

How exercise might keep depression at bay

By Gretchen Reynolds, New York Times

Exercise may be an effective treatment for depression and might even help prevent us from becoming depressed in the first place, according to three timely new studies. The studies pool outcomes from past research involving more than a million men and women and, taken together, strongly suggest that regular exercise alters our bodies and brains in ways that make us resistant to despair.

Scientists have long questioned whether and how physical activity affects mental health. While we know that exercise alters the body, how physical activity affects moods and emotions is less well understood.

Past studies have sometimes muddled rather than clarified the body and mind connections. Some randomized controlled trials have found that exercise programs, often involving walking, ease symptoms in people with major depression.

[Read the whole story](#)

Saving rain is easy with a barrel

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

After a soggy October, a rainy winter – hopefully – may be on the horizon. Or maybe not.

Given that uncertainty, how do you save some of that free water for possible dry days ahead? Those extra gallons could come in handy, especially if we face another year of drought. Current forecasts seem to point toward La Niña conditions and a subpar water year.

Rain barrels and cisterns allow for on-site storage of rainwater, a boon for homeowners facing watering restrictions. Regardless of drought conditions, saving rainwater can make sense for any gardener. Plants like rainwater, which is naturally soft and chemical-free. And if you usually get your water through municipal pipes, it saves money as well as water.

After five years of drought, rain barrels and equipment are easier to find at major home improvement stores and local nurseries.

Read the whole story

Don't get fleeced spending time on slopes

By Beth J. Harpaz, AP

Want to bust your winter vacation budget? Buy a one-day lift ticket at a ski resort on a holiday weekend.

That's "the most expensive way to go skiing. And that's what people hear about – the \$140 lift tickets," said Mary Jo Tarallo, executive director of Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month.

Don't get fleeced wearing your fleece. Here are six ways to

score deals and discounts on ski trips.

- Online deals – Buy tickets online, not at the window. Check out ticket prices and deals at GetSkiTickets.com, Liftoptia.com and Ski.com. Consider renting gear and clothing from GetOutfitted.com.

- Programs with benefits – January is Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month, when many resorts offer deals that typically include a lesson, gear rental and a lift ticket to the beginner slopes. Another program, Bring A Friend, offers incentives to pass-holders and other frequent skiers for introducing newcomers to the sport. Together, Learn to Ski and Bring A Friend programs have more than 200 resort partners in 34 states, according to Tarallo.

Some states also have “ski passport” programs that offer bargains at participating ski areas for kids in fourth, fifth and sixth grades.

- Coupons and discounts – Many regional ski areas distribute coupons through grocery stores, sporting goods stores, chains such as Costco.

And don’t forget the usual discounts offered at many resorts for AAA, kids, students, members of the military and seniors.

- Passes – If you have a favorite resort, season passes save a bundle. But they’re cheapest when purchased in spring.

If you like to vary your ski destinations, consider passes that offer access to different resorts. The MaxPass can be used at 39 mountains in North America. The Epic Pass can be used at 44 ski resorts around the world, from Colorado and Utah to the European Alps.

- Destination strategies – Drive-to regional ski areas are usually cheaper than big-name resorts. And if you can drive or take a bus to the slopes, you’ll save on food by packing lunch

and snacks. At Caberfae Peaks in Michigan, skiers bring slow-cookers and let their meals cook indoors while they're on the slopes.

If you're flying to major ski regions like the Rockies, be flexible on destinations and timing for best deals, according to Ski.com. Flights to small mountain airports fill quickly, especially at peak times such as holiday weekends. Consider flying into big airports such as Denver and driving from there. But be sure to check car rental rates, which can be steep, and weigh the potential downside of snowy roads if your drive is far.

Among the most affordable ski destinations in the Western U.S., according to Ski.com, are:

- Winter Park, Colo., with January lodging under \$100 a night.
- Salt Lake City, where the Salt Lake Super Pass offers a choice of skiing at Alta, Brighton, Snowbird, and Solitude.
- Heavenly, (fly into Reno and stay in a casino-hotel off-hill for under \$100 a night).
- Banff and Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada, where the U.S. dollar is worth \$1.35 Canadian.
- Schweitzer Mountain in Idaho, which offers free skiing on arrival day if you show a boarding pass from flights into nearby Spokane.

Ski.com also advises comparing ski rental fees with airline baggage fees for transporting your equipment. Some package deals include equipment rentals.

- Timing is everything – Midweek is cheaper than weekend skiing. Holidays are expensive and crowded.

Ski.com analyzed weather data, costs and arrivals using 25,000 reservations, and came up with Jan. 9-14, as the best week for

a ski or snowboard trip. Crowds are down, snow conditions are likely good and costs are 45 percent cheaper at top resorts compared to Christmas week, spring break or Presidents Day week, Ski.com found.

Struggles of starting kindergarten with few skills

By Teresa Watanabe, Los Angeles Times

Giuliana Tapia was way behind her classmates.

She was just 5 years old, starting kindergarten at Telesis Academy of Science and Math in West Covina.

At a kindergarten screening two months before her first day, she happily chattered about her dog Toodles, her favorite color pink, her Santa Claus pajamas, her nickname Gigi, her outings with dad to see SpongeBob SquarePants movies.

But many of her 21 classmates already knew most of the alphabet, colors and shapes. Two of them could even read all 100 words – at, the, there, like – that kindergartners are expected to know by the end of the year.

About half had been to preschool; Giuliana had not.

“I don’t know,” she said when she was asked to identify letters on a sheet of paper.

Read the whole story

Road Beat: Honda Civic – a rocket that uses no fuel



The Honda Civic continues to be a delight to drive.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

When Honda introduced its current Civic Coupe, engineers knew it might be a winner. In two words, it is, especially when it comes to looks, performance, fuel economy and handling. It is at the top of its class. This is the 10th generation Civic since its introduction in 1972 as a 1973 model. My wife owned a first generation CVCC Civic. In those 44 years Honda has sold 20 million Civics worldwide.

Its new super sleek design looks quick standing still. It is Honda's biggest hit in a long time. It looks racy even with a significant use of bright metal on the grille and window line. Its low, long and wide with a length of 182 inches and a height and width of just 56 and 71 inches, respectively, on a long wheelbase of 106 inches. Without going into a detailed analysis, this is one great looking ride with near perfect proportions, a long window line, strong front end/grille with almost no unnecessary design details to ruin its smooth, somewhat edgy body work defined by its subtle curvaceous character/shoulder line that runs the length of the body.



Specifications

Engine

1.5L turbocharged, direct injected, DOHC, 16 valve inline four cylinder 174 hp @ 6,000 rpm
162 lb.-ft. of torque @ 1,700-5,500 rpm

Redline 6,500 rpm

2.0L DOHC, 16 valve inline four cylinder 158 @ 6,500 rpm

138 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,200 rpm

Redline 6,700 rpm

Fuel requirement both engines regular unleaded

Transmission

Six speed manual

CVT

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 106.3 inches

Length 182.3 inches

Width 70.8 inches

Height 55.7 inches

Track (f/r) 60.9/61.5 inches

Weight 2,888

Weight distribution (f/r) 62/38

Fuel capacity 12.39 gallons

Trunk capacity 11.9 cubic feet

Passenger volume 88.6 cubic feet

Wheels 17X7 inch alloys

Tires 215/50X17 H (speed rating of 130 mph)

Steering lock to lock 2.22 turns

Turning circle 35.7 feet

Performance

0-60 mph 6.48 seconds

50-70 mph 3.41 seconds

50-70 mph up a 6-7 % grade 4.63 seconds

Top speed 130 mph easy

Fuel economy EPA rated at 31/41/35 mpg

city/highway/combined. Expect 38 mpg overall and 50 plus mpg on the highway at legal speeds.

OK, so it's got the looks, but can it back it up with the promised performance. You can bet the farm on that one. Even the lowest powered version of the Civic has serious motivation. The base engine in the LX series is a 2 liter 158

hp (at 6,500 rpm) inline four with all the bells and whistles and square engine dimensions. I hope to get one soon to wring out. But my touring model is blessed with a 174 hp at 6,000 rpm, 162 pounds of twist from a low of 1,700 rpm to 5,500 rpm, 1.5L inline turbocharged four cylinder DOHC, 16 valve mill with all important direct injection. Max boost from the turbo is 16.5 psi. Without direct injection turbo mills lose their economy advantage.

Both engines can be had with a 6 speed manual or a CVT which sometimes feels like it shifts gears. But the CVT does not have paddle shifters or a manual shifter; just D, S and L for downhill braking. As I have written in the past, max acceleration is best left to the geniuses who designed this car. Leave it in D and nail it. And this compact sporty car scoots with a 0-60 mph average elapsed time of a miniscule 6.48 seconds. Honda has yet to introduce the new Civic Si. Passing times are also record setting for a compact with a 50-70 mph simulated pass on a level road requiring just 3.41 seconds and the same run up a 6-7 percent grade only slows that time to 4.68 seconds. Those are phenomenal numbers.

Throttle response at tip in is initially soft, but then it turns ferocious. A little care must be taken in traffic. Midrange is terrific and the CVT responds beautifully once underway and at times it almost feels like it is shifting especially during the passing demonstrations. Once the engine approaches its 6,700 rpm redline it seems to fall off to peak torque which is 5,500 rpm. This is no ordinary compact car or midsize for that matter.

And that lack of ordinary also extends to the Civic fuel economy numbers, when it becomes extraordinary. Although rated by the EPA at 31/41/35 mpg city/highway/combined, you can expect much higher numbers. With the cruise control set at 70 mph in a 40 mile two way run on a level highway, the Civic returned an average of 50.7 mpg. Overall in about 500 miles of varied driving including some heavy traffic, mountain byways

and perhaps 15 percent on the freeway the Civic averaged 38.0 mpg. In a 20-mile round trip to Carson City and back over the Sierra and some heavy traffic incurred in Carson City, the Civic averaged 42 mpg. Seven plus liter, 400 plus hp muscle cars from the late 1950s and '60s didn't perform as well and returned 8-10 mpg. One small negative is that the fuel tank has shrunk from 13.2 gallons to a too small 12.4 gallons. Bigger would be nicer and more convenient.

Handling is go-kart like. Honda's has all the ingredients, its attitude is flat, its steering lightning quick and its wide 215/50 tires on 17 x 7 inch wheels provide tenacious grip. Suspension state of the art four wheel independent with stab bars at both ends and that lightning quick steering is just 2.22 turns lock to lock, albeit a bit heavy. That's about the quickest ever encounter in a street car. Turn in is very crisp and understeer while built in is still mild. Also helping is Civics' curb weight which is 2,888 meaning there is less mass to resist changes in direction. Weight bias is 62/38 percent front to rear. It's no wonder this is such a popular car in SCCA racing. It handles like a good sports car. It is a blast to drive and to power out of corners. This Civic gets it done.

However, it rides like a true sports car with a firm, solid ride. It handles bumps well and there is definitely no float. What you will feel are muted bumps, but you will feel them. There is no harshness, but it is not an Acura RLX. And with Hondas there is some road or tire noise. You get that with a sports suspension type of set up along with the handling benefits. The engine spins just 1,900 rpm at 70 mph and is quiet.

Besides strong four-wheel disc brakes (fronts are ventilated) with ABS and all the other braking acronyms, this touring model also comes with about every other safety acronym including lane keep assist, lane departure warning, a collision mitigation braking system, road departure mitigation and a whole lot more. One more important safety advance

involves turning right or a lane change to the right. When the right turn signal is activated the display shows a picture of what is on the right side of the vehicle, virtually eliminating the blind spot. What a great feature. Six airbags are still standard. Brakes are strong and easy to modulate. LED headlights are excellent.

More good news. With the top of the line Touring, everything mentioned is standard including leather seating (and it is nice leather) and other leather trim pieces and floor mats. Hooray for Honda. There are no options to buy. The seats fit my backside perfectly with superb back support. These are all day accommodations.

Instead of a two-tiered dash of the prior generation, front and center is a huge tach with a digital read out speedo in the center. Ancillary gauges are flanking left and right. Trip computer information is also centered inside the large tach giving separate readings for trip A and B with the average fuel econ in digital form and the instant fuel econ in a bar graph. That is a big plus too.

The center stack has a 7-inch screen which is for HVAC, NAV and the sound system. There are no buttons and everything is controlled by touch screen or on the steering wheel. The HVAC has knobs, but the sound system doesn't. Knobs and buttons are easier being more exact and precise.

Rear seating is there and would probably be OK for two, just not me, but it would sure beat walking. But it looks habitable.

Pricing for this top of the line Civic Touring Coupe starts and ends at \$26,125, plus \$835 for the train and truck from Honda's Alliston, Ontario, Canada assembly plant where U.S./Canadian parts are 70 percent of the build. Its paint was an interesting color, Energy Green, which is a very shiny enamel color bright green with some yellow in it. More like a

pastel color. You can see it from a mile away or more. It grew on me like a bad mold, but by the end of the week, it became cool. It sure got a lot of attention. Even a colleague in his story on a Civic of the same color discussed it as an extremely popular attention getter. If you want a slickly styled extremely competent sports coupe that gets phenomenal fuel economy and kicks some serious butt, this is your ride. You might even be finding yourself with an additional set of wheels and tires at Thunderhill, Sonoma Raceway, Buttonwillow or Laguna Seca having some real fun and exploring the Civic uncivilly during track days.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors will have a public hearing Dec. 13 at 9am in Placerville about raising rates for South Tahoe Refuse.
- Reno Jazz Orchestra and Pat Ester's Gospel Choir will perform at the Olympic Village Lodge on Dec. 21 at 7pm. For tickets, call 775.372.6160.
- Whiskey Dicks in South Lake Tahoe is hosting a free New Year's Eve party. Doors open at 9pm.
- Sierra State Parks Foundation is offering four opportunities to dine at one of the Tahoe parks as a fundraiser. They include cocktails at Vikingsholm, breakfast on the porch of the Hellman-Ehrman Mansion in Sugar Pine Point

State Park, dinner at the Ehrman Mansion, and dinner at Donner Memorial State Park Visitor Center Museum. To bid on one of these dining experiences, go **online**.

Nev. FBI chief: 'I want to take down the barriers'

By Ricardo Torres-Cortez, Las Vegas Sun

With an American flag pin on his lapel and an assertive smile on his face, the new special agent in charge of the FBI's Las Vegas Division introduced himself. Appointed by FBI Director James Comey, Aaron Rouse compared his first days on the job back in September to drinking from a firehose, adding that it was a "good hectic."

Rouse started his career in law enforcement 25 years ago as a New York state trooper, and he's been with the FBI for two decades, working violent crime and then forming part of a fugitive task force in the agency's Washington Field Office. He has held leadership positions in Florida and Texas, and before moving to Las Vegas was section chief in the Counterintelligence Division at FBI headquarters.

The federal agency, which also has satellite offices in Reno, Elko and Stateline, participates in several local law enforcement task forces, including targeting drugs, crime and counterterrorism. It also was an essential component of the Nevada Election Day Integrity Task Force, undertaking

investigations into election fraud complaints or voting abuses.

Read the whole story

Nev. 's \$860,000 execution chamber gathering dust



Nevada's execution chamber at Ely State Prison. Photo/Nevada Department of Corrections

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Nevada's new execution chamber at Ely State Prison is finished, but there is no expectation it will be used anytime soon.

The state can no longer obtain the drugs it needs to proceed with an execution.

Nearly \$860,000 was approved for the new chamber by the 2015 Legislature to replace the death chamber at the now closed Nevada State Prison in Carson City.

Read the whole story

Holiday concerts on the South Shore

Lake Tahoe Community College Chorus and Tahoe Choir are putting on A Holiday with a Spice concert on Dec. 2 and Dec. 4.

Also performing will be the children's choir. Marcia Sarosik dancers will be performing "A Charlie Brown Christmas."

The Dec. 2, 7:30pm performance is at Lake Tahoe Community College's theater. The Dec. 4, 3pm show is at St. Theresa Catholic Church in South Lake Tahoe.

Both cost \$12 for adults, \$10 students/seniors.

Power outage closes Alpine Meadows on Sunday

Update 3:59pm:

Alpine Meadows will not open today because of a power outage.

Liberty Utilities expects to have power restored by 8pm Sunday. At the height of the incident there were 685 customers in this area of Placer County without electricity.

A backhoe took out a power pole just before 5:30am Sunday, which meant the lines came down, too.

About a foot of snow fell at lake level overnight on the North Shore, with even more snow higher.

Sister resort Squaw Valley is open with 15 inches of new snow in the last 24 hours.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report