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MARCH 2021

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## DISTANCING (BUT NOT DISCONNECTING) FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

### DON'T LET IT RUN YOUR LIFE!



A little less than a decade ago, a professor from Stanford University named Clifford Nass published a book called "The Man Who Lied to His Laptop." The book detailed the conclusions of nearly a decade of study before its publication, in which Nass found that, among other things, people treat their computers and other devices like people. People will actually (as the title suggests) lie to, empathize, bond, and even argue with their computers. If you don't believe me, just think back to the last time you were frustrated and tried to coax a loading bar into moving faster than a glacier.

Much like Luke Skywalker's close connection with his favorite droid pals C-3PO and R2-D2, we bond with our computers and smartphones, regardless of how irrational it might seem for us to do so, and I wouldn't be surprised if that "bond" has been strengthened since Nass published his book by our culture's social media obsession.

Fifteen years ago this month, the first "tweet" popped up on Twitter. It was also around this time that Facebook began appearing on people's computer screens. Later, Instagram dominated smartphone screens everywhere, followed by

Snapchat, TikTok, and just about any other social media platform you can think of. Everyone has their favorite site for socializing with their friends online, but they all do essentially the same thing: They make you feel *good*.

That good feeling is by design. Whenever you engage with social media of any kind, your brain gets a dopamine hit. It makes social media not only easy to engage with, but also addictive. When it's all just cute cat videos and photos of family and friends, that's probably not much of a problem. But as we all know, social media is far more than that now.

Social media brings with it a lot of benefits. When I was young and in school, I used to have to physically go to the library to do any research. Now, I have the world's library in my pocket! Facts and feeds are brimming with knowledge, and we can learn so many things. Social media can also bring together people with similar interests. A few months ago, I got a smoker, and I found a group online that's all about sharing tips and tricks for smoking meat. Social media has made it more possible than ever to find and connect you with like-minded people.

At its worst, however, social media bombards us with ads and divides us into tribes. Even though Nass said we might empathize with our devices, those same devices make it easier to interact with the people beyond the screen with no sort of empathy. As many of us have seen especially during this past year, social media can also spread much disinformation, too.

So where does that leave us? Are we supposed to just do away with social media forever, regardless of the good it might provide? Not necessarily. A computer science professor at Georgetown University named Cal Newport wrote a book a few years ago called "Digital Minimalism," and in it, he describes how you can enjoy social media for the good it provides without letting it run your life. It's a book I'd certainly recommend, and for now, I'll at least recommend the digital minimalist approach to social media: Enjoy it, in small doses, for the good it can bring — but don't let it run your life.

*-Jim Monast*

# WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS ...

## Scrub the Microwave

Lemons don't just add a tart flavor to your favorite desserts or cool you down in a refreshing drink on a hot summer day. In addition to bold flavors, lemons also have powerful cleaning properties. Their acidity and oils cut through grease and can sanitize many of your household items.

The best place to clean with a lemon is in the kitchen. For the microwave, simply juice a whole lemon into a bowl of water, then plop the used peels into the bowl. Microwave the mixture for a few minutes, let the bowl cool before removing it, then wipe away the grease in the microwave. You can also use this method for your oven.

For odor-blocking properties, you can use a lemon as an air freshener. Leave half of a lemon in your refrigerator to trap and block potential smells and toss old lemon rinds down the garbage disposal. Run the disposal to clean the blades and freshen up the sink.



As for your kitchen tools, don't toss them out without trying this lemon trick first. Start by sprinkling salt on a wooden cutting board, then slice a lemon in half. Using half the lemon (flesh-side down) like a sponge, scrub the board really well. Wipe and remove the leftover lemon juice and rinse the board before using it again. Not only will the board *appear* cleaner, but it also won't smell as bad, and the bacteria will be gone. You can also use this method to polish dining ware, spruce up copper, and even remove stuck-on food from plates.

Now, here's the real secret: Once you master kitchen cleaning a la lemon, you can use these same principles to clean other parts of your house. For example, salt and lemon can be used to scrub grimy sinks and faucets, while a few squeezes of lemon juice in a cup of water makes an excellent cleaning solution for mirrors and windows. You can even make your own reusable cleaning spray by fermenting lemon peels — and the peels of other citrus fruits — in white vinegar for two weeks. Remove the peels after two weeks and spritz the mixture over surfaces you need to clean!



*Willie playing Santa for nursing home residents.*

## CLIENT STORY:

# WILLIE PETERSON III

Over the years, we've represented lots of teachers, firefighters, school bus drivers, and other public servants. Without exception, I have found them to be dedicated to their work, uncomplaining, and wanting to get back to work soon.

In my experience, police officers are among those most likely to minimize their injuries! Now, don't get me wrong — I admire their "no whining" attitude, and, no doubt, we probably need more of that as a nation these days. But sometimes, I'm reminded of the scene from "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" when King Arthur points out the Black Knight's injuries, and the Knight insists, "It's just a flesh wound," as he continues to lose arms and legs! (Kids, if you're too young to know this movie, ask your parents).

I've had police officers herniate discs while refusing to let go of a car that's dragging them down the road or return to work early and against doctor's advice, only to get hurt worse than if they would have waited and done what

they were told (hardheaded?). It's often tough, gritty work, and public opinion for them seems to vacillate between admiration and contempt.

By and large, they are also real characters. One such officer is our longtime client and friend, "Big Willie" Peterson III. He served as a Springfield, Ohio, police officer for many years after a long stint in the Army as a medical and X-ray technician. Willie suffered at least six injuries over nine years, usually from wrestling suspects who were trying to escape. He's injured his neck and back, broken an ankle, torn his shoulder and biceps, and developed carpal tunnel syndrome.

Police work is like playing sports: The more injuries you get as time goes on, the more it takes a toll on your body. Even with surgery, your body never seems to work the same.

Ultimately, after he could no longer hold his arm up to pass his firing test, he had to go out on disability. Undaunted, he became a grill cook at Frisch's and later at a nursing home where he was well-loved by the residents, especially when he played Santa Claus!

The shoulder and carpal tunnel eventually sidelined his grilling exploits, so he went back to school to learn about diet and became an aide at a local hospital. To my way of thinking, he's come full circle in that he's now back with soldiers, driving veterans to appointments at the VA office. He's also in charge of maintenance at Ohio Thrift ... some guys just can't get the whole "retirement" thing down!

We admire this man, our friend, Big Willie Peterson. If you live in Springfield, you may see him helping Santa next Christmas — at 6 feet, 4 inches tall, he's hard to miss!

# \$650,000 WORTH OF MEDICAL DEBT PAID IN FULL

## BY ONE ARKANSAS DOCTOR

In December 2020, 200 people in Arkansas received a Christmas present they probably didn't expect. They all had received cancer treatment from Dr. Omar Atik. In their Christmas cards from his office, they discovered that any outstanding debt they owed for their care — an amount that totaled \$650,000 — had been forgiven by the doctor.

In a country where medical bills for cancer can be almost as frightening as the disease itself, and in a year when so many families are struggling to afford even the basic necessities, Dr. Atik's gift to his patients was no doubt a welcome one. It was also his last gift to his patients, as he had to close his clinic due to staffing shortages back in February 2020.

But Dr. Atik is grateful for the opportunity he had to serve patients in Arkansas. He is originally from Pakistan and

completed his fellowship at New York City's Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center before accepting a job in The Natural State. In 2013, Dr. Atik became the president of the Arkansas Medical Society, and in 2018, he became chairman-elect of the board of governors of the American College of Physicians.

"I believe the opportunities that have come my way are, in part, because of where I am," Dr. Atik told the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

So, even after his clinic closed, Dr. Atik wanted to show his appreciation for the community that had become his home. He denied no one cancer treatment because they couldn't pay for it right away, but that meant that many patients had racked up serious amounts of debt. Not wanting to increase anyone's financial burden during an already difficult year, Dr. Atik and his wife simply forgave the \$650,000 worth of debts.

"We saw we could do it and then just went ahead and did it," Dr. Atik told Good Morning America. Even though his clinic had long since been closed, he found a way to help his patients one last time.

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ANSWER

## NIBBLES WITH NUG



# ENGLISH GROUND BEEF PASTIES

Inspired by AllRecipes.com

*In lieu of corned beef this year, try this spin on authentic English pasties — savory pockets of pastry dough stuffed with seasoned ground beef.*

### INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 lb ground beef
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 sheets store-bought puff pastry dough
- 1 tsp dried parsley
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup beef broth (as needed)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat your oven to 400 F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, combine the beef, onion, and potatoes.
3. Roll out the pastry dough into roughly 10-inch circles or squares.
4. Spoon 1/2 of the beef mixture onto each sheet of dough, then top the mixture with parsley, salt, and pepper.
5. Fold the edges of the dough over the filling, pinching each pasty shut and tucking in both ends.
6. Transfer the pasties to the prepared baking sheet, then cut several small slits in each pasty for ventilation. Bake for 45 minutes.
7. Remove the pasties from the oven and reduce the heat to 350 F. Spoon 1 tsp beef broth into each slit, then bake for an additional 15 minutes.
8. Serve and enjoy!

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# Corn Dogs and Basketball

## AN AMERICAN TRADITION

It's no coincidence that National Corn Dog Day is March 20 – the third Saturday of the month. This day is *traditionally* the first Saturday of March Madness, otherwise known as the NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Championship. But wait. What do corn dogs and a basketball tournament have to do with one another?

Turns out, National Corn Dog Day has *everything* to do with March Madness. The "holiday" began in March 1992 when two Corvallis, Oregon, high school students needed a snack while watching a basketball game. They got some corn dogs and called it good. But somehow, this simple snack and sport pairing turned into something huge.

In fact, eating corn dogs while watching March Madness caught on like wildfire – and the teens didn't even have Instagram to promote it! Though it's not clear how, it spread across Oregon and

eventually the rest of the country. It's likely that people just heard about it from friends and family and thought it was a great idea.

The corn dog, like basketball, is an American creation. In the 1920s, the creators toyed around with the idea of fried foods on a stick. They battered and fried everything from cheese to bananas, but it was the battered sausages that really stood out, and the corn dog was born. By the 1940s, the convenient creation had popped up at state fairs and drive-in restaurants all over the country.

In honor of the original Corn Dog Day, the then-governor of Oregon issued an official proclamation naming March 17 National Corn Dog Day in the state. Several companies jumped on the bandwagon as well, including Foster Farms (a maker of frozen corn dogs, among many other meat products) and the Pabst Brewing Company.



While it's not an "official" national day recognized by the U.S. Congress, it's celebrated with thousands of events every March. And it's grown beyond its U.S. roots. An article printed in *The Oregonian* in 2009 revealed that National Corn Dog Day parties have been celebrated on nearly every continent – including Antarctica!