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Letter From The Editor

How time flies. This month marks the beginning of the *ber* months and is traditionally considered the countdown to the end of the year and Christmas. Although I love the Christmas season with its messages of peace, love, giving and all the joyous festivities, as we age a bit, it seems to come around rather quickly. So, as some always say, "Make the most of life while we can." This is a message the team at *Enrich* always tries to put across in our articles. Be positive, help others, and enjoy life.

And the first of this month's articles worth a mention is *The Power of Touch* by Mona Gonzalez. From the very first moments that we are born, the kindness and emotion in a parent's touch can shape the rest of our lives. Often, things that appear small and inconsequential turn out to be lifelong game changers. They make a difference.

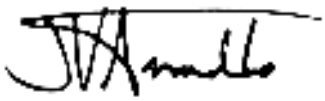
Another interesting feature, *"If You Can, Be At Home,"* by Excel Emmerybelle A. Sumalo, highlights the importance of how much time we should spend at home. It also lets us know what we should be doing with the time that we spend there. Being there in mind and spirit is more important than just being around.

For all those sports lovers out there, check out this month's *Sporting Icons* by Luke Johnston. It tells the story of Nesthy Alcayde Petecio**,** a Filipino amateur boxer and two-time Olympic medalist. She is widely regarded as one of the Philippines' greatest boxers and a pioneering figure in women's sports. Luke told me that as a member of the international press, he was in Tokyo for the 2020 Games and saw her win silver in the women's featherweight division. Due to the COVID restrictions, no ordinary spectators were allowed.

Were you one of last week's lucky P1,000 Mercury Drug gift certificate winners in the *Enrich Giveaway*? If not, don't miss your chance this month-check our social media pages for details and try your luck. It's easy to enter and great fun.

Good luck…

As always,



JV Arnaldo

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THE POWER OF GENTLE SKIN CARE



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MAKABISKURO GAMOT AY LAGING BAGO

By Mikee Gan

MEDICApps



mWell PH is a Philippine digital health and wellness platform available on Android and iOS. It was developed by Metro Pacific Health Tech and launched around 2020 with the distinction of being billed as the Philippines' first fully integrated, fully digital health and wellness app.

The platform is designed to make primary and specialist healthcare more accessible to Filipinos, both in the Philippines and abroad, by consolidating telemedicine, fitness, nutrition, wearable integration, and health e-commerce into a single mobile application.

Core Features And Functionality

At the heart of mWell PH is its teleconsultation service. Users have two options: Consult Now, which connects them with an on-call doctor within an average wait time of under three minutes, available around the clock; or Consult Later, which allows them to schedule appointments with their preferred physicians, specialists, or mental health professionals at a convenient time.

Once a consultation is complete, the app delivers the follow-through digitally. Patients can receive an electronic prescription, a laboratory referral, and a medical certificate directly within the app, reducing the need for in-person visits.

Beyond consultations, mWell PH incorporates a suite of wellness tools. Users can access fitness programs, nutrition guidance, and sleep and step tracking. These inputs feed into an in-app indicator called the mWellness Score, calculated daily from a user's activity and sleep data. The score functions as a preventive health indicator and is not intended as a diagnostic tool.



FACT #01

The Japanese festival Tsukimi, or moon-viewing festival, often occurs in September.

Ecosystem And Integrated Services

mWell PH extends beyond the app itself through a network of partner services designed to complete the patient care journey. Users can request ambulance dispatch through Lifeline 16-911, access home healthcare services through HealthLink, and have e-prescriptions fulfilled via MedExpress's medicine delivery.

The platform also features an in-app e-shop offering wearables such as the mWell ECG Ring and smartwatches, as well as insurance and health plans, along with a range of other wellness products and services.

For healthcare providers, mWell offers complementary professional tools. mWellMD EMR and mWell HealthSuite give clinics and doctors access to electronic medical record management, patient booking, and billing functions, helping them manage and grow their digital practice more efficiently.

Positioning And Industry Recognition

mWell PH positions itself as a healthcare mega app for the Philippines, with an explicit focus on affordability and accessibility for underserved communities. The platform aligns itself with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on good health and wellbeing, reflecting a broader commitment to inclusive healthcare delivery.

The platform has received industry recognition for its contribution to mobile innovation, particularly in supporting emergency and humanitarian situations. This recognition reinforces its identity as an inclusion-driven healthtech platform with both commercial and social purposes. ●

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Diabetes Corner



Here's a budget-friendly Filipino vegetable smoothie that's diabetic-friendly, low-sugar, and made with easy-to-find local ingredients found in most wet markets.

LOCAL GREEN SMOOTHIE

What You'll Need

1 cup fresh Malunggay leaves
½ cup Pechay (chopped)
¼ small Ampalaya
½ medium Cucumber
¼ small Avocado
1 small piece of ginger
1 tablespoon chia seeds or roasted ground peanuts
1–1½ cups water (or unsweetened coconut water if preferred)

Procedure

Wash all vegetables thoroughly. Soak the ampalaya briefly in salted water to reduce bitterness. Add everything into a blender.

Blend until smooth and green. Adjust water for desired thickness. ●

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FACT #02



The constellation Pegasus becomes highly visible in September skies.

PORK WITH PINEAPPLE & BANANA

(Diabetic-Friendly Savory Stew)



Here's a diabetes-friendly, nutritious recipe using Pineapple, Banana, and Pork that's designed to keep sugar impact lower while still being flavorful. Instead of making this sweet, we balance the fruit's natural sugars with protein, fiber, and healthy fats, and keep added sugar to zero.

What You'll Need

(2–3 servings)
250–300g lean pork (loin or tenderloin, sliced thin)
½ cup pineapple chunks (fresh, not canned in syrup)
1 small firm, slightly green banana (saba or cooking banana preferred), sliced
1 small onion, sliced
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 thumb-sized piece of ginger, sliced
1 tablespoon soy sauce (low sodium if possible)
1 tablespoon vinegar (coconut or cane vinegar)
1 teaspoon olive oil or canola oil
1 cup water or low-sodium broth
Black pepper to taste

Procedure

Heat the oil in a pan. Sauté garlic, onion, and ginger until fragrant. Add the pork slices and stir until lightly browned and the juices run out. Add soy sauce and pepper.

Pour in water or broth, cover and simmer for 25 to 30 minutes until pork is tender. Add pineapple chunks and simmer for five to seven minutes to release natural flavor.

Add the banana slices and simmer for three to five minutes until slightly soft but not mushy.

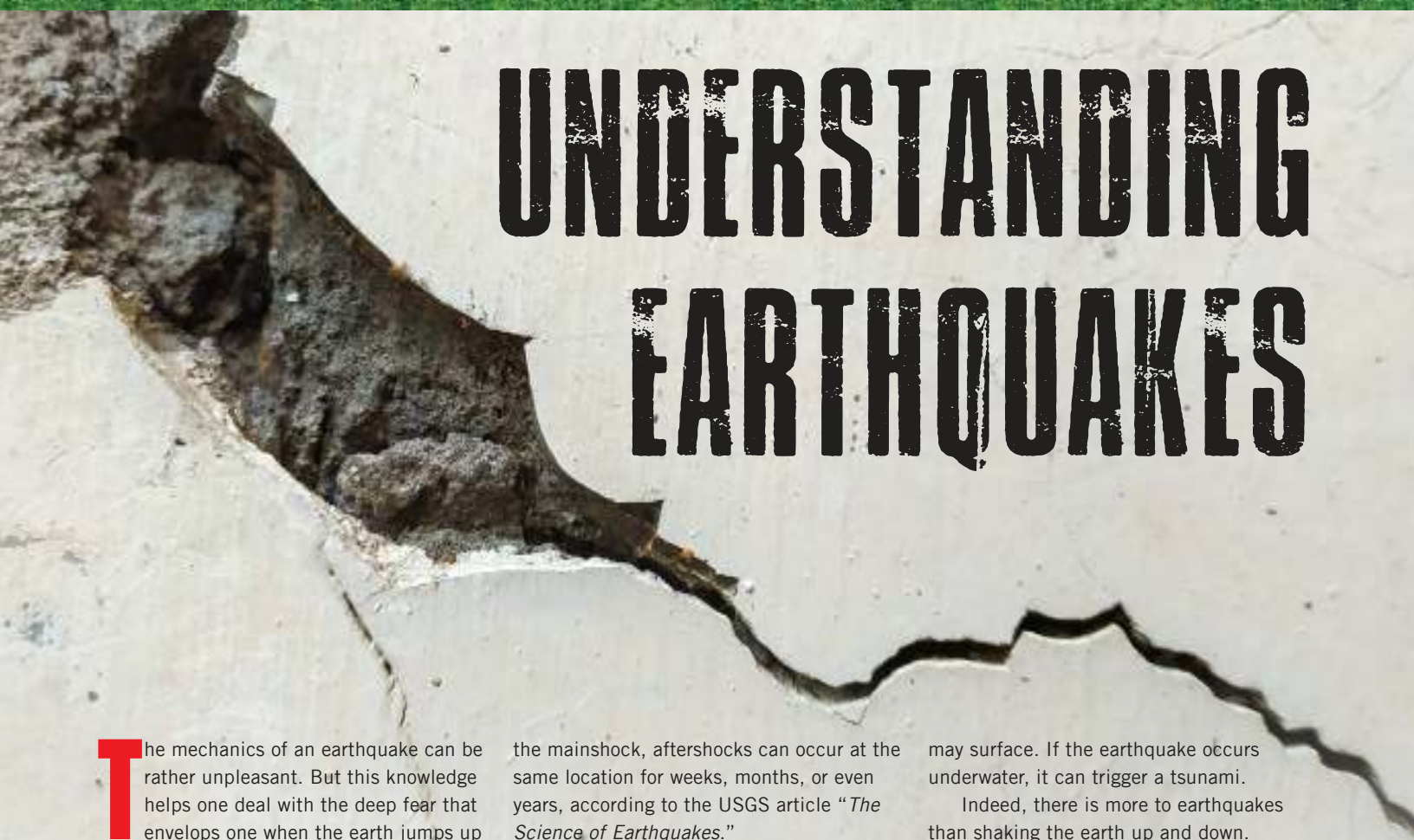
Add the vinegar and let it simmer uncovered for two to three minutes (don't stir too much after adding vinegar). ●

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Home Safety First

By Mona Sabalones Gonzalez



UNDERSTANDING EARTHQUAKES

The mechanics of an earthquake can be rather unpleasant. But this knowledge helps one deal with the deep fear that envelops one when the earth jumps up and down.

Earthquakes occur in three general steps.

The first step is the foreshock, smaller earthquakes before the mainshock. After the mainshock, aftershocks can occur at the same location for weeks, months, or even years, according to the USGS article "*The Science of Earthquakes*."

Secondary Hazards

Aftershocks leave behind secondary hazards. In mountainous areas, landslides may follow, while poorly constructed buildings could collapse long after the main quake.

Another possible secondary occurrence is ground liquefaction, in which water-saturated soil weakens, causing condominiums and other buildings to collapse, tilt, or sink. Underground pipes may surface. If the earthquake occurs underwater, it can trigger a tsunami.

Indeed, there is more to earthquakes than shaking the earth up and down.

A Series Of Earthquakes

In 2019, Mindanao was devastated by a series of strong earthquakes that destroyed 40,632 buildings, homes, schools, and hospitals, the Vera Files Fact Sheet said in "*Earthquake-Resilient Structures Explained*."

Home dwellers face the risk of secondary disasters, such as electrical short circuits that can cause fires due to

FACT #04



Google was officially founded in September 1998 by Larry Page and Sergey Brin.





excessive heat. Additionally, gas leaks may trigger explosive fires and pose severe health risks.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that half of all earthquake injuries result from falling objects, such as bookshelves, cabinets, and other heavy items like brassware, placed high, such as on a top shelf.

Start Strong With A Good Foundation

For safety during a strong earthquake, having a solid foundation is crucial. The best soil types for this are solid rock, bedrock, or stiff, dense soil (Soil Profile Types SA to SD). If your land lacks these, you can still build a strong foundation, ideally anchored to bedrock, as it offers more stability than soft soils.

Also, you want a continuous, reinforced-concrete slab-on-grade or mat foundation. When tied directly to the house's frame, the entire home will move as a single unit when the earth shakes.

What you must avoid are houses with raised foundations and a crawl space underneath the first floor. This foundation is highly vulnerable to earthquake damage.

If you haven't purchased land for your house yet, consult licensed civil and structural engineers about seismic zone classifications and designs based on the National Structural Code of the Philippines. They can also provide official geologic hazard data from DOST-PHIVOLCS. Alternatively, check out GeoRisk Philippines on Facebook for more information.

The West Valley Fault System poses a significant risk as it runs through densely populated areas, including Metro Manila and surrounding provinces. This information is crucial for anyone looking to buy land, as it helps choose the right foundation type and determine whether ground improvement methods are necessary for earthquake resilience. Additionally, a high water table increases the risk of liquefaction during an earthquake, so installing a dedicated drainage system is advisable for enhanced safety.

Advance Warning Of An Earthquake

Animals often exhibit strange behavior before an earthquake. Dogs may pace, howl, or hide, responding to environmental changes that humans can't perceive. Historical accounts dating as far back as 373 BC describe rats, snakes, and centipedes fleeing their homes before quakes. Birds and reptiles are also believed to show similar signs. However, we might

"Have an emergency bag ready and near your exit door. The bag should contain enough drinking water, non-perishable canned food, and a can opener to last for five days"



not always associate these behavioral changes with an impending earthquake.

Warning of an earthquake typically lasts only a few seconds, but these moments can be crucial for seeking protection. Foreshocks, small tremors, and changes in ground or groundwater levels can precede an earthquake, giving us time to get under a sturdy table or move outside to avoid hazards from homes and condominiums.

Home Safety Preparation

There are things you can do to be earthquake-prepared at home. First, heavy objects shouldn't be placed on top of shelves or cabinets. Also, heavy furniture such as bookshelves, wardrobes, and china cabinets should be secured to the floor with safety straps. Paintings should be bolted securely to the wall with studs to prevent them from falling in an earthquake.

Keep your flat-screen TV and your computers safe by securing them so they won't fall. Museum wax is a helpful adhesive for this, as it's semi-permanent and shock-absorbing. Just roll the wax into balls and place the balls under the base of the device. Then press it firmly onto a flat surface to prevent it from sliding or tipping over.

What if an earthquake occurs while you're in bed? To avoid harm, heavy mirrors and picture frames should be placed away from your bed and your favorite seating areas, www.ready.gov says in its article "*Earthquakes.*"

If heavy items aren't secured, stay away from them during an earthquake. Also, avoid chandeliers, heavy wood, and glass. Knowledge is also helpful. All members of the house must know how to turn off electricity, gas, and water to prevent electric currents, gas leaks, and water overflow.

Emergency Bag

Have an emergency bag ready and near your exit door. The bag should contain enough drinking water, non-perishable canned food, and a can opener to last for five days.

Your emergency bag should also contain basic medicines, daily maintenance medications, a first-aid kit, a whistle for each family member (to call for help), tools, a fire extinguisher, and wrenches to shut off the gas and water. Plus, you need flashlights, extra batteries, mobile phones, and power banks for the phones.

Also, important documents – IDs, medical records, and property titles should be kept in a waterproof pouch in your emergency bag, as well as cash in small denominations.

Last but not least, your emergency bag should include dog or cat food, vitamins, treats, blankets for cold nights, and leashes so that your pets' needs are met during an emergency.



FACT #05

First successful ascent of Mont Blanc inspired modern mountaineering, and its anniversary is celebrated in September.



If you think preparations to live outdoors are too much and unlikely to happen, bear in mind the 1990 Luzon earthquake, when thousands of Baguio residents lived outside their homes in tents or makeshift shelters for several weeks to months.

They did this because there were frequent aftershocks. Also, there were citywide power and water outages, prompting many residents to stay in tent cities for long periods.

Frequency Of Earthquakes In The Philippines

The Philippines sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, a 40,000-kilometer U-shaped belt tracing the edges of the Pacific Ocean. Some 90 percent of all earthquakes occur here.

Our country is among the most earthquake-prone countries in the world, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS). In fact, hundreds of earthquakes occur daily, but most of them are too weak to be felt. But a few of these daily earthquakes are widely felt and very damaging to homes and lives.

Four of the Philippines' major fault systems are located at (1) The Philippine Trench east of Mindanao and Eastern Visayas, (2) The Cotabato Trench of southern Mindanao, (3) The Manila Trench west of Luzon and Mindoro, and (4) the Philippine Fault Zone across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Earthquakes are a common reality in the Philippines, making it crucial to understand them. Knowing how and why they occur, along with their risks, empowers families to make informed decisions about home security and emergency planning. Even children should learn disaster preparedness for earthquakes. With knowledge, Filipino families can create safer homes and foster peace of mind in a country continually facing seismic activity. ●

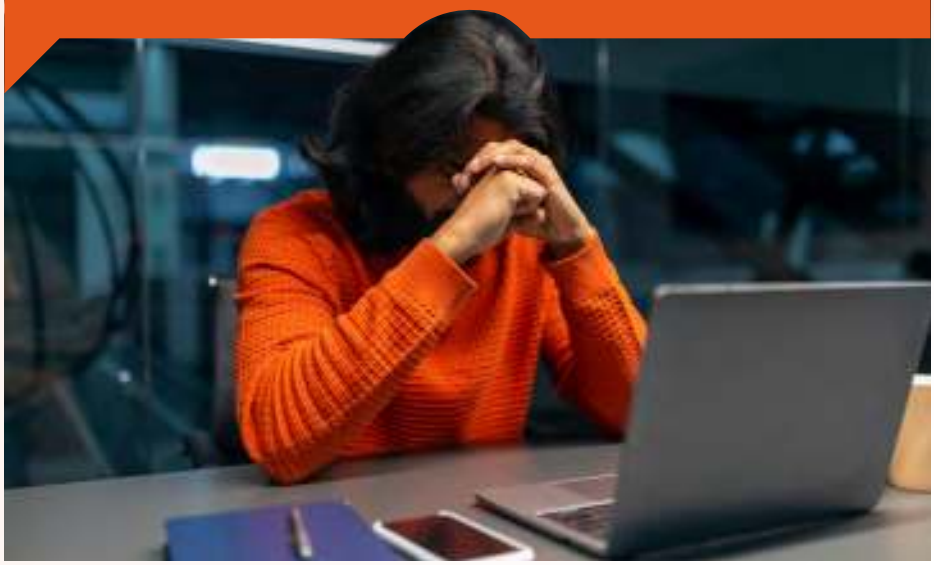
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By Noman Karl O. Banayat, M.D.

MEDICINE IN THE OFFICE

SILENT SHIFTS
Workplace Mental Health Is The Ultimate OSH Priority



Yellow caution tapes, loud visual posters featuring the importance of what to do in high-risk areas, and even well-rehearsed fire and earthquake drills, these are all commonly used in the language of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) throughout the world. But are these still enough as the work landscape evolves? The most critical hazard that the modern Filipino worker is facing now cannot be mitigated by wearing hard hats, steel-toed boots, or ergonomics alone. They are invisible: psychosocial and deeply rooted in the mind.

As we celebrate World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10, business leaders, HR practitioners, and OSH committees should realize that mental health is no longer a peripheral corporate benefit. We must accept that it is the defining challenge of the era. We must have a paradigm shift that transforms mental health advocacy from a temporary monthly awareness campaign that gets ticked off the calendar into a foundational pillar of daily operations.

The Scale Of The Crisis

For decades, workplace stress has been seen as a badge of honor, and it is this unavoidable hidden tax that you somehow "earn" as you climb the corporate ladder. This still holds true in today's workforce as shown by the Mind Health Study of AXA, where they report that 87 percent of Filipino workers experience at least one work-related mental health issue. The examples that they gave were feelings of worthlessness, appetite or eating disorders, loss of interest, difficulty in sleeping, stress and anxiety and even difficulty in concentrating. This finding was interesting as it was higher than the reported global average, which was 76 percent, and their study also reported that at least half of the respondents reported experiencing more than four of these issues, which is significantly more than the global average of 10 percent.

To put it in a different perspective, let's take a look at an article that was published in the *Frontiers of Psychology* in 2021, entitled 'Philippine Mental Health Act: Just an Act? A Call to Look into the Bi-directionality of Mental Health and Economy' by Nicholle Maravilla and Myles Tan. They noted that mental illness has become the third most common disability in the Philippines, and that there were about six million Filipinos who were living with these invisible struggles. They also talked about the relationship between the strength of the economy and the mental health of its workers, wherein there is a decline in the ability of the economy to thrive if the people who are central to it have poor mental health. At the same time there would reasonably be an increase in the number of individuals who have mental illness as the economy declines, as people are exposed to more risk factors such as unemployment, poverty and poor education.

This isn't speculation either, as it has been reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2021 that mental health conditions cost the Philippine economy PHP 68.9 billion each year, with 96 percent of these costs coming from lost productivity.

Anatomy Of Disengagement And Burnout

The accumulation of chronic workplace stress, as it goes unmanaged and unacknowledged by the leadership, would undoubtedly lead to corporate burnout. When an employee starts being unable to keep their professional obligations and personal life separate, this inevitably leads to a decline in their productivity. But, not just their productivity is affected, as an exhausted employee is a severe safety



liability, whether they are operating heavy machinery on a factory floor or managing complex data sets in a high-rise office.

Some of the factors that seem to be compounding this effect in the Filipino workforce are distinct cultural factors, as mentioned in the *Frontiers in Psychology* article, where they pointed out that Filipino workers not only have to contend with the stresses from work, but more so from the family and society as a whole to "make it" in life. At the same time, it is also true that in many workplace cultures, the traditional mindset of enduring hardships silently is praised, and at the same time, it is seen as doing the right thing to "go above and beyond" what is expected. This inadvertently forces employees to mask severe psychological distress out of fear of being seen as uncooperative or insubordinate.

Another problem that employees continue to face is the inaccessibility of safe spaces where they can voice out any mental health concerns, coupled with the social stigma attached to being seen as having one, mental health concerns often get neglected until they manifest in various and possibly destructive ways. Sadly, even when there are avenues to share their mental health concerns, because of this social stigma, employees can feel that acknowledgment of their struggles will damage their professional standing or even outright disqualify them from future career progression, leaving them to navigate their darkest moments in isolation.

Navigating Your Right To Mental Health Safety At Work

If we want World Suicide Prevention Day to truly change our daily realities, we have to look past superficial office perks. Free meditation apps, beanbag chairs, and occasional wellness webinars don't mean much if your daily work environment leaves you feeling chronically overwhelmed and unsupported. I believe that a company that truly wishes to create a safe space for mental health can do a few things differently that would shift the culture towards the right direction.

1. Auditing the workload

One of the causes of workplace mental health struggles is the persistent mismatch between what you are tasked to do and what is humanly possible. It's important to realize when operational demands are already crossing the line and leading to chronic exhaustion. Employees should have the right and are even empowered to advocate for realistic performance indicators and to set firm boundaries against an "always-on" digital culture, especially those in a work-from-home setup. Unplugging during your off-hours isn't slacking — it's a crucial preventive act for your mental health.

2. Leaning on Workplace Mental Health First Aiders

There are a lot of organizations that provide training in mental health first aid in the Philippines, such as Mental Health First Response and M-Psyche Services. With that in mind, just as modern offices keep first aid kits for physical cuts and burns, employees should also have access to trained peers or HR personnel as Certified Mental Health First Aiders. These people are trained to recognize the early behavioral warning signs of severe distress — such as uncharacteristic social withdrawal, erratic mood shifts, or sudden drops in performance — and safely guide struggling employees toward professional care pathways before a crisis occurs.

3. Normalizing Visible Wellness Leave

Taking time off shouldn't lead to employees feeling that they are taking a professional risk, especially if it is to take care of their mental health. Mental exhaustion is just as real and debilitating as any physical illness. Employees should be able to take time off without feeling of judgement or facing corporate backlash.

Investing In Empathy

When Philippine businesses start investing heavily in creating a culture that allows employees to feel psychologically secure, valued and fully protected, there would be an undeniable economic shift. When employees feel that they are secure, their capacity for innovation increases, and they are more likely to stay in their company. This leads to a decrease in turnovers, which would save companies from recruitment and retraining costs. While at the same time, having a stable core team would ensure the productivity of the team never decreases. ●

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Just Be

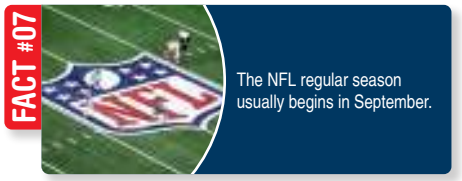
Finding Yourself No Matter Your Age

By Mae Anacay-Banayat

My friends — all of us in our late 30s — just competed in a football tournament over the weekend. Despite our aching knees, sore backs, dad bods and big bellies and the numerous aches and pains we felt, we showed up for each other and embraced our first love: football.

Many have commented on how admirable it is that we still keep up with the hobby. But the reality is we haven't "kept up" with it: it is simply there. Football is something all of us are passionate about, and nothing could take it away from us. While sometimes we take a hiatus for years at a time because of how busy life is, football is always ready to welcome us back.

So when the tournament was announced, and somehow all of us were free and had no prior commitments, we took the opportunity and signed up. And while we were rusty and hadn't set foot on the field in ages, we had fun with each other and reminded each teammate that we were there just to play. We know we are past our prime, and the goal is just to survive the night with no injuries.



"Self-discovery is a constant progress. You learn things about yourself that you didn't know before. The only limitation is your curiosity to continue growing"

And somehow, this non-competitive mindset played a critical role that evening. We were more surprised than the other teams when we found out we were running for champs. Somehow, we poured ourselves into the last game and emerged as the champions.

This made me realize that the best version of yourself — such as how we view ourselves when we were still playing competitively about two decades ago — is still yet to come. Self-discovery is a constant progress. You learn things about yourself that you didn't know before. The only limitation is your curiosity to continue growing.

Losing Your Sense Of Purpose

A lot of middle-aged individuals say they feel bored, lack direction, or feel depressed. A lot of them have simply zeroed in on their responsibilities: kids to raise, mortgages to pay, bills to settle. Somehow, as they ease into adulthood, they neglected the person they are most responsible for: themselves.

In project management, motivation is driven by three pillars: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It is the freedom to do the task to the best of your ability, with the autonomy to make decisions as you need. It is having the right skillset and resources to fulfill your role. And it is connecting to your broader team. Once you are aligned with all three pillars, team members are expected to understand the project's broader impact.

But when it comes to your household, it is so easy to disconnect from the team (your family) so that you can focus on your role: putting food on the table, making sure your children are fed, educated, and clothed, ensuring that your house is a home. And so you release the things that you found passion for before, such as your hobbies.

I mean, pause reading right now and think about it. Do you recognize who you are right now compared to who you were 20 years ago?

Change is good, and this isn't necessarily a bad thing. But if you don't like who you are right now in comparison to who you used to be, that's where the disconnect comes in and when you feel demotivated.

And when you lose that drive, when your life is now defined just by how much you earn instead of what you stand for, the motivation can dwindle. You may feel that nothing matters anymore because you have already built your nest, established your family, and your children have educational funds.

And after all that… what is left for you to do? You have conquered your mountains. Nothing is left to accomplish.

The Best Version Of Yourself Is An Ongoing Progress

Contrary to popular belief, self-discovery is an ongoing progress throughout your life. We constantly reinvent ourselves to fit what we need at any given time. You weren't always a father, a mother, a wife, or a husband. At one time, you were your own person, too. Nothing is stopping you from coming into a new identity again.

This doesn't mean that you have to leave your family and start anew. Rather, this means that you should set aside time for yourself and *explore*. Do you want to try a new sport? Do so. Do you want to go to the gym? Why not? Do you want to join a dance class? Sure. The idea is that you let go of your inhibitions and decide to do something for yourself for a change.

Soon, you will realize that there are layers to you than what you originally thought. You aren't just the homemaker, the breadwinner, the one who bandages the boo-boos and who makes the lunches. You are also capable. You are also strong.

How To Find Yourself

I understand, though, how daunting it is to venture out into the unknown when you are already set in your ways with decades of the same routine hardwired into your brain. You can start small, so you don't have to make any drastic changes.

Introspection: Before you go outward, go *inward*. Set aside 10 minutes each day to write in your journal, read a self-help book, meditate, or spend time in quietness. Be at peace with yourself for 10 minutes and just let the world continue on while you remain still. Hear your thoughts, understand them, feel your emotions. Identify what makes you happy, what makes you sad, and what your goals are. When you come out of your introspection, you can then make more productive steps into getting to know the new you.

Start small: If you want to be fit, you don't have to immediately join a triathlon. Instead, you can take a small step towards that goal. You can go to a gym for a free session, join a free dance class, or even just watch someone paint. You can look at new plants and research which one will grow best in your soil. You don't have to go all out and buy the equipment you need. Test it out first and see if this is something you are really interested in.

Rebuild your support system: It has always been there; you just weren't maximizing it. If you want to try something new, try talking to your wife or children about it. Talk to your friends about it. See if someone is interested in joining you to explore and trying out something new. This would be a good bonding experience, not to mention a good way to motivate both of you.

Embrace who you've become: Don't put yourself down or think that you're not good enough. If you are embarrassed about showing up to class with your big belly, remember that you are showing up for yourself and not for anyone else. If you feel like you don't have the stamina, you can always rest and continue later. Be kind to yourself, understand that these changes take time. And if you keep at it, you will soon meet a new you.



Self-discovery happens at any age, at any given time. You just have to let your curiosity fuel your drive. Remember, you are never too old to try something new. And if something makes you unhappy, then take active steps to change your situation.

You can only control your own thoughts and emotions and influence your health. Everything else is out of your control, no matter how much you prepare.

I always say that you are most responsible for the person looking back at you when you look in the mirror. This isn't selfishness, but rather a call for you to improve yourself. And if you are happy with who you are, then the people around you will benefit too. You will no longer be sullen, bitter, reactive, or itching for a fight — you will actually be a joy to be around.

Who knows? Maybe after this bout of self-discovery, you will find something that you are passionate about again — and you will once again find joy in life, having identified a new mountain to climb. ●

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BY LUKE JOHNSTON

SPORTING ICONS

NESTHY ALCAYDE PETECIO

Sport: Boxing
Born: April 11, 1992
Birthplace: Santa Cruz, Davao del Sur

Petecio is a Filipino amateur boxer and two-time Olympic medalist. She is widely regarded as one of the Philippines' greatest boxers and a pioneering figure in women's sports. Petecio made history as the first Filipina to win an Olympic boxing medal (silver in Tokyo 2020) and became the first Filipino boxer to win multiple Olympic medals after securing bronze in Paris 2024. Known for her technical skill, resilience, counterpunching style, and southpaw stance, she has also excelled in World Championships, Asian Championships, and Southeast Asian Games.

She is primarily a featherweight (57 kilograms) and has also competed in light welterweight (63 kilograms) in recent events.

Nesthy was raised in a modest farming family in Davao del Sur and grew up in poverty. Her father, Teodoro, introduced her to boxing at age 11 as a form of self-defense. She began competing in local "inter-barangay" tournaments to help support her family, often earning small cash prizes. These early experiences built her discipline and tenacity. By age 15, she had joined the national boxing team. Despite financial hardships and setbacks, including nearly quitting in 2018, she rose through the ranks with determination and support from her family and coaches.

Major Achievements

Olympics

- Tokyo 2020; Won silver in the women's featherweight division, ending a 25-year Olympic boxing medal drought for the Philippines and becoming the first Filipina Olympic boxing medalist.
- Paris 2024; Secured bronze in the same division, cementing her legacy as a two-time Olympic medalist.

World Championships

- Gold (2019, Ulan-Ude)
- Silver (2014, Jeju City)

Southeast Asian Games:

- Multiple golds and silvers across different weight classes, including gold in 2019 (Philippines) and 2023 (Cambodia). In 2025 (Thailand), she competed in light welterweight and won bronze.

Other honors

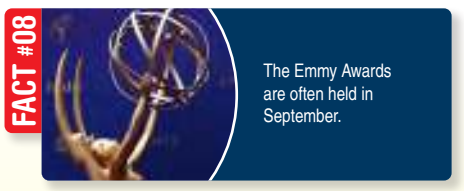
- Named Athlete of the Year (shared with Aira Villegas) at the 2025 PSC All-Women Sports Awards.
- Promoted to Petty Officer First Class in the Philippine Coast Guard after her Paris performance.

Openly lesbian, Petecio has used her platform to champion LGBTQ+ rights and gender equality in sports. After her Tokyo silver medal victory, she dedicated the win to the LGBTQ+ community, stating: "Whatever your gender is, as long as you have a dream, keep fighting." Her visibility has made her an important role model for inclusivity in Philippine and international athletics.

Petecio serves in the Philippine Coast Guard while continuing her boxing career. As of 2026, she remains active with the national team, training for future competitions, including potential qualification for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Beyond the ring, she works as a motivational speaker, inspires young athletes from underprivileged backgrounds, and advocates for better support systems for women in sports.

Her life story has been featured in the media, including a 2020 episode of *Maalaala Mo Kaya* ("Medal"), portrayed by actress Jane De Leon. ●

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By Vincent Tajanlangit

FAMOUS FILIPINOS

MEGAN LYNNE TALDE YOUNG-DAEZ

Megan Young is a Filipino-American actress, television host, model, and beauty queen who won Miss World 2013, being the first Filipina to earn the title. Crowned Miss World Philippines 2013, she became an influential public figure for representing Filipino talent on the global stage and for her continued work in entertainment and humanitarian efforts.

Born in the United States to a Filipino mother (Victoria Talde from Antique) and an American father, Young moved to the Philippines with her family at age 10. They settled in Castillejos, Zambales, near Olongapo City. She attended secondary school at Regional Science High School III in the Subic Bay Freeport Zone (2002–2005) before moving to Metro Manila. She later studied film making at De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde.

Young began her television career as a contestant on GMA Network's reality show StarStruck (Season 2, 2004–2005). She later became a prominent actress and host primarily with GMA Network, with a period at ABS-CBN/Star Magic. She has appeared in numerous drama series and films, often portraying strong female roles. She remains active as a television presenter and continues to advocate for education and youth development.

Her Miss World 2013 win in Bali, Indonesia, was historic for the Philippines. During her reign, she focused on the "Beauty with a Purpose" platform, supporting education, disaster relief operations, and children's welfare. Her poise, advocacy, and representation earned her recognition both locally and internationally.

Megan married actor Mikael Daez on January 25, 2020, after a long-term relationship. The couple are known for their shared work in media and travel content, and for their emphasis on balance and authenticity. They welcomed their first child, a son named León, in 2025. •



FACT #09

Apple frequently announces new iPhones models during its annual September event.

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SHOE CLOSET ESSENTIALS

By Jane Saya

Whether you are a minimalist when it comes to your personal style, or maybe you are reorganizing your wardrobe or even starting from scratch, here's a quick guide to making sure you have all the essentials when it comes to footwear.

Flats

A versatile shoe that goes with pretty much any outfit. You could wear a dress, jeans, shorts, a casual ensemble, or even something slightly dressier, and a good pair of flats will complete any of those outfits. What kind of flats, however, is up to you and is very much a personal choice. You can do a pointed toe, something in a neutral color like black, nude, or brown. On the other hand, if your personal style is a little more colorful or eclectic, then there are flats in different patterns and bright colors to choose from, which also adds a little pizzazz to your overall look.

There are also plenty of different styles to choose from when it comes to flats. For example, a Mary Jane-style flat shoe usually has a strap or two across the foot, which adds a nice detail. You can also get flats with a singular strap that goes around the ankle for something a little more elevated. There are also ballet flats with bows or toe embellishments, which can look a little more dainty or feminine.



If you like to walk a lot or maybe commute often, you can also go for a loafer, which is still flat but usually has a thicker rubber sole, making it more comfortable. It can also look more edgy, especially if it is black, and depending on how you style it.

What's great about flats is that you can wear these shoes all year round, in both casual settings, such as the mall, and more formal settings, such as an office. They're easy, comfortable, and usually don't cost as much as some other shoe options.

Sneakers

The sneaker trend will never go away. What started as a quick way to dress down an outfit now and again has become a well-known fashion staple or technique. You may notice that every year a different kind of shoe is trending, but you'll always find that



a white sneaker is a staple. A white sneaker, regardless of the shoe shape or brand you prefer, will also go with pretty much any type of outfit. You can wear them with more feminine options like skirts and dresses, or with trousers for a more business-casual look. Either way, this is another shoe that will be well used, so make sure to pick something you really like.

Taking into consideration that everyone has their own style, a white shoe may not always be the necessary choice for you. If you take a look at some of your favorite fashion icons and influencers, you may find that their chosen sneakers are in bold colors like red, yellow, or even metallic shades. You can replicate your icons if you know the color goes with most of what you wear daily. Remember that we are prioritizing the core of your shoe collection; you want it to match as many outfits as it can.

Sports Shoes

A sporty type of shoe has a double purpose. You can wear it casually, of course, as we've seen with the "dad shoe" trend in the last couple of years. A more chunky or rugged shoe can change the vibe of your outfit overall. You don't have to be in full athleisure wear to partake in this shoe trend either. The "dad shoe" not only adds a more street-style vibe, but you can actually use it for working out as well. This sporty shoe trend is versatile, serving both practical and fashionable purposes. You can use them for long walks, light-impact workouts, and still rock them with a casual outfit for running errands or maybe to the airport for a long day of travel. They're durable and comfortable, and now, also considered fashionable.

Sandals

Next up, we have the sandal. A sandal can be flat or have a little one to two-inch heel, depending on what you prefer. However, it is generally known to be open-toed or have more of the foot visible, making it a go-to option for the summer. A heeled option is great if you're looking to dress up a casual outfit, while a flat option is good for when you want to make something upscale a little more casual. They come in all sorts of styles, colors, heel heights, and shapes. There's a type of sandal for everyone. They can be strappy, slim soled, neutral, colorful, chunky, dainty, and many more. Always take into consideration your lifestyle, personal style, and what works best for you when choosing the right sandals.

Heels

Lastly, we have heels. If you don't attend big events or formal occasions often, then it's safe to say that you can probably get away with having one pair of really good heels. The safest options are nude or black, since they generally go with any type of long gown, dress, or even suit you could be wearing. Stilettos are the common choice, something over two inches for a more formal feel. The height of the heel should depend on what you can personally handle. High enough to look elegant, but not too high that you feel uncomfortable or cannot walk smoothly. You can also choose something with a block heel or even wedges if that is what you prefer. Utilizing heels is one of the best ways to instantly bring an outfit to the next level.

These five pairs of shoes will take you a long way in dressing up every day, whatever the occasion or weather. Once you have these basics down, you can then build upon them in time and add variations to each category for a more elevated collection. ●

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Health Tips To Prevent Constipation

Source: www.ndtv.com



Constipation is a common digestive issue in which bowel movements are infrequent or difficult to pass. Here are six tips to relieve it.

1. Avoid constipating food items such as white rice, bananas, chocolate, strong black tea or coffee.

2. Add fruits and vegetables to your diet. Aim to eat two cups of fruit or two and a half cups of vegetables every day.

3. Exercise regularly. Physical activity stimulates the intestinal muscles and makes them work more efficiently. It also decreases the amount of time needed for food to move through your intestine.

4. Drink lots of water. Drink at least eight to 10 glasses of water daily to have good bowel movements. Water not only lubricates the intestines but also moistens the food eaten, aiding its flow through the body.

5. Include more fiber in your diet as it helps ease the bowel movements. Avoid ice creams, chips, cheese, meat, pizza and processed or frozen foods because they lack fiber and can promote constipation.

6. Reduce stress. Bowel movement depends on intricate signaling between the gut and the brain. When our brain is under stress, our bowel is under stress too. Make sure that you do not stress too much about things.



Source: www.intermountainhealthcare.org

Six Daily Habits To Help Prevent The Spread Of Viruses

1. Avoid physical contact

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

2. Keep hands clean

Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 15 seconds.

3. Avoid touching face

Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

4. Practice proper respiratory hygiene

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough into your elbow, not your hand.

5. Clean all surfaces

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

6. Stay home if you are feeling sick

Isolate yourself when you're sick and keep sick children home from school.

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Source: www.stroke.org

TRIVIA

Lemons are one of the world's healthiest foods.

Not only do they contain high doses of vitamin C, but lemons also aid in weight loss and immune system function. Adding some to water can be a simple way to add a wellness boost to your day.

The sun is part of your nutrition.

Getting sunshine exposure is essential to making vitamin D. So soaking in some rays is actually part of a healthy diet.

Drinking a cup of coffee can reduce feelings of depression.

Feeling a little down in the morning? One study found that a cup of coffee can boost your mood and lower your risk of depression. But don't go for the decaf. You need caffeine for this effect.

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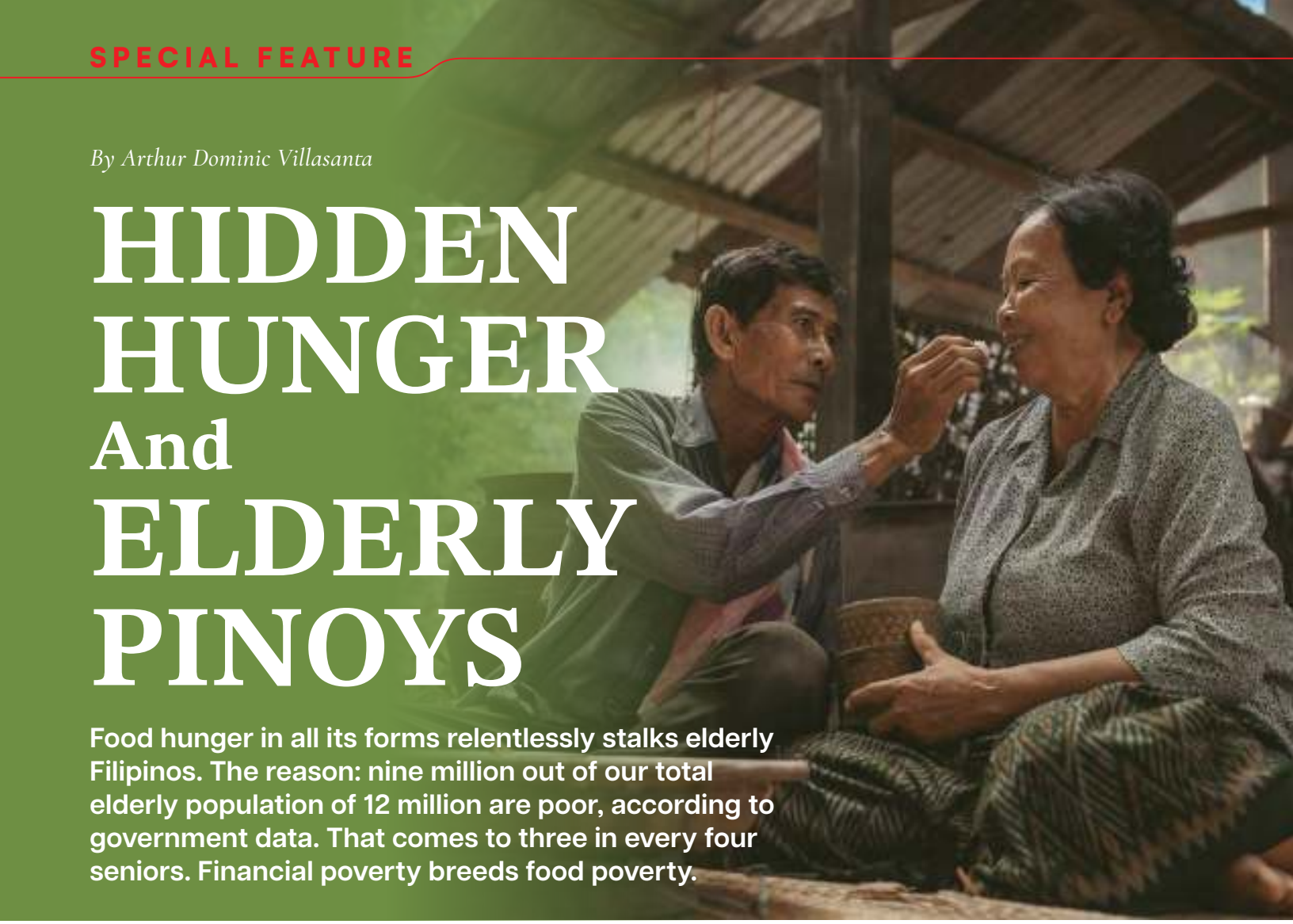
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By Arthur Dominic Villasanta

HIDDEN HUNGER And ELDERLY PINOYS



Food hunger in all its forms relentlessly stalks elderly Filipinos. The reason: nine million out of our total elderly population of 12 million are poor, according to government data. That comes to three in every four seniors. Financial poverty breeds food poverty.

Food hunger is defined by the United Nations (UN) as the distress associated with a lack of food. It's the direct cause of undernourishment, which occurs when a person consumes fewer than 1,800 calories per day. That's the equivalent of someone chowing down three pieces of pan de sal, one hard-boiled egg and one cup of unsweetened coffee as their only source of sustenance for an entire day.

This shameful reality also directly impacts the physical and mental health of elderly Filipinos. The inability to purchase food triggers hunger and chronic food hunger (long-term hunger linked to poverty).

It also directly ignites undernutrition, or a deficiency in calories, protein, and micronutrients, and its twin scourges, called wasting and stunting. Wasting spawns a person too thin for their height; stunting makes a person too short for their age.

"*Buto't balat lumilipad.*" ("Bones and skin, flying."). I'm not talking about a kite here, but emaciated and malnourished seniors, instead.

Hunger greatly degrades the mental health of our elderly as well. It directly leads to higher rates of depression, anxiety, chronic stress, and cognitive impairment. Moderate-to-severe hunger often leads to severe psychological distress, such as profound loneliness and depression.

Some 13 percent of Filipino households with senior citizens reported suffering from hunger for over three months, according to the Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health in the Philippines (LSHAP). Overall, poor nutrition, resulting in weight loss and loss of appetite, affects 15 to 50 percent of our elderly population.

More than four out of 10 senior Filipinos are at risk of malnutrition,



"Nine million out of our total elderly population of 12 million are poor, according to government data. That comes to three in every four seniors"





according to a report by Abbott Philippines. In the United States, the figure is one in four older adults.

The global prevalence of malnutrition among the elderly was placed at 18.6 percent, with rates reaching 35.7 percent in Africa and 20.3 percent in the in North and South America, said a published 2025 systematic review about global hunger.

The genesis of food hunger isn't a global shortage of food; it's the unequal access to food caused by poverty, conflict, and the inability of a country to provide food for all.

Hidden Hunger

There are, however, insidious forms of hunger that continue to gnaw at our elderly, even those who appear better fed. These unnoticed adversaries of healthy aging are called "Hidden Hunger" (or "silent hunger") and Chronic Energy Deficiency or CED.

Hidden hunger is a form of malnutrition among senior citizens who consume adequate or even excess calories yet still lack essential micronutrients for healthy functioning. It's quite pervasive among elderly Filipinos.

This condition is called hidden or silent because its victims show no obvious signs of debilitating symptoms like severe weight loss. It does, however, quietly damage an elderly person's health. It also weakens an already weak immune system and makes the elderly more susceptible to disease.

Put in another way, hidden hunger is a huge deficiency in micronutrients, while CED is a huge deficiency in macronutrients. Both hidden hunger and CED are distinct forms of malnutrition and are specific types of undernutrition.

Micronutrients, or micros, are those "minuscule but mighty" essential vitamins and minerals our body needs for healthy functioning. They're needed by our body in small, micro-amounts.

On the other hand, macronutrients or macros, provide the calories and energy our bodies need to function and stay healthy. They're needed in large, gram-measured amounts.

Micronutrients are obtained through a balanced, varied diet because our bodies can't produce most of these vitamins and minerals on their own. It consists of Water-Soluble Vitamins (Vitamin C, all B-complex vitamins); Fat-Soluble Vitamins (Vitamins A, D, E, and K); Macrominerals (Calcium, Magnesium, Potassium, Sodium), and Trace Minerals (Iron, Zinc, Copper, Iodine, Selenium). A critical lack of a micronutrient is called a micronutrient deficiency.

The three primary macronutrients are proteins, carbohydrates, and fats. Proteins are vital for building and repairing muscles, organs, immune cells and other tissues. Key macro sources are meat, fish, eggs, dairy, beans, lentils, and soy.

Carbohydrates, or carbs, are the body's main energy source and fuel our brain and muscles. Major sources are vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes.

Fats are essential for long-term energy, nutrient absorption, and supporting cell function. Key sources are nuts, seeds, oils, avocados, and fatty fish such as tuna and mackerel.

One in 10 Filipino seniors suffers from CED, according to the 2023 National Nutrition Survey (NNS) by the Department of Science and Technology-Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI). The agency added that seniors in the provinces are more greatly affected by CED compared to urban seniors. The numbers show 13.9 percent of provincial seniors versus only 9.6 percent for urbanites.

Data shows that seniors with CED almost certainly suffer from hidden hunger.

Malnutrition

Malnutrition, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), "refers to deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization.

"The double burden of malnutrition consists of both undernutrition and overweight and obesity, as well as diet-related noncommunicable diseases. Undernutrition manifests in four broad forms: wasting, stunting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies".

Malnutrition isn't limited to insufficient food intake; when taken to the extreme, it





"The double burden of malnutrition consists of both undernutrition and overweight and obesity, as well as diet-related noncommunicable diseases"

is a mark of poverty. It also includes poor-quality foods (*tuyo*, *pagpag*, *lugaw*, instant noodles) and impaired nutrient absorption (e.g., lactose intolerance, celiac disease).

The immense problem called malnutrition is frequently overlooked in the elderly because its symptoms are often mistakenly attributed to "normal aging". Among the malnutrition symptoms dismissed as mere aging are unintentional weight loss, constant fatigue, cognitive decline and slow wound healing.

Globally, malnutrition is a huge and "silent" threat to our elderly. A 2026 study by Amelia Pedro-Zambrano of the University of La Salette in Santiago, Isabela, found that an astounding 41 percent of Filipino seniors are at high risk of malnutrition. On the other hand, only 4.9 percent were overtly or visually malnourished.

Studies reveal a high prevalence of undernutrition among our seniors, with some 20 percent classified as underweight. This high rate results from age-related factors such as anemia and difficulties in chewing because of faulty or absent "*pustiso*" (dentures). "*Bungal*" (toothless) is a word that aptly describes this state of affairs.

This data gives us a picture of the extent of silent hunger among our elderly. Silent hunger is also a global problem. It affects between 19 percent and 30 percent of seniors worldwide.

Why Hidden Hunger

Apart from poverty, an important driver of hidden hunger among our elderly is an unwelcome shift in their dietary habits. One cause is a heavy reliance on "*sawsawan*" (dipping sauces) like "*toyo*" (soy sauce), and on saltier and sweeter flavors to compensate for their loss of taste due to aging. The problem is, these flavor enhancers offer zero nutritional value and also contribute to hypertension.

Other problems are bad dental health and dysphagia (difficulty swallowing). Many Filipino seniors, especially those in rural areas, can't afford the cost of geriatric dentistry. They also suffer from tooth loss and ill-fitting dentures.

Intractable teeth problems mean our elderly poor tend to gravitate toward soft diets such as "*lugaw*" (rice porridge), *pan de sal*, and instant noodles. These foods are easy to chew for the elderly but are mostly simple carbohydrates that provide "empty calories," or those with almost no essential nutrients, such as protein, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. They also lack the amino acids — found mostly in meat — needed to repair muscles.

This absence contributes to frailty and to "sarcopenic obesity," where a senior looks "*malusog*" (well-fed) due to visible





fat mass ("*taba*"), but lacks the muscle strength to prevent falls. Strong on the outside, weak on the inside. Age-related factors such as anemia, hypertension, and reduced appetite also contribute to the high rates of undernutrition among the elderly.

Solutions

A key solution is for our elderly to focus on eating nutrient-dense foods such as fatty fish like sardines, lean meats and poultry, eggs, leafy green vegetables, nuts and seeds like peanuts. Doing so will shift from simply feeding the elderly to nourishing them. Our elderly are also advised to reduce excessive intake of refined rice, sugary, and sodium-heavy processed foods, said DOST-FNRI.

The 2021 Expanded National Nutrition Survey (ENNS) found that our seniors consume only about 57 grams (2/3 cup) of vegetables and 22 grams (less than 1/2 of a small fruit) per day, significantly below the WHO recommendations of at least 400 grams (five servings) of combined fruits and vegetables daily.

Key recommendations from DOST-FNRI for our elderly include:

- More consumption of leafy greens like *malunggay* and *pechay*, along with fruits such as mangoes, bananas, and papayas for more micros, macros and fiber.
- Consume more fish. Meat remains expensive for many. Instead, DOST-FNRI suggests prioritizing fish and other small, calcium-rich fish (like *dilis*) over heavy meat consumption to combat the high prevalence of calcium deficiency, which affects 96 percent of the elderly.
- Adopt "*Pinggang Pinoy*". Use the Pinggang Pinoy (Filipino Plate) food plate model developed by DOST-FNRI to guide proportions, ensuring that half of every meal consists of fruits and vegetables.

Pinggang Pinoy is a simple daily guide to a balanced and nutritious meal. It recommends:

- ½ Glow (fruits and veggies).
- ¼ Grow (protein-rich foods).
- ¼ Go (energy-giving carbs).
- Don't forget your daily water intake.

- Opt for whole grains: Choose fiber-rich, unpolished grains such as brown rice and oats over refined carbohydrates (white rice, white bread) for better energy and digestion.

- Reduce salt and fats: Limit intake of salty, fried, and sugary foods to prevent chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.

The 2021 ENNS survey discovered that low fruit and vegetable consumption contributes greatly to the prevalence of malnutrition and NCDs among older Filipinos. Following these guidelines helps maintain a healthy weight and strengthens immunity.



As For The Americans...

The official American equivalent of Pinggang Pinoy is "MyPlate," developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Like our Pinggang Pinoy, MyPlate recommends that half of a meal consists of fruits and vegetables. Proteins and whole grains should each comprise one quarter of a typical meal, which is similar to ours. MyPlate emphasizes portion control and variety.

USDA explained MyPlate is a visual nutrition guide "designed to help Americans make better food choices and to remind them to eat healthfully." The plate is divided into four food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, and protein. There's a separate section for dairy.

There is, however, an alternative to MyPlate available to Americans. It's called "The Healthy Eating Plate," created by experts at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Harvard Medical School. Harvard says its version is "based exclusively on the best available science and was not subjected to political or commercial pressures from food industry lobbyists."

The main message of the Healthy Eating Plate is diet quality. The Healthy Eating Plate emphasizes balanced, nutritious meals and aligns with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. It divides a meal into sections: half filled with fruits and vegetables, a quarter with whole grains, and a quarter with protein sources like fish and nuts.

It encourages individuals to limit their intake of processed foods, red meat, and sugary drinks. It also advises them to avoid sugary beverages, which are a major source of calories in the American diet. It doesn't set a maximum on the percentage of calories people should get each day from healthy sources of fat.

Unlike MyPlate, The Healthy Eating Plate argues that the type of carbohydrates in a diet is more important than the amount of carbohydrates because some sources of carbohydrates, like vegetables (other than potatoes), fruits, whole grains, and beans, are healthier than others.

Our hidden hunger problem is a disgrace that has victimized elderly Filipinos for centuries. It continues unabated despite the best efforts of good Samaritans. We need to fix this tragedy once and for all. ●

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By Stephen Hammond

THE WAKE-UP CALL I NEVER SAW COMING

I spent seven decades proud of my good health — then my eyesight forced me to pay attention.

I have always considered myself fortunate. In seven decades of living, I have rarely been seriously ill—the odd seasonal flu, the occasional fever, nothing that put me out of commission for long. I never broke a bone, never had a major injury. I still have all my original teeth, with a grand total of four fillings to show for a lifetime of decent brushing. For most of my life, the concept of regular medical check-ups barely registered. I simply didn't feel the need.

"I spent decades assuming my body would go on managing itself without any particular help from me; for most things, that worked out. For my eyes, it nearly didn't"

Looking back now, I realize that wasn't wisdom, it was complacency. And it took my eyes to teach me that lesson.

Reading Glasses At Sixty Two

It started innocuously enough. Just after my 62nd birthday, I noticed some difficulty focusing when reading the newspaper. My wife, being far more sensible about these things than I am, marched me straight to the local optician. The eye test confirmed



what she had probably suspected: I needed reading glasses.

I wore that same pair for five comfortable years. Then the lenses started failing me, and a quick prescription update sorted things out for another two years. So far, so unremarkable, the ordinary rhythm of aging eyes, nothing to cause concern.

It was just before my 70th birthday when things became slightly more interesting. My optician, after a thorough examination, mentioned I had early-stage cataracts. Nothing to worry about right now, she said, just something to monitor. I nodded along, filed it somewhere in the back of my mind, and got on with life. I had heard friends mention cataracts over the years, but I had never really understood what they were. I still didn't, if I'm honest.

The Floaters, And A Stranger Across The Street

Three years passed. Then the floaters arrived — small specks drifting across my field of vision, occasionally blurring things for a few seconds before clearing. At first, they came and went. Then they became more frequent. I told myself it was nothing serious and kept putting off an eye check. I could still see clearly enough, or so I thought.

What finally forced my hand was almost embarrassingly simple. I was walking along the street one afternoon when someone called out my name. I looked up across the road and saw a figure waving at me — someone I clearly knew, judging by their enthusiasm. But I couldn't make out who it was. Not even close. Only when they came much, much nearer did their face finally come into focus.

That frightened me. I walked straight into an optician the same day.

The verdict was unambiguous: the cataracts in both eyes had progressed to the point where surgery was advised. No more monitoring, no more waiting. It was time.

Choosing Where To Go

I won't pretend the thought of eye surgery didn't make me nervous. The eyes feel different from other parts of the body — more precious, somehow, more vulnerable. I asked around among friends, researched my options, and received several recommendations for clinics and hospitals across Metro Manila.

One name kept coming up: the American Eye Center in Ortigas. Three separate friends had undergone procedures there, and all spoke highly of their experiences. For me, that kind of first-hand endorsement carries more weight than any advertisement. I made an appointment.





The center — currently operating from Level 4 of The Podium on ADB Avenue in Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City — is one of the Philippines' most established ophthalmologic institutions in the counry. Its origins date back to 1987, when a group of ophthalmologists from the University of the Philippines - Philippine General Hospital established a professional partnership to bring world-class eye care to Filipino patients.

A Different Kind Of Eye Clinic

What I found at the American Eye Center was not what I might have expected from a busy urban clinic. Yes, it was professional and efficient, but it was also calm, thorough, and genuinely focused on the patient rather than the procedure.

The center offers the full spectrum of eye care subspecialties, from cataract surgery and laser refractive procedures to retinal disease management, glaucoma care, pediatric ophthalmology, and low vision rehabilitation. It is, in the truest sense, a one-stop institution capable of managing almost any eye condition a patient might present with, from childhood through old age.

For my cataracts, I underwent phacoemulsification — a minimally invasive technique that requires no deep incisions and no sutures, and allows patients to resume normal activities with minimal downtime. The prospect of surgery on my eyes had felt daunting. The reality was far more manageable than I had anticipated.

Every physician at the center holds certification from the Philippine Board of Ophthalmology and carries subspecialty training from leading institutions in the United States, Japan, and Europe. Many are also active academics — professors and mentors at the UP-PGH, contributors to the national medical community. The center selects its doctors on three criteria: character, competence, and compassion. Sitting across from my surgeon during the consultation, I felt all three of those qualities in the room.

My designated eye surgeon was Dr. Ellen Sy. Any fears or uncertainties that I had were quickly dispelled. Dr. Ellen was the ultimate professional; her confident and friendly manner, along with an explanation of the whole procedure, left me relaxed and actually looking forward to what lay ahead. I can't thank her enough.

What I Know Now That I Didn't Then

I spent decades assuming my body would go on managing itself without any particular help from me; for most things, that worked out. For my eyes, it nearly didn't.

If you are reading this and you have been quietly putting off an eye check — perhaps because your vision seems fine, perhaps because you're not the type who goes to the doctor unless something is clearly wrong — I would gently ask you to reconsider. I am not a medical professional, and I am not in the business of issuing warnings. But I am someone who stood on the pavement, unable to recognize a friend waving from across the road, and who now understands exactly what that moment meant.

Pay attention to your eyes. They are trying to tell you something. Listen while you still can. ●

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THE POWER OF TOUCH FOR A NEWBORN'S FIRST YEAR OF LIFE

By Mona Sabalones Gonzalez

Friends and family used to call me a "Smother" rather than a Mother because I showered my newborn with so much affection. I cuddled her constantly, carried her around the house, danced while singing songs, clapped her tiny hands and feet, and rolled my hand gently across her tummy until she burst into laughter. Sometimes, I wrapped her in her hospital blanket and pretended she had just been born again. To me, those playful moments felt natural and loving. I didn't realize that science would one day affirm what my instincts already knew.

My husband was similarly affectionate. Every morning, he carried her to the gate and chatted with neighbors while she sucked her thumb and stared in fascination at passing cars. Those rituals seemed ordinary then, yet they formed her earliest understanding of comfort, safety, and connection. Long before babies understand words or sight, they understand touch. Today, science strongly supports what many affectionate parents have long believed. According to PBS NewsHour, touch is the first sense babies develop and respond to from infancy through their first year of life. Loving touch shapes critical brain regions linked to emotional intelligence, security, comfort, and attachment. A baby's first experiences with touch become their first experiences with the world.

The absence of affectionate touch, however, can leave deep and lasting wounds. Severe touch deprivation occurs in extreme environments where babies do not receive responsive caregiving. Children raised in such conditions often face emotional, social, and cognitive challenges that follow them into adulthood. Psychiatrist Bruce D. Perry describes many of these heartbreaking cases in his book *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog.* He treats children, some of whom lacked nurturing touch during infancy, and carried invisible scars for the rest of their lives.

One of Dr. Perry's patients became a murderer and sociopath. Other children struggled to understand empathy or read social cues. Dr. Perry also discovered something important: deprivation did not produce identical outcomes. Some children who suffered even greater neglect did not become violent, though they still carried profound emotional damage. Their stories reveal a painful truth. A baby who grows up without loving touch does not simply miss affection; the child misses critical stages of emotional and neurological development. That reality makes the role of touch impossible to dismiss.

Touch does far more than comfort a baby. According to a website article on www.babysensory.com, infants who receive regular physical affection often gain weight faster, develop stronger immune systems, sleep more soundly, cry less, and reach milestones such as crawling and walking sooner. As they grow older, these children also tend to show less aggression, engage in more purposeful behavior, and achieve higher educational outcomes. Behind every cuddle, hug, and gentle pat, something remarkable happens inside the baby's developing brain.

Why is touch so critical at this stage of a baby's development? Studies from the National Library of Medicine say touch develops before sight, taste, hearing, and smell. Loving touch during infancy creates healthy neural connections that later support emotional regulation, learning, and cognitive growth. Touch also helps develop the baby's brain. Other senses cannot replace this stage of development. That's why the first year of life carries such extraordinary importance. When parents lovingly hold, stroke, kiss, and comfort their babies, they strengthen the brain's foundation for future growth. Conversely, the lack of touch can stunt areas tied to emotional regulation and cognitive development. Brain scans of older children and adults who experienced severe neglect in their first year often reveal these deficits.



In infancy, touch isn't a luxury. It is a biological necessity.

Through touch, babies experience their first lessons about life. Skin-to-skin contact teaches newborns about safety, warmth, and comfort long before their vision fully develops. Babies can't yet understand language, but they can understand gentleness, reassurance, and calm through touch. Every loving interaction sends a silent but powerful message: the world is safe, and you are protected within it.

Repeated tactile experiences literally shape the brain. When parents massage, rock, cuddle, or gently play with their babies, they stimulate neural pathways linked to learning, attachment, and memory. These early interactions continue influencing development long after





infancy ends. The lessons of touch do not disappear once childhood begins; they become woven into a child's emotional and psychological framework.

Unfortunately, many myths still discourage parents from responding affectionately to infants. Some people believe holding a baby too much will spoil them. Others argue that parents should not immediately respond to cries because babies must learn patience and hardship early in life. However, an article on the website, www.scichida.com points in the opposite direction. Babies do not manipulate adults through crying; they communicate needs. When caregivers respond quickly and lovingly, babies develop trust. They learn that the world is dependable and that their needs matter. That sense of security later becomes the basis for independence, curiosity, and resilience.

Feeding also carries emotional meaning beyond nutrition. Some parents debate whether babies should be fed strictly on schedule or whenever they cry from hunger. Yet feeding is also a tactile and emotional experience. When we respond consistently to a hungry infant, it strengthens the child's sense of trust and safety. Discipline can come later. During infancy, babies first need reassurance that comfort, nourishment, and love will arrive when needed. From that deep sense of security, healthy independence eventually grows.

Science continues to confirm the profound role of touch in shaping development. Responsive contact supports brain development, activates neurological pathways in the baby's brain, strengthens communication between brain cells, and helps babies regulate their emotions. Touch also supports the nervous system by helping infants move from stress to calm. Every soothing embrace becomes part of the brain, building emotional resilience, trust, and neural wiring.

Nurturing touch also triggers the release of oxytocin, often called the "love hormone." Oxytocin reduces stress and helps babies feel emotionally secure. Positive touch calms both body and mind while laying the groundwork for secure attachment later in life. The emotional security built through touch eventually supports confidence inside and outside the classroom.

Touch even shapes the brain's synaptic connections, which allow the nervous system to transmit electrical and chemical signals. The richer and more positive a baby's tactile experiences are, the stronger these neural networks become. Loving touch in infancy later supports focus, language development, fine motor control, and physical coordination. In many ways, touch prepares the brain for every skill that follows. That is why even simple objects can become important tools for development.

Textured toys, soft blankets, smooth surfaces, and varied materials all enrich a baby's sensory world. When babies explore different textures, they strengthen the foundations for problem-solving, academic readiness, and higher-level thinking later in life. What appears to adults as simple play actually helps shape how children will learn and engage with the world for years to come.

At home, everyday routines offer countless opportunities for nurturing touch. My mother, who adored being a grandmother, turned even diaper changes into joyful games. She slid the clean diaper beneath the baby, snapped her fingers to make the baby look up, tickled her gently, and smiled as she fastened the diaper snugly into place. She probably never realized that those playful moments strengthened neural connections and deepened emotional bonds. Yet love often works powerfully in ordinary moments.

Parents do not build emotional security through grand gestures. They build it through small, repeated acts of affection: holding a baby close during feeding, rocking them gently when they cry, kissing their forehead before sleep, or resting a reassuring hand on their back. Touch becomes a language before words ever arrive. It tells a child, "You are safe. You are loved. You belong here."
And perhaps that is why a baby's first touch matters so deeply. Long before children understand language, achievement, discipline, or success, they first learn whether the world feels safe or frightening through the arms that hold them. A gentle touch in infancy does more than calm a crying child for a moment. It quietly shapes how that child will love, trust, connect, and move through life. In the end, the smallest acts of tenderness may become the strongest foundation a human being will ever receive. ●

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NAKASISIGURO GAMOT AY LAGING BAGO

By Evangeline Capuno

Breast Cancer

Women's Number One Killer



Breast cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer death among women worldwide. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), there were an estimated 2.3 million new cases and approximately 670,000 deaths from breast cancer globally in 2022.

The Philippines has the highest rate of breast cancer incidence in Asia. A report from the Asian Hospital and Medical Center (AHMC) noted that the country is among those with the highest number of breast cancer cases in the region.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), breast cancer accounted for a significant portion of cancer deaths in the Philippines. In 2022, there were 33,079 new breast cancer cases, making it the most common cancer among Filipino women.

"One out of every 13 Filipino women is expected to develop breast cancer in her lifetime," the AHMC document stated. "And the numbers continue to rise at an alarming rate for the simple reason that most women only consult a doctor when it is too late."

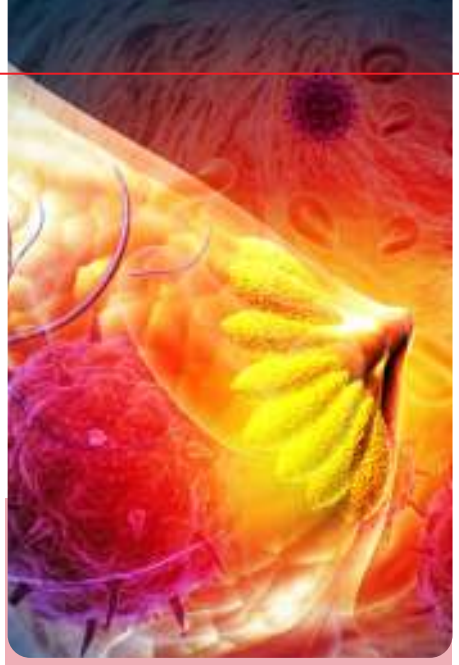


The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that many women diagnosed with breast cancer in low-resource settings die within the first five years. What is even more alarming is that all women are at risk, with approximately 70 percent of breast cancers occurring in women without major known risk factors.

Late diagnosis plays a major role in increasing the risk of death, with around 65 percent of cases in the Philippines being diagnosed when the disease is already in advanced stages, which considerably lowers chances of survival.

The five-year survival rate varies significantly by stage. Localized breast cancer (restricted to the breast) has a survival probability of 99 percent. Regional breast cancer (spread to nearby tissues or lymph nodes) has a survival probability of 86 percent. Distant breast cancer (spread to other organs) has a survival probability of around 28 to 33 percent.

Dr. George Crile, Jr., author of *What Women Should Know About the Breast Cancer Controversy*, describes breast cancer as "a malignant tumor that starts either in milk glands or in the ducts that carry the milk to the nipple. The cancer tends to metastasize (spread) to the lymph nodes in the armpit and to the nodes behind the breastbone. It can also spread widely throughout the body, especially to bones, lungs and liver."



"Late diagnosis plays a major role in increasing the risk of death, with around 65 percent of cases in the Philippines being diagnosed when the disease is already in advanced stages, which considerably lowers chances of survival"

According to Dr. Crile, breast cancer is not caused by sexual relations, germs introduced through the nipple, blows/bites/bruises, having or nursing babies, contact with someone having the disease, or the use of female hormones (estrogen) or the contraceptive pill.

"Although we are quite sure that the above factors do not cause cancer of the breast, much less is known with certainty about what causes it," Dr. Crile stresses.

Breast cancer can strike at any age, but it usually affects women over 35. "Age is the strongest risk factor for this disease."

Family history is another important risk factor — especially if a mother, sister, aunt,



or cousin has had breast cancer. Women who have had certain non-malignant breast tumors removed are also at higher risk.

Other risk factors include early menstruation (before age 12), late menopause (after age 50), being childless, or having the first child after age 30.

Studies show that smoking increases the risk of breast cancer, with heavier and longer-term smokers facing greater danger. Similarly, regular alcohol consumption raises risk — the more drinks per day, the higher the risk.

Researchers have also linked diets rich in fat (typical of many Western eating patterns) to higher breast cancer rates. In contrast, traditional diets in developing countries, which are lower in fat and higher in grains and vegetables, were historically associated with lower rates. However, as diets westernize, breast cancer incidence is rising rapidly in many developing nations.

In the Philippines, breast cancer is now the leading cancer among women. "What was once thought of as a disease of developed countries is now a major public health problem here," a health official noted.

The vast majority of women with breast cancer in low-resource settings are diagnosed only after the cancer has reached a late stage. Many women are unaware of their risk and do not know how to examine themselves.

Women themselves can play a key role in early detection. The Philippine Cancer Control Program recommends breast self-examination (BSE) about a week after menstruation.

The BSE can be done while showering, before bed, or upon waking. Using soap or powder can make it easier. If married, a husband can assist. A physician should check any unusual mass.

Here are the directions from the Philippine Cancer Society, Inc. (PCSI) on how to practice BSE:

In the shower or while taking a bath: Examine your breasts. Your hands





will glide easily over wet skin. With fingers flat, move gently over every part of each breast. Use your right hand to examine the left breast, and your left hand for the right. Check for any lumps, hard knots, or thickenings.

Before a mirror: Inspect your breasts with arms at your sides. Then raise your arms high overhead. Look for any changes in contour, swelling, dimpling, or nipple changes. Next, place your palms on your hips and press down firmly to flex your chest muscles. Breasts are not usually identical; regular inspection helps you know what is normal for you.

Lying down: To examine the right breast, place a pillow under your right shoulder and your right hand behind your head. With the left hand, fingers flat, make small circular motions starting from the outermost part. Move in an inch toward the nipple and repeat until the entire breast, including the nipple, is covered. Repeat on the left breast. Finally, gently squeeze each nipple to check for discharge.

In the early stages, breast cancer usually has no symptoms. As it progresses, possible signs include a lump in the breast, pain or tenderness, swelling in the armpit, changes in breast contour/texture, nipple changes (inversion, itching, discharge), or skin dimpling.

The earlier a cancerous lump is detected, the better the chances of successful treatment. Experts recommend that women aged 20 to 39 have a clinical breast exam every three years, and annually after age 40.

If diagnosed, breast cancer can be treated with surgery, hormonal therapy, chemotherapy, and/or radiotherapy. Newer approaches, including immunotherapy, continue to be explored.

Women can lower their risk through these evidence-based steps:

- Engage in regular exercise (at least three times a week for one hour). This can reduce risk by 20 to 40 percent. Breastfeeding and having children at a younger age also help lower the risk.
- Consume plant estrogens (e.g., from soy products), especially from early in life.
- Eat foods rich in folic acid (Vitamin B9), such as citrus fruits, dark green leafy vegetables, beans, and peas.
- Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke. Limit alcohol consumption.
- Know your family's medical history and stay vigilant if there is a history of breast cancer.
- Perform regular breast self-examinations and get clinical check-ups.

Early detection saves lives. By being proactive, women can significantly improve their chances of surviving and thriving after a breast cancer diagnosis. ●

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In Focus DIARRHEA

By Mae Anacay-Banayat

The rainy season in the Philippines ushers in a host of mosquito-borne and water-borne diseases, chief among them dengue fever, influenza, and leptospirosis – the latter from the ever-famous flooding that occurs every time we get a bad typhoon. There is another disease that is common but also deadly that many of us experience routinely. I'm talking about diarrhea.



Is It The Pasta, Or Something Else?

Everyone has experienced crippling diarrhea for a day or two in their life. You question whether it was the pasta you had for lunch, or the *samalamig* you bought from the street vendor on your way home. Whatever the case, you've spent the last minutes agonizing on your porcelain throne, wondering what you did to deserve this.

Diarrhea has been a persistent public health concern over several decades as it continuously ranks among the top 10 causes of illnesses in the Philippines. It is among the leading causes of death for Filipinos under five, with diarrhea incidences resulting in severe dehydration. It is also one of the most frequent reasons for hospitalizations, with PhilHealth paying over a million pesos for claims due to gastroenteritis and diarrhea.



“86 percent of diarrhea-related deaths could be attributed to poor water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) conditions”

Today, it is hard to determine the actual number of diarrhea incidences in the country, considering that the disease, for the most part, remains unreported. Globally, diarrhea is the third leading cause of death and of malnutrition among children under the age of five, says the World Health Organization (WHO). There are about 1.7 billion reported cases of childhood diarrhea in the world each year, of which a significant portion could be prevented by giving access to safe drinking water and teaching families about sanitation and hygiene.

In the Philippines, our Department of Health (DOH) says that 86 percent of diarrhea-related deaths could be attributed to poor water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) conditions. And so UNICEF Philippines, with the help of the WASH program, aspires to improve access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene in communities, health centers, and schools.

There is much to be said about this innovative program, but that is another article for another day.

Diarrhea Symptoms

Diarrhea often goes away on its own, but prolonged diarrhea can also cause dehydration. If the patient is young and unable to self-regulate, make sure that you watch out for signs of dry mouth, dizziness, extreme thirst, or dark-colored urine.

If there are no improvements after two days, it may be a sign of another problem— such as irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, an ongoing infection, or something else. In children, it is critical to consult a physician immediately if the diarrhea doesn’t improve within 24 hours.

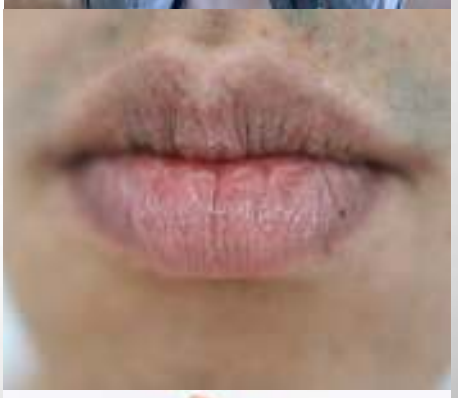
Common Diarrhea Causes

There are a host of things that can cause diarrhea, many of them harmless, while some of them could be signs of more serious illnesses. Below are some of them:

Medicines: If you experience loose stools after drinking a new prescribed medication, try to observe if it persists after your next dose. While medicines are supposed to make us feel better, some of them do trigger diarrhea as a side effect. It is also very common among some antacids with magnesium, as well as some antibiotics.









Traveler's diarrhea: A lot of people get sick when they travel to new places. In fact, the Cleveland Clinic says at least 30 to 70 percent of travelers experience traveler's diarrhea. This is because the sanitation practices of that particular area may be vastly different from what your gut health is used to. So, you may pick up a bacteria or two with the things that you eat. This is especially true in destinations with hot or humid climates where bacteria tend to thrive. As a precaution, it is always good to drink an oral probiotic containing *Bacillus clausii* at least 24 hours before your travel to protect your gut health when you arrive at your destination. You should always practice good hygiene: wash your hands before and after you eat, preferably with soap and water. Wash your hands after you use the bathroom. If you don't have this option, then use alcohol or hand sanitizer. You can also bring disinfectant wipes to help sanitize the surfaces where you will eat.

Food poisoning: This could be something as simple as eating or drinking something that has pathogens or harmful toxins. Once you ingest them, these toxins can trigger vomiting and diarrhea.

Conditions or diseases that affect your gut health: Food intolerance, celiac disease, churn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome, and more diseases affect the bowels. All of these have their own causes, treatment plans, and maintenance.

Immediate Diarrhea Treatment

The majority of diarrhea cases could be resolved at home. Over-the-counter medications can do wonders to curb the

"Diarrhea often goes away on its own, but prolonged diarrhea can also cause dehydration. If the patient is young and unable to self-regulate, make sure that you watch out for signs of dry mouth, dizziness, extreme thirst, or dark-colored urine"



effects of diarrhea, while other people prefer to let it run its course.

However, it is highly recommended that you seek professional help if the diarrhea doesn't improve in a couple of days.

Common treatments for diarrhea include the following:

Taking probiotics: Probiotics can combat the bacteria that are wreaking havoc on your digestive tract by introducing good bacteria.

Replenishing your liquids: Drinking lots of water and electrolyte-rich fluids (such as Pocari Sweat or Oral Rehydration Solution) can keep dehydration at bay. This practice also balances the fluids in your body to give you energy.

Eating right: The BRAT diet (Bananas, white Rice, Apples, and Toast) can do wonders in firming your stools. You should also eat low-fiber food while recovering.

Rest: Sometimes, there is no other way to combat diarrhea other than to let it pass its course. Make sure you get enough rest while your insides are churning, and avoid overexerting yourself.

Take medications: Consult a Mercury Drug pharmacist for over-the-counter medications you can take if you need to recover as soon as possible. This will slow down your gut to allow your body to absorb more fluid and thereby firm up your runny stools.

Quick And Easy

In a nutshell, diarrhea is a common disease that is easily treatable and preventable. Practicing proper hygiene, watching what you eat, and storing your food properly can prevent cases of diarrhea. But if you do get the runs, don't fret — rest, drink meds, and drink plenty of fluids. In no time, you will be back on your feet, feeling a few pounds lighter.

However, take note: if your diarrhea doesn't improve within two days, make sure to contact your doctor immediately. If it is a child who is suffering from diarrhea, contact their pediatrician immediately, as they are more at risk of dehydration. •

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By Dennis V. Gargantiel

Pardon Me, Your Neck Is Showing!

What Your Neck Body Language May Be Spilling About You

They say action speaks louder than words. Well, when it comes to people's body language, they might actually do much more than that. Sometimes they say out loud stuff we're trying hard not to say!

Kinesics, or the science of nonverbal communication, is not an exact science like math or physics. It cannot say for sure exactly what a gesture means all the time because interpretation heavily relies on context and culture, among other things. For instance, scratching one's head can signal puzzlement or irritation. Or it can mean the guy's head is just itchy. The viral misunderstanding of one small 1960s study suggesting communication is only seven percent verbal and 93 percent nonverbal had not helped its cause either, nor has a cottage industry of paperbacks and television shows that mushroomed, claiming deception-detection expertise that is scientifically sketchy.

Nonetheless, research interest remains robust because of its social and professional applications, and whatever its detractors might say, kinesics is a science – a core subfield of the social sciences with real-world application in business, negotiations, law enforcement, healthcare, cross-cultural communication, and most recently, as an aid for bots to recognize human behavior.

For the rest of us ordinary Juans, learning to read people like a "mentalist" (well, at least a little bit!) can make our social life more manageable. We'll decode better what they're really trying to tell us, and perhaps we'll grow more empathy in ourselves in the process. Knowing how gestures broadcast inner thoughts and feelings could help us to exercise more



“More common is neck scratching, usually the spot just under the earlobes. If the person’s neck is, in fact, not really itchy, it may indicate doubt or uncertainty. It’s an unconscious, if subtle, signal that they don’t agree with what you’re saying”

self-control and emotional management social and work situations demand. You wouldn’t want to appear insecure or wishy-washy (and therefore, incompetent) during a job interview now, would you? In this regard, body language experts like former FBI counterintelligence agent, author, and media resource person, Joe Navarro, believe that the neck and what we do with it with our hands can be most revealing.

Evolution And Physiology

Why the neck? Experts believe it is in our DNA. The neck is one of the most vulnerable and most sensitive parts of the human body. Hand movement to protect it has become instinctive since our caveman days, fighting off predators, going for the kill bite. There may no longer be saber-toothed tigers around, but we still do it unconsciously when we’re anxious or feel threatened. Men usually do it robustly by grabbing the entire neck with a hand, while women are more ladylike, touching it daintily with their fingers.

But prehistoric fears or not, neck touching elicits a physiological reaction, slowing heart rate and calming the nerves. The neck is highly innervated – meaning it is rich in nerve endings. It houses critical components of the “rest and digest” autonomic nervous system, regulating heart rate and blood pressure. The skin area is highly sensitive to touch and temperature, and it accommodates the vagus and other cranial transit nerves that serve as superhighways between the brain and the body. Because of its primal origins and demonstrable physiological benefits, Navarro believes that neck touching is a nonverbal that can be interpreted more unerringly.

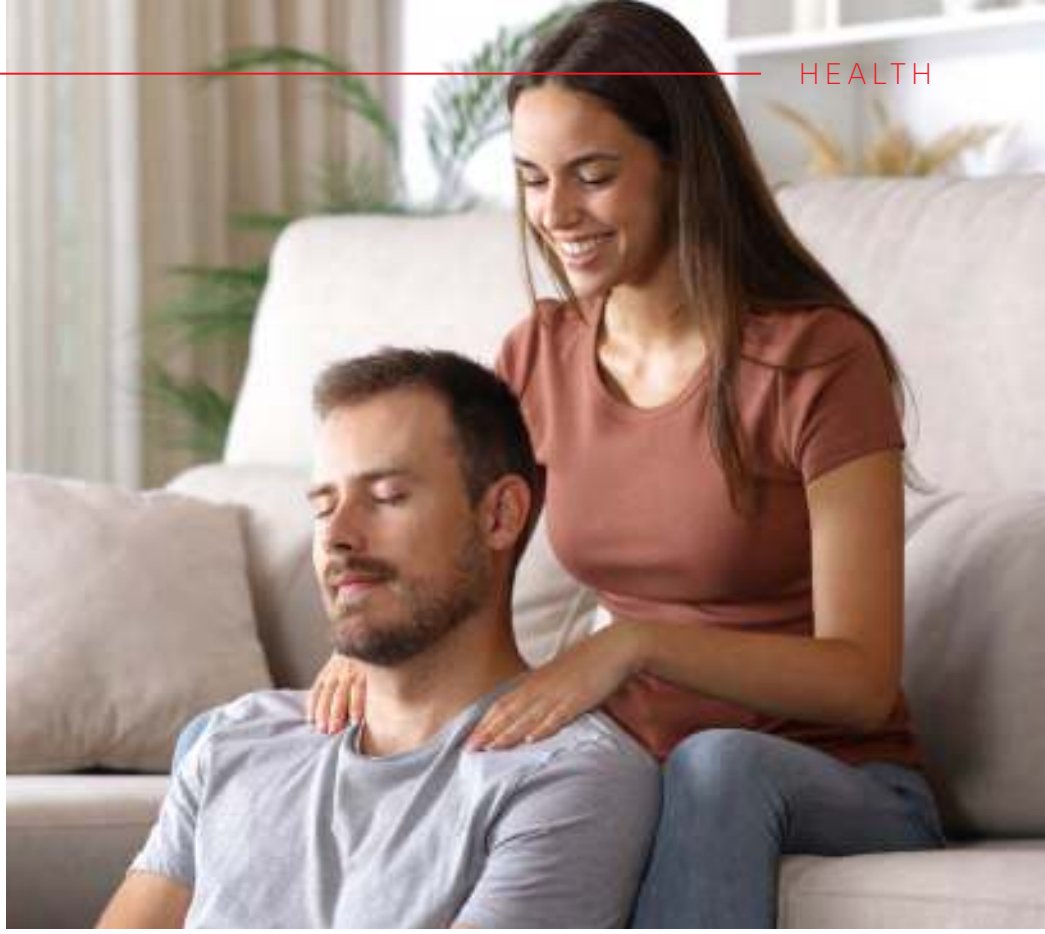
Stress And Discomfort

Instinctive touching or rubbing of the neck is a self-soothing gesture when we’re caught off-guard by a difficult question, receiving bad news, or in an awkward social situation. It manually triggers the body’s calming response, sending a “stay cool” signal via the vagus nerve to the brain. While men usually grab the front or side of the neck, women tend to touch the “suprasternal notch” (the dimple between the collarbones) or delicately place their fingers on the side of the neck. Navarro notes from extensive observation of people’s behavior that this is automatic even with pregnant women, although they might divert their hand to their bellies thereafter.

More common is neck scratching, usually the spot just under the earlobes. If the person’s neck is, in fact, not really itchy, it may indicate doubt or uncertainty. It’s an unconscious, if subtle, signal that they don’t agree with what you’re saying. This is something to watch out for if you’re trying to sell a product or an idea, indicating the need for you to change tack.

Experts say that the neck, by itself, can signal distress or discomfort. When





it suddenly stiffens up, and the head stops moving naturally, it may be a freeze response, such as when we're startled by sudden loud noise or find ourselves somewhere sketchy, like a dark alley. Another giveaway is the hard swallow or Adam's apple bob, which is said to indicate heightened emotional processing. It may be due to fear, anxiety, excitement, or even attraction. Whatever the case, keep it in mind if you plan to travel to the U.S. because it's in the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) 92-point checklist of dodgy behavior.

Comfort And Confidence

Thankfully, the neck is not exclusively a harbinger of things negative. If it reveals discomfort or distress in some cases, in others, it broadcasts a feeling of confidence or of being at ease. Rather than protect the neck, some gestures are meant to open it up, unconsciously signaling a feeling of being safe, confident, or receptive to new ideas.

According to the experts, tilting the head slightly to one side to expose more neck is a universal signal of feeling completely at ease. It's like telling Dracula or the Boston Strangler, "I now feel comfortable and safe enough to be around you!" If you watch couples sitting across from each other on a first date, you can tell how it is going by how they show more or less of the neck to each other. More neck, better odds of a second date; less neck, someone had better renew their dating app! But for romance or not, head tilts to show more neck is behavior that acts as a social glue in that it signals "active listening" and that you are actually interested in what the person has to say.

Lifting the chin to elongate the neck can mean something slightly different. It could be a show of utter confidence or pride, as a public speaker would do after scoring a great point during a debate or a basketball player after sinking a cool three-pointer. It's nonverbal for, "Look how clever I was just now!" or "Top that, buddy!"

Dominance And Aggression

However, some neck action can signal more than just pride or confidence. While lifting one's chin to show more neck is typically non-aggressive, doing this with a rigid neck could signal arrogance, defiance or contempt. It is literally looking down on others to establish dominance, as can be seen in old newsreels of infamous despots.

It looks cartoonish and is somewhat rare, but some men can visibly puff up the neck area to signal aggression, as if to declare that they are "ready to rumble." Tensing the muscles, broadening the shoulders, and thickening the neck's appearance is a primal challenge or intimidation display, similar to what animals do to appear larger when threatened. Jutting the neck and head forward slightly toward the other person is a subtle version. When a person you're talking with does this, it's probably a sign that things are getting heated and you need to take it down a notch.

Interest And Attraction

For wannabe Romeos out there, here's some neck language to watch out for. When a woman tilts her head casually, she's probably signaling interest in what you're saying. But when she does this in a slow, deliberate manner, it could be a sign of interest in you. Said to be a classic flirtation cue, the gesture draws attention to the neck skin – a very vulnerable and very sensitive area.

Sometimes, women will unconsciously take it up a notch by lightly and slowly self-touching their necks. It is said to be a form of auto-contact behavior, where she unconsciously touches herself in a way she would like to be touched. A variation – also a classic – is playing with a necklace, as we often see vamps do in old film classics. A word of caution, though – better check for context and other signs – clusters, if possible. As we mentioned, neck touching can be a self-soothing gesture, which means that it is also possible that she is uncomfortable being in the same room with you!

Seriously, though, it pays to be aware of what we do with our necks and to pay attention to what others do with theirs. Like it or not, they transmit thoughts, feelings and intentions, and social life would be easier if we could spot and decode them correctly while managing gestures of our own. Awareness can help in navigating social interactions, setting personal boundaries, and choosing responses that are appropriate in any social situation. It's a social skill that'll prove useful when we're up to our neck in challenges, when our neck is on the line, or when someone is being a real pain in the neck! ●

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Seven Ways Screens May Affect A Child's Brain

By Glecy G. Gamboa

Tablets or phones have become the modern-day babysitters. This may be a familiar scene: A working mother is at the breakfast table checking an email on her phone while her two-year-old son watches a cartoon on a tablet.

Technology is woven into our family lives. Devices are convenient and can enhance learning and build a sense of community, but they can also affect our health, including sleep, socio-emotional development, and creativity. Constant exposure to screens can also reshape the development of a child's brain.

Experts say that the constant pings and rapid-fire visuals of digital media act like a "dopamine pump," rewarding the brain for short bursts of attention while making the slow, steady work of real-world learning feel like a chore.

"It's not how long we're using screens that really matters; it's how we're using them and what's happening in our brains in response," says Dr. Michael Rich, director of the Center on Media and Child Health at Boston Children's Hospital and





associate professor of social and behavioral sciences at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

According to Dr. Rich, the growing human brain is constantly building neural connections while pruning away less-used ones, and digital media use plays an active role in that process. He further explains, "Much of what happens on screen provides 'impoverished' stimulation of the developing brain compared to reality.

"We don't want to be in a moral panic because kids are staring at smartphones. We need to be asking, what's happening when they're staring at their smartphone in terms of their cognitive, social, and emotional development? As with most things, it will probably be a mix of positive and negative. Going forward with our eyes open, how can we enhance the positive and mitigate the negative?"

Let's look into seven ways screens may alter a child's brain and, more importantly, how we can find a healthy balance.

1. Brain's Physical Change

The cerebral cortex is the outermost layer of the brain and is responsible for processing information from our senses and for planning and logic. This particular region of the brain starts to thin out when kids spend too much time in front of screens.

As we age, our brains naturally get smaller, a process called "pruning." This is how the brain gets rid of unused connections to become more efficient. But heavy screen users are experiencing this thinning process a bit too early.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) started the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study, a landmark study on brain development and child health. It is tracking over 11,000 kids, and they found that kids who spent more than seven hours a day on screens had thinner brains compared to those who didn't.

As a result, toddlers may find it hard to understand how 2D images on screens translate to the 3D "real world." And when the cortex thins too early, it becomes harder for older kids to solve complex problems.

2. Language Delay: Passive vs. Active Learning

A study in *JAMA Pediatrics* revealed that toddlers who spend more time on screens hear fewer adult words and engage in fewer conversations. For instance, a toddler watching an educational video about a talking cow might learn a word in isolation. But when they play with a parent and a plastic cow, they'll learn the word "cow," the sound of "moo," the feel of the toy, and the importance of eye contact.

The impact on toddlers is significant. Those who watch over two hours of TV before they're one year old are six times more likely to have trouble speaking.

And by fourth grade, heavy TV exposure at age two can lead to lower vocabulary scores and a seven percent drop in classroom participation.

3. "Fast-Pace" Trap on Focus and Memory

Have you ever wondered what makes your brain tick? It's all thanks to executive function, or EF, which is like the brain's boss responsible for impulse control, working memory, and mental flexibility.

Interestingly, a study found that just nine minutes of watching a fast-paced cartoon can mess with a kid's focus and problem-solving skills, temporarily losing their "CEO" abilities.

For example, toddlers using screens to "stay still" at restaurants aren't practicing waiting; they're just distracting themselves. Similarly, school-aged kids who do homework while watching YouTube can see their grades on standardized math and English tests affected.

Using a screen to "stay still" might not help your brain grow. Instead, focus on things like drawing, reading, or playing



or walking outside. This is beneficial for a child's brain, and for adults too!

4. Blue Light and Sleep Quality

Blue light from screens lowers sleep quality by tricking the brain into thinking it is daytime. Clinical research shows this short-wavelength light suppresses melatonin, the hormone responsible for drowsiness. This delay shifts our internal biological clock, making it much harder to fall asleep, shortening overall sleep duration, and reducing critical REM (rapid eye movement) sleep needed for recovery and brain development.

Even 10 minutes of evening screen time for toddlers can overstimulate their nervous system, causing bedtime resistance and







frequent awakenings. Scrolling or gaming in bed for older kids and teens can delay melatonin release by up to two hours, leading to chronic sleep deprivation and poor focus.

To protect their sleep, establish a strict digital curfew by turning off all screens one to two hours before bed. Keep bedrooms entirely screen-free overnight and use dim, warm lighting in the evening to help their bodies naturally wind down.

5. Sensory Restriction

A child's brain grows fast, but excessive screen time can cause sensory restriction by cutting off the real-world experiences they need. While tablets and TVs give their eyes and ears a workout, they don't engage foundational senses like touch, balance, and body awareness.

Experts from the Harvard Medical School say that digital media offers an "impoverished" form of stimulation compared to the physical world, which can alter how a young brain builds its neural pathways. In addition, the study in JAMA Pediatrics found that toddlers with more screen time were more likely to show atypical sensory behaviors, like getting easily overwhelmed by everyday noises.

6. Poor Socio-Emotional Development

Much of a child's social and emotional growth happens through simple, everyday interactions. When screens start replacing face-to-face time, it can create a small gap in their socio-emotional skills. Because smartphones or tablets can't react the way a human does, children miss out on practicing critical real-world skills like reading micro-expressions, sharing attention, and picking up on conversational pacing.

Another long-term study published in JAMA Pediatrics found that higher screen time at age one directly predicted developmental delays in communication and personal-social skills by age two. Another study in PMC Child Development found that heavy screen use is often linked to lower empathy scores in kids. This happens because passive viewing replaces the active, back-and-forth "turn-taking" talk with parents and friends that teaches kids how to understand big feelings.

Instead of screen time, shared moments like family meals, playing board games, or reading a book together make a big difference. While reading, you can ask fun, simple questions like, "What do you think that character felt?" to help them practice empathy in ordinary situations.

7. Excessive Stimulation of the Reward System

Every swipe, like, and flashing animation on a screen acts like a mini-reward for a child's brain. When kids interact with hyper-stimulating digital content, it triggers a rush of dopamine, the "feel-good" chemical



that tells the brain, "This is exciting, do it again!" Modern apps and videos, which are designed to deliver fast, unpredictable rewards, flood the brain with dopamine, and this keeps young minds hooked.

Constant dopamine triggers reduce the brain's "volume control" for joy, making ordinary activities less satisfying. This neural shift can change a child's behavior and frustration levels, and may lead to shorter attention spans in real life. When the screen turns off, developmental tasks such as reading, puzzle-solving, or family meals suddenly feel boring.

Swapping out fast-paced video games for board games, building complex Lego sets, or working on long-term crafts can gently retrain a child's brain to appreciate the steady, rewarding process of real-world effort.

Tips For Digital Balance

Pediatrician Dr. Michael Rich, from the Harvard School of Public Health, recommends the following tips for a healthy balance in the use of gadgets:

- Beware of digital media distraction. Half of all kids and three-quarters of parents feel the other is distracted when they talk.
- Have regular sit-down, screen-free meals with your children.
- Put down your device. Be present with others. Observe the world around you. Let your mind wander.
- Avoid blue-light-emitting screens before bedtime.
- Play online games with your children rather than forbidding them. Learn how to play from them, and as you play, help them think about what they're seeing and doing on screen.
- Help your children plan how to spend their time, focusing on important and favorite activities to avoid sliding into the screen abyss.

The Philippine Pediatric Society (PPS) and the Philippine Society for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus (PSPOS) have established age-specific guidelines for screen use.

Under 12 to 18 Months: Zero Screen Time

- Infants should have no exposure to digital media.
- Live video chatting with family members or parents who work overseas is permitted under strict adult supervision.

A benchmark study found that Filipino toddlers exposed to early screen time (more than two hours daily) had a fourfold likelihood of developing language delays, especially expressive speech.

Toddlers (two to five Years Old): Maximum one hour per day

- Non-educational media is capped at less than one hour on weekdays, with a maximum of three hours on weekends for high-quality programming.
- Physical, interactive, or floor-based play alongside caregivers is prioritized over digital pacing.

School-Aged Children (Six years and older): "Guided" Screen Time

- Limit recreational screen time to less than two hours daily.
- Filipino children exceeding two hours daily face a 1.6 times higher risk of psychosocial and behavioral issues compared to those within the recommended limits.

Indeed, as Dr. Michael Rich said, "Children need a diverse menu of online and offline experiences, including the chance to let their minds wander. Boredom is the space in which creativity and imagination happen."

There is always a balanced and healthy approach to screen use. "We have to be flexible enough to evolve with the technology but choose how to use it right."

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Finding beauty in the extraordinary and the mundane.

Behold The Beauty

By Betsy Gacutan-Ochosa

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
pass into nothingness, but still will keep
a bower quiet for us, and a sleep
full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
- John Keats, Endymion Book 1

What is beauty? Oftentimes, we attribute it to a person's physical looks…

Deep-set eyes. Aqualine nose. Crimson red lips. Chiseled jawline. Silky, smooth hair. Skin that glows…

There are people who command a double look the moment they enter a room. And yes, we do like looking at them. Sometimes, we even ogle. But we know there is so much more to beauty than that. There is beauty that emanates from within.

A winsome smile. Personal warmth. Ability to make another person feel at ease. Grace under pressure. A kind, gentle heart. People who seem to glow because of inner peace…



And then there is also beauty that you see and experience when you stop and look around you.

Sunrise. Your first cup of coffee – or tea – in the morning. The sound of the birds chirping, leaves rustling. A breath of fresh air. A loved one's 'good morning.' Spring flowers. Rainbows. A child's laughter. Your own giggles when with friends. Old photos, old souvenirs, old songs. Paintings that speak to your soul. Changing seasons. Sunsets. The full moon. Starry, starry nights…

The list is endless. There is beauty everywhere if you choose to open your eyes and see it. Let us counter the bleak and dreary days with all things beautiful. Let



"Because life is meant to be beautiful... and life's beauty is meant to be shared. Let us behold the beauty of life and revel in it together"

us be that person who holds on to the good and spreads beauty and light to others.

Because life is meant to be beautiful… and life's beauty is meant to be shared.

Let us behold the beauty of life and revel in it together.

Tips To Beautiful, Better Days

When I was a young girl, the days seemed to pass quite slowly. I remember summer vacations feeling so long and endless. One has to be creative so as not to experience boredom because the clock is just not in a hurry to tick. But then I also remember liking those vacations, boring as some days may seem, because I had time to pause… breathe… actually enjoy the day. I had time to look forward to things – may it be a phone call or a visit from friends or cousins.

We now live in a very fast-paced life. Technology has made a lot of things easier, and the more it advances, the faster everything tends to move. Even time. Suddenly, 24 hours is not that long anymore. There is always something to do. There is always something that needs or calls your attention.

The sad thing is, busyness does not necessarily mean productivity, nor does it always bring fulfillment. I am pretty sure that at some point you have asked yourself, "Am I living a life of significance, or do I just spend my days being busy?"



So how do we make our days matter? How do we still keep a smile on our faces and in our hearts at the end of the day, regardless of how difficult the day was? I believe if we truly want our days to have significance, we have to be intentional about it. We have to do things that actually matter, which oftentimes we dismiss or forget.

1. Wake up with a smile and an affirmation that "today is going to be a good day."

Before you reach out to get your phone, check your messages or read the latest news, the moment you open your eyes, give the world a smile. Say a short – or long – prayer. Thank God for waking you up, be thankful for another day.

Personally, as a Christian, my first utterance each morning is, "This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it." It speaks of my gratitude for the new day and my dependence on the Creator. Regardless of what the day brings, I have Someone watching over me; I need not be afraid. I face the day with great expectation and hope.

"Don't feel guilty indulging yourself once in a while. Don't feel guilty about liking beautiful things"

2. Smile at people... even those you don't know. Smiling makes you *feel good*. Your face relaxes, you look warm and approachable. Smiling makes you *look good*.

But sometimes we are too self-conscious. "*What if they think I'm creepy?*"

What if they don't? What if your friendly face is what that random person needs to get through a sad, difficult day?

3. Do random acts of kindness. Pay for your friend's lunch. Do someone else's chore. Give your food rider a hefty tip... or order take away for him, as well. Buy drinks or snacks for that security guard you always see at your building lobby or parking lot. Leave a good review of the service of a restaurant's frontliner. Make someone smile. Make another person happy.

4. Be more patient with people. We all experience bad days. Sometimes our fuse may be short, and little things can easily rile us. Sometimes it seems so satisfying to just blow your top and shout at someone annoying. At times, we are





faced with people who are pretty slow in understanding. It can get so irritating.

Pause. Breathe. Breathe slowly. Count quietly in your head. Tell yourself it is not worth your peace. Reasoning out calmly is one thing; soap opera drama is another.

There is elegance in being cool, calm and composed.

5. Do something nice for yourself. Buy yourself flowers if you love flowers. Go and get that perfume you like if you can afford it. Everyone remembers people who smell good.

Wear that dress you have been wanting to wear for a long time. I am sure it looks better on you than hidden in the cabinet.

Learn a skill you have always wanted to learn. One is never too old to paint or learn a foreign language. Join those classes.

Don't feel guilty indulging yourself once in a while. Don't feel guilty about liking beautiful things.

6. Be good to yourself. Take care of your physical health. Eat well. Exercise. Take care of your mental health. Do your best to avoid stressful situations and toxic people.

Read and try to learn new information every day. Knowledge is power. When you realize you learned something new, acknowledge it. Be proud of yourself. Be your own best friend.

Take care of your wellbeing. You cannot pour from an empty vessel.

7. Be grateful. Count blessings daily. Value people and the good they do. Don't scrimp on your thank yous.

End the day with a prayer of thanks – for the protection, for the learnings, and for the sustenance.

I believe it is the things we do outside our daily tasks that make us appreciate life more. These are the things that stay in our hearts, as well as in other people's, long after. There is always joy when you know you have touched someone else's life in a good way. You do it for them, but you do it also for *you*.

This is how you give yourself beautiful, better days. ●

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If You Can, Be At Home

By Excel Emmerybelle A. Sumalo



If there's something I think I have unknowingly taken for granted as someone who never actually left the province where I grew up, it's being at home. It's easy to think that since I'm just a few hours away from home, it's practically like I'm at home. It was like that when I started my college journey, and it was still the same when I graduated and eventually took a job 45 minutes away from my hometown. I could practically go home every single night, but newsflash – I couldn't. My experience mirrors that of hundreds, if not thousands, in the working community.

The reality for the working class is that we often don't have a choice about where we work. The economy does not necessarily allow us to choose to be closer to home every single time – we chase after availability, not comfortability, not what's easy. Although fortunate enough to be able to go home every other weekend, the fact remains that I'm not essentially at home as frequently as I'd like, which is why I have been trying not to take it for granted. Here are a few ways you can be AT home when you are actually there.

Limit Screen Time

One easy killer of genuine family time is our screen time. Our minds are wired so that when we don't have work, we scroll endlessly through our favorite social media platforms. This has been true of me, and it's absolutely true for most of us. Social media is not inherently bad, especially when used appropriately and moderately, or when used to connect with our loved ones who are miles away; however, it's still one of the easiest escapes we use to take



"When people say that food is the key to a man's heart, it's literally that for everyone. Conversations flow naturally when having a meal with people, which makes life a whole lot easier and more valuable"

our minds off our worries. However, being at home with the people who matter most should mean that escape is unnecessary – it should be sacred ground for rest, catching up with the family, and filling each other with the warmth of what it means to be alive and with the very people you work hard for. Don't lose your precious weekend grueling over the life you want to have when you're in the presence of the very people you are building that life for.

Be At The Table

One underrated act of building connection is eating together as a family. When I was a child, my parents would never allow me to sleep on an empty stomach or to prioritize any other task when it's time to eat – when it comes to breakfast, lunch and dinner – they mean business, and that means every single member of the household should be at the table. This should still be a thing. Nothing beats the stories told over a bowl of soup and a plate full of warm rice. Even as adults, my sister and I always look forward to our Mom's home-cooked meal after a long, tiring week. When people say that food is the key to a man's heart, it's literally that for everyone. Conversations flow naturally when having a meal with people, which makes life a whole lot easier and more valuable.

Schedule An Activity

A pitfall for everyone who takes moments for granted is the natural assumption that the people at home will always be there. There was a time when my grandparents' house was the favorite hangout spot of the entire clan on my paternal side. Now that they're both gone, the house that was once the home of thousands of our beautiful memories with my cousins as youngsters is left dejected – things can change just like that. This is why, never take moments for granted; schedule as many fun activities as you can at home. Set up karaoke night, read bedtime stories with the kids, do a hand shadow play, let the kids sing and dance and allow the family to clap for them, play with the youngsters, enjoy a cup of coffee with your parents – whatever it may be, do something that will not make you regret for the time lost, because in life, there's nothing else that will hurt more than the "what-ifs" after taking things for granted.

Leave Work In Your Workplace

I know, this is simply easier said than done. You might say that it sounds elitist because in reality, work can't be shaken off easily – for people who work for the survival of their own, this could mean abandoning what could be a day's worth







of rice and viand; however, truth should be told as frequently as it matters – we are replaceable at work, and this means ALL of us. It doesn't matter if you're the boss, the CEO, the Vice President, the Manager, the most decorated worker of the week, month or the entire year – YOU ARE REPLACEABLE AT WORK, but you are irreplaceable at home. This should put things clearly into perspective. Leave your work in your office if you can. If it's urgent, do it when everyone else is asleep or do it as quickly as you can so you can go back to your family. No amount of promotion or job well done could ever replace or equate to the time lost with the people you are working hard for. Yes, your work is important as it supports your family, but you can always find another job. You can never replace your family once they're gone.

Be In Your Most Present Self

It's not going to be easy. It's extremely difficult to differentiate the part of you who is a worker from who you really are beyond work. For most of us, it's the same – but for the sake of all that matters, wherever you are, be your most present self. Be there when your parents tell you of their back pains. Be present when your kid tells you about their measly drawings. Be there when your spouse complains about their day. Be there when your siblings ask you questions about the path they're navigating. Be there so you can also speak about your day when you're in a conversation with the people who care for you, just as you do for them. There might be instances where you think that all they do is talk about themselves, but you should not view it that way – speak of your reality too. Bridge your experiences, build on the commonalities and perceive the differences as a means to uncovering things you have not known prior. Whatever it is, be in your most present self to bask in the experience, even the most mundane ones.

If You Can, Be At Home

Life is a cycle. The moment we are born, we start dying. This is not a bad thing – just the reality we have to face. Oftentimes, our realities can feel bleak, stagnant, boring and tiring – especially when work is involved. But just because we're working doesn't mean we have to neglect what we're working hard for. It takes compromise and a lot of effort to be home in this economy – this is a hard-to-ignore, difficult-to-change truth. However, once we decide to pack our bags for the day and head home, the least we could do is to make sure that we are actually there, not just for our family, but most importantly for ourselves. For some, home is a place where their parents are. For others, home is where their spouse and children are. For a lot of us, home is never a place but someone we love. Whatever you choose to define home as, may you be there when you can and welcome the love and warmth it can offer. When you can, be at home. ●

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Don't Miss Your Child's Growth Window:

Why Vitamin D3 Matters for Your Child's Height and Bone Development

Every mom wants to give her child every possible advantage to grow tall, strong, and healthy. But many parents don't realize that a child's growth doesn't happen forever. There is actually a limited window of time when children experience their most important height and bone development. During these growing years, the body needs the right nutrients to support healthy bone growth. By understanding how growth works, and by providing the right nutritional support early, moms can help their children reach their full height potential.

Dr. Kevin L. Bautista, a pediatrician and professor from UP - Philippine General Hospital, shares expert insights to help parents better understand the important role of growth and nutrition in their child's development. Here, he answers some of the most common questions moms ask about children's growth and how proper nutrition can help support it.



What does "growth" really mean?

Growth refers to the increase in a child's height and bone length. Growth spurts occur most prominently during childhood and early adolescence, when the body undergoes rapid increases in height, weight, and overall physical development. Once growth stops, height can no longer naturally increase. This is why supporting children while they are still growing is so important.

What are growth plates and why do they matter?



Growth plates are soft areas of developing cartilage found at the ends of long bones. They are the areas where new bone forms, allowing bones to lengthen and children to grow taller. Growth plates are widely open at around 6–12 years old, which is the optimal window for growth and when growth spurts commonly happen.

As children grow older, these plates gradually harden and close during late puberty. This typically happens earlier in girls than in boys.

Is there really a "growth deadline"? When exactly do kids stop growing?

The growth deadline refers to the point at which the growth plates close. Prior to this stage, children have the highest growth potential. But once the plates close, missed growth cannot be recovered, which is why early support is important.

What helps support healthy growth?

Healthy growth is supported by several important daily habits:

- Balanced nutrition
- Adequate sleep
- Regular physical activity
- Key vitamins and minerals for bone development, especially Vitamin D3.

Why is Vitamin D3 important for growth?

Vitamin D3 is essential because it helps the body absorb calcium, which is necessary for building strong and long bones. Without enough Vitamin D3, bone growth may not be optimal.

How can parents maximize their child's growth window?

Parents can help maximize this growth window by supporting children early with the right nutrients. Ensuring consistent daily intake of essential vitamins and minerals helps maintain continuous bone growth during this critical stage of development.

Help your child reach their full height potential during the important growth years with proper daily nutrition and essential vitamins. Make sure to give them Vitamin D3 which supports healthy bone development. By nourishing their growing bodies with the right nutrients, you can help build stronger bones, promote healthy development, and help them grow taller and stronger every day.



LAKE SEBU

The Tranquil Haven In The Highlands Of South Cotabato

Text and Photos by Henrylito D. Tacio

Lake Sebu, a bucolic municipality in South Cotabato, garnered international interest in 1971. This event was purportedly the discovery of a surviving prehistoric tribe within the rainforests of this region in Mindanao. Among the prominent headlines were: "Primitive Stone-Age Tribe Discovered in the Philippines," "Philippine Stone-Age Tribe Under Threat," and "Lost Tribe of Tree-Swinging People Discovered in the Philippines."

However, the excitement was ultimately disclosed to be a hoax. The prehistoric tribe is actually known as the Tasadays. They are considered part of the Lumad community, which includes other indigenous groups inhabiting the island.

Lake Sebu is their home – alongside the T'bolis. The term Tboli is derived from *tau*, meaning "people," and *bilil*, which translates to "hill" or "slope," thus signifying "people residing in the hills."

Legends indicate that these individuals are the descendants of those who survived a great flood. A man named D'wata warned the community about the impending deluge, but most of the tribe chose to disregard his warning. Only two couples, La Bebe and La Lomi, along with Tamfeles and La Kagef, took his counsel seriously.

D'wata instructed them to seek refuge within a colossal bamboo, large enough to accommodate them, thereby ensuring their survival during the flood. The first couple is recognized as the ancestors of the T'boli and various other highland ethnic groups.

▶ Lake Sebu is named after the town's biggest lake.



The T'boli people are renowned for their *t'nalak*, a sacred fabric crafted from abaca, which is exchanged during matrimonial ceremonies and serves as a covering during childbirth. During our visit, we witnessed a tribal folk dance (ritual dances of the T'boli) performed in front of us, with dancers adorned in *t'nalak* garments.

The municipality is home to three lakes and derives its name from the largest, Lake Sebu, which covers 354 hectares. The word "Sebu" originates from the T'boli language,

▶ Lake Lahit is the smallest of the three lakes.



"Covering an area of merely 24 hectares, Lake Lahit is the smallest of the three lakes. It is celebrated for its natural beauty and tranquil ambiance, making it a favored destination for both tourists and locals. The lake provides breathtaking views and an opportunity to unwind in a serene setting"

signifying "lake" or "leaf." Visitors are encouraged to visit Lake Sebu to experience the most breathtaking sunset.

However, for those who have a particular interest in sunsets, Lake Seloton is the recommended destination. This lake covers 48 hectares and features the deepest section. It serves as a peaceful haven for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike. Renowned for its crystal-clear waters and tranquil ambiance, visitors can participate in a variety of outdoor activities, including kayaking, boating, and fishing.

Covering an area of merely 24 hectares, Lake Lahit is the smallest of the three lakes. It is celebrated for its natural beauty and tranquil ambiance, making it a favored destination for both tourists and locals. The lake provides breathtaking views and an opportunity to unwind in a serene setting.

The process through which water flows into the lakes is still unclear; nevertheless, the surplus cascades down a sequence of Seven Falls, which are among Lake Sebu's most cherished and revered features. The waterfalls are given Tboli names that reflect their characteristics.

To access the first waterfall, you must ride a *"habal-habal,"* a motorbike specifically designed with an extended rear seat to accommodate five passengers in addition to the operator.

The initial waterfall is referred to as Hikong Alu (which translates to passage falls). It is categorized as a "block type" due to the substantial water that originates from the largest lake. The swift flow from approximately 40 feet above renders crossing the river somewhat perilous. Therefore, caution is advised.

As you proceed to the subsequent waterfall, Hikong Bente (meaning immeasurable falls), a short trek through the forest is necessary. This waterfall, identified as a "plunge type," left us mesmerized by its breathtaking beauty and remarkable height. Even from a distance, its magnificence is apparent. The narrow stream at the summit is almost concealed, yet the waters cascading down from a height of 100 feet are genuinely awe-inspiring.

The waterfall's location is extraordinary, resembling a crater sculpted into the mountainside, with various rock layers that distinctly showcase different geological periods visible in the overhang.

The remaining five waterfalls are named Hikong B'Lebel (zigzag waterfall), Hikong Lowig (boot), Hikong K'Fo-l (the wildflower), Hikong Ukol (short waterfall), and Hikong Tonok (soil). Each waterfall has its own enthralling beauty.

For visitors in search of a more exhilarating adventure, there is an opportunity to experience a 700-meter zipline that spans from the first waterfall to the fifth. To return to the starting location, you must then use another 400-meter zipline from the fifth waterfall back to the second.

I never tried it since I have a fear of heights. But those who have participated in the zipline have reported that it provides an astonishing perspective, offering breathtaking views from above the waterfalls.

Lake Sebu comprises 12 islands and islets. Many of these floating land masses are inhabited by small communities of indigenous peoples, although they typically

▶ Hikong Alu is the name of the first of the seven waterfalls.



"A must-visit when you are in Lake Sebu is the T'boli Museum. Located at sitio Tokufol in barangay Poblacion, it serves as a repository for aspects of T'boli culture that have become increasingly rare due to the influence of Christianization, which has diminished the animistic beliefs that once centered around a multitude of deities and a supreme god couple"

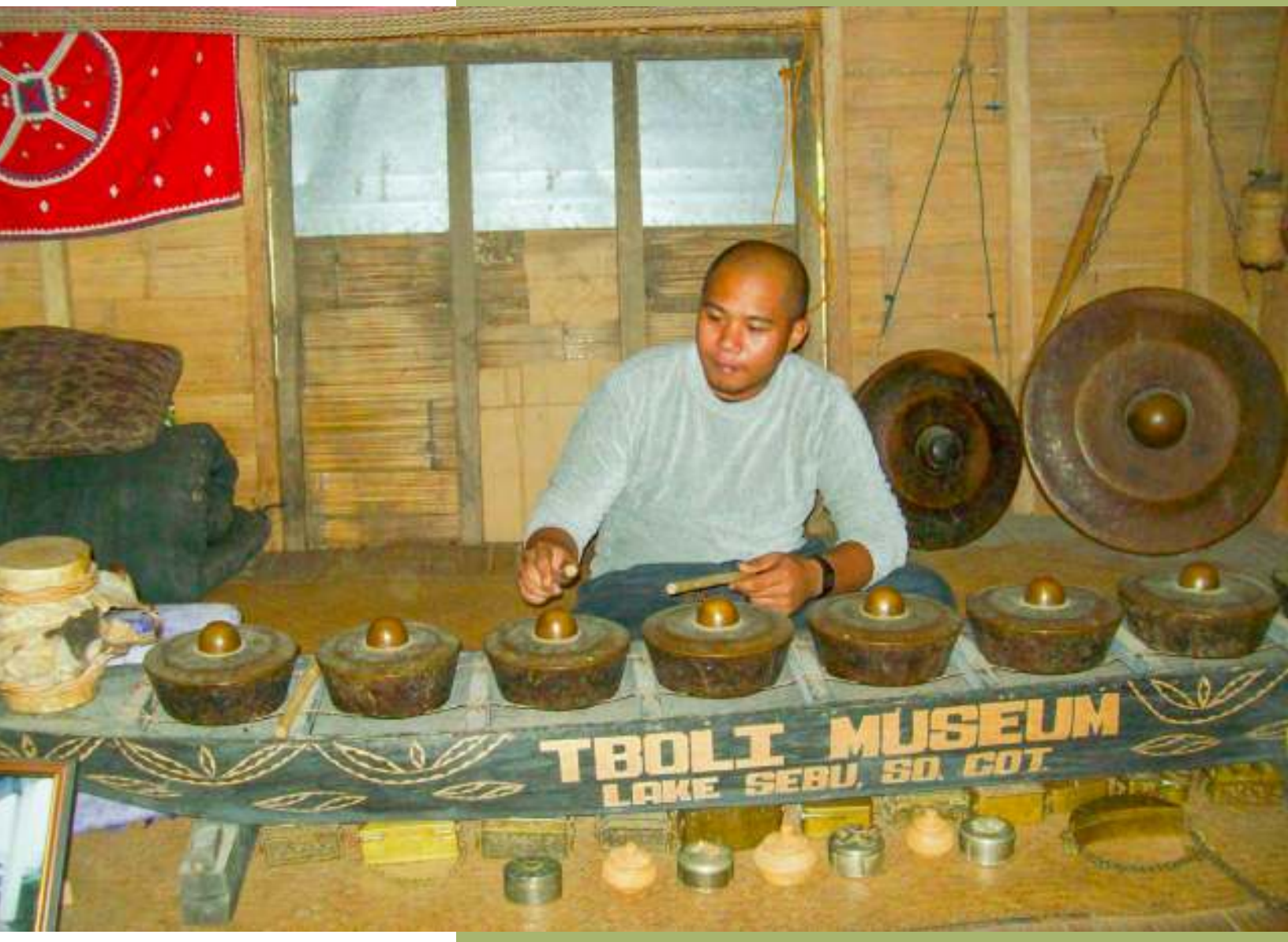
lack electricity to maintain the integrity of the natural ecosystem. The largest of these is commonly referred to as Crocodile Island, due to its shape resembling a resting crocodile.

A must-visit when you are in Lake Sebu is the T'boli Museum. Located at sitio Tokufol in barangay Poblacion, it serves as a repository for aspects of T'boli culture that have become increasingly rare due to the influence of Christianization, which has diminished the animistic beliefs that once centered around a multitude of deities and a supreme god couple.

Fortunately, the T'boli people take great pride in safeguarding their cultural heritage whenever possible, leading to the establishment of a modest T'boli Museum. The historical artifacts housed within this small museum, situated in a traditional T'boli dwelling, are truly remarkable.

If Baguio is regarded as the summer capital of the Philippines, then Lake Sebu in South Cotabato holds a similar distinction. The region enjoys a cool climate, attributed to its approximate elevation of 1,000 meters above sea level. During the night, temperatures drop, providing a refreshing atmosphere that appeals to those in search of a highland and mountainous experience.

A journalist, who had visited the place, penned: "The air in this area is quite cool, particularly during the nights when air conditioning becomes unnecessary. On one occasion, there was a brief power outage while we were asleep; however, it was inconsequential due to the pleasant coolness. In contrast to the northern city of Baguio, the atmosphere here remains fresh, and many of the buildings are still



▶ T'boli Museum is a must when visiting Lake Sebu.



▶ T'boli houses are very unique.

traditional huts and homes. Owing to the elevation, the sky frequently appears gray and overcast, and there are instances when the area is enveloped in fog, resulting in visibility being reduced to just a few feet."

The bestselling *Lonely Planet* described Lake Sebu as a place located in a "bowl of forests and mountains." The 42,450-hectare landscape is recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a cultural landscape in Mindanao. By definition, a "cultural landscape" is any distinctive geographical area that showcases a unique balance between the work of man, culture, and nature.

As Lake Sebu is designated as a protected area, it is possible to encounter wild boars and Philippine deer, both of which are classified as endangered species, in the vicinity of the lakes. The lakes and the adjacent rainforest serve as a natural habitat for egrets, kingfishers, swallows, herons, Philippine cockatoos, kites, and tarsiers.

The primary economic activity in Lake Sebu is aquaculture; the majority of the local population is engaged in raising tilapia within large fish cages that float on the lake. Indeed, many visitors recall the tilapia they enjoyed during their stay.

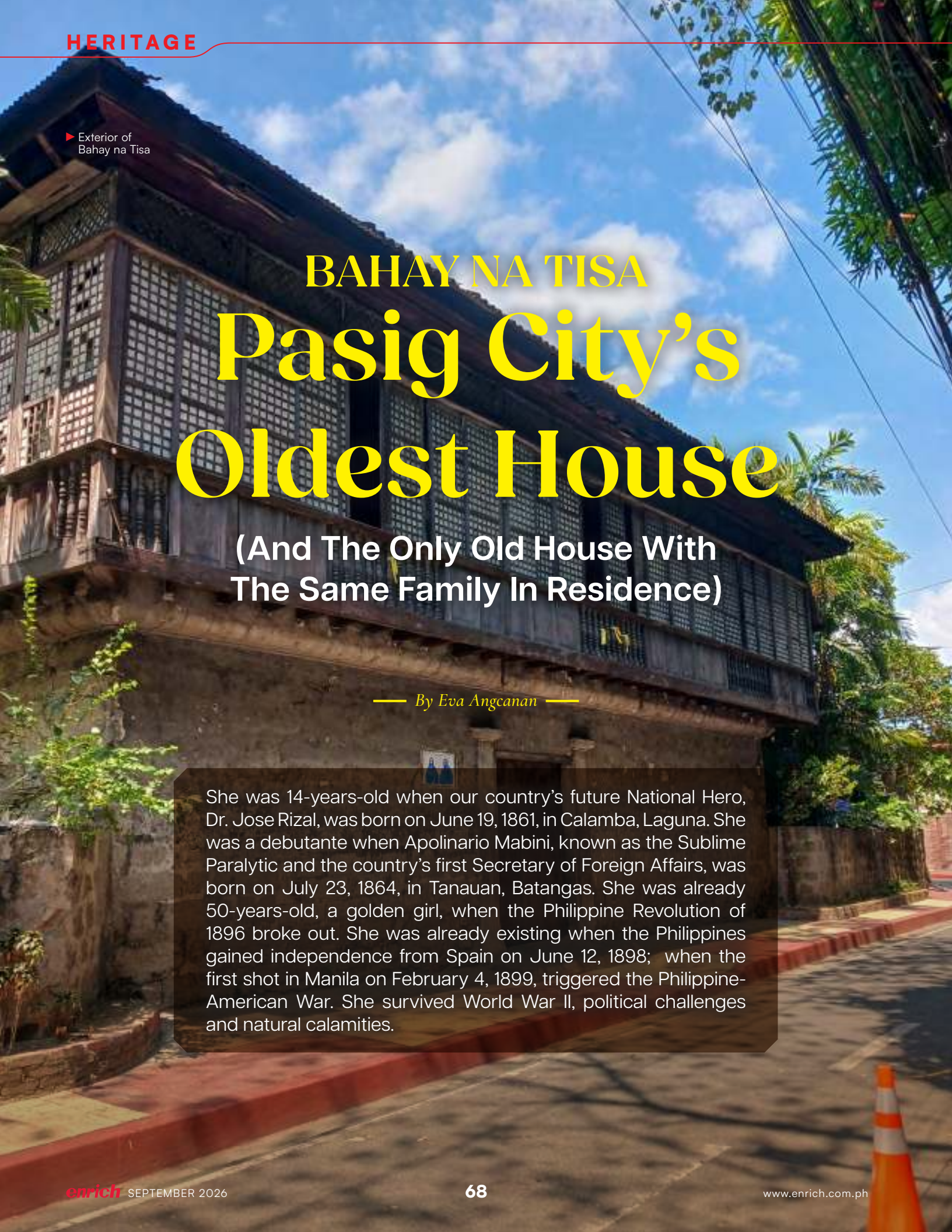
"I believe they prepared tilapia in various ways during our visit," remarked Bon Jovi Cabreros, a professor of tourism. Art Bonjoc, a journalist currently residing in Cagayan de Oro City, stated: "It was there that I encountered the largest tilapia I have ever seen."

There are many places to choose from if you want to stay there for a night or two. But we opted for Punta Isla Lake Resort as it is "the best place to stay," according to the third edition of *The Rough Guide to Southeast Asia*. The book describes the place in these words: "(It) sits on a hill with views of the lake and can be reached by tricycle in 15 minutes from where the buses stop."

To reach Lake Sebu, start your journey at the bus terminal located in General Santos City. Board a bus en route to Koronadal, often referred to by its former name, Marbel, and get off at the bus station. It is recommended to notify the conductor of your intended stop. The travel time is approximately 45 minutes.

Upon your arrival in Koronadal, switch to a bus heading to Surallah, then take a van to Lake Sebu. If you are looking for a faster alternative, you may opt for the "habal-habal" service for a direct ride to Lake Sebu, as the van may face delays while waiting for more passengers. ●

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Exterior of Bahay na Tisa

BAHAY NA TISA
Pasig City's Oldest House
(And The Only Old House With The Same Family In Residence)

By Eva Angcanan

She was 14-years-old when our country's future National Hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, was born on June 19, 1861, in Calamba, Laguna. She was a debutante when Apolinario Mabini, known as the Sublime Paralytic and the country's first Secretary of Foreign Affairs, was born on July 23, 1864, in Tanauan, Batangas. She was already 50-years-old, a golden girl, when the Philippine Revolution of 1896 broke out. She was already existing when the Philippines gained independence from Spain on June 12, 1898; when the first shot in Manila on February 4, 1899, triggered the Philippine-American War. She survived World War II, political challenges and natural calamities.

This grand dame is *Bahay na Tisa* (house of clay or red tiles), located on the far end of the quiet P. Gomez Street in Pasig City. It is the oldest house in Pasig City and the only old house with the same family in residence. The 8th generation of the Tech family lives within her 180-year-old structure!

Background

The 500-square-meter house was built on a 976-square-meter lot in 1846 by Cecilio Tech. The current owner is Marie Antoinette Tech-Mendoza, the 6th-generation member of the Tech family.

Here are the names of the Tech family members who lived in this house: Lorenzo, first generation and father of Cecilio; Cecilio, second generation and father of Maximo and two daughters; Maximo (only son of Cecilio and Pasig's first municipal treasurer), third generation, and father of Pedro and Leoncio; Pedro, the fourth generation and eldest child of Maximo; and Carlos, the fifth generation and eldest child of Pedro. Currently living in the house are: Marie Antoinette Tech-Mendoza, the 6th generation and only child of Carlos; Marie Antoinette's two sons, the 7th generation; and Marie Antoinette's grandchild, the 8th generation. "Whoever is the eldest child or the only child becomes the owner of the property," says Ms. Tech-Mendoza.

Viatico Publico

When the house was built in 1846 by Cecilio Tech, it was a tradition in Pasig to hold the *Viatico Publico* on the Sunday after Easter Sunday. "*Lolo* invited the elderly, whose ages ranged from 80 to 90-years-old, who, while not sick, couldn't attend Holy Mass in the church anymore." "They came on Saturday afternoons and took their *merienda* here in the old house. In the evenings after dinner, the priest came and heard confessions. The elderly guests slept in the house, and by 6:00 a.m. the next day, a Sunday, the priest returned and gave them Holy Communion.

One day, Ms. Tech-Mendoza's father invited Mr. Alejandro Roces, a historian and former Education Secretary (in the early 1960s), to witness the event. So deeply impressed was Mr. Roces with the practice of Viatico Publico that he exclaimed, 'What a beautiful experience! It is like acquiring a visa to heaven!'

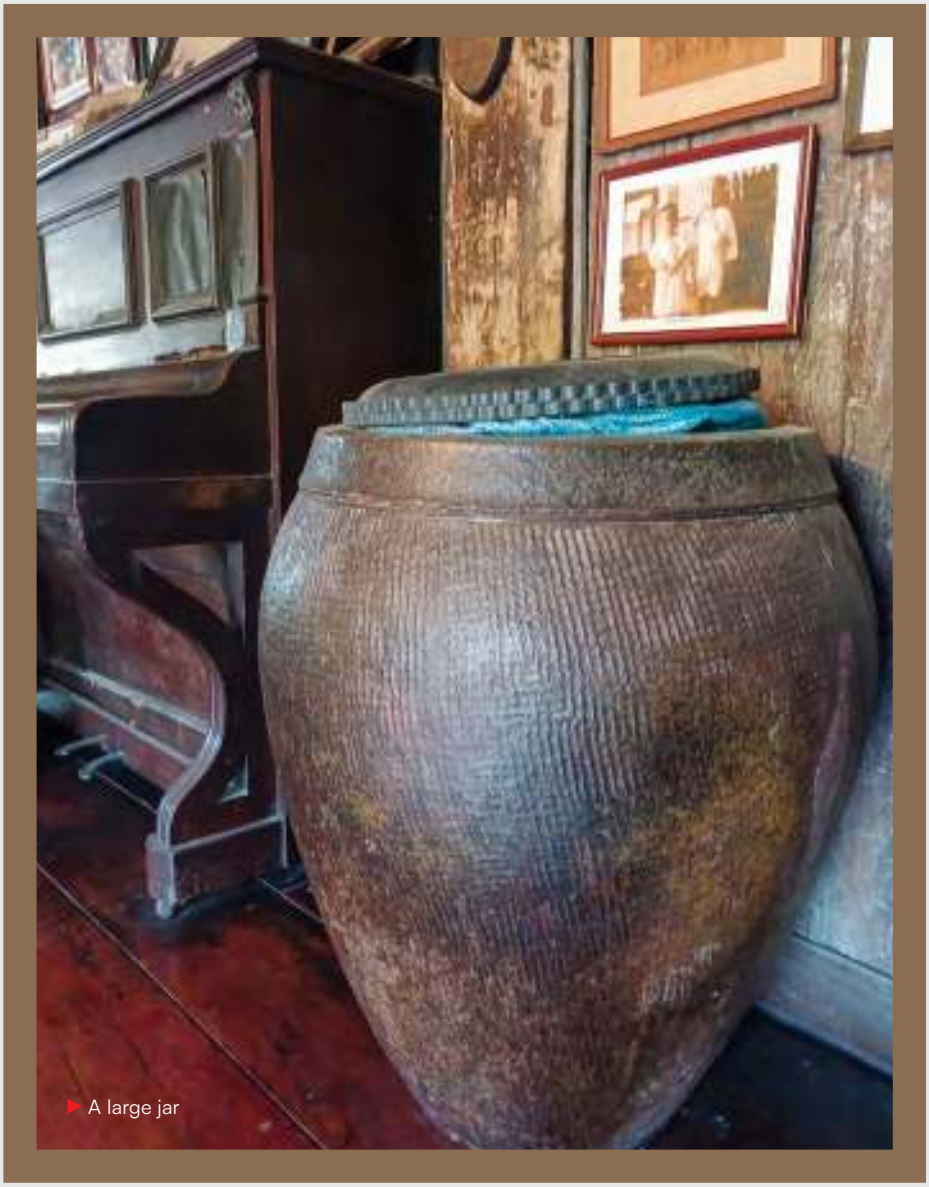
Souvenirs From Yesteryears

The Bahay na Tisa consists of two floors. There is no gate, but the yard is enclosed with cemented walls. The windows have sliding rectangular *capiz* frames.

On the first floor, Ms. Tech-Mendoza explains the details of the first floor. She points to a door and says, "Back then, we stored rice in that room." She points to a plough sitting on the left side of the floor. "We once had a rice field at the back of the market, and this was used to plough the rice field." Above the plough hangs an oblong-shaped piece of old wood which she says, "bears a painting of a pelican on wood done by an unknown artist. It is as old as this house. The pelican symbolizes Jesus Christ because it feeds its young with its own blood."

We climb a flight of wooden stairs leading to the dining room. Between the landing and the stairs is a "fence" made up of vertical pieces of wood nailed to two horizontal pieces of wood. The top portions of the vertical wooden pieces have sharp edges, like arrows. I used to see this feature before. It was a safety measure to prevent children from falling down the stairs. When I reached the second floor, I felt transported to the fictional house of Capitan Tiago in the fictional town of San Diego, the setting of *Noli Me Tangere* (Jose Rizal's first novel). I wouldn't be surprised if I came to meet Capitan Tiago, Maria Clara and Crisostomo Ibarra, the characters in Rizal's first novel, dressed in period pieces of clothing.

In the dining room, Ms. Tech Mendoza points out old pieces of furniture: a round



A large jar



Pugon

wooden table; the rectangular wooden dining table with a rectangular wooden bench; the dark brown piano; the large earthen water jars and a wall filled with pictures of the Tech family through the decades.

On her grandfather's desk are an old typewriter, old books, a small globe and a World War I combat hat.

To the right of the stairs is the living room. It has a rug in the middle and old *solehiya* chairs facing each other. The chairs are placed near a wide window with sliding rectangular wooden frames with *capiz* shells. In one corner are old religious images which attest to the Tech family's deep religiosity. When family members leave the house, they pray in front of the portrait of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage to ask for protection for their trips. The portrait hangs on a wall across the top of the staircase.

To the left of the dining room is the *azotea* (balcony) lined with potted plants on the edges. Stairs lead down to the yard.

Near the azotea is the kitchen, which has a *pugon* (traditional clay oven). With the ever-rising cost of electricity and gas these days, cooking with the pugon is the most economical way.

During the Martial Law period, Bahay na Tisa was referred to as Freedom House because both anti-Martial Law and pro-Martial Law groups held their meetings there. "My father opened the house to both sides."

Setting For Movies And Photoshoots

Bahay na Tisa became a setting for films and photoshoots. Ms. Tech-Mendoza opened the house to the youth and students who wanted to shoot their school projects there. For instance, the azotea is the choice setting of the courtship scene in *Noli Me Tangere* between Maria Clara and her beau, Crisostomo Ibarra.

Some films that had scenes shot in Bahay na Tisa included *Pagpag*, *Die Beautiful* (which starred Paolo Ballesteros), the indie film *Waiting for Sunset*, and episode 54 of the television series *Pulang Araw*.

Magazines have also chosen Bahay na Tisa as a setting for their photo shoots.

House Maintenance

Ms. Tech-Mendoza says, "The house is cleaned the usual way houses are cleaned every day. Floor wax is applied to the wooden floors twice a month. The house undergoes regular termite/pest control treatment.

She adds that the house is 90 percent original, while 10 percent (the roof and some parts of the ceiling) is renovated/repaired.

Security

"I believe that holding of Viatico Publico on the Sunday after Easter Sunday in the house by my grandparents has kept it safe. The visits of the Blessed Sacrament to our house protected us from harm, most especially during the country's tumultuous years in history, like the 1896 Philippine Revolution, World War II, and other political challenges."

Trees

The house has a yard with a 200-year-old fruit-bearing *chico* tree, a fruit-bearing *chesa* tree, and an *isis* tree with leaves so coarse that, when touched, they feel just like a scouring pad. Many houses built in the 19th century have *chico* trees.

19th Century Philippines

What were the events and structures in existence during Bahay na Tisa's "youth"?

In 1851, the first bank in the Philippines was established. It was called Banco Español de Isabel II, and is now called Bank of the Philippine Islands. It issued the first banknotes to circulate



Recognition as an Important Cultural Property from the National Museum

in the Philippines, called *peso fuertes* (strong peso).

In 1854, the Philippines became the first Asian country to issue postage stamps.

In mid-19th-century Philippines, the *Casa de Moneda* (House of Money) was established by then-Queen Isabela II. It was the first minting house in Manila and started minting coins in 1861.

When the earlier generation of Tech family members attended Holy Mass at the old Santo Domingo Church in Intramuros, they surely listened to the *Tiples de Santo Domingo*, the oldest boys' choir in the Philippines, founded by the Dominicans some 300 years ago.

The Manila Cathedral is known to rise after every tragedy. In 1863, a great earthquake ruined it. Then, in 1872, another earthquake brought it down, but it was rebuilt and completed in 1879, thanks to people's generosity. In 1880, an earthquake destroyed the cathedral's bell tower, but the cathedral remained standing.

Also in 1863, the same earthquake that destroyed the Manila Cathedral brought down the Palacio de Gobernador in Intramuros and forced the Spanish governor-general to move to the summer residence purchased by the government in 1825 along the Pasig River. That summer residence became Malacanang Palace.

When the University of Santo Tomas was still in Intramuros, it opened its Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy in 1871.

When UST students entered the UST premises between 1611 and 1941, they passed through the Arch of the Centuries. At present, the original Arch of the Centuries faces the UST Main building along Espana Boulevard, while a duplicate can be seen by passersby and commuters along Espana Boulevard.

Bahay na Tisa was declared an Important Cultural Property (ICP) on December 5, 2018, by the National Museum of the Philippines, meaning it is "an asset that possesses exceptional cultural, artistic or historical significance."

With houses like Bahay na Tisa still standing and inhabited, Filipinos born in the 20th and 21st centuries can learn to appreciate the architecture of mid-19th-century houses and help preserve the remaining old structures around them. ●

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BAHAY NA TISA
ADDRESS:
P. Gomez Street Barangay San Jose Pasig City

VISITING HOURS:
Mondays to Fridays
9:00 a.m to 12:00 noon
and 1:00 p.m to 4:00 p.m

By Henrylito D. Tacio

BE ALARMED

The Rise Of Bullying In Schools

"Bullying is never fun; it's a cruel and terrible thing to do to someone. If you are being bullied, it is not your fault."
— Raini Rodriguez.

Bullying among children is a common occurrence in educational settings, including classrooms, restrooms, hallways, on campus grounds, and even outside school boundaries. If not addressed promptly, some instances can lead to fatal outcomes.

This was the case for a young boy from New Hampshire, U.S, who was grappling with the loss of his mother. As if that burden were not heavy enough, he also endured bullying at school and on the bus.

No one beyond his immediate family tried to help him. He made several visits to the hospital with his grandmother, who had adopted him, hoping to receive the necessary support. Unfortunately, his mental health issues were overlooked, with others suggesting he was simply craving attention.

Then, tragedy happened. Just eight days after celebrating his 13th birthday, he took his own life. Family members described the loss of this young boy as "truly heartbreaking."

Similar incidents could also happen in the Philippines. The difference is that they may transpire in remote areas that lack media coverage or where parents are unaware of how to report such incidents.

As such, bullying must not be dismissed as trivial. It transcends mere childhood behavior or rites of passage.

"According to UNESCO, bullying issues have significant repercussions not only on educational outcomes but also on mental wellbeing"

Data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018 showed 65 percent of students indicated that they had been bullied at least a few times each month. About 40 percent of students reported being bullied on a frequent basis (once a week or more).

PISA data revealed that in 2022, one out of three Filipino students was being bullied in schools. Gender-wise, 43 percent of girls and 53 percent of boys stated they had experienced bullying multiple times each month.

Estimates imply that this significant percentage could represent as many as 17.5 million students encountering some form of bullying within educational institutions.



While PISA captures reported experiences, official statistics from the Department of Education documented over 79,000 bullying cases between 2019 and 2022.

"The Philippines experiences an alarmingly high prevalence of bullying," observed Dr. Karol Mark Yee, executive director of the Second Congressional Commission on Education.

These bullying occurrences in the Philippines alarmed the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It calls for pupils and students to be better protected from physical, verbal and psychological aggression, according to a report. "At school, every child should feel respected, accepted and safe, so that they can learn and develop," said UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay.

According to UNESCO, bullying issues have significant repercussions not only on educational outcomes but also on mental wellbeing. The UN agency claimed that pupils and students who are bullied are twice as likely to experience severe feelings of loneliness, insomnia, and suicidal ideation.



Violence at school disproportionately impacts specific demographics, influenced by factors such as gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and other identity characteristics, with girls being especially at risk, UNESCO said.

Even though it is common, bullying has received little attention, possibly due to the belief that fighting among children is part of school culture. "*Away bata*" is the common excuse for it – it's "normal" or "a rite of passage" for children.

But that should not be the case. Bullying is bullying, and school should be a place where children learn about life and living and not violence. "A school is a student's second home and is assumed to be one of the safest places for children. Unfortunately, for some, this is where they experience abuse," says a statement from the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF).

Bullying in the Philippines comes in different forms. However, it frequently arises from various factors, including physical appearance, social status, skin color, gender expression, and intellectual ability.

Very few of us are spared from bullying. During my time in primary school, I was targeted by a classmate who was larger than I was. Initially, I chose to ignore it. However, when his behavior escalated to being unpleasant, I became concerned.

Consequently, I resolved to take action – not in a physical sense, but rather in a strategic manner. I formed friendships with classmates who were significantly larger than him. I incentivized my friends by sharing snacks (I often requested my mother to prepare more than I could consume). Whenever the bully approached me, I informed my friends that he (the bully) was bothering me. From that point onward, he ceased his harassment.

Bullying may include any or all of the following: being made fun of or called names, threatened, pressured into doing things, excluded from activities, pushed, being shoved, tripped, or spit on, and the subject of rumors. If bullying is done by a group, it is called mobbing.

Dave (not his real name) was once a consistently high-achieving student during his kindergarten years. However, the



family relocated to a city after his father was promoted to a supervisory position at his workplace.

It was the middle of the academic year when Dave, now eight years old, had to change schools, which was situated a short distance from their new home. This transition introduced Dave to an entirely new setting, complete with unfamiliar classmates, a different teacher, and potential new friends.

Initially, the first few weeks went smoothly. However, an unusual situation arose. He began to feel unwell in the mornings. His academic performance began to decline. He also started to show unexplained cuts and bruises.

Then, one afternoon, upon returning home from school, he expressed to his mother, "I don't want to go to school anymore." She was utterly perplexed. Back when they lived in the province, Dave had genuinely enjoyed attending school. Yet now, he was reluctant to go to a school that was conveniently located nearby. She inquired about his feelings, but he remained silent.

The maternal instinct indicated that there was indeed something amiss with her son. It was not merely about him being her son; rather, something must have transpired to cause his reclusive behavior. After conducting some investigation, inquiring with Dave's friends, she discovered that her son was being bullied by one of his classmates, who happened to be the child of the school principal.

In addition to what Dave experienced, other signs that a child may be facing bullying include: a fear of attending school and difficulty waking up in the morning; reluctance to use the school bus; pleading to be driven to school; becoming withdrawn, anxious, or lacking self-confidence; crying themselves to sleep at night or suffering from nightmares; feeling ill in the morning; and returning home with torn clothing or damaged books.



While bullying gets a lot of attention from parents and teachers in industrialized countries, this is not the case in our country. Dr. Honey Carandang, a noted Filipino psychologist and author, has often expressed her disappointment over the seeming lack of concern that school authorities have shown towards bullying incidents that take place right under their noses.

"It's really sad how, instead of being helped, the bullied child is sometimes even blamed for the bullying that has taken place," Dr. Carandang deplored, adding that there should be more programs put in place to further educate teachers and administrators about the dangers of bullying and to teach them to be more sensitive.

"There are three persons who need to be helped and empowered here – the bully, the bullied, and the bystander," Dr. Carandang. She further said that everyone needs to be part of the solution and that if a teacher or student is in a class or is a witness to a bullying incident elsewhere on campus and does nothing, then that person is as much a part of the problem as the bully.

Now the good news. The Philippines has established specific legislation to combat bullying, primarily encapsulated in Republic Act No. 10627, commonly referred to as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013. This legislation applies to all elementary and secondary educational institutions, whether public or private.

Schools are required to formulate, execute, and oversee anti-bullying policies, which must include explicit procedures for reporting incidents, conducting investigations, and implementing interventions.

Under this law, school administrators who do not adhere to these requirements may be subject to administrative penalties, and educational institutions risk having their operating permits revoked. In addition, the law addresses cyberbullying, which encompasses bullying conducted through technological means, such as social media, text messaging, and online gaming.

The DepEd Order No. 55, series of 2013, serves as the Implementing Rules and Regulations for R.A. 10627. Furthermore, Republic Act No. 10175, known as the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, is also relevant to incidents of cyber-related bullying and harassment.

Pupils and students experiencing bullying are encouraged to report the matter to their school administration. Victims may also seek assistance from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Cyber Crime Division or the Philippine National Police (PNP) Anti-Cybercrime unit. ●

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