

A Christmas Story

During the Christmas season I tend to come across stories on television news, or on Facebook or read in the newspaper about random acts of kindness that make us feel good about the state of humanity. You know the type of story I'm talking about... the family whose home is destroyed by fire on Christmas Eve and the local firefighters pitch in together to buy the family presents to open on Christmas morning. Or like the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life," when the entire town of Bedford Falls shows up at Jimmy Stewart's house to donate money to make up for the money that Uncle Billy had lost.

Well, today I had the chance to be part of such a feel-good story. I was at a local store wandering about the Christ-

So there I was

By Pete Buckley



mas knick-knacks that were on display near the cash registers. I could plainly hear the loud voice of the cashier who sounded exasperated as she was trying to explain to the customer standing in front of her that the customer did not have sufficient cash to cover the purchase.

The customer was an elderly lady who reminded me of my own grandmother. She ap-

peared to be in her 80s, white wavy hair, cut above her shoulders and wearing a long, green colored winter coat. Her coat was open and I could see she was also wearing a brightly colored Christmas sweatshirt.

I kept hearing the cashier repeat, "You don't have enough money, what items do you want to put back?" The items were a pair of slippers with warm white-colored fluff inside, a red and green colored

Christmas ornament and a few other items strewn about the counter that the customer was apparently going to buy for herself or perhaps give as Christmas presents. The customer was embarrassed that she didn't have sufficient money and I could tell she was having trouble deciding what item(s) she could part with, as her mouth opened but no words came out.

The cashier appeared to be at the end-of-her-rope and wanting to complete the transaction so she could move-on and cash out the other customers. It was at this time that the cashier's voice got louder and I saw my chance to intervene.

I quickly moved to the checkout counter and piped up, "I've got some extra mon-

ey today. I'll pay the rest of what she owes." Both the cashier and the customer almost broke their necks as they twisted their heads like owls to see who this intruder was that was trying to be a Good Samaritan.

The cashier said, "She owes four dollars" while the customer whispered, "You don't have to that that. I'm just a foolish old lady who is an idiot not to bring enough money with me." I countered with, "No ma'am, you're not an idiot. I've made the same mistake myself by not bringing enough money when buying something." I fished out four dollars from my pocket, handed the dough to the cashier and went back to browsing through the Christmas knick-knacks.

After the lady with the green-colored coat completed

her purchase, she sought me out by the knick-knacks and thanked me profusely, saying that nobody has ever done anything that sweet for her in a long time. I replied that it was Christmas and that maybe we should all be a little kinder to each other.

Her eyes sparkled with tears and she took my right-hand in both of hers and squeezed. I told her it was a pleasure to meet her and wished her a Merry Christmas as she just stood silent... smiling. It was at that exact moment that I felt like the Grinch, the Doctor Suess character who watched his heart grow ten sizes larger after doing a good deed. Best four dollars I ever spent.

A new year ... A new you!

This time of year lends itself to resolutions. We all want to look better, feel better and live longer. The problem has always been that money, time and energy are all precious commodities that must be rationed so your best laid plans become diluted and are rarely fully realized. This has been my path many times.

So, this year, I'm going to try something different. I'm not going to make any grand resolutions. I am going to make small daily goals and aspirations that will make me feel good about myself. Today it's to drink my 120 ounces of water. I know I can get that done.

But, if you read my article from last week, you now have

a better understanding of your WHY. If you didn't read it, your WHY is the overwhelming reason you want to get and stay healthy for life. Your health is a journey, not a destination.

The best way I have found to chunk your entire health potential into digestible pieces is using the Triangle of Health. These three buckets, Chemical, Physical and Mental, include every part of your health potential. Pick a bucket, focus on making that bucket full and sturdy and then move onto the next bucket. Once you have focused attention onto all three buckets, then it becomes much easier to manage all 3 effectively.

Let's dive into each one of

Real Life Wellness

By Dr. Bill Hemmer



these buckets and give you examples of how you can make 2023 your best year ever for health. Your Chemical bucket includes Nutrition and avoidance of risky substances. I like separating these two different aspects because risky substances like alcohol, recreational drugs and medications

are much different than Diet. You must take a different approach to those problems.

Diet is absolutely the most important, but misunderstood part of your Triangle of Health. We have all endured hundreds, if not thousands of different diet plans over the last hundred years. They all

sounded great, each of them had believable testimonials that gave you hope it would work for you. Then you tried it and nothing happened, or worse you gained weight! We have all been there.

The latest research in diet has confirmed, no two people can eat the same thing and get the same response from that food. Your microbiome (which is the bugs found in your digestive tract right now) is different than anybody else in the world and changes every minute of every day! So, your diet must be just as individual as you are. Don't let anyone tell you what to eat.

The only guideline that works for everyone is that you

must eat enough fiber, good fats, protein some carbohydrates. The lack of fiber and good fats are the most common problems I see regularly. Fiber absorbs toxins so they can leave your body and cleans the walls of your colon. Good fats burn cleanly and helps you have better energy. Proteins are necessary to build muscle and hormones. Finally, carbohydrates are important for quick energy because they are the easiest food to digest.

The bottom line is you must pay very close attention to how the food you eat makes you feel afterwards. More about this next week.

Wasting time isn't all bad, I keep telling myself

I did something stupid the other day. Granted, it wasn't the most stupid thing I've ever done. It's not even in the top 100. I do a lot of stupid things.

What made this stupid thing more stupid is that I did it twice. You're supposed to learn from your mistakes.

About a week ago, I downloaded a new game for my phone and ended up spending an hour pushing fake wooden blocks across a fake wooden platform. When a number 2 block hits another number 2 block, one block is eliminated and the other turns into a number 4 block. If that one touches another number 4, the pair morph into a single number 8 block. The game ends when you run out of room trying to pair numbers.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out that this is a game you cannot win. You can nev-

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



er eliminate all the blocks. So the object is to get the highest score.

After a few hundred thousand points, the game started giving me fake affirmation. You must be cheating, the game teased. You are my new hero, the game said. Only 1 percent of people can make it this far, the game told me.

I don't know if that was an accurate statistic. If it is, it's not that most people can't score that high. Most people just quit before then because

they realize what a stupid waste of time it is.

After 1.2 million points, the game froze up. I thought I broke the internet. Surely, this was the highest score ever registered on the game, and the program just couldn't handle my awesomeness.

I put the phone down and found a better way to waste my time.

I decided to try the game again to see if it would freeze again at the same point level. It didn't. So, I kept playing.

The problem is, I'm not a quitter. As long as I'm still scoring points, I keep playing. After I surpassed my record, I told myself that I would quit after 2 million points. Forty minutes later, I revised my goal to 5 million points.

Two hours later, I set a new goal of 10 million points. Then 15. After 18 million points, my phone's battery quit ending the game in just under 6 hours.

I will never beat that score because I deleted the game. The thought occurred to me that maybe this game isn't designed for adults. Or addicts.

But it got me to thinking. Is there a bad way to waste time? If you're hurting yourself or others, then yes, that's bad. If you're missing work or neglecting your family, that's bad. But on the whole, is one time waster worse than another?

We grown-ups rail against kids spending so much time on video games, and there are valid arguments for regulating non-productive time. But is six hours on a golf course better than six hours on a video game? Is six hours on a boat on a lake better than six hours pushing fake wooden blocks around? Is bingeing a TV series a better use of time?

If you think yes, then that's a subjective thought. The idea of spending six hours golfing sounds horrid to me. I could go for six hours alone on a boat. It wouldn't even have to be on the water. I could spend six hours on a boat pretending to sail, and I'd be just as happy, especially if I had my phone with me so I could play games.

The point is, we all waste time. There can be upsides to that. Maybe you're getting exercise. Maybe you're get-

ting social time with friends, improving a skill or learning something. Maybe you're just recharging your emotional batteries. The way that you choose to waste your time matters only to you.

So, maybe it wasn't a stupid thing. Maybe playing the game was a great thing. Sometimes, the only difference between stupid and brilliant is how you choose to think about it.

Still, I won't be downloading that app again anytime soon. I have better ways to waste my time, like watching paint dry and counting ants on the sidewalk.

© Copyright 2023 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblinman.us. One of my favorite time wasters is watching how-to shows like *This Old House*, *The French Chef*, and *Criminal Minds*.

Keep this recipe in the freezer for unexpected guests

You have all heard that rule "don't try a new recipe out on company." I admit I frequently break that rule. It is hard to try certain recipes out when there are only two of us here at home to try it.

I broke the rule twice over the holidays but luckily both turned out great. The first recipe is Sausage Pinwheels that can be made ahead of time and kept in the freezer until ready to bake. I made these ahead of time for a party and I did tell my guests that it was a new recipe, and I would not be offended if they did not care for them.

I removed the pinwheels from the oven, put them out to be eaten. I left the room for a few minutes to tend to other things and when I came back the pinwheels were all gone! They were that good! These pinwheels would be handy to have in your freezer for unex-

pected company, or for those nights dinner will be late, but everyone is hungry now!

Make Ahead Sausage Pinwheels

1 lb. spicy sausage
1/2 cup diced red pepper
1 green onion, chopped
8 oz. cream cheese, softened
2 tubes Crescent rolls

Cook and crumble sausage. Drain. Add pepper and green onion. Cook and stir for 2 minutes. Place in a bowl, let cool 10 minutes. Stir in cream cheese. Let cool. Unroll the two Crescent rolls into 4 rectangles. Seal seams. Press into 6 x 4 1/2 inch rectangles. Spread each with about 1/3 cup of sausage mixture. Roll up pinwheel style starting with short side. Place on a baking sheet lined with wax paper, seam side down. Cover with wax paper and freeze until firm, about one hour. (At this point, you can bake them

Let's Cook

By Linda Hoskins



or wrap each roll individually and keep in freezer until needed). Cut each log into 10 to 12 slices. Bake on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake at 350 degrees 15 to 18 minutes until golden brown.

When I was making these, I felt like one green onion would add little flavor, so I used three. You could also add shredded cheddar cheese to the mixture if you like. I made these three days ahead of time and it was so nice to have them ready to slice, bake and serve with minimum fuss!

This next recipe is one I tried when I wanted to have a fancy roast beef dinner. After searching online and reading multiple recipes, I picked this to try, and oh my, was it ever good! The marinade added a really nice flavor without overpowering the beef. Be sure to read the notes I add at end of recipe.

Best Roast Beef

4 to 6 lbs. beef bottom round
1/2 cup olive oil
6 cloves garlic
2 Tbsp coarse sea salt (or kosher)

2 Tbsp dried rosemary
1 Tbsp dried thyme
1 Tbsp black pepper
2 Tbsp dried onion flakes

Place beef on a rack in a pan, let sit uncovered until room temperature (about 1 hour). With a mortar and pestle, grind garlic and seasonings together. Add a little olive oil at a time to make a paste. Grind until well pulverized. You may add oil as needed to make a semi thin paste. Rub all over the meat, be sure to really rub it in. With fat side up, place in 450-degree oven. Bake 20 minutes. Reduce temperature to 325 degrees. Roast 1 to 1 1/2 hours until meat thermometer reaches 135 degrees. (medium rare) Let rest 10 to 15 minutes before slicing.

If your roast comes with a slab of fat on it, resist the temptation to trim it off. Most of the fat will melt and drip down the sides of the beef adding a good flavor. If you do not have a mor-

tar and pestle, use the back of a heavy spoon to crush the seasoning. I had a hard time getting the rosemary crushed after adding it to everything, so next time I make this I will crush the rosemary first, then add everything else. It will look like a lot of marinade but use it all if you can. I also recommend checking the temperature of the meat after 45 minutes, mine seemed to cook a bit faster than expected. Beef bottom round can be tough if overcooked so don't do it! It is very important to let the roast rest before slicing. Cut as thinly as you can against the grain for more tenderness. So, if you have an electric knife, use it!

If you have a recipe to share, please send to letscook!@heraldpubs.com or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258. Thanks and Happy Cooking!