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RATIONAL EVIDENCE-BASED COMMENT FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS. WE SAY EXACTLY WHAT WE THINK

Evolutionary Physical Activity: Readers' Efforts to stay Paleo-fit – Peter Harris. **Q of Month:** Dr Mosley's "Fast 800" Program. **News Shorts:** Short Bursts of Exercise Improve Metabolic Health; Erectile Dysfunction & Diet. **Q&A:** Tooth & Gum Health. **Back to our Roots:** Arabian Sands IV – Privacy. **News Shorts:** Vegans have Fragile Bones; Pandemic – Migrate from Dense Conurbations to Small Towns. Sunshine Death, Covid Thrives. Exercise Boosts Cancer Fighting. **Hints:** Kiwi Skins for Roughage? **Human Behavior:** How WEIRD are you? Part II

Evolutionary Physical Activity

Readers' Efforts to stay Paleo-fit



<https://bit.ly/3cfw13l>

Peter Harris of Melbourne, Australia writes:

"Last year the best I could manage with my busy schedule was 7.5km (4.5 miles) hilly run 3-4 times a week. Plus 50-100km (31-62 miles) on-road cycling once every 2-3 weeks. Even with this I was getting a bit flabby.

"But this year I'm trying to step it up and increase the intensity and exercise more muscles by doing a weekly routine of: Day 1: Normal run. Day 2: Combination of skipping, burpees [1] and short interval sprinting. Repeat for 5 days. Then the other 2 days of the week chase the kids and do some gardening. It's only been a couple of weeks and already the flab is receding.

"In the past, I've always felt that 'intensity' is critical to making a step-change in fitness, health, and body sculpting."

I feel that although walking, modest jogging > p.3

Question of the Month

Dr Mosley's "Fast 800" Program

Q. You spoke of Dr Michael Mosley in "Why it's healthier to cook with lard than sunflower oil" April 2016. Now he is promoting his program: "The Fast 800". What do you make of it?

A. Dr Mosley is using his status to sell a slickly commercial program. To be fair his website gives plenty of free information, recipes and so forth. Nevertheless these are provided as a hook to get people to buy into his package of advice on diet and exercise. Mosley, to his credit, is trying to fit his plan around real research – but it is highly selective!

So he gets half a tick for basing his diet on the Mediterranean one – it's not Paleo, but getting close. No ticks for his promotion of the "5:2 diet" where you fast for two days a week and then eat as much as you like for five, see: **Fasting Diet**, [Jan 2013](#) [2]. No ticks either for the promotion of his specially formulated smoothies – for a price of course!

No marks for his promotion of fermented foods like kimchi and sauerkraut. Such foods have achieved fetish status in some circles but with no real advantage. On the contrary, they are pickles: high in salt and have lost many nutrients.

He gets a tick for pointing out the advantages of short bursts of high intensity exercise, see: **One Minute per Day**, [Dec 2005](#) [3] and, **Interval Training Slows Cell Ageing**, [Feb 2017](#) [4]. He gets another tick for advising to avoid sitting too long at a time see: **Paleo-conforming Physical Activity**, [Sept 2018](#) [5]. > p.2

News Shorts

Short Bursts of Exercise Improve Metabolic Health

Approximately 12 minutes of vigorous aerobic exercise improved more than 80% of markers involved in cardio-metabolic (e.g. diabetes, heart attack, stroke), cardio-vascular health and long-term health. [6]

Another study finds that good levels of 'vigorous' activity (VPA) compared to 'moderate' activity (MPA), significantly reduced risk of dying by 17% [7].

The threshold for lowest all-cause deaths was 150 to 299 minutes per week of MPA and 150 or more minutes per week of VPA. All based on a cohort of middle-aged people.

Rule of thumb definitions: in moderate intensity activity (e.g. brisk walking), you can talk, but not sing. Vigorous intensity activity (e.g. running), you will not be able to say more than a few words without taking a breath.

My View? I find it difficult to square these results with life for our ancient foragers. > p.4

Erectile Dysfunction & Diet

In **Erectile Dysfunction (Impotence)**, *Deadly Harvest*, [Chapter 9](#), p 240 [8], I described how this condition is an early warning of cardio-vascular disease – and that living a heart-healthy (Paleo) lifestyle was a way to deal with it.

Now yet another study finds support for this principle [9]. It finds that those men (of all ages) who follow a so-called Mediterranean diet. had much less chance of erectile dysfunction compared to those on standard western diet. The diet was rated on the consumption of vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, and fish or > p.3

Questions

Tooth & Gum Health

Q. *My husband does not brush regularly and he again has advanced gum disease. His gums will be cut back, the deep-rooted bacterial plaque scraped off, and the gums sewn back.*

Meanwhile we are told to brush our teeth and gum-line morning and night and flossing to keep gums a healthy pink color (instead of flaming red). Fighting systemic inflammation starts with teeth and gums.

How on earth did our ancient ancestors manage dental care and gum disease?

A. The interesting point is what you raise at the end – “How did foragers manage?” The short answer is: very well! – their feeding habits meant that their teeth and gums were self cleaning – just like any other creature living in a state of nature. I wrote about it at length in **Mouth Flora in Evolutionary Perspective, Oct 2008** [10]. For example, in the 1930s, the pioneering dentist, Dr. Weston Price, toured the world’s primal peoples (who never brushed their teeth) from Eskimos to Australian Aborigines and concluded that the wonderful state of their teeth and gums was due to their healthy diet in which starches and sugars were absent.

Today, we call these culprits “fermentable carbohydrates” – see: **Food & Ancient Plaque Bacteria, April 2013** [11]. On a personal note, Nicole, from the age of 20 had to have regular gum surgery and, at the age of 50 her dentist told her to prepare for a full set of dentures. Then she met me! The transformation was total. No tooth loss and the periodontist couldn’t believe the incredible improvement in gum health. Nicole’s full story [here](#): [12] Many people keep gum disease at bay with the cleaning protocols you mention but, likely, the gums are still a source of inflammation which spreads around the body.

So, yes, if you can’t persuade your husband to go BondPaleo, then, somehow, you have to persuade him to do the recommended cleaning

protocols and make regular visits to the hygienist for deep de-scaling. See also: **Your Jaws are what you Chew, Aug 2011** [13].

Back to our Roots

Arabian Sands - Thesiger IV, Privacy

It is an uncomfortable fact that life in a forager band was transparent to everyone in the band.



So it was also for Thesiger in his travels with the Bedouin in the wilderness of the ‘Empty Quarter’.

This was a terrible trial to Thesiger who says: “A craving for privacy is something which the Bedu will never understand.”

Indeed most peoples around the world – to say nothing of westerners in previous centuries – were accustomed to carrying out their business and ‘private’ conversations in front of anyone who happened to be around.

I had the same experience in Africa. I would have a meeting with some panjandrum only to discover that he had several other conversations going on at the same time with other people who each had their own business to transact.

I would talk about my business with the chief but everyone else there, who had no clue whatsoever about the affair, would chip in with their opinions and advice.

All this was frustrating to me as a WEIRD-o. (See: **How WEIRD are you?** p. 4). But somehow business got done.

My View? We are now in a world where, in some aspects, we have to leave behind our forager past and learn to live with the new reality: that we are no longer living in isolated forager bands and we are having to get along with a highly congested ‘civilisation’ which is quite artificial.

Curiously this seems to have increased our desire for privacy and increased our distress when we don’t have it. Something to do with us being WEIRD? See: **How WEIRD are you?** page 4.

Next month: Bedouin/Forager, Fatalism, Tracking, & more

News Shorts

Vegans have Fragile Bones?

A retrospective study that followed 65,000 subjects for 18 years found that vegans broke their hips at twice the rate of omnivores [14]. They broke other bones too, also at a higher rate.

The researchers opine that vegans have an insufficient calcium intake.

My View? I don’t buy that. Bones are living tissue undergoing constant tearing down and rebuilding. There are hundreds of processes going on, and malfunction of any one of these could sabotage bone health. See: **Osteoporosis, Deadly Harvest, Chapter 9**, p 266.

Indeed some studies find that **Calcium Pills Increase Fractures** and even the **Brain Regulates Bone Mass, June 2011** [15]

I don’t know why vegans might have poor bone health. Maybe it’s their focus on potatoes, pasta, cereals, lentils and beans. But we do know that living the way nature intended means good bone health. See Nicole’s **Stunning Bone Health, Oct 2016** [16]

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Dr Mosley’s “Fast 800” Program

Bottom Line: there is much useful free information on the website and, no doubt, for the average Westerner, this would be a good improvement if they have the insight and determination to follow it.

Nevertheless this website is a marketing business, and you have to buy the package to get the full benefit.

Having said that, it is much more worthy than that of the doctor (who we didn’t name) promoting his lectin antidotes; see **Lectin Cure-all - or Snake-oil? March 2018** [17].

Pandemic: Migrate from Dense Conurbations to Small Towns

Since the start of civilisation, the age-old instinct is for pandemic-hit populations, to migrate to the countryside. So far so good.

But what about the effect on the countryside and, more particularly the small towns?

A study [18] finds that although there is a small increase in infections in the small towns, there is much bigger reduction in infection in the cities thanks to the lower population density. So, the balance of advantage lies with such a migration.

My View? In **A Technological Revolution and a Shift in Society, Deadly Harvest, Ch 2**, [19] p.29, I describe how, with the farming revolution, we went from a highly dispersed species at the rate of one person per square mile to a highly dense population crammed into fetid cities.

Again, in **Alienation of Modern Life, July 2009** [20], I say: "Most of the population today is living like aliens in a dysfunctional environment. They are sucked into ways of life which are seductive yet ultimately destructive." - addicted to the artificial buzz and gewgaws of city life.

In my view, it is a basic human instinct to seek a lower level of population density, particularly when danger threatens.

Already we are seeing in USA and Western Europe, people selling up cramped flats in city centres to find space and social distancing in rural areas.

Sunshine Dearth, Covid Thrives

Back in April I reported on several pre-publication studies that spoke of the **Vital role of the Sunshine Vitamin, Vitamin D**, [April 2020](#) [21] in the body's fight against Covid.

Now a study confirms these propositions [22]. It found that 80% of Covid hospital patients in Santander, Spain, had vitamin D deficiency, a figure significantly worse than the general population. Men had, on average, lower levels than women.

In addition, they all had higher levels of inflammation

My View? It's surprising that in a sunny country like Spain, anyone should be deficient in vitamin D. But that ignores the Spanish cultural tradition of keeping out of the sun as much as possible!

Exercise Boosts Cancer-fighting

Well, we kind of knew this, but a study has uncovered one major reason: physical activity activates cancer-killer T-cells [23].

My View? As I've said for decades, cells are going pre-cancerous all the time in our bodies. The reason we don't break out in tumors all the time is thanks to our immune system which, in a state of nature, **WORKS ALL THE TIME**.

That is one of the many ways we undermine our immune system: a level of physical activity below that which is designed by our evolutionary past. See: **Physical Activity, Readers' Efforts to stay Paleo-fit**, p 1.

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Erectile Dysfunction & Diet

... other sources of omega-3 fats, as well as avoidance of red and processed meats.

My View? The study worked on food recall questionnaires administered once every four years, so it is hardly rigorous. Even so, we can take this to be a straw in the wind – an indication that living the way nature intended is the way for men to keep themselves fully functional at any age.

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Readers staying Paleo fit

and cycling are good, raising the heart rate and making it hurt a bit is probably many times better."

My View? Peter, like so many of us, is juggling career, family and time out. On top of it he has to find the time and discipline for sufficient physical activity to make his body and psyche happy.

He has heeded the warning signs of increasing flab and decided to do something about it. That is the vital first step.

As for the detail, well he is doing what works for him, and it certainly looks useful.

Peter's remarks about "**INTENSITY**" and **NO PAIN NO GAIN** for sure have their truth in medical studies. See:



Short Bursts of Exercise Improve Metabolic Health, p1. Also: Short Bouts of Stair Climbing are Healthful, Feb 2019 [24], Walk Faster, Sit Less, Nov 2016 [25], in One Minute per Day, Dec 2005 [26]

Mark Smith asked us "to imagine sprinting up the steps of a football stadium until we drop."

But, curiously, foragers would find the idea of gratuitously carrying out such uncomfortable activity as bizarre.

This is the irony that, in this modern, labor-saving world we have to seek out artificial replacements!

See also Peter's kiwifruit hint next.

Hints & Tips

Kiwi Skins for Roughage?

From Peter Harris, Melbourne, Australia.

"Following on from your request for ideas for roughage, my contribution is a drop in the ocean of what's required, and possibly not even true roughage, but for what it's worth I always eat the kiwi-fruit skins.

"I didn't start this habit to get fibre, I simply enjoyed the texture. Probably a bit 'weird' coming from a westerner but so be it."

My View? I suspect that the digestive juices will make short work of the kiwi skins but even so, they will be a useful contribution to feed the colon microbiome.

Kiwi-skins might not be for everyone but I did just try it and was agreeably surprised – a bit like eating a peach skin.

The message is that we should be adventurous and think of consuming the often discarded parts of fruit and vegetables. See next item.

Kiwi-fruit for Regularity

Researchers note that elderly people often suffer from constipation. They also note that anecdotally, kiwi-fruit is alleged to relieve constipation, so they put it to the test.

Subjects consumed kiwi-fruit at the rate of one (100g, 3½ oz) per day for

each 30kg (66lbs) in body-weight. That means most people would be eating two to three kiwi-fruit per day. They found that kiwi-fruit “enhances frequency and ease of defecation, stool bulk and softness.” [27]

The subjects did not eat the kiwi skins (see previous item) but the researchers opine that the peculiar nature of kiwi’s dietary fiber has something to do with it. It particularly has the property of swelling and increasing bulk.

My View? The intake of kiwi-fruit is quite large, but if it works for anyone seeking more regularity, it is worth a try, particularly when you consider that kiwi-fruit is classed as one of the most nutritious of all fruits [28].

Human Behavior

How WEIRD are you? Part II

[Last Month](#) we saw how most psychological studies are carried on westerners, but as Prof. Joseph Heinrich observes, their psyches are “WEIRD” and not typical of most of the world, or of foragers.

As people in the West moved towards voluntary associations of strangers they adjusted psychologically to be more trusting of people outside their kin group and

also developed contract law to buttress voluntary associations. How did all this happen? Henrich fingers the Roman Catholic Church which succeeded the Roman and Greek civilizations and, in some aspects introduced radical changes many of which emphasized individuality over communality. It:

- . emphasized the role of individual responsibility before God;
- . banned marriage between relatives up to the 6th degree;
- . promoted individuality to break down ties between tribes & clans;
- . prohibited polygamous marriage;
- . discouraged the adoption of children (so that clans died out);
- . encouraged newly married couples to set up independent households;
- . promoted the individual ownership of property.

My View? There is certainly a disconnect between the psychology of behavior as we understand it in the West and that of many other societies in the world and, indeed foragers. See **Tribal Relationships, Deadly Harvest, Ch 8**, p 206. [29]

I spent most of my career in Africa and the Middle East and Henrich’s insights would have been invaluable in my dealings with the local people.

For sure, just like foragers, they:

- . prioritized kinship over merit,
- . preferred attachment to their own land over ‘alien’ foreign parts,
- . saw themselves in a chain connecting the past to the future. This created a sense of continuity- and gave a real sense of meaning and security.

For all these reasons, studies on the behavioral psychology of western people (mostly on students) have to be taken with a pinch of salt.

On the other hand, such insights give us an understanding why there is such a rocketing incidence of mental distress in western societies. They are basically living WEIRDly – in irritating disharmony with our naturally-endowed psychic wiring.

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Short Bursts of Exercise Improve Metabolic Health

As far as we can tell, men did not indulge in such a high level of vigorous activity and women hardly ever at all. But if it works for us in our decadent society, then let’s get on with it! See Peter Harris, p.1

See also: **Run to Stay Young, Aug 2018** [30]. **Male Erectile & Sexual Function Depends on Physical Fitness, April 2015** [31]

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1 Burpee: a squat thrust made from, and ending in, a standing position

2 <http://bit.ly/1nHarRU>

3 <http://bit.ly/1xz6Rjy>

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