Focus on Health

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MEDICARE VS. MEDICAID: UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES

By Jennifer B. Cona, Esq., Cona Elder Law

As we take time this month to focus on our health, it is a good time to re-visit the confusing issue of Medicare vs. Medicaid. Let’s go back to basics and break it down.

First, everyone age 65 and over, as well as certain qualified disabled individuals is entitled to Medicare. Not so with Medicaid; Medicaid is a means-tested government benefits program, meaning that you must qualify financially for benefits.

Medicare Part B covers doctors’ services, medical supplies, outpatient care and preventive services. Many people who choose Traditional Medicare will also purchase a Medigap policy to cover some of what Medicare does not cover, including co-insurance. Medicare Part A covers in-patient hospital stays, short-term skilled nursing facility care/rehabilitation, hospice care and some limited home health care. If you are admitted to a skilled nursing facility for rehabilitation directly from the hospital, Medicare will cover the first 20 days in full. From days 21-100, there will be a co-insurance due. However, Medicare can cut off benefits anytime between days 21-100 if they believe you are not progressing.

An easy way to think of it is that Medicare pays for acute care needs (doctors, hospitals, rehab). In contrast, Medicaid covers long-term health care needs, including care in a nursing home or care at home with home health aides. In order to be eligible for both nursing home care and home care, the applicant must have no more than $30,182 (in 2023) in his/her name (total assets). A home care applicant is permitted to keep $1,677 of their income (in 2023). Income in excess of $1,677 must be spent down or transferred to a Pooled Income Trust to maintain eligibility.

In addition, an applicant for Medicaid nursing home benefits must prove they did not make any gifts or asset transfers during the past five years. If they did, they will be subject to a penalty period.

There is currently no look-back period for home care benefits, but it is expected to be phased in soon. As such, asset protection planning is key and the earlier the better. However, families can rest assured that even if a loved one is being placed in a nursing home today, they can still protect up to one-half of their assets by working with an experienced Elder Law attorney like the attorneys at Cona Elder Law.

The laws are complex and change often. The experienced Elder Law attorneys at Cona Elder Law will navigate the Medicaid and Medicare systems with you to ensure you have access to the best care while protecting your hard-earned assets.

Jennifer B. Cona, Esq. is the Founder and Managing Partner of Cona Elder Law PLLC. Cona Elder Law is an award-winning law firm concentrating in the areas of elder law, estate planning, estate administration and litigation, and health care law. The firm has been ranked the #1 Elder Law Firm by Long Island Business News for eight consecutive years. For additional information, visit www.conaelderlaw.com.
Mental wellness is important for a healthy heart and brain

Research shows anxiety, stress and depression can have a negative impact on physical health and may even increase the risk for heart disease and stroke. In fact, the American Heart Association, the world’s leading nonprofit organization focused on heart and brain health, identified a strong interconnection between the mind, heart and body in its scientific statement, “Psychological Health, Well-Being and the Mind-Heart-Body Connection.”

“Research has clearly demonstrated negative psychological factors, personality traits and mental health disorders can negatively impact cardiovascular health,” said Glenn N. Levine, M.D., chief of the cardiology section at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center.

“The body’s biological reaction to stress, anxiety and other types of poor mental health can manifest physically through an irregular heart rate or rhythm, increased blood pressure and inflammation throughout the body. Negative psychological health is also associated with health behaviors that are linked to an increased risk for heart disease and stroke, such as smoking, lower levels of physical activity, unhealthy diet, being overweight and not taking medications as prescribed.”

Studies have found some people may face a greater risk of poor health outcomes due to chronic stress, depression and anxiety linked to psychosocial stressors, particularly those related to social and economic inequality, discrimination, systemic racism and other societal factors.

A study published in the “Journal of the American Heart Association” found U.S. adults who reported feeling highly discriminated against at work had an increased risk of developing high blood pressure compared to those who reported low discrimination at work.

“Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being,” Levine said. "It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices. Practicing mindfulness in all forms allows one to be more aware of and have more control over emotional responses to the experiences of daily life."

Consider these tips from Levine to improve your mind-heart-body connection:

Practice meditation regularly. Even simple actions such as communing with nature or sitting quietly and focusing on your breath can have a positive impact.

Get plenty of good, restful sleep. Set a regular bedtime, turn off or dim electronics as bedtime approaches and form a wakeup routine.

Make connections and stay in touch. Reach out and connect regularly with family and friends, or engage in activities to meet new people.

Practice mindful movement. There are many types of gentle mindful practices like yoga and Tai chi that can be done about anywhere with no special equipment to help ease your soul and muscles.

Spend time with your furry friend. Companion animals are often beloved members of the family and research shows pets may help reduce physiological reactions to stress as well as support improved physical activity.

Work it out. Regular physical activity — a recommended 150 minutes of moderate activity, 75 minutes of vigorous activity or a mix of both weekly — can help relieve tension, anxiety and depression, and give you an immediate exercise “high.”

“Wellness is more than simply the absence of disease,” Levine said. “It is an active process directed toward a healthier, happier and more fulfilling life. When we strive to reduce negative aspects of psychological health, we are promoting an overall positive and healthy state of being.”

Nationally ranked health care close to home

One of the nation’s top-rated hospitals is located right in your community. Mather Hospital has earned five stars in overall care from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) placing Mather among the top 15 percent of the 4,654 CMS star-rated hospitals nationwide.

“This five-star rating reflects the exceptional standard of care we deliver which is centered on the well-being of each patient. It also speaks to our unwavering focus on patient experience, as a positive patient experience leads to better healing overall,” said Mather Executive Director Kevin McGeachy.

In addition to the overall five star rating, CMS also rated Mather as one of only seven hospitals in New York State to receive the top five-star rating for hospitals patients are most likely to recommend.

“Our commitment to continuous improvement is the driving force behind this achievement. We are constantly innovating and evolving to achieve excellence in healthcare services, all in the pursuit of providing the best care possible. Our one goal is to do better today than we did yesterday.”

The five-star rating is the latest in a series of recognitions the 248-bed hospital has earned recently. The American Nurses Credentialing Center has designated Mather a Magnet® hospital for nursing excellence three times, most recently in the fall of 2022. Only about 10% of hospitals in the U.S. have earned the Magnet® designation. Earlier this year, Mather was named one of America’s Top 250 Hospitals for 2023 by Healthgrades and received Healthgrades’ Patient Experience Award for the fifth consecutive year. The Leapfrog Group awarded Mather its 18th top ‘A’ rating for patient safety in May. And U.S. News in its 2023 ratings recognized Mather as high performing in gastroenterology and GI surgery, geriatrics, orthopedics, pulmonology and lung surgery, heart failure and kidney failure.

In addition, the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses awarded Mather’s Critical Care team a gold-level Beacon Award for Excellence last year. Also in 2022, Mather was one of only 29 hospitals nationwide to receive the Emergency Nurses Association Lantern Award for demonstrating exceptional and innovative performance in leadership, practice, education, advocacy, and research.
**Important minerals for health**

Vitamins get a lot of fanfare, but are minerals worthy of more attention?

The body needs both vitamins and minerals to function properly. The National Institutes of Health says that most people can get all the minerals and vitamins they need simply by eating a balanced, healthy diet. For those concerned about not meeting the daily recommended values, a multivitamin can help push vitamin and mineral numbers into the recommended ranges.

While vitamins are organic substances, minerals are inorganic substances. There are two types of minerals: macrominerals and trace minerals. Individuals need more macrominerals, which include calcium, phosphorous, magnesium, sodium, potassium, chloride, and sulfur.

Only small amounts of trace minerals are needed. These include iron, manganese, copper, iodine, zinc, cobalt, fluoride, and selenium, according to MedlinePlus. The body relies on minerals to help it perform various jobs, such as keeping bones, muscles, the heart, and the brain healthy.

Minerals also are important for making enzymes and hormones. Calcium, for example, is a crucial mineral for bone health. Calcium also is useful in regulating blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Iron is a major component of red blood cells that helps to carry oxygen and nutrients throughout the entire body.

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**What are the 13 vitamins the body needs?**

The human body is a marvel. When working correctly, the body automatically performs scores of metabolic functions. Individuals can facilitate the performance of those functions in various ways. Careful consideration of what they put into their bodies is one way individuals can make things easier on their bodies. It is vital to supply the body with the nutrients it needs. This includes the essentials: A, C, D, E, K, and the eight B vitamins.

**Vitamin A:** This vitamin helps ensure the health of the skin, corneas, lining of the urinary tract, lungs, and intestines. Vitamin A also helps protect against infection. It also is important for vision, as it improves vision in dim light.

**Vitamin C:** Also known as ascorbic acid, Vitamin C plays a vital role in immune system function, helping to protect cells from free radicals. Since the body cannot store vitamin C, it needs to be taken daily.

**Vitamin D:** Vitamin D assists in calcium and phosphoros sorption, which helps to keep bones and teeth strong. The body can produce vitamin D naturally by spending time in sunlight. That is why it's often called “the sunshine vitamin.”

**Vitamin E:** This vitamin maintains muscles and red blood cells. It also protects fatty acids.

**Vitamin K:** Vitamin K is necessary for blood to clot and helps to keep bones and other tissues in the body healthy.

**Thiamine (B1):** B1 is needed for metabolism and for nerve and heart function.

**Riboflavin (B2):** Another important nutrient for metabolizing foods, B2 helps maintain healthy mucus membranes, such as those in the mouth and nose.

**Niacin (B3):** This vitamin helps to release energy from food and keeps the nervous system healthy.

**Pantothenic Acid (B5):** B5 is another vitamin that aids energy metabolism. It also plays a role in normalizing blood sugar levels.

**Pyridoxine (B6):** People rely on B6 to metabolize food energy. It also has a role in proper nerve function and helps in the creation of hemoglobin, which carries oxygen around through red blood cells.

**Biotin (B7):** This is only needed in small amounts to make fatty acids.

**Folate (B9):** Folate is very important for healthy red blood cells. Folate also helps to prevent birth defects, which is why it is recommended as a prenatal vitamin. The manufactured form of folate is called folic acid.

**Cobalamin (B12):** B12 is needed to make red blood cells, DNA, RNA, and myelin for nerve fibers.

It is preferable to obtain vitamins through healthy foods. If and when foods are inadequate, supplementation might be recommended.

Certain vitamins are fat-soluble, which means they are stored in the body’s fat and used slowly over time, according to WebMD. Others are water-soluble, so they are not stored and need to be replenished frequently.

Individuals should speak to their doctors and nutritionists about any vitamin deficiencies they may have and how to combat them safely.
BEATING WORKOUT BOREDOM: What to do when a workout grows stale

Exercise is one of the foundations of a healthy lifestyle. Routine exercise can help individuals reduce their risk for various illnesses, including cardiovascular disease, and can even have a positive effect on mental health.

Making a commitment to routine exercise can be an adjustment for people accustomed to a sedentary lifestyle. But even the most devoted fitness enthusiasts will face certain hurdles on their exercise journeys. One such obstacle is a stale workout. Repeating the same exercises each day for months on end can grow boring, and that boredom may put individuals’ commitment to fitness in jeopardy. If a workout has grown stale, the following strategies might help people stay on a healthy track.

Don’t wait for a workout to grow stale

The most effective way to overcome a stale workout routine is to avoid it entirely. Switching up a routine every four to six weeks can provide enough change to avoid the boredom that can develop after following the same regimen for weeks. Strength-training regimens can shift from focusing on building muscle to toning muscle. Various fitness experts note that fewer repetitions with more weight is a great way to build muscle, while more reps with less weight can help to tone muscle. Switching back and forth between these approaches can help to avoid exercise boredom. With cardiovascular training, skip the treadmill on nice days in favor of cycling or jogging outdoors.

Establish new goals

Fitness goals can provide all the motivation individuals need to commit to an exercise regimen. But interest can wane after such goals have been achieved. That’s why it’s important to continue setting new goals. When establishing new fitness goals, don’t forget to consider the fun factor. Pursuit of a goal that’s fun will likely be more engaging, so identify some goals that will be effective and enjoyable.

Work with a personal trainer

Personal trainers and other fitness professionals recognize that workout boredom is as big a hurdle as anything in regard to committing to a healthy lifestyle. In recognition of that, personal trainers often know how to switch up a routine so it produces results and remains engaging. Trainers also have the knowledge to tweak routines so they play to clients’ interests and strengths.

Workout boredom can be a big hurdle on the road to a healthy lifestyle. But there are many ways to ensure workouts don’t grow stale.
We all know that routine exercise does a body good. While it may not require a degree from medical school to know that exercise can be a great way to lose weight and reduce risk for various illnesses, there’s even more beneficial side effects of regular exercise that might surprise even the most ardent fitness enthusiasts.

**Exercise produces positive psychological benefits.** WebMD notes that there are several psychological benefits of routine exercise. Those benefits occur because exercise triggers the release of endorphins, which are hormones that interact with receptors in the brain that reduce a person’s perception of pain. Some additional psychological benefits of exercise include stress reduction and prevention of anxiety and depression.

**Exercise can improve your social life.** WebMD also notes that routine exercise can improve self-esteem, which can make it easier for people to connect with others. A study published in the *Journal of Labor Research* linked regular exercise with an annual wage increase between 6 and 10 percent. Researchers found that moderate exercise yields a positive earnings effect, but individuals who exercised frequently had even higher wage increases.

**Exercise can benefit long-term cognitive health.** Though the reasons remain unclear, there seems to be a link between regular physical activity and long-term cognitive health. A study published in the *Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease* found that regular exercise can positively influence cognitive ability, reduce the rate of cognitive aging and lower the risk for certain dementias, including Alzheimer’s disease.

Many people feel a significant sense of accomplishment by the end of a vigorous workout. Such feelings could grow even more profound when individuals recognize the many benefits of breaking a sweat.
5 cancer-fighting foods to add to your diet

The prevalence of cancer is widely known. Affecting people of every ethnicity and across the socioeconomic spectrum, cancer poses a threat to people in all corners of the globe. And that threat could be more significant in the immediate future. Estimates from the International Agency for Research on Cancer indicate that the global population boom and the growth of the world’s aging population could result in more than 16 million cancer deaths each year by 2040.

The statistics surrounding global incidence rates for cancer are startling, which can give the impression that cancer is an inevitability for hundreds of millions of people across the globe. However, there’s much individuals can do to reduce their cancer risk.

According to the MD Anderson Cancer Center, a healthy diet can help reduce cancer risk. A diet that focuses on plants and emphasizes healthy choices may not eliminate the threat of cancer, but it can be an integral component of a preventive health care regimen. With that in mind, the following are five fruits and vegetables associated with reducing cancer risk, courtesy of the MDACC.

**BERRIES**: Berries contain antioxidants, which protect the body from cell damage that can contribute to various cancers, including skin cancer, lung cancer and breast cancer, among others. Blueberries, raspberries and strawberries make wonderful additions to anyone’s diet.

**CRUCIFEROUS VEGETABLES**: Cruciferous vegetables include broccoli, bok choy, cabbage, and brussels sprouts, among others. The MDACC notes that studies have indicated that special plant compounds in cruciferous vegetables may protect the body from stomach cancer and cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, and esophagus.

**GARLIC**: The experts at Mount Sinai note that garlic is often linked with reduced risk for heart disease, notably the prevention of atherosclerosis, which affects the arteries through the deposition of plaques of fatty acids along the arterial walls. However, antioxidant-rich garlic also helps the body fight off harmful free radicals that can contribute to cancer.

**SPINACH**: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that colorectal cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer deaths in the United States. Studies have found that spinach inhibits the growth of colon polyps that can develop into colorectal cancer.

**TOMATOES**: Lycopene is an antioxidant that gives tomatoes their bright red color. According to the National Cancer Institute, though human studies have produced inconsistent results, various in vitro and animal studies have indicated that lycopene may have chemopreventive effects for cancers of the prostate, skin, breast, lung, and liver.

Eating these five fruits and vegetables is not the only way to use diet in the fight against cancer. Individuals are urged to speak with their physicians to learn about the many ways to utilize food in cancer prevention.
A recent analysis of meta-studies found that exercise is a highly effective treatment for conditions such as anxiety and depression.

Authors of the study, which was published in February 2023 in the journal *BJM Sports Medicine*, concluded that physical activity was 1.5 times more effective at reducing mild-to-moderate symptoms of various mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression and psychological stress, than medication or cognitive behavior therapy.

The study was an umbrella review and its authors concluded that physical activity should be a mainstay approach in the management of depression, anxiety and psychological distress. However, individuals who suspect they are dealing with any of these mental health issues are still urged to speak with a physician for assistance in treating their conditions.

**Do you suffer from abdominal pain but can’t find the cause?**

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**Food pairing is often discussed in terms of which wines best complement particular dishes. But pairing food with exercise merits consideration, as it can create the balance needed for overall health. Food plays an important role in workouts, giving individuals the energy necessary to perform at their peak. Timing meals appropriately and knowing what to eat before or after a workout can make a difference.**

**Creatine benefits weight lifting**

Creatine is an organic acid that is an important ingredient for short duration, high-intensity exercises, such as weight lifting. According to Kelly Pritchett, Ph.D., RDN, director of the nutrition graduate program and assistant professor of nutrition and exercise science at Central Washington University, foods rich in protein from meat, poultry and fish can help optimize stores of creatine. Creatine also may be found in foods and beverages targeted to athletes, like protein shakes and snacks.

**Pre-workout mixes include protein and carbohydrates**

A snack or mini meal one to three hours before a workout is ideal so that digestive issues don’t occur during a workout when the body directs more blood to muscles than digestion. Food pairings that include a high quality carbohydrate, like whole grain bread or oatmeal, with a protein source, such as peanut butter or milk, can be key. Blood sugar will stay steady with whole grain carbs, and the protein will help you to feel full and avoid overeating after a workout.

**Glucose, glycogen and running**

Distance running or other exercises that require endurance, such as skating or biking, require ample energy stores. Although low-carbohydrate diets are popular for people looking to lose weight, they’re not ideal for people who engage in endurance sports and need carbohydrates for energy, states Johns Hopkins Medicine. Endurance athletes need more carbs than those who aren’t training. These activities use both glucose in the blood and glycogen, which is sugar stored in the liver and muscles. Eating plenty of healthy carbs helps bolster energy stores. Whole fruits and grains are good sources of carbohydrates.

**Benefits of bananas**

For those with limited time to grab a bite before a workout, bananas might be the perfect option. According to WebMD, bananas have easily digestible carbs that will not weigh you down. The potassium in bananas also may help prevent muscle cramps during and after workouts.

**Power up with potatoes**

Potatoes are whole foods, meaning they contain a balance of all the essential amino acids, despite being low in whole protein. They’re also rich in vitamin B6, which is critical to protein metabolism, says Mark Anthony, Ph.D., adjunct professor of science and nutrition at St. Edwards University, Austin. Potatoes also contain the right mix of sodium and potassium to maintain an electrolyte balance in the body.

**Recover right**

A mix of carbohydrates and lean proteins also is ideal for exercise recovery. Mix in good fats like avocado and olive oil. Carbs will help replenish depleted levels of glycogen and high-quality protein will help build and repair muscle. Don’t forget to drink plenty of fluids to replace what was lost while working out. Food and exercise go hand in hand. It’s important to eat well to keep the body in top form.

**How to pair food with exercise**

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Answers to Word Search on page 6
Autumn is coming: Get ahead of allergy symptoms now

If fall is a time when you're hit hard by allergies, you are better off acting now — instead of after you're already experiencing symptoms.

"Don't let the changing seasons catch you by surprise," says Kathleen May, M.D., president of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI). "Planning ahead can help make this year's fall allergy season a lot more manageable, no matter what's happening in the environment where you live."

Whether you've had allergies for years or you suspect that they may be the cause of your recent unpleasant symptoms, here are tips from ACAAI to help you prepare for autumn allergies before they strike — so you can reduce itching, sneezing and wheezing and enjoy everything the season has to offer.

Stay in the know

Keep an eye on your local pollen and mold counts. When they are high, it's best to avoid spending too much time outdoors. Keep the AC running in your car and home to help filter out allergens (rather than leaving the windows open).

You can also protect yourself when you need to be outdoors on higher pollen count days by wearing an N95 mask to help filter out pollen, and wearing a hat and sunglasses to help keep pollen out of your eyes.

Don't wait to medicate

If you already take allergy medication each fall, make sure not to wait until after your symptoms start. Instead, plan to begin taking your medication about two weeks before your symptoms usually begin for full effectiveness - and keep taking the medication two weeks after the first frost, as your symptoms may linger after most of the pollen is gone.

Unsure exactly when to start taking your medication? Talk to your allergist for advice on a treatment plan that's proactive rather than reactive. Then take a simple step like adding a medication reminder to your calendar so you won't forget.

Adjust some household habits

Making a few minor changes to your household routine in the fall — or even year-round — can have an impact on your exposure to allergens while you're at home.

You probably know what's coming: Along with changing leaves and dropping temps this fall will come the sniffles, stuffy nose and itchy eyes from allergies to certain plants like ragweed. Unfortunately, climate change has increased the intensity of symptoms and the length of time that many people cope with their autumn allergies.

Why does one commit suicide? What kind of contributing factors coalesce to bring someone to this life ending decision? For some, the thought is so scary, comprehension isn't possible. For others, attempting suicide is the only answer left for their inner anguish. For about 5 Americans per hour, it's the last worldly decision they'll ever make.

As a psychiatrist, the questions persist with no definitive answer. Unlike most medical illnesses, suicidality cannot be precisely measured, blood tested, or imaged. As such, the field of psychiatry is left trying to treat an illness we cannot fully understand.

Understanding what drives someone to suicide and trying to prevent it has been my life's work. Unfortunately, work has been busy. It's estimated over 10% of Americans have thought about suicide. Over 50% of us have been affected by it. The last couple years have been a trying time for all of us. Fortunately, there is a new tool in our arsenal that is changing the way we understand and treat the brain.

In 2019, the FDA approved a drug for major depressive disorder with suicidal thoughts. It was the first medication with this indication. Spravato, a ketamine derivative nasal spray, gave our industry a glimpse into the healing powers of psychedelics. The key to understanding psychedelics is in their ability to increase neuroplasticity.

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Here are some recommendations:

* Change your HVAC filter every three months - and choose a high-quality filter such as those with a MERV rating of 11-13 for the best filtration of pollen and mold.
* Leave shoes at the door - and wash clothes immediately after spending time outdoors.
* Shower or bathe at night to avoid bringing allergens into your bed.
* Don’t hang clothes or bedding outside to dry after washing.

See an allergist

Because the environmental conditions that create allergens and your body’s response to them can change over time, it’s a good idea to see your allergist for an updated, personalized treatment plan that can best help you manage your symptoms, no matter the season. Allergists are specially trained to help diagnose and treat your specific allergy and/or asthma symptoms, using the latest testing and treatments to help you get back to enjoying your life.

If you are — or think you might be — one of the over 50 million Americans who suffer from allergies, you can find an allergist in your area by visiting ACAAI.org/find-an-allergist.

Psychedelic Medicine Helps Prevent Suicide

By Dr. Sam Zand

Why does one commit suicide? What kind of contributing factors coalesce to bring someone to this life ending decision? For some, the thought is so scary, comprehension isn’t possible. For others, attempting suicide is the only answer left for their inner anguish. For about 5 Americans per hour, it’s the last worldly decision they’ll ever make.

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The concept of neuroplasticity refers to the brain's ability to create new neural pathways. What we're learning is that the brain is adaptive, flexible, and capable of regenerating new connections. Over time, when we constantly reinforce the same unhealthy thought patterns, we become rigid, literally. Those neural pathways of our brain strengthen and our minds become less flexible. With psychedelic medicine, we get to reset our neurocircuitry.

What that reset provides us can be life changing. It’s as if we can see our lives from a more objective lens, without all that emotional clouding our view. Through our ketamine therapy program, we’ve seen patients prioritize what's important to them and finally let go of the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that no longer serve them.

So what does all of this mean when it comes to suicide? Someone who is suicidal has strengthened the neural pathways telling them they are worthless, that their life has no meaning or value, that they and the world around them would be better off if they were dead. What's more rigid than this line of thinking? We can all logically conclude there are better options. However, when these thought patterns and feelings become strengthened in our neurocircuitry, logic does not compute. By decreasing our hardwired emotional charge, ketamine therapy can help us to look at life from a new perspective and re-wire new, healthier neuroprogramming.

Psychedelic medicine is giving us new hope. It is, however, important to practice these therapies with trained medical professionals. We are resetting the neurocircuitry of our brains, so proper intention and reflection is necessary. Some say ketamine therapy, done once weekly for the next couple years for depression and PTSD. Even formulations of LSD and MDMA are in advanced clinical trials and will be FDA approved in the next couple years for depression and PTSD. Even formulations of LSD are being researched for dementia and traumatic brain injury.

Psychedelic medicine is giving us new hope. It is, however, important to practice these therapies with trained medical professionals. We are resetting the neurocircuitry of our brains, so proper intention and reflection is necessary. Some say ketamine therapy, done once weekly for a few months, has been more enlightening than decades of talk therapy. Under professional treatment, we are able to more clearly process our traumas, relationship dynamics, self-esteem issues and limiting beliefs that affect the way we feel.

Let’s release any stigma we have towards psychedelic medicine, and embrace the expansion of consciousness so that none of us are stuck in rigidity. If you or a loved one are going through a tough time, seek professional mental health support and find out if psychedelic therapy is right for you. It may save a life.

For further information, call Dr. Sam Zand at 917-746-5436 or visit www.CalmClinicNewYork.com

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4 healthy habits to protect your skin

As the first line of defense against the outside world, skin is the body’s largest organ and takes on an important role in maintaining overall health. To take care of your skin, consider these skin-friendly health tips.

Manage Stress
Whether it’s caused by a lengthy to-do list or general anxieties, stress can negatively impact skin health while even exacerbating certain conditions. Managing stress can offer a reprieve in multiple ways, including encouraging healthier skin. Some simple ways to relieve stress include exercising, getting enough sleep, lightening or limiting your workload, scaling back on to-do lists and making time for things you enjoy.

Protect skin while outdoors
Ultraviolet rays skin emitted by the sun cause many types of skin damage, including skin cancer, wrinkles, freckles, age spots, discolorations and benign growths. One of the most direct ways you can protect skin is by applying sunscreen — most experts recommend 30 SPF or higher — or moisturizer before heading outdoors and reapplying every 1-2 hours.

Additionally, consider wearing protective clothing, such as a hat large enough to shade your face and neck. If you plan to spend extended time in the sun, opt for a lightweight, long-sleeve shirt and pants for maximum skin coverage.

Keep in mind that tanning beds are just as harmful as direct sunlight, as they also emit ultraviolet rays.

Fill your plate with healthy, hydrating foods
Nutritious foods, including fruits and vegetables, can play an important role in achieving an overall balanced diet with adequate hydration.

Foods that typically provide the highest water content are cucumbers, iceberg lettuce, celery, radishes, romaine lettuce, tomatoes, zucchini and summer squash, asparagus, bell peppers, cabbage, cauliflower, mushrooms, strawberries, and watermelon.

Another example is grapes. With 82% water content, emerging research suggests consuming grapes may help protect healthy skin even when exposed to UV light, which is known to be damaging. A study published in the journal Antioxidants, in which people consumed 2 1/4 cups of grapes every day for two weeks, showed increased resistance to sunburn and reduced markers of UV damage at the cellular level.

Drink more water
Drinking adequate amounts of water helps the body eliminate toxins while providing you with healthier skin. Benefits include improving skin tone, maintaining your pH balance, promoting a healthier gut, preventing premature aging, preventing acne, reducing puffiness, banishing itchy skin, and tightening skin.

Drink water throughout the day, and for added flavor, infuse with fruits like frozen grapes. Simply rinse, pat dry, remove from the stems and freeze the grapes for 2 hours in a single layer on a sheet pan for flavorful ice cube replacements.

To stay hydrated on warm days, try this Frosty Grape Hibiscus Slush for a subtly sweet, fruity tea in frozen form.

Frosty Grape Hibiscus Slush

**Prep time:** 15 minutes, plus freezing overnight

**Servings:** 6 (1 cup each)

**Ingredients:**
- 9 hibiscus tea bags
- 6 cups boiling water
- 3 cups grapes puree (green, red, black or mixture)
- 4 1/2 tablespoons frozen lemonade concentrate, thawed
- 1 1/2 tablespoons lime juice (optional)

**Directions:**
Steep tea bags in boiling water. Remove tea bags and stir in grape puree, lemonade concentrate and lime juice, if desired. Pour into ice cube trays and freeze overnight until firm. In blender, blend until slushy, stirring as needed.

**Notes:** If no ice cube trays, freeze mixture in large container about 1 1/2 inches deep. Let soften slightly then break into pieces with knife before blending and serving.

**Nutritional information per serving:** 80 calories; 1 g protein; 21 g carbohydrates; 0 g fat; 0 g saturated fat; 0 mg cholesterol; 0 mg sodium; 1 g fiber.

Source: California Table Grape Commission
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