



December 2019

Hello and welcome to the December 2019 issue of the *Straight from the Horse's Mouth* – an assortment of relevant (and maybe not so relevant) articles.

This issue of *Straight from the Horse's Mouth* is being sent to you courtesy of Winning Strides and Kaleidoscope Copywriting.

It is our way of saying that you are important to us and we truly value your relationship. Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to friends and neighbors. Enjoy!

Quotes of the Month

Happiness is the highest form of health.
—Dalai Lama

The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.
—Alice Walker

Opportunities don't happen; you create them.
—Chris Grosser

Latest Happenings

After finishing our fall retreats, we certainly aren't hibernating! Susan is just finishing her teaching at Wesleyan College in Macon with the third semester of Equine Assisted Therapy. Next semester will

complete the fourth and final semester for students minoring in Equine Assisted Therapy through the Psychology Department.

See if These Items Are on Your Calendar!

National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month. Drinking and driving can make the holiday season deadly for drivers, passengers, and pedestrians. Stay safe during the holidays.

National Safe Toys and Gifts Month. A toy safety system, requiring testing by independent laboratories, help American families feel confident as they prepare to shop for toys this holiday season.

Universal Human Rights Month. Began in 1948, the first article of this declaration states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Ugly Christmas Sweater Day, Dec. 20. You know you've got at least one. Grab your least attractive Christmas sweater and show off your lack of good fashion taste.

First night of Hanukkah, Dec. 20. Gather to light the first candle on the menorah.

Christmas, Dec. 25. The highlight of the year to children young and old.

Healthy Living

Millennials' Top Health Risks

Millennials are young, but they're not immune to health problems. The *Healthline* website reports that, according to the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, millennials 34 to 36 in 2017 were 11 percent less healthy than Gen Xers in 2014. Blue Cross lists the top ten health conditions affecting millennials:

1. Major depression
2. Substance use disorder
3. Alcohol use disorder
4. Hypertension
5. Hyperactivity
6. Psychotic conditions
7. Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis
8. High cholesterol
9. Tobacco use disorder
10. Type 2 diabetes

Millennials seem to be more affected by mental health issues than physical health problems, Blue Cross reports. Experts speculate that several factors are behind this: technological advances that inhibit the development of empathy at a young age; media overload highlighting news of terrorism, violence, and other dangers; undefined or uncertain work schedules; and other features of modern times.

The Health Benefits of Playing Cards

Stress has a negative impact on everyone's health. One way to ease the stress in your life is to play a game of cards. That's—unsurprisingly—what Bicycle Cards advises. Here's how playing cards with friends can help:

- **Conversation.**
- **Laughter.**
- **Low pressure.**
- **Brain exercise.**
- **No technology.**

Social Media Addiction in Children

Kids younger than five years old could become addicted to social media, according to a leading charity in the United Kingdom.

Barnado's has shared a new report in which social workers say that very young children could have their

emotional development affected by social media interaction.

Over 60 percent of professionals who deal with vulnerable young children say they are worried about the use of social networks by kids under five years old, not just because they may be exposed to inappropriate content but also because of the way their communication skills could be affected.

The report also indicates that the mental health of children and teenagers under the age of 18 could also be being negatively impacted by platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Snap Chat.

Seventy-eight percent of kids aged between 11 and 15 have been exposed to harmful or unsuitable online content, according to half of the surveyed support workers. The same age group also made numerous reports of cyber-bullying.

Improving Reading with Tech

Reading remains a popular pastime but can have unfortunate consequences such as eyestrain, particularly for those who already suffer from problems with their vision. However, there are several ways in which technology may be able to improve the reading experience.

One method of improving the experience of reading is to use an e-reader. These devices offer the user the option of changing the background color on the screen, which can have a big impact on readability. Likewise, for those who enjoy reading late in the evening, dimming the backlight can also make the experience easier on the eyes.

Another option for readers is to listen to audiobooks. Audiobooks are available in most public libraries and are an enjoyable way to spend several hours without straining the eyes.

For those who read digital books and posts on their computer, changing the computer settings can help make it easier. As well as changing the background color, as with an e-reader, you can also place a clear, colored overlay on the screen and ensure the text is zoomed in to a size that is comfortable for your eyes.

Holiday Family Matters

Time Spent

A recent study by Visit Anaheim suggested that the great majority of families have just 37 minutes of quality time spent together every day, but the good news is there are ways to change that figure and recapture some quality family time.

During the holidays, try cutting down on some of the electronics in the household. Families can spend more time looking at screens than interacting with each other. Try avoiding electronics during family time, including checking emails.

It is also a good idea to make family time a regular habit. Practice carving out family time during the holidays by having everyone participate in a fun activity together.

Removing distractions by having a family outing away from the house, such as going out for a picnic, is also a good idea.

Safety Tips for Family Travel over the Holidays

Planning for a family vacation can be complicated but top of the priority list should be ensuring that you and your family will be safe during your travels. The good news is there are some simple travel tips to ensure just that.

One good tip is buying travel insurance before you go on vacation. No one knows when a major problem such as a serious illness may befall a member of the family, and it is vital to have travel insurance coverage, particularly if you have children or elderly adults with you. Travel insurance can cover theft, damage costs, and sometimes medical expenses.

It is always also important to keep a working smartphone with you. Not only can a smartphone keep you connected to friends and family during your vacation, but it can also be an invaluable device in the event of an emergency.

Any important documents you are taking on vacation should be scanned and saved on digital devices, in the cloud, or on email.

Shop ‘Til You Drop? Just Be Careful

You’re probably shopping a lot more during the holiday season, so pay attention to your safety:

- **Pick the right time.** Shop during daylight hours, when the mall or store won’t be too crowded. Bring a friend or family member with you for added security.
- **Don’t overload yourself.** Carrying an armful of bags and packages limits your freedom of movement. Combine items in a single bag and take packages to your car before you can’t carry anymore (and be sure to place them in your trunk, out of sight).
- **Give yourself time.** Know how long you’re going to spend on shopping and stop well before you must get home (or wherever you’re headed next). You’ll be less likely to rush and more likely to be careful.

Manage the Holiday Atmosphere with a Balance of Spirit and Duty

December is a month of celebrations—Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Year’s—and many distractions as well. While you don’t want to squelch enjoyment and enthusiasm for the holidays, you also don’t want to spend the month stressed to the max. Here’s how to maintain the right balance:

- **Celebrate your accomplishments.**
- **Set the right example for family and friends.**
- **Support the festive atmosphere (that may mean bringing out your ugly sweater!).**
- **Plan by looking ahead to new projects.**

Odds & Ends

Tests Confirm Cats’ Attachment with Humans

Do you ever wonder whether your cat really likes you? Numerous studies have investigated the nature of attachments between dogs and people, but few have examined attachment in cats—probably because of the stereotype that cats aren’t social animals.

Researchers decided to study the bond between cats and their owners with a simple experiment: Eighty humans brought their kittens into an unfamiliar room, played with them for two minutes, then left. After two minutes, they returned to play with the kittens again.

The unfamiliar environment made many cats anxious, as demonstrated by loud meowing and other stressed-out behaviors. Some of the cats remained anxious when their humans returned, while others avoided them. But about two-thirds greeted their humans and relaxed, exhibiting playfulness and exploration of the environment. That's about the same proportion that dogs and babies have displayed in similar tests of attachment.

The researchers point out that we can't really know whether our cats truly like us, but the results do suggest that they form a real bond with their humans, much like dogs.

Happiness Really Is a Warm Puppy

Our pets make us happy, or we wouldn't have so many of them. Thirty-three percent of U.S. households have a dog, 11 percent have a cat, and 14 percent have both. The 2018 General Social Survey looked at the connection between pets and overall happiness.

The survey found that 36 percent of dog owners describe themselves as happy, and 18 percent of cat owners said the same. Twenty-eight percent who have both a dog and a cat agreed.

Does that mean you'll be a happier person with a dog as opposed to a cat? Not necessarily. The survey found that dog owners are more likely than cat owners to be married and own their own homes, two other factors that influence happiness and life satisfaction. Dog owners are more likely to engage in outdoor physical activity, another factor in overall happiness.

Whatever kind of pets you have, enjoy them and they'll bring you lots of happiness.



Anecdotes

A Little Means a Lot

Sometimes, very short stories have a lot of meanings. Here are a few examples:

- During a long drought, the mayor of a small village directed everyone to gather in the square to pray for rain. They all came, but only one boy came with an umbrella. That is *faith*.
- When you toss babies into their air, they laugh and smile because they know you'll catch them. That is *trust*.
- Every night we go to bed with no guarantee that we'll wake up tomorrow. But we still set our alarm clocks to wake up. That is *hope*.
- We make big plans without any knowledge of the future. That is *confidence*.
- We see suffering in the world, but we still get married and raise children. That is *love*.

Monthly Humor

The evening news is where they begin with "Good evening," and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.

The Herd from Winning Strides wishes all of you peace, hope, and joy!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!