

Health Insights

January 2022

Learning From Your Mistakes

When learning something new, there are instances where trial and error helps rather than hinders, according to recent findings by Baycrest researchers. Contrary to popular belief, when a person makes a mistake while learning, it improves their ability to remember the right information.

"Our research found evidence that mistakes that are a 'near miss' can help a person learn the information better than if no errors were made at all," says Dr. Nicole Anderson, senior author and scientist at Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute. "These types of errors can serve as stepping stones to remembering the right answer. But if the error made is a wild guess and out in left field, then a person does not learn the correct information as easily."

These findings could help with improving education not only for younger adults, but also late-life learners. In one of the studies included in the paper, researchers recruited 32 young adults with no Spanish background to guess the English definition of certain Spanish words. The Spanish words selected either resembled an English word with a similar meaning (such as "careera," which means degree) or the word looked like an English word, but meant something different (such as "carpeta," which resembles carpet, but means folder).

Participants were shown the Spanish words and asked to guess their meaning. Then they were briefly shown the correct translation, before being shown another Spanish word. After repeating this process with 16 Spanish words, participants had a short break before their memory for the translations was tested.

Researchers found that people were better able to remember the correct translations for Spanish words that were like the English word. They had greater difficulty recalling the meaning of words that looked misleading. "Based on these findings, someone studying for an exam should only take practice quizzes after reviewing the material," says Dr. Anderson, associate professor of psychology and psychiatry at the University of Toronto. "If a person takes a practice test and is unfamiliar with the content, they risk making guesses that are nowhere near the right answer. This could make it harder for them to learn the correct information later. Even if a person makes a mistake while testing themselves, as long as their error is close to the right answer, they're more likely to remember the right information," adds Dr. Anderson.

Andrée-Ann Cyr, Nicole D. Anderson. Learning from your mistakes: does it matter if you're out in left foot, I mean field? *Memory*, 2018;
1 DOI: 10.1080/09658211.2018.1464189

Mental Health Moment

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a recurring depression that affects individuals during the winter months and recedes during the spring and summer. Though SAD is most common in adults, it can also occur in children, adolescents, and the elderly.

What causes SAD?

The exact cause of SAD is still unknown, but researchers suspect that an increased level of melatonin in the blood could be a factor. Melatonin increases the need and desire to sleep. SAD affects people more during the colder, darker months because the body produces more melatonin during this time.

Decreased exposure to sunlight resulting in an increased production of melatonin causes the biological clock that regulates mood, sleep, and hormones to run slower in winter.

What are the symptoms?

- Difficulty concentrating
- Low energy and fatigue
- Decreased interest in daily activities
- Moodiness and irritability
- Increased appetite with weight gain
- Cravings for carbohydrates
- Increased sleep, with more daytime sleepiness

Coping with SAD

In severe cases, your doctor can prescribe medication, but oftentimes, self-help tactics can be just as effective: enjoy the present and try not to worry about what may be lacking.

- Increase the amount of light in your home. Open blinds, add skylights, and trim trees that block sunlight.
- Get outside. Walk outdoors on sunny days, even during the winter.
- Exercise regularly. Physical exercise helps relieve stress and anxiety.
- Find ways to relax.
- Learn how to manage stress better.

Staying Healthy For Life

Although the risk of disease and disability increases with age, poor health does not have to dominate your later years in life. Many chronic diseases can be avoided through preventive measures. The secret to aging well is to establish a healthy lifestyle early and stick to it as you grow older.

Eat Right and Exercise Frequently

Proper nutrition is vital to maintaining good health. Follow a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and fiber, and reduce fat and sugar intake. Improving your diet could extend your life span and reduce the occurrence of chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

Being active is also important for health and longevity. Regular physical activity reduces your risk of dying from heart disease and decreases your risk for colon cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Stop Smoking

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 16 million Americans are living with a disease caused by smoking, and more than 480,000 people die from smoking-related diseases each year.

Tobacco use increases your risk for heart disease, cancer, stroke, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Abstaining from tobacco is one of the best ways to protect your health.

Maintaining a Positive Outlook

Your mind plays an important role in your ability to age well and maintain a high quality of life when you are elderly. Being engaged and maintaining positive social connections can help you retain cognitive function as you age.



Hummus & Veggie Wrap-Up

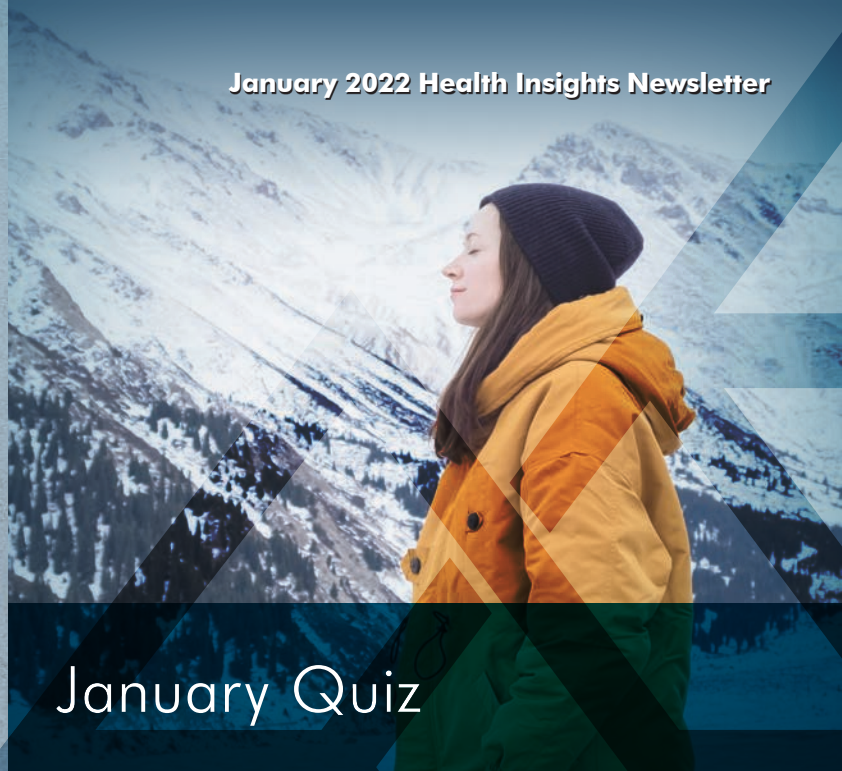
Ingredient List:

- 2 tablespoons hummus
- 1 whole wheat tortilla (8 inches)
- ¼ cup torn mixed salad greens
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped sweet onion
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced cucumber
- 2 tablespoons alfalfa sprouts
- 2 tablespoons shredded carrot
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinaigrette
- Meat of your choice - optional

Spread hummus over tortilla in a thin layer. Layer with salad greens, onion, cucumber, sprouts, carrot, and meat (optional). Drizzle with vinaigrette. Roll up tightly.

1 wrap: 235 calories, 8g fat (1g saturated fat), 0 cholesterol, 415mg sodium, 32g carbohydrate (4g sugars, 5g fiber), 7g protein. Diabetic Exchanges: 2 starch, 1 fat.

Taste of Home. "Hummus Veggie Wrap-Up." Taste of Home, September 25, 2022.
<https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/hummus-veggie-wrap-up/>.



January Quiz

Learning From Your Mistakes

- 1. True or False:** Mistakes that are a 'near miss' can help a person learn better than when no mistakes happen.
- Besides young adults, what other population can this research help?
 - a. School aged children
 - b. Late-life adults
 - c. Middle aged adults

Staying Healthy for Life

- 3. What health issues can arise from not exercising regularly?**
 - a. Certain cancers
 - b. Diabetes
 - c. High blood pressure
 - d. All the above
- 4. Fill in the blank:** Your mind plays a _____ in your ability to age well and maintain a _____ when you are elderly.

Mental Health Moment

- 5. Fill in the blank:** List two of the common symptoms of SAD

See page 5 for quiz answers



Healthy Habits Calendar

January 2022 - Intellectual & Personal Development

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Happy New Year! Start 2022 off right with the "Read Every Day" Challenge. See pg. 5 for details.
2	3 Motivation Monday: Write down 10 things you're grateful for.	4 Tuesday's Tip: Drink half your body weight in ounces of water.	5	6 Challenge Check In: Don't forget to read 15 minutes today.	7	8 Saturday Service: Donate something you don't need anymore.
9 Self-Care Sunday: Avoid screens in the evening & go to bed an hour early.	10	11	12 Wellness Wednesday: Schedule an annual physical or your next dental appointment.	13	14 Friday Fitness: Try a new workout.	15
16	17 Motivation Monday: Choose 3 affirmations for this week. Post them around your home & office.	18 Tuesday's Tip: Declutter a space in your home.	19	20 Challenge Check In: Set a reading goal for 2022. Create an action plan to make it work.	21	22 Saturday Service: Volunteer at a local shelter or soup kitchen.
23 Self-care Sunday: Find time to do something you love. Invite others to join.	24	25	26 Wellness Wednesday: Try a new dinner recipe. Add produce that you don't eat regularly.	27	28 Friday Fitness: Start your day with a guided meditation or yoga flow.	29
30	31 Motivation Monday: Meal Prep for the week. Prepare healthy snacks with fresh produce.					

Challenge: Read Everyday

30 Day Challenge:

The challenge this month is to read at least 15 minutes a day. Make time each day to work on establishing this healthy habit. Dig out a book you've been meaning to finish or take a recommendation from a friend for a new book to start. Benefits of daily reading include:

- Reduced stress and depressive symptoms
- Increased empathy
- Slowed progress of dementia and Alzheimer's disease
- Lowered blood pressure and heart rate
- Improved focus and concentration
- Improved sleep quality
- and much more

Week 1

Weekday	Book	Minutes
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Week 2

Weekday	Book	Minutes
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Week 3

Weekday	Book	Minutes
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Week 4

Weekday	Book	Minutes
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Answers to Quiz:

Q1: True | Q2: b. Late adult life | Q3: d. All of the above | Q4: a. Important role / High quality of life

Q5: Potential Answers: Difficulty concentrating / Low energy and fatigue / Decreased interest in daily activities / Moodiness and irritability / Increased appetite with weight gain / Cravings for carbohydrates / Increased sleep / More daytime sleepiness