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Workers' COMPanion

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TIGERS, STRAWBERRIES, AND SMILES

Brighten Someone's Day (and Yours!) With a Random Act of Kindness

When was the last time you did a random act of kindness? Feb. 17 is Random Acts of Kindness Day — a day that almost dares us to hit pause on life's chaos and shift our focus to the little things (that are actually the most essential parts of life). Let's face it: Life can be a mess. Between work, news headlines, and whatever else that feels like life is piling on, it's easy to focus on the "tigers" in our lives — the stressors clawing at us from all sides. But here's the thing: Even in the middle of it all, there are strawberries, too. You have to notice them.

Confused? Let me explain. There's a Zen story about a person hanging off a cliff, tigers above and below, and a mouse gnawing at the branch holding them up. It's a bad scene. But then, they spot a patch of juicy strawberries, pluck one, and savor its sweetness. The tigers are still there, but for that moment, all that matters is the sweet-tasting strawberry. That's the magic of perspective — and the magic of kindness.

Now, I'm no Zen master. I'm a regular guy who frets over things he can't control. When a case doesn't go my way or the world feels like it's teetering on the edge, it's easy to sulk and mope. But I've learned that gratitude and kindness can pull you out of that tailspin faster than anything. That's why I started a gratitude journal. Every night, I jot down a few things I'm grateful for or that made me smile — big things, like family; or small ones, like my dogs wagging their tails (well, Ellie has a stub) a little extra when I get home. Writing it down shifts my focus, making it easier to see and share those strawberries with others.

Acts of kindness need not be complicated. The other day, I was in the drive-thru at my bank, and the teller's smile could light up a room. So, I told her. She lit up even more, and honestly, so did I. It's this tiny thing to say, "You have a great smile," or "Thanks for what you do," but you'd be amazed at how much it means.

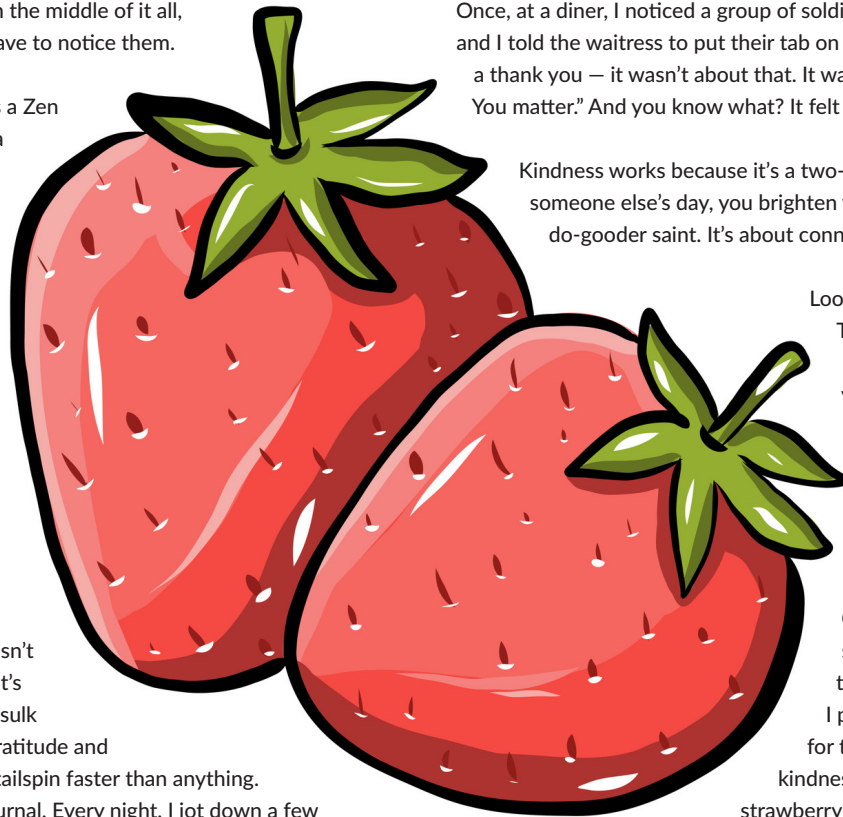
Once, at a diner, I noticed a group of soldiers. Without overthinking it, Amy and I told the waitress to put their tab on our bill. We didn't stick around for a thank you — it wasn't about that. It was about quietly saying, "I see you. You matter." And you know what? It felt incredible.

Kindness works because it's a two-way street. When you brighten someone else's day, you brighten your own. It's not about being some do-gooder saint. It's about connecting to what makes us human.

Look, life will always have its tigers. Things won't always go your way. But if you stop obsessing over what you can't control and start sharing your strawberries — the goodness you have — you'll find life feels a little sweeter.

I challenge you to try this Random Acts of Kindness Day. Compliment someone, pay for someone else's coffee, or just say thank you. It need not be big. But I promise, it'll make a big difference for them and you. Go on, spread some kindness. You might find it's the best strawberry you've ever tasted!

- Jim Monast



BETTER BUDGETING

THE BENEFITS OF THE 50/30/20 RULE

For many people, getting the most out of their hard-earned money can be a challenge. Thankfully, the 50/30/20 rule is here to help! This simple budgeting rule is straightforward, easy to remember, and useful (if you stick to it). According to the rule, you should take 100% of your after-tax income and allocate it in three different ways: 50% for needs, 30% for wants, and 20% for savings. For more on how to use the rule, read on!

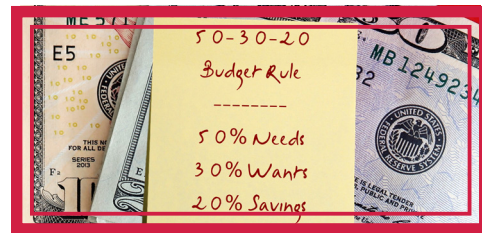
NEEDS

Half of your money should be put toward necessary expenses: groceries, utility bills, health care expenses, loans, mortgages, and other payments. However, you may need more than 50% of your

money to cover your mandatory expenses, and the remaining money should be split between wants and savings as evenly as possible. Your needs could also require less than half of your after-tax income. In this case, use the leftover money to pay down loans and debts so you will have more money to dedicate to savings and wants in the future.

WANTS

What good is life if you can't enjoy yourself? The rule says you should apply 30% of your after-tax income toward your wants. This portion can be spent on everything from tickets to see your favorite sports teams, a premier "Jurassic Park"-themed pinball machine, or eating out at a restaurant. However, it



should only apply to things you want to spend money on immediately — not long-term investments.

SAVINGS

The last 20% is the money you save for a rainy day. It can be cash you are saving for a dream vacation, money invested in a 401(k), or simply put into a savings account. Any long-term investment you make will fall into this category.

While the 50/30/20 rule is not an exact science, it is worthwhile for budgeting your money responsibly and equitably!

When Emotional Response to Injury Crosses the Line

YOUR RIGHTS TO COMPENSATION FOR WORK-RELATED MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

While workers' compensation is typically associated with physical injuries, mental health responses are recognized as well. Let's explore how mental health conditions can fit into the workers' compensation framework and the challenges involved.

ARE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES COVERED UNDER WORKERS' COMP?

Physical injuries at work can understandably result in low-level aggravation and anxiety. Sometimes, the responses are more severe. Workers' compensation laws vary widely across states, but in Ohio, mental health conditions like PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), depression, and anxiety can be compensated if they meet specific criteria, such as:

- **The condition must be associated with your work injury.**
- **A licensed mental health professional must diagnose your condition and document your treatment.**
- **The condition must come from a physical workplace injury or sexual conduct you were forced by threat of physical harm to engage in.**

PTSD among firefighters and paramedics is as common as it is among combat veterans, with 20% experiencing symptoms. However, even jobs without inherent trauma can lead to severe stress, as 57% of workers report burnout, according to the American Psychological Association. While some states permit mental health claims without requiring they result from an underlying physical injury, Ohio does not.

THERE ARE CHALLENGES IN PROVING MENTAL HEALTH CLAIMS.

Despite the increasing acknowledgment of mental health in workers' compensation, proving these claims can be an uphill battle. Employers and insurers may argue your condition comes from non-work-related

factors, like family conflict or preexisting conditions. That's why it's critical to have substantial documentation from a mental health professional and to establish a clear connection between your job and your mental health issues. However, the physical injury needs to be only "a" cause of the psychological response and not the sole cause.

Again, coverage differs among the states. While 36 states allow claims for mental stress unrelated to physical injuries, states like Ohio, Alabama, Texas, and Florida generally do not offer standalone mental health compensation.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS BEYOND WORKERS' COMPENSATION?

If workers' compensation isn't available for your mental health claim, other laws may provide relief:

- **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA):** This federal law can grant unpaid leave and job protection while you seek treatment.
- **Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA):** If your mental health condition qualifies as a disability, you can ask for workplace accommodations.
- **Social Security Disability Benefits:** Severe mental impairments that prevent you from working may qualify for long-term disability benefits.

WE CAN GIVE YOU OPTIONS.

Mental health issues should never be ignored or minimized. Whether through workers' compensation, federal protections, or private accommodations, resources are available to help you seek relief and recovery. If you believe your mental health challenges come from your work injury, contact our team to explore your options and advocate for your well-being.

FROM VIRTUAL CONNECTION TO REAL-LIFE REUNION

3 YEARS AS FACEBOOK FRIENDS, A LIFETIME AS FATHER AND DAUGHTER

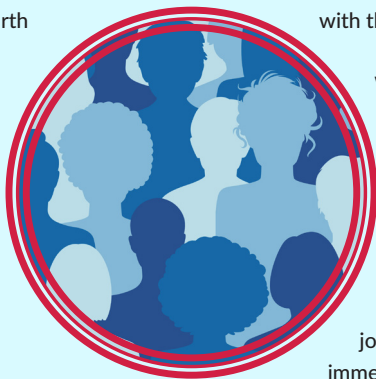
Life surprises us when we least expect it, often in profound and heartwarming ways. For Tamuna Museridze, a Georgian journalist, an unexpected discovery in 2016 set her on a journey that would forever change her life. While going through the personal belongings of the woman she believed to be her mother, Tamuna stumbled upon a birth certificate with her name on it — but with the wrong date. The discovery led to countless questions and, finally, a revelation: **She had been adopted at birth.**

What followed was a courageous quest to uncover her roots. Tamuna, with her investigative skills, created a Facebook group aptly named "Vedzeb" ("I'm Searching"), hoping to find her biological family. Years passed with little progress until one day, a message appeared. A woman from rural Georgia mentioned she knew someone who had concealed a pregnancy and traveled to Tbilisi in September 1984 — the month Tamuna was born.

That message became a turning point. A DNA test with the stranger confirmed she was Tamuna's aunt, and soon, she finally unearthed her biological father's name. **She didn't expect that her father, 72-year-old Gurgen Khorava, had been a friend on her Facebook page for three years.** Gurgen, a former member of the State Ballet of Georgia, had followed

Tamuna's work as a journalist without knowing they shared a bond far more profound than shared interests.

"He didn't even know my birth mother had been pregnant," Tamuna shared with the BBC. "It was a huge surprise for him."



When they finally met at Gurgen's home, the moment was surreal. They sat together in silence, staring at one another, realizing they were indeed father and daughter. Slowly, they began to bond, discovering a shared love for dance — a passion Gurgen had unknowingly passed down to Tamuna's daughters, who also practice ballet.

While her reunion with her biological mother was not as joyful, Gurgen's warmth and acceptance brought Tamuna immeasurable comfort. Gurgen hosted a family reunion to celebrate their newfound connection, inviting relatives far and wide to welcome Tamuna into the fold.

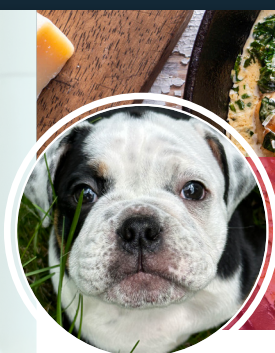
Reflecting on the journey, Tamuna shared, "It was strange. The moment he looked at me, he knew I was his daughter." *Their story is a testament to resilience, the power of human connection, and the extraordinary ways life brings us together.*

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ANSWER



EATS WITH ELLIE

SKILLET CHICKEN IN CREAMY SUN-DRIED TOMATO SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp butter
- 5 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbsp herbes de Provence
- 3/4 cup canned sun-dried tomatoes, drained and julienned
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 2/3 cup shredded Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1/4 cup pine nuts
- 1 cup spinach
- Fresh thyme, for topping
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Cooked rice or linguine, for serving

DIRECTIONS

1. Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add chicken and cook for 7-8 minutes until browned and cooked through. Remove and set aside.
2. In the same pan, add garlic, herbes de Provence, tomatoes, chicken broth, cream, Parmesan cheese, lemon juice, pine nuts, and spinach and stir to combine. Bring to a boil, and stir periodically until thickened and spinach is wilted, about 3 minutes.
3. Return chicken to the pan and top with salt, pepper, more Parmesan cheese, and thyme, and serve over rice or linguine.

Inspired by LeCremeDeLaCrumb.com

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BEAUTIFUL FRENCH OPERA SINGER OR MYSTERIOUS VAMPIRESS?

THE LEGEND OF CAMILLE MONFORT

Everyone loves a good scary story. However, stories with unfinished and uncertain endings leave more spine-chilling options for the imagination. The ever-alluring legend of Camille Monfort will raise the hair on your neck and make you wonder what may have been behind her story.

In 1896, Belém, Brazil (in the Amazon), emerged as a wealthy city filled with grand luxuries due to the rubber trade. The city's newfound affluence brought extravagance in many areas, including *Theatro da Paz*, which brought European culture to the jungle. However, it wasn't until the beautiful French opera singer Camille Monfort took center stage that the city's mystery came to light.



It's said that Camille's striking beauty and disregard for societal conventions cast spells of desire over rich men and spread great envy among their wives. Rumors spread that her pale skin tone not only meant she was a vampiress, but her beautiful singing during concerts hypnotized her audience so she could easily feed from them.

Unfortunately, her mystery was short-lived. By the end of 1896, cholera devastated Belém, taking Camille's life at age 25. She was then buried in the Cemetery of Solitude, but many believe her tomb is empty and her death was a ruse.

Stories of strange disappearances and whispered encounters surround Camille Monfort's entire existence, making her haunting story a unique chapter in the history of vampires.