



THE A-HED
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Former President da
Silva Provokes Ire



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Wash the Dishes and Cleanse the Mind?

Therapeutic meditation seems to improve dishwashers' experience

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cognitive state and [a popular form of therapeutic meditation](#) that calms the mind and body [by focusing attention on an object or activity](#), such as breathing. Mindful meditation is usually an exercise in itself, but [routine daily activities](#) may provide opportunities for informal practice, the

study suggests.

Researchers at Florida State University in Tallahassee recruited 51 students in their early 20s. Just over half read a 230-word passage that stressed the sensory experience of dishwashing. The others, who acted as controls, read a similar-length passage about proper dishwashing techniques. The subjects gave their interpretations of the readings verbally and in writing, and then each washed 18 clean dishes.

Positive and negative personality traits, mindful state, and psychological well-being were assessed before and after the dishwashing exercise. Nervousness ratings decreased by 27% in the mindful dishwashers, while mental inspiration increased by 25%. Both changes were statistically significant and reflected a substantial experiential shift, researchers said. There was no change among the controls.

Caveat: It isn't clear if washing dirty dishes would produce the same results, researchers said.

[Washing Dishes to Wash the Dishes: Brief Instruction in an Informal Mindfulness Practice](#)

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Gender and death: Talking to doctors about how and where you want to die may reduce overly aggressive—and medically unhelpful—treatments at the end of life, but only in men, says a study in the journal *Cancer*.

Men with terminal cancer who had end-of-life discussions with their doctors had significantly fewer intensive-care unit admissions during their last month of life than those who didn't have such talks. End-of-life discussions didn't result in less ICU care for women dying of cancer, the research indicated.

Previous studies have shown that intensive medical care at the end of life has no effect on

survival. Men are more likely than women to receive aggressive treatments as they near death and may benefit more from explicit discussions about their wishes, the study suggests.

Researchers at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City used data from medical charts and interviews with 353 patients from six U.S. cancer centers who died between 2002 and 2008. The patients were 58 years old, on average, and most had cancers of the lung, colon, pancreas or breast.

More than a third of the patients, 36% of men and 37% of women, had end-of-life discussions with their doctors. Just over 10% were admitted to the ICU before they died, and of those 19% had had end-of-life discussions. By comparison, 38% had end-of-life discussions among patients who didn't receive ICU care.

Men who didn't discuss their end-of-life wishes were 3.4 times as likely to receive intensive care as women who didn't have such talks. Men treated in the ICU were less likely to opt for palliative care or sign do-not-resuscitate orders.

Caveat: The specific aspects of end-of-life discussions that reduce ICU care and their association with gender aren't known, they said.

[Male-female patient differences in the association between end-of-life discussions and receipt of intensive care near death](#)

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Dropout risk: Excessive weight gain during the preteen and teenage years may increase the chances of dropping out of high school, suggests a study in the Journal of School Health.

Researchers found dropout rates were significantly higher in children who developed obesity around age 10 and maintained an obese weight throughout adolescence, compared with those who were obese from early childhood, had shed their excess fat before starting high school or had a normal body weight. The trend was more pronounced among white students than African-American or Latino teens.

Previous research has linked chronic obesity in childhood to poor academic achievement and absenteeism, researchers said.

The latest study, at California State University in Long Beach, used data from 5,066 children

whose physical growth and academic achievement were tracked from age 6 to 18 years old as part of a larger study.

Overall, 13.8% of the participants dropped out of high school. Of the children who developed obesity in early adolescence and stayed obese, 19.6% dropped out compared with 14.1% of chronically obese children, 13.5% with childhood-only obesity, and 13.5% of nonobese students.

Caveat: Height and weight were self-reported.

[Is Obesity Associated With School Dropout? Key Developmental and Ethnic Differences](#)

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Safe swallowing: Aging may cause sensory changes in the mouth that affect how people judge the right amount of water and other liquids they can swallow without choking, according to a small study in the Journal of Oral Rehabilitation. People over age 60 were significantly less able to estimate the volume of liquid in their mouth than those under age 40, the study found.

Many aspects of sensation diminish with age, but it wasn't known to what degree normal aging affects oral perception, researchers said.

The study, at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, involved 21 subjects without swallowing problems. They included a younger group of 10 people, with an average age of 31 years, and an older, 11-person group whose average age was 69.

The subjects took five quantities of water into their mouth and assessed the volume of each amount in comparison with the previous one. Subjects rated each of the five volumes eight times over four days.

Younger subjects were significantly more accurate at perceiving volume changes than the older group. Except for two participants whose ratings were similar to the younger group, older subjects perceived larger volumes as smaller, the study found. This means they may take a very large sip of water and perceive it as being smaller, increasing the risk of choking, researchers said. No gender differences were found.

Caveat: The study used broad age groups and only assessed the perception of liquid volume.

[Oral perception of liquid volume changes with age](#)

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Stress-free voting: Voting at home may be a healthier option for some people than standing in line at a polling station, suggests a study in PLoS One. Voters who cast ballots at public polls had significantly higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol than those who mailed absentee ballots or performed a control activity, the research showed.

The stress of voting isn't a result of just going out in public or making an important political choice, but the two together, the researchers suggest. The findings could increase political participation by sensitive people who avoid the social conflict of political engagement, they said.

The study, at the University of Lincoln-Nebraska, involved 133 people, age 45 on average, who were registered to vote in the 2012 presidential election. One group of 47 voted at the polls at approximately 7 p.m. on election day. Another group, with 42 people, marked absentee ballots in their home at 7 p.m. a few days before the election and then mailed the ballots.

A control group of 44 voted before 3 p.m. on election day. At 7 p.m. on the same day, they made a short trip to a local convenience store. Like public voting, the outing involved driving to a public place, interacting with people, possibly waiting in line, and making a decision.

Participants who voted at public polls had significantly higher cortisol levels, measured from saliva samples, after voting than those who voted at home and controls, the results showed. The magnitude of the increase suggests that voting at public polls isn't as stressful as making a speech but falls above the midrange of stressors that people encounter in day-to-day life, said principal researcher Jayme Neiman, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Northern Iowa.

Caveat: Going to the polls may trigger more direct thoughts about the election or other explicitly political experiences that could potentially elevate cortisol, researchers suggest. The study was relatively small.

[Voting at Home Is Associated with Lower Cortisol than Voting at the Polls](#)

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