

## Editor's notes:

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Is the economy getting you down? You need a place to chill out occasionally and get away from daily stresses. Here are a few tips on how to design your own space for meditation or simple relaxation.

- Remember that the place is meant to refresh your spirit, so decorate it the way you want, not to match other people's tastes.
- Remove all the clutter that can cause you stress, such as computers, paperwork, unpaid bills, etc.
- When choosing colours, look for cool, soothing tones like green, blue, or lavender.
- Soundproof the room, or play a recording of soothing sounds that drown out the noise from the rest of the house.
- Add scented candles. The glow and aroma of a candle in the dark promote serenity.

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Our love affair with pets goes back a long time. Scientists recently discovered that humans began domesticating horses around 3500 B.C., several thousand years earlier than previously believed. The first wild animals to be domesticated were, not surprisingly, dogs. Distinguished from wolves by their smaller jaw and teeth, they may have appeared anywhere from 13,000 to 30,000 years ago.

While you're riding your favourite horse, or taking the family pooch for a walk, here are a few dates to consider:

**International Clown Week, August 1-7** --The word 'clown' comes from the Icelandic word 'klunni' (a clumsy person) and is related to words like clod and klutz. During this week, clowns donate an hour of their time for a good cause in their community. They can be found clowning around in libraries, hospitals, and malls.

**Elvis week, August 8-16** -- Elvis fans unite! Held in Memphis, Tennessee. Elvis Week 2009 features an Elvis film festival, an art contest, a trivia scavenger hunt, and a candle-light vigil at the gates of Graceland Mansion.

**August 13** -- International Left-Handers Day -- the Left-Handers Club initiated this celebration of sinistrality in 1992 to increase public awareness of the benefits and disadvantages of being left-handed.

## Do a few inches of height make a difference?

The taller you are, the happier you are. According to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index study, taller people tend to feel more satisfied with their lives than shorter people and are less likely to report feel such negative emotions as anger, sadness, stress, and worry.

In the study, people gave their height and were then asked to evaluate their lives on a 1-10 scale, with 0 at the bottom at 10 at the top, representing the best life imaginable. Men with a height above the average of 5 feet 10 inches saw themselves as almost one-seventh of a step higher than males with below-average stature. The same trend was true among women, but to a lesser degree.

But wait: Taller people may be happier because they tend to have higher incomes, better education, and higher-level jobs. Gallup noted that once the findings were controlled for income or education, height in itself had little or no relationship to overall happiness.

## Cooking Corn on the Cob

Sweet corn is one of August's great taste treats. Here are two ways to enjoy it:

### ON THE STOVE

Husk the corn and remove the silk tassels. Put in boiling water. When the water comes back to a boil, the corn is done. (Don't add salt to the water because it will toughen the kernels and lessen the sweetness.)

### ON THE GRILL

Husk the corn and remove the silk tassels. Place on a hot grill for eight to 15 minutes, turning every two minutes or so to ensure that all surfaces are exposed to the heat.

Corn should be cooked as soon as possible after it's bought because, once harvested, its sugars start turning to starch.



# Master these acronyms ASAP

Here are a few common and uncommon abbreviations to dazzle and befuddle your friends:

- **ALF -- Always Listen First:** Used in training sessions and counselling.
- **BDU -- Brain Dead User:** Reputed to be a term used by IT support staff for human error (as opposed to software or hardware malfunction).
- **BRAN -- Benefits, Risks, Alternatives, Nothing:** Useful for deciding on a proposed course of action in business. What are the benefits? Potential risks? Alternative courses of action? What if we do nothing?
- **IDEA -- Identify, Design, Execute, Augment:** A planning strategy. First, identify the relevant issues; then design your course of action. Execute your plan; then adjust or add to it as necessary.
- **GROW -- Goals, Reality, Options, Will:** From the life-coaching literature, these are factors involved in self-improvement

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## Want to succeed?

### Then you must be willing to mess up.

Success is about . . . failure. At least, it's about learning how to fail without letting it stop you from moving forward. As personal and business coach Jane Herman writes: "You have heard the expression, 'Anything worth doing is worth doing well.' Here's your new motto: 'Anything worth doing is worth being willing to do badly.' If something is important to you, then you have got to be willing to try it, even knowing that you may fail. If you have the attitude that you can't do something unless you can do it well, or perfectly, then you will never take a step. Be willing to take the step."

## Perseid Meteor Showers, August 12-13

Star gazers can spot as many as 50 to 150 falling stars, or more accurately, "meteors," per hour during these two evenings. Meteors are often no larger than a grain of sand. Because they orbit the sun, it's possible to predict the dates of their arrival. As they come within the upper atmosphere, friction with the air burns them up, which explains the light they give off. The earliest recorded observation of the Perseid Meteor Showers, which actually begins in July but is most intense in mid-August, dates back to 36 A.D. when the Chinese noted that "more than 100 meteors flew thither in the morning." The Perseids are so named because early observers thought that the showers emanated from the constellation Perseus.

The best time to look for meteors is when Perseus is highest in the sky -- between 2 a.m. and dawn. On August 12th, set your alarm for 2 o'clock in the morning. Point your toes northeast; and gaze upward. Soon you'll see shooting stars racing along the Milky Way. You can still get a good meteor show on August 13, although the shower is expected to crest the night before.

For more information and graphics, please visit this website: <http://meteorshowersonline.com/perseids.html>.

## Avoid these errors when facing a tough choice

Even the smartest leaders make dumb decisions from time to time. You can avoid them -- most of them -- by paying attention to these two classic decision-making mistakes:

**Applying the wrong experience** -- Sometimes a situation seems to resemble a past problem. But if the resemblance is only superficial, repeating your solution will lead to more problems. Analyze each situation independently; adapt what's worked in the past to fit the unique circumstances of the current situation.

**Not considering personal conflicts** -- You may favour a particular solution that benefits your own interests and be unaware of what you're doing. It's not necessarily fraudulent or dishonest -- you may seek to protect your own employees, for example, but at the expense of another department. Get unbiased opinions from a range of people to be sure you're not following unconscious preferences.

## Quotable Quotes

*I went to a bookstore and asked the saleswoman, "Where's the self-help section?" She said if she told me, it would defeat the purpose.*  
-- George Carlin

*I was thrown out of college for cheating on the metaphysics exam; I looked into the soul of the boy sitting next to me.*  
-- Woody Allen

*Laughter gives us distance. It allows us to step back from an event, deal with it, and then move on.* -- Bob Newhart

*Politicians are wonderful people as long as they stay away from things they don't understand, such as working for a living.*  
-- P. J. O'Rourke

*When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.*  
-- Josh Billings