

Magazica



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Health

Hope, Happiness

Splash Safely: Why Your Skin and Ears Might Throw a Summer Tantrum

Heatwave Safety: Recognizing and Preventing Heat Exhaustion

Trailblazing: The Best Accessible Hiking Trails Across Canada

Farmers' Market Feasts: Maximizing Local Summer Produce

Unstoppable Tracy Schmitt

The Leadership Mindset That Turns Barriers into Breakthroughs with Resilience, Reinvention, and Real Leadership

Why Your Microbiome is the Secret to Wellness: A Review of Giulia Enders' "Gut"

The 24/7 of You: Why it is the Ultimate Season for a Self-Care Overhaul

The Psychology of Play: Why Adults Need Summer Recess Too

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Interview:

Unstoppable

Tracy Schmitt

The Leadership Mindset
That Turns Barriers
into Breakthroughs
with **Resilience**,
Reinvention, and
Real Leadership



Tracy Schmitt doesn't just talk about resilience — she embodies it. Known globally as **Unstoppable Tracy**, she has turned every barrier into a blueprint for possibility. From Paralympic trials to world-class sailing, from corporate boardrooms to international stages, Tracy's life reads like a masterclass in courage. Her stories don't simply inspire; they instruct. They remind us that progress begins with a single step, that leadership is built in moments of uncertainty, and that the human spirit expands when challenged. In this conversation,

Tracy pulls back the curtain on what it truly means to rise, reset, and lead with unstoppable energy.



Keywords:

Unstoppable Tracy Schmitt;
Leadership resilience;
Paralympic trialist speaker;
Executive coaching inspiration;
Overcoming adversity stories.

Magazica: Dear readers and viewers, today we have Tracy Schmitt, known as Unstoppable Tracy, who has built a life on breaking barriers. She turns challenges into fuel for resilience, leadership, and global impact.

From Olympic trials to boardroom coaching, her journey proves that limitations are only stories we tell ourselves. She's a best-selling author, international speaker, globally winning boat racer, scuba diver, and an executive coach who inspires audiences in more than 40 countries.

With humour, grit, and practical strategies, Tracy shows how ordinary days can become extraordinary. This episode is a powerful reminder that perseverance isn't just about surviving - it's about thriving and leading with unstoppable energy. Tracy, welcome to Magazica.

Unstoppable Tracy: Oh, thank you so much! Marvellous Magazica! I just love the name and the big M and being with you and all your listeners today. What a wonderful, magical morning.

Magazica: Thank you very much for that. Let's start at the beginning of your journey. Can you take us back to a defining moment in your life when you realized that resilience would become your superpower?

Unstoppable Tracy: You know, we all get big no's, and one of my biggest no's - super early in life, such a blessing, because life is rigged in our favour - was the first day of school.

I was face-to-face with my principal, with my mom beside me. The principal took one look at me. What your readers and listeners may not

know is that I'm missing my hands and my legs above the knee. The principal looked at my mom and said, "I'm sorry. Tracy can't go to this school."

My little five-year-old heart just dropped. My stomach dropped. And you, and all your listeners, are probably ready to take on the principal - like, what do you mean? So you would understand if my mom went full mama bear. But she didn't.

My mom had the kindest eyes. I've long since lost my mom, so when I talk about her, I get emotional. She had the kindest eyes. She looked at that principal, didn't get mad, and simply said, "How come?" Open arms, super sweet.

Because she wasn't defensive, he explained, "Well, because Tracy doesn't have her hands, she probably can't tie her shoelaces. And she doesn't have her legs, she probably can't go to the bathroom by herself." In the 70s, children with disabilities went to segregated schools.

My mom said, "Oh, I understand." And I looked at her like, what? Then she made a counteroffer: "But since we're here today, can we just try?"

The principal said, "Okay, one week." My mom shook his hand and thanked him very much. She didn't react to the "only one week." We walked around to the side of the school where the kindergarten kids were being led in, and she collapsed to her knees.

I thought she fell. She grabbed my arms with a ten-finger super grip - five fingers on each forearm - holding me eye to eye, super serious. I had no idea why she was so serious. I had no idea that if I didn't get outside at recess, I wouldn't get to stay at the school.

She held my arms, looked me in the eye, and

said, "Tracy. It's really important that you... and everybody's included. Nobody left behind."

I was five years old. I had no idea. I just wanted to play. So I broke free of her super grip and ran into the schoolyard - and bumped into the principal.

The principal was standing there with his eyes all welled up. He had heard my mom on her knees saying, "Nobody left behind."

So I like to say, in the spirit of the holiday season, his heart grew three sizes that day - like the Grinch. And of course, he didn't want me to leave. Fast forward to recess time: he runs outside... and I'm not there.

Five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes - I never made it outside.

So he's trying to figure out what he's going to say to my mom. He marches inside and asks my teacher, "What happened? Couldn't Tracy tie her shoelaces?"

My teacher is confused. She says, "Tracy was the first one to tie her shoelaces."

He asks, "Well, how come she wasn't outside?" She says, "Oh, her little friend couldn't tie her shoelaces."

So - what did my mom say? Nobody left behind.

Magazica: Nobody left behind.

Unstoppable Tracy: So I tied my little friend's shoelaces. It turns out none of the 30 kids tied their shoelaces. By the time I tied 30 shoelaces, the recess bell had gone off.

What I learned that day is that it doesn't matter - everybody is a valuable contributor. I didn't know I was going to be the shoelace leader. But now you know: how come the only student - male, female, they, them, Black, white, visible

disability like me with no hands and no legs, or no disability, or invisible disability - how come the only student with no hands was the only student required to be able to tie their shoelaces?

And it actually makes sense. One teacher, 30 kids - this student has no hands, no legs, how is she going to manage? And some of your readers and listeners might think, "How am I going to write that book?" or "That's the standard operating procedure - you're not allowed to work from home." Well, we figured it out. You figure it out. So "no" just means "know." You just don't know yet.

And that principal - he wasn't mean. He was a lovely, kind man. He never said no again. From then on, he said, "I don't know. I don't know how we're going to get her over the snowbank off the school bus," or "I don't know how she's going to join swimming in grade three," but he didn't say no. He just said, "I don't know, but we'll figure it out."

So that was the first unstoppable memory. My superpower comes from my magical mom.

Magazica: Fantastic. What a beautiful piece of your experience to open our conversation. So, let's drive from challenges to strengths. Many people see obstacles as setbacks. How did you learn to see them as stepping stones instead?

Unstoppable Tracy: Sometimes we think we need a perfect plan, and really, we just need the courage to start. When I started sailing without my hands and without my legs, every time the boat heeled or we hit a wave, I fell out of the boat. That scared the sailing instructors for sure - and your face says it all.

I knew how to swim, I was wearing a life jacket,

and I knew the parts of the boat and the points of sail. But that first summer, I failed. It turns out you've got to be able to stay in the boat to get your Level 1.

So you just keep climbing back in. I climbed back in over and over until I figured out how to balance in the boat.

And by looking out - you know, when we're in our cubicle, we're in our head; when we're at home, we're in our computer; and in a boat, we're looking at the lines and inside the boat - I learned to get my head out of the boat. I learned to look at the water, read the water: Where's the wind? Where's that wave coming from? So I could brace myself or sail according to the wind.

And that was balance. I also learned forward balance. They were advanced study skills. So I got my Bronze 4, and then I got my 3, 2, 1 - when all my little friends got their Level 2.

So if you feel like you're falling out of your boat, you're just doing your advanced study... backwards.

Big successes - there's no such thing. Everything is just one little stepping stone at a time. It's not a tidal wave or a magic wand.

And we don't take it alone. I wasn't in that boat alone. I wasn't in kindergarten alone. We rise up together.

Magazica: With that same spirit, let's talk about your Paralympic trialist experience. Training at that level - Paralympic training - is incredibly demanding. What did that level of training teach you about discipline, mindset, and the human spirit? The Paralympic trialist experience - training at that level is incredibly demanding. What did that training teach you about discipline, mindset, and the human spirit?

Unstoppable Tracy: You know... now your listeners know: yes, I'm a World Cup sailor and climber, I earned an MBA, and I grew up to be an executive coach at Air Canada, Shoppers Drug Mart, Uber, and organizations around the world. But as a person with a disability, as a child, there were programs filled with sympathy and kindness - "We'll take you on," "We'll give you a joyride in the boat," "You can come watch us ski," or "We'll put you in a sled and drag you around so you can experience it." But Paralympic - Olympic, Paralympic - sailing is different.

When I had that lightbulb moment that I wanted to be a Paralympic trialist, I looked around for who was extraordinary. If you're a girl, train with boys. If you're a boy, train with teams older than you. All of us should train with people performing at a higher level. Be around those who are succeeding at the level you want to reach.

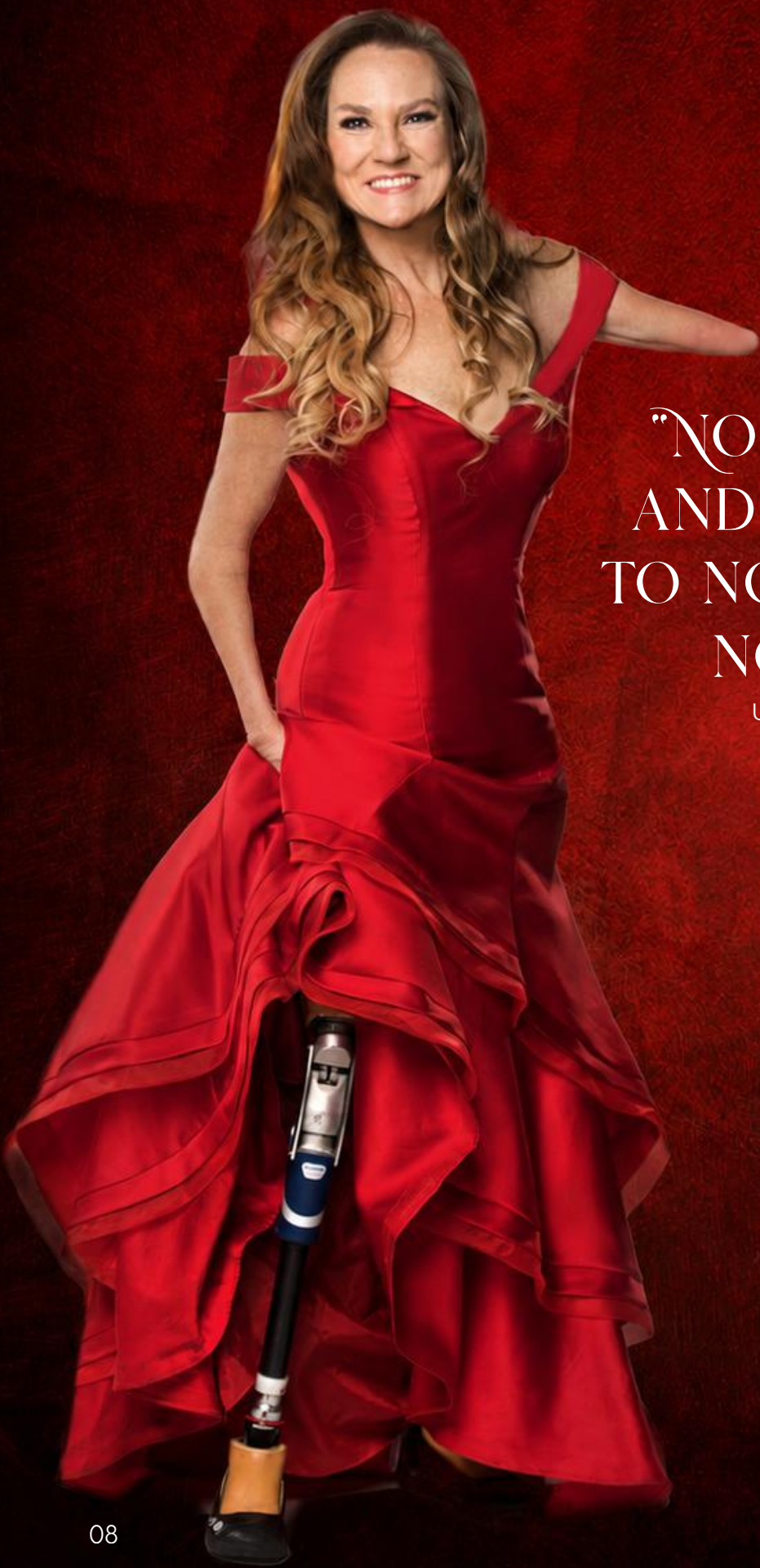
So I looked for a Gold Olympian. At the time, the only one in Canada was a man named Magnus Liljedahl in Miami, Florida, and I was in Toronto.

Everyone said it was impossible. You need \$10,000 for a boat, 10,000 hours in a boat, 10,000 hours with a Gold Olympian - never mind becoming a Paralympic trialist. It was a no-way situation.

So I recommend: when people say it's impossible, you hear them - and then you ask, "Impossible unless what?"

They replied, "Magnus Liljedahl." And then added, "But there's no way."

So I said, "Thanks so much," and I took everything I owned - my bed, my wall unit, my dresser - everything. I put it on the internet and tried to sell it for funds. Then I drove down in my car.



“NO EXCUSES –
AND THE BONUS
TO NO EXCUSES IS
NO LIMITS.”

Unstoppable Tracy

My family and friends were lovingly worried. They said it was unrealistic. Their way of helping was refusing to help me load the car because they didn't want to support what they thought was a bad decision. When I left, nobody even helped me carry a teapot to my car. If it didn't fit, I didn't bring it. And I drove five days to Magnus Ligidal.

And I'll let you in on a secret: Magnus is a lot like Shrek. And I wish I were the Fiona of the story - but in fact, I'm the donkey.

I arrived... and guess who wasn't there? Magnus.

So I took my car and hid it between two multi-million-dollar yachts. Because who you surround yourself with matters - maybe I'd become a millionaire by proximity. I hid in the boatyard. I wasn't allowed to be there, but I tucked my car between the gigantic yachts and woke up at 5:30 in the morning.

Guess who finally showed up? Magnus - at 5:30 a.m. What does a high-performance athlete do at 5:30? Something related to their craft. He was washing and waxing boats.

I jumped out of the car and ran over: "Magnus! Magnus! It's Tracy from Toronto! I'm sorry I phoned you and tweeted you and Facebooked you and emailed you, but I'm Tracy from Toronto!" All this high energy.

Magnus just looked at me - deadpan, quiet, washing his boat. He didn't say anything. Just stared like, "Who is this woman?"

And I realized Magnus had a slightly different energy than I did. I had forgotten my kindergarten lesson.

My mom didn't say to the principal, "Oh, she can tie her shoelaces." She listened. She heard that he was worried about being stuck with me.

With Magnus, I was all me, me, me.

So I picked up a sponge. And I started washing the boat. I reset my conversation with him.

I ended up washing and waxing boats - like Karate Kid - for three months. Secretly hiding in my car in Magnus's boatyard, unbeknownst to him. Every day. 5:30 a.m. Ninety days in a row. Three months before, Magnus finally said, "Come on. Let's go sailing."

So what's the discipline, the mindset, the human spirit? It started before I even started. To be able to get - pardon the pun from a girl with no foot - a foot in the game.

Magazica: And all those three months, you were in that boatyard? In the dock?

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes. Someone invited me to sleep on their boat one night. Someone else said, "I have a residence in town when I'm here - you can stay on my balcony." She didn't invite me into her home - she invited me onto her balcony. So I slept on her balcony. Over those three months, there were moments when I had a balcony, or someone's boat... but it wasn't the Hilton by any means.

Magazica: And still - three months. People break down after two or three days, let alone three weeks.

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes.

Magazica: Three months is extraordinary.

Unstoppable Tracy: There's power in progress. You don't wait for "someday." You take the next step forward. As soon as I decided I was going, I drove down there. And I invite you and your listeners and readers:

write one page, make one call, take one action toward your dream.

Because once you start, the momentum builds. Those three months were packed with little momentous moments. Just like in *The Karate Kid* - I was learning; I just didn't know I was learning.

Magazica: That's very powerful. I don't know about others, but I needed this at this moment. Thank you very much.

Let's continue. We just learned about your MBA and your business education. You coach executives - you mentioned Uber, Shoppers Drug Mart, and many others. You give anecdotes and inspiration to executives, sharing your huge, kind spirit. It brings out the best in people. So, what's one common barrier leaders usually face, and how do you help them break through it?

Unstoppable Tracy: A common barrier is that we all have a barrier - a roadblock, a challenge. For leaders, it's often something like imposter syndrome.

Many people are promoted into leadership roles because they did their job well. At Air Canada, someone knows how to load baggage on an airplane - now they're a supervisor. Or someone is an incredible customer-service-focused flight attendant - now they're the head of training, bringing in new people who don't know how to do the job. They have to relinquish the skill they mastered and take on a new task.

That's happening everywhere. You could be a leader for 30 years and know your job extremely well, but change is inevitable. New technology arrives. Suddenly, you're managing

staff from home because of COVID. Or you're a 30-year director and your CEO changes - CEOs don't stay for 30 years; they often rotate every four.

So there's always something new. And you're asking a 12-month contract question - how do you break barriers? But an immediate thing everyone can do, and something I do with leaders, is what I call appreciative inquiry.

It's like water. You've got hydrogen and oxygen - amazing molecules. Bring them together, and you get the magic of hydration. So you have "appreciate" - value, positive thinking, and "inquiry" - gather data, gather facts, get information. When you put appreciative inquiry together, you get the magic of discovery.

For example, the kinds of questions you ask determine the kinds of answers you find. If you ask, "What's the problem here?" you're going to find the problem. I'm not saying ignore the problem. In Canada, we have moose - some say, "What's the elephant in the room?" I say, "What's the moose in the room?" You can put a moose under a boardroom table and throw a tablecloth over it - you can still smell the moose. You still have to drag it out of the room. I'm not saying ignore the problem.

It's just about the question you ask. Instead of "What's the problem?" you could ask, "What worked last time you had a problem?"

You get more specific. You've heard my kindergarten story, my Magnus story - what worked? So ask yourself: What's something you're facing right now that's a challenge? But don't start there. Start appreciatively.

What's something you're super proud of? What's something you did where you woke up and thought, "Oh my gosh, that was tough - and I did it"? Maybe you ran a marathon.

Maybe you helped your child deal with a bully. Maybe you crushed a huge financial barrier in your company.

How did you do it? Who was there? What was exciting about it? Focus on that breakthrough story.

And then ask: What's something you're facing right now? We often start with the problem. Let's start with the time we overcame a problem.

It's usually resilience. It's usually who you surround yourself with. It's usually persistence. Then you bring that into what you're facing now - with the confidence that you've already done it. You've already overcome a barrier.

And it doesn't matter what age. Mine was at five years old in kindergarten. But I brought that into my business life.

Magazica: And then an inquiry about the solution part.

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes. What's something you crushed?

Magazica: Because we already did it once.

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes.

Magazica: Maybe several times.

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes!

Magazica: So build on that.

Unstoppable Tracy: Exactly. And then you get through the imposter voice - "I don't know how," "I've never done it," "I've never presented to a group before," "I've never raised a

teenager before," "I've never written a book before." But you have. You've crushed barriers before.

Magazica: No, that's so powerful. Truly powerful. Let's talk a bit about resilience in the workplace. For everyday people listening, what's one simple practice they can use to build resilience at work - or at home? One small practice they can build on?

Unstoppable Tracy: In your mind, right off the bat, obstacles are not stop signs. You reframe the barrier. For example, yesterday I went to Tim Hortons. I pulled up to the first window, driving a brand-new car - swanky.

During COVID, I got sepsis, and for the first time in my life, I felt like a four-way amputee. I never felt like I was missing my hands and legs before. But when I got sepsis, I didn't own a wheelchair, I didn't live in an accessible apartment, and I didn't have people around. My legs end above the knee, I have no left arm, I have one finger in an unusual place, and I live by myself. And then I lost my legs to sepsis.

But I don't say, "I have to get an accessible apartment, I have to get a wheelchair, I have to get a different vehicle." I say, "I get to drive a new car."

So first: reframe. You get to, not have to. You get to do your laundry, not have to do your laundry. Reframe it as "I get to."

I pulled up to Tim Hortons. I have an MBA, I'm a World Cup sailor, and I climb mountains. And I said at the window, hopefully sounding educated and capable enough, "Can I please have an extra-large, steeped tea?"

I drove to the second window. And yesterday - 2025, almost 2026 - she said, "Oh... no."



Your face right now is curious and confused. I was, too. Even now, I feel a little nauseous remembering it. Here I am, the only four-way amputee who has ever climbed the Himalayas of Nepal - male, female, they, them - and these two words from a Tim Hortons lady crushed me.

I got a lump in my throat. My stomach felt nauseous. And that was yesterday. Words can hurt.

Magazica: Yeah.

Unstoppable Tracy: And that wasn't her. That was me. I let myself interpret it that way. She's just a kind person. And I could hear my mom whisper in my ear: "She just doesn't know."

Magazica: Doesn't know.

Unstoppable Tracy: It's like that "no" from kindergarten turning into "know." She just doesn't know.

So I reset. I thought, okay - she just doesn't know. And I said, "It's okay, I've got this. I can hold the cup." I love my tea so much, I'm drinking out of a two-cup measuring jug instead of a mug because I want more tea. It's funny. But I can hold a cup. And she handed me my cup.

I said thank you, and I drove away. And from her face, I know she was amazed I could hold a cup.

She doesn't know that I fly airplanes, that I jump out of airplanes, that I ride horses, that I'm a World Cup sailor competing against able-bodied men - 80 of them in March 2025. Only a few women were there, and everyone else had their hands and legs.

And she was amazed I could hold a cup. But we get to reset. Even me.

So you get to ask yourself: What is this moment teaching me? With the Tim Hortons lady - what is this moment teaching me? How can I use this to become stronger? And what's one action you can take right now to reset?

Reset. Reframe the barrier.

Magazica: You're giving me so many learning points - and to the readers as well. So whenever you say that - full respect and full kindness to the Tim Hortons lady - whenever someone "does not know," that is such a powerful message.

Unstoppable Tracy: And I didn't know, in that moment, that I got to. She had zero intention of hurting my feelings.

Magazica: Yes.

Unstoppable Tracy: And my impression, in hindsight, is that it was actually her backwards way of kindness. She was giving me empathy in her culture. It was her way of trying to say, "I see you, and I feel for you," even though it didn't translate that way.

Magazica: Yes, yes.

Unstoppable Tracy: And unstoppable - as you said - you broke your hand, the rope was cut, but you were being unstoppable. Unstoppable isn't falling. It's rising every single time. I still see the passion, the pride, and the smile in your eyes when you share that you were there. You didn't finish that climb, but you were there. You finished a symbolic climb - probably even

bigger because of breaking that hand. I'm sorry you broke your hand.

Magazica: That's okay.

Unstoppable Tracy: I'm so proud of you for having that smile on your face. It isn't a broken-wing story - it's just a story.

Magazica: It's just a story.

Unstoppable Tracy: Yeah.

Magazica: So many things. And now, remembering what you said, unstoppable doesn't mean overcoming hurdles every time. It means that whenever you fall, you get up every time.

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes.

Magazica: My father used to say, "Rise and rise again until the lamb becomes the lion."

Unstoppable Tracy: Oh - rise and rise again until the-

Magazica: The lamb becomes the lion.

Unstoppable Tracy: The lion.

Magazica: We were visiting a castle in Scotland, and it was written on a stone slab. I don't know who wrote it - ancient or recent - but my father told me, in the pre-mobile age, "Remember this quote throughout your life."

“
Today's
the day
I'm going to be
the best version
of myself.”



Unstoppable Tracy: I love it! I can see the rock. I want to paint that rock!

Magazica: He said, "Be like that, and you become a castle by yourself."

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes!

Magazica: "If you can follow this stone, you will become a Castle Wanda, and so many people will get their shelter here." And you will inspire so many people. I'm seeing that inside you now.

Unstoppable Tracy: Aww, I see that inside you, too. It's so true. I love that we're together.

Magazica: You get together, yes.

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes.

Magazica: Rise and rise again - whenever you fall and rise again, it means you have translated your doubt...

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes - into drive.

Magazica: So, you often speak about self-doubt and procrastination. What's a practical way someone can shift from hesitation to action?

Unstoppable Tracy: One of the reasons we hesitate or procrastinate - or face bigger roadblocks - is that we just don't know how. That feeds our doubt. That feeds our procrastination. We just don't know how. We didn't know how I would ski without hands and without legs. We tried my long legs, but

because both my knees are artificial, I'd get on the hill, and my knees would collapse. We tried a sitting ski with outriggers - poles with skis on the end, but because I don't have hands, I wiped out into the trees. I didn't have enough control.

We tried for many weeks. One day, we were sitting inside next to my ski instructor, and I looked at his feet. I had a bit of an inappropriate thought as a young girl: "Holy cow - he's got big feet!"

And then I had a lightbulb moment: He's got big feet. I can put my thighs - my stumps, my legs that end above the knee - into men's boots. And then I'm knees-to-skis.

I wiped out some more because ski boots are canted forward. So we turned the boots around. I don't have toes - the toes were empty. We put my thighs into men's ski boots backwards. And then I was in this duck-squat position, knees to skis, because I don't have knees or ankles. My "knees" were in men's ski boots backwards.

So you get to embrace possibility even when you don't know how. You jump in. You get started. You're going to find your backwards boots.

What do you do with doubt and

“Progress
beats
perfection
every single
time.”

procrastination? You get started. I had a ski instructor - I wasn't alone. Who are you rallying yourself around with?

But you're not going to find your backwards-boot solutions...

Getting started. Do a little research, but eventually you have to start - even when you don't know how. The act of starting is what helps you find your backwards boots. You do it one determined step at a time.

Every unstoppable person knows this truth: Progress beats perfection - every single time.

Magazica: That's a powerful line.

Unstoppable Tracy: Progress beats perfection every time.

Magazica: Just jump in. Just get started. You'll find your backwards boots.

Unstoppable Tracy: I did not become a Double Black Diamond bronze downhill medalist with those backwards boots - but they definitely got me started.

Magazica: Progress beats perfection every time. So powerful. How do you protect this energy? You inspire thousands, but sharing inspiration constantly can be draining. You're giving your energy, and energy has a reserve. How do you protect your own well-being while giving so much to others?

Unstoppable Tracy: You know, I told you I spent three months sleeping in my car. You can imagine - on the 89th day - there's a lot of self-doubt. I'm eating Cheerios for 89 days. I'm sleeping in my car. It's not quality sleep; it's not

quality food.

And now, as an athlete, it's a huge part of my everyday life. I have no sailing competitions this month or next month, but I'm still doing my lemon-ginger, still eating vegetables and fruit, and taking vitamins. I'm protective of my sleep - and yes, it gets compromised, but I go back to it. I acknowledge when it's been compromised, and I bring it back.

But on that 89th day... what got me through was this: every day I would look in the rearview mirror of my car and say, "Today's the day you're going to talk to Magnus. Today's the day Magnus is going to take you on."

By the 89th day, I was saying it 20 times before I believed it. I wouldn't get out of the car until I believed it. And I recommend you don't leave that mirror talk until you believe it.

That morning, I said it 25 times - and I didn't believe it anymore. I couldn't get out of the car. So I flipped it. I said, "Today's the day I'm going to be the best version of myself." Because I didn't believe I was going to convert Magnus anymore.

"Today's the day I'm going to be the best version of myself."

I got out of the car. Someone was struggling with the lift. I'd been there for three months - I knew how to Hoyer the boats, crane the boats into the water. So I went over and helped.

Then another boat came flying into the dock out of control. All these Gold Olympians from around the world - not just the U.S. - were standing around shouting, "STOP!" But if the guy knew how to stop the boat, he would. He needed more than "STOP."

So I shouted, "Let off the main - the line in the middle! Push the boom away from you! Push the mainsail away!"

Then I went to the part of the dock where the wind was coming from and said, "Sail to me!" Now he was sailing into the wind - wind resistance instead of with the wind. It was a big U-shaped area, so I ran to where the wind would slow him down. And he stopped - right at the dock, at my knees.

To get to the wind, I had my legs on. I had to bum-shuffle - I've got one arm - and I bum-shuffled over to the dock where the wind was. He stopped poetically right in front of me. Magnus saw me.

He came clambering down. I tied off the boat. All the Gold Olympians ran over to help, shouting at the poor guy instead of empathizing with how terrified he must have been. You can educate later - why not give him empathy now? But that's not what Gold Olympians do.

Magnus said, "Tracy! You can sail!"

And I was like, "Yeah, man!" For three months! So how do I take care of myself? Yes, I have to eat right. I have to sleep right. But also - in my mind. You start the day with, "Today I'm going to be the best version of myself."

And that was the day Magnus said, "Come on, let's go sailing."

It wasn't the 89 days I spent trying to impress him - though they mattered. He's used to people wanting something from him and then going home. They hadn't shown tenacity or resilience for three months.

He realized I wasn't going home. And I realized I needed one more piece of the puzzle - my own best version.

That's how I keep my strength. It's body - but it's mind and soul, too.

Magazica: That's very powerful - that you don't stop telling yourself something in the mirror until

you believe it, and then you choose to be the best version of yourself. That's very stoic as well. Marcus Aurelius - one of my favourite writers - said something similar: that today, whatever happens, however I'm treated by people, I will be my best version to all.

Unstoppable Tracy: Yeah.

Magazica: It's very powerful. Very stoic. Looking ahead, what's next for you? Any projects or dreams you're excited to share that continue your mission of being unstoppable?

Unstoppable Tracy: What's next? I'm super keen - I'm back at it. In 2025, I'm back at it with World Cup sailing. In 2016, sailing was removed from the Paralympics, and my dream disappeared. It's been ten years since I focused on it in a huge way. But world sailing is coming back, and they're bringing in open class. Thank you, thank you.

I went to Australia in March, but it's open. When it was the Paralympics, there was classification. In March, my competitors included a German sailor missing his pointing finger, and a young, strong UK veteran whose disability was PTSD - physically, he was incredibly strong.

So my competitors were this German sailor and this UK veteran with big muscles. You get perspective. And of the 80 sailors, about 80% were able-bodied men. The sailors with disabilities included missing a finger, PTSD, missing a foot, and a couple paralyzed from the waist down - but I still call all of those paper cuts in comparison.

I've been going everywhere - New York, Rhode Island, Chicago, San Diego, Australia,

“

You're not
going to find
your
backwards-
boot solutions
unless you
get started.”



Quebec - all over regattas this past year, sailing across the world and North America.

And yes - sleeping in my car again.

Here I am, a mature woman - not a youth - sleeping in my car at regattas. I'm an older, dignified lady, and I was sleeping in my car. So I want to give up my condo and convert my van. I'm walking on my legs again - not 100% of the time, but I'm coming back to walking full-time, which they told me would never happen at my age. They said I'd be using a wheelchair now. They said I should thank my lucky stars I wore artificial legs that long.

Most double amputees above the knee use a wheelchair and are not full-time on prosthetic legs like I was. But I'm back. I'm part-time on my prosthetic legs, building up skin tolerance. I need the van for the chair, and now that I have the van, I want to convert it into a sleeper van. I'm hoping for sponsorship - someone who

wants to co-brand with Unstoppable Tracy. We could have Unstoppable Toyota, Unstoppable Honda, Unstoppable Audi. I love Volkswagen - those classic vans. My big dream is: on April 1st, when my lease is up, I want to go full-time into my van. Then, when I go to regattas, my home is with me.

Magazica: And it's better sleeping.

Unstoppable Tracy: Better groceries - because it's all there in the van.

So that's part of the dream. But I wouldn't be out there living this dream - I wouldn't be back on my legs - if it wasn't for the Canadian Amputee Coalition. We just did a fun fundraiser called Foot First, where they took pictures of amputee feet doing fun things - a foot in a fish tank, a foot in spaghetti. For me, I had sexy fishnet stockings on my prosthetic foot.

And so I get to live this van life - not in hardship, not in struggle - but as part of being powerful in pursuing World Cup sailing for Canada. There were no other Canadians in Australia. If I didn't go, Canada wouldn't have been represented. I intend to get Canada out there. We are Canada proud, and my mission is to get Canada there.

But because sailing left the Paralympics in 2016, there's no funding for World Cup sailing. But it's coming back.

Magazica: And you want to be the Canadian rep.

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes. Sail Canada sent me a nice shirt, and they're behind me - but they don't have the funding to support it. So all of it is 100% on my dime.

Magazica: On behalf of the common Canadian people - thank you.

Unstoppable Tracy: Thank you.

Magazica: Thank you for representing us. That is the Canadian spirit I love. That's why we started Magazica on July 1st.

Unstoppable Tracy: Really? Was it part of the Canadian spirit? Yes!

Magazica: First of July.

Unstoppable Tracy: Seriously?

Magazica: That's the spirit. We speak for common people - for those trying to make a difference in the world, in the medical sector, in

every sector, and for those continuously inspiring others. So thank you for being there on our behalf.

Unstoppable Tracy: You know, another coincidence - I was taking my first steps, the steps they told me I wouldn't take, in July. And as soon as I was walking, even just a little, I thought, "I want to get back in a boat."

It was a boat that helped my mindset when I was feeling at my lowest. I broke out of the hospital and went down to the sailing club just to be around it. Then I came back, and the nurses didn't even know I had snuck out to be near the water for a short time.

And it was July - the same month you started your magazine. And since July, I've been training so hard to represent Canada in world sailing again.

Magazica: That's a beautiful coincidence.

Unstoppable Tracy: It is. We're choosing courage over comfort. I imagine starting your magazine in July was out of your comfort zone, too.

Magazica: Way to go. Way to go. And lastly, your whole interview has been one big inspiring message. But at the end of this conversation, what would be your message to the audience? If someone listening or reading feels stuck... defeated... what's the first step you'd encourage them to take?

Unstoppable Tracy: I don't know what's going on behind your eyes as my interviewer, or what someone reading or listening is facing. I don't know. I could have said, "I've lost my mom,

I'm learning my legs again, I have sores and exhaustion from prosthetic training, and I really want to do this interview - but I can't do it this morning." And you would have understood. Those are real reasons.

There are real reasons. Very real reasons. But my mom always said, "No excuses."

My mom was from Liverpool - like the Beatles - and came out of a time of war. Liverpool has unbelievable humour, but also a tough-love culture. They don't say these exact words, but it's very "suck it up, buttercup." You've probably heard "Get on with it, love" a hundred times.

Magazica: Many times.

Unstoppable Tracy: Yes - "Get on with it, love." They make fun of the strife. That was my mom. She had a big heart, but she also had tough love. No excuses.

Even when there were real reasons - even when I was bawling my eyes out from being bullied - she'd say, "How's that working for

you?" It wasn't. She'd kiss me on the forehead, then walk away and leave me to figure it out.

This isn't the story I meant to tell, but as soon as you said, Liverpool...

So yes - no excuses. I have empathy for not knowing what someone is facing, and that they may have real reasons. So with the biggest heart, I say: no excuses.

But the bonus to no excuses is no limits. I make a joke - no limits, I'm limitless. I was born limitless. No excuses, no limits. There's a bonus in that tough love.

Magazica: Thank you. Thank you for the wonderful gems sprinkled across this conversation. Thank you for being with us. And I can confirm - this is not the last time we're talking.

Unstoppable Tracy: Aww, it's such a pleasure.

Magazica: Thank you.

Author Bio:

Tracy Schmitt - widely known as **Unstoppable Tracy** - is a globally recognized leadership expert who helps managers, executives, and educators reach their highest potential. A #1 international speaker, bestselling author, Paralympic triathlete, and award-winning executive coach, she blends lived experience with proven strategy to help leaders break barriers and elevate performance. As a TV and podcast host, she brings powerful conversations to audiences worldwide. Tracy's work is grounded in resilience, practical leadership development, and the belief that with the right mindset, every individual can lead their best - personally and professionally.

“



Unstoppable
isn't falling —
it's
rising
every single time.





The Psychology of Play:

Why Adults Need Summer Recess Too

Conceptualized by
Anthony Testa
Editor

As the long days of summer stretch out, many Canadian adults watch children fill parks and playgrounds while they remain tethered to desks, deadlines, and the digital demands of modern life. The idea of a summer recess can feel like a distant, childish memory. Yet psychological research suggests that the impulse to play is not a frivolous desire to outgrow, but an important contributor to adult mental health, emotional recovery, and resilience.

The Ontario Psychological Association notes that in our productivity-driven culture, play is often misunderstood as a wasteful or immature activity. In reality, play is a powerful tool for regulating emotions, recovering from burnout, and reconnecting with creativity. It is any activity that feels joyful, spontaneous, and immersive state of being that is inherently "purposeless, fun, and pleasurable." This freedom from productivity is exactly what makes play so mentally nourishing.

The Psychological Case for Play

The need for play is rooted in our neurobiology. Dr. Gordon Neufeld, a Vancouver-based developmental psychologist, describes play as a sanctuary for our emotions. According to Neufeld, the primary purpose of play is to manage our feelings. It creates what he calls an "emotional playground", a safe, not-for-real space where the brain can process emotions without them feeling like work. "Play turns out to be the only form of activated rest that's available to us," he notes, distinguishing it from passive activities like watching television.

This concept is supported by research from the University of Alberta, which explored how play contributes to holistic wellness across a lifespan. Participants in these studies consistently reported that play was central to their well-being, providing essential elements like joy and coping mechanisms. One participant from the study articulated a sentiment that resonates with many: "It just makes you feel good" was the "bottom line of why we play across our lifespans". When life becomes stressful, play acts as a counterweight. As one study participant explained, while facing work pressure, the ability to engage in a playful activity creates a necessary disconnect: "it's like something else did exist, and now I'm relaxed and now I can sit down".

Play as a Buffer Against Burnout

For many Canadians, the pressures of work and daily life can lead to severe burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion and

chronic stress. Play offers a preventative tool against this state. Positive psychology research shows that playful adults are more adaptable, less reactive, and more capable of handling uncertainty. Engaging in activities that promote joy can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, while building social bonds that are crucial for resilience.

However, the journey back to play is often blocked by stigma. A common misconception is that play is the opposite of work. In reality, "the opposite isn't work, it's depression" (Stuart Brown, as cited in a Concordia University study). When we lose our playful approach to life, we can become joyless and anhedonic. The stigma is particularly potent for adults; society often shames them for engaging in activities deemed "childish" outside of specific contexts like parenting or professional performances. This internalization makes it difficult for people to give themselves permission to be playful.

Making Space for Summer Recess

The good news is that "play" does not require a return to organized sports or a trip to the playground (though it certainly can). It is about reclaiming a mindset. As one University of Alberta researcher emphasized, "It is not what you do, it is how you do it." Play is a mental attitude, not a specific activity. It can be anything from painting without a purpose, to building with LEGO, to engaging in a spirited board game with friends.

For those feeling the call for a "summer recess," experts suggest a few starting points:



Reframe "Productivity":

Give yourself permission to engage in activities that are process-oriented, not outcome-oriented. The goal is the joy of the experience, not a finished product.



Think Like a Child:

Reflect on what you enjoyed doing as a child. Is there a way to revisit or reinvent that activity today?



Schedule It:

In a culture that values busyness, play must be intentional. Even ten minutes of unstructured, joyful activity a day can be a radical act of restoration.





Ultimately, reclaiming play in adulthood is not about escaping reality but about reconnecting with ourselves. As Dr. Neufeld notes, "play may be the active ingredient in therapy when it works. In play, play is a sanctuary for feeling our emotions". This summer, consider giving yourself permission for a recess—it might just be the healthiest decision you make all year.

And if reclaiming play means asking, "Now where did I leave my lightsaber?"—all the better.

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Splash Safely

Why Your Skin and Ears Might Throw a Summer Tantrum

Prepared By
Suman Dhar
Editor-in-Chief



Think about the ideal day out by the lake. The cooler is packed, you've found the perfect spot to lie on the beach, and now it is warm enough to take a swim in the lake. It is a classic Canadian summer scenario; however, some lakes have other ideas for your Monday morning.

Have you ever gotten home with a strange rash or a painful ear? If so, then you have had the unfortunate experience of meeting the two most common unwanted visitors of summer, which are Swimmer's Itch and Swimmer's Ear. Although these sound as though they should be related, they are completely different biological scenarios.

Swimmer's Itch: The Case of the Lost Parasite

Cercarial dermatitis, commonly referred to as swimmer's itch, is basically a parasitic infection by mistake. The larval flatworms, which live in aquatic snails and are looking for birds and small mammals to colonize, come out of the water.

The problem occurs when you are swimming in the path of those larvae since they mistakenly enter your body. The fact that people are not the right hosts makes these larvae die immediately, but your immune system doesn't know that yet.

Imagine your immune system as an overprotective security guard. Despite the fact that the "invasion" is finished, the guard still keeps raising alarms and closing doors, causing your red, itchy, raised pimples.

According to scientific research, such outbreaks are quite dangerous all over Canada, as cases have been observed in almost all Canadian provinces. For example, there was a five-year study conducted in Alberta where thousands of cases were registered in July and August – the hottest months of the year.

Takeaway: Swimmer's itch is just an allergic reaction to water parasites; therefore, it is not an infection.





Swimmer's Ear: The Watery Canal Blockade

Whereas the "itch" remains on your skin, Swimmer's Ear (also referred to as otitis externa) occurs near your outer ear canal. Swimmer's Ear is caused by bacteria and not parasites; however, these organisms flourish when there is excessive moisture inside your ear.

Generally, our ears are equipped with a defence mechanism against infections, which involves the production of earwax. This substance, which is hydrophobic and has an acidic nature, forms a barrier preventing bacteria and fungi from entering our ears.

The process of contracting Swimmer's Ear happens when we stay inside the water for too long, or when we clean our ears using cotton swabs, and hence traumatize the skin barrier or earwax and allow the *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacteria to invade the area.

Within 48 hours, symptoms begin to show, such as pain in the ear, a feeling of fullness, and discharge from the ear, which is usually yellowish. The main symptom of having Swimmer's Ear is when it hurts a lot whenever you pull your outer ear or the flap of the ear canal.

Takeaway: Swimmer's Ear is a bacterial infection of the ear canal often caused by trapped moisture or minor trauma to the skin.

Defensive Maneuvers for the Modern Swimmer

However, prevention may be easier than treatment when it comes to these diseases. With Swimmer's Itch, it is especially hard to stop the process, as a single infected snail may produce thousands of larvae in the water.

Even if there are some who believe that towel-drying is a key solution, in fact, the best thing one can do is to know the area. Should a person have the misfortune to swim in the area where there is already an outbreak or high concentrations of birds and snails, he will surely get a good case of Swimmer's Itch from the shallow and weedy places of the lake.

Regarding ears, the best solution is "keeping them dry" with well-fitted earplugs or swim caps.

After the swimming session, a person should slightly tilt their head in order to allow all water to drain. One can even use a hair dryer set on the coolest setting.

Takeaway: Protecting your summer fun means keeping your ears dry and staying alert to local water conditions and warnings.

This article is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Always consult with a qualified healthcare professional for personalized medical guidance.

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Heatwave Safety:

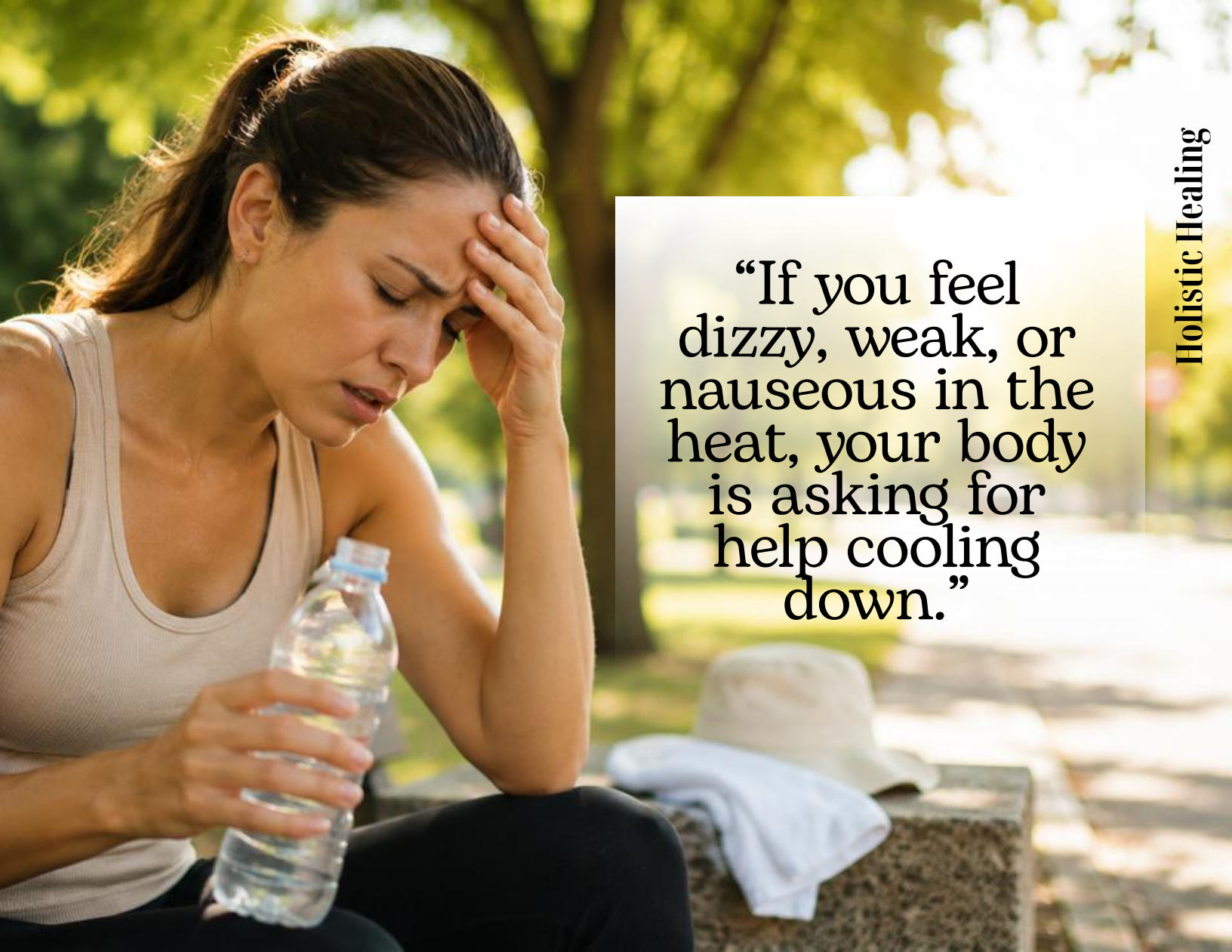
Recognizing and Preventing Heat Exhaustion

Conceptualized by
Anthony Testa
Editor

When the temperature soars, your body works hard to keep you cool. Most days, a glass of water, a shady spot, and a slower pace are enough to help you feel comfortable. But during a heatwave—especially when the air is humid, the nights stay warm, or you’re spending more time outside—your body can start to feel overwhelmed. That’s when heat exhaustion can sneak up. The good news? A little awareness can go a long way. When you know what to watch for, you can cool down early and help prevent a more serious problem.

Heat exhaustion usually happens when you lose too much water and salt through sweating. It can happen to anyone, even people who are usually active and healthy. Some people just need to be a little more careful, including older adults, babies and young children, outdoor workers, athletes, people without reliable air conditioning, and anyone taking medications that can affect hydration or body temperature. It may build slowly over a few hot hours, or it may come on quickly after exercise, yard work, or even a long walk in the sun.

**“Heatwaves
are not the time
to push through
fatigue—slow
down, rest, and
hydrate.”**



“If you feel dizzy, weak, or nauseous in the heat, your body is asking for help cooling down.”

Too Hot? Here's What to Watch For

So, what should you look for? Heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, muscle cramps, a racing pulse, cool or clammy skin, or feeling faint can all be signs that the heat is getting to you. Someone may also seem unusually tired, mixed up, or cranky. Think of these signs as your body's way of saying, “I need to cool down now.” Most of the time, quick action helps. But if someone becomes very confused, passes out, has a very high body temperature, or stops sweating despite the heat, call emergency services right away.

If you think someone may have heat exhaustion, start by getting them somewhere cooler. Move them into the shade, an air-conditioned room, or any spot that is out of the heat. Encourage them to sit or lie down, loosen tight clothing, and sip cool water or an electrolyte drink if they are awake and able to swallow. Cool cloths, a fan, a gentle mist of water, or a cool shower can also help. If they vomit, faint, become confused, have chest pain, or don't improve within about an hour, it's best to get medical help.

Stay Cool When the Heat Is On

The best plan is to stay ahead of the heat. Sip water throughout the day, even before you feel thirsty. If you can, save errands, exercise, gardening, or outdoor chores for the morning or evening, when it's usually cooler. Choose lightweight, loose-fitting clothes in light colours, and add a wide-brimmed hat and sunscreen if you'll be outside. And give yourself permission to slow down. Heatwaves are not the time to push through fatigue or squeeze in "just one more thing."

At home, a few simple habits can make a real difference. Close curtains or blinds during the hottest part of the day, and open windows only when the air outside feels cooler. Fans can help you feel more comfortable, but if your home is getting too hot, consider spending time somewhere air-conditioned, such as a library, community centre, shopping centre, or cooling centre. Local public health updates can also point you toward heat alerts and nearby cooling options.

Staying safe in the heat is also something we can do for one another. During a heatwave, check in on neighbours, friends, and family members who live alone, have limited mobility, or may not have a cool place to go. Never leave children or pets in parked vehicles, even for a quick errand, because the temperature inside a car can climb dangerously fast. If you work, exercise, or play sports outdoors, use a buddy system so someone can spot early signs that the heat is becoming too much.

A holistic approach to heatwave safety comes down to listening to your body, respecting the weather, and looking out for each other. Rest, water, shade, and cooling off are not luxuries during extreme heat—they are simple, practical ways to protect your health. With a little planning and quick action when something feels off, we can move through hot days more safely, more comfortably, and with a lot less stress.

1. Health Canada — Staying Healthy in the Heat: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/sun-safety/extreme-heat-heat-waves.html>
2. Health Canada — Extreme heat events: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/reports-publications/climate-change-health/extreme-heat-events-guidelines-technical-guide-health-care-workers.html>
3. Canadian Red Cross — Heat Stroke & Heat Exhaustion: <https://www.redcross.ca/training-and-certification/first-aid-tips-and-resources/first-aid-tips/heat-stroke-and-heat-exhaustion>
4. Ottawa Public Health — Extreme Heat and Humidity: <https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/extreme-heat-and-humidity.aspx>



Trailblazing: The Best Accessible Hiking Trails Across Canada

Canada's trails are having a glow-up—and this one is for everyone.

Conceptualized by
Anthony Testa
Editor

From salty boardwalks on the Atlantic coast to city-side green spaces in Ottawa–Gatineau and coast-to-coast mapping on the Trans Canada Trail, accessible hiking is no longer a niche idea. It is part of a bigger Canadian shift: clearer information, better design and more ways for people with different mobility needs to choose their own outdoor adventure.

The best accessible trails are not just “easy.” They are predictable. They tell you what the surface is like, how steep the route gets, whether there are washrooms or benches nearby and how far you can go before turning back. That kind of detail matters whether you use a wheelchair, walk with a cane, push a stroller, travel with kids or simply want a gentler day outside.

Atlantic Canada: boardwalks, beaches and big views

If your idea of a perfect hike includes ocean air and the sound of waves, Parks Canada's accessible trail list is a great place to start. The Kellys Beach Boardwalk in Kouchibouguac National Park, New Brunswick, is listed as a 1 km return boardwalk over barrier island dunes. In Prince Edward Island National Park, Gulf Shore Way East is described as a paved, relatively flat 24.4 km return multi-use route along the coast, while Gulf Shore Way West offers 17 km of paved coastline near Cavendish and North Rustico. Source: Parks Canada accessible trails — <https://parks.canada.ca/voyage-travel/experiences/accessibilite-accessibility/sentiers-trails>

Cape Breton Highlands National Park also brings the drama without demanding a summit attempt. Parks Canada lists the Bog Boardwalk as a 0.5 km loop on boardwalk at the top of French Mountain, and Freshwater Lake Trail as a 1.7 km return boardwalk route near the ocean. Translation: short distance, big payoff, very Canadian scenery.

Ontario and the National Capital Region: access starts with information

Ontario has a huge trail culture, but the most useful accessibility resources go beyond postcard photos. The Ontario Trails Council maintains an accessible trails directory that identifies routes with complete or partial wheelchair access, from urban waterfront paths to conservation-area walks. Source: Ontario

Trails Council accessible trails — <https://www.ontariotrails.on.ca/content/accessible-trails>

Closer to Ottawa, the National Capital Commission's Inclusive Trails initiative is especially useful because it focuses on choice. Its map highlights six trails in the Greenbelt and Gatineau Park, covering 11.8 km, and includes practical details such as trail length and width, surface type, slopes, obstacles, 360-degree trail photos, parking, toilets, benches and boardwalks. Source: National Capital Commission Inclusive Trails — <https://ncc-ccn.gc.ca/places/inclusive-trails-ottawa-gatineau>

From coast to coast: the Trans Canada Trail is mapping what matters

The Trans Canada Trail is the big national story here. Its accessibility and inclusion work includes accessibility mapping, support for local improvements, inclusive trail-sector resources, adaptive trail activities and funding through its Trails for All stream. Source: Trans Canada Trail Accessibility and Inclusion — <https://tctrail.ca/accessibility-and-inclusion/>

That matters because “accessible” can mean different things to different people. A paved trail can still have a difficult slope. A boardwalk can still have narrow points. A short loop can still lack nearby washrooms. The move toward detailed mapping puts the decision back where it belongs: with the person planning the outing.

Why accessible trails are totally Fit & Fab

Accessible hiking is not about lowering the adventure level. It is about widening the welcome. A great accessible trail can be a cardio cruise, a social outing, a mindful reset or a confidence-building first step back into nature. It can be a solo roll beside the water, a family walk through spruce bog, a multigenerational picnic route or a low-pressure way to enjoy fresh air after a long week.

The fun part? Canada is full of variety. You can choose red-sandstone coastline in P.E.I., Atlantic boardwalks in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, urban nature in Ottawa–Gatineau, wetland lookouts in Ontario or mapped sections of the Trans Canada Trail across the country. The vibe can be rugged, relaxed, scenic, social or snack-forward. Yes, snack-forward is a valid hiking style.

Before you go: the Canadian trail-smart checklist

- Check the trail's current page before leaving; weather, construction and seasonal closures can change accessibility quickly.
- Look for specific details: surface, slope, width, washrooms, parking, benches and distance.
- Bring layers. Canada can deliver four seasons before lunch.
- Tell someone your plan, especially if you are exploring a new route.
- Pack water, snacks, sun protection and bug spray. The mosquitoes do not care how beautiful the view is.

Canadian sources and links

- Parks Canada accessible trails: <https://parks.canada.ca/voyage-travel/experiences/accessibilite-accessibility/sentiers-trails>
- Parks Canada accessible and easier-access travel: <https://parks.canada.ca/voyage-travel/experiences/accessibilite-accessibility>
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- Ontario Trails Council accessible trails: <https://www.ontariotrails.on.ca/content/accessible-trails>
- Trans Canada Trail Accessibility and Inclusion: <https://tctrail.ca/accessibility-and-inclusion/>
- AccessNow and Trans Canada Trail accessibility mapping: <https://accessnow.com/blog/25-trail-sections-mapped-on-accessnow/>

Four Fit & Fab callouts



1

BEST COASTAL ROLL:

Gulf Shore Way East in Prince Edward Island National Park serves up paved, relatively flat seaside distance with dunes, salt marshes and forest views.



2

BEST QUICK NATURE RESET:

Bog Boardwalk in Cape Breton Highlands National Park is short, scenic, and packed with highland bog character.



3

BEST LOCAL PLANNING TOOL:

The NCC Inclusive Trails map is a smart starting point for Ottawa–Gatineau outings because it gives practical trail details before you arrive.



4

BEST BIG-PICTURE TREND:

Accessibility mapping is changing the conversation from “Can I go?” to “Which trail works best for me today?”





Farmers' Market Feasts:

Maximizing Local Summer Produce

Conceptualized by
Anthony Testa
Editor

There is a moment in the Canadian summer—brief, golden, and intensely flavourful—when the farmers' market becomes the centre of the culinary universe. From the Okanagan Valley's orchards to the vegetable stalls of Montréal's South Shore, farmers' markets offer a sensory

experience that grocery stores simply cannot replicate. They provide not only the freshest ingredients but also a direct connection to the land, the seasons, and the people who grow our food. For those seeking to make the most of this seasonal bounty, the summer market offers a feast waiting to be discovered.

The Case for Seasonal Eating

Eating locally and seasonally is more than a culinary trend; it is a practice rooted in nutrition, sustainability, and community support. According to Fraser Health, summer in British Columbia offers a wide variety of delicious produce that is perfect for meals and snacks, from antioxidant-rich berries to versatile tomatoes and nutrient-dense leafy greens. When vegetables and fruits are at their peak freshness, they are 'in season'—and that is when they offer the best flavour and nutritional value.

Fraser Health dietitian Donna Whitham emphasizes that eating seasonally can make a significant impact on health while also supporting local farmers and the local community. This sentiment is echoed by registered dietitians who advocate for fresh, local, and seasonal eating as a key strategy for both nutrition and budget management. Choosing seasonal produce like peaches, watermelon, and berries in the summer is not only more flavourful but also more cost-effective than buying out-of-season imports.



What's in Season Across Canada

Canada's diverse climate means that summer produce varies by region, but the bounty is universally impressive. In British Columbia, summer offers an abundance of berries (blueberries and strawberries), cherries, tomatoes, zucchini, leafy greens, Swiss chard, carrots, and beets. The Okanagan Valley, a UNESCO City of Gastronomy, is particularly celebrated for its fruit: cherries ripen in July, peaches follow in August, and by September, apple trees are heavy with fruit.

Farmers' markets across the country showcase these seasonal treasures. The Comox Valley Farmers' Market on Vancouver Island runs Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays, offering a glimpse into the breadth of local offerings. In the Okanagan, destinations like Davison Orchards, Don-O-Ray Farm Market, Gatzke's Farm Market, and Paynter's Fruit Market provide farm-to-table experiences that range from U-pick orchards to artisan markets with over a thousand locally made BC products.

Greater Montreal boasts a remarkable network of public markets. The South Shore features markets in La Prairie, Old Saint-Lambert, Mont-Saint-Hilaire, and Chambly, each bringing together local producers offering seasonal fruits, vegetables, meats, cheeses, and baked goods. The North Shore's Saint-Jérôme public market operates year-round, providing fresh produce from April through November.

Closer to home, in Ottawa, we are surrounded by local farmers and their markets—something my wife and I take part in every week.



Our visits often become a small ritual: choosing vegetables from nearby growers, picking up berries or fresh herbs when they are in season, and letting what looks best at the stalls shape our meals for the week. It is one of the simplest ways we stay connected to the local food community and to the rhythm of the season.

Turning Market Finds into Meals

The true magic of farmers' market shopping lies in the kitchen, where fresh ingredients can be transformed into simple, celebratory meals. One of the most beloved seasonal dishes is Nova Scotia Hodge Podge, a silky vegetable stew that showcases early summer vegetables at their finest. This humble chowder combines new potatoes, new carrots, fresh beans, and peas in a buttery cream broth. The key to its success lies in using truly fresh ingredients: Summer market vegetables have a sweet tenderness that grocery store vegetables can never match".

For those who want to preserve summer's flavours, Chef Phil Scarfone's farmers' market tomato passata recipe is a perfect solution.

This simple sauce, made with ripe tomatoes, onion, garlic, olive oil, and basil, can be jarred and enjoyed in the depths of winter. Scarfone emphasizes that local farmers allow their tomatoes to ripen on the vine, "which is great for flavour and is an integral part of making a beautiful passata".



Acclaimed chef Craig Flinn, an early advocate of the fresh and local approach, built his Halifax restaurant menu around seasonal ingredients. His cookbook *Fresh & Local* offers recipes that range from spring fiddlehead soup to summer cedar-planked sea trout with hodge podge, and fall roasted squash soup. Similarly, chef Lynn Crawford's award-winning cookbook *Farm to Chef* takes readers on a seasonal journey with over 140 recipes featuring farm-fresh produce.

Preserving Summer's Bounty

Canadians have a long tradition of preserving summer's abundance to enjoy throughout the year. Fraser Health recommends canning or freezing fruits and vegetables to maintain their flavour and nutrition.

Frozen and canned vegetables and fruits are often picked at peak ripeness and preserved immediately, offering similar nutritional value to fresh produce.

For those new to preserving, experts recommend starting with simple methods like freezing berries or making tomato sauce. Home canning requires attention to safety guidelines, but it rewards the effort with jars of summer flavour that brighten the darkest winter days. As one chef notes, the goal is to "cook down [tomatoes] into jars you'll crack open in February when you desperately need a hit of summer".

Building a Market Feast

Creating a farmers' market feast is less about following rigid recipes and more about letting the ingredients guide you. Here are some tips for maximizing your summer market haul:

1. **Go Early and Talk to Farmers:** Farmers are passionate about their produce and can offer tips on selection, storage, and preparation. Build relationships with your local growers—they are the heart of the community.
2. **Embrace Imperfection:** Ugly produce is often just as flavourful as perfect specimens, and buying it reduces food waste. Plus, it's often more affordable.
3. **Plan Simple Meals:** Let the quality of the ingredients shine. A salad of heirloom tomatoes with fresh basil and good olive oil needs little else. Grilled vegetables with a squeeze of lemon are a summer classic.
4. **Preserve the Excess:** When tomatoes, peaches, or berries are at their peak and plentiful, buy extra for canning, freezing, or making jam. You will thank yourself in January.

5. **Try Regional Specialties:** Seek out local traditions like Nova Scotia Hodge Podge, which "always feels special" precisely because it is tied to the season and the place.

Conclusion

Farmers' markets are more than places to buy food—they are community gathering spaces that celebrate the rhythm of the seasons and the bounty of the land. Whether you are in British Columbia, Quebec, or the Maritimes, summer markets offer an opportunity to connect with local growers, discover new ingredients, and create meals that are fresh, flavourful, and deeply satisfying. By embracing seasonal eating, you not only nourish your body but also support a more sustainable food system and the local economy. This summer, make the farmers' market your kitchen's source of inspiration—and feast on the season's best.

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Conceptualized by
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Editor

Community Gardens: Cultivating Food and Neighbourhood Bonds

A Garden That Brings People Together

On a sunny Saturday morning in many Canadian neighbourhoods, a community garden is one of the liveliest places to be. Someone is watering tomatoes before the heat of the day sets in. A child is proudly carrying a fistful of radishes. A newcomer is asking a neighbour how to grow herbs that remind them

of home. Nearby, a longtime resident is sharing extra zucchini with anyone who will take it. At first glance, these gardens may look like simple patches of soil. In reality, they are small but powerful places where food, friendship, and community pride grow side by side.

Fresh Food in a Tough Economy

Across Canada, community gardens have become an important part of local life. In cities, suburbs, small towns, and northern communities, residents are looking for ways to reconnect with food and with one another. The reasons are easy to understand. Grocery bills have risen sharply in recent years, and many families are thinking more carefully about what they buy, waste, and grow. Statistics Canada reported that 18 percent of Canadian families experienced food insecurity in 2022, up from 16 percent the year before. Community gardens cannot solve food insecurity on their own, but they can help people gain access to fresh produce, learn practical skills, and feel less alone in facing everyday challenges.

In my own city, Ottawa, the value of community gardening is easy to see. The City of Ottawa describes community gardens and greening initiatives as shared spaces where people work together to grow food, care for green spaces, and build community connections. The city also

notes that these projects support food security, civic participation, neighbourhood revitalization, environmental awareness, climate resilience, and mental and physical well-being. Ottawa now has more than 140 community gardens — a sign of just how much residents value these green gathering places.

What makes a community garden special is that it is not only about what comes out of the soil. Yes, the harvest matters. A basket of lettuce, beans, kale, or carrots can make a real difference at the dinner table. Some gardens also follow “Plant-a-Row” or “Share-a-Row” models, encouraging gardeners to donate extra produce to neighbours, community fridges, shelters, or food banks. But the deeper harvest is often social. Gardens create low-pressure spaces where people who might otherwise pass each other without speaking can meet, swap advice, share seeds, and celebrate small successes.

That neighbourly spirit is especially important in a country as diverse as Canada. Community gardens can become places of cultural exchange, where food traditions are welcomed and preserved. A plot might hold Italian basil, Caribbean callaloo, South Asian coriander, Indigenous medicines, or vegetables familiar to families who have recently arrived from another part of the world. In this way, gardens help people feel rooted in a new neighbourhood while also sharing pieces of their heritage. Canadian researchers have also been exploring how community gardens can support immigrant communities by connecting culturally familiar foods, intergenerational knowledge, mental health, and food security.




Food security
starts close to home:
Community gardens
give residents access
to fresh produce while
building practical
growing skills.

The benefits extend well beyond individual households. Community gardens help turn underused land into welcoming public space. A vacant lot, a corner of a schoolyard, a strip beside a community centre, or land near a place of worship can become a living classroom and a neighbourhood meeting spot. Children learn where food comes from by planting peas and watching them climb. Seniors pass along knowledge about composting, saving seeds, and reading the weather. Volunteers learn how to organize workdays, apply for grants, and make collective decisions. These are practical skills, but they are also civic skills.

Small Spaces, Big Environmental Benefits

There is also an environmental story growing in these spaces. Many Canadian gardens now include pollinator plants, rain barrels, compost bins, native species, and small habitat areas for bees, butterflies, and birds. In a changing climate, these details matter. Gardens can help absorb rainwater, reduce heat in paved neighbourhoods, improve soil health, and support local biodiversity. They also remind us that climate action does not always begin with a large project or a technical solution. Sometimes it begins with a group of neighbours deciding to plant milkweed, collect kitchen scraps, or keep a patch of soil healthy for the next season.

Of course, community gardens need support to thrive. Access to land is often the first challenge, especially in growing cities where space is expensive and development pressure is high. Gardeners also need water, tools,

storage, soil testing, accessibility features, insurance guidance, and clear rules for shared use. Municipal governments, school boards, non-profit organizations, housing providers, and faith communities all have a role to play. The federal government has also recognized the importance of local food infrastructure, including community gardens, greenhouses, irrigation systems, and food forests, through programs that aim to strengthen community food security across the country.

Still, it is important to be realistic. A garden plot will not replace strong income supports, affordable housing, fair food pricing, or reliable public services. Food insecurity is a complex issue, and it is closely tied to poverty and inequality. But community gardens offer something that larger systems often struggle to provide: a sense of agency. When people plant, tend, harvest, and share food together, they experience a measure of control and dignity. They are not just consumers at the end of a long supply chain. They are growers, teachers, learners, and neighbours.

For many Canadians, the appeal is also beautifully simple. Gardening slows us down. It gives us a reason to step outside, notice the season, and talk to people we might not otherwise meet. It offers the satisfaction of seeing effort turn into something edible. It teaches patience when seeds take longer than expected, generosity when the beans come in all at once, and resilience when pests or weather interfere with the plan.

Community gardens need community support:

Land, water, tools, funding, and local volunteers are all essential to keeping these spaces strong.



LAND



WATER



TOOLS



FUNDING



VOLUNTEERS



Community Connections

Cultivating the Future

As communities across Canada look for ways to become healthier, greener, and more connected, community gardens deserve a place near the centre of the conversation. They are modest in scale but rich in impact. They feed people, brighten streets, support biodiversity, and create spaces where neighbours become familiar faces. In a time when many people feel stretched by costs, schedules, and social isolation, a community garden offers a hopeful reminder: when we cultivate the soil together, we also cultivate trust, belonging, and care.

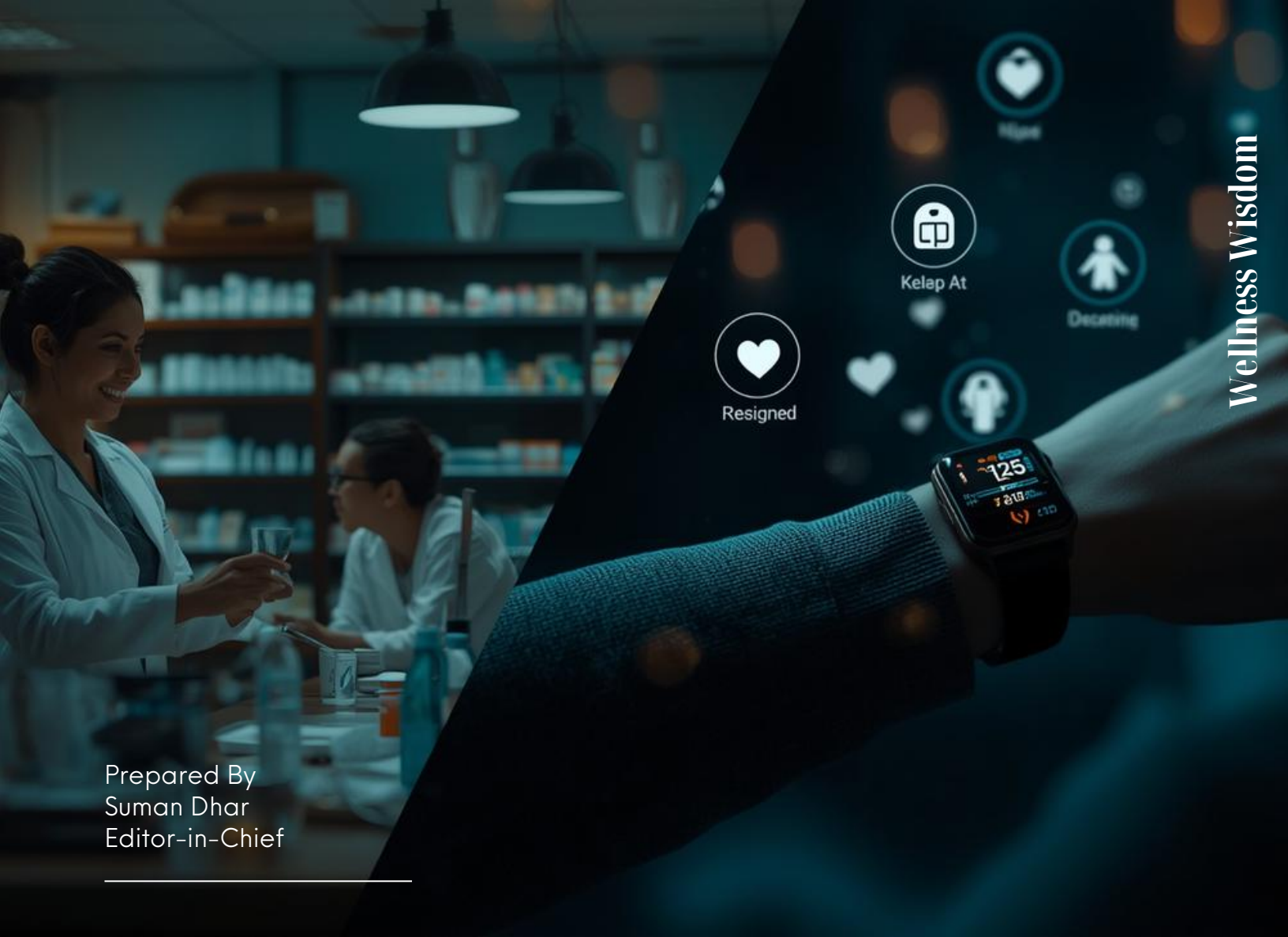
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Prepared By
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The 24/7 of You

Why it is the Ultimate Season for a Self-Care Overhaul

Let's say today the Canadian summer is at its peak, and you are probably trying to make the most of your time by enjoying a hike or a backyard barbecue party. However, there is one particular reason why this date is reminiscent of the name of a convenience store – it marks the International Self-Care Day and all its focus on the “24/7” aspect of self-care. Interestingly enough, it turns out that the whole month before this event, Self-Care Month, is anything but a period of relaxing with face masks and bubble baths – quite the contrary, it is the most active period when we can finally take care of ourselves.

DIY Body Renovations: Defining the Self-Care Movement

If your experience with health care seems like a bit of a circus act nowadays, then you must be searching for a way out of it. The term 'self-care' is generally perceived as a privilege, but the WHO calls it "an ability" that is fundamental for promoting good health and managing diseases in individuals and communities, irrespective of whether there is a professional around or not. It can be described as an individual's art of being the Chief Executive Officer of his or her biology.

It is safe to say that scientific studies reveal self-care as a multi-level phenomenon. These levels include the individual one, which deals with people's daily activities, the interpersonal one that concerns how the family influences their lives, and the structural one, which consists of legal opportunities and tools. Most likely, all these mean that you should go beyond your role as a passenger of the healthcare system and become an active "decision-maker" whose adherence to medical prescriptions and healthy changes in lifestyle works.

Conclusion: Self-care is not an activity but a biological one.

The Pharmacy Pit Crew: Your Local Health Keeners

Although your local pharmacy could be viewed simply as a store where you get your prescriptions filled, these teams are, in fact, the healthiest keepers ready to assist you with

"filling your boots" with useful information on your wellness. Community pharmacists are the most easily accessible healthcare providers that shift their attention from dispensing pills to dispensing advice about managing self-limiting health problems such as sore throat, hay fever, and mid-summer heartburn.

According to statistics collected through the global survey, more than 77% of pharmacy teams have an outstanding understanding of self-care and are willing to contribute to your health-related decision-making process. They function like a pit crew for your body, providing you with all possible information on medication adherence, nutrition, and physical activities. When engaging with these health care providers, you don't only "purchase goods," but enter into a collaboration intended to prevent you from getting sick and having to stay at home for long.

Conclusion: Pharmacists are credible sources of self-care tools that will enhance your quality of life without waiting for a long time at the clinic.

Digital Dashboards: A Personal Trainer in Your Pocket

We now live in a time where our watches know more about our heartbeat than we ourselves do. The digital self-care tools, such as health tracking apps and wearables, have evolved from being mere "neat toys" to becoming crucial health equipment. Studies show that roughly 36% of patients have started using health tracking apps for monitoring their health, while the rest are using home diagnostic tests.

Such tools act like a dashboard of the physical engine of your body. Through them, you get an insight into what goes on with your physical body in real time. You could monitor everything from your blood pressure to your glucose level right from the comfort of your home. Although there might be some "technical glitches" to sort out concerning privacy and integration of data, such tools are the most important enabler of today's self-care. With them, you have access to "low-down" on how your body performs so that you can take appropriate action before the small thing becomes something bigger.

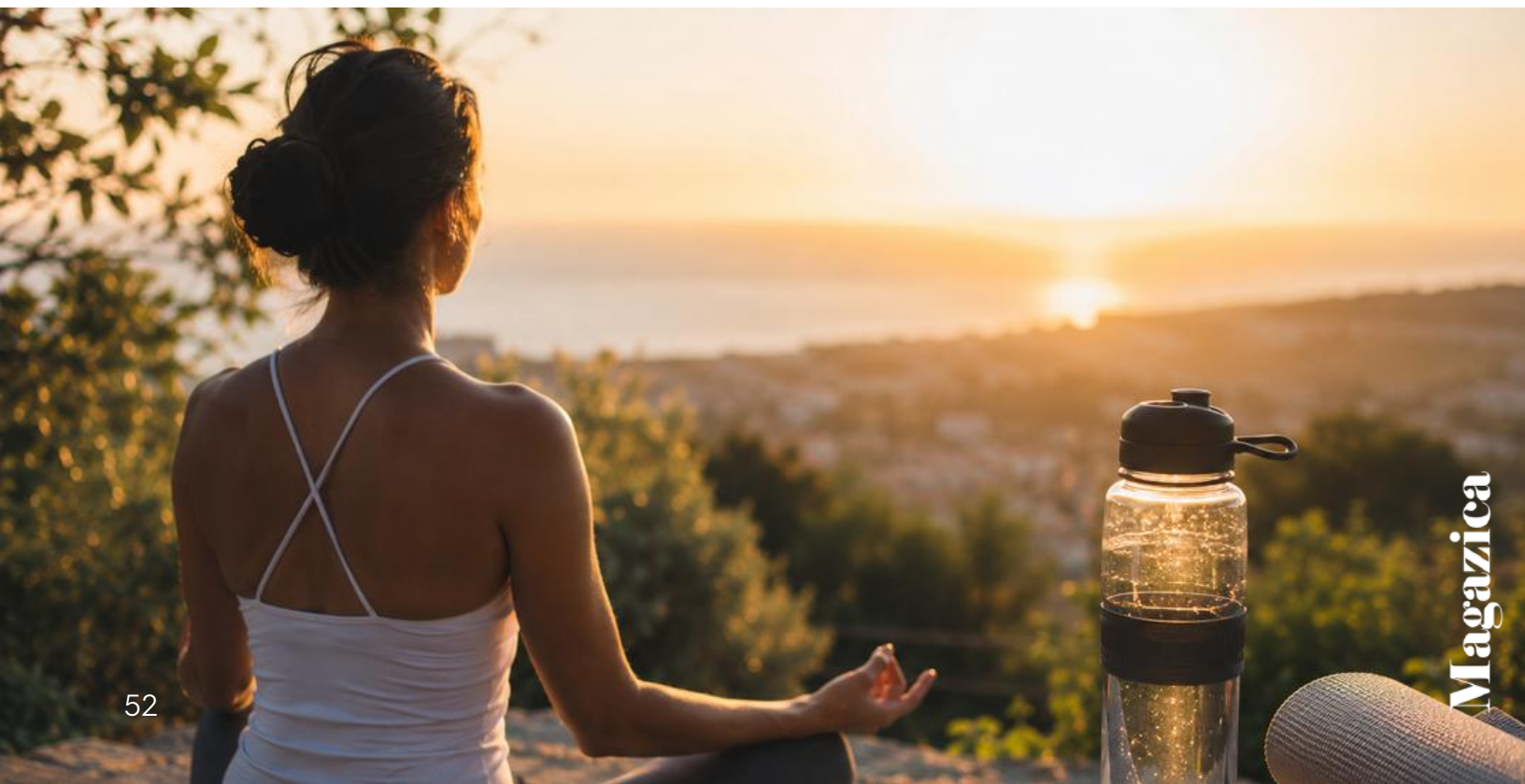
Takeaway: Using digital health tools is a key aspect of self-care.

The Summer Sweet Spot: Why July 24th is the Big Deal

Well, how exactly is it that the thesis claims the mid-summertime frame to be the "commercially viable" jackpot for wellness?

The reason behind it is that the International Self-Care Day is the global lighthouse which will point towards the fact that developing good habits now will make a big difference in decades to come. It may be the marketing campaign of the new fitness application, but the month provides a "content-rich" environment, as there is no other time when people are more aware of public campaigns.

Maintaining proper self-care from your twenties till your fifties can be the difference between having a chronic illness and having a healthy, active retirement. Taking care of your health by eating well, moving regularly and sleeping properly is nothing but buying a "health insurance policy" which returns dividends in the form of an extended lifetime in optimal condition. Instead of reacting to your symptoms in the summer, use the power of the Self-Care Month to develop a healthy habit of being healthy. That way, you will avoid the problems and keep your inner "bouncer" busy kicking out the bad guys who wish to ruin your health.





Key Takeaways

- **24/7 Self-care:** Self-care should be seen in terms of your capacity to take care of your health 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, rather than just during your visit to the clinic.
- **The Pharmacist Knows Better:** You should approach your pharmacist as an expert who gives credible information on small health issues and lifestyles that need modification.
- **Take Advantage of Technology:** Digital gadgets and applications have proved themselves as evidence-based interventions of self-care and can serve to help keep yourself informed about the progress.
- **Prevention Is the Aim:** By taking proper care of your body regularly, you can avoid any possible chronic problems such as heart disease or diabetes.

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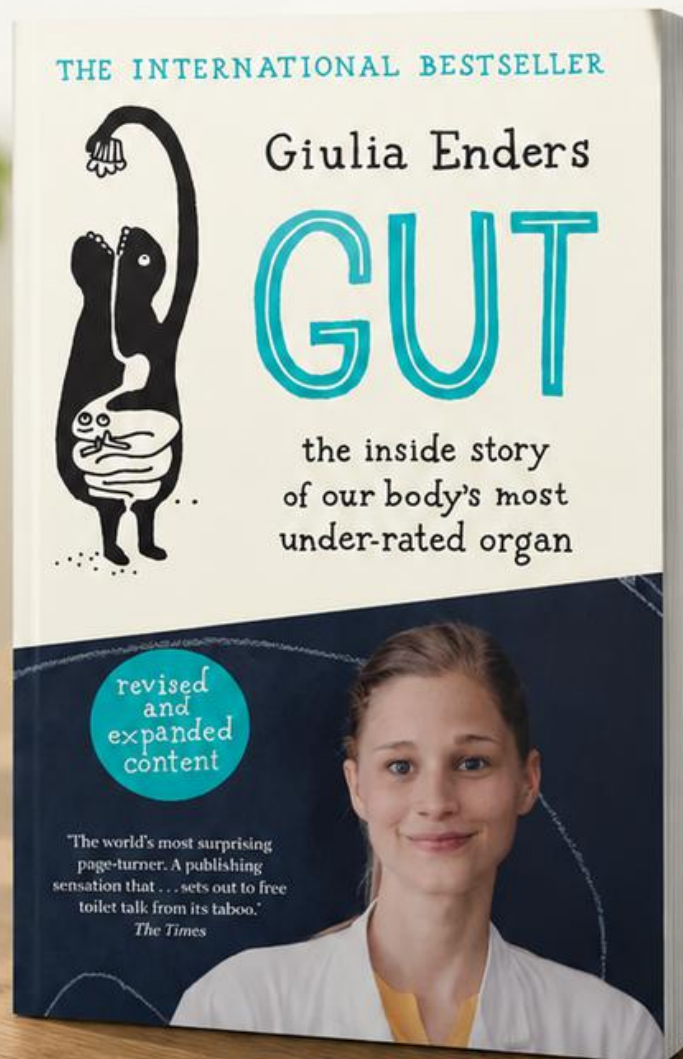
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Why Your Microbiome is the Secret to Wellness: A Review of Giulia Enders' "Gut"

*From the **Gut-Brain Axis** to the "**Daily Housekeeper**":
Discover the Inside Story of Your Body's
Most Underrated Organ*

Reviewed By
Suman Dhar
Editor-in-Chief



To most of us, the gut is a "Quasimodo" in the body's architecture – unappealing, uneven and disregarded until it erupts in "fumes" during some social occasion. While we marvel at the beating heart and brilliant mind of the brain, we overlook the intestinal tract with a combination of reticence and embarrassment.

In her acclaimed book entitled "Gut: The Inside Story of Our Body's Most Underrated Organ", German medical scientist Giulia Enders offers us the idea that this 20-foot-long, winding tube is indeed a marvel of organization requiring no more power to function than a 100-watt bulb.

As someone who can enlighten Canadians amid the recent onslaught of "gut health" advertising, Enders is certainly a humorous narrator. She does not simply teach biology; she makes the science accessible, bringing us through a tour of the "inner forest" of Grade XII science revisited.

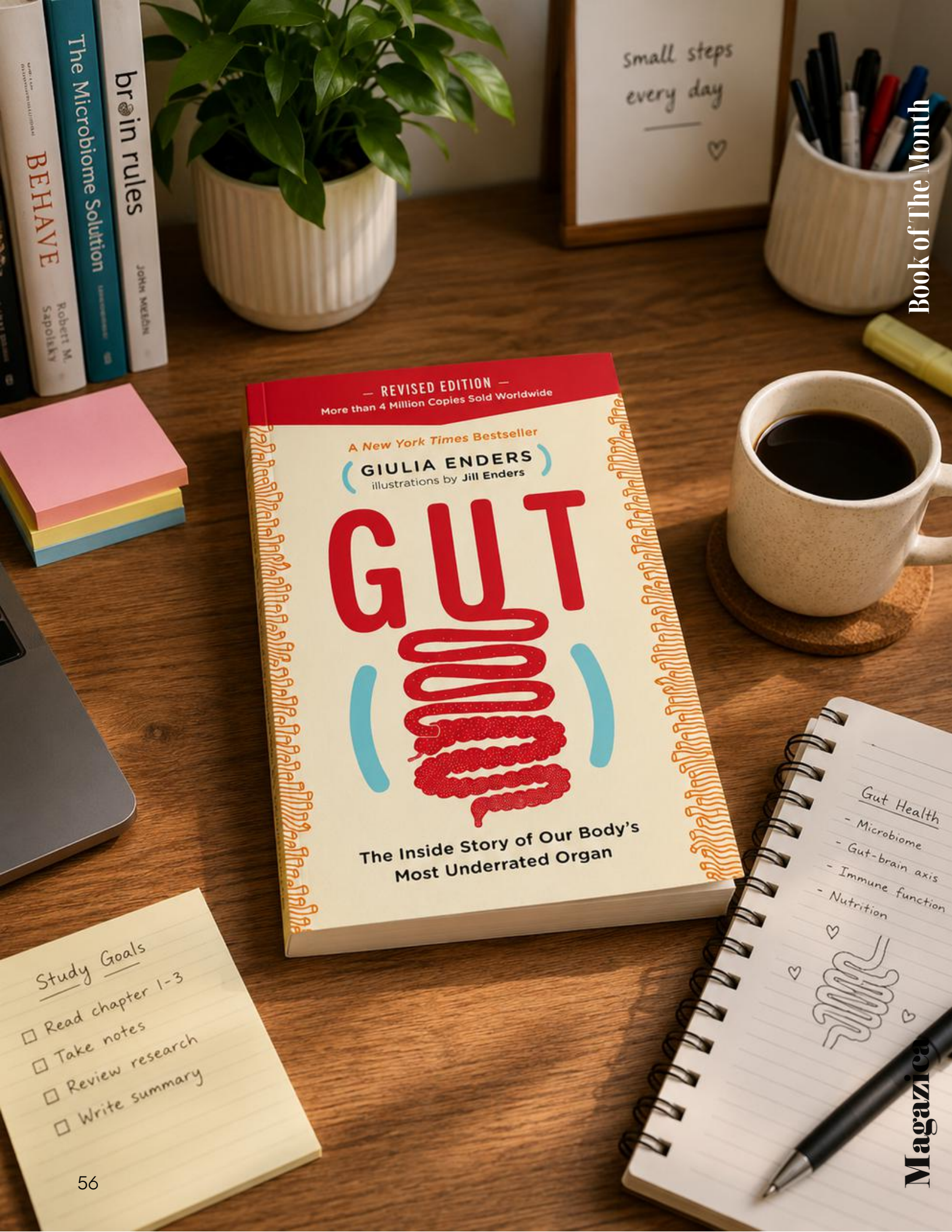
The story starts off with the question which would forever change Enders' life, "How does pooping work?" That is followed by an amazing explanation of a performance which consists of two nervous systems working together. Enders takes us through the introduction to the internal and external sphincters, "no nonsense little guy," which represents our unconscious self and "faithful servant" of our conscious self, respectively. The area between them serves as a "taster" area where sensor cells determine whether what is coming is solid or gas and give a report to the brain.

A section which is interesting and provocative for contemporary health enthusiasts includes a

discussion of the "porcelain thrones." According to Enders, such common problems of Westerners as hemorrhoids and diverticulitis do not exist in 1.2 billion people who defecate while squatting. She states that the problem in the civilized world lies in the fact that the sitting posture of defecation forms a bend in the tube that prevents the hatch from opening fully. The advice that she gives to people who are not willing to use squat toilets is quite practical and easy: lean forward and rest your feet on a stool. According to Enders, such common problems of Westerners as hemorrhoids and diverticulitis do not exist in 1.2 billion people who defecate while squatting. She states that the problem in the civilized world lies in the fact that the sitting posture of defecation forms a bend in the tube that prevents the hatch from opening fully. The advice that she gives to people who are not willing to use squat toilets is quite practical and easy: lean forward and rest your feet on a stool.

In addition to the mechanics of defecation, the book contains information about the importance of the gut as the largest sensory organ of the body. According to the author, the "housekeeper" – a migrating motor complex – starts a cleaning wave an hour after the process of digestion. It is this process that makes people feel that well-known rumbling in the abdomen that Enders says is not caused by the fact that we are hungry, but indicates that the gut has had enough time off from snacking to clean itself.

Being a health critic, however, it is necessary to admit that the most influential aspect of this book is connected with the discussion of the gut-brain axis.



Study Goals

- ☐ Read chapter 1-3
- ☐ Take notes
- ☐ Review research
- ☐ Write summary

Gut Health

- Microbiome
- Gut-brain axis
- Immune function
- Nutrition



Enders explains that the gut is the only organ that has an autonomous nervous system; once disconnected from the brain, it continues to work happily. "Gut brain" produces more than twenty hormones and, probably, the most surprising fact, it creates 95 percent of serotonin in the body. Moreover, Enders suggests that an "unhappy gut can lead to an unhappy mind," implying that irritating signals from the gut might affect the brain's emotional centers, thus causing anxiety and depression.

The last third of the book is devoted to a discussion of the microbiome – 100 trillion bacteria that live in our body. Enders regards it as a kind of ecosystem that we have to "cultivate" instead of just cleaning. Thus, she describes the "bad guys," who are "sombbrero-wearing" *Salmonellae* and "good guys," which form the main training camp for the immune system.

Enders gives us a more realistic approach to probiotics and prebiotics, not resorting to clichés surrounding a "miracle cure" for every single illness. She argues that whereas probiotics are like "temporary workers who are hired during stressful or antibiotic conditions," prebiotics – that is, the indigestible fibres in onions, garlic, asparagus and cold potato salad – are the "meals hearty enough to give our good bacteria an edge."

The text is written in a very understandable manner, thanks to the quirky illustrations done by the author's sister, Jill Enders. Even though some might say that the "poop talk" goes beyond the necessary level of detail, it comes across as very professional, with the focus

being put on providing the reader with accurate information. It even includes research done at Canada's McMaster University, where gut bacteria were shown to trade behaviour characteristics of shy and outgoing mice.

"Gut" is a wonderful example of science communication that makes you feel "miraculous" instead of "gross". The author successfully convinces his readers that they are not only the owners of their thoughts but also the protectors of a tiny universe inside them. This book is a must-read for people interested in learning the manual of their own vessel and, maybe, showing some sympathy towards their "inner forest".

This review is intended for informative purposes only and does not serve as a source of medical advice. Always consult with your healthcare provider before making any changes in your health/wellness practice.



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