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LIFESTYLE



To err is human...

FORGIVING OTHERS, NO matter how badly they may have hurt us, could actually prove to be beneficial for our health, a US study has found.

Researchers from the University of California, San Diego, found those people who let go of their anger were less likely to see spikes in blood pressure, *Daily Mail* reported.

The research has been published in the *Journal of Biobehavioral Medicines*.

During the study, over 200 volunteers were asked to think about the time when a friend offended them. Half of the group was told to think about how it angered them while the other half was advised to consider it in a more forgiving manner.

Both the groups were then distracted for five minutes and then told to rethink about the event in any way they wish to while the group members were wired up to monitors, observing blood pressure and heart rate. The team, led by Britta Larsen, found the angry group saw the highest increase in blood pressure compared to the forgiving group after the first ruminating session.

The effect was seen later on despite having the brief timeout period to calm down. However, there was no differences in heart rate.

Maybe that's why the idiom that to err is human, to forgive divine. *IANS*

Ditch the telly

TV addiction boosts diabetes risk among elderly

BEING GLUED TO TV for four hours daily could boost the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, especially if you are aged 60 or above.

The study, led by Paul Gardiner from The University of Queensland School of Population Health, was one of the first to examine the effects of sedentary behaviour and TV watching on older men and women.

"Up until now, most research about sitting and watching TV has been focused on children, while older adults have potentially the most to gain from changing their behaviour," Gardiner said.

Researchers found that for each hour a person spends watching TV, his or her risk of



developing metabolic syndrome increases. Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of cardiovascular disease predictors linked to the onset of type 2 diabetes, according to a Queensland statement.

Other lifestyle factors linked to metabolic syndrome include

a lack of regular exercise, poor nutrition, high alcohol consumption and smoking.

Previous studies had shown that sedentary behaviour has a unique physiological effect on the body and that this was different from the effect of lack of exercise. *IANS*

Smile away your worries

Research finds that smiling speeds up recovery from stress

FEELING GOOD USUALLY makes us smile, but does it work the other way around? Yes, smiling during episodes of stress can help to reduce its intensity regardless of whether a person actually feels happy or not, according to research.

Psychological scientists Tara Kraft and Sarah Pressman of the University of Kansas investigated the potential benefits of smiling by looking at how different types of smiling, and the awareness of smiling, affects individuals' ability to recover from episodes of stress.

"Age old adages such as 'grin and bear it' have suggested smiling to be not only an important non-verbal indicator of happiness but also wishfully promotes smiling as a panacea for life's stressful events," says Kraft.

"We wanted to examine whether these adages had scientific merit, whether smiling could have real health-relevant benefits," Kraft said.

Smiles are generally divided into two categories: standard smiles, which use the muscles surrounding the mouth, and genuine or Duchenne smiles, which engages the muscles surrounding both the mouth and eyes, the journal *Psychological Science* reports.

Previous research shows that positive emotions can help during times of stress and that smiling can affect emotions; however, the work of Kraft and Pressman is the first of its kind to experimentally manipulate the types of smiles, people make in order to examine the effects of smiling on stress, according to a Kansas statement.

The researchers recruited 169 participants from a Midwestern university. The study involved two phases: training and testing.



Photos: Getty

During the training phase, participants were divided into three groups, and each group was trained to hold a different facial expression.

The results suggest that smiling may actually influence our physical state: compared to participants who held neutral facial expressions, those who were asked to smile, and in particular those with Duchenne smiles, had lower heart rate levels after recovery from the stressful activities.

These findings show that smiling during brief stressors can help to reduce the intensity of the body's stress response, regardless of whether a person actually feels happy.

"The next time you are stuck in traffic or are experiencing some other type of stress," says Pressman, "you might try to hold your face in a smile for a moment. Not only will it help you 'grin and bear it' psychologically, but it might actually help your heart health as well!" *IANS*

ALIGN YOUR LIFE

Breaking Barriers

We all have fears and barriers within our minds. Some of these are created by us, and some we are born with. It could be anything - riding a bike, travelling on a plane, petting a dog or being alone in a dark room. There is no logic. We just feel the way we feel. As a result, we spend an entire lifetime living within the boundaries of those fears.

To tell you honestly, I've always had a fear of animals. I don't know why, but I simply hated the sight of cats and dogs. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that I grew up in the cramped city of Mumbai. We never had any interaction with pets. And so I formed a belief, that I hated animals. As a result I barely visited my only sister because she had a dog. I slowly cut off from friends who had pets, I stopped visiting my old aunt because she lived across a lady who had cats... the list is endless. I became a prisoner of my own fears.

And then Olive started coming into my garden. She was a Persian beauty, who loved her freedom. My husband started feeding her food against my baseless protests. I refused to pet her or allow her in my house. I was stubborn. I even refused to acknowledge her presence in my backyard. And one day when I saw her shivering in the cold, something inside me changed. I decided to face my fear. At the most she could bite me, or scratch me. How bad could it be? So with a pounding heart I opened the backyard door and let her in. Not only did I face my fear that day, but also broke the biggest barrier of my life. She must have sensed my discomfort and stayed away from me most of the time. Slowly I warmed up to her and when she started rubbing herself gently against my leg, I knew we had bonded. It took me a while, but I eventually held her, I learnt to play with her and most importantly, I saw a side of me that I never knew existed.

Needless to say I meet my sister often now and our relationship has improved. I have reconnected with some old friends who have pets, and in the bargain rediscovered great relationships all over again.

So ask yourself today - what is holding you back from doing something that makes you scared or uncomfortable? Is it fear of failure or simply a barrier that you have created yourself? Whatever it may be - just face it head on. Because once you break that barrier, freedom awaits on the other side.

Shivani Adalja is an Abu Dhabi-based well-being expert. She runs the Alignment Insitute which offers unique solutions that focus on stress management and overall wellbeing

