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January • 2026

Issue 11
49th Year

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Monthly

Book Blitz Month. This is a time for authors of all genres to put themselves out there and promote their work. For the rest of us, it's a time to celebrate literacy, set personal goals to read more, and curl up with a good book.

National Braille Literacy Month. Developed in the 19th century by Louis Braille, this tactile system allows visually impaired and blind individuals a way to read, write, and learn.

International Creativity Month. Whether you're a homemaker, student, employee, employer, or retiree, this is the month to challenge yourself and your usual way of doing things. Try something new, explore, innovate, broaden your horizons of expression, and create something.

Hot Tea Month. Black, white, green, herbal, oolong, Darjeeling, Ceylon, chai—the list can go on for several pages. There are thousands of teas and blends to try. Find a new favorite and warm up with a cup of fragrant goodness this winter.

Self-Love Month. Many of us have already promised to become better at being better this year. Why not start by showing yourself some TLC? Find a way to honor, appreciate, and love yourself this January.

Weekly

Elvis Presley Birthday Celebration Week, Jan. 7-11. If you can make it to Memphis, you can walk in the footsteps of "The King" and visit Elvis' estate, Graceland, where plenty of activities will honor the legendary singer.

Universal Letter Writing Week, Jan 11-17. Since 1971, the Universal Postal Union has held a letter writing competition for young people age 15 and under. The event is a way to promote both literacy and the development of composition skills throughout the world. The theme of this year's contest asks writers: "Imagine you are a letter travelling through time. What message do you wish to convey to your readers?"

Healthy Weight Week, Jan. 18-24. This isn't about diets or the latest weight loss trends. A healthy body image is the key to establishing realistic goals and strategies that will help you to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and body mass. Factors such as age, bone structure, height, and physical ability should also be considered when developing personal health standards. Check in with your physician before making any changes to your diet, nutrition, and activities.

National Clean Out Your Inbox Week, Jan. 21-27. This can be a challenge of epic proportions for those who don't prioritize, sort, and organize incoming emails. Use this week to unsubscribe from or change delivery preferences for electronic communications cluttering your inbox. Save only what's necessary. Delete, delete, delete.



The courage to try

Life lessons can come from the most unlikely sources if we are open to receiving what they have to offer us. For Tricia Goyer, a wife, mother, and accomplished author, a lesson in bravery came from her twentysomething son Nathan.

When he announced his plans to write a book, Goyer encouraged him and even promised to edit it once the manuscript was completed. With 500 magazine articles bylines and more than 50 published books of nonfiction and fiction, Goyer knew her insight would be beneficial. She also knew that Nathan had a gift for creating and telling stories, which had been a favorite pastime since his childhood.

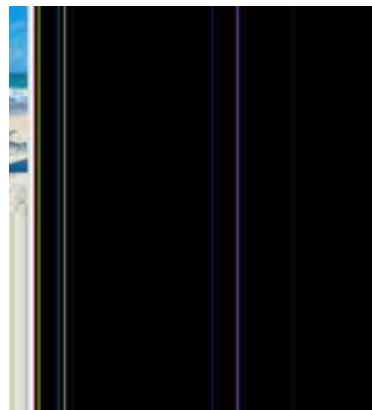
As Goyer edited Nathan's rough draft she realized that her son had a talent for writing and decided they should hire a professional editor to review the text. The editor also liked Nathan's work and offered the aspiring novelist some constructive feedback.

After the rewrites were finished, Goyer told her son to start weighing his options about next steps in the publishing process. He could go the traditional route and work with a publisher, or self-publish. Nathan told her he'd need time to think things over and then excused himself to run an errand. He returned a short time later and announced that he would self-publish his work as an e-book. The next day his novel *Bask* was for sale on Amazon.com. It has even received a few positive reviews.

For Goyer, taking those next steps in the process of publishing one of her many books has never been something she could act on with that kind of certainty or efficiency. She says she would first share copies with as many as 20 friends and consider their feedback. Next she might attend a workshop or conference to solicit even more feedback and advice before deciding which route to take.

Nathan has inspired Goyer to believe that "sometimes we just need to roll up our sleeves and do what we've been afraid to try."

JANUARY





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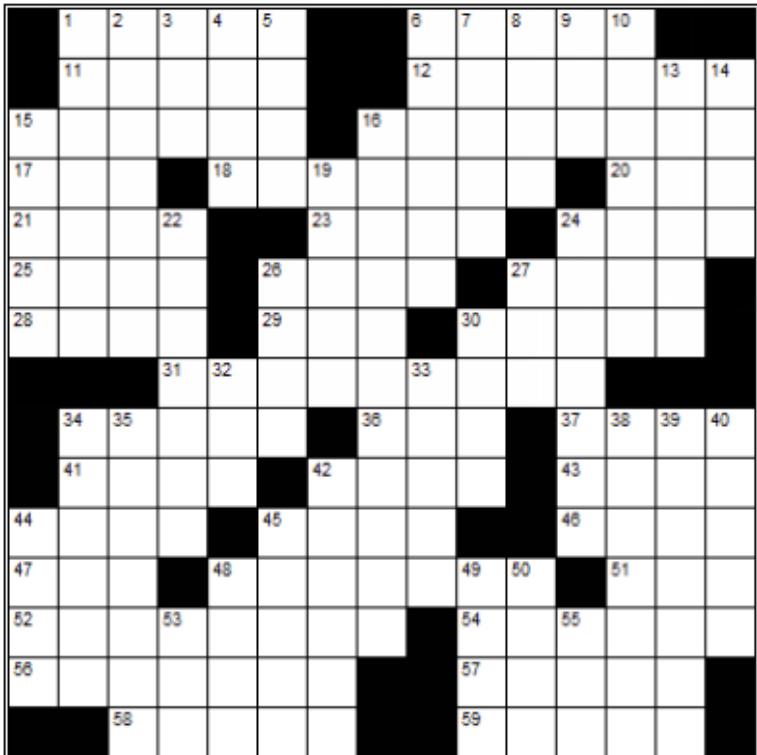
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DOWN

- Land
- Male genitalia
- Uncooked
- Small island
- Not more
- Arrive past due
- Utilizers
- Neuter
- 2000 pounds
- Kill oneself intentionally
- Breathes noisily while sleeping
- They come from hens
- Started
- Gun repairing
- Dogs wag these
- Anticlimax
- Blimp
- Opening

- Deli loaf
- King of the jungle
- Anagram of "One"
- They can be fraternal or identical
- On land
- One who establishes
- Building
- Mammals like camels
- Apprehensive
- Objects
- Fired a projectile
- Holy person
- Smile
- Gorillas
- English royal house
- An uncle
- Fifty-two in Roman numerals

ACROSS

- Spring month
- Failures
- Pursue
- Take up the cause
- Barroom fights
- Harvesting
- Snake-like fish
- Wide part of a river
- Sprocket
- Chutzpah
- Picnic insects
- Broadcasts
- Chills and fever
- Workshop gripper
- Fair attraction
- Bird home
- Type of tree
- Harps
- Amounts per unit size
- Underway
- One plus one
- Make well
- Scattered seed
- Not fat
- Inactive
- Blackball
- Tibia
- Tube
- Term of endearment
- Deny
- Distant
- Making menu requests
- A plan of action
- Abounding
- Genus of heath
- Leases
- Where clouds are



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Three tips to spark your brain

Everyone can be creative, as long as they're willing to give up some pre-conceptions about what being creative really means. Try these tactics for opening up your mind to innovative possibilities:

- **Focus on intuition, not intelligence.** You don't have to be a genius to be creative. Train yourself to listen to your feelings, random thoughts, dreams, and intuition. Often ideas and solutions come to us when we aren't looking.
- **Give yourself space to think.** Collecting data about what you're working on is good, but don't let facts crowd out your creative impulses. Set the information aside and step back to allow your mind to process it without pushing. Build some room inside your head to let ideas grow.
- **Try something different.** Breaking your routine can lead to creative insights. See the kind of movie you'd never ordinarily watch. Take a walk in a new neighborhood. Fly a kite, or take up a new exercise regimen. Mixing things up can help your mind look at the world in new and different ways, sparking your imagination.

How creative types have gotten into the groove throughout history

Some people take unusual steps to get their creative impulses going. From the Mental Floss website, some examples of how famous folks have jumpstarted their imagination:

- **Yoshiro Nakamatsu.** This Japanese inventor with more than 3,000 patents to his name dives underwater, holds his breath, and scribbles ideas on a Plexiglas board in his swimming pool.
- **Leonardo da Vinci.** The Italian artist and inventor honed his creative instincts by taking short naps every four hours throughout the day. He's said to have slept a total of just two hours every day.
- **Thomas Edison.** This inventor was also a fan of naps, with a twist: He'd sit up holding a handful of marbles and think about the problem he was working on until he fell asleep. When the marbles dropping to the floor woke him up, he wrote down whatever came into his mind, regardless of whether it offered a solution.
- **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.** The German poet kept a rotten apple on his desk, insisting that it helped him write more effectively.
- **Charles Dickens.** The British novelist claimed to write only at a desk facing due north.

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Who you want to be

A farmer on his way into town pulled over to pick up a young man thumbing for a ride. The two men began to talk, with the younger man sharing his experiences of his solo hiking and camping adventures.

“So what do you plan to do when this is over?” the farmer asked.

The young man mapped out his plans of a university education, graduate school, a job with a fancy title and a huge salary, future board positions, his own company, and more money than he could spend in three lifetimes. “You know what they say,” the young man remarked. “You should dream big or not dream at all.”

“It’s a pretty big dream,” the farmer said, “but little more than that.”

The farmer continued, “It seems to me that if you wanted to accomplish any of those things you wouldn’t be hitchhiking through small towns. You’d be somewhere else working and building on the knowledge and skills required to help you achieve your goals.”

“Right now, I’m figuring out who I am,” the young man said.

“Why don’t you try figuring out who you want to be?” the farmer replied.

LOOK
To THE
Future

Quotes

We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories.
—John Gottschal

Words are how we think; stories are how we link.

— Christina Baldwin



Did You Know?

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		1	2	3
		New Year's Day		
6	7	8	9	10
Epiphany				
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

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January Word Search



alive	drive	honor	lost	right
board	empty	hopeful	matter	score
brilliant	excise	knock	money	street
carry	expect	lane	movies	style
casino	fees	later	phone	test
compete	flush	light	possession	things
destination	foot	loose	repeat	tornado
				wealth

Follow these tips to avoid accidents at home

Every year about 30,000 fatal accidents occur in people's homes, most of which were largely preventable. Making your home accident-proof isn't hard. To make sure your home is a safe home, review this safety checklist:

- **Stairwells, stoops and steps.** Tack down loose carpeting, augment dim lighting, and bolt handrails to walls with long screws.
- **Exterior walkways and steps.** If painted, repaint with a nonslip additive that prevents slipping or affix with nonslip strips.
- **Electric garage door.** Test periodically to make sure the safety stop mechanism is operational.
- **Free-standing furniture.** Secure bookshelves and storage units to walls with angled brackets, screws or bolts.
- **Gas and water cutoff valves.** Know how to close them. Use tags to identify each one, if necessary.
- **Heating and water system.** Have the vent stacks professionally checked annually to prevent toxic gases from entering the home.
- **Water heater.** Set temperature at or below 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Test highest temperature in running water with meat thermometer. Alternatively, install an anti-scald device on faucets and showerheads.
- **Clothes dryer.** Make sure it vents directly outside, not through a chimney flue, as lint is combustible and the fumes can be toxic.
- **Radiators.** Cover with a frame that is not touching the unit.
- **Steam irons.** Always unplug before filling with water.
- **Toasters.** Avoid toasting sugarcoated or filled pastries because the sugar can ooze, gumming up the inside and causing a fire.
- **All appliances.** Check to make sure they have UL listings, which guarantee the product meets safety standards. And make sure electrical appliances are not next to heating equipment.
- **Light switches.** Relocate any that are within reaching distance of a tub or shower.
- **Electrical cords and plugs.** Replace any worn piece, as they cause many household fires. Keep out of high traffic areas where they can trip children and adults. And never run under carpeting or rugs.
- **Extension cords.** Avoid using. If necessary, use cords with the same or greater wattage/amperage than the appliance. Never run under carpeting or rugs.
- **Electrical panel box.** Ensure there's a main disconnect to cut off all power in case of a fire. Also, properly mark all circuit breakers.

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What friends are for

Two women were discussing their weight loss goals and dieting strategies. “We should team up. We could work out together, exchange recipes, and support each other,” said one woman.

“Sounds like a plan,” replied the other.

“And when I’m craving a deep-dish pizza with a side of cheese fries, like I am right now—“

“Don’t worry, sister, I’ve got your back,” said the friend. “I could go for a slice myself and know just the place. Come on, I’m driving.”

The meaning of life

Ryan left behind a successful career and all the material trappings his wealth afforded. In his quest for a more meaningful life, he embarked on a pilgrimage to a faraway land to seek the counsel of a sage rumored to live on the summit of a mountain.

Ryan’s journey took him through villages, valleys, and forests; he hiked through rugged terrain and climbed over sharp rocks. He was exhausted once he reached the base of the mountain and camped out there for a couple of days to regain his strength before his ascent.

The climb up the mountain was grueling, but Ryan knew he would be rewarded once he reached the top and learned the meaning of life from the sage.

When Ryan finished his climb, he made it to a tiny hut where he encountered the sage sitting cross-legged in the middle of the floor. Ryan sat cross-legged across from the sage and said, “I have discarded all of my material possessions and traveled thousands of miles to learn the meaning of life from you.”

The sage cleared his throat and said, “Life … is like … a—” The sage dropped his head and began to snore. Ryan poked the sage on the shoulder and the sage mumbled, “What was I saying?”

“You were going to tell me the meaning of life.”

“Oh, yes,” the sage said. “Life is like a rock.” He shrugged his shoulders and then coughed.

“That’s it?” Ryan asked.

“Hey, what did you expect? I’m just an old man living alone on the top of a mountain.”

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Happy
New
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A changed man

When Fred stumbled home from a night of revelry, he immediately fell on his knees and said, “God, thank you for helping this sinner make it home tonight.”

He went to the medicine cabinet for aspirin and gasped when he glimpsed his reflection in the mirror. His eyes were bloodshot, his hair was matted to his head with some unknown sticky substance, his skin looked like sandpaper, his knuckles were scraped, and his clothes were ripped and disheveled. “That’s it,” he proclaimed to his reflection. “I’m going to turn my life around.”

Before he passed out that night, Fred mumbled, “God, I’m going to mend my wicked ways.”

The next day Fred awoke a changed man. He stopped drinking and started juicing. He became a vegetarian. Instead of partying all night, he rose early and went for runs, started lifting weights. He rode his bicycle just about everywhere and was in the best shape of his life. Friends remarked that he looked 20 years younger.

One day, while crossing the street to go to the health food store, Fred was hit by a car. As he was dying on the curb, he said, “God, why now? I was doing so much better.”

God replied, “Fred? Is that you? Oh, man, I didn’t recognize you.”

Stage one

Joe asked his friend Dan for a cigarette.

J “I thought you made a resolution to stop smoking this year,” Dan replied.

“I did,” Joe agreed, “but it’s a process with many steps that must be completed before you actually quit. Right now, I’m working through stage one.”

“What’s stage one?”

“This is the period where I stop buying them.”



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