

Family and Community Health “Connections” in McCulloch County

3 Ways to Learn Patience and Amp up Your Well Being

Do good things really come to those who wait?

Research tells us that, yes, there's a relationship between patience and well-being. Various studies have found that people who are more patient experience less low mood, are more empathetic and feel greater gratitude. Your level of patience may even be related to your level of happiness.

It seems our parents and teachers were right when they reminded us that patience is a virtue. But it's also a skill, one you can learn and practice.

Ready to become a more patient person? Experts advise starting with mindfulness practices that help you become more aware of where you are and what you're doing *right now*. Like anything worthwhile, it'll take some work to improve your mindfulness. But if you commit to the effort, you'll reap the rewards that come with being good to yourself — lower blood pressure, less stress and anger, and an increasingly positive outlook.

These three practices have all been shown to help build mindfulness and improve patience.

1. Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) — MBSR has been shown to actually strengthen areas of the brain used to regulate emotions and process learning and memory. Usually taught in an eight-week class led by professionals trained and certified in MBSR, this program includes breathing, stretching and awareness exercises.

With practice, you can use these skills to increase your acceptance of what's happening in the present moment. On a practical level, that means transforming things such as traffic jams from anger triggers to mere inconveniences that you understand *and accept* are out of your control.

2. Meditation — Studies have shown that people who meditate have larger volumes of gray matter in the areas of the brain that regulate response control. That may be why meditators have a more positive outlook, are more emotionally stable and are more mindful. With continued practice, meditation can help you summon the patience to deal stress-free with life's daily annoyances, from long lines in the grocery store to tedious work meetings.

3. Mindful movement — Yoga, aikido, tai chi and qigong are all forms of mindful movement designed to help strengthen your body and your mind. Many research studies have shown that mindful movement practice helps reduce stress, negative thinking and depression.

These controlled exercises teach you to focus on your breath and your body as you perform specific movements. A happy side effect is improved patience as you repeat the process over and over, gradually learning to quiet your mind.

Practicing patience can help you learn to enjoy the times "in between." The stoplights, the grocery store lines, the elevator rides. The impatient you likely reached for your phone, anxious to fill the time between where you were and where you were going. The increasingly patient you keeps your phone in your pocket and, instead, engages your senses, appreciating the moment.

Researchers have shown that appreciation can lead to greater life satisfaction. Seems our parents and teachers were also right when they urged us to stop and smell the roses.

Source:
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/>

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How to Make (and Keep) a New Year's Resolution

Are you making a resolution in the new year? Warning: More than half of all resolutions fail, but this year, they don't have to be yours. Here's how to identify the right resolution to improve your life, create a plan on how to reach it, and become part of the small group of people that successfully achieve their goal.

Pick the Right Resolution

You'll give yourself your best shot at success if you set a goal that's doable — and meaningful too.

According to the time management firm [FranklinCovey](#), [one third of resolutions don't make it past the end of January](#).

A lot of these resolutions fail because they're not the right resolutions. And a resolution may be wrong for one of three main reasons:

- It's a resolution created based on what someone else (or society) is telling you to change.
- It's too vague.
- You don't have a realistic plan for achieving your resolution.

Your goals should be smart — and SMART. That's an acronym coined in the journal *Management Review* in 1981 for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. It may work for management, but it can also work in setting your resolutions, too.

• **Specific.** Your resolution should be absolutely clear. "Making a concrete goal is

really important rather than just vaguely saying 'I want to lose weight.' You want to have a goal: How much weight do you want to lose and at what time interval?" said Katherine L. Milkman, an associate professor of operations information and decisions at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. "Five pounds in the next two months — that's going to be more effective."

• **Measurable.** This may seem obvious if your goal is a fitness or weight loss related one, but it's also important if you're trying to cut back on something, too. If, for example, you want to stop biting your nails, take pictures of your nails over time so you can track your progress in how those nails grow back out, said Jeffrey Gardere, a psychologist and professor at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine. Logging progress into a journal or making notes on your phone or in an app designed to help you track behaviors can reinforce the progress, no matter what your resolution may be.

• **Achievable.** This doesn't mean that you can't have big stretch goals. But trying to take too big a step too fast can leave you frustrated, or affect other areas of your life to the point that your resolution takes over your life — and both you and your friends and family flail. So, for example, resolving to save enough money to retire in five years when you're 30 years old is probably not realistic, but saving an extra \$100 a month may be. (And if that's

easy, you can slide that number up to an extra \$200, \$300 or \$400 a month).

• **Relevant.** Is this a goal that really matters to you, and are you making it for the right reasons? "If you do it out of the sense of self-hate or remorse or a strong passion in that moment, it doesn't usually last long," said [Dr. Michael Bennett](#), a psychiatrist and co-author of two self-help books. "But if you build up a process where you're thinking harder about what's good for you, you're changing the structure of your life, you're bringing people into your life who will reinforce that resolution, then I think you have a fighting chance."

• **Time-bound.** Like "achievable," the timeline toward reaching your goal should be realistic, too. That means giving yourself enough time to do it with lots of smaller intermediate goals set up along the way. "Focus on these small wins so you can make gradual progress," [Charles Duhigg](#), author of "The Power of Habit" and a former New York Times writer, said. "If you're building a habit, you're planning for the next decade, not the next couple of months."

By: Jen A. Miller



Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/smarterliving/resolution-ideas>

10 Best Winter Vacations in Texas

Every summer you'll hear a lot of Texans complaining about the heat, but the flip side of that coin is that Winters here tend to be pretty mild. While we don't often get many white [Christmas-es in the Lone Star State](#), sometimes we get some sun-shiny ones. Here in [Texas](#), you can take vacations in the winter that might be unbearable during the hotter months of the year. So whether you're looking for an exciting tourist spot or a serene, remote getaway, we've got you covered.

1. South Padre Island

South Padre Island is the undisputed beach destination preferred by most Texans. You don't have to wait until Summer to go there though. South Padre is just as beautiful in the Winter as in the Summer, and it's less expensive and not as full of tourists. Whereas you might not want to jump into the gulf, it's still pleasant enough for a stroll along the beach, or to take a picnic or a boat ride.

2. Davis Mountains State Park

The [Davis Mountains](#) are a particularly special area of [Texas](#). Because of its desert climate, West [Texas](#) gets both hot and cold extremes. Though its status as a desert means there is little precipitation, there are occasional snowstorms in the Davis mountains that blanket the beautiful Southwestern landscape in frosty white. You can stay in the historic Indian Lodge, bird-watch, stargaze and hike all without getting heat exhaustion like you might during Summer.

3. Big Bend National Park

Located in the big bend of the Rio Grande River, Big Bend National Park is a must-see destination in [Texas](#) during Winter. Daytime temperatures hover in the 70s, which makes strenuous hikes unusually pleasant. Tem-

perature can drop near freezing at night though, which makes it the perfect time to light a fire at your campsite and snuggle up.

4. San Antonio Riverwalk

Most folks probably think about visiting San Antonio during the Summer months, but the Riverwalk is also a great place to go during the Winter. Every year the trees lining the San Antonio River are wound with millions of glittering and [colorful Christmas lights](#) which reflect off the water creating a winter wonderland. Also, hotels on the Riverwalk drop in price during the offseason, so it's easier on your bank account.

5. Galveston

Each December the historic streets of Galveston are transformed into a Victorian world as Dickens on the Strand descends upon the Gulf city. A visit to Galveston during the winter, even if you miss Dickens on the Strand is still like traveling back in time. Galveston is full of historical quirks and attractions like the Opera House and the Moody Mansion that are fantastic places to visit in the cold months.

6. Marfa

Far West [Texas](#) is a study in contrasts. Both hot and cold, both desolate and beautiful, both remote and heavily traveled. The [tiny town of Marfa](#) has received a lot of recognition lately for its art installations as well as its mysterious Marfa lights. Visiting Marfa in the Winter means you get the intrigue of West [Texas](#) without the intense heat, and you can still do, well, pretty much everything you do there in the Summer.



7. Falcon State Park

If you enjoy [bass fishing](#) then you've got to head down south to the Falcon Reservoir (also known as Falcon Lake). The reservoir is on the Rio Grande, and it offers amazing

fishing during the Winter. You're likely to catch enormous large-mouth bass, but you could also nab alligator gar, catfish or crappie. Winter is a great time to go down here because it

won't be as hot as other times of the year, but it certainly won't be as cold as it is on Lake Fork near Dallas. Also, the fishing doesn't suffer for the change in weather.

8. Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site

[Seminole Canyon](#) in South [Texas](#) near Comstock is a beautiful place to visit during the Winter months. The hike out to view the ancient pictographs in the park is much more enjoyable when the weather is cool, and you can stand to stay out there longer as well.

9. Padre Island National Seashore

Probably the most unspoiled beach in the state of [Texas](#), the [Padre Island National Seashore](#) on North Padre Island is 70 miles of undeveloped barrier island where you can see exotic seabirds, sea turtles and all manner of ocean life. Though parts of the seashore were damaged in Hurricane Harvey, the park remains open at 15 sites. Though Winter can be windy, there are certain sights you can only see in the winter, like the rare release

of cold-stunned sea turtles that the NPS rescues throughout the season.

10. Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

Just down the road from South Padre, you'll find the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. At Laguna Atascosa, you can enjoy hunting, fishing and bird watching during Winter without getting heat stroke. You might even spot an endangered ocelot while you're there! You could also head over to Boca Chica Beach to see the same gorgeous blue waters of South Padre without all the crowds or souvenir shops.

Source: <https://www.wideopencountry.com/winter-vacations-in-texas-to-consider/>



County News

A new series of Healthy Community Classes for West Texas Wellness have been developed by local FCH agents. Plan ahead and mark your calendar to attend those that you choose:

1. SMART Goals—January 20, 2021 - Karan Heffelfinger, CEA FCH, Pecos Co. Register by sending email to kaheffelfinger@ag.tamu.edu by 1/15/2021

2. Clean is the Foundation of Everything on April 21, 2021
by Jacque Behrens, CEA FCH, McCulloch County
Register by sending email to jabehrens@ag.tamu.edu by 4/19/21

3. Adequate Sleep on July 21, 2021 by Abigail Pritchard, CEA FCH, Ector-Midland County
Register by sending email to Abigail.pritchard@ag.tamu.edu by 7/19/2021

4. How you Spend Makes a Difference in Your Fiscal Wellness on October 20, 2021 by Courtney Parrott, CEA FCH, Brown County
Register by sending email to Courtney.parrott@ag.tamu.edu by 10/18/2021

Low Fat Potato Soup

Ingredients

- 1-3/4 cups diced peeled potatoes
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup chopped celery
- 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 can (12 ounces) fat-free evaporated milk, divided
- 1 cup shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese

Directions

- In a large saucepan, combine the potatoes, onion, celery, broth and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15-18 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
- Combine cornstarch and 1/4 cup milk until smooth; stir into potato mixture. Add the remaining milk. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from the heat. Stir in cheese until melted.

Nutrition Facts

1 cup: 178 calories, 2g fat (0 saturated fat), 9mg cholesterol, 274mg sodium, 26g carbohydrate (0 sugars, 0 fiber), 14g protein. **Diabetic Exchanges:** 2 starch, 1 medium-fat meat.

Source: <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/low-fat-potato-soup/>

Family & Community Health “Connections” is provided by these Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Family and Community Health Agents:

Courtney Parrott, Brown County
London Jones, Burnet County
Milissa Wright, Coke/Concho/Menard/Sterling
Vacant, Coleman County
Kelli Maberry, Jones County
Karen DeZarn, Lampasas County
Whitney Whitworth, Llano County
Jacque Behrens, McCulloch County
Staci Winders, Nolan County
Kandice Everitt, Runnels County
Kailey Miller, San Saba County
Kim Miles, Taylor County
Courtney Redman, Tom Green County
Barbara Brown BLT Regional Project Specialist
Stacy Drury, D7 Regional FCH Program Leader

