

# Janet's Journal

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October 2021

## Awesome Autumn

Dear [FirstName],

This month's newsletter has a short article on famous authors who worked up to success entitled, It's Not Where You Start... and I cannot think of a more appropriate phrase for this month. With the last of autumn's vibrant leaves falling from trees and the first signs of winter sweeping in on unexpected gusts of wind, October is truly a month that develops into an entirely different season as the weeks progress.

While you're reading this month's newsletter, you might notice the outside cold creeping indoors and wonder if it is time for some extra home insulation or another improvement to make your house extra-comfy as winter sets in. If you decide to gather a few ideas for renovation, or even buy or sell, for an entirely different set up, please let me know so we can brainstorm before the holidays. I'm here when you're ready to start planning. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy these fun days of fall.

Hope we can talk soon,

Janet Browning

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### The Forest Man of India

At age 16, environmental activist, Jadav Payeng, saw hundreds of dead snakes, the victims of a major drought occurring on Majuli Reserve, the world's largest river island in India.

Even at such a young age, he knew someone had to do something... then he decided he was that someone.

In 1979, he started planting a tree sapling a day in the barren soil. Over 40 years later, his forest covers 1,390 acres, approximately the size of 15 football stadiums. He had an idea to save Majuli Island from erosion by planting coconut trees that grow straight and, when planted together in close proximity, they protect the soil. In turn, this would not only help India's economy, but also help fight climate change.

He began by planting bamboo and then moved onto other species. At first, planting trees was time consuming, until the trees started providing the seed themselves. As his forest grew dense, so did the amount of inhabitants. Soon, the forest was filled with hundreds of species of birds, deer, rhinos and tigers, and even included a herd of elephants straying into his forest three months out of the year.

Payeng's life began to change in the fall of 2007, when a photojournalist discovered him seeding his forest and wrote an article about him. He soon gained the attention of the Indian government and then the entire country, winning multiple awards for his incredible achievements.

Payeng has now created a man-made forest bigger than New York City's Central Park.

## **October Question**

**Q: How many bones does a shark have?**

## **Sept Question**

**Q: Which is the only vowel on a standard keyboard that is not on the top line of letters?**

**A: A**

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## **Defeat Fear In Advance**

Although you should try to start your day on an upbeat note, spend some time asking yourself what might happen during the day that you're afraid of— failure to complete a big project at work, for example, or rejection by someone you'd like to date.

Then think of what you could do to prevent failure from happening. Be on the lookout for behaviors and thoughts that add to your fear, and train yourself to change your patterns of action and thinking.

Finally, pay attention to what you learn about failure as you confront it. Use the experience of facing and overcoming your fear to confront and defeat the obstacles you face every day.

## Fit to Share

Americans are taking extra steps (get it?) to ensure they stay physically fit these days. The *Pew Research Center* reports that 21% of U.S. adults wear a smart watch or some other kind of fitness tracker to monitor their physical activity - 18% of men and 25% of women.

Many fitness apps allow the data they collect to be shared with health researchers, which raises privacy concerns for some. Still, 41% of Americans feel it's acceptable to use information to research the link between exercise and heart disease, as opposed to 35% who disagree, and 22% aren't sure.

Among people who actually use a fitness tracker, 53% agree that sharing is acceptable, but only 38% of those who don't use trackers say the same.

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## Stormy Weather

As fall approaches with wet weather, driving on slick, rainy roads can be treacherous. With so much time spent at home recently, a reminder of how to drive in wet conditions is a good idea. Follow this AAA-recommended advice for staying safe:



- **Plan ahead.** Check weather and driving conditions before getting behind the wheel.
- **Keep a safe distance.** Allow extra space for you to stop if a vehicle ahead of you stops or swerves suddenly. Slow down early before coming to intersections or stop signs.
- **Be patient.** Traffic will be slower when rain is falling. Add in extra time to reach your destination so you don't have to rush.
- **Turn headlights on.** This doesn't just help you see the road better— it makes you more visible to other drivers. However, avoid using high beams.
- **Drive slowly.** Even at 35 mph, your tires can lose contact with the road, causing your vehicle to start hydroplaning. To stay in control, slow down, avoid sharp turns, and drive in the tracks of vehicles ahead of you.
- **Don't use cruise control.** Used in wet conditions, it can increase the risk of hydroplaning.
- **Eliminate distractions.** As always, don't text, talk, or do anything that takes your attention from the road.

## Get Physical

Creativity and intelligence aren't just in the brain. Your physical body plays a large role in your ability to think clearly, solve problems, and find innovative strategies. The *Height Media* website offers these tips for strengthening your body to enhance your mind:

- **Practice paced breathing.** Steady, healthy breathing releases chemicals that can help you stay calm during stressful situations. Spend 10 minutes a day breathing deeply from your diaphragm; in through the nose and out through your mouth. The in and out counts can be different. One study found that after 21 days of paced breathing, a group of bankers achieved an average of 62% improvement in cognitive capacity on complex decision-making tasks.

- **Sit and stand straight.** Hunching over for hours on end reduces the space your lungs need to expand adequately, increasing carbon dioxide levels and reducing your emotional and mental performance. Sit and/or stand with your feet flat on the ground, straighten your spine as if you had a string attached from the ceiling to the top of your head, and square your shoulders. Check your posture during the day.

- **Walk throughout the day.** Sitting too much increases your risk of cancer by 13%, according to studies, and also raises your mortality risk by 17%. However, you're 45% more likely to have a creative idea while you're walking than when you're seated, even if you're walking on a treadmill. If you're blocked for ideas, a walk can be a quick, easy way to unleash your imagination.

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**See Page 7**

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## Empathy on the Rise

Working from home initially presented employees with many struggles, from child care to virtual meeting fatigue. But it has revealed a few upsides, according to a report from Microsoft. Among them: increased empathy for colleagues working from home (WFH).

Overall, 62% of 2,000 remote workers in six countries surveyed by Microsoft reported feeling more empathetic to their co-workers now that they have a better idea of what WFH is like. The response was highest in China, with 91% reporting high empathy, followed by Mexico (65%), the U.S. (61%), Italy (54%), and the U.K. (51%).

# Focus On You

Success breeds more success, or so they say. But a study reported in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* seems to suggest that watching other people succeed lowers the motivation to strive for success on your own.

In an experiment, a group of test subjects watched videos of people completing a series of puzzles. Another group was shown videos where the puzzles were not solved, and a third group watched no videos at all. Then the groups were asked to complete similar puzzles themselves.

Subjects who had watched the puzzles get completed actually had the lowest rate of completion. Scientists call this “vicarious goal satiation,” explaining that watching others achieve goals can provide a sense of achievement that drains the motivation to accomplish goals on one’s own. The lesson: to prime yourself for success, focus on what you need to do, and don’t get distracted by others’ efforts - successful or not.

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# It's Not Where You Start

Few great authors spring up overnight. Most work odd jobs while they struggle to create. The *Literacy Site* shares these stories of the famous before they became famous:

- **J.D. Salinger.** Before breaking onto the literary scene, the author of *The Catcher in the Rye* and other classics, worked as an entertainment director on a Swedish cruise ship.
- **Langston Hughes.** The would-be poet worked as a busboy at a prestigious Washington, D.C. hotel. One day the well-known poet Vachel Lindsay came to lunch, and Hughes worked up enough courage to show her some of his poems. Lindsay was impressed by his talent and resolved to help get his name out, which led to him being discovered and going on to lead the Harlem Renaissance.
- **Kurt Vonnegut.** The future author of *Slaughterhouse-Five* and other classics, owned the first Saab dealership in the U.S. He went on to serve in the U.S. Army during World War II, which had a major impact on his subsequent writing.

*"I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers."*

~ L.M. Montgomery

# Heart of the Job

Shortly after being forced out of Apple Computer, Steve Jobs bought a small computer manufacturer named Pixar.

In 2000, he relocated the company to an abandoned factory. The original plan called for three buildings, with separate offices for computer scientists, animators, and the Pixar executives. Jobs immediately scrapped it. Instead of three buildings, he wanted a single vast space with an atrium at its center.

As Pixar's Ed Catmull explains, *"The philosophy behind this design is that it's good to put the most important function at the heart of the building. Well, what's our most important function? It's the interaction of our employees. That's why Steve put a big empty space there. He wanted to create an open area for people to always be talking to each other."*

Jobs saw separated offices as a design problem. He shifted the mailboxes to the atrium, then moved the meeting rooms, cafeteria, coffee bar, and gift shop to the center of the building. *"The atrium initially might seem like a waste of space,"* says director Brad Bird, *"But Steve realized that when people run into each other, when they make eye contact, things happen."*

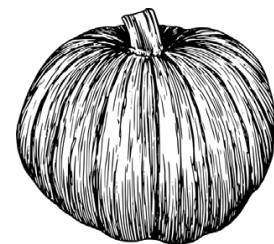
Jobs insisted that the best creations occurred when people from disparate fields were connected, especially in an age of intellectual fragmentation.

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# Treats For All

Did you know? A teal pumpkin is a sign that a host will offer treats suitable for anyone who has any food allergies or intolerances. Although the practice originated with trick-or-treaters, it has since spread to harvest festivals, community gatherings, and other autumn celebrations where food is handed out to young children.

If someone has a food allergy or intolerance to the treat on offer, it could ruin the fun for them. So consider having an alternative that anyone can tolerate: colorful pencils, stamps and stickers, costume jewelry and bubbles are all fun choices that anyone can enjoy.





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# Janet's Journal

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