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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ALFN | VOL. 6 ISSUE 3

## JOURNEY INTO THE SUNRISE

A PATH TO GOOD MENTAL HEALTH



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# Letter from the Editor

**THE HARD STUFF.** The private stuff. The “I don’t want to talk about it” stuff. Every one of us has struggles and battles we endure. The difference - and what we can learn from - is how each of us handles (or doesn’t handle) those struggles or battles. Mental health encompasses so much of our well-being- it impacts our physical health, how we interact socially, and how we feel emotionally.

Living during a pandemic brought a whole different layer to people’s mental health struggles. Some lost jobs, some faced illness or had loved ones who faced illness, some had to pull double-duty homeschooling their kids while still trying to balance a full caseload at work... all of this on top of being isolated at home without much help or means to an outlet. If I’m being honest, I struggled quite a bit with many of these things. And while I’d like to say I pushed through as best I could- I faltered more often than not. I was not the best version of myself. It was a really challenging time. And when I was able to take the time to acknowledge all of it, I realized I was not alone in those struggles. I recall reading somewhere that “we are not all in the same boat. We are in the same storm.” And that really stuck with me. While we were all riding out the impacts of the pandemic, all of our experiences looked different and felt different based on our own circumstances. And you know what else I learned? It’s ok to not be ok.

When our Editorial Committee met up to talk about our next edition, mental health was received with such an overwhelming response. Not only that, but when the topic was sent to the WILL group at-large for article volunteers, we were met with a tremendous amount of response. Clearly, the Women in Legal Leadership felt passionate about a WILLed edition surrounding mental health and well-being. Andrea Tromberg contributes an article that discusses whether or not we get happier with age. Natalie Grigg poses the question: “Are you an optimist or pessimist- and how does that affect your health?” Michelle Pierro discusses how physical well-being improves mental health. Kris Zilberstein writes about Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Marissa Yaker shares insight on how animals can help with mental health. Cheryl Cook gives us some tips on how to take better care of ourselves. Jillian Wilson shares her own journey with postpartum depression.



For some of our reoccurring pieces, this issue brings back the “Tell Me Something Good” column, where we celebrate some of our industry colleagues doing some great things. Annalise DeLuca provides us with a book review on Glennon Doyle’s Untamed. Amanda Green brings us a piece called “What’s Your Passion?” and Lisa Lee brings back our “Ten Things to Know About,” where she shares details on the incredible Nellie Bly.

It is our hope that this issue reaches our WILLed membership and provides some help to those who might need it. Talking about mental health helps us normalize it and work through it. And talking about mental health gives others the comfort to do the same. Let’s keep the conversation going... **W**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maggie Garden". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**MAGGIE GARDEN**

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# Tell Me *Something Good*

BY: MAGGIE GARDEN, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING  
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**I**N A WORLD that often seems so uncertain and where the only constant is change, the ALFN WILled Editorial Committee wanted to celebrate the people in our industry who are keeping things positive and spreading good vibes in the world by highlighting their efforts in this WILled Column called: **"Tell Me Something Good."** If you or anyone you know in the industry is up to **Something Good**, we want to know about it and acknowledge it in an upcoming edition of WILled. Please send a brief write-up with the name of the person you are nominating and what they've been up to. It could be fundraising efforts, or a recent promotion or accomplishment. Please submit your information to: [srosen@alfn.org](mailto:srosen@alfn.org) and [mgarden@bmpc-law.com](mailto:mgarden@bmpc-law.com).



## EXCITING ADVANCEMENTS...

Mackie Wolf Zientz Mann has two promotions to announce! Lisa Hess has been promoted to Chief Financial Officer. Lisa joined MWZM in 2014 and has provided incredible leadership and strategic financial navigation to the firm. Lisa has over fifteen years of experience as a Controller and Director of Accounting and Finance. MWZM is going to continue to flourish with Lisa in her new role.



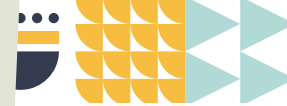
Rosalie Escobedo has been promoted to Director of Business Development. Rosalie, previously the Litigation Manager, has been with the firm for over four years and has over ten years of experience in the industry. She currently serves on the ALFN Marketing and Event Planning Group as a Social Media Chair, and we believe this role will be a natural fit to better serve and support our industry partners.

## A TRUE TEAM LEADER...

Amber Todd of RoundPoint is described by her peers as one who: "leads by example, she is inspiring, helps her team to leverage their talents, mentors them on areas of opportunity, passionate about our teams' success, helps groom members to ensure a successful career. She shows up every day to support her team and her peers. Amber is always helping others and genuinely wants people to be as passionate about RoundPoint as she is." Recently, Amber was promoted to Senior Vice President of Default Servicing. This is a great accomplishment for not only Amber but also RoundPoint. Amber started her career at RoundPoint as a Foreclosure Specialist almost 10 years ago.







### COACHING THROUGH COVID...

In August 2020, Ernestine Faienza of Bendett & McHugh, P.C. met with the New Britain Police Athletic League (PAL) about bringing her then girls basketball program over to their organization. At the time, she was running a skill development program out of the schools but with COVID, she wouldn't have access to those gyms anymore. PAL was willing to let her use their gyms, so it made sense to merge. She has 4 skill development teams (beginner level), 4 travel teams (intermediate level), and 4 AAU teams (advanced). In June 2021, the 6th and 8th grade teams competed in the US Junior Nationals in Hershey, Pennsylvania. There were 12 teams in the U11 bracket (6 in each pool) and they competed against teams from VA, NY, NJ, and PA. The U11 team (6th grade) ended up winning the whole tournament (7 games), which is a huge accomplishment for a program that hasn't even been together a year. Ernestine is an incredible coach and leader to these girls and could not be more proud of how far they have come.



### REMOTE IN PUERTO RICO!

Vivian N. Lopez | Associate Attorney at the Litigation Department of Mackie, Wolf, Zientz & Mann, P.C.

I moved to Texas in 2016, after getting admitted at the Puerto Rico State Bar and Federal Bar. Since then, I have not had the opportunity to go back and visit my beautiful island of Puerto Rico. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work became the new normal for many of us. One of the benefits of working remotely is that you can work almost anywhere in the world. I thought that working remotely from the island could be an exceptional opportunity to reconnect with my roots. My request was approved, and I immediately started to get things ready. I planned a very meticulous schedule that allowed me to attend my hearings, comply with my deadlines and performance expectations, while at the same time allowing me additional time to visit some of the breathtaking beaches that we have on our island. The weather in Puerto Rico is a year-round summer warm weather. We have beautiful beaches such as: Caracoles (Lajas, PR), Buyé (Cabo Rojo, PR), Crashboat Beach (Aguadilla, PR) and Flamenco Beach (Culebra, PR). This is just a short list of the many options you could have. This opportunity was great to connect with my childhood memories and to nurture my family relationships.

As an interesting fact that some people do not know, Puerto Rico is a territory (commonwealth) of the United States and Puerto Ricans are considered U.S. Citizens. We Puerto Ricans are fiercely proud of our island and are always welcoming to have more and more people visit our beautiful island. **W**



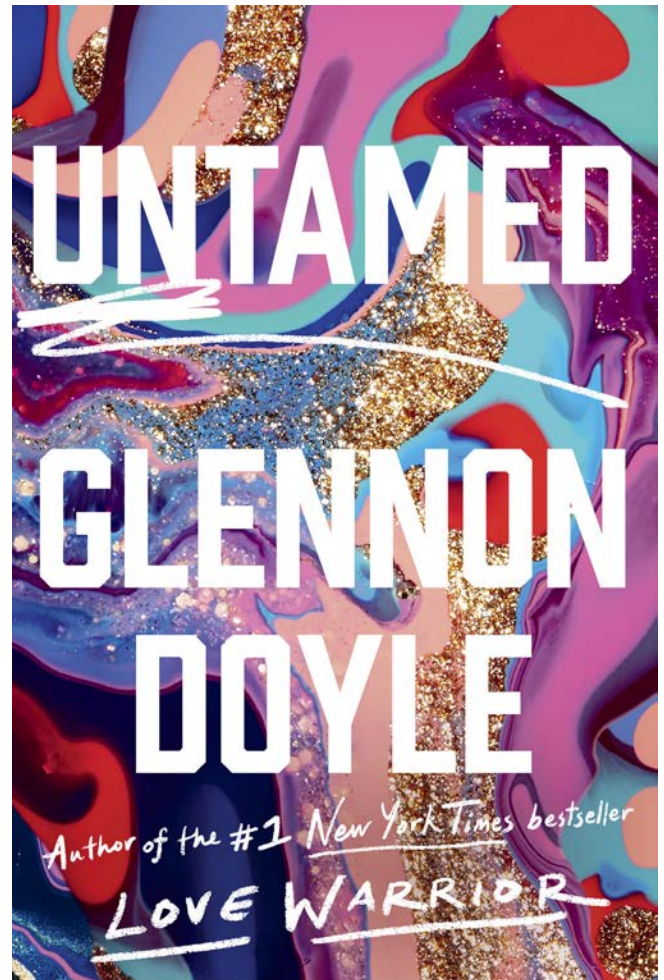
# Untamed

by Glennon Doyle

BY ANNALISE HAYES DELUCA, ESQ.  
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**ONLY A FEW PAGES** into the Prologue, author Glennon Doyle hits her readers with the first of many thought-provoking statements- “You are a goddamn cheetah.” What precedes is the story of a cheetah named Tabitha, who spends her days in a zoo performing for the crowds. It is only after she is done chasing a stuffed pink rabbit, trailing behind a jeep, that Tabitha reverts to the “wild” nature that is innately within her. Despite being raised in captivity and knowing nothing else, Doyle observes that Tabitha realizes there is more out there beyond the confined life she has been leading. It seems an apt metaphor for the way many of us muddle through the day-to-day of our lives without truly listening to what is within us and what we are capable of. Inside of all of us is a cheetah, whether we choose to recognize it or not.

Much like in her previous books, *Carry On, Warrior* and *Love Warrior*, Doyle uses her own stories to impart hard-earned wisdom upon her readers. From her battles with addiction and an eating disorder, to her Christian beliefs, to her husband’s infidelity, and finally to meeting her wife, Abby, Doyle lays bare many of the moments that brought her to where she is. Though her experiences may be unique to her, they offer us many universal truths. They provide a commentary on the expectations of society on people in general, and women specifically. Doyle talks about the concepts of making yourself smaller, of being caged within the expectations of what makes a “good girl” or a “real boy.” It is the taming of individuals from a young age that Doyle questions, which causes us to question our own



notions about what “good” or “real” looks like.

Another concept Doyle manages to pull through her stories is that of Knowing. In one story, “Algorithms,” Doyle reveals the indecisiveness she felt after discovering her husband had been serially unfaithful. She talks about calling her friends, reading articles, and polling as to what she should do next. At one point Doyle found herself googling, “What should I do if my husband is a cheater but also an amazing dad?” We have all been there, in that moment where a monumental decision must be made, but feeling utterly unprepared to make it. It is in Part Two of the book, titled “Keys,” in which Doyle tells us how to Know. Essentially, to Know is to surrender to a place of silence and stillness within ourselves. It is a space where we




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**ALLOWING OURSELVES TO RECOGNIZE THAT A TASK BEFORE US  
IS DIFFICULT, BUT THAT WE ARE CAPABLE OF OVERCOMING IT,  
PROVIDES A CERTAIN LEVEL OF FREEDOM.**

can recognize things deep inside of us that we cannot recognize on a surface level. It is an encouragement to trust what we know to be true on a deeper level and go with that gut instinct rather than let all the external influences sway you. Whether it be a decision regarding work, family, or personal affairs, if we just sit with ourselves and shut out everything else, we oftentimes find we already know the correct answer.

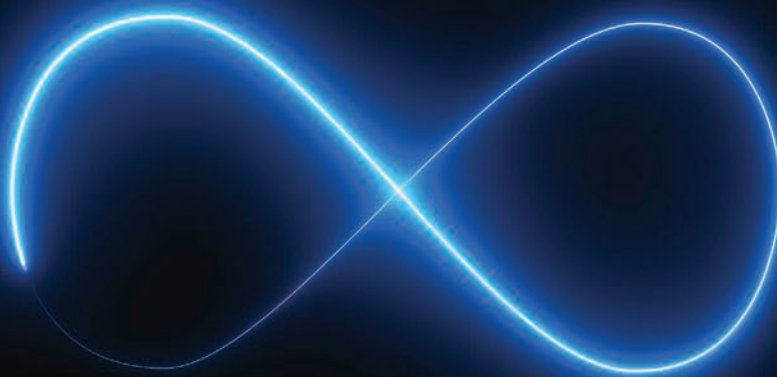
In Part Three, titled “Free,” Doyle introduces us to the concept with which I most resonated- the concept of doing hard things despite how impossible it may feel. She writes of the time when she discovers she’s pregnant, while in the throes of an alcohol addiction and bulimia. It is on her daily walk to the lunchroom with her third-grade students that she sees a sign

which reads, “WE CAN DO HARD THINGS.” This becomes her daily mantra. As Doyle writes, acknowledging that something is difficult, telling yourself that you can handle it, and then moving forward and getting the job done is sometimes all you can do. Allowing ourselves to recognize that a task before us is difficult, but that we are capable of overcoming it, provides a certain level of freedom.

Overall, while the concepts Doyle discusses in her book are not particularly novel or groundbreaking, the way in which she tells her stories and imparts her wisdom is compelling. For anyone who is feeling a bit lost, alone, unfocused, or uninspired, this book may be just what is needed to reignite a spark. This particular reader highly recommends. 

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10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT

# NELLIE BLY



BY LISA A. LEE, ESQ.  
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WHILE CONTEMPLATING The theme of this Summer edition of WILled, Mental Health and Well-Being, my mind instantly went to Nellie Bly – a serious badass of a woman whose early work had a profound positive impact on the mental health care industry. Nellie was a trailblazer, and an inspiring one at that. So, without further ado, I present Ten Things to Know About ..... Nellie Bly. Enjoy!



## — 1 —

Nellie Bly was born Elizabeth Jane Cochran on May 5, 1864 in Cochran's Mills, Pennsylvania, the town founded by her father, Michael Cochran.<sup>1</sup>

## — 2 —

While studying to become a teacher in Indiana, Pennsylvania, Elizabeth was forced to leave her studies due to financial difficulty. She moved to Pittsburgh with her mother, where the two operated a boarding house together.<sup>2</sup>

## — 3 —

Bly wrote a letter to the editor of the Pittsburgh Dispatch that so impressed the editor that he offered her a job. The subject of the letter? A criticism of the paper's negative representation of women.<sup>3</sup>

## — 4 —

It was at this first job in journalism that Elizabeth took the pen name Nellie Bly, a name she got from the title of a song written by Stephen Foster of "Oh! Susanna" and "Camptown Races" fame.<sup>4</sup>

## — 5 —

Bly moved to New York City in 1886, and pitched a story idea to New York World. The paper did not accept her story idea (about the immigrant experience), but instead tasked her with investigating one of New York's most notorious mental hospitals.<sup>5</sup>

## — 6 —

At the age of 23, Bly showed her acting chops, feigning mental illness to gain access to the insane asylum on Blackwell's Island, where she stayed for 10 days, in unthinkable wretched conditions.<sup>6</sup>

## — 7 —

The resulting expose was published by New York World in a six-part series, and spawned an investigation into the hospital's practices, and resulted in health care reforms.<sup>7</sup>

## — 8 —

Bly's immersive approach to her work gave rise to the concept of "investigative journalism." She also reported on abuses in sweatshops, jails, and the New York state legislature, along with a trip around the globe in a world record beating seventy-two days.<sup>8</sup>

## — 9 —

After retiring from journalism, Bly went on to patent several inventions related to oil manufacturing, many of which are still in use today.<sup>9</sup>

## — 10 —

You can see the movie! In 2019, Christina Ricci played Bly in a Lifetime TV thriller called "Escaping the Madhouse: The Nellie Bly Story."<sup>10</sup> **W**

1 <https://www.biography.com/activist/nellie-bly>

2 Id.

3 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nellie-Bly>

4 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/07/28/she-went-undercover-expose-an-insane-asylums-horrors-now-nellie-bly-is-getting-her-due/>; See also, <https://songofamerica.net/song/nelly-bly/>

5 <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/nellie-bly>

6 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/07/28/she-went-undercover-expose-an-insane-asylums-horrors-now-nellie-bly-is-getting-her-due/>

7 <https://www.biography.com/activist/nellie-bly>

8 <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/history-magazine/article/nellie-bly-united-states-first-investigative-journalist-started-asylum>; <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nellie-Bly>

9 <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/nellie-bly>

10 <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-reviews/escaping-mad-house-nellie-bly-story-review-1177635/>

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# HOPE FOR THE BEST, PREPARE FOR THE WORST

HOW OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM  
IMPACT OUR HEALTH



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**H**OW WE EXPERIENCE the world and interpret our experiences are guided by our own internal filters. By definition, optimism is defined as “an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and events or to anticipate the best possible outcome.” In contrast, a person who is pessimistic is known to have a tendency to see the worst aspect of things or believe that the worst will happen. The age-old question that remains, however, is whether being optimistic or pessimistic is a personality trait you inherit, does being pessimistic impact one's mental and/or physical health, and if so, is there anything you can do to shift from one to the other?



Studies show that optimism is approximately 25% inheritable but is also impacted by such factors as socioeconomic status and other environmental influences. This leads to the conclusion that while we may feel a tendency to be pessimistic, it is within our sphere of control to do something about it.

At the outset, it is interesting to note that there is conflicting information on whether pessimism has negative impacts, with some studies showing that pessimism can actually lead to increased longevity because people become more cautious as they anticipate negative outcomes. That said, a pessimistic outlook has been linked to mental health issues, including anxiety and depression, as well as sleep disorders, high blood pressure, and heart disease. The question remains whether pessimism causes these issues or whether experiencing these issues reinforces pessimism.

However, even with the conflicting research about the effects of pessimism on one's health, the benefits of

being optimistic are well documented and far outweigh those of remaining pessimistic. These include such benefits as having better cardiovascular health, being more resilient, earning a higher income, experiencing lower levels of pain, sleeping better, having more expansive social networks and better relationships, having better coping strategies, and having higher survival rates after receiving a medical diagnosis.

What's not to love, right?

A word of caution though: while it would be great if we were all optimistic, this is not to say we all need to walk around wearing rose-colored glasses. While viewing your life or circumstances with the belief that there will be a positive outcome is beneficial, it still is important to acknowledge the reality of the situation and that negative things do happen.

In the end, being optimistic or pessimistic is a choice, and you can work to rewire your brain to become more optimistic. Some strategies to try to be less pessimistic include:





### CHALLENGE BELIEFS

Reality and perception are different, but it can easily be said that a person's perceptions are their reality. A pessimistic outlook may lead a person to see a situation that does not actually line up with reality. As such, challenging those beliefs can help you come to the realization that your belief is not rooted in reality.

### MAKE A PRO AND CON LIST

Making an effort to come up with one pro for every con can assist with finding a balanced perspective.

### SEEK OUT OPTIMISTIC FRIENDS

Optimism and positive thinking are two different concepts. Optimism is the way you view the world, while positive thinking is the way you will react to the world. An optimistic friend will help you rethink your ideas by challenging the underlying foundation for your beliefs.

### REVIEW PAST EXPERIENCES

Question whether things really were as bad as you thought they were going to be. More importantly, focus on what went right and consider how many bad things that you thought were going to happen actually did.

### RECOGNIZE YOUR DAILY "WINS"

At the end of each day, review what went right. Were you able to get a brief done? What about taking time to check in with a friend? Even small wins throughout the day add up and can highlight how things are better than you may think.

### VISUALIZE A MINI MOVIE OF YOUR LIFE

Visualization exercises help you envision your ideal life: how you look, how you feel, what you have accomplished, and what your life is like. Set aside a short time each day to picture what you want your life to be and watch your mood improve.

### ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT CONTROL

*Winston Churchill once said,  
"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity;  
an optimist sees the opportunity  
in every difficulty."*



# CHOOSE Happy

BY SUSAN G. PAGE, INVOICING SUPERVISOR  
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When things of this life are wearing you down,  
And you don't think you can make it from where you are now.

When you feel like you're just here and going through the motions,  
And you feel the waves pounding like you're drowning in the ocean.

When whatever you're going through feels like a curse,  
You'll soon realize that things could always be worse.

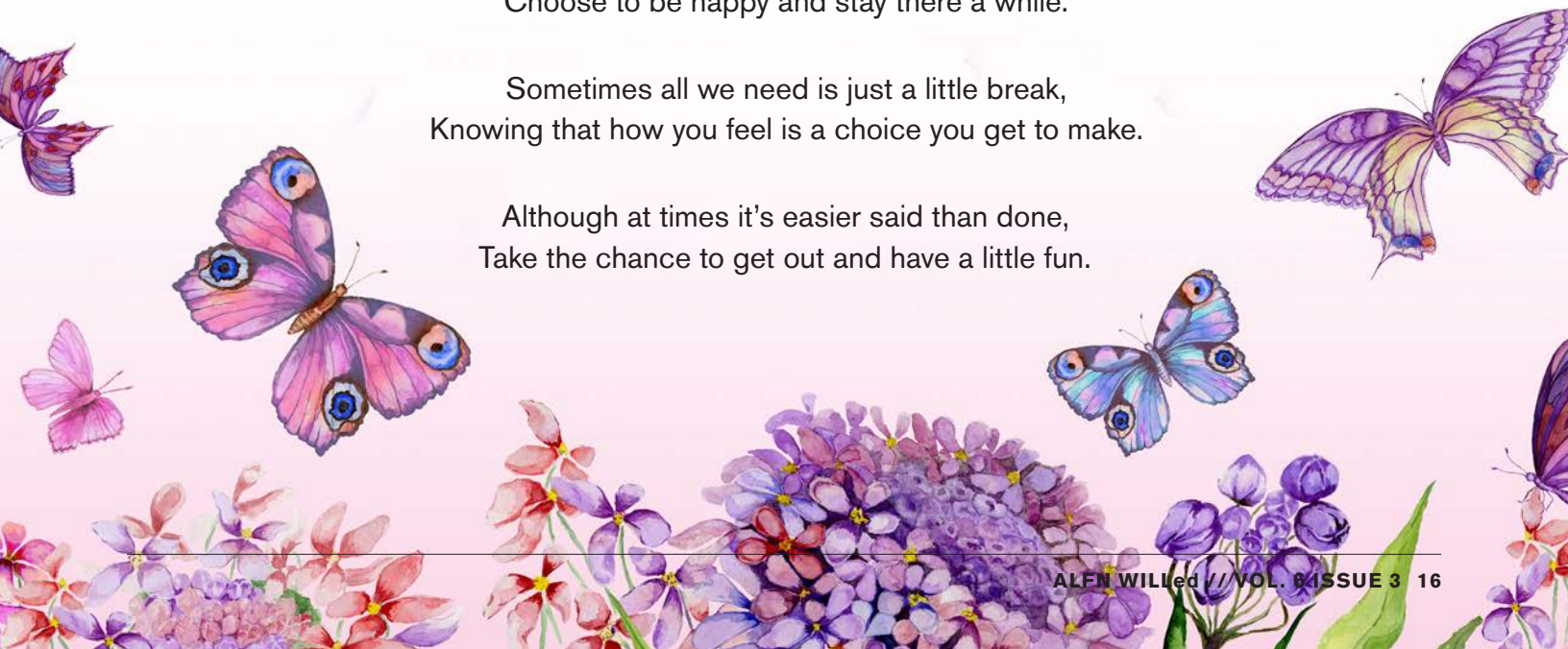
Just remember you're not alone, in whatever you're going through,  
Knowing that someone, somewhere is going through it too.

Whether it's a phone call to a friend or a night out on the town,  
You can always choose to turn that frown upside down.

It's been said that less muscles are used when you smile.  
Choose to be happy and stay there a while.

Sometimes all we need is just a little break,  
Knowing that how you feel is a choice you get to make.

Although at times it's easier said than done,  
Take the chance to get out and have a little fun.





# HOW ANIMALS CAN HELP WITH MENTAL HEALTH

BY MARISSA M. YAKER, ESQ.  
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# “There’s a reason dogs are dubbed man’s best friend. Dogs-and cats, too-make wonderful companions and provide many emotional and physical benefits.”<sup>1</sup>

Over the years, we have heard more about therapy dogs, and the benefits of how animals can assist with mental health. This article will focus on all those benefits, and perhaps at the end of it.... you may find yourself either wanting a puppy or kitten, or googling puppies or kittens.

Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”), “there are many health benefits of owning a pet. They can increase opportunities to exercise, get outside, and socialize. Regular walking or playing with pets can decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and triglyceride levels. Pets can help manage loneliness and depression by giving us companionship. Most households in the United States have at least one pet.”<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the above, pets can also decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels, triglyceride levels, feelings of loneliness, provide exercise and outdoor activities, and increase opportunities for socialization.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, so far, all I am envisioning is cute puppies/kittens as I am writing this, and then thinking how I can convince my husband why we should get a puppy. Here is another argument, per one medical opinion: “we do best medically and emotionally when we feel securely attached to another, because we’re mammals and that’s the way we’ve evolved. We feel

especially secure with dogs and cats because of the unconditional love they provide.”<sup>4</sup>

One prime example of how pets are used for mental health, are therapy dogs. “While therapy dogs have long been welcomed as “nonpharmacological interventions” for some hospitalized patients, their use with those who are critically ill is new for many hospitals.”<sup>5</sup> At John Hopkins, animal therapy is utilized. Therapy dogs must go through a program called “Pet Partners,” which ensures that both handlers and dogs have training. Additionally, to qualify for visits, patients must be awake and alert enough to engage calmly with a dog, not at high-risk infections, and be interested in having a dog visit.<sup>6</sup>

Per the article that was published on John Hopkins University’s page, by having the therapy dogs visit patients, it helps build motivation to become more active, i.e., it is hard for a patient not to avoid engaging the dog, and that it may also provide a calm, affectionate presence.<sup>7</sup>

So, next time you are feeling stressed out or just simply having the blues- take a moment and either go and spend time with your pets, or if you do not have pets, go and visit an animal shelter, and perhaps you may go home with a new best friend. **W**

1 Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School, The health benefits and risks of pet ownership, February 19, 2016, The health benefits and risks of pet ownership - Harvard Health

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Healthy Pets, Healthy People, About Pets & People, April 15, 2019, About Pets & People | Healthy Pets, Healthy People | CDC

3 *Id.*

4 Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School, The health benefits and risks of pet ownership, Dr. Greg Fricchione, February 19, 2016, The health benefits and risks of pet ownership - Harvard Health

5 John Hopkins University, Therapy dogs may unlock health benefits for patients in hospital ICUs, Marin Hedin, February 2018, Therapy dogs may unlock health benefits for patients in hospital ICUs | Hub (jhu.edu)

6 *Id.*

7 *Id.*

A photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a grey tank top, holding a baby in her arms. She is looking upwards towards a window with vertical blinds. The lighting is soft and natural, coming from the window. The woman's expression is contemplative or perhaps distressed, fitting the theme of the article.

# POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

**THE FIRST CALL IS THE HARDEST**



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## BEFORE

### **“WE NEED TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR.”**

I will never forget where and when I heard my husband say this to me. Harry, my sweet, perfect son, was five weeks old and I was curled up in a ball in our living room, sobbing. I had tried swaddling Harry for the four millionth time, and after I repeatedly failed to make a tight burrito, I was hysterical. I was tired, sad, and frustrated. I felt so alone.

This was not the image of motherhood I had seen in the months leading up to the birth of Harry. Why was it that I was curled up on the living room floor when every other new mom with a five-week-old baby was looking amazing on Instagram and smiling and wearing cute matching outfits and full makeup and

hair? I hadn't showered in days, my hair was a mess, I couldn't swaddle my child, and I was a wreck. I kept wondering what was wrong with me.

I was never the type of person to give up. Nor was I the type to shy away from difficult problems. To the contrary, I was always the kind of person that likes a challenge. Give me a hard project, and I will break it up into small, digestible chunks, and get it done by the deadline. Like so many young attorneys, I am accountable. I am reliable. I can do hard things.

So, why couldn't I handle this? Of all the hard things I worked to accomplish, why was mothering the one I was struggling with the most? I imagined being able to focus my attention and energy, and my love of detail, on getting everything just perfect with my child. Naptime? No problem. He's hungry? Got it. He's cry-



## BABY BLUES

OR

## POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

**50-85%**

of mothers in the first  
2 weeks after birth

**10-20%**

of mothers in the first  
year after birth

### **SYMPTOMS**

Irritability, anxiety and  
fluctuating mood

### **SYMPTOMS**

Excessive guilt, anxiety,  
depressed mood,  
insomnia/hypersomnia,  
suicidal thoughts  
and fatigue

Mild & occasional  
not considered  
psychiatric

Moderate to severe  
symptoms, prolonged

From: <https://www.umms.org/uch/health-services/womens-services/family-birthplace/postpartum-support>

ing? I'll hold him and rock him until he stops! I had a plan. But, when my husband told me he thought we needed to call my doctor, I realized he was right. I needed help.

Okay, full disclosure: this wasn't the first time he mentioned this to me. I just didn't agree with him at first. He previously mentioned it a few times and I brushed it off. "I don't need help." "This is normal." "The way I'm feeling will pass." And the biggest justification of them all – "Other people don't need help with this. Why would I?" It was hard for me to admit I needed help when I knew so many friends and acquaintances who never did. See *Instagram*, supra. It felt very off-brand for me because I feel like I'm normally on the giving, rather than the receiving end of help. It was a struggle to change my headspace – I

always felt pressure to achieve and succeed based on my own efforts, and it was uncomfortable facing the reality that I couldn't manage these feelings alone. I felt embarrassed and ashamed. It kept me from asking for help for almost too long.

### **AFTER**

First and foremost: obviously I am not a doctor or medical professional. This article is solely based on my personal experience. If you have any questions, please consult your doctor.

I am writing this to try and help anyone that might read it to understand these experiences are quite normal. High emotions, mood swings, and anxiety are felt by so many women after giving birth. Your body just did something incredible! And now it needs to

# POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

## FACTS AND FIGURES



**POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION (PPD)**  
is the most common  
complication of childbirth.



Up to **1 IN 7** experience PPD

Approximately

# 600,000

Women get PPD  
each year in the  
U.S. alone.



For half of women  
diagnosed with PPD,  
this is their first episode  
of depression



About half of women who  
are diagnosed with PPD  
**experienced symptoms**  
during pregnancy.

Only  
**15%**

of women with  
postpartum depression  
ever receive professional  
treatment

From: <https://www.fix.com/blog/post-partum-depression-and-you/>

adjust. It is very common for women to experience difficult emotions after giving birth, but it becomes unhealthy when those feelings last longer than about two weeks.

An easy rule of thumb here is that feeling negative emotions within the first two weeks after giving birth might qualify as the “baby blues,” which is not postpartum depression and goes away after this period. However, if these feelings last longer than two weeks, it could be postpartum depression, and you should talk to your doctor.

As I mentioned before, it took my husband a few attempts to convince me I should call my doctor. And continuing with full disclosure – it wasn’t actually me who made the first phone call. It was him. He noticed I was not acting like myself, and I was refusing to ask for help. He called my doctor and left a voicemail that he thought she should talk to me about potential postpartum issues, and she called me back. At that point in time, I would not have contacted my doctor but for his phone call.

To everyone out there – lean on your spouse or part-



ner and your friends and family. Let them help you. Trust them and let them take care of you. I know it is hard. But, in such a vulnerable and difficult time, it is okay to need help.

I wish I could say that if my husband had not made that first phone call, I would have called my doctor myself. But I don't know if that is the case. I needed that outside party seeing me and understanding how odd my behavior was, and ultimately pushing me towards the help I needed. Not all of us are lucky enough to have that when we need it. I hope this article can be that initial push (or shove) for someone out there who needs it.

After I connected with my doctor, we discussed what was happening to me and how I was feeling, and since that time I have been treated for postpartum depression. Once the conversation started, it was an easy talk to

have. And, boy, am I glad I had that conversation. I am worlds away from where I was that day on my living room floor. It's all because of that phone call and my eventual, albeit reluctant, willingness to receive help. Please listen to your loved ones and allow yourself to accept that you may need help. You and your new child deserve a happy and healthy first several months together. Don't let your excuses or your reasons or your pride get in the way, like I did. And if you need to hear this, too: accepting you may suffer from PPD doesn't mean you love your child any less. I felt a tinge of guilt that energy was being expended on my behalf and not my child's. Don't hesitate to call your doctor. And when your doctor asks you if you've been feeling out of control, depressed, anxious, or unlike yourself, allow yourself to answer "yes" if you have been. I promise – it is so much better on the other side. **W**



# TOP TEN LIST TIPS FOR SELF-CARE

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**N**OT EVERYONE WORKS well with lists. Some people live for them; others see them as a taskmaster bent on getting EVERY. LAST. ITEM. completed. At the same time, lists can prompt creativity and ideas, as well as remind us of things we might otherwise forget. With those caveats in mind, here is a list of tips for taking care of yourself.



### BREATHE.

Deep breaths from the belly, in good fresh air where possible, with measured exhalation. According to Harvard Medical School, belly breathing “works well to ease anxiety and garden-variety stress.”<sup>1</sup> Others concur – deep breathing stimulates healthy functioning of the vagus nerve, which does a lot of things for your body that you might not normally think about<sup>2</sup> including reducing inflammation and pain.<sup>3,4</sup> Inhale through your nose (visualize filling your belly like a balloon), and then exhale through pursed lips for a total of three in-and-out cycles, or try whatever other method works for you. You’re welcome.



### SLEEP.

To the extent possible, getting adequate restful sleep is the first step toward taking care of yourself.

Insufficient sleep, particularly REM sleep, can impact your ability to stay alert, your memory, relationships, quality of life, and even safety when driving.<sup>5</sup> If you have trouble sleeping, a cool, dark environment is helpful. Proper exercise, nutrition, and hydration, as well as a consistent and relaxing bedtime routine, can also facilitate sound sleep. Perhaps the biggest tip, though, may be turning off the electronics.<sup>6</sup> Even electronic devices intended to monitor how much sleep you get can interfere with the sleep you need.



### DRINK. WATER.

Good old H<sub>2</sub>O. Staying adequately hydrated helps your body and your soul because it facilitates adequate balance of the nutrients you take in, as well as regular clearing of wastes from your body.<sup>7,8</sup> Proper hydration can stave off fatigue and confusion, in addition to headaches or other ailments. In addition to maintaining your physical self, proper hydration is good for your inner self – mens sana in corpore sanum: a healthy mind by/ from a healthy body.

1 Ease anxiety and stress: Take a (belly) breather - Harvard Health

2 The vagus nerve: your secret weapon in fighting stress (allied-services.org)

3 Why deep breathing matters (laughteronlineuniversity.com)

4 Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercises and Your Vagus Nerve | Psychology Today

5 Here's What Happens When You Don't Get Enough Sleep (And How Much You Really Need a Night) – Health Essentials from Cleveland Clinic

6 Can Electronics Affect Quality Sleep? | Sleep Foundation

7 Hydration (clevelandclinic.org)

8 Healthy Living: What Happens to Your Body When You Drink Enough Water? (onhealth.com)

4

**EAT.**

What, how much, when, why, and where we eat is, I believe, one of the biggest challenges in modern life. Particularly if you work in an office, though, maintaining adequate nutrition without overdoing it (or skipping meals because you're under a deadline) can present challenges for even the best-intentioned. Some people crave variety; others need one less thing to have to think about. Planning (even a little bit) to ensure that you get adequate nutrition with satiety so that you don't feel constantly hungry can be your best ally in maintaining the energy you need to do the things on all of your other lists.

5

**PRAY.**

Whatever your spiritual beliefs, spiritual health is as important as physical health, if not more so. A definition of spirituality as “the connection that people make to something beyond themselves as a means of reaching self-actualization” may work<sup>9</sup> Including this as a tip to take care of yourself is not intended to push or promote a particular religious expression or any religious expression. However, people are spiritual beings, and neglecting that aspect of our lives and ourselves can lead to a soul-weariness that is hard to shake. Whether your preference is yoga, meditation, nature, or something else, make time for that aspect of your life as part of self-care.

6

**COUNT.**

One of the most difficult times to care for yourself is when you feel overwhelmed. At such times, it can feel like everything is bad. To bring back balance, count good things. Name them – five a day is a good number to maintain perspective, but count as many different “good things” as you can find. Keep a list if you like, and reflect back on it if you do. For the things on your list that resulted from someone else doing something for you, thank them.<sup>10</sup>

7

**MOVE.**

The human body was not meant to sit still in one place for hours at a time. Whether you count steps, or completely get out of your workspace to walk for 10 minutes, or whether you have to meet the dawn in solitude, some form of physical exercise (preferably outdoors) is critical to well-being. Climbing stairs is another way to get some exercise while at work. Even if all you have time to do is stretch while going to and from the bathroom, it's important to move regularly. If nothing else, just getting up and swinging your arms back and forth as hard as you can and then letting them slowly come to rest on their own can be a great way to shake the cobwebs loose and get your blood going. It may look quite silly to others, but try it and see how you feel. (Preferably at least swinging distance away from your nearest neighbor).

<sup>9</sup> The Importance of Spirituality in Patient-Centered Care | American Journal of Critical Care | American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (aacnjournals.org)

<sup>10</sup> Amazon.com: 365 Thank Yous: The Year a Simple Act of Daily Gratitude Changed My Life eBook: Kralik, John: Kindle Store



8

**PAY.**

When you are stressed about your financial stability (and who isn't these days), you can feel stressed and anxious about your present as well as your future. Paying attention to your financial status, creating a plan for how to accomplish goals, and prioritizing your expenses can relieve the oppressive presence of financial disarray and help you feel a bit more control over this area of our lives. There are a number of good personal finance resources out there, but the important part is to find a plan that works for you and then work that plan. If you don't know where to start, make a list of all the bills each month and the amount of each payment for each bill (whether the amount is fixed or variable), and then total the column. Knowing what you owe and to whom is part of taking care of yourself. If you have money left over after paying all of your fixed and variable expenses each month, you have a starting point for your future goals. If you don't have enough money left over, you have a snapshot of your present that can help guide you in making decisions about your future.

9

**PLAY.**

Recreation can be re-creation. Whether you spend time with others who matter to you and to whom you

matter, or get away for some "alone time," at the end of the day, put the work away. Or, put another way, "Divert daily, withdraw weekly, abandon annually." Make some time every day to divert yourself from the stresses of the day. Withdraw weekly to rest and refresh for the work ahead. Abandon annually – carve out time to get completely away without the tug of business pressures, so that you can "re-create" yourself for the next things in your path.

10

**FORGIVE.**

In a list about self-care, how does forgiveness fit? Forgiveness is not letting others off the hook for wrongs they did to you. It is not giving others the opportunity to hurt you again. It is not denying reality or ignoring repeated offenses, or condoning what was done. It is not reconciliation. Forgiveness does not depend on someone else asking for it. It does not occur in an instant, nor is it necessarily complete upon the moment of decision. Forgiveness is letting go of the right to hurt someone else because they hurt you. It is freeing yourself from the prison of that event or that person's actions and stepping back into your life. Forgiving yourself for wrongs you committed or for omitting to do good things that were in your power to do frees you from guilt and empowers you to do better the next time. Acknowledge, ask for forgiveness from others, and vow to yourself that you will do and be better. Find out what you don't know about how to do so and commit to learning.

Do justice, to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.<sup>11</sup> That would have been shorter, wouldn't it? **W**

<sup>11</sup> Micah 6:8 (NASB).

# GETTING HAPPIER WITH AGING? SCIENCE SAYS YES!

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**HEN APPROACHED** with this topic, I jumped at the chance to write about it, mainly because I turned 50 this year and wanted to know if this was true. Will I be happier as I age? Logic would tell me no because after all, it would seem that people in their twenties and thirties have freedom, young bodies, less medical concerns, and have a long life ahead of them. So, how could this be true? And is it?

As I began my research for this topic, I did what any normal person would do, I went straight to *Google*. To my amazement, the screen lit up with hundreds of articles on the topic that all indicated the same conclusion. People are happier as they age. I am sure you are still asking the same questions as I did, like: Isn't life easier for the young? As you age, don't you have more responsibilities? In some ways this may be true, but research tells us it is the wisdom and ability to see the world from a different lens that gives those in their later years the advantage. Not only are people happier as they age, in many situations, they are even more productive than typically believed.

In a study by Jeannette McClennan, President of McClennan Masson, older adults in their sixties, seventies and eighties were more likely to report feeling calm, optimistic, cheerful, and full of life, and less likely to report homelessness, restlessness, nervousness, or sadness than those in the twenties to forties range. Interestingly, this study also found that because of the increased ability to remain calm, happy, and

stable as we age, employers should consider retaining older workers rather than pushing them to retirement to replace with the young. She also found that in her own life, as an executive in her fifties, she is happier than ever, feels confident and knows her life experiences give her an advantage. Age allows a person to be a better leader and not get hung up on life's small ups and downs. Experience gives you the confidence that life will work out in the end. Coming to end of life also reminds us to make each day count, and to find meaning in how we live. (McClennan, 2020)

In a survey conducted in San Diego with over 1,500 residents aged 21-99, it was found that those in their twenties were the most stressed and depressed, while those in their nineties were most content. It was a clear correlation between age and mental health. "The older people were, the happier they felt." (Netburn, 2016).

While scientists question how it could be that as people age and lose so much, that they also gain happiness. However, Laura Carstensen, Director of the Stanford Center of Longevity, finds that it all makes sense.



She found that people's goals and reasoning change as they age, and they begin to have a greater appreciation for their finite time on this Earth. Stating, "When you focus on emotionally meaningful goals, life gets better, you feel better, and the negative emotions become less frequent and more fleeting when they occur." (Netburn, 2016).

Further, these studies found age and wisdom allow people to make better choices and decisions. Experience and age provide more empathy, compassion, and openness to ideas, as well as emotional regulation. (Netburn, 2016). These attributes contribute to a healthier mental state allowing for more enjoyment and happiness in life.

Another possible theory for happiness in the elderly is physiology of the brain. In fact, brain imaging studies have shown that older people are less responsive than younger individuals when shown stressful images. For example, when shown a car accident, younger people had a much more stressful response than older people. However, scientists do not find this is conclusive or the only reason for this phenomenon. Authors of the brain study indicate it could simply be that we have less





stress as we age. The young experience many social pressures to find a job, start a family and learn to navigate the world. Darrell Worthy, a professor of cognitive psychology at Texas A&M University believes, “It could be that age is associated with a reduction in risk factors for mental health.” Simply put, we have less to worry about, so we are healthier and happier. (Netburn, 2016).

Some may be suspect and ask, how is it possible to know as happiness is subjective. However, scientists conducted numerous studies, all with the same outcome. Since 1972, there were more than 50,000 interviews for the General Social Survey, conducted by the Nation Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. This survey eliminated some of the variables such as time of question and generational differences. The study found conclusively that happiness increases with age. (Stibich, 2020). Another interesting finding was that the participants were not always happy in their lives. To the contrary, this was something that began around 50 and grew.

The quantity of studies and opinions from researchers appear to be endless. As I searched, I found more

and more evidence. The takeaway for me is that as we age, we use our life experiences to make better choices, look at life with hope and reason, and have less stress over job and family decisions. While there are exceptions—for example, a family illness or financial loss—our ability to handle these bumps in the road improves and allows us to quickly return to happiness and appreciation for life.

I take comfort in knowing that at 50, the worst is behind me. I should feel comfort in that my experiences in life brought me to a point where I can make sound decisions and not sweat the small stuff. It is so important to take life one day at a time, live the second half of my life to the fullest and appreciate all that life has to offer. After all, I must be happier today... it is science. **W**

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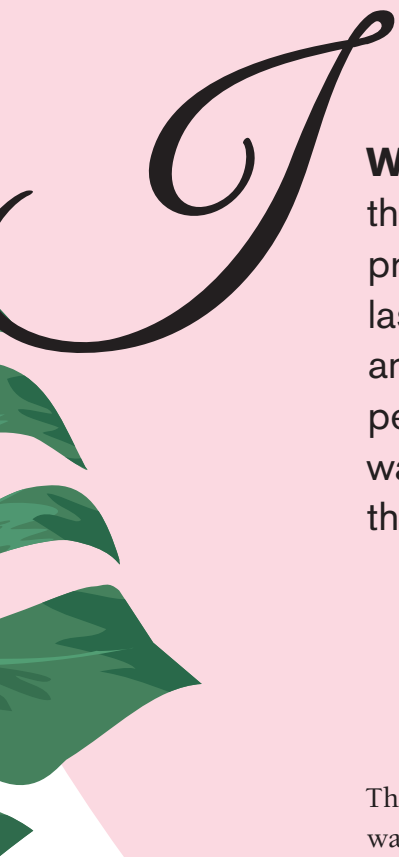


# A WORLD OF *Passions*

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**I WILL ADMIT** when I agreed to write on the topic of Passion, I thought I was writing about how to find one's passion. That I was prepared for. Like most of you, I have spent the better part of the last year in self-reflection and refining myself. It took a pandemic and huge losses in every facet of my life to put things in the right perspective. I am convinced that gratitude and positivity are the only way I have endured this tumultuous time. I was prepared to share that secret sauce, to help others live with passion and find joy.



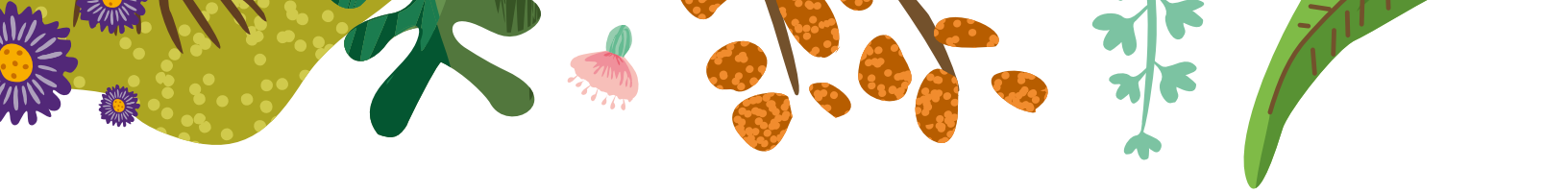
Then the article topic was clarified for me. I was going to be writing about my passions and what I am passionate about. Well, this topic was going to be a little harder for me to digest. When I discussed the writing topic and opportunity with my family, my youngest daughter asked, "How are you going to narrow this down to one or two things? You are passionate about everything mommy." And there you have the insight of a beautiful 12 year-old child. My older teen daughter agreed stating, "I do not think there is a single thing I can think of that you are not passionate about."

Honestly, after their words sunk in, I did a little happy dance inside at their revelations. I am overwhelmed and honored that this is how my daughters perceive me. We discussed this further and they truly see me living a passionate life in all I do, the day-to-day chores, taking them to dance, volunteering in our community, which led me to a whole lot more reflection and conversations with my girls. If I must sum up my passion, the thing or things in life that give me so much joy I feel I could bust, that would be helping and improving the lives of others. This is what my daughters see and are trying

to describe when they think I am "passionate about everything."

I will admit, I am the first to volunteer for that project at work, you know the one no-one wants to do. The first to volunteer at our church, the girls' school, or in our community. You know those non-glamorous chores, behind the scenes, that need to be done. Like any good Mom, I drag my kids along and tell them to roll up their sleeves. I think my children see that I pour my heart into whatever the task is and carry out that work, big or small, with joy. In doing so, they see my passion for helping others and see me living a passionate life.

Over the pandemic our community was hard hit with food insecurities. My house was hard hit with a whole lot of boredom, too. We are not wired or used to being idle. My heart was breaking for some of our neighbors that had to avail themselves to food banks and food drives. Community events sprang up everywhere with folks lining up for miles and miles at Great America Amusement park for food and supply distributions. I truly have never seen anything like this in my life. I saw friends and acquaintances sharing their struggle. I had to find an outlet,



for myself and for my family.

We worked all year long at our community garden. Let us be clear, I have limited to no skills in this area. But we worked with some teacher volunteers in the garden and were blessed with donating fresh produce all summer and fall to the local food pantry. Then I saw that spark, saw a fire ignite within my daughters. They began to organize food drives through their 4-h club and the youngest organized a food drive at her school. Through their hard work, those food pantry shelves were filled again and again all year long. The

last event they organized was an Easter basket drive and delivered 25 fun-filled baskets to the pantry along with a lot of candy-filled eggs for the elderly clients. Through these events and hard work, my heart ached a little less during this pandemic.

So, thanks to the prompt of this article, to the insight of my daughters, I can definitively tell you my true passion is EVERYTHING, or to narrow it down just a bit.... helping others. I hope this article entertains and inspires you to live your life with gratitude, joy, and passion. **W**





# DO YOU GET THE **BLUES** IN WINTER MONTHS?

**THERE IS A LEGITIMATE EXPLANATION**

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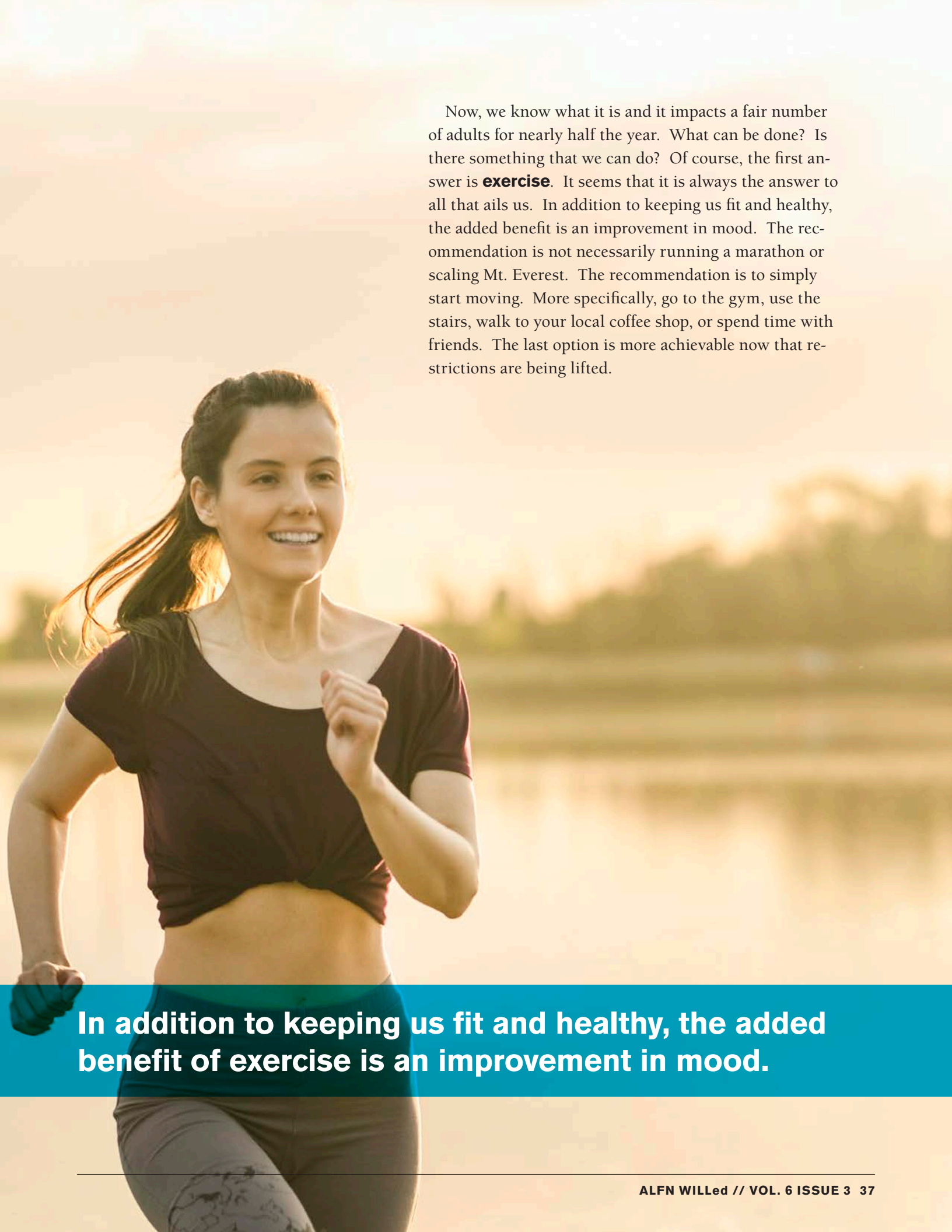


# WHAT IS IT?

**It is Seasonal Affective Disorder. That's the name given to it, but what is it really? Seasonal Affective Disorder ("SAD") is depression that affects people during the winter months. While it is not depression per se, the symptoms mirror depression. The onset comes with the fall and winter months, normally improved with the spring and summer months and longer days. What makes SAD different from depression? It is only in the winter months and tends to be impacted by the amount of light in the day.**

If you think you are impacted by this, you are not the only one. I find my mood affected by the winter months even more so on rainy or cloudy days. Studies have indicated that approximately 5% of adults experience SAD over approximately 40% of the year. Women are impacted more often than men. Of those impacted, 75% are women. While not specifically addressed, it is a reasonable assumption that the COVID quarantine did not help matters much.


Women, the young, and people with previously diagnosed mood disorders such as bipolar, depression, or schizophrenia are at greater risk of having SAD. Other disorders like anxiety, ADHD, eating, and panic may be impacted. Further, areas north of the equator like Alaska and New England are impacted.

A woman with long dark hair tied back is running towards the camera. She is wearing a dark maroon short-sleeved crop top and grey leggings. She has a joyful expression, smiling and looking slightly to her right. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene at sunset or sunrise, with warm golden light and silhouettes of trees and water in the distance.

Now, we know what it is and it impacts a fair number of adults for nearly half the year. What can be done? Is there something that we can do? Of course, the first answer is **exercise**. It seems that it is always the answer to all that ails us. In addition to keeping us fit and healthy, the added benefit is an improvement in mood. The recommendation is not necessarily running a marathon or scaling Mt. Everest. The recommendation is to simply start moving. More specifically, go to the gym, use the stairs, walk to your local coffee shop, or spend time with friends. The last option is more achievable now that restrictions are being lifted.

**In addition to keeping us fit and healthy, the added benefit of exercise is an improvement in mood.**





The second answer is to **change your viewpoint**. To me, this seems to be one of those pieces of advice that is easier said than done. However, the recommendation seems reasonable. The suggestion is to change your opinion of the season by thinking to the positive side by seeking new activities that are only available in winter like skiing, snowboarding, or ice skating. The goal is to appreciate the difference that comes with the season.

**The goal is to appreciate the difference that comes with the season.**





The third answer is to **improve your diet**. Again, what a shock that this is part of the answer! Like exercise, diet is another item that is always an answer to improve one's health. Apparently, SAD causes us to crave the evil sugary foods and simple carbohydrates like pasta and white bread. As an alternative, complex carbohydrates such as oatmeal, whole grain bread, brown rice, and bananas should be eaten to increase serotonin levels. More importantly, to boost your mood, eat omega-3 fats like fish, walnuts, soybeans, and flaxseeds. These foods can also increase the effectiveness of antidepressant medication.

In addition to general positive health, there are treatments available. They are phototherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and Vitamin D. Phototherapy involves a special light best used in the morning to avoid insomnia. Do not use a tanning bed. It is not the same and increases your chance of skin cancer. Unfortunately for our industry, the experts recommend against alcohol. I am not sure that this is an option, but give it a try.

In the end, take care of yourself and your mood should improve. **W**

"3 Strategies To Fight Seasonal Affectiveness Disorder (SAD)", Voyage Healthcare Team posted by Family Medicine, Health Tips, December 18, 2019 8:30:26 AM.

"Seasonal Depression", Cleveland Clinic, December 7, 2020.

**In the end, take care of yourself  
and your mood should improve.**



A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a black tank top and leggings, is in a squat position holding a large black kettlebell with both hands. She is looking directly at the camera with a focused expression. The background is a blurred gym setting with other people and equipment.

HOW PHYSICAL  
WELL-BEING  
IMPROVES MENTAL

HEALTH FROM A  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
PERSPECTIVE

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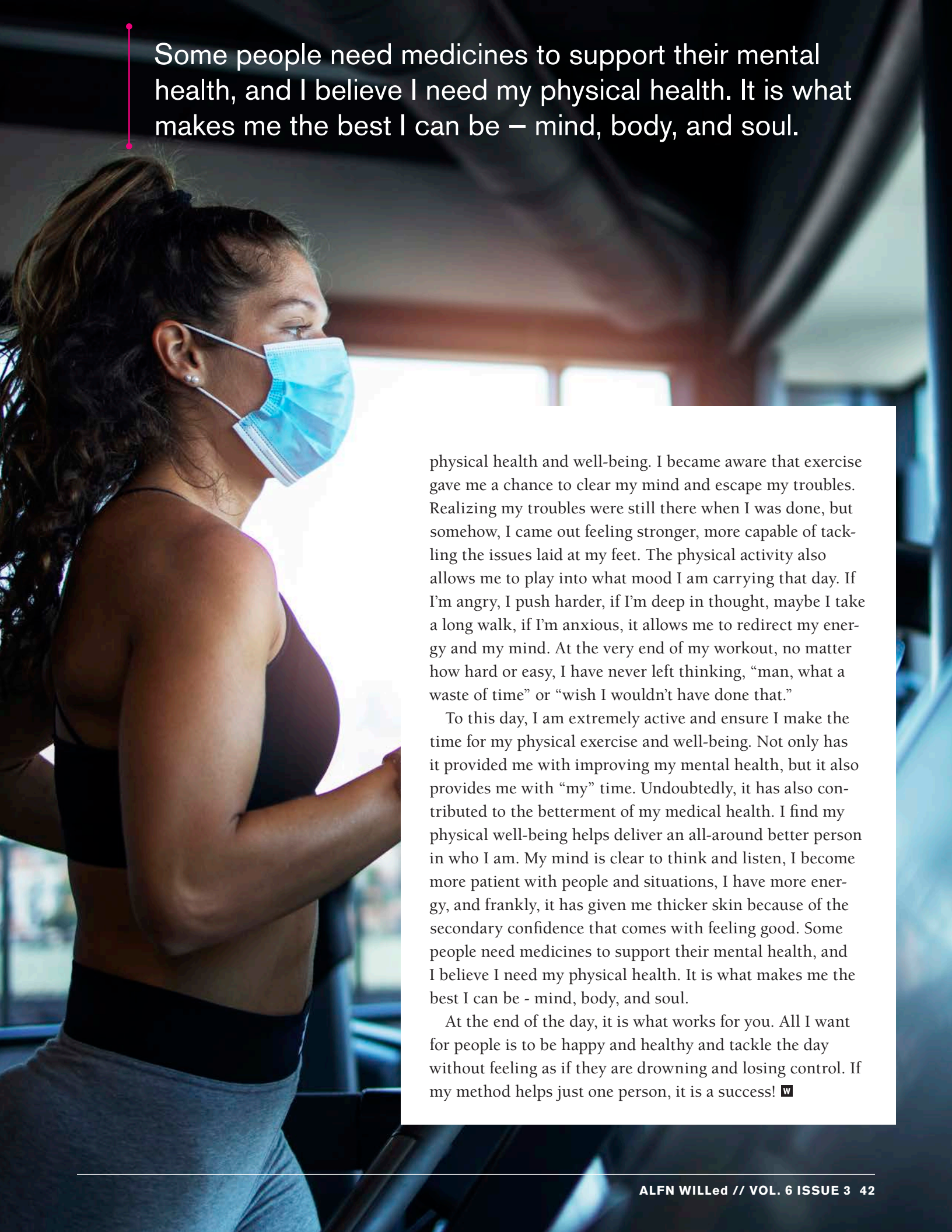


**MENTAL HEALTH.** It's a phrase that is often casually used, with various meanings attached to it, and sometimes stigmatized. Some look at it with a broad spectrum, while others think of it as taboo. Some take mental health to be the textbook cases or finite terminology, and others view it as overall well-being.

I view mental health as that broad spectrum. I think so many facets of our lives touch a part of what mental health really is. Stress, anxiety, depression, self-doubt, exhaustion, hormones, etc., are all areas or rather symptoms of mental health that play on the mind and body. I also feel women are often more prone to struggle with mental health and the symptoms and side effects that stem from it. Whatever view one takes on "mental health," there are several ways to combat the pressures of it. For me, exercise is the fuel for my mind and body to support my physical well-being.

From a young age, I was very active. Whether it was organized sports, riding bikes, or swimming with my friends in the summer, I was always on the move. I remember coming home in the evening when the lights came on (yes, I am of that generation) and my body feeling exhausted but feeling utterly fulfilled. I was much too young to understand or explain that feeling, but as I became older, I recognized that feeling within me and could place it. That feeling being about my





Some people need medicines to support their mental health, and I believe I need my physical health. It is what makes me the best I can be – mind, body, and soul.

physical health and well-being. I became aware that exercise gave me a chance to clear my mind and escape my troubles. Realizing my troubles were still there when I was done, but somehow, I came out feeling stronger, more capable of tackling the issues laid at my feet. The physical activity also allows me to play into what mood I am carrying that day. If I'm angry, I push harder, if I'm deep in thought, maybe I take a long walk, if I'm anxious, it allows me to redirect my energy and my mind. At the very end of my workout, no matter how hard or easy, I have never left thinking, "man, what a waste of time" or "wish I wouldn't have done that."

To this day, I am extremely active and ensure I make the time for my physical exercise and well-being. Not only has it provided me with improving my mental health, but it also provides me with "my" time. Undoubtedly, it has also contributed to the betterment of my medical health. I find my physical well-being helps deliver an all-around better person in who I am. My mind is clear to think and listen, I become more patient with people and situations, I have more energy, and frankly, it has given me thicker skin because of the secondary confidence that comes with feeling good. Some people need medicines to support their mental health, and I believe I need my physical health. It is what makes me the best I can be - mind, body, and soul.

At the end of the day, it is what works for you. All I want for people is to be happy and healthy and tackle the day without feeling as if they are drowning and losing control. If my method helps just one person, it is a success! **W**



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