help with overcoming these issues is taking the therapy we learn in a one-on-one session and using it in our everyday lives. Make notes on various techniques learned in your therapy sessions and apply them to real life situations. You'll be surprised at how much better you'll feel about yourself.

Put this scenario together for a moment; you're in your mid-twenties and you just finished college. You received your first adult job, and it pays decently. You just left a toxic relationship with your former partner, and the transition to a new journey in life is troublesome, at first. You're used to being pushed around and talked down to. You're trying to get used to this new position of leadership and credibility. Unfortunately, you keep having intrusive thoughts of your new boss talking down to you just like your former partner would do to you. What have I learned from this past relationship that I can use in my everyday life?

According to Psychology Today, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, also known as ACT, provides us with a cognitive diffusion technique to learn how to stop avoiding, denying, and struggling with inner emotions. Instead, we accept these emotions and come to terms that they are responses to certain situations that should not prevent us from moving forward in our lives. Your therapist taught you this cognitive diffusion technique to allow these thoughts to pass through your mind like a leaf on a stream of water. You'll come to accept these thoughts of your

past trauma and remain present in the moment when having these thoughts. We are more than our thoughts, feelings, and experiences. We have values that set us apart from these principles.

Imagine this thought in a scenario of content versus context. The content is the thought of your new boss talking you down, the words and images that make up the thought. The context is the location, or sense of self where the content of the thought occurs. So often we identify ourselves with the content of our thoughts as if the thought is really happening. But is it? By changing how the thought is heard, for example, by putting it in a specific voice or character in your mind; think of your favorite musician, actor or comedian, we can more easily see that the thought is not us, but rather we are the context for our thoughts. This is not a control strategy per se, but a new way of relating to ourselves. Will these intrusive thoughts stay away for good? Not exactly, but you are diffusing them; letting them show up and go away on their own. You are a being that can observe your own process of thinking. We

often don't make contact with it because we are pulling leaves out of the stream to define ourselves. You are separate from your thoughts, making them easier to diffuse because we are a being with thoughts, instead of becoming the thoughts.

If you are experiencing anxiety or intrusive thoughts from a past traumatic experience, it is important to follow up with your doctor, psychiatrist, or mental health counselor to develop different techniques to diffuse these behaviors. Not all techniques work for everyone, but it doesn't hurt to give it a shot and see what some in-office and at-home therapy can do for your mental health.



Lupus Signs, Symptoms, Resources and Advice

By: Molly Gavin

Everyone's affected by Lupus differently, what were your first signs of Lupus? How old were you?

Honestly, the only reason I ever found out something was wrong was in May of 2011, I passed out in school and I went to the hospital. They ran bloodwork and noticed my red and white blood cell count was off. They sent me to a hematologist where I was initially diagnosed with antiphospholipid syndrome which is the first stage of lupus. Luckily my mom worked at a doctor's office at the time and she asked one of the doctors to review my labs from the hospital. He said it's either lupus or leukemia, they have the same genetic strand. After going to numerous doctors and taking medication, my blood work showed that it was Lupus. I was also diagnosed with Lupus nephritis in 2014 which is lupus in my kidneys. I was officially diagnosed with lupus at 16/17 and lupus nephritis at 19. I'm currently 29 years old.

What is something that you would like everyone to know about this condition?

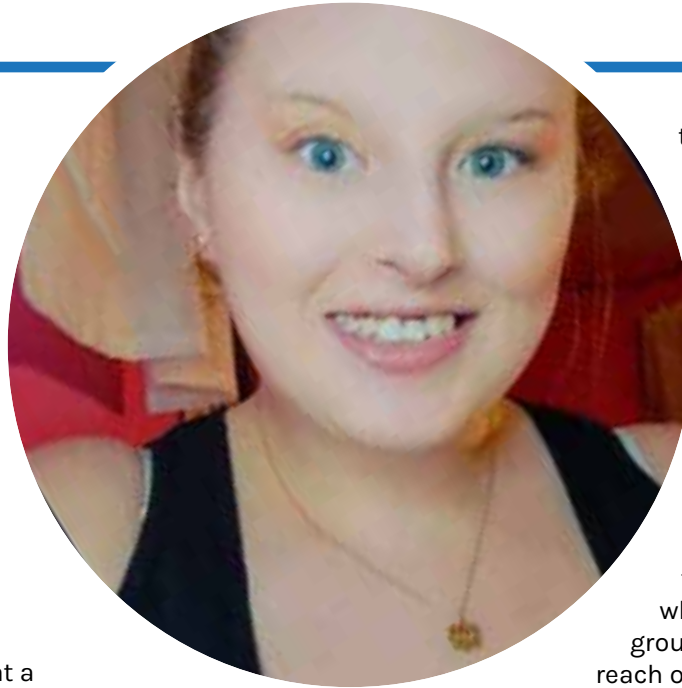
Just because you can't see someone struggling externally, they're struggling internally.

Would you say it affects your everyday life? If so, how?

Absolutely, it affects my everyday life. Two of the most common lupus symptoms are joint pain and fatigue. Being in constant pain makes doing normal things a chore, like getting out of bed or getting dressed. And the fatigue is brutal, no matter how much I sleep, whether it's 2 hours or 20 minutes, I feel like I never slept and coffee does absolutely nothing.

What impact did it have on you when you were first diagnosed? How did things change for you?

The biggest impact was on my mental health. Mental health is definitely a key thing in a chronic condition. Your body is so unpredictable so you don't know what you're able to accomplish during the day. You're trying



to mentally prepare but your mind is constantly racing.

What kind of resources would you recommend for those who have been recently diagnosed?

One resource that helped me was the lupus website. It breaks down all the different types of lupus. Also, talk to your primary care provider and see if they have any recommendations on where to turn. Also, there's so many groups on Facebook you can join and reach out to others. I'm part of multiple groups. It's amazing to hear other people stories and realize they're literally in the same boat as you. Also, the Lupus Alliance of Upstate New York is a wonderful place to learn about lupus.

What is something that you learned about lupus, or yourself, throughout your journey with lupus?

One thing that having lupus taught me was how strong I truly am, I know how frustrating and scary it is when you get that first diagnosis, going through countless tests, medications, and blood work. It's all overwhelming. But as long as you have a solid support system, things get a lot easier. Also, don't be ashamed in using medical equipment to make life easier. I personally use a cane from time to time and a handicapped tag when I do have to drive somewhere. If it makes life easier to live, use it! Don't listen to people's comments/judgements about being a young person using something that helps you. I've also been a lot more grateful for the life I've been living. My amazing mother and stepdad are always by my side if I need help with anything. I'm also grateful to be a Lupus Warrior, thinking about everything I've gone through leading up to the current moment of writing this response makes me cherish life a little bit more.

If you or a loved one is experiencing symptoms of lupus, it is important to follow up with your health care provider right away. Visit wnymedical.com or call our office at (716) 923-4380 to schedule an appointment today.



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Dr. RS: Benefits of Saffron and Cloves

By: Dr. Riffat Sadiq, CEO of WNY Medical, PC, Channel Creator

Saffron is a vibrant and unique spice that comes from the Crocus flower. It can be quite expensive, but this is only because of all the intensive harvesting that comes with gathering the spice. The benefits are worth the process, however, because saffron contains calcium, potassium, sodium, and protein and has no calories. It is also extremely important because of its antioxidant property that can reduce the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's in older age.

Saffron can serve as an anti-depressant as well, because it comes from the Crocus flower, and this is known to have elements to positively change people's mood. Saffron has been documented to naturally increase dopamine levels, without altering other brain hormone levels. It is advised to have tea with saffron for a quick pick me up when you're feeling down!

A lot of cosmetic products started to include saffron as an ingredient because it can reduce pigmentation and make the users skin look a lot clearer as well as appear to be younger. These cosmetic products can then also help with acne, help with scar tissue, and reduce inflammation.

The saffron spice has a variety of plant compounds packed inside, which then serves as antioxidants for the body when consumed. The two most notable antioxidants saffron contains are crocin and crocetin. These two antioxidants alone have been known to aid with weight loss, improve your memory, and can protect your brain cells from any potential damage.

With saffron, moderation is important because too much of it can lead to irregular heartbeats better known as palpitation. Which is why it is advised for pregnant women to not consume saffron, and it is best to consult a doctor if you are experiencing any unusual symptoms.

Cloves are a small aromatic herb that has been used for years in food and medicine. They are known for their Vitamin A and K benefits, and the benefits that they have for our skin. Cloves have built in anti-inflammatory properties that can get rid of scar tissue on the face, and the dark circles that can form around one's eyes.

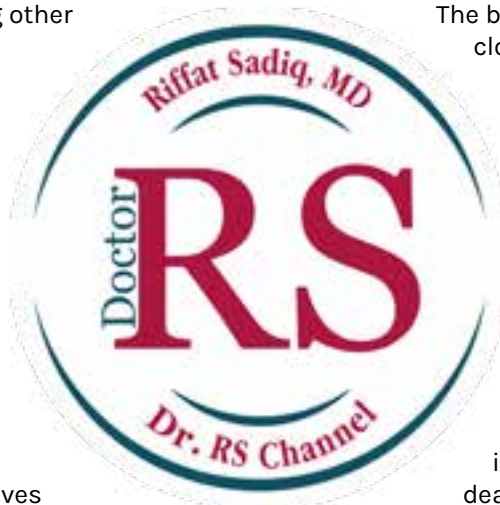
To get the most out of the skin benefits that cloves can provide, you can add lemon juice and honey to your choice of clove oil or powder and make a paste for a face mask. This can be applied once a month or every other week for a natural healer for your skin!

The benefits don't just stop there! Because cloves provide manganese, which is a mineral that can help regulate your blood sugar, this simple ingredient can help with so much more. By putting a few cloves in your tea, you can experience other great health benefits such as weight loss, help regulate high cholesterol, and can help with diabetes.

This spice can be a great relief to stomach pains and digestive issues as well. Because of its high fiber count, it can help relax the stomach lining when dealing with nausea and can relieve gas and vomiting issues.

Cloves can also contribute to bettering your mental health, with all the natural effects they have on weight loss and clearer skin, it will also naturally help you feel good about yourself and put you in a better mental state.

However, it is important to note that just like anything else, moderation is key! About 3-6 cloves a day is a good way to start, but too much can lead to an upset stomach, and it is important to ensure there is no allergy before trying.



Dr. Riffat Sadiq: Restoring Self

Want more tips on improving your wellness and restoring yourself? Watch videos on YouTube, DrRSMD.



Approaching Summertime in WNY

By: Lei Anna Craig

Summer is around the corner, and we all know what that means, it's time to break out the shades and don't forget the sunscreen! The summertime is the perfect opportunity to try out new things and set yourself on a new and healthy lifestyle. With the sunrays shining down on us and keeping us motivated, how can we not feel inspired?

But if not, don't worry, we have got you covered with some ideas on what to do this summer. Here are some tips for you to stay healthy, get active, and have fun!

Gardening Fun

Nothing says "summer" better than being outside and connecting with Mother Nature! Gardening is a great way to start a healthy lifestyle as you can grow all your favorite fruits and vegetables. And you can do this right in the comfort of your own backyard, it is important that you do this in an area that is close to your home for easy access, and in a place that can gain a lot of sunlight.

Gardening is also a great way to improve your mental health, because of its ability to teach patience and acceptance while also giving you satisfaction when you get the results that you are looking for. Your physical health can be improved from this act too, because



believe it or not, there is a lot of heavy lifting that comes from gardening. So, you will be getting your workout in!

Backyard Games

Summertime means family fun, and oversized board games. So, break out the cornhole and the four-foot Jenga because it's time for some friendly competition! But, to make it more interesting, we can make the loser of the games help clean up the backyard, pick out all the pesky weeds, mow the yard, or whatever the winner says! It's a win-win situation, you are helping to improve the environment while also gaining bragging rights, who would want to pass that up?

Hiking, Biking and Walking, Oh My!

There are so many trails around the Buffalo area that are open to the public and have amazing views that you simply must visit this summer. This is an easy way to stay active and healthy and is even better when you bring a friend! So, pick your favorite activity, grab your water bottle and have fun!

We hope that you have a healthy and fun-filled summer and try some of our tips if you can. Maybe you will find your new favorite summer activity this year!



Giving Back on Memorial Day

By: Lei Anna Craig

Memorial Day became an official holiday on May 30th in 1868 after the Civil War. It was made to honor those who gave their lives fighting for their country and was intended for those still living to pay tribute by decorating their gravesites.

It wasn't until much later did they realize that this should be for the fallen soldiers from all the American wars, and in 1971 Congress made it a national holiday; making the last Monday in May the official day for Memorial Day.

But how can we celebrate Memorial Day? There are a lot of things that we can do around Buffalo to honor and express our gratitude for all the men and women who gave their lives for us and our country.

Forest Lawn Cemetery

A simple but one of the most effective ways to honor our fallen soldiers would be to bring flowers to their gravesites. Decorating their resting place displays our gratitude for their services and efforts, and all that they've done will never be forgotten. Buffalo often holds ceremonies in the morning of Memorial Day at Forest Lawn that is open to the public and welcomed for everyone to join!

Memorial Day Parade

The Memorial Day parade in Buffalo is a big deal and isn't something that you would want to miss out on. It occurs every year and is one of the largest parades in

Western New York, starting on Delaware Avenue and ending on Elmwood Avenue. Join in to take part in the festivities and celebrate the lives of those who fought for us.

The Red Poppy Flower

The Red Poppy flower symbolizes the lives lost, and has been the symbol since World War I. So many will wear red poppy pins or lay out the flower on this day as a tribute to the men and women who gave their lives on the battlefield. So, expect to see a sea of red poppies making their way through the crowds!

Veteran Organizations

Although Memorial Day is to honor those who have fallen, it is still important to celebrate our veterans as well. Many have faced hardships that were difficult to bounce back from and faced difficulties like PTSD as well as other forms of trauma, as they have lost those close to them on the battlefield and seen things that are indescribable. In honor of Memorial Day, we can do our part in helping them by volunteering at organizations such as: WNY Heroes Inc, Veterans One-Stop center, American Veterans, and many more.

There are many ways to honor those who have fallen, even if it's just a moment of silence for remembrance. We hope this helps and you can take the time out this year to honor those who served us this Memorial Day!

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We can do our part in helping by volunteering at organizations.
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Turn Brainstorming into Action in Everyday Life

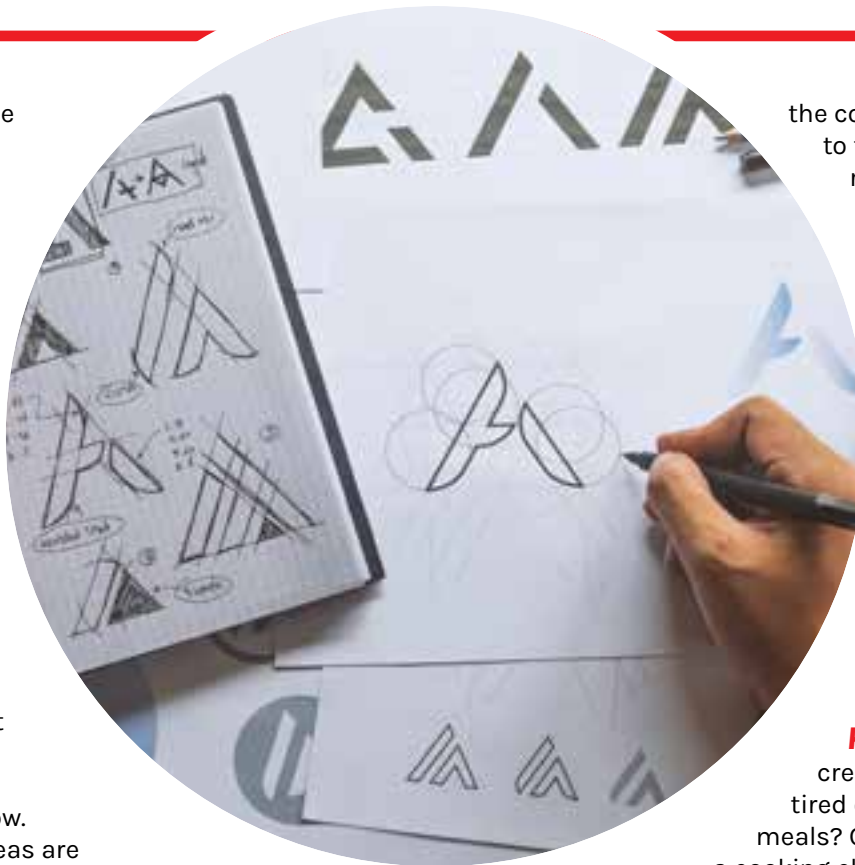
By: Roberta Schlehr

Last month I wrote an article about brainstorming as it relates to generating ideas and solving problems. Brainstorming encourages a way to think freely and without judgement, at least not at this early stage! I discussed the technique of generating ideas quickly, in the creative world called thumbnail sketches and how to generate them. Get your ideas down on paper, if you are not comfortable or feel you don't have the ability to sketch - then start with a list of words or short phrases. Whatever method you choose, let the ideas flow. Judge only when enough ideas are generated, then evaluate for potential possibilities.

Did you come up with good ideas or at least a starting point? Maybe you will continue brainstorming with someone about your ideas and/or discuss the problem you are trying to solve. Either way it is time to put your thoughts into action.

I brainstormed practical ways to implement everyday creativity into your world.

At home: It is spring and a great time to freshen up indoors and out. **Inside:** Start simply with rearranging furniture from a cozy winter layout to an open, spacious arrangement. Adding a fresh coat of paint or changing



the color can bring fresh energy to the space. Try this in other rooms of your house. Be careful not to overdo – take it slow so you don't get overwhelmed.

Outside: Adding new flowers to your garden that bloom at different times from what you currently have can be a gift for years to come. Try changing the cushions or throw pillows on your patio furniture to give a new look.

Personal growth: Get creative in the kitchen. Are you tired of cooking the same type of meals? Check out new recipes or join a cooking class. Experiment cooking a new meal once a week from a different culture that you are curious to try.

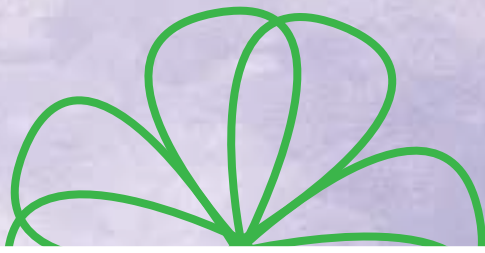
Problem solving: Create a mind map instead of listing the pros and cons of the problem. Ask What if... come up with all different kinds of solutions, maybe some that seem impossible. Think outside of the box!

There are many, many ways to explore and incorporate everyday creativity into your life. Start with a journal or use your smartphone camera to capture inspiration all around you. Act on the spark of inspiration whether it is a traditional creative project like painting, sculpting, writing, or tackling household tasks. This is your creative adventure – where is it going to take you?



Motherly

Through Multiple



One of the most powerful lessons I learned from my mother was to have faith in God's plan. She truly placed strong beliefs in the Catholic religion within our family. From a young age, I remember the beautiful statue of the Blessed Mother that held a special place in our backyard flower garden. We carried on a tradition of a statue of the Blessed Mother as a shrine-like setting in the flower garden. To this day, I can feel her loving presence watching over me. Due to my mom's religious beliefs, I too made the decision to raise and pass down my Catholic faith to my children. I believe no matter what spiritual beliefs a person has, that the gifts of faith, hope, and love continue to be at the core of a meaningful life. I appreciate the caring efforts that my mom placed throughout my life to nurture my physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

- Debbie Fadel

My mother taught strength. She was both for me. We may not a but she's one of my to get up a

- Hunter



My mom always taught Hard work pays off. S take time. A quot well with the "the cream always

- Anne D

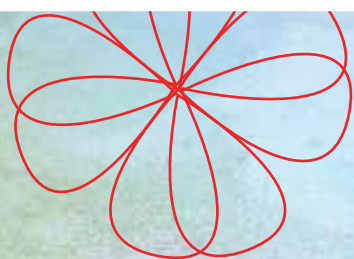
My mom taught me to live my life with an open, non-judgmental mindset and to accept everybody for who they are. Parental relationships can struggle at a younger age but can blossom in adulthood with the right nurturing and care. I'm glad I was able to see this as an adult, and I now cherish every moment I have with my mom.

- Katy Defazio



My mom passed during the blizzard we had two winters ago. We weren't on good terms most of my life, and just got back into speaking terms because I had a baby of my own. It taught me to never give up on having a great relationship with my own child, and to never lose sight of giving them a better life than what I had.

- Kai Reuther



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Wolfgang

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I lost my dad at 11 years old in 2006, so my mom had to play both parents. My mom is a warrior and quite literally my best friend.

I've learned what it takes to be strong and having bad days is ok. She's been the reason I keep strong on days I want to quit.

She is my voice of reason.

- Molly Gavin

My mother showed me the power of a kind heart and how strong a woman can be. I grew up watching her be the “breadwinner” of the household while still showing up as “mom”. Through thick and thin I noticed how much love she held for others, and how this love and her outgoing personality would light up all who were around her. When I was young, I found it so fascinating to watch her be a social butterfly anywhere we went - from the grocery store to some random far out place where it seemed there'd be no possible way she could know someone. Time and time again, I'd see people excitedly stop and chat with her, sometimes it would even be people she had helped take care of as an RN in the hospital. It amazes me how much she has overcome in her own life and how she was still able to show up for so many people, in so many different ways. She has shown me what courage looks like, even when there is great uncertainty.

- Selena Stucke

My mom was raised without a mother. When I was born, she was scared because she was afraid to make any mistakes. Her fear motivated her. She taught me several things throughout the years. One thing that stuck out to me was her courage to stand up against any obstacle and defeat any painful or traumatic experiences that life throws at us in our way.

- Sara Loft

Harnessing the Power of May's Flower Full Moon

By: Lana Shapiro



As the vibrant month of May unfolds, the celestial stage is set for the spectacular appearance of the Flower Full Moon. Scheduled to illuminate the skies on May 23, 2024, this lunar event heralds the final flourish of spring, inviting us to shed self-doubt and embrace the boundless potential that lies within.

The Flower Moon beckons us to reassess our aspirations, revitalize our spirits, and realign with our deepest convictions.

Under the radiant glow of the Flower Moon, we find ourselves filled with the courage to confront past insecurities and transcend limitations that may have hindered our progress. It is a time to ignite the spark of creativity, to pursue our dreams, and to embrace newfound confidence.

The Flower Moon, an annual lunar phenomenon that graces the skies each May, derives its name from the abundant blossoming of flowers that characterizes this time of year. Symbolizing renewal, growth, and the promise of new beginnings, the Flower Moon serves as a reminder of the cyclical nature of life and the ever-present potential for transformation.

In 2024, the Flower Moon ascends in the spirited sign of Sagittarius, infusing the atmosphere with a sense of adventure, expansion, and the pursuit of truth. As we bask in its luminous glow, we are encouraged to embrace the journey of self-discovery, to revel in the beauty of the present moment, and to nurture the seeds of potential that lie within. Sagittarius, known for its philosophical depth and thirst for exploration, infuses this lunar phase with a sense of optimism and a daring willingness to embark on new ventures.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of our daily lives, the Flower Moon beckons us to pause, to reflect, and to cultivate a sense of gratitude for the myriad blessings that surround us. It is a time to embody patience, resilience, and self-compassion as we navigate the ebbs and flows of our personal evolution.

In essence, the Flower Moon serves as a sacred reminder of our innate capacity for growth, resilience, and renewal. As we gaze upon its luminous light, let's embrace a collective change, to pursue our passions with unwavering determination, and to bloom in the light of our own full potential.

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The Flower Moon derives its name from the abundant blossoming of flowers that characterizes this time of year.
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A Journey Through the WRAP Program

By: Jessica Rabb, Family Peer Advocate, Olive Tree Family Services

Moms navigating mental health challenges while raising children face a unique set of circumstances. Within the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) program, these moms embark on a journey of resilience, empowerment, and holistic well-being.

WRAP takes a comprehensive approach to mental health, recognizing that wellness encompasses more than just symptom management. For moms, this means addressing their own and their families' needs. Parenting challenges, such as guilt, communication struggles, and self-care balancing acts, are integral parts of the process. So OTFS plays a significant role in supporting these moms through their journey

Central to the WRAP philosophy is the cultivation of resilience. Moms work with facilitators and support persons to identify strengths, develop coping skills, and create personalized crisis plans. Through this process, they learn to bounce back from setbacks and thrive through adversity.

Empowerment is a cornerstone of the WRAP program. Here at Olive Tree Family Services, moms are encouraged to take an active role in their recovery journey, making informed decisions and advocating for their needs and their family's needs. Facilitators

provide guidance and support while respecting each mom's autonomy and agenda.

Our peer support advocates, and home skill builders play a vital role in the WRAP community. Moms connect with others who share similar experiences, offering empathy, validation, and practical advice. These connections foster a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation.

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**a safe and
supportive
space**
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Flexibility and adaptability are key components of the WRAP approach. Recognizing that every mom's journey is unique, the program adjusts to accommodate individual needs and preferences. This might involve exploring different coping strategies, modifying wellness tools, or adjusting the pace of the program.

With Olive Tree Family Services, moms find a safe and supportive space to explore their mental health, parenting challenges, and personal strengths. Through collaboration, empowerment, and peer support, they emerge stronger, more resilient, and better equipped to navigate the complexities of motherhood while prioritizing their own well-being. To learn more about us, visit our website at olivetreefs.org. We wish a Happy Mother's Day to all moms, from us here at Olive Tree Family Services!



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Mirror Mirror on the Wall: Where Do You Think Your Financial Statements Are?

By: Faizan Haq, Editor-in-Chief and Publisher, Your Bliss Magazine and CEO, Manage Your Business, LLC



In business looking in the financial mirror with accuracy is important. That is where you will find out whether you are making good financial decisions or not. This is why the banks periodically require you to provide financial statements. However, before the banks request one from you, you should periodically update yourself about the state of your financial matters. See your true reflection in the financial mirror.

Numerous online templates are readily available for compiling financial information. Creating a comprehensive overview is straightforward. You can list all your assets, encompassing banking, investments, your 401k, the equity in your assets, including your property, specifying what is paid off and what remains, you have now begun to draw your image in the financial mirror. If anything, detailing your liabilities complements this approach, resulting in a concise statement or financial reflection. Determining your net worth involves subtracting liabilities from assets. While the initial outlook for startups may seem daunting, there's room for improvement as you update your financial statement.



Effective cash flow management plays an important role; consistently allocating funds to savings initiates the process of building your net worth gradually. Whether you're seeking a loan, embarking on a business venture, or monitoring personal or business finances, assessing your financial status is a prerequisite. Think of it like looking in a mirror; that's what a financial statement is all about, it reflects how are you looking financially.

Updating your financial statements regularly is a smart business practice. Whether you're borrowing from a bank or managing personal loans like student loans or a mortgage, it's important to develop a habit of reviewing your financial details. Many people who use credit cards may incur additional charges if they don't pay on time, or don't pay attention. It may lead to paying high interest rates. Carefully avoid that by examining your credit card statements, which helps you to understand the cost of your purchases and avoid being in this situation. We shall address this in a separate article in detail.



Maintaining accurate financial records is essential in many instances. Just as it is important to dress up in the morning before you leave for work. You want to look your best. While banks may require periodic updates, it is wise to proactively monitor your financial status independently. Utilizing online templates simplifies the process of compiling assets and liabilities, allowing for a clearer picture of your financial standing. We are uploading a simple template on our website for you to get started. Good luck!



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Media Corner: A Review of Tokyo Vice

By: Alex Tilton

Tokyo Vice is a fictionalization of the memoirs of reporter Jake Adelstein (played by Ansel Elgort), the first foreign born reporter to work for a major Japanese newspaper. Season one introduces the character of Adelstein, his hiring by a Tokyo newspaper, and his introduction to the police beat. It also serves as a cautionary tale around the timeless theme of 'be careful what you ask for.' Adelstein finds himself researching a series of suicides that seem connected to a corrupt moneylending operation of a violent yakuza gang run by Boss Tozawa.

The story also takes the time to deal with Jake's process of acclimatizing to working at the newspaper, where (at first) the only thing anyone will call him is 'gaijin' (foreigner). He speaks fluent Japanese but in spite of having lived there for years, he's still learning the subtler nuances of the country he's living in. But he adapts quickly and establishes a working relationship with a senior Tokyo police detective named Katagiri, played by Ken Watanabe.

There are two other main characters. Sato is a young yakuza soldier moving his way up the ranks and learning that the supposedly 'honorable' traditions of the yakuza world are anything but. Samantha is an American expat with a mysterious past, trying to make her way in Japan and open her own hostess club. Their threads interact throughout the story and provide a richly detailed human feeling to the plot.

Sato wants to keep his little brother out of the yakuza. Samantha wants to own her club free and clear, but can't secure funding. Jake wants to print a major story about the yakuza corruption but can't get the damning evidence he needs. Katagiri wants to bring down the yakuza but his hands are tied by institutional corruption, Japanese tradition, and the danger to his family. On the other side, Tozawa is an ambitious, scheming sociopath

who doesn't value anything above himself. He is opposed by Sato's boss, Ishida, a respected yakuza elder statesman who still entertains the idea that his organization can hold an honorable position in Japanese society, even as he uses violent crime to get what he wants.



The story is extremely well written, complex without being confusing, and well plotted out. It was designed to fill two seasons and provide a satisfying ending in case a third season didn't happen. The bad guys are believably human, and the good guys aren't artificially clean and perfect. The pacing is also excellent, and none of the action feels contrived. The writing is also very tight and clean. It expands where necessary and knows when to keep things brief. Nobody has any weak motivations or cartoonish overreactions.

As for the cast, Ken Watanabe is impossible to dislike. The character of detective Katagiri is perfect for Watanabe's dramatic range; constantly under the strain of being expected to do his job without violating his country's traditions. It's a tightrope walk that wears him down terribly.

Ansel Elgort is new to me and I find his acting to be a little flat compared to the rest of the cast who always felt like real people living their lives. But since the character Jake living in a foreign land and literally trying to act Japanese, this could simply be an acting choice. He also learned fluent Japanese to play this part, so his work ethic can't be denied.

I liked Sato and Samantha quite a lot. They both find themselves far off the track they'd been trying to follow, trying to make the best of it. They take comfort in one another as a couple because they know neither will judge the other, and there isn't anyone else they can really talk to since they both inhabit the same part of the Japanese underworld.

“
Their threads interact throughout the story and provide a richly detailed human feeling to the plot.
”



Their relationship is the most natural feeling and effective one in the show. Jake has a dalliance with Tozawa's mistress, but it feels like an immature man's impulsive romantic impulse and it's clearly a bad idea from the start. To its credit, the show doesn't cut them any slack and their ill-conceived relationship suffers accordingly.

Various reviewers have criticized *Tokyo Vice* as being a 'white savior' story, but this feels like a disingenuous critique to me. Jake tries to bring information to light that the Japanese government would like to keep quiet, but at no point does he save anybody. His many frustrations throughout the series revolve around his American impulse to blow the truth wide open,

and Japan's cultural preference to look the other way and avoid scandal. Jake would very much like to save the day, but Japan isn't interested in being 'saved' as Jake defines it. And his character arc revolves around coming to terms with this reality. He must learn that he doesn't get to be the big hero.

In any case, *Tokyo Vice* is another excellent piece of prestige television. Anyone who likes crime dramas would be well advised to sit down and watch it. It's not perfect, but it's pretty close.

Image Sources: MAX.com & PrimeVideo.com

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Pesto, Potato, and Egg Salad

recipe presented by [delicious.com](https://www.delicious.com)

Ingredients

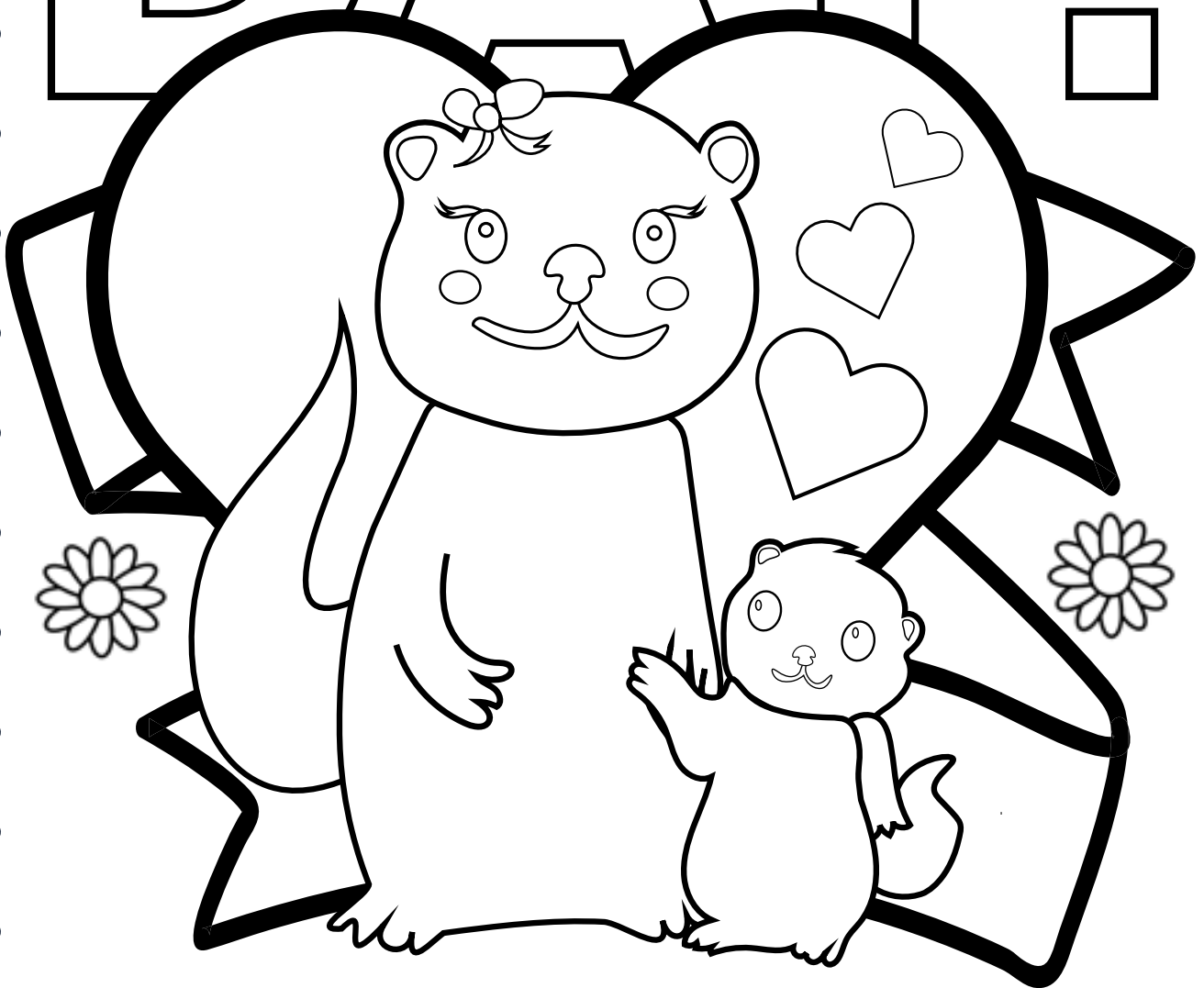
salad: 750g small potatoes
4 eggs
2 cups baby spinach
1 bunch flat leaf parsley
250g cherry tomatoes

pesto: 1 bunch basil leaves
2 crushed garlic cloves
1/2 cup grated parmesan
2/3 cup roasted cashews
1/2 cup olive oil
1 tsp grated lemon zest
1 tsp smoked paprika
lemon juice

Directions

- 1.) For the pesto, place all ingredients in a food processor and blend until smooth.
- 2.) Place potatoes in a pan of salted water. Bring to a simmer over medium heat for 15 minutes or until tender.
- 3.) Drain and set aside to cool, then halve.
- 4.) Boil eggs for 6 minutes for soft-boiled, or cook to your liking. Drain and run under some cold water.
- 5.) Place potatoes and half of the pesto in a bowl and toss. Add the spinach, parsley and the tomatoes in.
- 6.) Peel and halve the eggs. Place on top of the salad and serve with extra pesto.

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