

# In Touch with Extension



## Pause and Take a Breath: Take Care of Your Emotional Health

Submitted by Rachel Buenemann

### Know The Facts – Set Healthy Limits

As we try to navigate and adapt to Coronavirus, it is important to get up-to-date and accurate information from reputable sources for you and your family. Overconsumption of news and social media may add to your stress and anxiety, so finding the balance that works for you is key. Take a breath, and take care of your health.

### Connection

Take breaks from watching, or reading news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic can be upsetting. Being in a constant state of 'doing' can deplete us, leading to exhaustion. Give yourself permission to unplug and reset. Stay connected with loved ones through technology. Your phone, FaceTime, Zoom, Google Hangout, Skype, and Marco Polo are great apps to keep in touch. Promote a sense of community by checking on others where you can, either by phone or virtually. Enjoy this time to be with your family by playing games, working puzzles, coloring, etc.

### Mind

Our mindset can impact our overall health and wellbeing. Getting back to basics and establishing routines can help our emotional health and wellbeing. Staying present and being mindful of our thoughts, particularly negative thoughts about what the future may have in store. When you find yourself in this cycle of negative thinking, try taking a breath and bringing your focus back to the present moment. This is normal and it's important that we exercise compassion with yourself and others. Practicing self-compassion can reduce stress level and build resiliency. During this time, it's important to continue to do things that you enjoy. Perhaps there is an unfinished project or hobby that you can focus your energy on and feel productive. Listening to music, writing, drawing, painting, and other creative activities, can also be therapeutic and calming. If you feel overwhelmed and have difficulty coping, reach out to your doctor or a health professional.

### Body

During COVID-19, it is crucial to maintain your physical and mental wellbeing. Social distancing is the best way to prevent illness and avoid exposing others. This does not mean that you should avoid being active. Many gyms are closed right now, but some facilities and fitness instructors are offering virtual sessions and classes online. Friends and family may be able to exercise together virtually. To limit how much time we are sitting, it is important to get up and move around, walk in place, stretch, dance, do yoga or tai chi, any activity that requires movement. Spending time outdoors is calming. Try mindful walking by focusing on your breath, as your mind wanders, bring your focus back to your breath. Nourish your body with plenty of water and a healthy diet with foods that boost immunity, such as fruits and vegetables. Power down for quality sleep at night to rejuvenate for the next day.

Written by Community Health Engagement & Outreach Department of MU Extension

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## To Reduce Tick Encounters, Where You Dump Your Leaves Matters

Submitted by Sarah Havens

If you cleared fallen leaves from your lawn last fall, did you deposit them along the edge of your lawn, where grass meets woods? If you did, you might have unwittingly created an ideal habitat for blacklegged ticks.

In areas of the United States where ticks that carry Lyme disease-causing bacteria are prevalent, residential properties often intermingle with forested areas, and ticks thrive in the “edge habitats” where lawn and woods meet. While many homeowners heed the advice to clear their lawns of fallen leaves in autumn to avoid creating tick-friendly habitat in high-use areas, a new study on tick abundance in leaf litter says raking or blowing leaves just out to the forest edge is not enough.

“Our study showed that the common fall practice of blowing or raking leaves removed from lawns and landscaping to the immediate lawn/woodland edges can result in a three-fold increase in blacklegged tick numbers in these areas the following spring,” says Robert Jordan, Ph.D., research scientist at the Monmouth County (New Jersey) Mosquito Control Division and co-author of the [study published today in the \*Journal of Medical Entomology\*](#).

Instead, Jordan and co-author Terry Schulze, Ph.D., an independent medical entomologist, suggest homeowners either take advantage of municipal curbside leaf pickup (if available), compost their leaves, or remove leaves to a location further into the woods or further away from high-use areas on their property. “The thing homeowners need to keep in mind is that accumulations of leaves and other plant debris provide ideal host-seeking and survival conditions for immature blacklegged ticks,” says Jordan.

In their new study, Jordan and Schulze set up test plots on three residential properties in Monmouth County, New Jersey, in the fall of 2017 and 2018. Each property had plots at both the forest edge and deeper within the wooded area. Some edge plots were allowed to accumulate leaves naturally, while others received additional leaves via periodic raking or leaf blowing. These “managed” edge plots resulted in leaf-litter depths two to three times that of the natural edge and forest plots.

The researchers then compared the presence of nymphal (juvenile) blacklegged ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*)

and lone star ticks (*Amblyomma americanum*) in the test plots the following spring. In both years, the results for lone star tick nymphs were inconsistent, but the number of blacklegged tick nymphs in the managed edge plots was approximately three times that of the natural edge and forest plots.

“While we expected to see more ticks along lawn edges with deeper leaf-litter accumulation, we were surprised about the magnitude of the increase in ticks that resulted from leaf blowing or raking,” Jordan says.

Fallen leaves provide blacklegged ticks with suitable habitat via higher humidity and lower temperatures within the leaf litter, as well as protection from exposure over winter. Previous research, meanwhile, has shown that people more commonly encounter ticks on their own properties than in parks or natural areas. And that, Jordan says, is a major reason why he and Schulze have been evaluating a variety of residential tick-prevention strategies in recent years. Landscape management is an important—and affordable—strategy to keep ticks at bay, he says.

On properties with considerable leaf fall, the best option would be complete removal of leaves from areas most frequently used—such as lawns, outdoor seating areas, and in and around play sets,” Jordan says. “If this is not possible or practical, leaf piles should be placed in areas least frequently used. Where neither of these options is possible, or where leaf fall is minimal, mulching in place may be a good option, since this encourages rapid decomposition of leaves, which may reduce habitat suitability for ticks.”

Source: entomologytoday.org



## Gift Ideas for Active Living

By Linda Rellergert, Nutrition Specialist, Submitted by Jean Day

Looking for just the right gift for someone special on your list? Consider something that promotes an active lifestyle. Use the following list for gift ideas. You can also circle the items you'd like to find in your own basket and leave the list where the Easter Bunny can't help but notice it.

**Walking or athletic shoes.** Since it is difficult to judge proper fit for someone else, purchase a gift certificate for shoes at an athletic-goods store and wrap in a shoebox.

**Athletic socks.** Fit is important, but since socks come in only a few sizes, these can be easy to buy for someone else.

**Comfortable and attractive clothes for your favorite activities** — skiing, walking, jogging, cycling, aerobics, yoga. Athletic stores are the best bet, with better selections and knowledgeable sales people to help.

**Hand and ankle weights.**

**Workout videos.** Both of these are highly recommended:

- *Strong Women Stay Young* — Learn to do strength-training exercises correctly in this 50-minute video.
- *Chair Dancing* — A fun way to get aerobic exercise and to improve muscle tone and flexibility. Adaptations for different fitness levels are included in the video.

**Books that promote physical activity.** Try some of these:

- *Great Shape: The First Fitness Guide for Large Women* by Pat Lyons and Debby Burgard published by iUniverse.com, Inc., 2000. ISBN 0-595-08883-X.
- *Strong Women Stay Young* by Miriam E. Nelson, Ph.D. with Sarah Wernick, Ph.D., published by Bantam Books, 2000. ISBN 0-553-38077-X.
- *Strong Women Strong Bones: Everything You Need to Know to Prevent, Treat, and Beat Osteoporosis* by Miriam E. Nelson, Ph.D. with Sarah Wernick, Ph.D., published by G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2000. ISBN 0-399-14597-4.
- *Hiking Missouri* by Kevin M. Lohraff, published by Human Kinetics Publishers, May 1999.
- *One Hundred Nature Walks in the Missouri Ozarks* by Alan McPherson, Lonnie Russell (Illustrator) published by Cache River Press, May 1997.
- *Missouri Hiking Trails: A Detailed Guide to Selected Hiking Trails on Public Land in Missouri* by Ramon D. Gass, Bernadette C. Dryden (Editor), Charles W. Schwartz (Illustrator) published by Missouri Department of Conservation, July 1996.

**Membership to the local YMCA, Rec-Plex or other fitness center.** Or gift certificate for an aerobics, tai chi or yoga class at one of the above. Purchase two and enroll yourself to make it even more fun!

**Make coupons good for any activity your recipient would enjoy doing with you** — walking, hiking, cycling, skating, dancing, sledding.

If your budget allows for a more extravagant gift, how about a trip that includes plenty of activity — to the mountains for skiing, up north for snowshoeing, down south for swimming.

## Youth Voices: Creating an Environment of Inclusion

By Mason McClintock

Kindness is a choice, and resilience does not always come easy. As simple as those things may seem, they can sometimes be challenging attributes to exude. I realized that many years ago, when I was faced with a situation that was very pivotal in my development as a True Leader.

I was eating supper at Rock Eagle 4-H Center for an event as a member of Georgia 4-H's Southeast Junior District Board of Directors. Many of my friends surrounded me as we enjoyed each other's company. As time passed by and through all the laughing and camaraderie, my eyes wandered around the room. My gaze became fixed on this seemingly lonely girl sitting a few tables away; she was by herself. The situation concerned me. After a few minutes of deliberating whether I should stay and enjoy the comfort of my friends and our fellowship or get up and join the girl sitting in isolation, I knew what I needed to do. So, I stood up and made my way to her table. We began talking, and initially, she was very reserved. However, our conversation grew livelier, her smile became bigger, and several others meandered our way. By the end of the meal, the entire table was filled with 4-H'ers of all different shapes, sizes and colors.

In that moment, I realized that the accepting and inclusive environment that I had come to know so well in 4-H did not just emerge out of nowhere. It is not always easy, but taking action to create an atmosphere of positivity and belonging is what must be done if we desire to live in a world where love does indeed overcome hate.

It took many brave people to step up and be proactive about leaving their comfort zones to ensure that others felt loved and included in 4-H. It took people leaving their tables to join those who were alone. It took a special person many years ago to do the same thing for me when I was the one sitting across the room by myself. If it were not for those people, I would not be who I am today, and 4-H would not be either.

Be the one who steps up, joins the lonely, empowers the outcast, encourages growth, and inspires positive change.

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