



FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS

"One of life's most painful moments comes when we must admit that we didn't do our homework, that we are not prepared." ~ Merlin Olsen

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The Blood Pressure Blueprint

I just finished reading the book [The Blood Pressure Blueprint: The Holistic Guide to Defeating Hypertension](#) by Ellie Campbell DO, MS (5 stars and a Should Read). It is very comprehensive and I highly recommend it, as it can help you avoid The Silent Killer.

Campbell begins, "High blood pressure is the primary contributor to [the] number one cause of death: cardiovascular disease. Hypertension ravages those parts of your body most dependent on a brisk blood supply—the heart, brain and kidneys....if blood pressure is even slightly elevated, these organs get strangled with restricted blood flow, and you become at risk for heart attack, strokes and chronic kidney disease, leading to dialysis."

Campbell says that if either of the numbers in your blood pressure are too high, it can lead to serious organ damage. Once you turn 40, for *each* increment of 20 over the ideal systolic number (120) or increment of 10 over the ideal diastolic (80), "the risk of *death* from a heart attack or stroke doubles."

One important thing I learned is how to make my blood pressure properly. It should be taken just once right after you've walked into your doctor's office, so the reading will be artificially high and the doctor can then prescribe you a drug to lower your "high" blood pressure so that hot young drug company rep will keep bringing in a wagon full of free

lunches for his staff every day (I've seen this). Just kidding! Seriously, one thing I was doing wrong was not elevating my arm to the same height as my heart. Also, your back needs to be supported by a chair because using your back muscles can increase your BP by 5 to 10 points.

BTW, I use an Omron cuff that takes three readings of my blood pressure over about six minutes and then pushes the average (along with my pulse rate) to an app on my phone, where I can view the trend over time and share it with my doctor.

Campbell explains why it's crucial to avoid having a heart attack in the first place: "In the first year following a heart attack, 35% of men and 47% of women will die."

She also includes an entire section called "How Following Doctor's Advice Can Raise Your Blood Pressure." For example, beta-blockers (a commonly prescribed drug) "have been shown to reduce the production of melatonin....If you do not get deep, restorative sleep, your blood pressure will go up."

Campbell also recommends meditation (which she calls "one of the most powerful strategies for wellness") and breathwork: "Learning to control your breathing has been scientifically shown to lower blood pressure, blood sugar, improve attitude, memory and brighten your mood." [Dr. Andrew Weil](#) was once asked what his most important wellness strategy was, and he replied "Learning to breathe."

Campbell explains why it's important to lose fat: "...our body has learned that the best way to handle [foreign chemicals] is to hide them away from the bloodstream by depositing them in our fat. The more fat we carry, the more likely we are to be burdened with environmental toxicity....many chronic diseases can be traced specifically to how many toxins are buried in the person's fat stores....The toxins stored by the body are one of the worst metabolic triggers for the hormonal dysregulation that results in diabetes."

Consequently, "We need to spend time *daily* on detoxification strategies to undo what our world is doing to us," including sweating and using your lymphatic system to drain the toxins via bouncing or a periodic lymphatic massage.

For decades, we've been told that cholesterol is bad for our health; thankfully, there have been many prescription drugs that have helped us to reduce this deadly scourge. But Campbell writes, "We now know that cholesterol is actually good for us. People with the highest cholesterol live the longest...as long as that cholesterol is not corrupted.... [Uncorrupted] cholesterol is used to make cell membranes, new brain cells, hormones and even Vitamin D. If it gets sugar coated, rusted (or oxidized), or is the wrong shape or size, it can start the process of atherosclerosis or hardening of the arteries [which] can lead to hypertension, heart attacks, strokes...and kidney disease."

Campbell emphasizes the importance of good dental health: "Killer mouth bacteria are often a factor in many health conditions....Teeth that have previously had a root canal are devitalized. These dead or 'zombie teeth' can cause havoc in distant parts of the body and can be a source of infection and inflammation....Your mouth plays a significant role in

chronic inflammation, leading to other systemic diseases, including vascular disease, diabetes, dementia, cancer, miscarriage and even autoimmune diseases.”

Campbell recommends trying to breathe through your nose, which increases your nitric oxide (“the microscopic miracle mouth molecule”) levels, after which “everything gets a little better, from sleep to blood pressure to your sex life.” When evaluating a patient’s cardiovascular health, the first question Campbell asks is, “How is your mouth health?”

Interestingly, Campbell writes, “...mounting medical evidence tells us that obsessive-compulsive and [anxious] thoughts are profoundly influenced by the bacteria living in your GI tract. So getting the gut healthier can improve your mental health....By consciously focusing on happiness and gratitude, you can affect your microbiome.”

Campbell discusses the critical role of movement in good health: “Biochemically, the signal transduction pathways triggered by body movement profoundly affect human physiology. Healthy responses that balance inflammation and anti-inflammation, oxidative stress, immune responses, oxygenation, cellular repair, blood sugar metabolism, and hormonal signaling are all triggered by exercise that involves full body movements, muscle strength, flexibility and endurance.” She recommends recasting exercise as “movement and play,” which I mentioned in [last week's issue](#).

Campbell recommends walking at least 7,000 steps per day, which “profoundly benefits your health.” Middle-aged adults who do this have a “50 to 70% reduction in mortality over ten years.”

Another way to lower your BP is to urinate if you need to go, as having a full bladder can increase it by 10 to 15 points, which can last for several hours.

Two chapters at the end of the book examine Anxiety Management and Parasympathetic Biohacking, including Shinrin-Yoku (Japanese “forest bathing”), which can lower your cortisol stress hormones by over 15%.

After reading this book, I’ve been able to reduce my blood pressure to a good level. I think one of the primary reasons is that I practice [gratitude](#) and try to maintain a general demeanor of equanimity. (One of [my daily affirmations](#) is “What’s great about this situation?”) I also think that taking garlic twice a day (I use the Blood Pressure Health version of Kyolic Aged Garlic Extract) as well as (organic) Hawthorn has helped my BP.

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