**Pain**

Acupuncture’s real benefits: To the surprise of doctors, new research on acupuncture has found that the ancient Chinese healing technique provides real pain relief. Acupuncture involves sticking needles into specific points in the body that Chinese healers believe contain unseen energy pathways; the needles supposedly stimulate the flow of “qi,” or energy. Western medicine has viewed these claims with deep skepticism, contending that any benefits from acupuncture were due to the placebo effort: When people believe in a phony treatment, they often feel relief from symptoms. But a new analysis of studies involving 18,000 patients by researchers at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York found that real acupuncture is more effective than sham acupuncture, in which the needles are administered at random spots in the body, and is also more effective than some traditional over-the-counter pain relievers. About 50 percent of patients with migraines, arthritis, and chronic back or joint pain felt markedly better after undergoing acupuncture, as opposed to 43 percent of patients who received sham acupuncture and 30 percent who tried traditional remedies. “The effects aren’t due to the placebo effect,” Andrew Vickers, a researcher at Memorial Sloan-Kettering, tells The New York Times. Even if doctors don’t understand how acupuncture works, he says, they now have “firm evidence” that it can relieve chronic pain. *(The Week magazine, September 28, 2012)*

**Last year Americans spent $2.1 billion on non-prescription pain relievers. *(Ed Edelson, in American Health magazine, November, 1991)***

**Pain is temporary. Quitting lasts forever. *(Lance Armstrong, U.S. cyclist)***

**When radio commentator Paul Harvey reported, more or less in jest, on a homespun arthritis pain reliever recipe of gin-soaked raisins, he received a letter from one of his listeners. "I heard your remedy for arthritis," the man wrote. "I don't have arthritis, but I can't wait to get it." *(Reader's Digest)***

**Only in the past 15 years have scientists understood that aspirin- containing compounds relieve pain by inhibiting the body’s production of prostaglandins. *(Claudia Wallis, in Reader’s Digest, October, 1984)***

**I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain. *(James Baldwin)***

**In the end, some of your greatest pains become your greatest strengths. *(Drew Barrymore, American actress, producer, and entrepreneur)***

**Tooth on the Wing: A McAllen, Texas, dentist has an unusual painkiller -- birds. I can attest to their effectiveness. I was so busy watching the greedy birds feeding that I forgot I was having a tooth extracted. The dentist keeps grain in a cage hanging in a tree directly in front of the window the patient faces. Dozens of birds darting in and out of the cage, scrambling over one another with gusto, provide a motion picture so engrossing that the dentist has finished his treatment before you know it. *(Paul T. Vickers, in Reader's Digest)***

**Scientists know that acute pain is the body’s alarm system. It alerts us to the fact that something is harming us. It compels us to seek help when we need it. It immobilizes us so that healing can occur. *(Claudia Wallis, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Pain plus time equals humor. *(Lenny Bruce)***

**Recognize that the person or event you think caused pain is only a stimulus that surfaced what was already there. Once more you have been given the opportunity to heal. Don't miss it! Again! *(Michael Ryce, in New Thought magazine)***

**To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain and play with it. *(Charlie Chaplin)***

**Bad week for: Los Angeles, after IBM’s “commuter pain index” ranked Los Angeles the worst city in the U.S. for commuting by car, because of frequent traffic jams, incidents of road rage, and other irritations. L.A. – which got a pain rating of 25 – still fared far better than Beijing and Mexico City, whose pain ratings of 99 (on a scale of 100) were the worst in the world. *(The Week magazine, July 16, 2010)***

**The only kind of painless dentistry is that practiced on someone else. *(Country Extra magazine)***

**As in the physical world, so in the spiritual world, pain does not last forever. *(Katherine Mansfield, New Zealand-born author)***

**We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey. *(Kenji Miyazawa)***

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**You know about those bodily jump-starters called endorphins. Men produce them plentifully to deal with stress. But some medical authorities contend endorphins don’t help men hold up well under long-term pressure. Not as well as they help women, anyhow. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**In the 1970s, scientists found that our brains contain endorphins, substances that seem to be natural pain relievers several times more potent than morphine. They turned out to be concentrated in the limbic system, that ancient part of the brain linked with strong emotion. *(Laurence Cherry, in Reader’s Digest)***

**The body produces painkillers as well. Morphine-like substances called endorphins bring pain relief by literally blocking the sites where nerve cells receive pain signals. *(Gurney Williams III, in American Health magazine)***

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**Pain is the energy that results from holding onto a negative thought. *(Michael Ryce, in New Thought magazine)***

**It still hurts to be executed: Death by lethal injection may be more painful than was previously thought, a new study has found. Developed in 1977 as a humane alternative to the electric chair and the gas chamber, the lethal-injection process actually involved three injections: sodium thiopental, to render the inmate unconscious; pancuronium bromide, to induce paralysis; and finally potassium chloride, to stop the heart. But autopsies of executed prisoners found that in 43 of 49 cases the level of anesthetic in the corpse’s blood was very low – lower than levels typical in patients going into surgery. That means inmates may sometimes be conscious after the first injection, study author Dr. Leonidas Koniaris tells the Los Angeles Times. If so, they would experience paralysis and be unable to breathe after the second injection. The third injection “will cause nerve fibers to fire, and you really get a profound burning sensation,” Koniaris says. “If people are thinking that the death penalty is acceptable because it’s been medicalized, it hasn’t.” So far, 789 people have been put to death by lethal injection in the U.S. *(The Week magazine, May 6, 2005)***

**Raising the pain barrier: It has long been known that intense exercise temporarily dulls pain. When muscles begin to ache, the body releases endorphins and other natural opiates that help relieve the discomfort for as long as 20 or 30 minutes after the workout. Now scientists believe the effect may be more permanent. Researchers in Sydney recruited 24 young and healthy but inactive volunteers. The researchers measured the pain threshold of all the subjects – the point at which the participants started to feel pain – and their baseline pain tolerance. Half of the volunteers then undertook a six-week program of moderate exercise, cycling for 30 minutes a day three times a week, while the other half continued their lives as normal. The control group’s pain threshold and tolerance remained the same. But while the exercise group’s subjects still felt pain at the same level as before, their tolerance was substantially higher; they could withstand the discomfort for much longer than before. “The participants who exercised had become more stoical,” researcher Matthew Jones tells The New York Times, “and perhaps did not find the pain as threatening after exercise training, even though it still hurt as much.” *(The Week magazine, August 29, 2014)***

**Some people can feel others’ pain – literally. When those with a rare condition called mirror-touch synesthesia see another person being touched or hurt, they actually feel the sensation themselves. There are several types of synesthesia, a neurological syndrome that causes senses to cross paths in the brain. For some synesthetes, for instance, specific colors create distinctive sounds in their head. Experts had heard only anecdotal accounts of mirror-touch synesthesia until neuroscientist Sarah-Jayne Blakemore discussed the phenomenon at a seminar in 2003. “There was a woman in the audience who asked, ‘doesn’t everyone experience that? Isn’t that completely normal?’” Blakemore tells Nature. Since then, Blakemore has studied 10 other mirror-touch synesthetes. All of them have overactive mirror neurons, which are the brain cells that allow us to see an action and comprehend it enough to be able to mimic it. “I have never been able to understand how people can enjoy looking at bloodthirsty films,” says Alice, one of Blakemore’s study subjects. “I can feel it.” *(The Week magazine, July 13, 2007)***

**We believe fish feel pain because it’s a claim of science that any sort of animal that registered no pain couldn’t survive. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Another man, Dr. C. Norman Shealy, was diagnosed as having rheumatoid spondylitis. This man suffered incredible pain because of degenerated disks in his spine. It took four days of positive prayer, meditation, and attitude adjustments to achieve his goal – freedom from pain. Ten years later, he continues to live pain-free. *(Christopher Ian Chenoweth, in Unity magazine)***

**Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding. *(Kahlil Gibran)***

**The body first, and the spirit later; and the birth and growth of the spirit, in those who are attentive to their own inner life, are slow and exceedingly painful. Our mothers are racked with the pains of our physical birth; we ourselves suffer the longer pains of our spiritual growth. *(Mary Antin)***

**The smallest pain in our little finger gives us more concern than the destruction of millions of our fellow beings. *(William Hazlitt)***

**According to National Institute on Aging it’s possible sometimes that an older person might have a heart attack without chest pain. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**A 92-year-old woman, nearing death, awoke suddenly. “We have to change our teaching!” she declared. “There isn't supposed to be pain in heaven!” “Mother,” replied her daughter, “you're not in heaven yet, you're still here with us on earth.” “Oh,” said the woman, relieved. “It's all right then.” *(Forum Letter, in Catholic Digest)***

**Your heel is the body part least sensitive to pain. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 49)***

**Psychologists agree that our minds are capable of thinking only one thought at a time. Any hobby which requires single-pointed concentration can be used as a substitute for thoughts of pain. I often lost myself in knitting, watching the design of an afghan grow. Medical science substantiates the theory that absorbing activities like knitting cause the brain to release natural painkillers, called endorphins. (Incidentally, so does laughing.) *(Evelyne Lein, in The Healing Process)***

**HOT PEPPERS FOR PAIN: Hot peppers can burn the mouth and blister the skin. But in South America, ground peppers have been used to help relieve pain for centuries. Now scientists have developed a cream derived from the hot pepper's active ingredient, capsaicin, that relieves often intractable skin pain. The cream, sold under the brand names Zostrix and Axsaine, blocks pain signals from nerves just under the skin. The first condition to benefit from capsaicin's powers is postherpetic neuralgia (PHN), which occurs in about 20 percent of people who have a bout of shingles. A recent small study showed that as many as three-quarters of PHN patients treated with the cream reported pain reduction. Patients with painful diabetic neuropathy, which causes burning sensations in the hands and feet of about 20 percent of diabetics, have also been helped by capsaicin, according to a recent study reported before the American Diabetes Association. In a trial with 47 patients, two out of three obtained some relief. *(William A. Check, in Los Angeles***

***Times)***

**The human heart dares not stay away too long from that which hurt it most. There is a return journey to anguish that few of us are released from making. *(Lillian Smith, author)***

**Not long ago, Los Angeles psychologist David Bresler helped a cardiologist with rectal cancer overcame his paralyzing pain. Asked to picture his pain as concretely as possible, the man soon said he could “see” a vicious dog snapping at his spine. Bresler asked him to imagine himself making friends with the dog, talking to it, patting it. “Many of us had imaginary playmates as kids,” says Bresler, “and that resource for vivid fantasy is still alive in us. I just try to tap it.” As the cardiologist became “friends” with the vicious dog, he found his pain subsiding and becoming more manageable. *(Laurence Cherry, in Reader’s Digest)***

## Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional. *(M. Kathleen Casey)*

## Good week for: The instructive power of pain, after a new study revealed that college football players who practiced without wearing helmets were 30 percent less likely to suffer potentially dangerous head impacts during games, because they learned to stop using their heads as weapons while tackling. *(The Week magazine, January 15, 2016)*

**Pain is an invitation to heal yourself. The body is saying, “There’s something not right in here.” *(Michael Ryce, in New Thought magazine)***

**How much pain have cost us the evils which have never happened. *(Thomas Jefferson)***

**If you get rid of the pain before you have answered its questions, you get rid of the self along with it. *(Carl Jung)***

**The Painful Truth: Just because you have a pain doesn’t mean you have to be one. *(JoAnn Ridings, in The Saturday Evening Post)***

**As you age, you become less sensitive to pain, it is said. And less susceptible to colds, too. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Ethical lobster: Switzerland has become the second country after New Zealand to ban the boiling alive of lobsters for food, arguing that the process causes the crustaceans unnecessary pain. Starting March 1, lobsters must be knocked unconscious -- with an electric shock, for example -- or have their brain destroyed with an ice pick or knife before being dropped into the pot. The measure revives a controversy over whether lobsters even free pain, which many scientists dispute. "I find it really quite remarkable that people attribute to these animals humanlike responses when they simply don't have the hardware for it," said Joseph Ayers, a marine science professor at Northeastern University in Boston. The Swiss don't eat much lobster anyway: The U.S. exported $147 million worth of live lobsters to the European Union in 2016,, but only $368,000 worth to Switzerland. *(The Week magazine, January 26, 2018)***

**Look for a long time at what pleases you, and longer still at what pains you. *(Colette, French author)***

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**We live in an age of easy money and people pull out the plastic to medicate their pain. *(Chris Packard, a mental health therapist from Gilbert, Arizona, on credit card debt)***

**People in the United States are downing more pain medication than ever before, an Associated Press investigation has found. Between 1997 and 2005, the amount of the major painkillers codeine, morphine, oxycodone, hydrocodone, and meperidine sold at drugstores has jumped 88 percent. Use of the drug oxycodone (the chemical in OxyContin) is now six times what it used to be, thanks in part to “hillbilly heroin” hot spots such as St. Louis; Columbus, Ohio; and Fort Lauderdale. Vicodin use has soared as well, especially in rural counties of West Virginia and Kentucky. Medical experts say some of the use is legitimate, as the population gets older and sicker. But some is based on the drug companies’ intensive advertising campaigns that make patients, and doctors, believe that all pain should be medicated, says medical manager John Charles. “Physicians are walking a fairly fine line.” *(The Week magazine, September 7, 2007)***

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**Pain meds might just prolong the agony. An analysis of records in the UK Biobank found that those who used ibuprofen and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for a sore back had a 70 percent higher risk of developing long-term pain than those who took alternatives. In experiments on mice, NSAIDs led to a reduction in neutrophils – the white blood cells involved in inflammation. When researchers deliberately blocked neutrophils in the mice, their pain lasted up to 10 times as long. Senior author Jeffrey Mogil says the findings could mark “the beginning of the end” for NSAIDs. *(The Week magazine, December 30, 2022 / January 6, 2023)***

**For an accurate measure of a mouse’s pain, just look at its face. Researchers in Canada have found that, when subjected to the varieties of pain that often arise in lab experiments, mice make an array of facial expressions similar to human ones. “This is the first study that has examined facial expressions of pain in nonhuman animals,” psychologist and study co-author Kenneth Craig tells Scientific American. Craig and colleagues filmed mice for a half-hour before and after injecting them with a weak and mildly painful vinegar solution. The scientists then created a “mouse grimace scale” that correlated changes in their subjects’ faces – closed eyes, bulging cheeks, or retracted ears – to the degree and duration of their pain. The researchers think the pain scale may apply to other mammals as well, and could help test how well painkillers and other medications work in animals, says co-author Jeffrey Mogil. “We think in a sense that we can rewrite the veterinarian rule book.” *(The Week magazine, May 28, 2010)***

**Pain nourishes courage. You can’t be brave if you’ve only had wonderful things happen to you. *(Mary Tyler Moore)***

**If you believe the findings of a Chicago research team, you may want to schedule your dental appointments for mornings. Conclusion is that your ability to take pain is probably better before noon. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Pain does have a purpose. The function of discomforting signals such as fever and inflammation is to alert us to disease and injury and set healing in motion. Inflammatory agents known as leukotrienes are released by injured tissues, causing inflammation that increases blood flow to the injury, bringing microbe-fighting white blood cells and oxygen where they’re needed most. *(Gurney Williams III, in American Health magazine)***

**Pain reaches the heart with electrical speed, but truth moves to the heart as slowly as a glacier. *(Barbara Kingsolver)***

**The Yupik Eskimos used dried beaver testicles to relieve pain. *(Don Voorhees, in The Perfectly Useless Book of Useless Information, p. 172)***

**Pierre-Auguste Renoir, a French Impressionist painter and prolific artist, completed more than 1,000 paintings during his career. Renoir continued to paint even after arthritis severely limited his mobility in his later years. He said, "The pain passes, but the beauty remains." (*The Daily Chronicle)***

**The capacity for feeling pain increases with knowledge. A degree which is the higher the more intelligent the man is. *(Arthur Schopenhauer)***

**It takes about 1/50 of a second for a pain in your big toe to reach your brain. *(Barbara Seuling, in You Can't Sneeze with Your Eyes Open, p. 39)***

**Scorn pain: Either it will go away or you will. *(Seneca)***

**If pain could have cured us we would long ago have been saved. *(George Bernard Shaw)***

**The reason people become funny is to overcome pain. *(Sarah Silverman)***

**If you can go through life without experiencing pain you probably haven’t been born yet. *(Neil Simon, in The Play Goes On)***

**Pain can be a great teacher, but sometimes the lesson doesn’t come through, because of the pain. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

**People who suffer chronic heel pain, a particular bane of athletes, may soon get a new therapy: sound waves. Sound waves, emitted from a machine called a lithotripter, sometimes are used to break up kidney stones, offering a noninvasive treatment. Now that procedure is being modified to relieve chronic heel pain, also known as plantar fasciitis. On Thursday, advisors to the Food and Drug Administration recommended approval of a lower-dose lithotripter called the OssaTron. If the FDA follows the advice, the machine could become the first approved for a condition often frustrating to treat. At issue is a sharp pain, aching or stiffness on the bottom of the heel. It can be caused by bone spurs, but in most cases is plantar fasciitis, an inflammation of the foot’s connective tissue. Manufacturer HealthTronics Inc. of Marietta, Georgia, studied 260 people who had suffered heel pain for six months and failed other treatments. All had anesthesia applied to the foot. Then half had the OssaTron’s sound waves beamed into their heels and half had a sham treatment. Some 47 percent of OssaTron patients were deemed successfully treated three months later. *(Associated Press, as it appeared in the Rocky Mountain News, July 21, 2000)***

**I’m not going to turn the pain inward. I’m going to turn it outward so I can help others. *(Elvira Maxwell, who decided to help young people after her two sons were killed)***

**I want your pain (but not you) to go far away, and never come back. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

**Secretary calls 911 about her boss who has just collapsed: “His pains at watching the market contract are now three minutes apart.” *(Hilary B. Price, in Rhymes With Orange comic strip)***

**The woman who feels no pain: Scientists have identified a rare genetic mutation that has allowed a 71-year-old Scottish woman to live a life virtually free of pain, fear, and anxiety -- a discovery that could one day lead to new treatments for chronic pain. Doctors realized about five years ago that retired school-teacher Jo Cameron was unusual after she refused painkillers following a major hand operation, reports The New York Times. Follow-up questions revealed that cuts, burns, and fractures didn't hurt her: When she broke her arm at age 9, she went to the hospital three days later only because her mother told her it looked strange. She felt no pain during childbirth, likening the experience to "a tickle," and cannot recall ever feeling depressed or scared. Her body also heals faster than other people's. "It didn't dawn on me that I was different," she says. "I thought that it was just me." When scientists at University College London examined Cameron's DNA, they found two notable gene mutations. The first dampens activity in a gene called FAAH, which makes an enzyme that breaks down a chemical crucial to pain sensation and mood. The second, rarer mutation is on a previously unknown gene the researchers named FAAH-OUT. Scientists believe when this gene is disabled, as it is in Cameron, it makes FAAH fall silent. The researchers are now examining how FAAH-OUT works, with the hope of developing a gene therapy or other pain treatment around it. *(The Week magazine, April 19, 2019)***

**Good week for: Swearing, after researchers at Keele University in the U.K. found that yelling obscenities helps increase tolerance of pain for both men and women. *(The Week magazine, April 29, 2011)***

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