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DC set to relaunch its mobile app to focus on comics

WASHINGTON: DC is all set to shake up its comics app on January 21 and will be relaunching it as DC Universe Infinite. According to The Verge, the original DC Universe featured television shows and comics, but now that DC shows have moved to HBO Max, the company has decided to refocus the app on comics and the 'fan community,' while keeping the same USD 7.99-a-month price. DC Universe Infinite will have DC's catalogue and early access to comics six months after they are released physically in stores. The company said that the comic reader in its app has been improved, and users will have more options to curate custom lists of titles. –ANI

Keep bird flu risk at bay with these natural, ayurvedic tips

With everyday kitchen ingredients and with ayurvedic techniques, know how you can boost your immunity against avian influenza

AGENCIES
New Delhi

Bird flu, also called avian influenza, has come as a double whammy for countries that are already fighting their biggest battle against Covid-19. Again, the sign and symptoms are related to the respiratory system only along with fever. Since there is not much clarity about its complications and other issues which patients can face, there is no one way to deal with this situation.

As per the available data and as a general rule of Ayurveda strength of diseases can be reduced by only good immunity. So, the best way to protect yourself from any kind of disease is to boost your immunity and follow a healthy lifestyle which can go beyond opting good eating habits. Daily routine, waking up early morning and sleeping on time are also part of a healthy lifestyle.

With work-from-home in place, people now-a-days tend to work over night resulting in a disturbed sleep cycle. Such lifestyles affect our immunity and various 'doshas' of the body, says Dr. Pooja Kohli.

"So, first of all we all need to follow a healthy lifestyle which includes a healthy meal on time, sound sleep, daily exercise & meditation, offering food for our mind as well as soul," says Kohli who is the Vice President of Ayurveda Growth at NirogStreet.

To keep your immune system in shape and strengthen body's fighting mechanism she suggests these simple yet impactful tips to follow.

Give that extra herbs touch : You can add a few herbs like Ginger, garlic, turmeric in your daily diet to avoid bird flu kind of infections. These herbs give strength to the body for fighting back and also protect our body from getting infected.

Nasya to keep your respiratory system in shape: Every morning putting two to four drops of Anu tail in each nostril will give strength to the respiratory system, this therapy is known as Nasya. This also helps in flushing out pollutants or foreign bodies from the nasal cavity and prevents them from crossing the nasal pathway.

Remove toxins with oil pulling therapy, gargling and steam inhalation: One of the other important therapy is oil pulling therapy, it can be done by holding lukewarm oil in the mouth for a few seconds followed by gargling with lukewarm water with a pinch of salt and turmeric along with steam inhalation. Oil pulling therapy, gargling and steam inhalation helps in removing toxins and boost immunity of the person.

Start your morning with one spoon of Chyawanprash: One more important add on in daily life is Chyawanprash. Every morning during breakfast taking one spoon of Chyawanprash helps in boosting immunity and strengthens respiratory system.

Golden Milk: Before sleeping, taking golden milk (Milk with sugar and pinch of turmeric) is one of the best remedies to get rid of symptoms like fever, cold and running nose etc. –IANS

AI may outsmart our brain in chess, but not in memory

AGENCIES
Oslo (Norway)

A new research has shown that the brain strategy for storing memories is more efficient than that of Artificial intelligence (AI).

The new study, carried out by SISSA scientists in collaboration with Kavli Institute for Systems Neuroscience & Centre for Neural Computation, Trondheim, Norway, has been published in Physical Review Letters.

In the last decades, Artificial Intelligence has shown to be very good at achieving exceptional goals in several fields. Chess is one of them: in 1996, for the first time, the computer Deep Blue beat a human player, chess champion Garry Kasparov.

Neural networks, real or artificial, learn by tweaking the connections between neurons. Making them stronger or weaker, some neurons become more active, some less, until a pattern of activity emerges. This pattern is what we call "a memory". The AI strategy is to use complex long algorithms, which iteratively tune and optimize the connections.

The brain does it much simpler: each connection between neurons changes just based on how active the two neurons are at the same time. When compared to the AI algorithm, this had long been thought to permit the storage of fewer memories. But, in terms of memory capacity and retrieval, this wisdom is largely based on analysing networks assuming a fundamental simplification: that neurons can be considered as binary units.

The new research, however, shows otherwise: the fewer number of memories stored using the brain strategy depends on such an unrealistic assumption. When the simple strategy used by the brain to change the connections is combined with biologically plausible models for single neurons response, that strategy performs as well as, or even better, than AI algorithms. How could this be the case?

Paradoxically, the answer is in introducing errors: when memory is effectively retrieved this can be identical to the original input-to-be-memorized or correlated to it. The brain strategy leads to the retrieval of memories which are not identical to the original input, silencing the activity of those neurons that are only barely active in each pattern.

Those silenced neurons, indeed, do not play a crucial role in distinguishing among the different memories stored within the same network. By ignoring them, neural resources can be focused on those neurons that do matter in an input-to-be-memorized and enable a higher capacity.

Overall, this research highlights how biologically plausible self-organized learning procedures can be just as efficient as slow and neurally implausible training algorithms. –ANI

Being obese may up mental woes in teens

AGENCIES
London

If you are obese, there are chances that it may lead to some mental health issues, as a new study suggests that half of all young people treated for severe obesity have a neuropsychiatric problem.

The study, published in the journal Acta Paediatrica, indicated that over half of the parents estimated that their obese teenagers had difficulties resembling ADHD and/or autism, despite only a few of them having been previously diagnosed with these conditions.

"Symptoms of ADHD mean that the person has difficulty with impulse control. This increases the risk of eating without being hungry and the tendency to opt for quick solutions such as fast food," said researcher Kajsa Jarvholm from Lund University in Sweden.

For the study, the team involved 48 teenagers (73 per cent girls), with an average age of 15 and an average BMI of 42, which is severe obesity. Half of the participants received medical treatment for obesity, while the other half underwent surgery. The teenagers' parents completed questionnaires to measure their children's symptoms of ADHD and autism. The adolescents themselves responded to questions about binge eating and symptoms of depression.

"People on the autism spectrum are sometimes more selective in their eating than others. They only accept certain dishes but may eat more of them as a result," she said. One-fifth of the adolescents reported suffering symptoms of depression. One-third of them reported problems with binge eating, which is a loss of control resulting in the person eating large quantities of food in a short time.

"Contrary to our expectations, the adolescents with neuropsychiatric difficulties did not have more problems with binge eating and depression than the other adolescents in the group," said Jarvholm. –IANS

Average life expectancy in Tibet reaches 71.1 in 2020

AGENCIES
Lhasa

The average life expectancy in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region hit 71.1 in 2020, said Qizhala, chairman of the regional government.

The key health indicators of maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate both fell close to 50 per cent from 2015, dropping to 50 per 1,00,000 and eight per 1,000, respectively, Qizhala said in his government work report delivered on Wednesday at the fourth session of the 11th People's Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region, the Xinhua news agency reported. Before democratic reform in 1959, the average life expectancy in Tibet was just 35.5 years. –IANS

Teachers are working harder than other professionals, reveals report

AGENCIES
London

Teachers are working harder than ever before and more than any other occupation, according to a study published in the peer-reviewed journal Oxford Review of Education authored by researchers from UCL.

The proportion who say their job demands a very high level of input is nine in ten which represents an increase of two-thirds (90% vs 54%) over 25 years, according to the findings taken in 2017 and based on more than 800 teachers in British schools.

This compares with just 44% of people in all other occupations who agree they have to work very hard. Only health and social services managers and legal professionals come close to the levels of work intensity faced by teachers.

The data reveals for the first time how this drop in job quality goes beyond just pay and hours. Training, the influence teachers have over their tasks and work-related well-being have also declined.

An increasing percentage of teachers say they often or always come home from work exhausted (72% in 1997 vs 85% in 2017) which again is higher than any other professional over the same period (44% vs 45%).

The study author Professor Francis Green from the UCL Institute of Education says the findings suggest a link between declining work well-being and decreased job quality, independent of the long hours teachers work. He says reforms are needed to address the issue which is a possible factor in declining teacher retention rates.

"The most striking aspect of job quality is teachers' high work intensity and intensification." "Compared with other professionals and all other occupations, teachers work more intensively and this has risen to unprecedented levels."

"Any improvement in teachers' job quality achieved in a post-COVID-19 environment should be beneficial. Not only for teachers, but also for schools and the pupils who depend so much on the quality of teaching." –ANI

Appearance, social norms keep students off Zoom cameras

AGENCIES / New York

Ever thought why some students do not turn on their video cameras during online classes on Zoom? Because they may be more concerned about their privacy or how they look, researchers said in a new study. The findings indicate that while some students had concerns about the lack of privacy or their home environment, 41 per cent of the 276 respondents cited their appearance as the reason for keeping their cameras off.

For the study published in the journal 'Ecology and Evolution', the researchers surveyed 312 students in the class at the end of the semester to figure out why they weren't using their cameras – and try to come up with ways to turn that trend around.

In the survey, the team found that among underrepresented minorities, 38 per cent said they were concerned about other people being seen behind them, while 26 per cent were concerned about their physical location being visible; while among non-underrepresented minorities, 24 per cent were worried about people behind them and 13 per cent about their physical locations. –IANS

Lack of fatty acid triggers multiple sclerosis

AGENCIES
New York

The abnormal immune system response that causes multiple sclerosis (MS) by attacking and damaging the Central Nervous System can be triggered by the lack of a specific fatty acid in tissues, a new study suggests.

The finding, published in The Journal of Clinical Investigation, suggests that dietary change might help treat some people suffering the autoimmune disease. "We've known for a while that both genetics and environment play a role in the development of MS," said senior author David Hafler, Professor at Yale University in the US.

"This paper suggests that one of environmental factors involved is diet," Hafler added.

Fat tissues in patients diagnosed with MS lack normal levels of 'oleic acid', a monounsaturated fatty acid found in high levels in cooking oils, meats (beef, chicken, and pork), cheese, nuts, sunflower seeds, eggs, pasta, milk, olives, and avocados, according to the study.

This lack of oleic acid leads to a loss of the metabolic sensors that activate T cells, that mediate the immune system's response to infectious disease, the team found.

Without the suppressing effects of these regulatory T cells, the immune system can attack healthy Central Nervous System cells and lead to vision loss, pain, lack of coordination, and other debilitating symptoms of MS.

When researchers introduced oleic acid into the fatty tissues of MS patients in laboratory experiments, levels of regulatory T cells increased, they found.

The researcher had earlier noted that obesity triggers unhealthy levels of inflammation and is a known risk factor for MS, an observation that led him to study the role of diet in MS.

He stressed, however, that more study is necessary to determine whether eating a diet high in oleic acid can help some MS patients. –IANS

'Chopping tools' were common even in prehistoric times!

AGENCIES
Jerusalem

Israeli and Italian researchers have discovered that early humans about half a million years ago used stone chopping tools to break animal bones and consume the bone marrow, Tel Aviv University (TAU) in central Israel said on Wednesday.

In their study, published in the journal PLOS ONE, researchers from TAU and the University of Rome, in collaboration with the University of Tubingen, Germany, found that the tools were used to break open bones of cattle, fallow deer and gazelles, and extract the nutritious high-calorie bone marrow, the Xinhua news agency reported. Applying advanced scientific methods, the team unraveled the function of 53 tools found at the prehistoric site of Revadim in southern Israel.

These tools are flint pebbles with one flaked, sharp and massive edge, probably used by the late Homo Erectus species.

The team detected substantial edge damage on many pebbles, as a result of chopping hard materials, and some also showed residues of animal bones.

Use of replicas, made from pebbles collected in the area, on the bones of dead animals, led to the same results as in the original pebbles.

Such tools, invented in Africa about 2.6 million years ago and used for over 2 million years, were also found in Europe and Asia, with the current research revealing their use. –IANS

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Autonomy-supportive parenting led to well-being of kids during Covid pandemic

AGENCIES
London

Researchers have found that autonomy-supportive parenting, or offering meaningful choices when possible, contributed to the positive well-being of both children and parents.

"We explored whether or not autonomy-supportive parental behaviour would facilitate adaptation and better child well-being," said Andreas B. Neubauer, postdoctoral research scientist at DIPF, Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education in Germany.

"We also explored whether such parenting behaviour helps to create a positive emotional climate that benefits parents as well as children." The research published in the journal Child Development showed that autonomy-supportive parenting behaviour is positively associated both with better child well-being and higher parental need fulfilment.

According to the authors, such parenting behaviour requires parental energy and vitality but also reciprocally contributes to it. The research involved 970 parents who filled in an online questionnaire after which they could opt to enrol in a second part of the study in which 562 parents participated.

"Helping parents in their daily parental behaviour choices might be an effective way to improve the family climate and child well-being in a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic."

Through the second part of the study, for three consecutive weeks, parents received 21 daily online questionnaires with questions such as "As far as possible, I let my child decide today what he or she wanted to do" or "As far as possible, my child was able to do what he or she liked today."

They also received a final questionnaire after the three weeks. Parents were asked about their parenting behaviour, the extent to which their psychological needs were fulfilled and their child's well-being.

Additionally, parents were asked about their own well-being, their perceptions of the family climate and their child's behaviour once before the 21-day period and once again after the 21 days.

"Our findings from the daily questionnaires suggest that autonomy-supportive parenting is beneficial for the well-being of both children and parents," said Florian Schmiedek, Professor, and head of the cognitive development unit at DIPF, Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education.

"Helping parents in their daily parental behaviour choices might be an effective way to improve the family climate and child well-being in a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic." –IANS