

The Nutrition Reporter™

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EXTRA

The independent newsletter that reports vitamin, mineral, and food therapies

A Review of Recent Health Books

This December supplement to *The Nutrition Reporter*™ focuses on recently published nutrition and health books, as well as a couple of related books. To order any of these books, follow the link to Amazon at www.feedyourgenesright.com.

How to Talk with your Doctor, by Ronald L. Hoffman, MD, and Sidney Stevens (Basic Health Publications, 2006, \$24.95). Most of us know the experience of bringing up alternative therapies, such as nutritional supplements, with our physicians. More than not, we get a dismissive response that, I now realize, reveals the physician's ignorance and antipathy for therapies that don't involve drugs or surgery. The subtitle of Dr. Hoffman's wonderful book clearly states how it's a solution: *The Guide for Patients and Their Physicians Who Want to Reconcile and Use the Best of Conventional and Alternative Medicine*. Dr. Hoffman walks readers through the current state of health care and explains why many physicians fail to engage in real collaborations with their patients. He explains how to get a real (i.e., meaningful) physical exam, and then tackles the leading degenerative diseases. This is an important book for patients to read – and then to share with their personal physician.

CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap. Strategies for Coping in a World Gone ADD, by Edward M. Hallowell, MD (Ballantine Books, 2006, \$24.95). In recent years, people have gotten...well, crazy busy...increasingly resembling the hamster running at breakneck speed on his wheel. We multitask, even though studies have shown that completing one task at a time is far more efficient. We yack on our cell phones, not paying attention to where we drive or walk. We are increasingly impulsive, acting and reacting without thinking. Many of us are totally overworked and have forgotten about the nice things life offers, if only we could find the time to enjoy them. Dr. Hallowell tackles how we've gotten ourselves into this mess, focusing on personal habits but not nutrition. It's an engaging book, with short chapters that enable quick little reads. (We're all too busy, of course, to actually

sit down and read long stretches of books.) Hallowell describes many examples of how people overwork and overcommit themselves, leaving no time or energy, as but one example, for feeling romantic or sexy. He offers many ways in which we can lighten the load. This is a very good book and should be read by everyone who feels the days are not long enough.

The Food-Mood Solution: All-Natural Ways to Banish Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Stress, Overeating, and Alcohol and Drug Problems—and Feel Good Again, by Jack Challem (John Wiley & Sons, March 2007, \$24.95). I apologize in advance for being a little self-indulgent and, also, for describing a book that won't be available til March. (You can, however, preorder it at amazon.com and save one-third of the cost.) This book focuses largely on the nutritional basis of our neurotransmitters, the brain chemicals that influence our moods, and how fast foods and convenience foods wreak havoc with normal brain chemistry. *The Food-Mood Solution* explains how stress derails the best eating habits, leading to a shift in neurotransmitter levels. The book offers a four-step program that includes supplements, eating habits, physical activity, and lifestyle tips to buffer against stress so we remember to eat healthy foods and not skip meals. The supplement recommendations are straightforward and uncomplicated, unlike many other food-mood books that offer complicated vitamins and amino acid formulas as the only answer. *The Food-Mood Solution* is distinguished by two other features. It looks at the "nutrisocial" backdrop that influences our choice of foods, because supplements alone are only a partial solution. The book also goes beyond the many books that have focused on depression and anxiety (although it covers these topics) and address the most common mood issues, including irritability, impatience, anger, tension, impulsiveness, distractibility, blood-sugar-related mood swings, and alcohol and drug problems. If you often feel stressed or moody, this is a book that explains the causes and solutions for common mood problems.

Continues on next page

Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More than We Think, by Brian Wansink, PhD (Bantam, 2006, \$25). *Mindless Eating* is unquestionable one of the best and most original nutrition books to be published in recent years. People have become, as the title suggests, mindless eaters – consuming too much sugar, refined carbohydrate, trans fat, and too much, period! Worse, people routinely underestimate the number of calories they consume. Wansink points out that one fundamental problem is that few people have a clear reference point for when to stop eating. They look for cues in package sizes and what other people eat. Large food containers lead to greater consumption, especially in front of the television. People also eat more when they dine with another person, and the quantity of food individuals consume increases with the number of people at the table. The power of Wansink's book is that it makes us more conscious of the unconscious factors that influence our eating habits. To become a more mindful eater, he recommends a variety of techniques, such as serving food on smaller plates and planning ahead of time to take restaurant leftovers home.

What to Eat: An Aisle-by-Aisle Guide to Savvy Food Choices and Good Eating, by Marion Nestle, PhD (North Point Press, 2006). As I was doing supermarket research and talking with shoppers for a forthcoming book, I realized that most people simply don't know how to shop for healthy foods and don't understand how to read food labels. Marion Nestle, a well-known nutritionist, has tackled the subject of navigating grocery stores with great depth. She explains the nutritional ups and downs of each supermarket aisle – nearly all supermarkets have essentially the same layout – from the produce section (with lots of healthy fresh vegetables) to the inner aisles (loaded with junk foods, trans fats, and sugars). This is a great, encyclopedic book, and it explains why things are the way they are in modern supermarkets – for the folks who want to take the time to learn more about shopping for healthy foods and avoiding the unhealthy ones. Therein lies the biggest problem with this book: if a shopper is not interested in reading a food label, why would he or she be willing to read this 600-page book? Still, I highly recommend this book.

Change Your Life With Travel, by Jillian Robinson (Footsteps Media, 2006, \$14.95. Order at footstepsadventures.com). Robinson traveled the world as a producer for National Public Radio, and she has done an excellent job of tackling a feeling familiar to many of us who enjoy traveling. The act of traveling can change our lives, how we see the world, and how we assimilate experiences. Robinson observes that there are three stages to travel:

planning, traveling, and processing the experiences. But this is not a dry book. It's filled with 70 short, inspiring stories of people whose lives were changed in positive ways by travel. People learn to live in the moment, gain a newfound sense of courage, and strengthen their self-esteem, if they did a good job of processing their experiences and recollections. I certainly know how travel experiences have changed my life, from reading the perspective of overseas newspapers to getting stuck in Denmark over 9-11. Robinson's basic message – to be receptive to experiences and to process their effects on us – can be applied to all manner of experiences in your daily life. Reading the book gave me an enjoyable and meaningful glimpse into how travel changed other people's lives for the better. I heartily recommend it.

Little House on a Small Planet: Simple Homes, Cozy Retreats, and Energy Efficient Possibilities, by Shay Salomon (Lyons Press/Globe Pequot Press, 2006, \$19.95). Around 10 or so years ago, middle-class Americans developed a taste for McMansions – huge, expensive homes. I was living in Portland, Oregon, at the time, and I saw these indulgences destroy beautiful green hills – the same has since happened here in Tucson and in so many other cities. The construction of such homes contributes to the destruction of the world's forests and the accelerated use of energy reserves. Like so many other things American, bigger seems better, but it is not always. Salomon is a friend, and so I know that this oversize book grew from a labor of love – and a desire to help get out the word that smaller homes can be better, more cozy, and use less energy than McMansions. The book is rich with photographs by Nigel Valdez showing the interiors and exteriors of houses. You don't have to downsize your home to enjoy and benefit from this book. By perusing or reading it, you'll get a sense of how wasteful modern homes can be – and yet don't have to be. Just the photographs alone are worth the price of this book, but Salomon's writing is clear, enjoyable, and inspiring. You'll also learn many ways you can modify your existing home.

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THE NUTRITION REPORTER™

Post Office Box 30246 • Tucson AZ 85751-0246 USA

Editor and Publisher: **Jack Challem**
Copy Editor: **Mary Larsen**

Medical and Scientific Advisors:

Richard P. Huemer, MD Lancaster, Calif • **Ralph K. Campbell, MD** Polson, Montana
Peter Langsjoen, MD Tyler, Texas • **Ronald Hunninghake, MD** Wichita, Kansas
Marcus Laux, ND San Francisco, California • **James A. Duke, PhD** Fulton, Maryland