SHORT BREAK: MYANMAR

YANGON

Officially opening its doors to the world only several years ago, Myanmar is the only ASEAN country that’s still truly untouched. Those who visit soon will get to see Myanmar’s authentic culture and historic architecture before fast-paced gentrification slowly erases its unique identity. Yangon was the capital of Myanmar prior to the establishment of its new seat of power at Naypyidaw, and is now a great place to start a Burmese adventure.

HIPSTER YANGON

Thanks to the growing number of design-conscious visitors, it’s not too difficult to find a place to enjoy the interior, sip some coffee and more importantly, top into free wifi. Some popular trendy cafes include Press Office Cafe with its airy interior, Coffee Club Yangon with its reasonably priced drinks, the chic Rangoon Teahouse, and the swanky Bar Bao.

For an eclectic hawker experience, check out 19th Street – aka Chinatown – where you’ll find vendor after vendor of charcoal grills inspired by Burmese, Shan, and Rakhine cultures.

There are plenty of contemporary art galleries, notably Pansodan Scene, situated in a colonial-style building, as well as Gallery 45, housed in a beautiful colonial teak house.

Yangon also has becoming night life spots – like the painfully chic speakeasy The Blind Tiger, the upscale Japanese restobar Gekko, and The Lab, a trendy tapas bar.

HISTORIC YANGON

Yangon is dotted with gold domed pagodas that make great photo ops and landmarks. The Shwedagon Pagoda is Yangon’s most iconic structure, with its golden dome topped with a 76-carat diamond. If you know which day of the week (and time) you were born, it will determine which part of the pagoda you make offerings in.

After decades of relative isolation, Yangon has not developed much, and thus has retained the largest number of listed colonial buildings of any city in Southeast Asia. The area along Strand Road and lower Pansodan Street is like an open-air museum of faded colonial grandeur – check them out before they’re converted into luxury hotels.

> The Secretariat is an iconic Victorian building where Aung San, Aung San Suu Kyi’s dad, was assassinated in 1947. Public outcry has stopped the sale of the building to hoteliers; instead, there are plans to turn it into a cultural centre.

> Soefer Building, built in 1906, features interior fixtures from England and Italy. Once the city’s most prestigious addresses, it had one of the first electric lifts in the country but today it’s caked in soot and moss. Also known as Lokanat Building, today it’s home to contemporary art galleries and Gekko.

> Strand Hotel, Myanmar’s version of Raffles Hotel, built in 1901 along the Yangon River. You can have afternoon Burmese tea here, with its popular Mohninga noodles and homemade pastries.

ACCOMMODATION

It was once difficult to find decently-priced accommodation in Yangon, but these days there’s an emergence of comfortable hotels (from $525), as well as affordable hotels (from $550). With the influx of luxury hotels though, you can expect top rooms to go for US$4,000 a night.

GETTING AROUND

Hop on the Yangon Circle Line, an old railway that does a 50km, 3-hour loop around Yangon – at parts the scenery is very rural. The train leaves from Yangon Central Station (at 45 minutes), and costs a dollar, but you can jump off at any station. There’s an interesting pagoda close to Insein station, the halfway point.

You can also take a 15-minute ferry from opposite the Strand Hotel to get to Dala village; hire a trishaw or motobike to get around this time-warped area where people still pump water from wells.

GETTING THERE

There are direct flights (3 hours) from Singapore to Yangon on Tigerair, which is currently offering an all-in return fares from S$233 (excluding booking fee, price before 10% discount code applied). Use promo code GOREN10 to enjoy 10% discount off for travel period 2 Oct to 30 Nov 2016. Promo code valid till 31 Oct 2016. Book now with Tigerair at www.tigerair.com.
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TRIPPING IN TAIWAN

TAICHUNG TOP SPOTS

TAICHUNG WESTERN DISTRICT

NATIONAL TAIWAN MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS (NTMoFA)

Taichung’s third biggest city — at 50 minutes from Taipei by high-speed train (NT$750), or 2.5 hours by bus (NT$250) — has a lot to offer. You get down to it and explore on foot, there are pockets of totally unexpected art galleries, cafes and night markets all over town, with some of the city’s best concentrated in Taichung’s trendy western district. There’s even a word that describes this area: wenqing (文青), aka “hipster”.

NTMoFA is the largest art museum in Asia with an extensive collection of Western, Ming, Qing and Japanese art, alongside the island’s biggest collection of home-grown local art. It’s a must for anyone who loves Taiwan’s unique design aesthetic, as it’s especially notable for its modern art.

Art isn’t all it offers either; try some bubble tea at the Rose House cafe or Chun Shui Tang Cultural Tea House; the latter actually invented this drink.

Entry to the NTMoFA is free, and the museum itself is a work of modern art with its industrial architecture and sculpture park creating optical illusions. The museum is a magnet for artsy types and plenty of trendy cafes have popped up nearby.

ZHONGXIN MARKET

Located opposite the museum in Zhongxin Market — it’s what you’d get if you crossed Melbourne-style coffee with ‘The Hare Runner’. A covered maze of alleyways, Zhongxin was a bustling wet market, but fell into disuse a decade ago. Over time, many residents left, leaving it a crumbling, rubbish-filled relic. All that changed when a group of local artists moved in, lured by low rent, and opened unique, non-profit art spaces that sit alongside the still-functioning wet market.

Today, its gritty warren of alleyways is a self-contained arts district, with galleries and cafes. Pipe Cafe specializes in gourmet nibbles, coffee, craft beer and cocktails like “Russian Milk Tea” (vodka ice milk tea) served up by its charismatic owner who grew up in the neighbourhood. There’s also the tiny Yen Cafe (月的咖啡), literally a coffee cart with alfresco seating, situated near a colourful public restroom itself an art piece. You can check out the studios, standing coffee bar/record store, Sailing Room and 1987, an eclectic restaurant with its jumble of furniture. Best close by 3pm, except for Yuan Sheng Cafe (源盛咖啡), which is a cafe by day and a bar after hours.

TENPOUSEN CAFE

The original bubble tea of Chun Shui Tang

The largest art museum in Asia

Explore the alleys of Zhongxin Market

Pipe Cafe

Restaurant
BEYOND TAICHUNG

WUQUAN STREETS

Just south of the museum is a grid of streets with one name Wuquan. Divided into various lanes the Wuquan 1st St, the green corridors - Art Park way - features plenty of cafes. Many hipster cafes have a minimum charge (1 drink), while some have 2-hour time limits.

Some of the cutest cafes used to be residential houses, including Oigo Restaurant and Sehra Crossing Cafe - both curated double-storey spaces featuring a country-chic interior and a patio. Ino Home has a cozy cafe on the ground floor, while the upstairs in a B&B - a concept that's gaining popularity in Taichung. Other notable spots include the C-Bun with its honey interior; steam punk-inspired Sutter & Brunch &Cafe, and Kuishinho dessert cafe with its gritty chic architecture.

There are also quirky themed restaurants like the Farmhouse-kio Pumpkin House, the Sidewalk-inspired Aturu Takimoku, and Sulu Sulu Munde Restaurant with its colourful Aboriginal interior.

XITOU FOREST

If you want to get out of the city for a bit of nenlinyu (森林浴), or 'Forest bathing', head to Xitou Nature Education Area, situated in the mountains near Lugu town, a 2-hour drive from Taichung.

This huge park has plenty of green areas where you can picnic, hike, or simply stroll. Plenty of trails crisscross the park, including the strenuous uphill Bird Watching Trail that takes you past 2 suspension bridges and the popular Giant Tree Trail which takes you through a bamboo forest - which looks like something out of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon - and a dense forest of tall red cypress trees which rise ramrod-straight, as if reaching for the skies.

Don’t miss the 180m-long Sky walk - at over 20m above the ground you are literally walking in the trees, where you can try and spot tree-dwelling animals. You can also hike all the way up Mt. Penghu - or go on the stairs from the observatory. Xitou can be explored in a day; you can even camp there NT$500/night, while admission is NT$200. Be warned, traffic from Taichung can get bad with tour buses, so many people stay in the area at Kingshan Resort, Leader Hotel, or the swanky, European-themed Le Midi Shitou.

GAOMEI WETLANDS

If the beach is what you prefer, the Gaomei Wetlands is one of the best spots in Taiwan for amazing sunsets. There, windmills and a lighthouse add to the charm, and if you’re hungry, the beachfront is lined with plenty of food stalls.

The draw here is not just the beach, but the wooden boardwalk that extends all the way into the ocean so it looks like you’re walking on water at high tide. However, when the tide subsides in the evening, the boardwalk reveals wildlife like fiddler crabs and mudskippers. At the end of the gangway, you can walk on the salt and sift through the mud for shellfish. There are direct buses to Gaomei from Taichung TSR and TRA stations.

MONSTER VILLAGE

Next to the entrance of Xitou Forest is the highly Instagrammable Monster Village - a quirky, open-air homage to cute, Japanese-inspired and monsters. Built in 2011 in memory of two friends, one Japanese (Kubota) and one Taiwanese (Tsai), the village consists of restaurants, cafes and shops, set within the surrounding forest, and sprinkled with statues of mythical Japanese spirits and red lanterns. A big draw is the fresh bread baked at Kubota Bakery (10:30am-2:30pm, daily). Admission is free, with regular shuttles to/from Taichung. Check http://en.taichantrip.com.tw/line/ for bus information (Santou-Xitou Route).

FORMOSAN ABORIGINAL

CULTURE VILLAGE

At a 1.5-hour drive from Taichung, this huge amusement park houses exhilarating park rides – like Jurassic Cruise and Caribbean Splash - alongside a traditional Aboriginal village where you can see authentic houses and costumes from Taiwan's many tribes like the Atayal, Rukai and Pai. You can spend a whole day here - take the Skyline cable car to the top, and work your way down. Don’t miss the popular Sun Moon Lake Ropeway which offers the best views of Sun Moon Lake.
CATS VS. DOGS: PICK A SIDE

Scores of personality tests can be found easily on the internet. There are the more well-known and reliable ones like the Myers-Briggs, and then there are those that claim to be able to tell you who you are from the color that you pick or the painting that you prefer. Forget these though, because accurate or not, they are all equally time-consuming. A simple way to reaffirm your personality is to just check if you self-identify as a cat or a dog person, or perhaps as “bi-petual,” or maybe even neither.

According to a study done in 2010 (by Gosling, Sandy, and Potter), there are differences in the Big Five Personality profiles of people who identify themselves as a cat person, dog person, “both” person, or “neither” person.

**CAT PEOPLE**

Out of the 4,500 people who participated in the study, cat people stood out by scoring the highest in neuroticism and open-mindedness, and the lowest in agreeableness and sociability. This evinces a kernel of truth that cat people tend to be more introverted and neurotic, like that crazy cat lady—but they are also experimental and unsociable, like someone who only listens to death metal and hates everyone. They may also be more sensitive and intelligent compared to a dog lover, and often seek affection more than companionship.

**BI-PETUALS AND THOSE NOT INTERESTED**

“Bi-petual” is the term coined for those who like both cats and dogs. More often than not, bi-petuals and dog people have very similar personality characteristics. Both are agreeable by nature and are hence more tolerant of other animals, unlike cat people, who usually cannot stand dogs.

For both bi-petuals and those in the “neither” group, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism scores were very similar or even the same as that of dog people. Only in sociability did the canine lovers appear to be higher than the “neither” or “both” groups. Unsurprisingly, bi-petuals have the same level of open-mindedness as cat people.

**DOG PEOPLE**

The polar opposite of cat people, those in the dog camp came in highest for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and sociability, and lowest for neuroticism and open-mindedness. Lively, accommodating, loyal, straightforward and diligent, dog people tend to follow rules closely and are often more conservative and dominant as compared to cat folks. They are better suited to be a team player, and seek companionship in pets. Not surprisingly, most well-loved world leaders—like Obama and Trudeau—have dogs.

Pet preference is a tell-tale sign of one’s personality because people generally prefer animals that have behavioral characteristics compatible with their own. Those who enjoy social interaction may favor dogs, while those who would rather read a book at home may be partial to cats.

Then again, it wouldn’t be all that surprising to see a cat person who is outgoing and a dog person who is shy. So while cat lovers may throw a hissy fit, and a dog lover may be barking mad, there’s no huge difference between the two camps. Maybe except for the neurotic bit.
Love 101:

The Chemistry Behind It

Ah, love. Those butterflies in your tummy, the warm blanket of happiness, and those blasted sweaty palms that you get — don’t worry, you can still hold hands if it’s true love. One doesn’t fall in love at first sight though, nor is it because someone’s the polar opposite of you.Instead, there’s a whole load of psychology and biology at play — yet, love is actually rather science. Sorry, romanticists.

Mind Games

Before you fall in love with someone, you have to first feel an attraction, which is influenced by several factors such as physical attractiveness, proximity, similarity and reciprocity.

People are attracted to partners whom they consider to be physically attractive, and while everyone’s definition of “attractive” differs, the matching hypothesis proposes that people tend to pick those who are as equally attractive as themselves. Being geographically close also plays a part in increasing the attraction, because of the ‘mere-exposure effect’, which refers to our tendency to develop a preference for things if encountered repeatedly.

It’s only natural too that having similarities will give you more to bond over and feel a sense of connection, such as chronic Netflix watchers bingeing together and caffeine addicts cafe-hopping with each other.

Lastly, we tend to like others who reciprocate our feelings, because that boosts our self-esteem, and gets translated by our brains to view that person favourably.

Moving past the initial attraction, factors that push one to maintain the relationship can be as surprising as being eco-friendly and as straightforward as responding to the partner’s interests. It can, however, also be as complex as having the same approach to relationships (ie. clingy or distant) and compatible ‘ego states’ that affect human behaviour which is determined by how nurturing, spontaneous or rational one is.

It’s in our blood

When experiencing love, the levels of feel-good chemicals like dopamine, adrenaline and norepinephrine increase. Dopamine creates an euphoric feeling, while adrenaline and norepinephrine are responsible for the hyper-awareness that allows you to notice the tiny details about your partner. Your brain also forms feedback loops, which basically deciphers whatever makes you feel good as a ‘reward’ and pushes you to seek more of what was pleasurable. In this case, this means that you would constantly want to see your partner.

MRI scans also indicate that when we fall in love, blood flow increases in the pleasure centre of the brain, which coincidentally is the same part implicated in obsessive-compulsive behaviours. What a fine line there is between a lover and a stalker! This explains once more why we obsess over our partner during the early stages of a relationship.

In the later stages, this behaviour fades because the body develops a tolerance to the pleasure stimuli. Instead, endorphins and hormones such as vasopressin and oxytocin floods the body, which creates an overall sense of well-being and security.

Of course, there are also more primal and evolutionary reasons that affect the attraction to our partners, such as the level of testosterone in men that women find irresistible when they’re ovulating.

So there you have it, that’s how we fall in love and ‘choose’ our partners. Sayings like “love at first sight” and “opposites attract” are purely myths, but don’t let the technicalities of love put you off. Life (or love) may not be a bed of roses, but it isn’t necessarily a bad thing; people often forget that roses have thorns.
How much do you know about your poop?

**Shape**
There are several shapes that poop can have. And yes, you guessed it, those shapes can give clues about your digestive system’s health.

- **Pebble poop:** When your poop has the shape of pebbles and passed in separate, hard lumps, it means that it has stayed in the intestines for too long.
- **Firm poop:** Another sign of constipation is the “firm poop” – basically, poop in the shape of pebbles glued together. It means that it stayed in the intestine too long, but not so much as to come out as separates pebbles.

**Frequency**
There is no recommended amount of times we should poop per day. Some people go once, others might go once every few days. Only in extreme cases is frequency indicative of problems, such as pooping more than 5 times per day or less than 2 times per week; in these cases, the intestines and the liver are not working as they should. However, the general rule says that as long as you feel comfortable, the situation should be fine.

- **Cracked stool:** Poop can have the normal sausage shape, but with cracks all over it. This “cracked stool” is indicative of a poor diet and sedentary life.
- **Regular poop:** Regular poop is usually the shape of a sausage and contains the right amount of nutrients, minerals and water so it will remain intact when flushed. The larger the diameter, it means the more fibre you took.

**Colour**
Poop is not only brown. It can take on many different shades and colours, each indicative of a particular situation.

- **Brown:** when the shade is mostly like a piece of milky chocolate, you are in great shape. This is the perfect colour for poop.
- **Green:** It can be green if you are eating too many vegetables or if the food moves too quickly through your digestive system.
- **White:** In this case, the liver is probably not producing enough bile which is the substance that gives poop its typical brown colour.
- **Black:** If your poop is black, you may have internal bleeding in your upper GI tract, or are ingesting high levels of minerals, or meds like anti-depressants or codeine. Rather than play WebMD and self-diagnose, it’s best to call a doctor if your poop was black more than once.

Also, an average of 1,000 different species of bacteria are expelled from our body when we poop. If you really want to be sure of what’s going on, analysing it could give you an exact idea of what is populating your body at the moment. You probably never knew your poop had so much to tell you.
Elvis Presley made headlines when he died—not because he was only 42 years old, but because he was found dead while on the toilet, of a heart attack. Or was it? Upon further investigation, it was discovered that the King died on the proverbial throne with a bowel that was twice the normal size, filled with 5 months of backed-up stool.

To the average person, the fact that his excrement wasn’t...excreted can very simply be chalked up to a (very) bad case of constipation.

**No Guts No Glory**

Elvis wasn’t the only person to suffer this unfortunate end, and his cause of death wasn’t constipation, per se.

But what constitutes constipation? The official definition of chronic constipation is when you usually have less than three bowel movements a week. While chronic constipation is rarely life threatening in itself, it can be symptomatic of much bigger problems.

Congenital conditions like Hirschsprung Disease give some people lifelong cases of constipation, while a 2015 study showed a statistically significant link between chronic constipation and serious gastrointestinal disorders such as gastric cancer, colorectal cancer and diverticulitis.

Constipation can also be due to disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), or a symptom of diseases like diabetes or even depression. Hormones can also affect your gut, along with increased caffeine consumption or medication.

And that’s not even an exhaustive list of conditions. If anything, constipation tells us just how sensitive our gut is.

**Damned If You Do, Damned If You Don’t**

Medical concern arises not so much over chronic cases, but acute ones—i.e. impacted bowel movements, with red flags such as severe abdominal pain and swelling, fever and nausea.

Constipation sufferers find it difficult to defecate, and some even die attempting the deed. It’s called defecation syncope, a fancy name for breathing deeply, compressing air in your lungs, and using the pressure to force out a poo. The maneuver causes a drop in blood pressure, which if prolonged, can lead to heart attack or stroke, even in otherwise healthy people.

Not pooping can also be hazardous; it not only means your waste gets absorbed by your colon and intestines, but the sheer size of internal poop is enough to dangerously shift your internal organs around.

Some people also have a psychological fear of using the toilet (example: some people refuse to use public toilets), so they hold it in until their bowels become enlarged, causing damage to other organs. This happened to a teenager in the UK who went 8 weeks without a bowel movement and suffered a fatal heart attack as a result.

**Poop Envy**

As of 2006, an estimated 12% of people worldwide suffered from constipation—that’s an astounding 790 million people. And guess which population has the highest levels of constipation? Asia Pacific.

A major reason is our diet—the average Singaporean eats 12-20 grams of fibre a day, or less than half the recommended 25-30 grams. With a predilection for white rice, white bread and hawker food with limited veggies, it’s no wonder our collective digestive system is crampy.

To help combat this, you need an active, healthy lifestyle, taking in 8-10 glasses of water daily, and more foods high in fibre, like wholegrain and wholesome. More legumes and less red meat; more fruits and nuts, less dairy.

It is best to seek out professional help before a minor issue snowballs into something serious. Like Elvis once said, you can shut it out for a time, but it ain’t goin’ away.
An artificial intelligence era, in the way that was already predicted in ‘I, Robot’, is apparently coming, as AI research is progressing everyday.

While the 20th century saw machines take over our physical endeavours, the 21st will see robots developing more cognitive abilities. This will enable them to do things like perform surgery by themselves and needless to say, they will be able to think, create and understand. The technology has advanced so far that in some law offices, robots have already replaced lawyers.

THE INTUITIVE, CREATIVE ROBOT

A company called Catapora has already developed a machine able to recognise the feelings in an email or the “subtle changes in style”. This means that robots have already gained a sense of intuition – and this has even made its way into music. A man named David Cope invented algorithms that are able to compose a classical music piece so rich that some music experts did not believe at first that it was not written by a human.

Basically, we are experiencing what human beings have been anticipating for centuries: the third technological revolution of artificial intelligence. However, man has also wondered about the dark side of this change. Remember all the movies where robots try to take over the world? Well, it actually could happen.

AI AND THE IMPACT OF HUMAN PROGRESS

This catastrophic fantasy could become fact if we truly let robots control our lives and especially, our brains. For instance, if humanity chooses to live surrounded by machines that think for us, what will become of human progress? Why would we educate our children at all if there are robot lawyers, engineers and architects?

Another big question surrounding AI is how it will change education. Will this field be entrusted to computer networks, or remain in the hands of human educators?

Already there is a brain drain of AI lecturers (and even students) from prestigious universities, lured to tech giants like Google to develop AI technology. But if these brains are developing AI, who’s teaching the next generation how to program future AI? Will it be the robots?

Also, there is a thing that machines and robots can’t have: feelings. Or can they? Recently a robot named Pepper, developed by Aldebrann Robotics, was touted as a robot with emotions. The reaction? It was sold out to households in seconds. Are we really comfortable letting machines run and handle our lives? Imagine all your household chores handled by an efficient robot housekeeper that you can’t control.

It’s important to keep in mind that this hi-tech revolution is something which can enrich, but at the same time, could ruin us all. Already we are seeing that a reliance on tech has made us that much stupider – think of all the zombie-looking Pokemon GO fans, or anyone who gets lost because they can’t read a physical map, or anyone who can’t do simple math without their phones.

YAY OR NAY

Sooner or later the question of ever more advanced artificial intelligence will become one of ethics – should we let it control hostage situations, emergency rooms, or classrooms where the human intuition plays a big role? Much like the creation of dangerous weapons, the most important thing to any advanced technology is the setting of boundaries and rules.

The Siri that was just a talking voice in our phones may soon step into a robot body. Are you ready to see her face?
Printing at home has never been easy. You either run out of ink halfway, or get presented with low-quality pictures and photos that ruin your portfolio. Besides, getting up from your bed to reach for the computer is just such a hassle. Given these frustrations that we've all experienced before, here are some printing hacks, courtesy of the Canon PIXMA Ink Efficient E560, that will make your life a whole lot easier.

FOR THE WORKAHOLICS
With the increasing use of technology in classrooms today, lecture slides, revision notes and assignments are often saved in our laptops. This is probably even more so for workaholics, which makes having a physical copy of everything an absolute must.

Printers with double-sided printing and extra efficient ink mean that you won't have to manually reverse the paper or constantly replace ink cartridges, thus making it a lot easier to be kiasu (without worrying about cutting down too many trees), and to annotate on your notes. Relief from computer-induced eye strain is an added bonus. The E560 is also a much cheaper alternative (only 2 cents per page) compared to printing shops in your neighbourhood and school, where the lowest price is typically 3 cents per page.

A $4 Latte = 300 printed pages

FOR THE PERPETUALLY BUSY
If you're always rushing for time and have no patience to wait for your computer to start up wireless connectivity that allows you to print from your mobile devices is ideal. Using the free Canon PRINT Inkjet App, photos, documents and even web pages can be printed or scanned conveniently at your fingertips (literally).

Connect and print from your tablet and mobile via WiFi

The app helps you avoid the annoying situation of running out of ink mid-print too, by checking the ink status via the Remote User interface. Additionally, with Google Cloud Print, you can access Gmail and Google Drive via your phone or tablet, and print items from there. This print-from-anywhere mobility is extra useful for saving precious time when you're hurrying back home to print documents that you forgot you needed.

FOR THE CREATIVE TYPES
Sifting through a photo gallery for that one photo consumes much time and effort. If your gallery is not properly organized, with My Image Garden software, photographs can now be sorted according to Calendar, Event, and People views.

On top of that, you can enhance your photos by applying various fun filter effects such as Fisheye, Miniature, and Soft Focus. To get your creative juices flowing, a wide range of templates for crafts, gift cards, and other artful things that can be downloaded and printed for free from the Creative Park and PIXMA town websites.

The Canon PIXMA Ink Efficient E560 is available in Popular bookstores and selected schools' bookstores.
BY VINCENT TAN

BEWARE THE PSYCHOPATH

From the cold-blooded stare of Hannibal Lecter, to the flamboyant murders of Heath Ledger’s Joker, the psychopaths of Hollywood have long fueled our nightmares.

And yet, despite being noticed from the dawn of modern psychiatry, much about psychopathy still remains a mystery. Are psychopaths all that we see in the movies?

EMPATHY. WHERE ART THOU?

Chillingly, if you told a highly psychopathic person to imagine pain inflicted on someone else, their brain activity wouldn’t show empathy, but rather pleasure. And with such an emotional disconnect, it is not surprising that criminal psychopaths have few scruples about hurting victims.

Throwing their emotional hollowness in sharp contrast is the cluster of highly attractive personality traits that psychopaths commonly exhibit. Confidence, coolness under pressure, charm and determination; their condition is closer to Lecter’s manipulative cunning than the disordered insanity of Ledger’s Joker.

However, this mental condition also primes psychopaths for success in several highly competitive professions.

According to Oxford psychologist Kevin Dutton, the top four jobs with the most psychopaths are: CEO (#1), lawyer (#2), television and radio (#3), and sales (#4), with up to 4% of CEOs estimated to be psychopathic – four times higher than the percentage of psychopaths in the population as a whole.

ARE YOU ONE?

Psychopathy exists on a spectrum, so you won’t find the same symptoms in every psychopath. But here are some common traits:

1) pathological lying
2) an inflated sense of self-worth
3) poor self control
4) unwillingness to take responsibility for actions

If you’re thinking, “Wait, that sounds just like (insert hated frenemy/co-worker/boss’ name here)!” it’s not a label to be tossed around lightly. While results may not be accurate, there are tests for psychopathy, like the Hare Psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R) and the Levenson Self Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP).

Another common trait for psychopaths, is that they are very goal oriented. If it’s to be a Fortune 500 CEO, they go after it 110%. If it’s to collect human heads in jars in their freezer, then they do that 110%. Their motivation may or may not make sense to anyone else but them.

ARE PSYCHOPATHS... PSYCHOS?

People assume that psychopath = crazy. In reality, since up to 1% of the population is psychopathic, it’s a matter of society labelling psychopaths with abnormal goals vs. those with logical goals (eg. a successful CEO vs. a weird guy who collects dead pigeons). The key is they manipulate people to get what they want, and use their higher-than-average intelligence to organise it all.

Rather than treat the term ‘psychopath’ as ‘criminal’, look objectively at what it is. We can’t tell who is a psychopath any more than we can read minds, but whoever they are, it’s clear that not all psychopaths are bonkers, and that’s a step forward in understanding this none-too-rare condition.
THOUGHTS ON BEING BEAUTIFUL (ACCORDING TO THE DECADE)

1910 | The Gibson Girl
The Gibson Girl was tall, had a long neck, sloped shoulders, large bosom, and wide hips accentuated by a tiny waist, created by a corset. Think Victorian outfits.

1920 | The Flapper
Gender roles were changing and gone was the notion that feminine was beautiful. Androgynous, trendy women known as Flappers had bob haircuts and slender, lean builds who were brash, smoked, drank, and drove cars, as seen in ‘The Great Gatsby’ film.

1930 | The Soft Siren
Influenced by Hollywood, the waist returned, along with slight curves and a hint of shoulder. Actress Mae West and Shanghai ‘calendar girls’ were famous for sporting this figure.

1940 | The Star-spangled girl
During the post-war era, the ideal shifted from the softer, rounder look of the 30s to broad, boyish shoulders. Women then had to be tall and leggy like Rita Hayworth.

1950 | The Hourglass Pin-Up
The soft voluptuousness of leggy, curvy women returned, and skinnier ladies were shamed the same way mass media shamed bigger women now. The ideal body type became embodied by pin-up girls and sex symbols like Marilyn Monroe and Lin Dai, the “Asian Elizabeth Taylor”.

1960 | The Twig
Being thin and leggy was in during the Swinging Sixties, with high-fashion model Twiggy famous for her small frame and androgynous look. Audrey Hepburn was another famous icon during this era.

1970 | The Disco Diva
A bronzed, toned body to rock either the disco fashion or athletic look was what all women strived for during this decade of gender equality, with icons like Cher. Without the use of corsets, however, the 70s saw a rise in anorexia.

1980 | The Supermodel
As the athletic body type became more popular, Jane Fonda’s Workout videos started an aerobics craze. Women strove to become toned and slim like supermodels Cindy Crawford and Naomi Campbell, and mile-long legs were desirable.

1990 | The Heroin Chic
“Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels” was a famous quote by supermodel Kate Moss, whose waif-like appearance in her 1993 Calvin Klein campaigns sparked the trend for pale skin, flat chests, angular bone structure, and an extremely thin frame.

2000 | The Buff Beauty
This was an era of visible abs, airbrushed tans, and Brazilians. Women aspired to be like Victoria’s Secret Angels, such as Adriana Lima and Gisele Bundchen - tall, toned, slim, leggy, and busty.

2010 | The Booty Bae
Today, buns are all the rage. Mainstream pop culture now emphasizes bottoms, with songs like Anaconda and Booty, and everybody is (overly) familiar with Kim K’s ass. Top that off with toned arms, a bigger hip-to-waist ratio, a thigh gap, and you’ll have #bodygoals.
OLD WIVES' TALES ABOUT THE HUMAN BODY

"The human body is the best picture of the human soul," espoused philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. It appears that some countries and cultures obey this adage more strictly than others, coming up with a whole list of superstitions and customs related to the physical body. Here are some of the more bizarre ones.

Egyptians believe the heart is the most valuable organ, not just in life, but in the afterlife as well. When a corpse is being mummified, embalmers will remove all of the internal organs from the body – all except the heart, which ancient Egyptians believe is needed by the deceased in the Hall of Judgment. There, the heart is put on a weighing scale against the Feather of Maat (truth and justice); if the person proves to be sinful, his heart will be devoured by the demon Amon.

Having your life-giving organ eaten by a creature called The Devourer is one thing, but at least the Egyptians will not accuse another of witchcraft if they did not have nice brows. Many other cultures, for instance those in Germany, Iceland and Denmark, believed that people with unibrows were deceitful, bad-tempered, and might even be witches or vampires. Western superstition says that those born with a unibrow would suffer from ill fortune and premature deaths.

But it is another story altogether in Ancient Greek and Roman cultures, where unibrows were prized as a defining characteristic of the most sought-after women. In fact, having a unibrow was so desired back then that women frequently used dyed goat’s hair to give themselves one. The fortunate ladies who already had one would go one step further and darken them with powdered minerals or soot.

Beware of that man
Be he friend or brother
Whose hair is one colour
And moustache another.

There seems to be some strange preoccupation with facial hair amongst several cultures. One American rhyme dictates:
Beware of that man/Be he friend or brother/Whose hair is one colour/And moustache another.

The only thing worse than having different-coloured hair and moustaches was if either of them was red – redheads or red-bearded men were allegedly the most untrustworthy. This is why in the Middle Ages, artworks often depicted Judas, Jesus’ betrayer, as having red hair. In fact, it is said that red-haired men are so full of evil their fats could be used to make poison.

However, not all badly folklore is so pessimistic. Anyone bemoaning wrinkles on their face might want to think twice; apparently, the number of wrinkles represents the number of children one will have in the future. Another method a person can use to foretell the size of his brood would be to study the number of veins branching out from the main vein in his wrist.

These old wives’ tales about the various body parts have now more or less faded into obscurity in modern-day society. Aren’t you pleased we no longer lived in a world where people will be burned at the stake for having unibrows or red hair?
BY MARTA CIARAGLIA

WHEN GENETIC ABNORMALITIES DON’T MEAN SUPERPOWERS

EVERYBODY KNOWS ABOUT X-MEN, SPIDERMAN AND THE FANTASTIC FOUR. RIGHT? WHAT DO THEY ALL HAVE IN COMMON? SOME GENETIC MODIFICATIONS THAT MADE THEM THE SUPERHEROES WE KNOW. IF ALL THE RECENT MARVEL, DC, ETC. MOVIES HAVE YOU DESENSITISED INTO THINKING THAT CRAZY GENETIC ABNORMALITIES = SUPER POWERS, THINK AGAIN.

GENES ARE FUNDAMENTAL: WE ARE ALL SHORT, LIGHT OR DARK BECAUSE OF THEM. THEY CAN ALSO BE THE CAUSE OF DISEASES. A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION CAN BE AFFECTED BY CERTAIN RARE DISEASES THAT DRAMATICALLY CHANGE THEIR PHYSICAL OR MENTAL ABILITIES – AND NOT FOR THE BETTER. UNFORTUNATELY, THEY HAVE NO SUPER POWERS AND MOREOVER, THEY ARE OFTEN CONSIDERED “WEIRD” AND CONSEQUENTLY ISOLATED BY SOCIETY MOST OF THE TIME.

THERE ARE MANY POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS – MORE THAN WHAT YOU PROBABLY EXPECT – AND THESE ABNORMALITIES ARE TRANSMITTED FROM PARENT TO CHILD.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND SYNDROME

Also known as Todd’s Syndrome or Lithium hallucinations, this disease is a disorienting neurological condition. People affected by AWS can experience microopia and macroopia (where objects appear smaller or larger than they really are), or opopsis and teleopsis, where objects appear nearer or farther than they really are.

This syndrome can appear from early childhood, and if untreated, can be lifelong. There are several potential causes: frequent migraines, a brain tumor, psychoactive drug abuse, prolonged sleep deprivation or abnormal electrical activity in the brain, causing an abnormal blood flow to the parts of the brain that process visual perception.

PICA DISORDER

Pica is a mental disorder which can have some terrible consequences on the body. This disease causes the person to crave non-nutritive things like metal, paper, hair, poop, ice, etc. Of course, eating these affects the stomach, and the entire digestive system sooner or later.

Generally, a person is diagnosed with Pica when these cravings appear during adulthood, and last more than a month. It mostly affects pregnant women and people with mental disabilities, such as autism.

The cause of Pica is usually a mineral deficiency (e.g., iron deficiency), or celiac disease; currently, Pica is considered a mental disorder.

VAMPIRE DISEASE

Despite what you might think, sufferers don’t drink human blood. Medically known as Porphyria, it got its nickname due to its symptoms and consequences: aversion to sunlight and garlic, shrunk gums that make the teeth look more prominent, and reddish or purplish-colored urine.

The cause is actually a haemoglobin malfunction; in this case, a part of this molecule called Haem causing bad blood oxygenation.

BLUE-SKIN DISEASE

Lacking any of the powers of Mystique, or even the Beast (what are his actual powers anyway?), the medical name of this disease is Methaemoglobinemia, and yes, people with this genetic defect have blue skin tone. Methaemoglobin is a molecule contained in haemoglobin which is responsible for oxygenating blood.

Usually, people have less than the 1% of methaemoglobin in their blood; while for those with methaemoglobinemia, the level can be 10-20%, causing conditions like blue skin and chocolate-coloured urine.

The most famous case comes from a family from Kentucky: the Fugate family. The methaemoglobinemia was transmitted within the family for six generations, from 1800 to 1960.
Most of us are pretty aware of the importance of eating healthy, however, there is still much to learn about what we eat, and we’re still far from knowing everything about food.

That’s why we are often quick to jump onto the bandwagon of any particular food that claims to be miraculously beneficial for our health. Health supplements supposedly containing the necessary vitamins, proteins, and amino acids have always been touted as essential to our health.

Ultimately these supplements were full of surprises, and not all good ones – from the garlic extracts which should have prevented people from getting several type of cancers, to weight loss pills which should have ensured a dream body without ever working out. What’s going on?

Proof is in the Pudding

Famous pills for weight loss were often publicised as containing only all-natural substances; most of the time though, they were full of chemical products not actually meant to be in the human body, and turned out to be very dangerous. In fact, 90% of them contained substances such as Rimonabant and Sibutramine which affect the cardiovascular system. In many countries, these pills are now considered illegal. Also, many users suffered diarrhea and vomiting, leading to serious dehydration.

Another kind of “magic pill” ensured muscle gain. Men especially went crazy over the possibility, but unfortunately the reality was quite different. Among these pills, testosterone boosters were the favourites, promising increased muscle mass and strength. It turned out that not only were they not delivering those results, they were lowering good cholesterol levels and causing breast enlargement – not surprisingly, they were removed from the market in 2005.

Prohormone DHEA survived the 2005 ban, but only thanks to lobbying efforts. The substance claims to improve strength and body composition, but some studies have revealed no significant modifications. Also, DHEA reduces good cholesterol and can negatively impact the heart.

When it comes to products such as extracts, science still isn’t able to verify the miracle claims. In many cases, they are not useless, but they also don’t deliver impressive results or health benefits. Generally, extracts and vitamins can’t treat most conditions or prevent the body from any of thousands of possible diseases; most of the time they have only a few specific benefits.

For instance, vitamins B and C are purported to relieve stress and cure colds respectively, but there is no evidence to suggest their efficacy as supplements. Then there’s acai berries – extracts of which are claimed to treat arthritis and aid weight loss. No study has supported these results, but that doesn’t stop the power of belief making it fly off the shelves.

Moral of the Story

Every health product on the shelf is made to sell – and the best way to do so is by purporting miracle benefits. This practice dates back to snake oil charmers of days past, and today health supplements are a multi-billion dollar industry.

If you have a well-balanced diet, these supplements aren’t necessary, unless you’re advised by a medical professional to take them. Ultimately, we shouldn’t believe everything we read or hear, no matter how outrageously tempting it sounds, especially when our health is involved.
THE DARK SIDE OF CROSSFIT

BY DISHI GAUTAM

CrossFit, the short, high intensity workout, has been making the rounds in fitness circles for a while now. Some major sports brands even market CrossFit-specific gear. A typical workout session lasts about 45-60 minutes which is broken into 3-4 sections including a warm up, a strength/skill set, and an intense "Workout of the Day" (usually a combination of burpees, deadlifts etc.) that's about getting in the reps. It ends with a stretching session.

Because it provides a fast and effective workout, even people who work long hours are incorporating it into their routines. Some CrossFitters have not only lost significant weight and gained muscle, but are also cured of lifelong ailments like diabetes, hypertension and sleep apnea. But as this workout gains popularity, a number of problems surface.

UNTRAINED TRAINER

It has come to people's attention that not all trainers are well qualified. There's big money in CrossFit these days - memberships typically cost members about $5300 a month - and with so many boxes (CrossFit gyms) opening up all over the country, the demand for coaches may be more than the 200+ qualified local trainers available.

An inexperienced coach can accidentally programme back to back workouts that use the same muscle groups the same way, so you can't recover properly. Or they aren't able to properly scale the programme in relation to one's experience. Even Level 1 trainers aren't specifically taught aspects of injury or anatomy, so an unqualified one may not be able to pick up on signs that participants are in trouble. What's more, according to Singapore coaches, many participants have never worked out their entire life before joining.

INJURIES

Almost all exercise routines leave one exposed to injuries if done incorrectly, but CrossFit is known to cause frequent injuries, especially if there's too many reps or too hard a workout. Box jumps and sudden movements commonly cause tendinitis, while squats and overhead presses may lead to lower back pain, and not to mention, equipment issues.

A serious phenomenon associated with CrossFit is "Uncle Rhabdo" (or rhabdomyolysis), a kidney disorder. It occurs when exercising excessively (usually combined with not hydrating enough) causes muscle fibres to break down and get into the bloodstream, causing kidney failure as they become unable to remove waste.

THE ADDICTION

CrossFit addiction is real, just like any other addiction. It can eventually overtake a person's self-control. Regular CrossFitters swear by the muscle burns and calf-stings, calling them all "worth it."

The comradery too, can be addictive - people tend to enjoy something more when in a group creating a cult-like following. According to a study people who crave control are particularly attached to very intense workouts because it makes them feel empowered. All this could lead to an addiction that can cause physical and emotional imbalance.

While the effectiveness of CrossFit may outweigh its downsides, the risks are undeniable. Judging from the many CrossFit boxes populating Singapore, it is a full-on fitness craze. The main driving philosophy is "go big or go home", and while fitness is a good thing, many doctors and scientists believe those behaviors approach (and sometimes cross) the line into dangerous territory.
THE MORE YOU EAT

Obesity is an alarming health issue, and has been rising steadily for those under 40. Studies have shown that obesity in Singapore has increased from 7% in 2004 to 12.9% in 2015.

Obesity can lead to several health complications, such as cardiovascular diseases like heart failure and stroke, musculoskeletal disorders and even colon cancer. An obese person is also more susceptible to Type 2 Diabetes: for 150 calories consumed from sugar, diabetes risk increases by 11 times. A recent study by the Asian Diabetes Foundation found that 3 in 10 Singaporeans under 40 had diabetes.

According to research in the Journal of Sports Medicine, overeating sugar and carbohydrates is what’s causing obesity, not a sedentary lifestyle, and the current environment of readily available cheap (and unhealthy) foods makes it difficult for some to make the switch to healthier options.

While some people on the tubby side are content with their weight, many suffer mental issues, either from body shaming, bullying, or low self esteem. Phrases like “I eat because I’m upset, and I’m upset because I eat” rings true for many.

For those willing to change, a healthy diet alone will make a big impact. Exercising definitely helps - with the proliferation of fun runs, Instagram, and Pokemon GO, it doesn’t take much persuasion to get someone out of the house.

BY NATALIE KWAN

FOOD WOES
THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

THE OBSESSION WITH BEING THIN

On the other end of the spectrum, people with eating disorders abstain from food entirely.

Anorexia Nervosa, an eating disorder common in females in their teens and early twenties, is associated with self-starvation, the lack of appetite and an unhealthy obsession with being thin.

Anorexics consume a dangerously low amount of calories, falling way below the recommended daily intake, effectively starving their bodies, dropping to dangerously low body weights. Anorexia often leads to fatigue, fainting, frequent mood swings and disruptions of the menstrual cycle, and many have a gaunt appearance.

Then there’s bulimics with their compulsive binge-eating followed by purging. Like anorexia, bulimia is typically caused by a poor body image and an unhealthy obsession with weight.

Bulimics often restrict themselves from certain foods only to find themselves binging on them soon after. Overwhelmed with shame, they find ways to get rid of the food. Common ways include induced vomiting and laxative abuse. Induced vomiting causes tooth enamel erosion due to stomach acids going the wrong way, while laxative abuse can lead to peptic ulcers, chronic irregular bowel movements and pancreatitis.

Those with eating disorders often have a distorted perception of their own weight, and have a strange preoccupation with food. Triggered by anything from depression to a need to have control in their lives, warning signs to look out for include a sudden loss of weight and refusal to eat in public.

Eating disorders are on the rise in Singapore, with KK Hospital reporting a third increase in a 5-year period and treatment facilities seeing more younger patients these days. Eating disorders can kill: some 20% of anorexia sufferers prematurely die from complications like cardiovascular illness and suicide.

Current therapies focus on the importance of families and schools working together to help patients to overcome these disorders.

With so many well-captured pictures of mouthwatering dishes on Instagram, it’s hard not to feel hungry even just an hour after lunch. However, for sufferers of eating-related issues like obesity, anorexia and bulimia, food presents not a fulfilling action but an internal battle of control.

It’s ironic how food, the very fuel that we run on, has become a double-edged sword for us in the First World. It might seem silly, how something that should be celebrated and savoured can spark such adverse reactions and pose such daunting problems to people, but perhaps food is like a frenemy, and we all have a love-hate relationship with it.
VIDEO GAME ADDICTION: HOW DANGEROUS IS IT?

ASIA

In 2015, Taiwan saw two cases of death caused by too much gaming. One man was found collapsed in an internet cafe after having spent five days straight playing. A week later, another collapsed after three days, gaming without proper food or sleep, and was only found after his dead body had started to stink. They were not the first – gaming has claimed many lives due to prolonged sessions, with one case in China lasting up to 27 days straight.

This addiction can also be dangerous for the people around them, as was the case of 9 obsessed gamers in Korea who left their infants to starve to death because they were too “busy” playing video games.

U.S.

On the other side of the world, people addicted to video games tend to show more violence, making them perpetrators of terrible massacres. First person shooters (FPS) allow gamers to “kill” on screen – something audiences can confuse with real life.

In 2012, James Holmes – who was addicted to violent RPGs – went on a killing rampage in a movie theatre. Violent game addict, Nathaniel Gringo, killed his parents and his three siblings, while Michael Carnes shot and killed several girls in a prayer group. He killed the girls with one shot each, as players in video games do to maximize kill rates. Some even reenacted game scenes, as Jacob Roberts did with Grand Theft Auto.

THE ADDICTIVE GAME

Unfortunately, all these events are not pure coincidences, but evidence of a problem. Research by the Illinois Institute For Addiction Recovery reiterated what we all know – that video games are highly addictive.

First of all, that’s what these games are designed to be. As with every product, the aim is to increase sales, so games are created to challenge players enough to keep them playing. Some games are more addictive than others. For instance, multiplayer games (MMOs) have no ending, loading the gamer to become more and more addicted with every level. Also, once an “interact” with other players, letting the gamer escape from real socializing.

In Real Time Strategy (RTS) games, the player has the impression of “playing the role of God” as they are in control of the environment and the destiny of the characters. The consequence is, again, the slow but steady loss of contact with reality.

It’s not just shooter games either – Candy Crush has its addicts, as well as Pokemon GO. Both are hooked in players to get to the highest level or gather the most monsters.

THE REALITY

Too much gaming can damage one’s health as much as social relations; it’s also proven that exposure to violent games increases one’s tendencies for violence. Those with mental conditions like ADHD, depression and social phobia are also more susceptible to game addiction.

The anticipation of PlayStation VR, the Hololens, and the Oculus Rift means that games are getting more accessible. Already beating the film and music industry in revenue, it’s only set to get bigger; which is why even YouTube is jumping on the bandwagon with YouTube Gaming. The question is, are we going to be a nation of gaming zombies?
Yoga: Curing Ailments of the Mind and Body

By Violet Koh

The ancient art of yoga has been around for millennia. And while what many of us think of as yoga today involves trendy studios and expensive sport's clothes, yoga itself is grounded in something that's both incredibly physical and deeply spiritual.

There's a reason dedicated yogis can do amazing things, with backs bent backwards, and balancing on one hand. And that's because, at its core, yoga is all about balancing your mind, body and soul. The word yoga itself means 'union' in Sanskrit. Despite its ancient, religious roots, it has something valuable to offer busy people like us today, trying to balance studies, sleep, relationships and emotional wellbeing.

Healing your Mind

Firstly, practicing yoga helps you improve your concentration by keeping your mind in one place as it is focused on the breath, especially during balancing postures - this is the dhārana.

Secondly, the conscious breathing in yoga - called prānāyāma - combined with certain poses makes breathing deeper, helping you decrease blood pressure and hypertension, and increase blood flow to your intestines, improving digestion.

Lastly, practicing yoga increases self-esteem and self-acceptance. One of the most common issues students struggle with is body anxiety, so instead of focusing on weight and eating habits, yoga emphasizes on ridding yourself of negative thoughts by making you aware of your limitations and potentials so you can focus. It also develops a positive body image, as it improves your posture and balance, leading to better bodily functions and a more toned physique.

Healing your Body

Once a yoga practitioner is in the right frame of mind, yoga can become a tool to address the physical ailments like migraines, neck pain, and insomnia. For example, a study by the International Journal of Yoga suggests yoga, when paired with conventional care, decreases the frequency of migraines, with relatively simple poses like downward dog and upward facing dog (both part of the Sun Salutation) taking pressure off the neck, engaging and stretching the complementary muscle groups to relieve tension, and improving short-term blood flow to the brain.

Climbing Aboard

For anyone considering yoga, the first step is identifying which type of yoga fits you. There is no one-size-fits-all style - it depends on your personality and likes. However, it is best to start off with a gentler style such as Hatha or the slightly more intense Bikram.

Next would be scouting for classes, as sessions in popular studios can be expensive. However, there are affordable options like local community clubs for $5 or less.

Alternatively, Hindu temples like Sri Layan Sthi Vinayagar (Koeng Salk Road) and Sri Thendayuthapani (Tank Road) regularly offer open classes for free.

The bottom line is the ancient art of yoga has a lot to offer busy students, including a disciplined way of life, along with innumerable physical, emotional and spiritual benefits. But there's a catch. Yoga will ask something from you in return - your time, dedication and open-mindedness. If you're ready to start that relationship, then yoga could be for you Namaste.
SHED THAT EXTRA KILO: Surprising Calorie Facts

BY ZELENE LEE

Ah, calories – you either hate them or love them. The key to our health, weight, and how we fit into our clothes each year; you’re not alone if you’ve ever felt frustrated over your weight gain despite diligently counting your calories. While most of us are aware of the simple math that is calorie output = calorie input = weight loss, counting calories is alas, not as straightforward as it seems.

COUNT THE CORRECT calories

It is understood that the greens and lower-fat food are healthier dietary options that can bring you closer to your body goals – vegetables provide 0.65 calories/gram, while carbohydrates and proteins have 4 calories/gram. On the other hand, fats give you twice as much – 9 calories/gram.

If you’re planning to watch your weight by counting calories, avoid eating high-fat food, such as bacon for breakfast, which will probably provide you with more than half of your necessary calorie intake for the day. Plus, a few strips of bacon are less likely to make you feel full as compared to, let’s say, replacing your breakfast with carbohydrates and proteins like an egg omelette stuffed with mushrooms, green peppers and onions. The latter will curb cravings and snacking, but will also allow room for more caloric intake later in the day.

Caffeinated drinks – like coffee and green tea – not only have zero calories, they can even increase our metabolic rate by up to 13%, so we burn calories and fat faster.

TAKE YOUR time

Your appetite and calorie intake is largely controlled by hormones. After eating, your gut normally suppresses the “hunger hormone” called ghrelin, and releases other hormones that let your brain know that you’ve eaten. This will then reduce your appetite and make you feel full, which helps you stop eating further.

However, this process takes about 20 minutes, so eat slowly for your brain to receive the “I’m full” signal, in order to avoid a higher-than-necessary intake of calories. Research has also found that chewing more helps you burn calories (11 calories/hour), and eating slowly makes you feel full longer.

GO AU naturel

While cooked food seems like a healthier option because nobody wants salmonella, eating more raw food is actually rather healthy too, as they contain less calories.

That’s right, cooking makes energy in starch and protein more available to us, thanks to the heat that breaks down and reorganises originally indigestible glucose and protein into absorbable bits of energy. Raw food – like celery, leafy veggies and grapefruit also make your body work harder at digesting, which burns calories, and they’re packed with fibre to make you feel full.

Plus, consuming cold food or water actually burns more calories to warm them to 37°C.

KNOW yourself

Having said all that, calories are like fuel, whether they’re from proteins, carbohydrates or fats – your body requires them in order to function. Even at rest, your body burns calories to maintain cardiac function and repair cell structures. However, each person’s required caloric intake varies accordingly to age, gender, height, body frame, hormones, and level of physical activity, so you should never compare your calorie intake and output with anybody else’s.

Reduce your intake if it’s exceeding your output if you must, but there shouldn’t be a need to drastically cut down the amount of food that you normally consume just because some welf-model says so.
Death and Dying: WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PHYSICAL BODY

Death – it’s scary, it’s unpredictable; is it the beginning of the end? Medical science defines death as when a person is pronounced brain dead and decomposition of the body begins. So if that’s the definition of death, then what happens next?

The Body after Death: WHAT HAPPENS

When your heart stops pumping blood, no more oxygen is delivered to the cells in the body, causing it to change colour from ashen (pale) to (eventually) black.

After about 3 hours, rigor mortis occurs, as the body’s muscles stiffen and tense due to the buildup of lactic acid. However, rigor mortis only occurs for the initial 24 hours. After that, the muscles begin to relax, leading to the emptying of both bowels and bladders. Lungs expel fluid through the mouth and nose.

The body’s organs also start breaking down, although at different speeds according to their levels of lactic acid, thereby opening up the opportunity for organ and tissue transplants.

The body then becomes bloated due to bacteria creating various gases (yes, bacteria fart too), especially around the gut where bacteria is concentrated. Decomposing bodies take on a green hue and a foul odour. Finally, the body turns black and dries out as the gases are released. If preserved well, a body will look like a mummy. Otherwise, maggots can consume up to 60% of a body in 7 days.

Embalming: PRESERVING IT ALL

Embalming is the temporal preservation of your remains. Legs and arms are massaged to relieve rigor mortis, and embalming chemicals are injected into the blood vessels while surface embalming helps restore the skin damaged as a result of accident, decomposition, or disease.

Embalming also helps maintain the body’s natural appearance for funerals, with different religions and cultures differing in their embalming practices. For instance, Muslims regard the body as a sacred object and hence do not practice embalming before burial, which is usually done as soon as possible, while Zoroastrians and some Buddhists believe in sky burial, letting nature do away with the remains.

The Future of Us: CRYONICS

Cryonics is the preservation of bodies using extremely low temperatures with the hopes of resurrection in the future where advanced medical technologies can provide a clean bill of health.

Should you join a cryonics facility, an emergency team would stabilise your body the moment you are pronounced legally dead, to ensure that there is sufficient oxygen and blood flow in the brain before reaching the cryonics facility. Blood is also prevented from clotting by packing your body with ice.

Removal of water from your body’s cells and replacing it with a cryoprotectant prevents the formation of ice crystals in organs and tissues. Afterwards, your body is cooled on a bed of dry ice until it reaches -130°C, and then inserted head down into a container, placed in a metal tank with liquid nitrogen at around -196°C. Preservation of the brain, or neurosuspension, costs US$50,000 while preservation of the body costs US$150,000.

In 2015, a 2-year old Thai girl, Mathern Naroaratpong, became the youngest person to be cryonically preserved after her battle with brain cancer. While her parents hope to have their child brought back to life, the question of ethics surrounding this ‘medical zombie resurrection’ is ongoing.
BEING A MOZZIE MAGNET: THE SCIENCE BEHIND IT

by Wong Si Jia

After a typical overnight camp, numerous itchy welts run up the length of your arm, red and unsightly. You ask your friends about it, to which all of them answer that no, they have not been bitten. You then curse the tiny and annoying buzzing creature - this mosquito - under your breath, and for the umpteenth time, wonder exasperatedly, just why mosquitoes are so attracted to you.

Fortunately, you’re not alone - 20% of the population are more susceptible to mosquito bites, and this can be attributed to various reasons.

FACTOR 1: BLOOD TYPE

Not that much of a surprise, huh? If you find yourself covered in bites often, you may be of Type O blood, the one that appeals most to mosquitoes. Type B is next, but individuals in this category are twice as likely to be bitten as compared to the former, while A’s the least preferred blood type.

New, how would a mosquito be able to distinguish one group from another? Turns out, we’re the ones doing the job - there exists a chemical in our body that tells of our blood type, which is released by 85% of the population. Needless to say, the above group are more vulnerable to mosquito bites than the other 15%.

FACTOR 2: HIGH BODY TEMPERATURE

Fancy jogging down the street or playing soccer in a field? Be warned, you may stand a higher chance of becoming a target! This is because mosquitoes use body heat to locate the exact spot to bite before landing on unsuspecting victims.

The process is made easier by active or overheated individuals, whose blood lies nearer to the skin surface throughout their body. Coupled with their high body temperature, mosquitoes are able to make quick work of the heat and determine the optimal area to bite into.

So, the next time someone comments on the frequency at which you get bitten, you can give a tongue-in-cheek quip that it’s because you’re hot - quite literally!

FACTOR 3: CONSUMPTION OF BEER

Surprise, surprise! Beer can be good company not only for you during long and relaxing nights, but for mosquitoes as well, as a Japanese study found. With the findings later supported by another French research, it’s believed that guzzling beer raises body temperature and the alcohol content to one’s sweat, causing drinkers to be bitten more often.

Interesting as it is, there seems to be little to no evidence showing a relation between alcohol consumption and mosquito landings, so kick back and savour the taste of booze against your tongue without the irritation of mosquito bites on your skin. For now, at least.

Mosquitoes are pesky insects that just don’t quit until they get hold of your blood. To keep them at bay, it’s recommended to use repellents containing the chemical DEET, or lemon eucalyptus oil as a natural alternative. Now you know what to pack the next time you go hunting for Pokémon along the neighbourhood hiking trails!
It's said that money makes the world go round, but yet money can't buy happiness. So what exactly can be exchanged for this ideal mental state then? According to the United Nations World Happiness Report, the variables that affect a person's happiness are: the GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption. Based on their aggregate scores on a scale that runs from 0 to 10, here are some of the happiest and unhappiest places on Earth.

### Happiest

1st **DENMARK (7.526)**

Ranked first for an impressive third time, this Scandinavian nation remains the undefeatable champion thanks to its life expectancy of 80 years (global average is 73), enviable welfare system, world’s smallest national wealth gap, free healthcare, healthy work-life balance, and low perceived corruption.

![Denmark Flag](image)

2nd **SWITZERLAND (7.509)**

Beating Denmark in 2019’s rankings, this strong contender boasts an average life expectancy of 82.8 years, multilingual citizens, and breathtaking alpine scenery. It also has effective institutions, healthy public finances, sound tax regime, excellent infrastructure and reputable education system.

![Switzerland Flag](image)

3rd **ICELAND (7.501)**

Ranked as the most peaceful nation on Earth on the Global Peace Index, Iceland offers relatively low income tax, free health care, and free public education to its citizens, securing this far-flung nation a third spot in the report.

![Iceland Flag](image)

4th **NORWAY (7.498)**

Famous for its fjords, mountains, and midnight sun, Norway topped the Legatum Institute’s Prosperity Index (2013 and 2014) and is the fourth happiest country in the world. With a vibrant culture, its sense of community is probably the main reason behind its happy people.

![Norway Flag](image)

### Least Happy

1st **BURUNDI (2.905)**

Facing severe political unrest and widespread violence, Burundi is at the bottom of the list, with its citizens having an average life expectancy of only 51 years and a GDP per capita of just $1,877.

![Burundi Flag](image)

2nd **SYRIA (3.069)**

Syria’s civil war has already killed more than 250,000 people in over 5 years. Resulting in poor access to education, healthcare, and shelter. However, Syria scores relatively much higher in GDP per capita, life expectancy and generosity than the other 3 least happy countries.

![Syria Flag](image)

3rd **TOGO (3.303)**

While Togo’s economy grew 5.6% in 2014, its government is frequently accused of human rights abuses, suppressing democracy, and corruption. Life expectancy is 58 years, and in 2011, 28% of the population lived on less than a dollar a day.

![Togo Flag](image)

4th **AFGHANISTAN (3.360)**

It is of no surprise to see war-torn Afghanistan on the list as it continues to suffer from widespread civil unrest. Off-limits to travellers of most nationalities, the war has obliterated much of the country’s infrastructure and displaced over 900,000 people.

![Afghanistan Flag](image)
BY CHAN CHOY YU

ASIA'S CHANGE OF HEART:
THE FIGHT FOR GENDER EQUALITY

We've all heard jokes about Asian parents and their strict rules synonymous with Asian culture, such as the infamous Asian Grading System where an “A” stands for “Average”, and a “B” stands for “Bad”. Hierarchical, patriarchal, less open with affection and with a strong emphasis on face and honour; there isn’t anyone who doesn’t recognise the traditional Asian family.

BACK THEN

Patriarchy has ruled relationships for centuries. Men were biologically the stronger counterpart in a couple, and it made sense then that they were to venture out of their nests to hunt for food, while women took care of their dens and offsprings. As time passed and society modernised, there was a rise in gender equality in the West that remained elusive in Asia. This was because of the traditional Confucian teachings of subordination seeded deeply into Asian culture, and the age-old battle between the East and the West, which prevented the spread of social views vital for equality between the sexes to develop.

It didn’t help that sons were favoured as they were viewed as more advantageous to a family in terms of monetary and face value — they could help out in farms, run family businesses, contribute to the household income, receive dowries, and carry on the family lineage. In Asian countries like China and India, the majority of the population were poor and could not afford to feed that many mouths. Not forgetting a large national population that led to the one-child policy in China, female infanticide became an unfortunately common occurrence, because to put it bluntly, raising sons was more “worth the investment”.

As a result, by 2050, there will approximately be

60 million
more men of marriageable age than women in China and India.

GENERATION NOW

Today, families and relationships in Asia are no longer as patriarchal as before. As the world globalised, traditional Asian culture got infiltrated with western values and the family landscape changed. Women can now join the workforce without being frowned upon and receive higher education if they so wish. Jobs predominantly taken on by females such as teaching and nursing are no longer as looked down upon and men are increasingly wanting in; male-dominated workplaces that are also often higher-paying are extending more recognition and acceptance to women, from finance and business operations to medicine and science.

As education levels and financial independence rise, women are also marrying later. Mirroring the West, many wealthier nations like Japan, Singapore, and South Korea, to name a few, have women marrying at ages 29-34, and even sizeable populations of women who aren’t marrying at all.

Almost a third of Japanese women and over one-fifth of Taiwanese women in their 30s are unmarried; in Bangkok 20% of women aged 40-44 are single.

WHAT IT MEANS

Even with all the progression and changes in the typical Asian family unit, it cannot be said that patriarchy has taken a backseat yet. Glass ceilings still very much exist, and being a househusband is still taboo. Women might be allowed to go out and earn their keep, but society by and large still expects them to continue managing household affairs.

Until Asia is able to graduate from battling with gender inequality to figuring out gender neutrality (that’s a whole new ballgame), ageing populations, slower economic growth, and even an increase in crime rates — yes, marriage actually socialises men and lowers levels of testosterone and criminal behaviour — are just some things that Asia has to deal with.
OUTBREAK: EPIDEMICS ARE WORSE THAN YOU THINK

When we hear about Ebola, Yellow Fever, Zika and so on, we are speaking about the so-called Emerging Infectious Diseases (EIDs). These epidemics are catalysed by a fast growing outbreak that affects many people almost instantly and within a city. However, when they are not contained properly, these viruses can break the geographical boundaries and become pandemics. This is not something you didn’t know, anyway. What we don’t really talk about, is the social and economics impact that such epidemics have. Some of you may remember the huge economic burden and social impact that the H1N1 virus had in Asia. That isn’t an isolated case.

ZIKA

The latest epidemic is Zika. The virus causes a slight fever, headaches and sometimes a rash. The disease doesn’t last more than a few days even though the infected person remains contagious for almost 6 months after.

While some cases have been registered all over the world, the area largely hit is South America, and economically speaking, the Aedes Aegypti-borne disease will damage their tourism. In Brazil, there has been less than the usual number of tourists during the carnival season and it’s already impacted the attendance of the Olympic Games.

From a macroeconomic point of view, Zika could have long-term effects, too. The government is already asking women to delay getting pregnant, so the Brazilian birth rate could decrease throughout the next few years. For a country, this means having less labour resources – however, this remains a possibility and not a certainty at the moment.

EBOLA

This virus is a combination of several different viruses and, even though the primary source is not isolated yet, scientists think it could come from bats. It appeared in Guinea in 2013 and affected Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2014.

Ebola caused not only many deaths, but also a complete stop of the economy of these countries which had just started to build their system after the recent restoration of peace and democracy.

Basically, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia are countries populated mostly by farmers. After Ebola, these farmers weren’t able to sell their products like they did before due to the dwindling economy. Less children were sent to school because their mothers were afraid, and also because their families were no longer able to afford the payments.

YELLOW FEVER

In Africa not so long ago, another virus returned: Yellow Fever. This disease had been suppressed for decades, but a few years ago, it became an epidemic throughout several African countries.

The economical consequences of Yellow Fever were not very different from the ones caused by Ebola, but the main difference was that Yellow Fever hit more cities, while Ebola affected the countryside. So, tourism, as well as restaurants and public services, were suffering.

Also, this disease had a particular social consequence – the population started to isolate those infected. These folks remained isolated even after they healed despite being told by specialists that they were of no risk to the public.

Epidemics negatively affect the body and society equally. Basically, the victims aren’t just the infected, but also those who are healthy. That’s why epidemics aren’t just about health scares – it’s much worse.

BIOHAZARD
Alcohol is that substance that can give you an immediate euphoria as much as a consequent headache the morning after, and it doesn’t act like this because of a special karma punishment: this happens because alcohol affects our body as much as our mind.

**UNINHIBITED**

**EUPHORIC**

**RELAX**

**BLOOY**

**ALCOHOL AND THE BRAIN**

Basically, alcohol is both a stimulant and a depressant which affects the brain chemistry by acting on neurotransmitters - parts of our mind that send messages to the rest of the body. In particular, the neurotransmitters altered by alcohol are glutamate, an excitatory ability to increase brain activity and energy level, and GABA, which reduces the activity level of our mind and calms everything down.

Alcohol suppresses the release of glutamate, resulting in a slowdown of the brain highways and at the same time, improves the production of GABA, making us more relaxed. Where does the euphoria come from then?

Our brain has a special area called the “reward centre” where all the pleasurable activities are registered. We are able to recognise something pleasant thanks to dopamine, a substance produced when a certain activity or feeling makes us feel happy or excited. We, alcohol is able to increase the production of dopamine and that’s why when we drink, there is a certain euphoria and excitement in all we do.

Also, drinking makes us feel less inhibited. That’s because it affects the cerebral cortex - the area of the brain where consciousness and thought-processing happen. Alcohol works even on the processing of information so, after some drinks, we show a certain difficulty in thinking clearly.

**ALCOHOL AND THE BODY**

However, the brain is not the only thing affected by alcohol. Even the body can perceive both positive and negative consequences. All the good effects come from a moderate use of alcohol, while of course, the bad consequences arrive when the use of alcohol turns into abuse.

As for positive effects, several studies have proven that drinking one glass of red wine every meal (only one, and only during a meal) can contribute to reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease. This is because alcohol increases the production of high-density lipoprotein and HDL, which if combined with a high level of “good” cholesterol, can prevent heart disease.

Also, it could lengthen your life, as shown by some studies from the Catholic University of Campobasso which have demonstrated how drinking one drink per day could reduce the risk of death by 18%. It decreases the chances of developing dementia, diabetes and reduces the risk of gallstones by one-third. However, it’s specifically recommended to stick to the rule of one (or maximum two) drinks per day and during mealtime only.

**TOO MUCH ALCOHOL**

Obviously, over-consumption of alcohol can lead to some serious consequences: too much drinking can cause the liver to accumulate excessive fat, causing a “fatty liver”, which can lead to inflammation, better known as hepatitis. Alcohol can even bring on liver cirrhosis, when its cells are so damaged that they are not able to regenerate anymore.

For women, alcohol abuse can increase the risk of breast cancer.

Excessive drinking causes inflammation and internal bleeding of the stomach, undermines the heart by causing cardiomyopathy (the stretching and drooping of the heart muscles), as well as myocarditis and arrhythmia.

It’s impossible to determine if alcohol is more of a good or a bad thing. However, all the clues can lead us to only one conclusion: that moderation is key.
OUT AND ABOUT

RUNS

29 Oct | 5.30pm
Palawan Green, Sentosa
Tickets: $60 - $80
Skechers
Blacklight Run
Singapore

Less about speed and more about fun, Blacklight Run is from the U.S. and has grown to become the world’s largest night-time 5km, brought to Singapore for the first time by Skechers, there will be three Blacklight Run Zones along the course, each with a distinct colour - green, pink, orange - where runners/ walkers will be showered in UV Neon Glow Powder. DJs for the afterparty include DJ Automatic, who shared the stage with Kanye West in the U.S., and DJ Safe East, an exciting newcomer from Zouk. Register at http://blacklightrun.sg.

4 Sep | 7.45am
SAF Field (Changi Village)
Tickets: FREE, $28 - $45
Yellow Ribbon
Prison Run 2016

Organised to show support for ex-offenders as they fight against stigmatisation, the annual Yellow Ribbon Prison Run will feature a competitive run (10km), a fun run (5km), and a carnival that includes temporary tattoos, face paint, Zumba, and a band performance. Each run has different flag-offs and start points. All proceeds raised from the run will go to the Yellow Ribbon Fund, which supports rehabilitation and reintegration programmes of ex-offenders, their families and their children.

PRODUCTIONS

20 & 21 Aug | 9pm
The Playtent (200 Chiat)
Tickets: $15
Buds Theatre In-house Series 2: How to be Happy

How to be Happy is a play based on the topic of extramarital affairs, centering on Alicia and Nathan, who have been married for over 30 years. As their marriage goes stale, Nathan has an affair with a girl 10 years his junior.

SHIN GODZILLA

Shin Godzilla
(in Japanese)
(August 25)
Cast: Hiroki Hasegawa, Satomi Ishihara, Yutaka Takenouchi

An unknown source causes a catastrophic accident in the tunnels of the Tokyo Bay Aqua Line, leading to irreparable damage and massive flooding. An emergency cabinet meeting is ordered to salvage the situation and discover the cause of the accident. Soon after, a gigantic creature emerges and rampages through town after town, much to everyone’s horror. How will Japan deal with this gigantic “monster” that they know nothing about?

1 Sept - 30 Sept
National Gallery Singapore
Tickets: $15-$35
ART

The Tony Award-winning comedy, ART, is brought back by the Singapore Repertory Theatre (SRT) in collaboration with National Gallery Singapore. It explores the themes of what art, friendship and creativity are. The production features local theatre veterans Gerald Chew, Lim Yee-Beng and Rimesh Panicker, directed by Danny Yeo.

22 Sept - 2 Oct | 3pm, 8pm
National Library Building
Tickets: $22 - $72
Innamorati Two (唯二)

Sharing the same theme as Innamorati about the human spirit finding strength in adversity, perfection in imperfection, and passion for life, Innamorati Two (唯二) is premised on a different but no less compelling storyline from Innamorati. The spirited Mandarin musical also boasts self-penned songs by the entire cast.
THE ART IN YOUR HEART
WHAT YOUR ART PREFERENCE SAYS ABOUT YOU

Ever wondered what kind of person you are deep down? Whether you’re actually an Olympian in the making, or someone who could be the next John Green? Perhaps you might be an explorer craving for freedom, or maybe there lives a badass rebel, you just waiting to be set free.

To find out, here are some works from Singapore’s foremost master potter, Iskandar Jalil, a Cultural Medallion recipient and the first Singaporean artist to receive the Order of the Rising Sun from the Emperor of Japan. His works feature in many public and private collections worldwide.

PICK AN ARTWORK YOU LIKE BEST:

A

A A SPORTY FELLOW

You must be an avid football fan, just like Iskandar himself, as he expressed his admiration for Ghana’s and Cole d’Ivoire’s impressive teams at the 2006 World Cup. The heavy modelling of the features, which stand out prominently from the background, suggest tribal masks associated with continental Africa. Chances are, you already have a soccer match arranged tonight.

B

A SENTIMENTAL SOUL

Possibly inspired by a bajau Iskandar’s father once owned, this loose-fitting but not entirely casual traditional Malay costume is ornamented with five buttons, a stylised hem and a floral detail imprinted on the breast of the top. This work has a rough surface and earthy tones that juxtaposes the materiality of ceramics against the traditional form represented. Also, you probably cry at almost every movie, and even cry while reading books.

C

AN ADVENTURE SEEKER

From a potter’s wheel to another type of wheel, Iskandar’s works reflect the influence of quite another type of wheel. He has owned various motorcycles since the age of 18, such as a 1000cc Harley that he has ridden on countless journeys, including ones to collect clay from all over Singapore and Malaysia. It’s no surprise if you own one yourself, and if you’ve been bitten by the wanderlust bug (and proud of it).

D

A REBEL

The chair might be a metaphorical seat of power that was intended to be a light-hearted reflection on bureaucratic hierarchy in Singapore. The chair’s position at the apex of the work literally suggests the very top-down model of administration and bureaucracy that Iskandar is critical of, just like how you are critical of trends and refuse to do being something just because everyone else is. You also do not get the hype for Pokemon GO.

Like Iskandar Jalil’s works?

To discover many more relatable and interesting works, including “tuna sashimi“ and an old school biscuit tin, ISKANDAR JALIL: Kembra Tanah Liat (Clay Travels) is the first exhibition to map the works of one of Singapore and Southeast Asia’s most prominent ceramic artists, Iskandar Jalil. It also features works from as early as the 1960s, and relooks at how ceramics are an important thread in modern art history, through its reinvention of ordinary materials, pictorial idioms, language, forms and ideas.

DATE: 1 September 2016 – 28 February 2017
TIME: Sun-Thur 10am – 7pm, Fri-Sat, Eve of PIt, and PH: 10am – 10pm
VENUE: The Ngee Ann Kongsi Concourse Gallery & Concourse Gallery 2, Basement 1, National Gallery Singapore
ADMISSION: Admission to the Concourse Galleries does not require a ticket and is free
Our brains are truly amazing things. And while the oft quoted line about there being more synapses in the human brain than there are atoms in the universe is a fallacy, the fact remains our brains are infinitely complex, and not always logical. Here are some things that we do that surprise even ourselves.

**We’re Not as Intuitive as We Think**

Most of us would think that we know a lot about other people – even if we don’t know them personally. We assume that they’d like bingsu, football or Warcraft the same way we do. It turns out that we don’t, really. In many studies, people were asked 2 questions in response to a situation: what they think other people would do, and what they would do. Most of the time, they’re the same answers. But, that’s not always correct; in fact, you can do this experiment amongst your friends – some examples you can use include movie reviews or the age-old cat vs. dog argument.

Most people often assume others think the way they do because of our egocentric bias, and that’s dubbed by psychologists as a ‘False Consensus Effect’.

**Will You Help a Stranger?**

What would you do if you saw someone in need of help, and you’re close enough to attend to them? Your response, as it turns out, matters if you were alone, or with a bunch of other people.

And it’s nothing to do with you being a good samaritan vs. cold-hearted.

In a series of classic studies, it turns out that people are more likely to aid others if they were alone, but when other people are around them – especially if they’re not rushing to help – then the likelihood drops by half.

Nicknamed the ‘Bystander Effect’, researchers singled out 2 factors that affect this behavior: diffusion of responsibility where individuals don’t feel the pressure to act since the responsibility is shared; and social conditioning – if nobody reacts, then they feel they don’t have to (or feel it’s inappropriate to play the ‘hero’).

**We All Lie To Ourselves**

Here’s something that we all do regardless of intelligence. We tend to sometimes make ourselves believe in something just because we want to make ourselves feel good about it. Take smokers, for instance. They know that smoking is bad, but they convince themselves that their enjoyment outweighs the risks, or that the risks are overstated, or simply because they fear gaining weight if they stop.

This is what psychologists call ‘cognitive dissonance’ – when we believe in what we know isn’t true. We often base our action on our set of beliefs, and if our actions don’t match them, we have an internal conflict.

In the real world, it can be detrimental to our judgement.
You may have free will to do whatever you want as an individual, but when it comes to your reactions, it seems that your biology has already hard-wired your brain into certain, inexplicable patterns, making you do what everyone else does. No matter how smart you are.

**Little by Little**
Psychologically, **titration** is the idea that if something outrageous is done incrementally, you can convince people to believe in it. For example, if a random stranger approaches you and asks for a dollar – you hesitate, but then they reveal that they just lost their job. You give them a dollar, but then they go on to say that they had to take care of their elderly parent. You might be persuaded to give more. Then they go on to mention that their pet fish just died and they need to pay for a funeral. Eventually, there’s a saturation point when a lie becomes so outrageous that you rebel. It works if a lie starts small, but if they opened with needing money for a fish funeral, you would have walked away immediately.

Surprisingly, this ‘saturation point’ can be hard to reach, thanks to our gullible side. Because our brains are hyper-complex, there are numerous mitigating factors affecting people’s propensity to put aside reasonable doubts during titration. The instigator is going fishing for the most they can get out of you – it’s the same principle that makes people fall for love scams, where conmen persuade victims to part with their money little by little, before amounts snowball to tens of thousands.

**First Impressions May Be Wrong**
If you’re approached by someone in a uniform – say a police officer or an Apple employee – chances are you’d trust what they’re doing to be the correct thing. Our belief in authority figures extends beyond uniforms – we tend to trust those with fancy titles (like Dr, or PhD), or someone with the fancy trappings (like a sports car), or someone successful. Sometimes we tend to lose our rationality when it comes to these people because it only takes 1 second to evaluate their trustworthiness.

Same goes for attractive people – we tend to assume they’re more capable or more intelligent. This is considered the ‘**Halo Effect**’, when we assume that someone is successful simply because they’re attractive. For example, a teacher may assume a well-groomed student is more intelligent, or that good-looking employees may get paid more.

**Fear and Empathy**
It’s fair to say that the average human is decent and empathic. But what happens when you throw fear into the equation?

You may be familiar with the numerous shootings in the US – thousands of people empathised with the victims, sending them “thoughts and prayers”. But do they really empathise? With the threat of death so close to home, fervent calls to ban guns has actually done the opposite: people rushed to buy more guns. It seems their fear of having guns taken away overrides their empathy for the victims.

So, self preservation trumps altruism in most people – meaning ‘**kiasuism**’ is not uniquely Singaporean. And neither is ‘**kiasi**’.

**Ratting You Out**
In what may be the most interesting theoretical example of ‘**kiasuism**’ ever, the ‘**prisoner’s dilemma**’ is what happens when you pit logic against trust, and a fear of punishment.

You’ve seen it in countless cop dramas – interrogators who lack evidence try to get two accomplices to rat each other out. Since the accomplices can’t communicate with each other, they assume the other will act in their own best interest. The accomplices know that even if they refused to implicate each other, they wouldn’t be in trouble; ironically in most cases, they both talk, fully implicating each other. The dilemma itself is a theoretical ‘game’ that was developed to understand our often illogical responses to many potentially cooperative situations.
Do you know the liver from the spleen? How much do you know about the human body? Let Ah Boon be your guinea pig! What better way to relieve stress than to play doctor and learn about your insides at the same time. To start the game, cut out all the ‘body parts’!

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Single Player: the best way to play by yourself is to set a time – 1 minute should be more than enough.

2. Multi Player: have each person pick a body part of their choice, and put them into Ah Boon one at a time.

For more fun, close their eyes. Those who put the parts in correctly get a point.