

Celebrating love and family

We're amid the season of love with Valentine's Day on February 14th. Keep reading to discover the importance of understanding your heart rate, how trust and emotions affect relationships, and fun chocolate recipes to enjoy with your loved ones.

We've got the beat: Understanding your heart rate

Everything you do helps your heart keep the beat.

Your heart beats on average around 100,000 times each day. Walking up a flight of stairs will make it go faster, as will being near someone you love. Sometimes, it will beat slower due to medications or medical conditions.

Your heart rate, or pulse, is the number of times your heart beats in 60 seconds. A healthy heart rate (rested, healthy and relaxed state) is between 60 and 100 beats per minute.¹

Find your resting heart rate

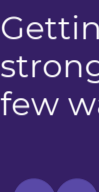
Knowing your resting heart rate can help you understand your health status. The first step is measuring it. Sit or lie down, relax and lightly put two fingers on the thumb side of your inner wrist or on one side of your neck just below the lower jaw. Find the pulse and count the beats for 30 seconds. Multiply that number by two. The total is your resting heart rate.



Count it out: A person who counts 32 beats in 30 seconds has a resting heart rate of 64.

How hard should your heart work?

When exercising, it's important to know how hard your heart is working. First, calculate your maximum heart rate by subtracting your age from 220. Intense physical activity, like running or a spin class, should put your heart rate within 70% to 85% of your maximum heart rate. During moderate physical activity like walking, your pulse should be within 50% to 70% of your maximum heart rate.²



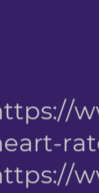
Do the math: A 55-year-old would subtract their age from 220. Their maximum heart rate is 165 beats per minute. A quick run should put their pulse between 115 and 140 (70% to 85%) beats per minute. For a less strenuous activity, like a brisk walk, it should be between 82 and 115 (50% to 70%) beats per minute.

Get moving

Getting your heart beating faster with exercise is a healthy way to make your heart stronger. Just a few minutes of activity will improve your heart's health. Here are a few ways you can tune up your beats:



Start now, wherever you are. You don't have to spend hours at the gym to give your heart a good workout. Start with just five minutes of any movement you're comfortable with.



Get your heart rate up. Pick an activity you enjoy. Dancing, pickleball or brisk shopping counts as exercise if you work up a sweat.



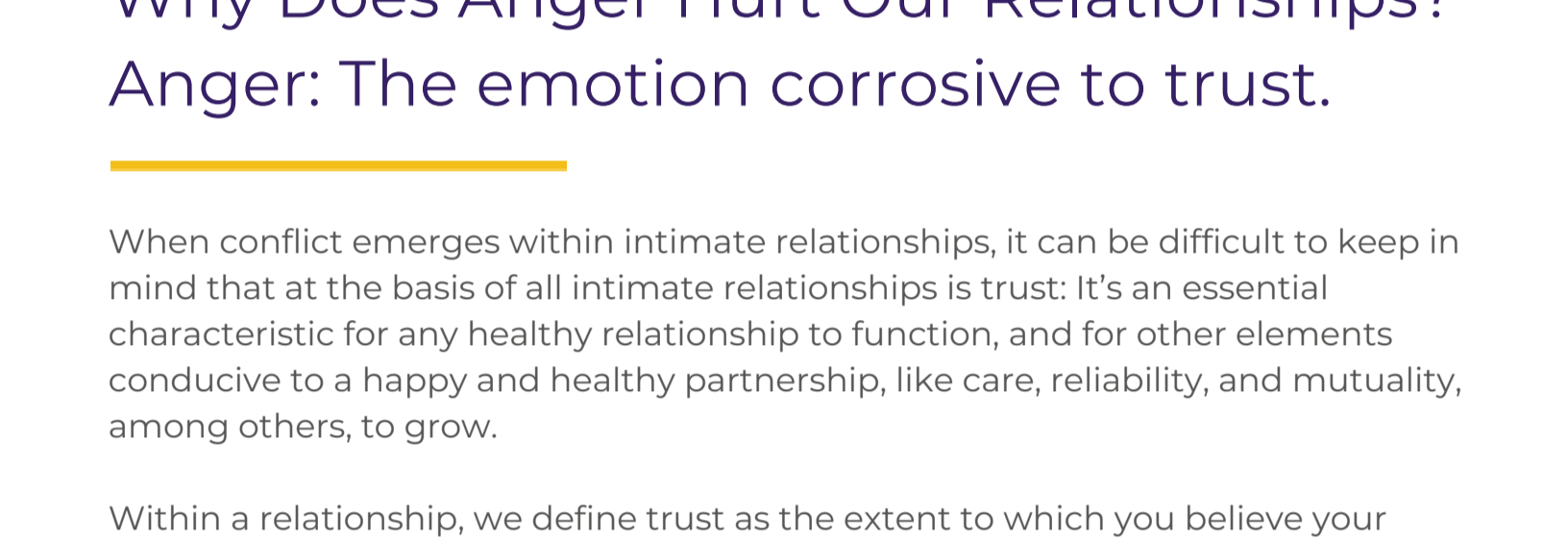
Break activity into smaller chunks. Ten is the magic number. Do any physical activity, like walking on your lunch break, three times a day for 10 minutes.



Go beyond cardio. Building muscle can help improve your heart health too. Increase your fitness by adding resistance exercises like pushups, squats or by lifting hand weights.

1 <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/the-facts-about-high-blood-pressure/all-about-heart-rate-pulse>

2 <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/fitness-basics/target-heart-rates>



Why Does Anger Hurt Our Relationships? Anger: The emotion corrosive to trust.

When conflict emerges within intimate relationships, it can be difficult to keep in mind that at the basis of all intimate relationships is trust: It's an essential characteristic for any healthy relationship to function, and for other elements conducive to a happy and healthy partnership, like care, reliability, and mutuality, among others, to grow.

Within a relationship, we define trust as the extent to which you believe your partner will act in a way that's fair and beneficial to you, and, at the very least, in a way that won't purposely harm you. That said, the central question we should be asking when we experience conflict with our partner is, "is the way I'm feeling, thinking, or behaving promoting trust in this relationship, or taking away from it?" If the relationship we have is valued and one we want to continue, it's important that we take steps toward promoting that trust, even in the most frantic situations.

When in conflict with our partner, what happens when we feel and express anger is that we can violate that trust that's essential to relationships, primarily because when we feel anger, it's an emotional response telling us that we have been wronged. Within the meaning of that feeling, we therefore believe the trust we've put into our partner has been violated in some way or there has been some sort of injustice done whenever we feel angry.

The problem with that is, not only could we be misinterpreting our feelings from past traumas or previous hurts or damaging childhood experiences, but when we express the visceral anger we feel, depending on how it's expressed, our partner's trust in us is similarly violated, because there isn't much guarantee that we aren't out to "harm" them, whether it'd be physically, emotionally, or psychologically, creating a vicious cycle of hurts, fear, and, ultimately, distrust. Without the trust component, there's no guarantee of safety within our relationship, and without safety, we are prone to either attack or shut down; there's no space for the softness that comes with vulnerability or care.

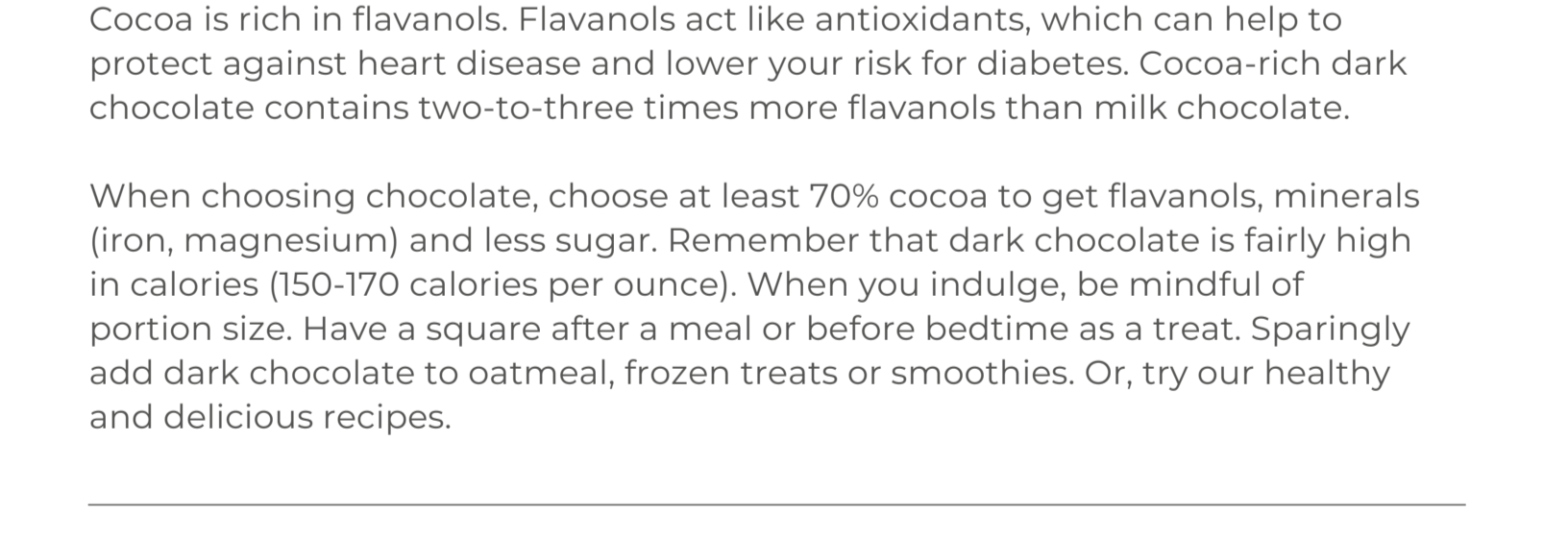
Because anger is an "approach" emotion, meaning we are motivated to approach others like the source of our anger, or, in extension, attack our opponent, anger automatically sets the scene for a response that is less than soft — our trust has been violated, and by acting out in a way that's provoking, we've dampened our partner's ability to believe that we mean them no harm, as well. As such, trust is diminished from both ends.

From an evolutionary and physiological perspective, we are wired to "fight or flee" when stressful situations arise. So, when our partner is expressing anger and provoking an enraged response, our cortisol levels similarly shoot up because we are now psychologically facing an opponent and readying ourselves for a fight, thus often responding to anger in kind. Over time, however, we may become worn down and stonewall, when we completely disengage from a conversation, which is one of four main components found to lead to divorce.

With a complex cognitive, behavioural, and physiological response, it's not surprising that anger overwhelms our ability to connect and maintain vulnerability, which leads to trust: Put simply, it's difficult to let our guard down when we feel as though our back is up against the wall.

To express soft and vulnerable emotions, we need to feel safe with our partners, and for that, we need trust.

Source: M. Bockarova, PhD (University of Toronto). "Why Does Anger Hurt Our Relationships?" Psychology Today



We ♥ dark chocolate

And your heart does, too! Dark chocolate can be the ultimate secret weapon when you're craving a treat. It's made from just cocoa solids, cocoa butter and sugar. The higher the percentage of cocoa solids, the more pure, rich chocolate flavour it has.

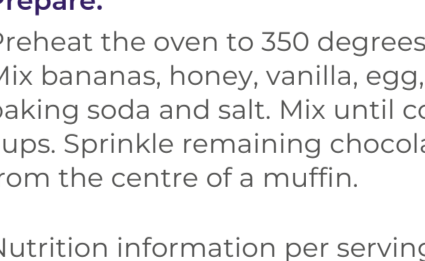
Cocoa is rich in flavanols. Flavanols act like antioxidants, which can help to protect against heart disease and lower your risk for diabetes. Cocoa-rich dark chocolate contains two-to-three times more flavanols than milk chocolate.

When choosing chocolate, choose at least 70% cocoa to get flavanols, minerals (iron, magnesium) and less sugar. Remember that dark chocolate is fairly high in calories (150-170 calories per ounce). When you indulge, be mindful of portion size. Have a square after a meal or before bedtime as a treat. Our healthy and delicious recipes.

Dark chocolate dessert bar

Makes 2 servings | Prep: 3 minutes | Cook: 2 minutes

Choose your toppings to satisfy your taste buds. Store half the bar or share it.



- Ingredients**
- 1 oz high-quality dark chocolate
 - 1 Tbsp dried cranberries or dried strawberries
 - 3 Tbsp dark cocoa powder
 - 2 Tbsp crushed peanuts or chopped almonds

- Prepare:**
- Place a sheet of parchment paper over a dinner plate and set aside. Melt dark chocolate in the microwave for about 1 minute. Stir and microwave for another 20-30 seconds if necessary. Using the back of a spoon, spread the melted chocolate on the parchment-lined plate.
 - Add topping combination, sprinkling on top of chocolate. Lightly press into the formed bar. Place in the refrigerator for 5 minutes or until hardened. Break in half for 2 servings.

Nutrition information per serving | Serving size: 1/2 bar

Calories: 68 | Total fat: 5 g | Saturated fat: 2 g | Sodium: 0 mg | Cholesterol: 0 mg
Total carbs: 7 g | Fiber: 2 g | Sugars: 3 g | Protein: 2 g | Potassium: 117 mg

Dark chocolate banana muffins

Makes 12 servings | Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 25 minutes

These muffins are packed with whole grains and bananas. They are a tasty breakfast or snack.



- Ingredients**
- 3 medium-ripe bananas, mashed
 - 1/4 cup honey
 - 1 tsp vanilla extract
 - 1 large egg
 - 2 Tbsp olive oil
 - 1/2 cup non-fat plain Greek yogurt

- 1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips, divided
- Nonstick cooking spray

Prepare:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray a regular-sized muffin pan with non-stick cooking spray. Mix bananas, honey, vanilla, egg, oil and Greek yogurt until well combined. Add flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt. Mix until combined. Stir in 1/3 cup chocolate chips. Pour batter into prepared muffin cups. Sprinkle remaining chocolate chips on top. Bake for 25 minutes until a toothpick comes out clean from the centre of a muffin.

Nutrition information per serving | Serving size: 1 muffin

Calories: 177 | Total fat: 7 g | Saturated fat: 2 g | Sodium: 135 mg | Cholesterol: 16 mg
Total carbs: 29 g | Fiber: 4 g | Sugars: 15 g | Protein: 4 g | Potassium: 117 mg

Dark chocolate breakfast smoothie

Makes 1 serving | Prep: 5 minutes

Start your day with this creamy, dreamy, balanced meal-in-a-glass.



- Ingredients**
- 1 ripe banana
 - 1 cup plain non-fat Greek yogurt
 - 1/2 cup oats, old-fashioned or quick-cooking
 - 3 Tbsp dark cocoa powder
 - 1/2 cup almond milk, vanilla
 - unsweetened
 - Ice to thicken

- Prepare:**
- Place all ingredients except ice in a high-speed blender. Puree until smooth. Add a handful of ice and blend. Add more until you've reached desired consistency.

Nutrition information per serving | Serving size: 1/3 cup

Calories: 33 | Total fat: 1 g | Saturated fat: 0 g | Sodium: 1 mg | Cholesterol: 0 mg
Total carbs: 7 g | Fiber: 2 g | Sugars: 5 g | Protein: 1 g | Potassium: 105 mg

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