

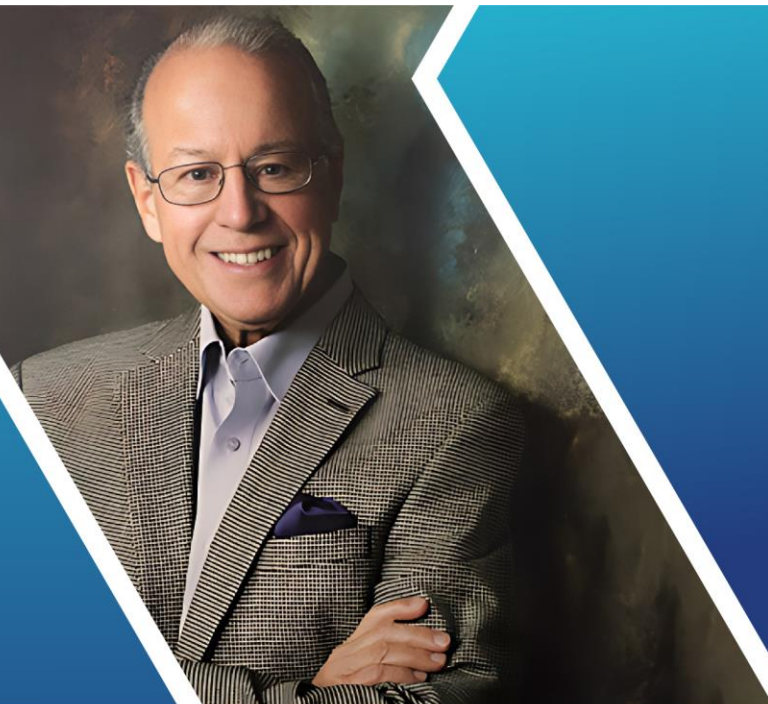
# MD Life

DECEMBER 2023



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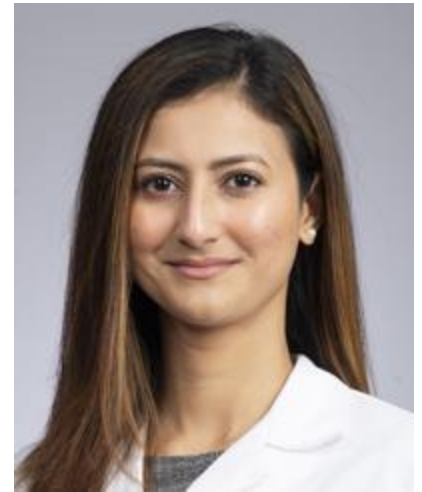
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# A Physician's Cry in Light of World Events

FAREEHA KHAN, MD

I am not a pediatrician, and I am glad that I am not. There was a time in my life when becoming a pediatrician was a genuine career aspiration, but the universe clearly steered me away from it. After becoming a mother and receiving the title of a “NICU mom,” I could see how switching tracks was a blessing for my sanity. Those who continue to provide this noble service may have a different chemical composition of their higher faculties, but needless to say, it is still hard to see a child suffer.



For centuries, there has been much philosophical and theological debate regarding the nature of a Higher Being or God who would let innocent children endure pain and suffering. Without delving into deeper discussions, we can still conclude that a child's suffering has been enough reason to question the Divine. Today, we find ourselves as citizens of the same world, mere spectators of children dying and suffering, not due to natural causes but rather due to man-made actions by the same humans who would once point fingers and object to the Divine.

There is always an endemic level of tragedy in the world. While an emotionally sound individual with a certain degree of morality might wish for a utopia where such endemic tragedy can be eradicated altogether, pragmatism pushes for coexistence. So, we reconcile our lives to accept this “baseline” level of distress while continuing the struggle towards perfection. However, there are times when the threshold is breached, and this tragedy affects many in some form or another, amounting to a pandemic of distasteful emotions.

Amid all this, a physician wakes up every morning and does their best to save lives. A vivid example of both figuratively emotional and scientifically literal pandemic can be seen in the images from Italy, Iran, India, and New York in 2020. Morgues were running out of space, crematories were moved to any open ground deemed suitable, emergency departments had to triage equally sick patients, choosing one over the other, and a simple puff of oxygen had to be rationed and accounted for. These were gut-wrenching and heart-rending images. The world cried, prayed, and hoped for a new dawn.

Amid all this, physicians still woke up (or never slept) to do their best to save lives. But we physicians were hurting then, and we are hurting now. Today, we hurt because we wake up every morning to go to work and save lives while thousands of children take their last breath, not by coincidence of nature. Our hearts wring and wrench as innocent blood spills, and we cuddle our own a little too tightly every night. We count our privileges yet cry ourselves to sleep because we are not okay. We smile, we talk, we care, we nurture, but we are not heedless; we have feelings, and we are not okay.

We are hurting, and we are not okay. Turning a blind eye to the screens blaring images of the bleeding world is not the solution, nor is it an option, as it has been the popular discourse. Many of us have deep emotional and humanitarian connections, and we cannot distance ourselves or become unavailable. We walk with heavy hearts, putting all preconceived notions and personal opinions aside. We come together as humans who plead for the pandemic of death, destruction, and emotional turmoil to come to an end. We are not idealists, yet we hold the wish to bring tragedy to a complete halt.

[Fareeha Khan](#) is an internal medicine physician.

# Before You Start Holiday Shopping, Do This to Hide Your Gift Purchases

BY KIM KOMANDO, KOMANDO.COM



## Stop Alexa from spilling the beans

If you have an Echo device, Alexa can automatically tell you delivery updates for items you order. Cool, except when Alexa loudly announces the delivery, ruining a surprise. Now, your gift recipient will know just what to expect.

To keep the element of surprise for your gift orders, follow these steps to disable the feature in the Alexa app:

- Open the **Alexa app** on your phone.
- Tap **More > Settings**.
- Choose **Notifications**.
- Select **Amazon Shopping**.
- Slide the toggle to the left next to **For items in delivery updates** under the section **Let Alexa say or show titles for items you've ordered**. This disables the feature.

Although nearly 70% of smart speaker owners use Alexa, not all know her entire skill set. We found a bunch of little-known tips and tricks that open up a world of possibilities

## Clever ways to hide purchases

If you're sharing the same Amazon account with another family member, there are ways to hide purchases and searches to avoid potentially heartbreaking gift spoilers. Here are a few options:

## Archive an order

When you archive orders, this action hides gift purchases from your order history and can also hide items you no longer want to reference or are simply too embarrassed to reveal.

To archive an order on a computer, hover your cursor over **Account & Lists** and click on **Orders**. Find the order you want to hide and click View order details, then **Archive Order**. Click **Archive Order** again to confirm. This will remove the item from immediate viewing within your order history.

**Note:** Archived orders can still be viewed by going to the **Your Account** page and selecting **Archived orders**. These items can also be restored by selecting **Unarchive Order**.

## Remove items from your browsing history

You can remove items from your browsing history to avoid revealing your gift ideas. Hover your cursor over **Account & Lists** and click on **Browsing History**. A list of things you've looked at will appear. For each item that you want to hide, tap **Remove from view**.

**Note:** If you want all searches hidden, turn off your account's Browsing History entirely by selecting **Manage history** and toggling off **Turn browsing history on/off**.

## Remove items from your recommendations

Amazon's Recommended List is another source of potential gift spoilers. This is an automated list of items the algorithm thinks you'll like. (It's based on prior purchases.)

To exclude certain purchases from influencing your recommendations, go to Amazon's [Improve Your Recommendations](#) section, locate the item you want to exclude, then toggle off **Use this item for recommendations**.

## Ship to an Amazon Locker

Deliveries can also cause spoilers. Nothing says "something's up" more blatantly than a big Amazon box waiting at your front door — especially when special occasions like Christmas or your anniversary are coming up.

To avoid Amazon home or office delivery gift spoilers, you can always ship to a nearby Amazon Locker.

What are Amazon Lockers? They're basically delivery sites located in U.S. cities. You can ship an item to an Amazon Locker of your choice and then pick it up at a time that's convenient for you.

To ship to an Amazon Locker, find your [closest Locker location](#) while logged in to your Amazon account and add it to your shipping address book. Now, when you purchase an item, you can select your Locker as the shipping address.

Once an item has been delivered to the Locker, Amazon will email you the unique six-digit code you'll need to retrieve it. Enter the code on the Locker's touchscreen interface, wait for the Locker door to open, and pick up your package.

**Note:** Although most items can be shipped to Amazon Lockers, size and weight restrictions exist. You only have three calendar days to pick it up, or it will be returned to Amazon for a refund. There is no additional cost for using an Amazon Locker, but standard shipping rates (including free Prime shipping) still apply.

### Ship to a different Address

You can also ship to a different address by hovering your cursor over **Account & Lists > Your Account** and clicking on **Your addresses**.

Just click **Add Address** and put in the details. For security reasons, you'll be asked to confirm your credit card each time you place an order using a new or edited address. You can also delete or edit any saved address you have in this section.

### Amazon Key

Amazon Key is an easy way to have Amazon packages delivered inside your garage. It's free for Prime members and works with Amazon, Amazon Fresh, and Whole Foods Market deliveries.

Hover your cursor over **Account & Lists** and select **Account**. Then click on **Amazon Key settings** to start. Follow the on-screen instructions.

Now that you know how to hide all your purchases and search history, adjust those settings and start shopping!

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# Revolutionizing Patient Care: The Convergence of AI and Personalized Medicine

HARVEY CASTRO, MD, MBA

In the dynamic realm of health care, two revolutionary forces are converging to redefine patient care: artificial intelligence (AI) and personalized medicine. This synergy transforms how we understand, diagnose, and treat diseases, tailoring health care to each patient's needs.

## **The emergence of personalized medicine**

Personalized medicine, at its core, is about understanding the unique genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors that influence a person's health. This approach moves away from the one-size-fits-all model, offering treatments and prevention strategies customized for the individual.



## **AI: the catalyst in personalized health care**

Artificial intelligence has emerged as a powerful tool in deciphering the complexities of human biology. AI algorithms can analyze vast amounts of medical data, from genetic sequencing to lifestyle information, enabling the identification of patterns and correlations that would be impossible for humans to detect unaided.

## **Case studies and success stories**

Several recent developments exemplify this synergy:

- AI-driven genomic sequencing helps identify the most effective treatments for cancer patients based on their unique genetic makeup.
- Machine learning models predict the onset of diseases like diabetes and heart conditions, allowing for early intervention based on individual risk factors.

## **Challenges and considerations**

Despite the promise, integrating AI into personalized medicine presents challenges:

- Data privacy and security: Ensuring the confidentiality and security of patient data is paramount.
- Ethical considerations: Decisions around the use of AI in health care must be guided by ethical principles to prevent biases and ensure equitable access.

## **The future landscape**

The future of health care lies in the balance of technology and human insight. AI will not replace health care professionals but will enhance their ability to provide personalized care.

## Conclusion

The fusion of AI and personalized medicine is more than a technological advancement; it's a paradigm shift towards a more precise, predictive, and preventive health care model. As we stand on the cusp of this new era, the potential for improving patient outcomes and the efficiency of health care delivery has never been greater. How will this transformative approach shape your future health care experience?

*Harvey Castro is a physician, health care consultant, and serial entrepreneur with extensive experience in the health care industry. He can be reached on his website, [harveycastromd.info](http://harveycastromd.info), Twitter @HarveycastroMD, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. He is the author of Bing Copilot and Other LLM: Revolutionizing Healthcare With AI, Solving Infamous Cases with Artificial Intelligence, The AI-Driven Entrepreneur: Unlocking Entrepreneurial Success with Artificial Intelligence Strategies and Insights, ChatGPT and Healthcare: The Key To The New Future of Medicine, ChatGPT and Healthcare: Unlocking The Potential Of Patient Empowerment, Revolutionize Your Health and Fitness with ChatGPT's Modern Weight Loss Hacks, and Success Reinvention.*

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# A Lesson at the Circus

"Once when I was a teenager, my father and I were standing in line to buy tickets for the circus.

Finally, there was only one other family between us and the ticket counter. This family made a big impression on me.

There were eight children, all probably under the age of 12. The way they were dressed, you could tell they didn't have a lot of money, but their clothes were neat and clean.

The children were well-behaved, all of them standing in line, two-by-two behind their parents, holding hands. They were excitedly jabbering about the clowns, animals, and all the acts they would be seeing that night. By their excitement you could sense they had never been to the circus before. It would be a highlight of their lives.

The father and mother were at the head of the pack standing proud as could be. The mother was holding her husband's hand, looking up at him as if to say, "You're my knight in shining armor." He was smiling and enjoying seeing his family happy.

The ticket lady asked the man how many tickets he wanted? He proudly responded, "I'd like to buy eight children's tickets and two adult tickets, so I can take my family to the circus." The ticket lady stated the price. The man's wife let go of his hand, her head dropped, the man's lip began to quiver. Then he leaned a little closer and asked, "How much did you say?" The ticket lady again stated the price.

The man didn't have enough money. How was he supposed to turn and tell his eight kids that he didn't have enough money to take them to the circus?

Seeing what was going on, my dad reached into his pocket, pulled out a \$20 bill, and then dropped it on the ground. (We were not wealthy in any sense of the word!) My father bent down, picked up the \$20 bill, tapped the man on the shoulder and said, "Excuse me, sir, this fell out of your pocket."

The man understood what was going on. He wasn't begging for a handout but certainly appreciated the help in a desperate, heartbreaking and embarrassing situation.

He looked straight into my dad's eyes, took my dad's hand in both of his, squeezed tightly onto the \$20 bill, and with his lip quivering and a tear streaming down his cheek, he replied; "Thank you, thank you, sir. This really means a lot to me and my family."

My father and I went back to our car and drove home. The \$20 that my dad gave away is what we were going to buy our own tickets with.

Although we didn't get to see the circus that night, we both felt a joy inside us that was far greater than seeing the circus could ever provide.

That day I learnt the value to Give.

The Giver is bigger than the Receiver. If you want to be large, larger than life, learn to Give. Love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get - only with what you are expecting to give - which is everything.

The importance of giving, blessing others can never be over emphasized because there's always joy in giving. Learn to make someone happy by acts of giving."

~ Katharine Hepburn





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# Medicine Has Become the New McDonald's of Health Care

ARTHUR LAZARUS, MD, MBA

I was having a conversation with a colleague about a state-funded Medicaid managed care organization (MCO). She told me that the mental health performance measures used by the state to evaluate the MCO were all “placement and provider issues,” such as the amount of time children spent sleeping on the floors of social services offices or languishing in emergency departments (ED) before they were transferred for treatment or placed into foster homes.

The performance measures used by state officials also included the number of adults waiting in hospital psych units to be transferred to state hospitals and the number of children and adults waiting at home to receive outpatient services or enhancements to current services.



“This is not how MCOs should be measured,” my colleague said.

“How disgusting,” I replied. “Medicine has become the McDonald's of health care – drive-through services – where the only thing that matters is throughput and not quality.”

“To make matters worse,” I continued, “politicians and lawmakers created the resource shortage in the first place by failing to recognize the [mental health crisis](#) and plan for it by allocating more dollars toward essential services. Now they blame MCOs and everyone else for the service bottleneck. If that's not a case of the pot calling the kettle black, I don't know what is. Perhaps we should all take out construction loans and build more hospitals and residential and assisted living facilities?”

I admit, this is not an original idea. Health insurers have been dabbling in the brick-and-mortar business for years and, vice versa, provider-based organizations have ventured into the world of health insurance. It's just that there is such an intense push for health care to be more accessible to patients, especially psychiatric patients. After all, the lack of access to evidence-based mental health care is the [root cause](#) for the mental health crisis in America. We must act urgently to overcome common yet difficult barriers to treatment – geographic, financial, cultural, structural, and social (poverty, education, support networks, etc.) – and do a better job of integrating psychiatry and primary care medicine.

Perhaps we should follow McDonald's lead. McDonald's pioneered the fast-food industry and is known for its efficiency and accessibility, being available worldwide. McDonald's is also [vertically integrated](#), meaning that the fast-food chain processes the meat themselves, grows its potatoes, and transports its own materials. With the rise of telemedicine and retail clinics in locations like pharmacies and supermarkets, the future of medicine is already beginning to resemble the fast-food industry with “fast medicine.”

The comparison of modern medicine to McDonald's illustrates many trends and issues in health care apart from accessibility and integration, such as the drive (no pun intended) for standardization and consumerism and the over-reliance on technology. Here are some ways in which medicine has become the "new McDonald's" of health care:

**1. Standardization.** Just as McDonald's has standardized menus and processes across its outlets, health care has seen a significant rise in standardized treatment protocols and guidelines. This is meant to ensure consistency and quality of care. However, critics argue that it might lead to impersonal care and overlook individual patient needs. It's no wonder rival Burger King came up with the slogan "Have it Your Way" (abandoned in 2014 and now "You Rule").

**2. Drive-through approach.** The pressure to see more patients in less time can lead to a fast drive-through approach in health care, where the focus is on quick, high-volume service rather than personalized care. This can result in rushed appointments and a lack of comprehensive care. It's not uncommon for office staff to instruct patients to wait "curbside," in the hallway, at the end of a visit for their paperwork, lab slips, and other business.

**3. Consumerism.** Like McDonald's, health care has also seen a shift toward consumerism. Patients are increasingly viewed as consumers or "clients" who are told they have choices in health care providers and decisions. But instead of delivering care that is person-centered, the emphasis on consumerism has aided marketing by rebranding health care. Interstate billboards advertise hospital ED wait times, but how good is their quality?

**4. Cost efficiency.** Both McDonald's and modern medicine strive for cost efficiency. In health care, this often means a focus on reducing hospital stays, increasing use of technology, and streamlining processes. However, this drive for efficiency can sometimes compromise patient care and outcomes by neglecting education and prevention and increasing medical errors and staff burnout.

**5. Dependence on technology.** Just as McDonald's uses technology for order taking and processing, health care has become increasingly dependent on technology for patient records, diagnostics, and treatment. Soon we'll be selecting treatment options from kiosks, like keying in our choice for a Big Mac over a double cheeseburger – sorry, "super-size" is no longer available.

**6. Fragmented care.** Similar to how a McDonald's meal is often made up of different components prepared at different stations, health care can often be fragmented with different specialists treating different conditions. This can lead to issues with coordination and continuity of care. Incorrect medications due to multiple prescribers are the McDonald's equivalent of receiving a hamburger with mustard and relish when you asked for ketchup and pickles.

While fast-paced medicine has some advantages, it also poses many challenges, as above. The psychiatric sequelae of assembly line practice are most concerning, because 15-minute "medication checks" are generally insufficient unless coupled with psychotherapy, and even then [split treatment](#) is less than optimal. As an Army psychologist named John Rigg wisely [said](#), "Medication doesn't fix this stuff."

In addition, the mental health system is on the brink of collapse after decades of defunding and financial diversion, causing community services to dry up. Deinstitutionalization was a noble experiment, but it neglected the serious and persistently mentally ill who now fill our prisons and seek the warmth of sidewalk steam grates during the winter.

It's critical for policymakers to consider both the medical and mental health needs of vulnerable children and older adults and balance these with personalized, quality care. I worry about our health care system and the politicians tasked with deciding how to fund it when they have no direct experience working in these systems and do not appreciate the gaps in service, let alone the effects of workplace [distress and violence](#).

To make any sense of our health care system, lawmakers need to experience a "Big Mac Attack." They need to have their access revoked to the drive-through lanes at McDonald's lest they continue to equate fast food with fast medicine.

[Arthur Lazarus](#) is a former [Doximity Fellow](#), a member of the editorial board of the American Association for Physician Leadership, and an adjunct professor of psychiatry at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. He is the author of [Every Story Counts: Exploring Contemporary Practice Through Narrative Medicine](#).

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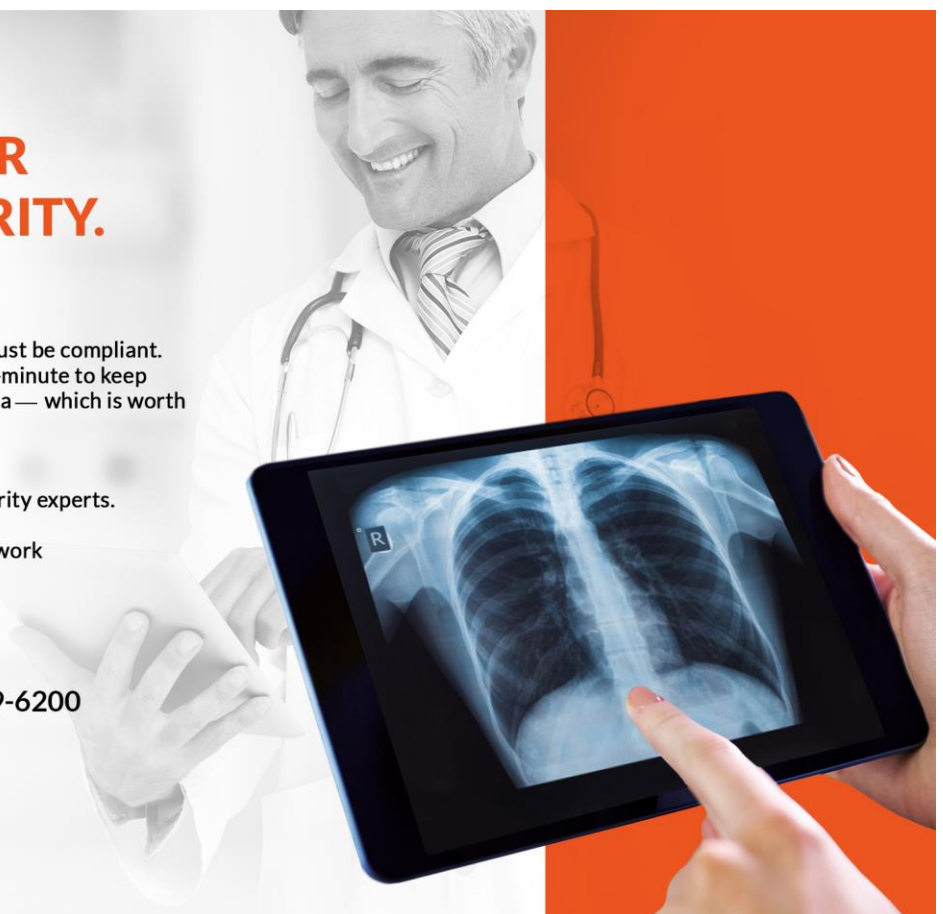
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# Best Holiday Punch Recipes

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## Champagne Party Punch



Makes 18 servings (about 3-1/4 quarts)

*To make this punch even more festive, float an ice ring in the punch. —Taste of Home Test Kitchen, Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

### Ingredients

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups unsweetened apple juice
- 2 cups unsweetened pineapple juice
- 1/2 cup lemon juice
- 1/3 cup thawed orange juice concentrate
- 1/4 cup lime juice
- 2 cups ice cubes
- 1 quart ginger ale, chilled
- 1 bottle (750 ml) champagne, chilled

### Directions

In a large pitcher, combine sugar and water; stir until sugar is dissolved. Add the apple juice, pineapple juice, lemon juice, orange juice concentrate and lime juice. Refrigerate until serving. Just before serving, pour into a punch bowl and add ice cubes. Slowly add ginger ale and champagne.



## Slow-Cooker Christmas Punch



Makes 10 servings

*This holiday, why not indulge in a warm ruby red punch made in the slow cooker? We use cinnamon and Red Hots to give it that cozy spiced flavor and welcome-home aroma. —Angie Goins, Tazewell, TN*

### Ingredients

- 4 cups unsweetened pineapple juice
- 4 cups cranberry juice
- 1/3 cup Red Hots
- 2 cinnamon sticks (3 inches)
- Fresh cranberries and additional cinnamon sticks

### Directions

In a 3- or 4-qt. slow cooker, combine the first 4 ingredients. Cook, covered, on low until heated through and candies are melted, 3-4 hours. Garnish with cranberries and additional cinnamon sticks.



## White Christmas Sangria

 **Makes** 21 servings (3-3/4 quarts)

*This punch has a pleasant fruity flavor. It's not too sweet so everyone will enjoy it! —Taste of Home Test Kitchen*

### Ingredients

6 cups white cranberry juice, chilled  
3/4 cup thawed lemonade concentrate  
3 bottles (25.4 ounces each) sparkling grape juice  
Pomegranate seeds and sliced grapefruit, oranges and kiwi, optional

### Directions

Combine cranberry juice and lemonade concentrate in a punch bowl; pour in sparkling grape juice. If desired, add pomegranate seeds and sliced fruit. Serve immediately.



## Holiday Wassail Punch

 **Makes** 16 servings

*This festive and fruity punch is made with five kinds of juices plus cinnamon and allspice for a unique, well-balanced flavor. —Jennifer Stout, Blandon, Pennsylvania*

### Ingredients

4 cups apple juice  
4 cups orange juice  
2 cups cranberry juice  
1 can (11.3 ounces) pineapple nectar  
1/2 cup sugar  
2 teaspoons lemon juice  
3 to 4 cinnamon sticks (3 inches)  
8 whole allspice  
8 to 10 orange slices  
Optional: Apple slices and fresh cranberries

### Directions

In a 5- or 6-qt. slow cooker, mix the first 6 ingredients. Place cinnamon sticks and allspice on a double thickness of cheesecloth. Gather corners of cloth to enclose seasonings; tie securely with string. Place spice bag and orange slices in slow cooker. Cook, covered, on low 4-5 hours to allow flavors to blend. Discard spice bag and orange slices. If desired, top punch with apple slices and cranberries. Serve warm.





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# Physician Burnout Reimagined

CLAUDIA FINKELSTEIN, MD

In preparing yet another talk about burnout, I had a brainstorm. I created a counterpoint PowerPoint (or tongue-in-cheek complementary model) to The Stanford Model of Professional Fulfillment. Perhaps it was a particularly irreverent or flippant stage of my own stuttering burnout. Maybe it was passive-aggressive pent-up frustration. Whatever it was, I came up with a “new and improved” model for physician burnout. I’ve gotten rather burned out on burnout. The literature keeps expanding with types of health care workers who are affected, proposed causes, etc. So, although I find the Stanford Model inarguable, I tongue-in-cheekily whipped up my own model – the F Model.



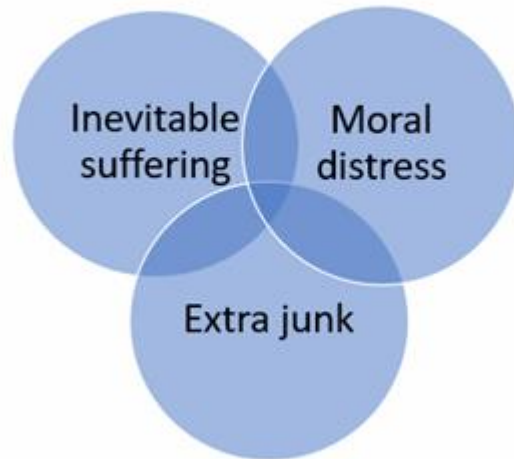
If you are not yet familiar with it, The Stanford Model has at its center, the positive desired end state (professional fulfillment). The focus on a positive aim rather than a negative state (burnout) is a welcome start. Another pivotal concept in the Stanford Model is the recognition of three dimensions supporting professional fulfillment. Rather than focus solely on individual resilience, the model names both “culture of wellness” and “efficiency of practice” as essential institutional drivers of professional fulfillment.

Early physician wellness literature focused exclusively on the physician. The Stanford Model made clear that institutional-level factors are also at play. Rather than ascribing burnout solely to a lack of individual resilience, the model acknowledges the importance of workplace factors. There has been a growing shift to recognizing burnout to be an occupational condition not an individual failure of resilience. The group at Stanford, as well as researchers at Mayo, have been instrumental in bringing this to awareness.

While providing a more complex framework for professional fulfillment, the Stanford Model doesn’t cover it all. So, I whipped up the F Model. See figure. I am no graphic artist. Nor did I pay one. I used the most basic PowerPoint template to draw a crude Venn diagram. I named the three spheres comprising the F Model: inevitable suffering, extra junk, and moral distress. Pretty self-explanatory.

The inevitable suffering is what we signed up for. To be with people in times of great need. We witness sadness and grief regularly. People die, receive difficult diagnoses, grapple with addiction, and struggle to manage chronic disease. We bear bad news, long hours, and vicarious traumatization. By choosing medicine as a calling, we knew these truths were in store. This is where support for individual resilience is vital. Beyond the basics – sleep and food, there are many paths to coping. Coaching, therapy, Balint groups, exercise, mindfulness, journaling, solitude, community – let me count the paths. All that’s required is to acknowledge our needs, to find our preferred way(s) to meet them, and the will to pursue them. This is not easy for a bunch of altruists. Wellness offices and chief wellness officers frequently start here. I did this as the wellness person at my institution. Subsidizing mindfulness classes, creating peer support programs, and offering coaching, time management talks, and small group experiences – were all gratifying and useful. But none addressed the two other spheres in the F or Alternate Model.

## Alternate Model



The “extra junk sphere” is getting more attention, thanks to thought leaders and researchers in the field. Endless inboxes, “pajama time,” and the EMR are among the factors being evaluated as contributors to burnout. The AMA has launched a [Practice Transformation Initiative](#). Their [Steps Forward Modules](#) are full of toolkits and time-saving strategies, as well as descriptions of workflow process improvements.

The third sphere, that of moral distress is now receiving increased attention thanks in part to a book by [Dr. Wendy Dean](#). Knowing that 41 percent of U.S. citizens carry some medical debt and 24 percent of them are considering [bankruptcy](#) to solve the issue, generates moral distress. Hearing about inequities in access to health care by race, gender, employment status, and income – more moral distress. These are two examples. There are innumerable day-to-day examples when doing the “right thing” is impossible.

The F Model is not intended to supplant or compete with the Stanford Model. It’s a gentle poke to broaden attention. The Stanford Model broadened the concept of burnout to include institution-level factors. I hope the F Model will further broaden the discussion beyond any single institution. Many elements of the health care ecosystem (payors, pharmaceutical companies, etc.) must also be part of the conversation.

*[Claudia Finkelstein](#) is an internal medicine physician.*



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# 10 of the Best Book Gifts Of 2023 To Share and Treasure

By [Lucy Fuggle](#)

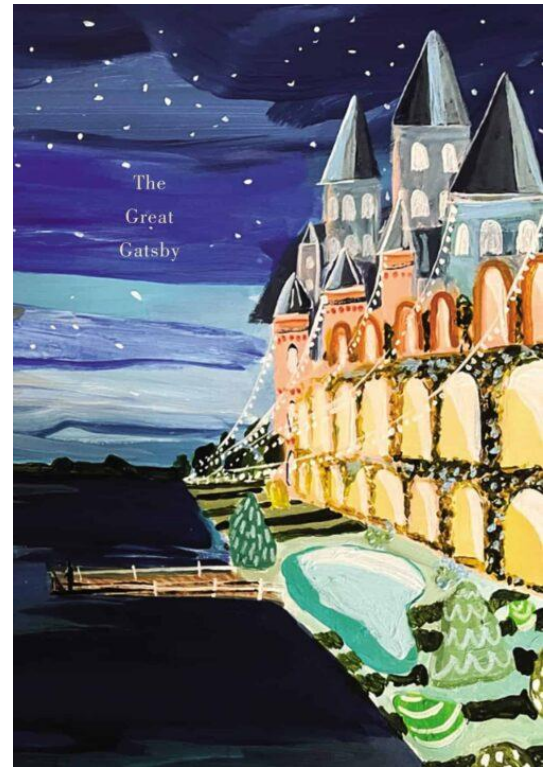
There's always a place in my heart and home for beautiful books, and they're usually what I give to my loved ones for birthdays, Christmas, and other special moments.

On this page, I've curated my recommended **best books to give as gifts in 2023**, including thoughtful classic editions, luxury coffee table books, and other unique choices that book lovers will adore this Christmas.

As you browse these beautiful book gifts, I hope you find the perfect presents to treat your fellow avid readers. (Or why not ask for these books on your own list?)

***The Great Gatsby* is one of the most beautiful book gifts for...** book lovers who adore pretty classic editions.

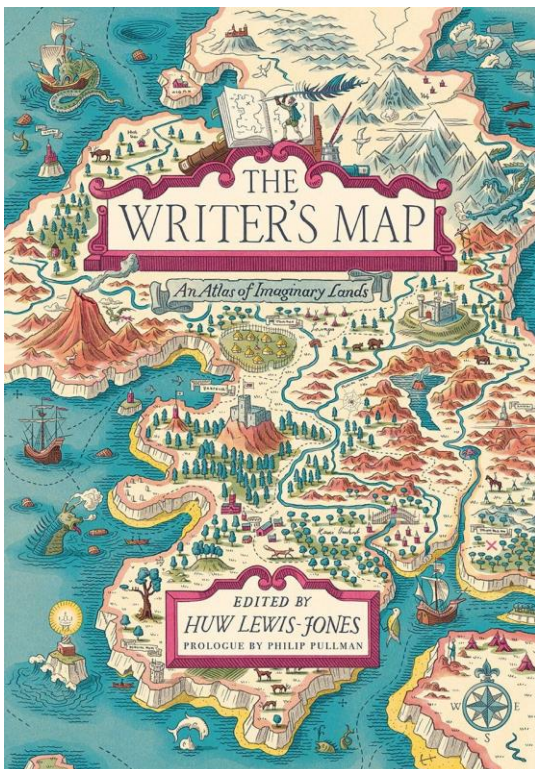
If you're looking for special gifts for bookworms, [Harper Muse's Painted Classics series](#) is an excellent place to start. With **each title featuring a gorgeous painted cover**, these books are perfect gifts to cherish. And what better choice than *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's all-time classic?



***The Writers Map* is one of the best book gifts for...** book lovers and writers who adore literary maps and illustrated hardcovers.

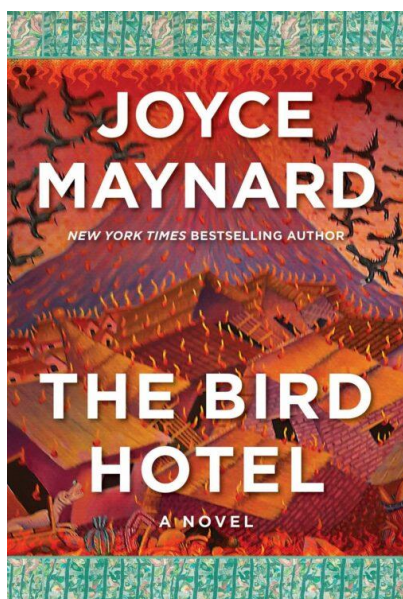
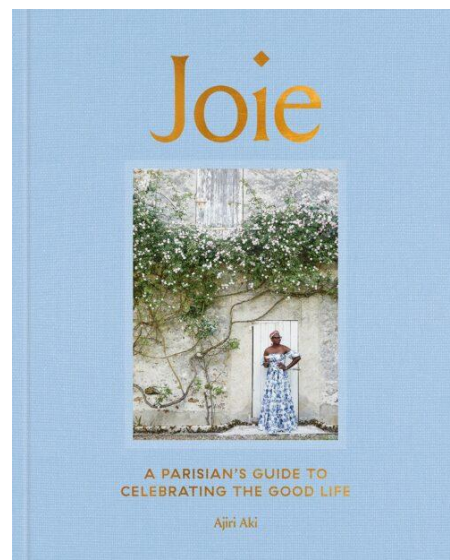
Edited by Huw Lewis-Jones and with a prologue by Philip Pullman, this stunning hardcover isn't a new book (it was published all the way back in 2018). However, after gifting myself a copy recently, I've wanted to recommend it to everyone.

*The Writer's Map* is a **captivating atlas of imaginary lands made for leisurely browsing**, accompanied by 167 full-colour images for any bibliophile (or cartophile) to admire. Even with such a gorgeous cover image, the book looks even more impressive in person.



***Joie* is one of the best luxury book gifts for...** readers who love travel, inspiring coffee table books, and most of all, Paris.

This gorgeous new [coffee table book for 2023](#) is one of the most beautiful and inspiring book gifts for travelers this year. As you browse through these rejuvenating pages, you'll **uncover the Parisian secrets to celebrating life** based on author Ajiri Aki's time spent living in the city.



***The Bird Hotel* is one of the best books to give as gifts to...** book lovers who have read everything already.

Spanning four decades and penned with **beautiful touches of magical realism**, this exceptional novel is one of my top picks of the best new fiction of 2023.

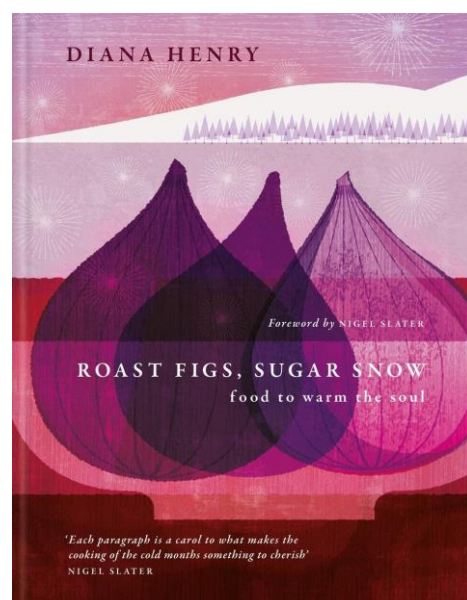
After heartbreak and loss, Irene, a talented artist, finds herself in a small Central American village checking into a stunning but decaying lakefront hotel at the base of a volcano.

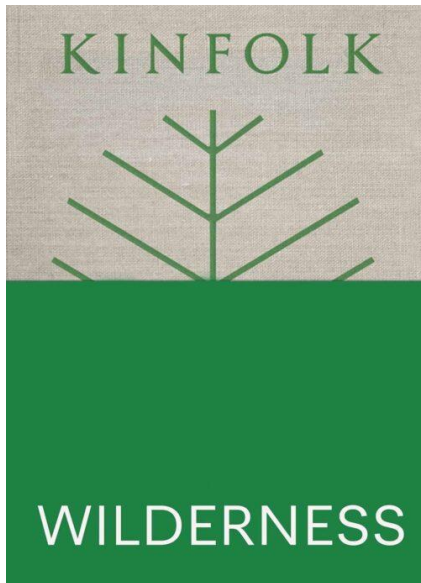
With years of restoration ahead, the hotel, called La Llorona, will become Irene's home and livelihood, as well as the setting for so much joy and companionship.

***Roast Figs, Sugar Snow* is one of the best cookbooks to give as gifts to...** foodies who love embracing colder weather with warming recipes and leisurely companionship at the dinner table.

If there's any book that perfectly matches the hygge vibes I'm seeking during the dark days of Copenhagen in winter, it's this stunning new edition of Diana Henry's classic cookbook *Roast Figs, Sugar Snow*.

**Delightfully cozy and warming for the soul**, these recipes celebrate the unique pleasures of autumn and winter in a mesmerizingly lovely hardcover that's perfect for gifting this festive season.





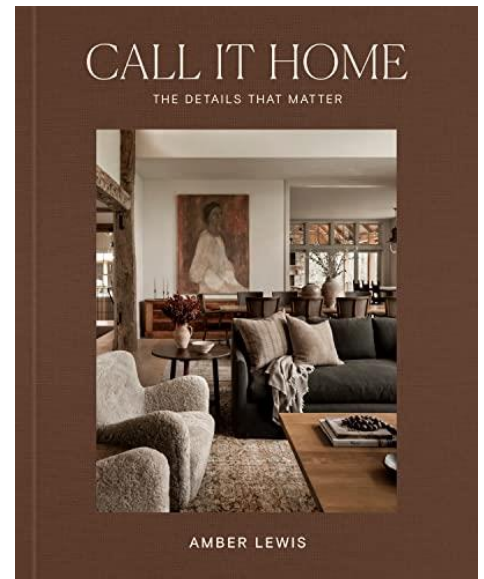
***Kinfolk Wilderness* is the perfect book gift for...** adventurous folks who love wild nature and remote places.

Known for delving into home, style, and culture via their wonderfully well-made books and magazines, Kinfolk's adventurous new release for 2023 is one of the best luxury book gifts for travel lovers.

*Kinfolk Wilderness* is a stunning travel book to show off on a coffee table and keep turning to for inspiration, complete with **wanderlust-inspiring photos and maps**. Once you see it for yourself, you'll probably want your own copy too. [Here's our video look inside the book.](#)

***Call It Home* is one of the best book gifts for...** interior design lovers who have a soft spot for luxurious coffee table books.

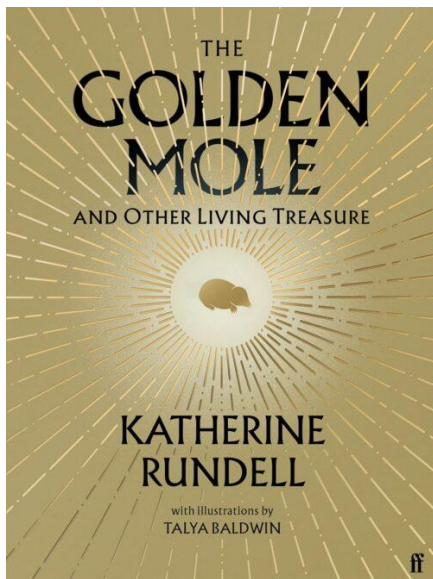
If you love interior design, **Amber Lewis's California-inspired style is a treat for your eyes**. Her new book, *Call it Home*, offers readers a gorgeous hardcover full of timeless design inspiration, documented with quality photographs and heartfelt stories.



***The Golden Mole* is one of the best book gifts for...** readers who adore nature writing and gorgeous illustrations.

In the vein of Robin Wall Kimmerer's beloved classic *Braiding Sweetgrass*, this delightful book is an ode to **the miraculous treasure of our natural world** that's more astonishing than our wildest imaginings.

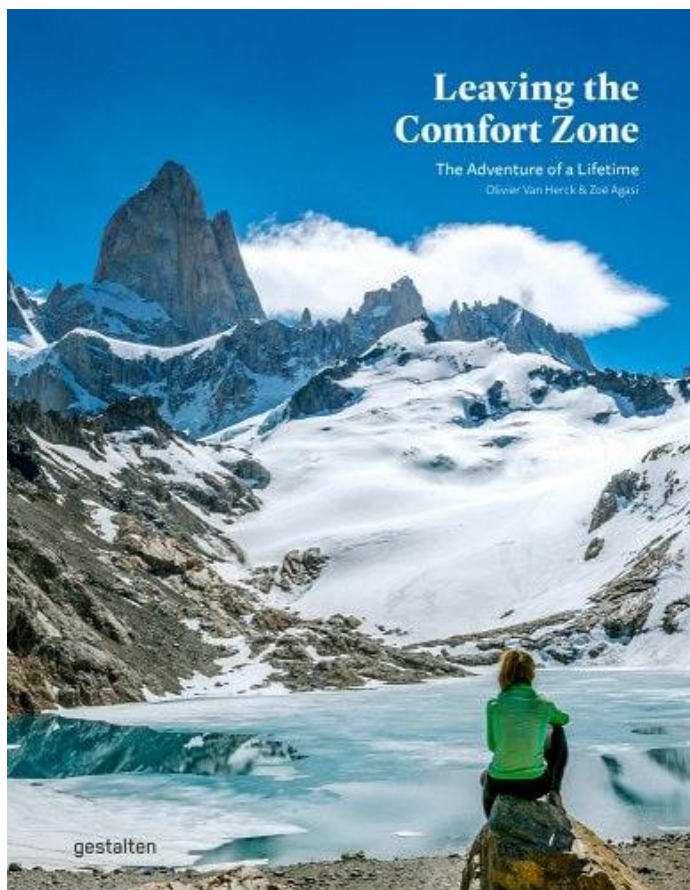
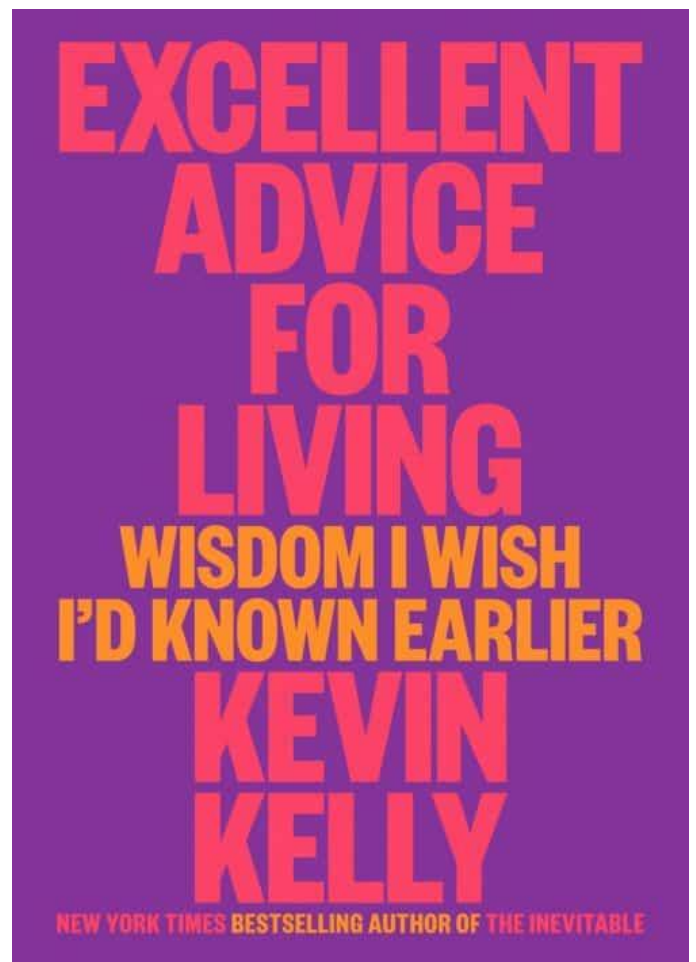
Weaving Katherine Rundell's captivating words with sumptuous illustrations by Talya Baldwin, *The Golden Mole* is a chance to be bewitched and lovestruck. Fall into its pages and learn about the two million kilometers a swift flies in its lifetime and the five hundred years a Greenland shark can swim our seas.



***Excellent Advice for Living* is one of the best book gifts for... non-fiction readers who love self-improvement books.**

Written by Kevin Kelly – co-founder of Wired, author, and technology thinker – this [new self-improvement book](#) is a five-star compilation of easy-to-read, wise, and practical snippets of wisdom for living well.

The idea for *Excellent Advice for Living* started on Kevin's 68th birthday, when he began to write down for his young adult children **what he wished he'd known earlier about life**. The book is perfect for quiet browsing before beginning the day or while winding down for bed.



***Leaving the Comfort Zone* is a special book gift for... adventurers drawn to the road less traveled.**

[gestalten](#) publishes some of the most beautiful travel books you can find, and this new release is no exception. This stunning hardcover (that would make a perfect coffee table book) weaves the story of **one couple's adventure of a lifetime**.

Detailing a 40,000-kilometre journey spanning four years and accompanied by awe-inspiring photographs, it's the story of a shared dream and a desire to break free from expectations.

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# 3D Printing In Medicine And Healthcare – The Ultimate List

*3D Printing in Medicine: in recent years 3D printing in medicine took a massive leap. Check out our analysis of where this exciting field stands today!*

Dr. Bertalan Mesko, PhD

## Key Takeaways

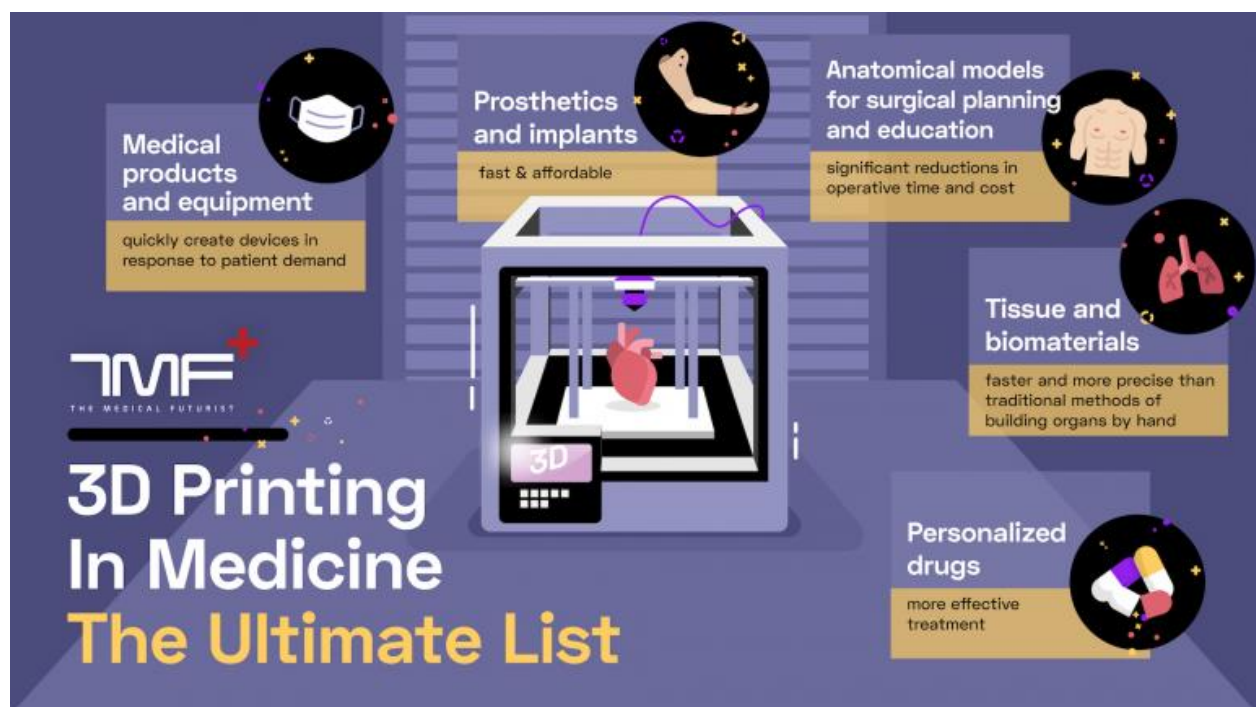
3D printing in healthcare shows enormous promise for revolutionizing medical equipment production, drug creation, and personalized medical services, with examples including cost-effective prosthetics and bespoke implants.

The pharmaceutical industry is embracing 3D printing with FDA approvals for 3D-printed drugs and the development of personalized medication, indicating a significant shift in drug manufacturing and distribution.

Despite the enthralling sci-fi imagery and futuristic scenarios often associated with 3D printing, the current state of this technology does not yet permit the printing of fully functional human organs. The vision of “printing” organs on demand for transplants, though actively pursued in research, is still a goal on the horizon rather than a present-day reality.

3D printing has demonstrated huge potential for the future of medicine in the previous years, and its development is unstoppable. See the impressive list of 3D-printed healthcare materials and medical equipment below!

## How does 3D printing in medicine work?



3D printing in medicine is part of the [innovative process called additive manufacturing](#), which means producing three-dimensional solid objects from a digital file.

As technology evolves, researchers work on various solutions. For example, engineers from the University of Buffalo have [created a novel technology that speeds up](#) the printing process itself. What's remarkable about this particular hydrogen-based technology is that it's way faster than previous 3D printing methods. Like, up to 50 times faster.

3D printing in medicine and healthcare could revolutionize drug creation and the production of medical equipment. It could also offer new methods for practicing medicine, optimizing supply chains, and proposing cheaper and way more personalized medical services. Let's see the most promising examples!

### **Personalized medical equipment**

It is a well-known fact that medical equipment is expensive. The global medical devices market size was valued at USD 512 billion in 2022 and is [projected to grow to USD 780 billion by 2030](#). Thus, 3D printing splints, medical models used before surgeries, or other necessary means for healing could save vast amounts of money. And there are already brilliant examples on the market of how to do it!

Ian McHale, a senior at the US Steinert High School, [created a blueprint](#) for producing finger splints. A low-end 3D printer can print his splint quickly and affordably, about 2¢ worth of ABS plastic in about ten minutes! For developing countries, where splints can often be ordered from overseas only in bulk, it could mean the cheapest solution for remote communities. At the same time, it could efficiently serve personal needs.

As for 3D-printed plaster casts, for the moment, these remain a distant hope. In theory, it sounds amazing; however, the technology still seems niche, facing several challenges before its mass adoption. We dedicated an entire article looking for the solutions and the companies providing them

But 3D printing in medicine can also be a lifesaver – as it saved the life of a baby in the U.S. [Kaiba Gionfriddo](#) was born prematurely in 2011 and suffered from tracheobronchomalacia – a congenital disability that causes the windpipe to collapse. He had a tracheostomy and was put on a ventilator—the conventional treatment. Still, Kaiba would stop breathing almost daily. His heart would stop, too. His caregivers 3D printed a bioresorbable device that instantly helped Kaiba breathe. After the operation, Kaiba's trachea gradually reconstructed itself. His body reabsorbed the inserted splint. A year later, the tube was also removed without causing any harm.

Australian scientists [3D printed a set of microneedles](#) for effective diabetes monitoring. These minimally invasive and minimally painful needles offer an effective way for continuous glucose monitoring – and open up the path towards personalized medicine and drug intake itself.

3D printing of medical equipment also played a significant role at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Urgent 3D production of especially personal protective equipment was literally saving lives for hospital personnel. In fact, 3D printing became a vital technology, supporting hospitals and frontliners. Community-based [makerspaces](#) offered freely accessible 3D blueprints helping the rapid response to the pandemic.

### **Models for surgical planning and education**

3D printing can also help medical research and the outcome of complex operations and particularly challenging cases. Researchers in China and the US have both [3D-printed models of cancerous tumors](#) to aid the discovery of new anti-cancer drugs and to better understand how tumors develop, grow, and spread. Bioprinted cancer models can even [“mimic the 3D heterogeneity of real tumors.”](#)

[Researchers have also used](#) scans of animal hearts to create printed models and then added flexible electronics on top of those models. The material can be peeled off the printed model and wrapped around the real heart for a perfect fit. The next step is to enhance the electronics with multiple sensors.

3D printing in medicine can be used to print organ models. These could also be helpful for patient education and pre-operative planning for surgeons. [Scientists are using a combination](#) of MRI and ultrasound imaging along with 3D-printing technology to help doctors prepare for fetal surgeries. With the 3D printed model, doctors can more easily identify potential obstacles and reduce the risk of surgery on babies with spina bifida, a congenital disability.

Another example is [Schiner 3D Repro GmbH](#)'s Digital Anatomy 3D printer. The device can [help simulate anatomies and pathologies](#) with ultra-realistic 3D printed models, reducing the need for human and animal cadavers, ensuring high repeatability and acceleration across the design validation process.

### **Prosthetics and implants**

Globally, over 30 million people need mobility devices such as prosthetics, while 80 percent of the world's amputees do not have access to [modern prosthetics](#). However, creating traditional prosthetics is very time-consuming and destructive, which means that any modifications would destroy the original molds. In collaboration with Autodesk Research and CBM Canada, researchers at the University of Toronto used 3D printing to quickly produce [cheap and easily customizable prosthetic sockets](#) for patients in the developing world.

NGOs like [Refugee Open Ware](#) and [Not Impossible](#) were helping people in need with 3D printing in medicine. They created 3D-print prosthetics for refugees from war-torn areas. Not Impossible, for example, took 3D printers to Sudan in 2013, where the chaos of war has left many people with amputated limbs. The organization's founder, Mick Ebeling, trained locals to operate the machinery, create patient-specific limbs, and fit these new, very inexpensive prosthetics.

Personalized medical implants could also be 3D printed. This is especially important in complex and rare cases. Back in 2014, Dutch surgeons replaced [the entire top of a 22 year-old woman's skull](#) with a customized printed implant made from plastic. The patient was suffering from a rare condition that caused the inside of her skull to grow extra bone, which squeezed her brain. The growth was discovered after she reported severe headaches and then lost her sight and motor control. If untreated, the extra bone would have killed her.

A novel 3D printing technique makes it possible to create astonishingly small and complex [biomedical implants](#). Engineers and biomedical scientists at RMIT University in Australia created a 'reverse' 3D printing, versatile enough to use medical grade materials off-the-shelf. "The approach involves printing glue molds that can then be filled with biomaterial filler. Once the mold is dissolved away, the biomaterial structure remains. Excitingly, the technique uses standard 3D printers, such as those now commonly even found in high schools, and PVA glue as a printing material." Imagine the possibilities of this achievement!

### **3D Printing biomaterials**

3D printing in medicine is a powerful tool for tissue engineering. No matter whether it is about blood, bones, heart, or skin. It is the technology that lets your jaw drop and scares the hell out of you at the same time when you first encounter it.

## 1. Blood vessels

Researchers at Harvard University were [the first to use a custom-built 3D printer and a dissolving ink to create a swatch of tissue](#) that contains skin cells interwoven with structural material that can potentially function as blood vessels in the future. The vasculature network enables fluids, nutrients, and cell growth factors to be perfused uniformly throughout the tissue.

As a next step, Korean engineers have created [implantable 3D printed blood vessels](#) and successfully implanted them into a rat. With the process, they hope to develop functioning artificial blood vessels needed to cure cardiovascular diseases.

## 2. Bones

Professor Susmita Bose of Washington State University [modified a 3D printer to bind chemicals to a ceramic powder creating intricate ceramic scaffolds](#) that promote the growth of the bone in any shape. It helps hip and knee replacements last longer by developing a body-friendly calcium phosphate-based coating for the implant materials. Once integrated, the coated implants are expected to last longer – possibly doubling the life of cemented implants. Researchers, in the meantime, started using [sea coral](#) or [graphene and ceramics](#) to create bone-like structures with 3D printing.

And using a novel method at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, doctors can [create new bone tissue during surgery](#) exactly where it is needed. “We can go directly into the bone where there are cells, blood vessels and fat, and print a bone-like structure that already contains living cells, right in that area”, – said Associate Professor Kristopher Kilian, who co-developed the technology in the university statement.

## 3. Heart valve

Jonathan Butcher of Cornell University has [3D printed a heart valve](#) possessing the same anatomical architecture as the original valve. It will soon be tested on sheep. He used a combination of cells and biomaterials to control the valve’s stiffness. Butcher believes bioprinting will gain much more traction in the tissue engineering and biomedical community over the next five years, potentially becoming the standard in complex tissue fabrication.

## 4. Replicating human ears/noses

Lawrence Bonassar of Cornell University used [3D photos of human ears to create ear](#) molds. The molds were then filled with a gel containing bovine cartilage cells suspended in collagen, which held the shape of the ear while cells grew their extracellular matrix.

Canadian scientists have [printed synthetic noses](#) for skin cancer patients. The printing used real human nose cartilage cells, donated by people having nose jobs, with collagen-based hydrogel. The nose job requires surgery, though, while [Chinese scientists started research](#) on mice printing the ear directly inside the animal.

And more recently, experts in France [have grown a woman a new 3D-printed nose](#) on her forearm after she lost hers to cancer.



“The operation involved ear, nose and throat experts as well as plastic surgery teams at the Toulouse University Hospital and the Claudius Regaud Institute and took place at the Toulouse-Oncopole University Cancer Institute. They said that they managed to successfully re-vascularize the patient’s nasal cavity, connecting the blood vessels by performing microsurgery.” She stayed in the hospital for 10 days and was on antibiotics for 3 weeks, and now she is doing very well.

#### 5. Synthetic skin

In 2017, James Yoo at the [Wake Forest School of Medicine](#) in the US and [researchers at the University of Madrid](#) developed the prototype of a 3D printer that can create synthetic skin. It is adequate for transplanting patients who suffered burn injuries or have other skin issues. It may also be used in research or the testing of cosmetic, chemical, and pharmaceutical products.

A significant step forward for skin grafts and burn victims is the development of living skin. Researchers at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute [developed a method](#) to 3D-print living skin along with blood vessels.

#### 6. Synthetic organs

When talking about 3D-printed organs, people tend to think of a machine that can create readily available, implantable human organs. However, the [reality is far from this optimistic image](#).

Researchers worldwide are working on possible solutions: [Organovo](#) successfully bioprinted liver tissues already in 2014. They then seemed to be 4-6 years away from printing liver parts for transplantation. Together with the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, Organovo even created miniature [human kidneys](#) in the lab.

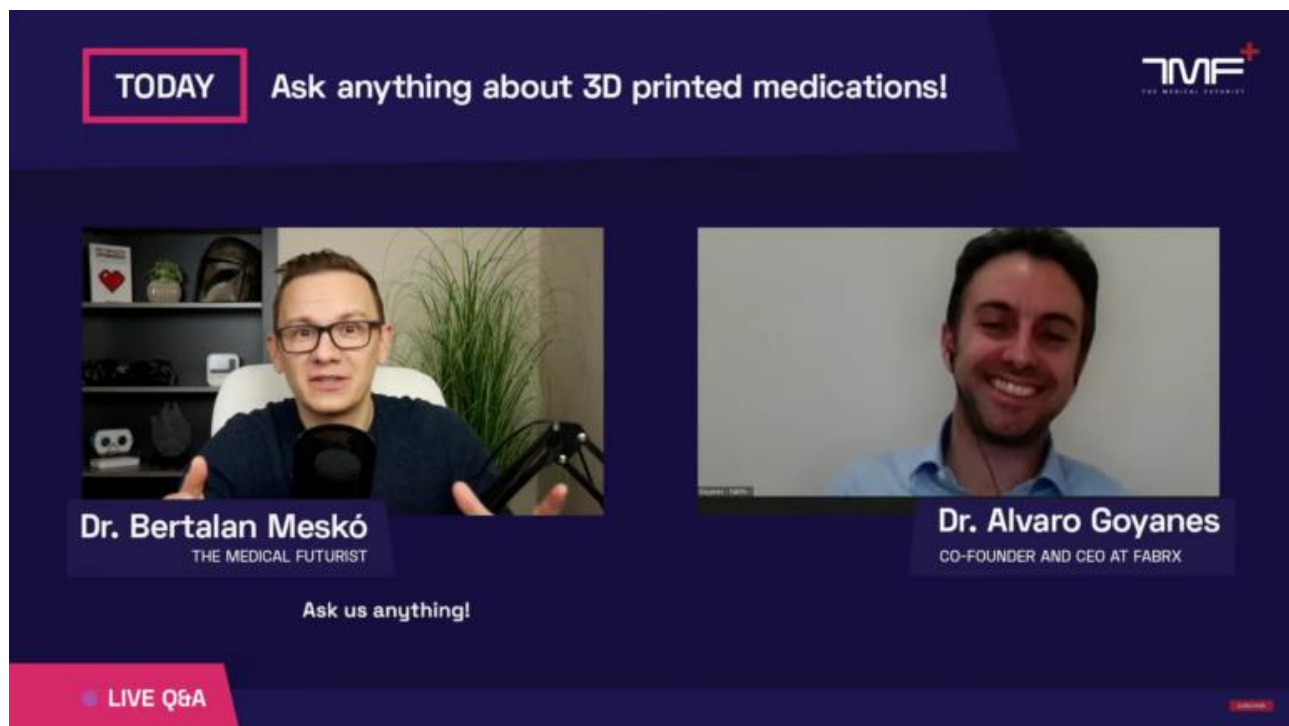
Bioprinted organs could also be used in the pharmaceutical industry to replace animal models for analyzing the toxicity of new drugs. Technological solutions like BioAssemblyBot [we wrote about earlier](#) and

entirely [new methods](#) that can lead to patient-specific heart tissue printing will eventually lead to success: industry leaders expect a breakthrough in about a decade. In an interview for our Patreon site, Erik Gatenholm, CEO of [CELLINK](#), said, “we will see fully functioning organs within the next decade or so.”

#### The future of pharma: 3D printed drugs

In 2015, the [FDA approved](#) the first-ever drug [made by 3D printers](#), and in 2021, the second such medication received approval. Chinese pharmaceutical company Triastek, Inc. has [received](#) Investigational New Drug (IND) clearance from the FDA for its first 3D printed drug product, T19, which is designed to treat rheumatoid arthritis.

The latest major milestone happened in 2023 when the [first clinical trial with a 3D-printed drug in Europe in the pediatric field](#) was launched. The 3D printer used for the study produces medicines in semi-solid and chewable forms, which are personalized to each child based on their weight and clinical characteristics, as a collaboration between the Pharmacy Service at Vall d’Hebron University Hospital, the University of Santiago de Compostela, and the company FabRx. Fantastic news for the industry as it opens up a range of opportunities to bring the supply chain to the next level.



Dr. Meskó from The Medical Futurist and Alvaro Goyanes, the Co-Founder and CEO of FabRx answered all the questions about 3D printed medicine, tissues, personalized drugs, customized prosthetics, casts, and 3D printed medical devices

[3D printing](#) of multiple medicines on a single pill, known as a polypill, is [already possible](#). In 2020 [FabRx released](#) the first pharmaceutical 3D printer to manufacture personalized medication. ‘M3DIMAKER’ can print personalized medicine real fast – about 28 pills/minute. Imagine how fast the distribution of medication could be with a [3D printer in pharmacies](#)! Or imagine how different our attitude towards pharmacies would be if we could print out pills at home.

# THE BEST PHYSICIAN FINANCE BLOGS OF 2024

by The Motivated M.D.

Part of the mission of The Motivated M.D. is to provide resources to our readership that will help them self-educate and grow on their journey toward financial prosperity. However, despite my weekly blog posts juggling a full-time clinical job, I cannot provide this alone. Because of this, I turn to other resources to help me, like many of you. Some are wildly thorough, comprehensive, and established platforms; others are solo bloggers like myself. However, they all seek to provide the same thing: a helpful word to guide you on your financial journey. As such, I have compiled this list of the best physician finance blogs of 2024.



The 'OG' of physician finance blogs. Dr. Jim Dahle has turned The White Coat Investor into a platform synonymous with 'physician finance.' The White Coat Investor (WCI) posts daily content, offers a monthly newsletter, and an annual conference (White Coat Investor CON – WCICON). Further, WCI has multiple books that are all great reads, online courses ranging from personal finance to real estate investing, and a podcast! These are all items I recommend to any professional who approaches me.

You cannot begin your financial journey without interacting with WCI. Do yourself a favor, subscribe to their newsletter, pick up their books, and circle back when you need more nuanced content.



Honestly, I fear even labeling Physician on FIRE as a 'close second' to WCI. Physician on FIRE (PoF) is equally impactful in physician finance. Originally founded by Dr. Leif Dahleen, an anesthesiologist with a passion for FIRE (financial independence, retire early). He used this blog to share his experience as he navigated the road to financial independence. After retiring completely at the age of 43 and subsequently traveling the world, he continued to grow the blog into the juggernaut it is today.

Surprisingly, it recently changed hands, and new ownership has taken over. Though I will sincerely miss Dr. Dahleen and his infinite wisdom, I am excited to see what Dr. Jorge Sanchez, Dr. Nirav Shah, and Vinci Palad bring to the blog. Change can be a good thing. Physician on FIRE primarily focuses on financial independence, early retirement, debt elimination, financial milestones, etc. PoF is another excellent blog and newsletter that everyone should subscribe to. They are part of the WCI network.



In keeping with blogs that are affiliated with the WCI network, the next blog is Passive Income M.D. (PIMD). Catering to a slightly different crowd, Dr. Peter Kim, founder of Passive Income MD, predominantly focuses on physicians' side gigs and real estate investing. Though the WCI network often shares articles across their platforms and comments on real estate investing periodically, Passive Income M.D. is headstrong into financial independence through real estate investments and side gigs.

When I started The Motivated M.D. blog, I spent a lot of time on this site. It offers many articles on blogging as well as other means of diversifying your cash flow. Don't like to digest your content through blogs? Don't worry; there are online courses and podcasts too! Further, Passive Income M.D. has its own conference as well called PMIDCON! Along side all its peers in the WCI network, PMID has found a home teaching medical professionals to grow wealth outside of their profession.



Dr. Cory S. Fawcett at Financial Success M.D. is a retired surgeon who continues to pump out content across multiple mediums. He is most well-known through his many physician finance books. He has publications targeting debt elimination, practice management, investing, alternative career paths, and more. I have read the lion's share of them and would recommend them all.

Though he has several books in circulation, he also manages a blog by the same name. Financial Success M.D. curates content around physician finance, retirement, and investing. However, he does write about philosophy, experience, locum work, and post-retirement life. I would honestly tell you to start by reading one of his books. They are a gateway to more of this content.



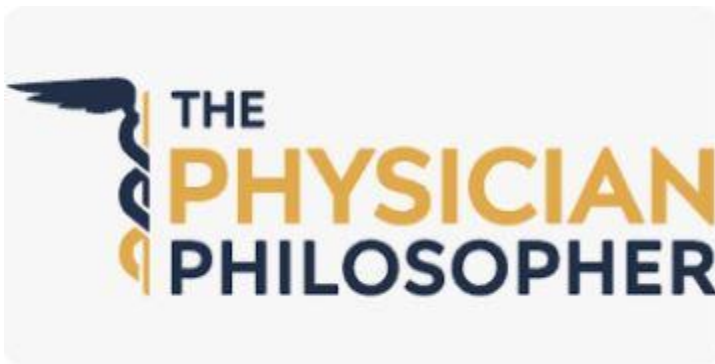
The Prudent Plastic Surgeon, Dr. Jordan Frey, is a practicing plastic surgeon who blogs about personal finance. To be honest, I am not sure how he does it all! He has written a book called *Money Matters in Medicine* that can be found on Amazon. Further, he also boasts an online course called *Graduating to Success*. All the while, he has somehow found the time to publish a blog post almost daily and still practice medicine. As a fellow physician finance blogger, full-time physician, and happily married father of two, I genuinely do not understand how he has managed to do so much.

I see his content featured on Doximity and other sites included above. So clearly, he is becoming a prominent name in our small physician finance niche. I think he has solid content and a passion for helping colleagues reach their financial goals. Check him out!



Somewhat akin to Passive Income M.D., Semi-retired MD focuses on reaching financial independence through real estate investing, and they are willing to show you how! The website is owned and operated by a dual-physician couple (Drs. Kenji Asakura and Leti Alto) who have improved their quality of life and finances through real estate investing. They offer online courses and their podcast, *Doctors Building Wealth*, to supplement their blog posts.

Semi-Retired M.D. does a great job of publishing articles documenting their journey achieving financial milestones through intelligent investments. If pursuing passive income through real estate piques your interest, look no further. Check out their online course, subscribe to their newsletter, and expand your real estate knowledge!



The last of the White Coat Investor network, Dr. Jimmy Turner, has been publishing content on The Physician Philosopher for quite some time now. I originally came across The Physician Philosopher after his book *The Physician Philosopher's Guide to Personal Finance* was recommended. I subsequently digested it overnight and, since then, have followed his content with some regularity. Though his book reiterates similar points across much of the personal finance sector, I would include it in the list of 'must-reads' concerning physician-focused personal finance. Further, he also has many prior blog posts around physician finance.

Dr. Turner has recently turned his sights towards the burnout epidemic that our profession is facing. His most recent publication is *Determined: How Burned-Out Doctors Can Thrive in a Broken Medical System*. Like many other blogs, The Physician Philosopher offers a physician coaching course and two regular podcasts. His content should be another welcome addition as you gather financial education resources.



Dr. Ben White, a neuroradiologist, has been blogging for quite some time. From what I can gather, he has been publishing on his site since 2007! As a seasoned veteran in the blogosphere, his content is worth checking out. Though he posts regularly about philosophy and radiology, he also incorporates great physician finance content. Further, he has written books on student loan debt and navigating medical school and The Match process.

He is one of the original voices in the physician finance niche. Though his content is not always directly applicable, including a giant in the niche who regularly has something insightful to say is always appreciated.

## The *Frugal* Physician.

Last but certainly not least on our list is Dr. Disha Spath at The Frugal Physician. She has been blogging and making waves in the physician finance niche for quite some time. She got her start publishing content on her website. However, her articles were quickly picked up for other platforms, and her frugal mentality spoke to a broader audience. She would later join the White Coat Investor network, briefly participating in their podcast content, co-hosting WCICON, and providing a female physician perspective alongside Dr. Dahle.

Her journey has since navigated away from the White Coat Investor. She is back publishing content on her website and hosting a podcast, *Finding Financial Freedom with The Frugal Physician*. Her website also provides several freebies, including a budgeting tool, an e-book about debt elimination, and more! With a revitalized website and fresh content across various mediums, Dr. Spath is back to providing you with the tools needed to reach financial success.



"I think everything important I ever learned, I learned as a dishwasher and as a cook. You show up on time, you stay organized, you clean up after yourself, you think about the people you work with, you respect the people you work with and, you do the best you can."

- *Anthony Bourdain*

# Abbey the Dog Goes to Heaven

Our 14-year-old dog Abbey died last month. The day after she passed away my 4-year-old daughter Meredith was crying and talking about how much she missed Abbey. She asked if we could write a letter to God so that when Abbey got to heaven, God would recognize her.

I told her that I thought we could so, and she dictated these words: Dear God, "Will you please take care of my dog? She died yesterday and is with you in heaven. I miss her very much. I am happy that you let me have her as my dog even though she got sick. I hope you will play with her. She likes to swim and play with balls. I am sending a picture of her so when you see her you will know that she is my dog. I really miss her." Love, Meredith.

We put the letter in an envelope with a picture of Abbey and Meredith and addressed it to God/Heaven. We put our return address on it. Then Meredith pasted several stamps on the front of the envelope because she said it would take lots of stamps to get the letter all the way to heaven.

That afternoon she dropped it into the mailbox at the post office. A few days later, she asked me if I thought God had gotten the letter yet. I told her that I thought He had.

Yesterday, there was a package wrapped in gold paper on our front porch addressed, 'To Meredith' in an unfamiliar hand. Meredith opened it. Inside was a book by Mr. Rogers called, 'When a Pet Dies.' Taped to the inside front cover was the letter we had written to God in its opened envelope. On the opposite page were the picture of Abbey & Meredith and this note: Dear Meredith, Abbey arrived safely in heaven. Having the picture was a big help and I recognized her right away. Abbey isn't sick anymore. Her spirit is here with me just like it stays in your heart. Abbey loved being your dog. Since we don't need our bodies in heaven, I don't have any pockets to keep your picture in so I am sending it back to you in this little book for you to keep and have something to remember Abbey by. Thank you for the beautiful letter.



# Last Minute Holiday Trip Ideas

Cheapism.com



## Acapulco

An affordable beach paradise known for its turquoise water and unforgettable cuisine. Top attractions include XTASEA, a zip line over the Bay of Puerto Marques that reaches 75 miles an hour, and the Rollo Aquatic park, with wave pools and waterslides for kids of all ages. Just off Acapulco's coast is La Roqueta Island for snorkeling and diving.



## Bucks County, Pennsylvania

Bucks County, about 30 minutes from Philadelphia, gives a more traditional holiday backdrop. The New Hope Railroad allows passengers to relive the golden age of rail travel, and during holidays features a North Pole Express theme ride. At Peddler's Village, visitors can explore a winter wonderland that includes a whimsical gingerbread display through Jan. 8.



## Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria charms with its brick-lined streets and twinkling holiday lights — King Street is like a real-life Dickens village — and just minutes from Washington, D.C., by subway, Alexandria is also a foodie's heaven. If you're still there for New Year's Eve, don't miss First Night Alexandria, a festival that includes music, fireworks, and more. Named one of "America's Top Holiday Towns" in 2016 by USA Today.



## New Orleans

If there's one thing New Orleans does well, it's celebrations. Holiday festivities continue after Dec. 25, including Celebration in the Oaks in City Park, which includes hundreds of thousands of colorful and illuminated outdoor displays, and the Audubon Zoo's Zoo Year's Eve, with music, games, prizes, and daytime countdown to the new year.



## Iceland

Pure magic during Christmas and New Year's. Visitors here can spend days on snowmobile tours and adventurous glacier trekking expeditions, or dash across picturesque landscapes on husky rides, says Cammie Burke, Europe expert for travel company Scott Dunn. Once the sun sets, cozy up with a bowl of lobster bisque by a hotel fire and watch the Northern Lights dance across the sky.



## Miami

Miami's December beach weather is hard to beat (hovering between the 70s and low 80s) and nonstop flights with low prices make it one of the best last-minute, end-of-year vacations. Iconic South Beach is home to some of the city's best restaurants, nightlife, and shopping. Don't miss the city's graffiti art zone, the Wynwood Walls.



## Bimini, Bahamas

Just 50 nautical miles from South Florida — a mere 25-minute plane ride or two-hour ferry from Miami — Bimini is known for stunning beaches, friendly locals, and charming resorts. Ernest Hemingway was fond of deep-sea fishing here; Martin Luther King Jr. was a regular visitor. Learn Bimini's unique story at cultural and historical sites such as Heroes Park, or take guided eco-tours through lush mangroves to observe wildlife.



## Chicago

Yes, it is cold in Chicago in late December. Ignore it to ice skate in Maggie Daley Park in the heart of downtown and eat your way through Restaurant Row on Randolph Street. There's also a rich art scene, with galleries and theaters offering refuge from the cold — and don't miss the iconic Buddy Guy's Legends blues club.



## Hamilton, Ohio

A small community along the Great Miami River oozing historical charm — most cities in the region were built in the 20th century, but Hamilton dates back to 1791. Revitalized, with its downtown transformed into a hot spot for arts, dining, and recreation, the city includes a nine-block German Village Historic District on the National Register of Historic places.



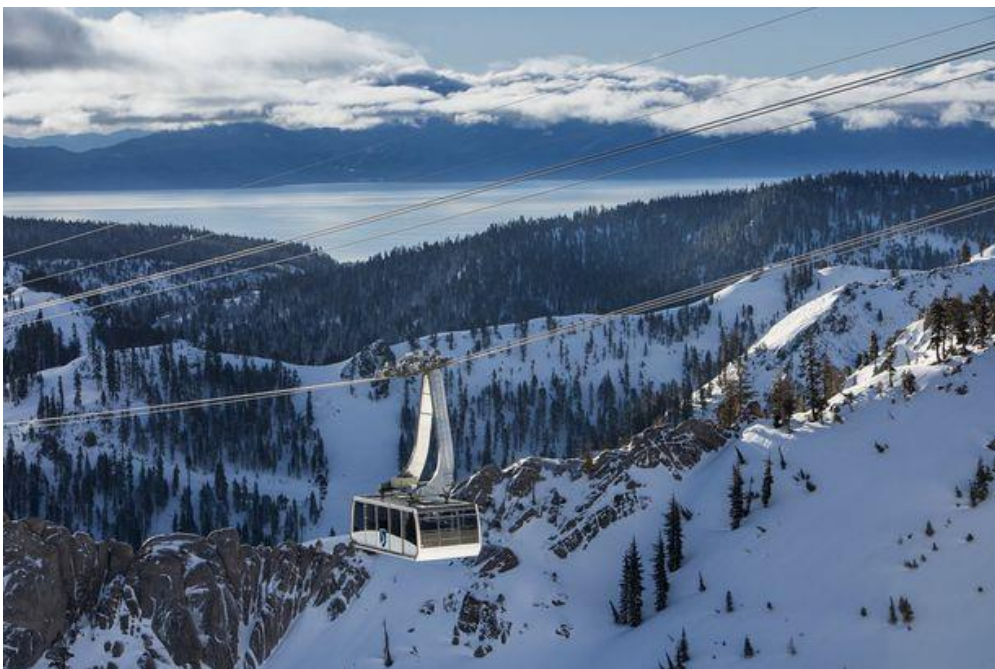
## Beaufort, South Carolina

Queen belle in an underrated cluster of coastal communities, and a quiet idyll for those seeking to wind down at year's end amid 18th century antebellum homes, a richly restored historic downtown district, and coastal waters and marsh as far as you can see. Explore through temperatures in the low to mid-60s on foot, by bike, boat, or horse-drawn carriage.



## Wind River Country, Wyoming

Escape the crowds and steep price tags of Jackson, and go beyond popular tourist stops such as Yellowstone. This authentic west destination offers include fat biking, skiing, and dog sledding, as well as wildlife observation.



## North Lake Tahoe, California

Home to the continent's largest alpine lake and among the nation's largest concentration of ski resorts. Take sleigh and carriage rides through the snow on Sand Harbor beach, go dog sledding at the Resort at Squaw Creek, and don't miss the Palisades Tahoe Aerial Tram ride, which climbs more than 2,000 feet for 360-degree views of Lake Tahoe and the High Sierra.



## Abingdon, Virginia

Downtown charms with shopping, cozy eateries, and twinkling lights. Among the Main Street highlights is Holston Mountain Artisans, showcasing traditional and contemporary crafts of the Appalachian region and one of the oldest craft cooperatives in the nation. Visitors can take in a show at The Barter, a historic 500-seat theater dating back to 1933.



## Indianapolis

One of Travel + Leisure's recent "America's Favorite Cities for Affordable Getaways," and host to a number of holiday events through December, among them Winterlights at Newfields on the Indianapolis Museum of Art campus, which includes 1.5 million dancing lights and s'mores, and Christmas at the Zoo, a season of extended hours for even more light displays.



## Navarre Beach, Florida

Often referred to as "Florida's Most Relaxing Place." Spend days looking for souvenir seashells on a quiet corner of white sand Gulf beach, take a short drive inland to explore sprawling Blackwater River State Forest, or stop by historic Milton, listed on the National Register of Historic places, for antiquing.



## Oaxaca City, Mexico

Designated a World Heritage Site, Oaxaca offers a glimpse of various chapters of Mexican history — pre-Hispanic, colonial, independent, modern, and contemporary phases — in its architecture, museums, festivals, and colorful crafts, as well as its pre-Columbian ruins.



## Monterey, California

A quintessential beach California town with some of the state's most iconic locations, including Bixby Creek Bridge, come winter Monterey hosts Ice Skating by the Bay but is also a place to witness migrating Monarch butterflies.



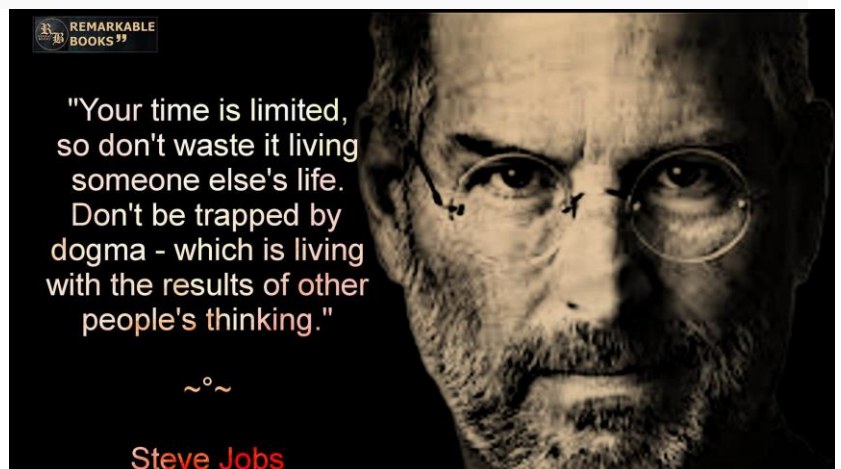
## Ogden, Utah

Just 35 minutes from Salt Lake International Airport and home to three ski resorts: Snowbasin Resort, Power Mountain, and Nordic Valley. Non-skiers can visit the dark skies of wild and rustic North Fork Park (though getting around there is also by cross country ski and snowshoes, available for rent).



## Pensacola, Florida

Abundant powdery, white sand beaches, and more than 400,000 twinkling holiday lights to boot. Each year on the Friday after Thanksgiving, downtown Pensacola is illuminated as part of the First Lights Ceremony, kicking off a season of music, shopping, food, art, and nightlife under a glowing canopy illuminating historic buildings. Take in the scene along Palafox Street by foot, by horse and carriage, or by trolley.



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