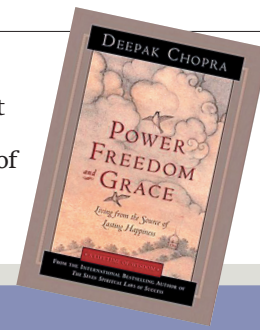


16 lifestyle

Inner happiness

SELF-IMPROVEMENT. Media mogul Deepak Chopra offers up his wisdom in his latest book, "Power, Freedom, and Grace: Living from the Source of Lasting Happiness" (Amber-Allen, \$19) and explains why happiness for a reason is just another form of misery. Say what? OK, so you may need to read carefully. He draws upon ancient Vedanta philosophy to explain how knowing who we truly are brings us to the source of happiness — not happiness due to specific things or events. **METRO/NC**



60M

DIABETES. Number of Americans who have diabetes and pre-diabetes, according to the American Diabetes Association. The disease is the fifth deadliest, and one-third of Americans don't know they have it. **METRO/NC**

Body & Soul

When the sun don't shine

Lack of sunlight during the winter could be giving you the blues

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PROFILE. It might be difficult for East Coasters to conceive of it, but winter is actually here. While there haven't been any tell-tale signs of snow or freezing temperatures on our side of the United States, approximately 10 to 20 percent of Americans suffer from winter depression, medically referred to as seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

"Seasonal affective disorder was actually discovered in the Pacific Northwest where we have really gray and dreary winters," says Dr. Eugene Baker, vice president of employee assistance programs for United Behavioral Health, based in Portland, Ore. "[Doctors] started to notice that there was an increase in depression rates during the winter months. And they realized that had something to do with the lack of sunshine availability."

SAD, which usually manifests itself in adults in their mid-20s and statistically affects more women than men, is marked by



Gloomy days could lead to a gloomy disposition. If you suspect you suffer from seasonal affective disorder, consult your doctor.

an increase in eating and sleeping, a loss of interest in once-enjoyable activities, irritability, lack of concentration, interpersonal conflicts often accompanied by feelings of rejection and a decrease in sex drive.

It is important to note that SAD can be a sign of a greater mental health problem, and the first line of action is always to seek the advice of a physician. However, the growing awareness of this sub-type of major depression has led to treatments that

prove effective for a wide swath of sufferers, many of whom regain a healthy mental balance with the arrival of spring.

In addition to dietary adjustments (lowering carb and caffeine intake) and aerobic and outdoor exercise, among the most popular treatment recommendations for those struggling with SAD is bright light therapy, which entails exposure to artificial light (often a 10,000-lux light box fitted with fluorescent light bulbs and UV ray-blocking capabilities) for approximately 45 minutes a day. This light simulation helps to mimic the longer days SAD sufferers typically enjoy in the summer and has proven effective in adjusting their depressed moods after one day or just a few weeks of use.

Resources

Baker suggests two sources of information that could be helpful for SAD sufferers:

Employee assistance programs: More than 90 percent of large companies in the U.S. have EAPs that can connect members with health-care professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week, who can talk you through difficult periods and recommend services in your area. Contact a member of your human resources department to obtain your local EAP number.

211: A national initiative spearheaded by the United Way, 211 is a number you can call to be placed in contact with local community services, including mental health resources in your area.

FOR MORE aggressive cases of SAD, doctors sometimes recommend cognitive therapy in combination with light therapy to give sufferers mental tools to rework the negative emotions and attitudes that can accompany the disorder.

And last June, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Wellbutrin XL for the prevention of major depressive episodes in patients with a history of SAD. It's the first drug approved specifically for SAD, but long-term studies have yet to show its efficacy. For the time being, look into the light.

No more drama

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Excising exes

I have problems not knowing when to cut ex-boyfriends out of my life. I attempt to be friends with them; however, that usually leads to being physically involved with them again. Often, it doesn't make us feel much better, and we use the excuse of old habits dying hard, but I also think it's a crutch if you haven't met anybody new, and there is always a part of you wishing it was like it used to be. What is a healthy amount of interaction with an ex? And when do you know if it's worth giving people a second chance, just having fun? Or is it really just a way to set yourself up for disappointment? — Anonymous

The reason he's your ex plays an important role in your decision to get back together or not. Did your ex sleep with your sister or was there a communication problem? Was he brought up on assault charges or was he too immature for a committed relationship? Take a look at the relationship breaker, and decide whether it's powerful enough to deter you from reuniting.

If there has been enough time since the split for both of you to grow and make changes, then maybe giving it another try is in the cards. On the other hand, if you're feeling lonely on a Saturday night, then maybe it's not a good idea to give it another go. Late-night calls motivated by a desire to relieve a void probably disregard the problem areas in the relationship and focus only on the positive parts. This, although fulfilling for the night, is probably temporary and won't help you move past the "old habits."

With each new relationship, there is potential to figure out what qualities are important to you in your ideal partner. Take an inventory of what you need and desire in a man, and then resolve not to settle for less, or else you're in it for only the short-term and the next breakup and disappointment might just be lurking around the corner.

Jonathan Alpert is a licensed psychotherapist with offices in Manhattan and Philadelphia.

Metro does not endorse the opinions of the author, or any opinions expressed on its pages. This column is not a substitute for one-on-one therapy. Please consult your doctor to determine the best way to get help.

How would you like to look & feel _____ ?

A. Great
B. Awesome
C. Invigorated
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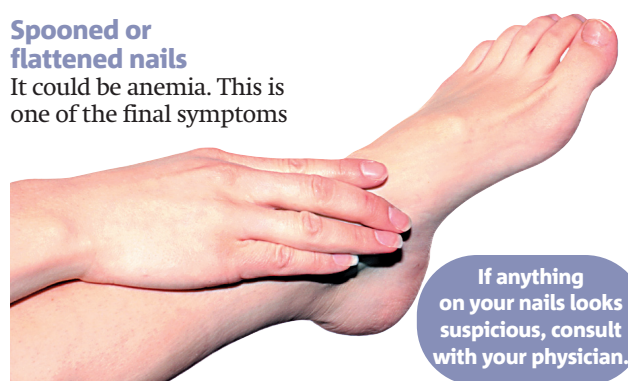
Your health is in your hands

TIPS. Your nails can reveal a lot about your body. Check your fingertips for signs of these five conditions, then use them to dial your M.D. if anything looks off.

Spooned or flattened nails

It could be anemia. This is one of the final symptoms

to appear, says Robert Brodell, M.D., a dermatologist in Warren, Ohio. A blood test can accurately check your iron levels.



If anything on your nails looks suspicious, consult with your physician.

Nails speckled with white spots

It could be a zinc deficiency. The problem is more common among vegetarians and those who eat low-protein diets. Aim for 8 milligrams of zinc a day; find it in nuts and bran.

Nails streaked with brown lines

It could be melanoma. Look at your nails during monthly skin exams. The change is an early sign; the condition (if confirmed) is likely still highly treatable, Brodell says.

Red around cuticle

It could be an infection. If you're also experiencing swelling and throbbing in the area, you may have an infection called paronychia. Antibiotics are likely in order.

Ridged nails, especially on thumbs

It could be stress. Many people run their fingers over their thumbs when stressed. Though it isn't harmful, you can protect your nails by covering them with bandages.

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