

Marta's Newstand

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Keep your brain young

When your eyes finally close and you drift into sleep, your brain springs into action.

There's chemical housekeeping to be done, information to be processed files, or discarded, and diagnostics to be completed.

Specialized parts of the brain get busy when we sleep.

Scientists quoted in Time say sleep rejuvenates bones, skin, muscles -- and the brain itself. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania say there is evidence that

Puppy love can enrich life and boost health

Want to be greeted enthusiastically as you walk through the door? Who can take a nap on the sofa with you? How about listening to your every word, believing it and loving you for it?

A pet can do all of this. Research shows there are physical and emotional benefits to owning a cat or a dog, even a fish, especially for older people. About 68 percent of all households have a pet and treat them like a member of the family.

People living alone get companionship from pets, and couples have new topics for conversation.

Individuals are less likely to feel stressed because animals keep them in the present. You have to feed them, walk them, and find their toys.

Quoted in USA Today, Alan Beck, 72, director of the Center for the Human-Animal Bond at Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine, says:

- * Touching and stroking a pet can be comforting to people (and to the animal) and lowers blood pressure.
- * Dogs encourage exercise. You will walk with them, which also helps with weight management.
- * They help to orient your day. You might forget to get the mail or to feed yourself but not the dog or cat who is nudging you.
- * They are social facilitators. You are more likely to engage in conversation with others when you are walking your dog. In dog parks, owners visit while the dogs play.
- * They're ice-breakers when a new neighbor visits or when you meet up with an old friend.

Work-at-home tips for telecommuters

Working remotely has obvious advantages in addition to saving the time and cost of driving to work. You can wear your super-casual all day, and you're less likely to catch cold from your co-workers, to name a few.

chronic sleep deprivation ages brains. A sleep-deprived 20-year-old has a brain that works like a much older person.

Getting seven to eight hours is basic for all of this to happen. Sleep can improve your concentration, sharpen planning and memory skills and maintain fat-burning systems that regulate your weight.

Recipe of The Month

Indian Pudding

Indian pudding is made with cornmeal and was really the creation of the settlers who didn't have flour to make their familiar hasty pudding.

Indian Pudding is still popular in the New England states, but it isn't commonly made elsewhere, though it's likely the most American of all.

Jasper White's recipe has been reprinted many times; he is a renowned Boston chef.

Jasper White's Indian Pudding

2 and 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 cups milk
5 tablespoons yellow cornmeal
1/3 cup molasses
1/3 cup maple syrup
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 egg, beaten
1 cup cold milk

One problem with working remotely is with old-school managers who are more likely to describe in-house people as "committed" or "dedicated." The best way to counteract a negative perception is to make regular status reports and to be immediately available when they call your office.

Some co-workers may be jealous of your arrangement and seem to be less cooperative. Some could even be saboteurs. Make a point of being available to collaborate virtually. Let them see that the success of your work could make flexible work arrangements more widespread. Be business-like but pleasant when you have to visit their office.

As for feeling lonely and isolated from co-workers, that feeling will be gone as you become deeply involved with your work. Don't hesitate to keep in touch with co-workers who may feel inconvenienced by your absence.

Advisors at Kiplinger's Personal Finance recommend setting boundaries between your work and home life by actually dressing for success. When you dress in your work attire, friends, neighbors and family, will not interrupt you as frequently.

Establishing a quitting time can be a problem with telecommuters. Changing into your sweats and slippers at the end of the workday helps set the boundary between work and home.

Health in the News

Veterans using new ways to cope with PTSD

Since 2001, more than 250,000 U.S. troops have suffered traumatic brain injuries. For many, the result is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Symptoms include:

- * Reliving the event through terrifying thoughts, nightmares or flashbacks. Some avoid activities or conversations that could remind them of the event.
- * A loss of interest in home and work activities, feeling all alone and being unable to have normal emotions.
- * Feeling that one can never relax and must be on guard all the time to protect oneself, overreacting when startled, and having angry outbursts.

While the VA has a number of programs and treatments, none work for everyone. Many victims have tried several of them with little success.

Now, vets are trying unconventional treatments, like riding horses, walking the Appalachian Trail, scuba diving, dance, drama programs and using companion dogs.

Nicotine Inhaler gets U.K. health clearance

British American Tobacco PLC will soon be selling a cigarette alternative approved by the British government's health-care authority. The approval means it can be sold as a safer alternative to cigarettes.

Called Voke, it will be sold as a cigarette-size stick in a box containing 20 nicotine refills. Voke is not an electronic cigarette. Instead it's a "cigarette-shaped nicotine inhaler" that doesn't heat liquid, use a battery or create vapor.

That means it should escape any of the regulations expected to be imposed

Preheat oven to 300°F.

Grease 1 1/2 quart baking dish with 1 tablespoon of butter; set aside. Heat 3 cups milk in a saucepan until it is close to boiling.

Add cornmeal and reduce heat to low. Whisk until it thickens (5 minutes).

Remove from heat and add remaining butter, molasses, maple syrup, cinnamon, ginger, salt and egg.

Pour into the buttered dish. Bake for 30 minutes.

Pour the cold milk over the hot pudding and return to the oven.

Bake for 1 hour and 30 to 45 minutes more, until the top is brown and crisp.

Serve hot or warm with topping of 2 pints premium vanilla ice cream, whipped cream or light cream. Serves six to eight.

Thanks for all of your Referrals!

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Marta was the recipient of the 2012 Top Women

on e-cigarettes by governments in the next few years. The World Health Organization called for tougher restrictions on e-cigarettes.

That followed plans by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that were outlined in April. They include banning sales to those under 18 years if age and products must include health-warning labels.

Joint replacement linked to better cardiovascular health

Researchers recently presented new findings to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. They show that joint replacement for the hip or knee may lower the risk of a heart attack or stroke by as much as 40 percent.

They analyzed adults age 55 or over who had osteoarthritis (OA) in the hip or knee and had the joint replaced. Subjects exercised more and were more active after the surgery. And they were less likely to have depression, which is also linked to the risk of heart problems.

Big pantries have become multipurpose rooms

Some homeowners are spending as much to outfit their pantries as others spend on a redo of an entire kitchen.

As they become more open, kitchens are merging with family rooms and becoming the place for entertaining. So homeowners are moving the clutter and noise out of sight. Home builders say 85 percent of respondents put a walk-in kitchen pantry on their "most wanted" list. In addition to built-in coffee pots, and a washer and dryer, the pantry may have a desk, TV and counter space. And it can be a place for boots and coats.

Some view the pantry as a second kitchen with its dishwasher, refrigerator, freezer and large work surface. It also reduces the number of cabinets so the kitchen can be more decorative, says The Wall Street Journal.

The whole project is more like pantries of more than a century ago. In the mid-to-late 1800s, the "butler's pantry" was a room off the kitchen for storing glassware and dishes and where food was prepped for cooking.

Pantries all but disappeared in the 1950s and didn't return until the 1990s. When kitchens opened up, walk-in pantries returned.

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