

DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES? OUR SURPRISING SURVEY



navigatortrends



A Ruff Workout

Make this New Year's resolution: help your pooch shed pounds

Is your precious pup beginning to look more like a furry sumo wrestler? About 40 percent of American dogs are overweight or obese, putting them at risk for heart disease and other ills. Excess pounds usually result from overeating and underexercising, but losing just 10 percent of body weight can dramatically improve your pet's health, says Tony Buffington, D.V.M., veterinary professor at The Ohio State University. Canines have varying needs, so first check with your vet to ensure your pet's weight-loss program is on target. Then stick to these strategies.

Guard the goodies Don't use food as a love offering. When you see those sad eyes, play a game or give a warm pat.

Monitor munching Buffington says many people don't know how much their pets eat. He advises owners to track their dogs' food intake and ask vets about the proper serving size.

Double the drills You and your four-legged friend can work out in tandem. The Thank Dog! Bootcamp in West Hollywood, California, offers a fitness program for owners and pets (888-364-4256; www.thankdogbootcamp.com). At home, step to Bow Wow Bootcamp's audio program (MP3 files, \$19.95; 866-752-3538; www.bowwowbootcamp.com). —Christina Ianzito

Calling Dr. Feel-Good

HOW TO KEEP FINANCIAL STRESS FROM HARMING YOUR HEALTH

YOU COULD LOSE more than money in today's economy: new research shows that anxiety associated with financial uncertainty can endanger your physical and mental health. Eight of ten Americans now say the economy is a significant source of stress—which contributes to ills from headaches to heart disease—according to a recent survey from the American Psychological Association. And 52 percent are lying awake at night—bad news, since sleep loss is linked to higher blood pressure and lower immune response, the National Sleep Foundation notes.

Some behaviors add to the damage: almost 50 percent of Americans say they overeat or eat unhealthy foods to

cope. But you can conquer anxiety without compromising health, says Stephanie Smith, Psy.D., a Colorado psychologist. Here are some surprising suggestions for better outcomes.

Crack a joke You may not want to smile after seeing your 401(k) statement, but laughing helps suppress stress-related hormones, says Joel Goodman, Ed.D., founder and director of The Humor Project Inc., which promotes the positive power of laughter.

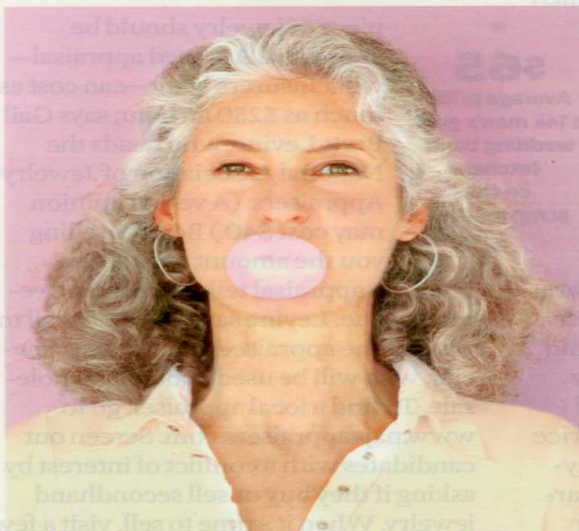
Focus on fragrance People sleeping in a jasmine-scented room reported lower anxiety upon waking, research from Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia shows.

Walk it out Brisk walking for 30 minutes on most days can reduce blood pressure and boost mood, Mayo Clinic notes.

Blow a bubble Avoid comfort foods; instead, chew gum—this helps to relieve stress and reduces snacking, studies in Australia and the United Kingdom found.

Get artsy Listening to music while breathing slowly lowered blood pressure in a study by Italy's University of Florence. And people visiting an art gallery over lunch had a drop in the stress hormone cortisol in a study by the UK's University of Westminster.

—Leslie Quander Wooldridge



BRAIN BACKUP

On the Web

Yearning to make senior moments a thing of the past? Now you can, with online services that kick in when your memory fails. For instance, if you're tired of scribbling memos to yourself—and then misplacing

them—visit Evernote.com. Just send text or images to the site (by e-mailing, sending a photo from your cell phone, or copying online material into your account) and the service stores and catalogs your data. You can save to-do lists, photos, and even copies of business cards. Basic service is free; you'll pay just \$5 monthly

for a premium account, which includes more storage and faster image recognition.

And if failure to remember appointments is your personal Waterloo, try Snoozester.com or WakeUpLand.com. Both websites send timely reminder calls in the spirit of a doting concierge (monthly plans start at under \$5). —L.Q.W.