

Editor's notes:

Finally, something we have been waiting for all these years -- a health study that says slightly chubby people live longer! According to this Japanese study, very thin people had a life expectancy that was shorter by some five years than that of obese people.

Two university professors studied the mortality rates of 50,000 people between the ages of 40 and 79 over 12 years. Those who were a little overweight at age 40 lived six to seven years longer than very thin people. The professors speculated that the shorter life-spans of skinny people could be attributed to their heightened vulnerability to diseases such as pneumonia and the fragility of their blood vessels.

However, the study's authors did warn against recommending people eat as much as they want to. It is better that thin people try to gain normal weight, rather than have people of normal physique to put on more fat.

Something to think about: A Work Watch survey asked the question, "Have you changed your work style or habits based on your manager's personality?" Sixty-one percent of the men responding said, "Yes," whereas only 49 percent of women gave the same answer. Does this mean male employees are worse sycophants? Or, that women have more integrity? Hmmm, something to discuss over the water cooler!

July was named in 44 BCE for Julius Caesar, the ruler of Rome. He reorganized the calendar to bring it closer in sync with the seasons, adding 67 days to the year 45 BCE and introducing 12 months of 30 and 31 days instead of the original 10. The Senate, grateful for righting the chaotic calendar, named the month after him because it was his birth month.

Here are a few more dates of interest this month:

Canada Day, July 1 -- This national holiday commemorates the July 1, 1867, confederation of Canada. The country was named after "kanatas," the Indian word for "settlements." It is the second largest country in the world in terms of area, second only to Russia.

Dog Days of Summer, July 3- August 11 -- The ancient Romans believed that this 40-day stretch of hot, sultry weather was the result of Sirius, the Dog Star, rising in conjunction with the sun. Because it is the brightest star, they believed its heat reinforced the sun's, raising temperatures on earth during this period.

American Independence Day, July 4 -- Our neighbours to the south are celebrating their 233rd anniversary of their declaration of independence.

Tour de France, July 4 - July 26 -- For all you cycling fans, the 96th Tour starts in Monaco on July 4. The race, consisting of 21 stages, covering almost 3,500 kilometres, finishes three weeks later at the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Bastille Day, July 14 -- This day marks the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789, when French citizens stormed the medieval fortress and prison known as the Bastille.

Running of the Bulls - July 7-14 -- American writer Ernest Hemmingway helped spread the tradition of the festival of San Fermin. Each morning of the festival, young men race through the streets of Pamplona, Spain, "escorting" to the bull ring the bulls fighting on that day.

Cousins Day, July 24 -- A day to honour your cousins.

Talking Your Way to the Top

Do you want to be seen as a leader? Just speak up more. That's the perhaps unsurprising conclusion of researchers from the University of California, who ran an experiment observing graduate students in four-person teams as they worked on a project. The students, the researchers, and a group of outside consultants all rated the levels of influence and competence of each team member. Students who talked more tended to receive higher ratings in general intelligence and such qualities as being "dependable and well-disciplined."

The interesting conclusion came when the researchers repeated the test using math problems. Team members who spoke up more often -- not necessarily with the correct answers -- were seen as both better leaders and smarter math whizzes, as long as they made their comments with authority.

Cynical minds might see that as proving that all a would-be leader has to do is fake it convincingly. True or not, it certainly shows once again that image is at least as important as substance when it comes to assuming a leadership role.



Roca Milagro, Helix president Siegfried Pedde's residential development in the mountains of Panama, is progressing nicely. For periodic updates on the project, please sign up on the website at www.rocamilagro.com or at the project's blog at rocamilagro.blogspot.com.

Turn your best on-line profile forward

Could your FaceBook profile prevent you from getting a job offer? The on-line job site CareerBuilder reports that its survey of over 3,200 hiring managers found that 22 percent say they screen job applicants by viewing their social networking profiles, and 34 percent have eliminated job candidates because of the content they've found.

Forty-one percent cited posts on drinking or drug use, and 40 percent cited candidates' provocative photographs. Also: poor communication skills; evidence of dishonesty concerning applicants' qualifications; discriminatory remarks on race, religion, or gender; and unprofessional screen names.

Getting Organized

Feeling a bit scattered? Professional organizer Linda Rothschild suggests replacing all those sticky-backed notes and memos with one small notebook. Rather than wading through a hodge-podge of bits and pieces, you'll have all your important information and "to do" lists in one handy place. When you jot down a task, note the date so that you'll recall when you decided to do something.

The Game of Monopoly

Monopoly, perhaps the most popular board game of all time, was invented during the Depression. In the 1930s, Charles Darrow, an unemployed salesman, used the time on his hands to develop the game based, in part, on an earlier one called the Landlord Game, invented by Elizabeth Phillips in 1904.

Darrow recalled the more prosperous times when he and his family vacationed at Atlantic City, New Jersey, so he named the properties after local streets and the railroads and utilities that served the city. At first, he sold handmade sets to friends who took to the game because there was little money for going out on the town. Later, he sold printed versions to department stores in Philadelphia.

In 1934, with demand exceeding his production capabilities, Darrow offered the game to Parker Brothers, but the company rejected it, citing 52 fundamental errors, including the lengthy time needed to play and the likelihood that people would not be able to grasp the real estate concepts. But when demand and popularity continued to increase, Parker brothers bought the game. Darrow retired a millionaire at age 46.

The Origins of Tattoos

The earliest record of tattoos dates to ancient Egypt during the time the pyramids were being built, but historians believe the practice is much older. Many cultures and civilizations -- including those of Greece, the Middle East, China, and Africa -- used tattoos to symbolize different things. Some believed that the wearer would adopt the personality traits of the tattooed image -- so someone with a tiger tattoo would have the animal's ferocity. Others believed tattoos warded off illness. Perhaps the most common symbolism is that the wearer is tough and can withstand pain.

Go Ahead! Throw it out!

If you hold onto papers, mail, and other types of office clutter longer than you should because you worry that you'll need some of it later, try this suggestion from Lisa Kanarek, author of *Organizing Your Home Office for Success*: "Create a 'safe' trash can," she says. "Nothing goes into it except for paper -- no apple cores, no soda cans, nothing that you wouldn't want to have to see again if you had to rummage through the trash can."

Wait a few weeks to empty the safe trash to allow a grace period for second thought. "This system may make it easier for your pitch stuff," Kanarek says.

A Sweet Solution

Deborah Frist, a human resources expert, suggest putting a dish of candy on your desk for guests and fellow employees. "Something as seemingly inconsequential as a mid-day visit to grab some candy can really help co-workers get to know each other. It's an easy way to create a sense of bonding with others."

The Elm

Botanist Donald Peattie once said, "If you want to be recalled for something that you do, you will be well advised to do it under an elm." The elm's shade is certainly a cool place -- one mature elm offers the cooling equivalent of five air conditioning units. This shade tree with arching limbs was once the most popular choice for urban planners because its shallow root system does not undermine pavements. But Dutch elm disease -- so named because Dutch scientists discovered the deadly fungus -- has killed millions of elms since the 1930s. Arborists, though, are hopeful that new disease-resistant elms can be bred and that the tree can once again be an option for landscapers.

Elm trees can grow to more than 100 feet, have a diameter of 10 feet and can live for 300 years. Iroquois Indians used elm bark to make canoes, ropes, and utensils. Early settlers called the tree "the lady of the forest."

