

What Makes Sense?

by *dorit hoffmann*

What if that thought of sitting still and quieting your mind isn't your cup of tea? I'm personally much better at 'actively' relaxing. One of my favourites is engaging my 5 main sensory organs.

1. The eyes translate light into image signals for the brain to process: I look for light/shadow differences as well as various colours and anything that captures my interest.
2. The ear uses bones and fluid to transform sound waves into sound signals: the songs of birds affect me differently than the voice of Sam Elliot.
3. Specialized receptors in the skin send touch signals to the brain: we can distinguish gentle touch from itches, needle pricks and therapeutic massage.
4. Olfaction: Chemicals in the air stimulate signals the brain interprets as smells, such as cleaning solutions, but also my favourites: flowers, lemon, coffee, toast... oh such delights
5. Gustation: the act or sensation of tasting. With the tongue you can easily detect the differences between sour, sweet, bitter and salty. We tend to love food that combines all of those. Next time you have a meal somewhere else, try to taste the spices and flavours.



Photo by Dorit Hoffmann

And research has identified a few more senses we engage constantly without much awareness. Depending on what you read there are at least 9, 10, 21, 33 different ones.

A few mentionables:

Temperature: knowing the difference between hot and cold.

Pain perception is also considered a sense. You know the difference between a headache, a toe hitting the corner of your bed and a stuck gallstone...

Then there's that sense of your internal health, the interoceptors. Most people have some awareness of blood pressure, full stomach or bladder.

Balance: we all know and have it, though when it goes wonky—you sure know.

And proprioception? In MS it's usually included in the neurological tests when you have to close your eyes and touch your nose for instance. It's to know your place in space.

Getting back to mindfulness and how to lower your heart rate and slow down your breathing and pick up some delights along the way. One of my 'dailies' is taking a fresh strawberry (or a piece of chocolate, that cup of tea, a cocktail...)—I look at that strawberry, admire nature's artistry, smell it, feel it, and taste it, every bit. I taste the tartness and sweetness,

Tomorrow

by *brenda worthington*

Freedom. What does it mean to you right now? Someone recently asked, "If tomorrow you wake up and everything is the way you want it. What would that look like? How would you live your life?"

I've read that self-help query many times, but this time it stuck. Hmm. I would live in a covid-free world and be able-bodied. What about you? What does freedom look like? Have you made concessions this last year and found life surprisingly good? Or are you chafing at the bit? Hang in there. We're doing it together!

Cont'd from page one

feel the texture, the crunch of the little seeds, and like a fine wine, I breathe out while it's still resting on my pallet to get the full bouquet of aromas. And every day I'm determined to hear a bird sing, look at the intricate design of a plant, such as a daisy and I'm sure it'll be a 'he loves me' with all the little petals. And see the dew drops like diamonds on the grass. Now I will make sure I feel my feet on the grassy or hard ground, perhaps standing on one leg to include my senses of balance and proprioception. So many ways to live in the moment and appreciate.



Photo by Dorit Hoffmann

Another suggestion by Anxiety Canada: Simple mindfulness is to notice what you are experiencing right now through your five senses: sound, sight, touch, taste, and smell.

Take a few slow breaths and ask yourself:

- What are three things I can **hear**? (clock on the wall, car going by, music)
- What are three things I can **see**? (table, lamp, that person walking by)
- What are three things I can **feel**? (chair under me, the floor under my feet, my phone in my pocket)
- What are three things that I can **smell**? (flowers in the room, the laundry detergent, the soap on my hands)
- What are three things I can **taste**? (my tea, a cracker, a grape)

Think of these answers to yourself slowly, one sense at a time. It is impossible to do this exercise and not be in the moment.

Shared Voices

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To Vaccinate or Not

by karen careless, gibsons

On a phone conversation recently with my sister, I discovered (to my horror) that she was an anti-vaccine person.

She stated that the vaccine had not been proven, was developed too quickly and she believed all vaccines were bad for your body. Injecting foreign substances into your body was not a good idea.

I responded that millions of doses of the drugs had been given with few side effects (one in a hundred thousand chances of blood clots) that far outweighed any potential problems. Yes, the vaccines had been developed very quickly (for our benefit) by scientists and had been tested rigorously before being approved.

I riled at the belief that all vaccines are bad. How many of us have had polio, smallpox and diphtheria vaccines? I remember polio outbreaks with devastating effects; my mother recalled her neighbourhood friends dying of diphtheria, and smallpox has all but been eradicated in the world. After devastating so many indigenous peoples.

I questioned her about travel restrictions and denied access to schools that were sure to come if she remained unvaccinated. She questioned whether she needed to be immunized if everyone else was.

I responded that this might just be a selfish act on her part as none of us would be safe until the majority of people were. I would continue to wear a mask and self-distance unless it became clear who was protected and who wasn't.

I realized I wasn't going to 'win' this argument and I began to understand why she had these ideas when exploring the internet. It became clear that any position can be backed up by 'facts' and 'experts'. It is important to check out this information, find out the backgrounds and credentials of the people stating these ideas.

My sister is free to have her choice and I



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know she believes very strongly that her decision is the right one as do many people, but there are consequences. I will not hug her or have her in my home. I feel very sad about this because I love her and fear the possible outcome of her choice.

I don't believe she is wrong—just misguided. I recognize this is my opinion. I believe vaccines are the only way out of this disastrous situation. I really hope we can ALL be healthy and happy soon.



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Our Daily Bread

by mona houle, victoria

"...Give us this day, our daily bread."
"Just for today." "One day at a time."

There's a theme here. But how do you live for today only when there's a hole in the water?

Multiple Sclerosis is not for the faint of heart. That's for sure.

For me physically moving was becoming slower so it took longer and longer to accomplish the same daily tasks. So much so that life had become a zillion mundane chores rolled into one giant household errand that took all day, every day. It was depressing to think about my future.

So how did I keep myself motivated?

Firstly, I had to leave the worries and cares of the big picture alone. I read somewhere to give half an hour to my overall future and then move on. So that is my guidepost. Not that I use it all the time. But I do try to trust the big picture to the big guy Himself.

Another biggie was I had to stop believing my worth was connected to my doing. I could slide right into the pit of hopelessness comparing my old with my new me. I knew the antidote to get out of myself is usually doing something for others. But that had me stumped for years, because how could I help if I simply didn't have the physical tractor to do anything? It took a while to realize there was still a lot I had to give. I could talk, cheer someone just by my appreciation of them. I could send a note of congratulations or emotionally enter into someone's plight. Sometimes, people just need your presence. I could show I cared. That I could do.

Inspiration comes in all kinds of ways –a phone call, a headline, a trigger, an echo, (something you hear more than once



Photo by mona houle

If I lose touch with the day, I move to the moment. It's easy to live in the past or future; it takes work to stay in the present.

from different sources). Whether it's a convincing tap on the shoulder or a strong conviction, what comes from the heart goes to the heart.

'Give us our daily bread' also gave new meaning to one day at a time. There's a story in the bible where the Israelites were in the wilderness and it rained down manna, but if they tried to store it up for the next day, it went rotten. Disappointments used to take me down for a whole day, heck the whole week, but it's rare these days. If I lose touch with the day, I move to the moment. It's easy to live in the past or future; it takes work to stay in the present. My best days are always doing a little bit of everything which make for a good mix of 'moments'.

So, I cobble together each 24-hour chunk with a kabillion well thought-out little decisions trusting if I make good on those, the big ones will take care of themselves. And so far, they have. In spades. I never dreamed life could be so good with such a bad hand.

And what of the bleak future I was dreading?

It's not true. Tomorrow will be bright because today is pretty good.

Growing in the North

by Laurie Mclean, Yellowknife NWT

People living with MS help in May for MS Awareness month in Canada and World MS Day on the 30th. Many volunteer and donate to the Walk as awareness helps to educate and understand more about this disease. Every May, Karen S. volunteers for the Walk and for any MS events in Yellowknife.

Karan does not have MS, but she does know how much it can change your life. In December 2012 her daughter was diagnosed with RRMS, and only two months later, her husband was diagnosed with PPMS.

I sat down with Karan to discuss why she looks forward to the month, starting on her outdoor gardening by May long weekend. Her family knows she will not be seen in the house much and to look for her in the garden.

Growing up in BC and Alberta, Karan would be in the family garden every chance she got. When she moved to the NWT she continued to experiment with this long time love. Living in Yellowknife, timing is everything when starting a garden and planting requires a strategy. There was a learning curve: down South, there are 4 seasons. Up here we often skip spring and fall, and have a shorter Summer to grow. She pays close attention to the weather and the ground freeze. Never plant outside before the long weekend as it is too early and cold for the plants to germinate. While the weather may be chilly after the long weekend, there is not usually a hard frost, allowing the vegetables and fruit to survive. Summers consist of long hours of daylight and intense sun, which is like growing in fast forward.

Karan usually begins by potting her seedlings (cucumber, zucchini, tomatoes, peppers, and spaghetti squash) in April in her south facing window, then bringing them out to the green house May long weekend. Knowing what type of soil and not using



Living in Yellowknife, timing is everything when starting a garden and planting requires a strategy.

pesticides helps her grow a healthy garden.

Karan plants potatoes, carrots, beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, and peas directly in the outside garden. Potatoes and carrots thrive in this climate; as underground vegetables can survive night frost. She will often let her potatoes stay in the ground until mid-September. If you can still dig into the ground, you can get a potato out. Last year Karan planted a crab apple tree and an apple tree with three delicious apples on it and she is hoping it bears fruit this summer, too.

She loves the whole process of gardening. She says having her hands deep in the dirt gives a sense of peace. It's her happy place; the rest of the world disappears. An escape. Plucking weeds is like throwing away the garbage in her life. It helped her deal with becoming a caregiver for two family members in the house. MS is an unpredictable: one day the body behaves normally, the next it refuses to listen. A roller coaster ride.

We ended our conversation with her saying there is nothing better than a fresh carrot pulled out of the dirt. I wholeheartedly agreed!

Vitamin D, the Sunshine Vitamin

by linda mcgowan

*Sunshine on my shoulders
makes me happy..
Sunshine almost always makes me high
—John Denver*

Feeling sun on your body has a physical, mental, emotional, spiritual benefit. Vitamin D supports the serotonin production, the happiness hormone, which may also reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety and boosts brain activity. D helps your body absorb calcium, build strong bones and teeth, supports immune function and heart health.

When the sun is shining, it is recommended to have 20 to 30 minutes direct exposure. At noon, during the summer months, the sun is at its highest point, and UVB rays are most intense.

For people with MS who are heat sensitive, spending time in the sun may be challenging. Caution needs to be exercised if your skin is very sun sensitive. Perhaps you can tolerate having your hands, arms and legs exposed. You still absorb invisible ultraviolet (UVB) with the use of some sunscreen. A spray water bottle will help keep your body cool and increase your tolerance to sitting in the sun.

In the winter, it's virtually impossible to produce vitamin D from the sun if you live 37 degrees above the equator. The sun never gets high enough in the sky for its ultraviolet B rays to penetrate the atmosphere. And it requires skin exposure, though we are usually well covered.

People get less sun now, spending much more time indoors than our ancestors did. Throughout most of human history, people spent much of the daytime outdoors. At the turn of the 20th century, more than 90 percent of North American citizens lived and worked on farms.

Factors affecting how much vitamin D your body makes from the sun, include:



Illustration by Dorit Hoffmann

Feeling sun on your body has a physical, mental, emotional, spiritual benefit.

- weather
- time of day
- season and location
- age: you make less as you get older
- colour of skin: people with well tanned, darker skin absorb less of the sun's ultraviolet rays

It is an essential nutrient (considered a prohormone, rather than a vitamin) subject of ongoing increased interest for multiple sclerosis. Research is currently focused on the effects of its intake on MS outcomes, such as disability, brain lesions, immune cell activity, and relapse rate.

The process by which the body makes vitamin D starts when the skin absorbs UVB. Small amounts of it are found in food such as oily fish, liver, vit D-fortified cereal and dairy products, mushrooms and egg yolks. The liver and the kidneys then make a bioavailable form of it.

Dosage recommendations in adults:

- Under 70 years: 600 international units daily/ maximum dose 4000 IU.
- Adults Over 70 years: 800 international units daily/maximum dose 4000 IU

Enjoy the summer and get sun when you can!

**I am not a doctor. Check with yours for your recommended dosage.*

Summer Research News

by *brenda worthington*



Megal Trial in UK

In a world-first “mega-trial”, UK experts will test a range of drugs already approved for other illnesses for the treatment of multiple sclerosis (MS). bit.ly/UKmegatrial



Potential Myelin repair

Researchers at the University of Buffalo have identified “SULF2,” a molecule involved in cell signaling, as a possible target for strategies to promote the repair of myelin, the substance that surrounds nerve fibers. bit.ly/myelinrepairstrategy



Possible reason of severe MS in men

Cell Reports. Due to differences in sex chromosomes, certain immune cells cause more severe disease in males than females, according to a new study in a mouse model of MS. The findings could help to explain why biological males with MS tend to have more severe disease. bit.ly/maleimmunecells



Potential clue answers women’s MS susceptibility over men’s

Lower intestinal fatty acids may contribute to MS in women. Certain fat molecules produced by gut microbes, which have protective immune-suppressing effects and may protect against MS, are lower in women than in men, a case-control study has found. These findings may explain the greater MS susceptibility observed in women, the scientists said. bit.ly/shortchainfattyacids



Fatigue study

The prevalence of fatigue continues to be high among people with MS despite significant progress over the years in therapies that change the course of the disease, a large survey study in Norway found. The findings also show that the frequency of fatigue is higher in women and associated with anxiety, depression, and daytime sleepiness. bit.ly/msandfatigue



Do we need eight glasses of water?

Researcher examines the body’s need for water. bit.ly/exercisescientistexplains



When we can fly again

Sandra Gualtieri is disability rights activist with cerebral palsy. She created an airplane seat for people with disabilities in hopes of alleviating some of their travel discomfort. bit.ly/customairplaneseat

IN & ABOUT

by sv editorial board

Since 2020, our interaction with the arts, zoos and aquariums have been impacted, but all is not lost. Now we have virtual opportunities.



Free Zoo and Aquarium Tours

Vancouver Aquarium
vanaqua.org/live-cams

Monterey Bay Aquarium
Keep an eye on the aviary, coral reef, kelp forest and so much more with Monterey Bay's 24-hour live cams. There's even a shark cam for those who love to live on the edge.
bit.ly/montbayaquarium

Houston Zoo
Plenty of habitats at the Houston Zoo include a live webcam, so you and the kiddos can enjoy watching every four-legged creature frolic, from gorillas to rhinos to ants.
bit.ly/houstonzoowebcam

San Diego Zoo
Live cams give you a peek into all kinds of exhibits, featuring apes, elephants, giraffes, polar bears, tigers and more 24/7.
kids.sandiegozoo.org/videos

WildEarth
This site focuses mainly on wildlife cameras across the globe, of large predatory birds to watering holes and wolf dens. Some of the cameras have been broadcasting live for more than two decades.
wildearth.tv

Explore.org
This is the world's leading philanthropic live nature cam network and documentary film channel.
explore.org

Art

The Louvre
For the first time ever, the richness of the Louvre collections are available online.
collections.louvre.fr/en

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum
Five virtual exhibits walk you through the inspiration behind Georgia O'Keeffe's greatest works.
bit.ly/okeeffemuseum

Getty Museum
With over 25 online exhibits, the J. Paul Getty Museum is loaded with color and history.
bit.ly/gettymuseumonline



Disability Foundation Vancouver

Booking for hiking, kayaking, paddle boarding and sailing is now open. The number of volunteers will be limited per hike and following COVID protocols. It is going to be much like last year—all hikes in Pacific Spirit Park: once a week down to Spanish Banks.

604.688.6464 disabilityfoundation.checkfront.com/reserve

Balancing Act

by *brenda worthington*



I was intrigued to see proprioception and balance considered senses on Dorit's cover piece, and looked for sites that married them with MS. The exercise group I liked, already has specific ones.

For me, it was the MS Gym, bit.ly/msgym
However, there are many others:

- Health Central offers graphics alongside exercise instructions
bit.ly/healthcentralbalance
- Healthline shows a short video of each exercise along with written instructions.
bit.ly/healthlinebalance
- Britain's MS Trust gives animated figures and offers a downloadable PDF.
bit.ly/msbalanceexercises
- Practical Fitness for MS offers a video demonstration.
bit.ly/msfitnessbalance

This shows four of many. Isn't it good that technology brings so many sites in any language? Take a look, if balance is your issue.

Kids Say the Funniest Things

by *linda mcgowan*



Illustration by Katie Lapi

My four grandchildren have only known me as a grandma who walks on wheels. When we go on excursions, and I am using my power chair, there are always heated discussions about whose turn it is to ride on the back of the chair.

On one such adventure, I offered this option to my youngest grandson. "Do you want to ride along the long flat sidewalk or the shorter uphill climb to the Skytrain?" He chose the first option but when we got to the base of the hill, he was reluctant to relinquish his position to his sister. She exclaimed "but it's my turn!".

His immediate response was "Why does grandma always get a turn?"



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MS Bike

by linda mcgowan & ashley mccartie

Canada has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world. Bikers are riding to change that.

In 2020, people hit the road, trainer or stationary bike, for the first time virtually connected for a cycling experience that will never be forgotten. Their chant was 'let's make a difference; go the distance' and they did.

This event has been raising funds and awareness in BC for over 20 years. This season thousands of participants across the country will come together online introducing new virtual experiences, as we encourage our cyclists to participate in kilometer challenges, and connect through our Strava MS Bike Club (strava.com/clubs/msbike), Ride with GPS routes, and the MS Bike Facebook Group (bit.ly/msbikefacebook). We're also introducing a new MS Bike app feature that allows participants to challenge one another and link their cycling (indoors or outdoors) to their fundraising. In addition, after careful consideration and engagement with our MS Bike community we are cautiously planning five in-person, 1-day MS Bike events across Canada with capacity caps and numerous safety protocols in place. Visit msbike.ca to register for your local event and details.

We will unite all participants in a nationwide event on September 18th that will include cycling experiences and live streaming.

Claudine P. Bourgaize has a long history with MS and the Bike Tours.

As a teenager she volunteered to help feed people with MS in Trois-Rivières, Québec. When she moved to BC in 1993, Claudine was looking for a way to do more to help. She often returned to Trois-Rivières to visit Carole, who has MS. Claudine rode annually in the tour from 1997 to 2000, then she took a break in favour of mountain biking.

In December 2007, Claudine was diagnosed with MS. Together with her husband they decided to do the MS Walk in 2008. In 2009, Claudine renewed her friendship with the Bike Tour and continues to participate. She says, "The uncertainty with the MS Bike Tour in 2020 did not stop me. I started my fundraising as usual and I had decided to ride no matter what. I hand made wood projects for the silent auction but it got cancelled with COVID-19. I decided to use them for draws to encourage people to donate. I made a



Our bibs. My husband is a private pilot and I am his co-pilot. We reversed the role for the bike tour!

map of quiet streets and parks starting from our house (60A avenue) all the way to Langley (224th street) using as many parks as possible. I bought my favorite snacks from the bike tour to bring with me: berry juice, banana and strawberry licorice. I also made for myself a bib and one for my husband who always rides with me. I made sure I took with me pictures of people with MS that I know. I ride for them!

We chose to ride on Friday, July 24th because the weather was better than over the weekend and the traffic would be lighter. We took the time to stop to pet goats, horses and a pony. We had our lunch under the wing of an airplane in a farmer's field from where we take off and land. Yes, you read well. We are renting an airplane and we are taking off and landing from that field, it is fun! Rob took more pictures than usual because we were riding on our own. I used them to write a little story to send to all of my donors and grasped the occasion to thank them for their support.

Call for 1:1 Peer Support Volunteers

“Throughout my lifetime, my dad’s incredible strength and resilience in his MS journey has inspired strength in me. Now, I volunteer at the MS Society as part of a community who understands what type of tenacity that truly takes, and with the hope of sharing his journey to remind others of what they are capable of.

Volunteering reminds me that nobody is alone—no matter how many times we may feel lonely on this journey. Everyone experiences each element of MS differently, but there is a sense of comfort in solidarity. This program has been a wonderful opportunity to help people by sharing my experiences of having a parent who lived with the disease.

Since it is phone and online-based, I am still able to reach out to people affected by MS without leaving my house. I encourage others to volunteer for 1:1 Peer Support to connect with their MS community and support those who are unable to go out, even when these trying times are over. We are always better when we stick together.”

—Shannon, in loving memory of her father, who lived with MS.

The MS Society of Canada needs volunteers to share their unique experiences, challenges, and successes to support individuals affected by MS and their loved ones through the 1:1 Peer Support Program. You can live in any community across Canada, volunteer from your home, and communicate in ways and times that work best for you and your match. We are currently in need of volunteers who live with MS, as well as caregivers. Sign up by contacting peersupportprogram@mssociety.ca or 1.800.268.7582 x3149. More information at mssociety.ca.

MS PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

You are not alone in living with multiple sclerosis.

The MS Society of Canada is pleased to offer a confidential peer support program to connect you with trained volunteers who also live with MS.

I need someone to talk to about my MS

No one understands what I'm going through

I have some questions and I want to connect with someone who's been there

For more information, contact peersupportprogram@mssociety.ca 1.800.268.7582 x3149



Have questions about multiple sclerosis?

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- Information about MS, symptom management and the latest research
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1.844.859.6789
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msbike.ca



**Connect with others in your area by joining our
Facebook community groups! Visit the links
below to get started.**

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