Building a Healthy Vocabulary

So these terms might not be showing up on the GRE in the immediate future, but they are becoming more common in popular media.

**Orthorexia** is a type of psychological disorder in which a person is obsessed with eating healthy foods. Orthorexics avoid all unhealthy foods even foods they once enjoyed. Like many people with eating disorders, a person who has orthorexia feels like they have control when they are making these food choices. When they do consume something from their avoid list they feel like they are losing control which affects their stress and anxiety levels. This can lead to an increase in depression and a further decrease in self-esteem. An example of an orthorexic behavior is avoiding restaurants because they do not trust others to make their food. Eating healthy becomes takes control of all of their food related choices and behaviors.

Confusion around orthorexia is easy to understand in a culture that constantly pursues “health food.” A healthy eater is someone who chooses to eat healthy foods because they know that by eating those foods they will live a higher quality of life. They also believe that these foods may help prevent diseases such as cardiovascular disease, various forms of cancer, type II diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), and a long list of other diseases. A healthy eater allows themselves to make occasional unhealthy choices without feeling guilty.

**Flexitarians** limit consumption of animal meat to 2 - 3 times a week, because of this they tend to have a healthier diet than those who consume it on a daily basis. The majority of Americans eat more than two times the amount of protein needed daily. The most common source of protein in American diets is animal meat. It has become the main focus of meals, forcing fruits and vegetables to take a back seat. Flexitarians are aware of this and try their best to put the focus back to where it's supposed to be, by replacing animal meat with plant protein sources such as beans, nuts, seeds, fruits and vegetables.

If you’ve ever considered becoming a vegetarian but felt that it was too difficult, then try being a flexitarian first! A flexitarian diet can help you jump-start to make new and healthier food choices.

**Phytochemicals** are substances which occur naturally in plants. These chemical compounds may affect health in a positive way but are not established as nutrients. You’ve probably heard the names of some of them in conjunction with food supplement advertisements like those that tout they've found the new “miracle” food. **Antioxidants** are the nutrients found in our foods which can prevent or slow down oxidative damage to our bodies. They are also known as “free radical scavengers” which help prevent and repair damage done by oxidative foods. Lots of plant-based foods have anti-oxidants (they just don’t all advertise it like the Welch’s Grape Juice people).

Sunscreen Won’t Prevent the Burn Down There

Let's talk about laptops here. (If you are experiencing a burn in the other “down there” please make an appointment at the Health Center immediately by calling 607.436.3573.) While most of us are focusing on how laptops make your work experiences more comfortable by not being tied to a desk all day long, they may be doing some damage to your skin. In one of the great mismatches in recent history, it turns out you really shouldn’t put your laptop on your lap. You should place something between the laptop and your legs, like a pillow or a lapdesk. Your clothes are not thick enough to protect your skin.

So what's up with this? Placing your laptop on your lap is fine to do as long as you only have it there for a short period of time. For some who use their laptops on their laps for prolonged periods of time users may notice the beginnings of what appears to be a rash on their legs. Prolonged and repeated exposure may result in a laptop burn erythema ab igne a/k/a “toasted skin syndrome”. Symptoms include mild itchiness, a burning sensation and changes in skin pigmentation to red, pink, brown or something that looks like an actual burn.

Limiting exposure of your leg to this heat source will prevent this type of burn. If you already are showing symptoms of laptop burn, the rash should start going away within a few months. The exact amount of time will vary depending on how long your leg has been exposed. In some cases skin pigment may be permanently altered.
Feeling Teary Eyed?
All humans have the ability to cry and produce tears. The only place where you can’t cry is in space. You know, that whole gravity thing? Or lack thereof? What makes us unique as humans is that we are the only animals known to cry emotional tears. Crying actually benefits the body. Tears do have the ability to make us feel better because they relieve sadness and stress and help us work through any grief that we may have. Tears offer more benefit than an outward display that we are feeling sad and emotional. You may notice that your eyes become watery if they become irritated by certain pollens in the air or from exposure to certain foods like onions or hot peppers. Our eyes actually produce different types of tears for each need. Basal tears keep our eyes moist and lubricated. Without basal tears blinking would feel painful. Irritant or reflex tears are used when something gets in your eyes. This could be anything from sand, a finger being poked in your eye, or when you cut an onion. Irritant tears and basal tears have basically the same purpose; they protect your eyes. Emotional tears are the tears that people are most familiar with. These occur during times of intense feelings. These tears can be seen during times of joy, sorrow and even stress. What makes emotional tears so important is the fact that they contain stress hormones which get excreted from the body when you cry. Anthropologists have also suggested that the ability to outwardly display emotional upset allows for others to step in and comfort a person who is upset. One little, but important, step in the building of a community. So, no matter what stereotypes you harbor surrounding crying (men, are you paying attention?), everybody can cry and everybody should cry because tears are the function of a body staying healthy.

Helping a Friend.
While at college you become less dependent on your family and more dependent on friends. They are there for you when you need them and vice-versa. But what happens if a friend you know needs help? If you have a friend in need of an intervention here are some tips to help you. First, think about where you will bring the issue up. Make sure you are in a quiet place where you aren’t likely to be interrupted. This will allow your friend to feel safer while discussing a private issue. Tell your friend you care for them and are concerned about some of the choices they are making or behaviors they are displaying. Point out specific occurrences. For example “I was really worried and concerned about you when we had to carry you home last Friday.” Next, listen carefully to what they say in response. Let them tell you what they want and don’t push for further information. If your friend is unwilling to talk, don’t push it. You may want to talk with a college professional for further help at this point. The Counseling Center (436.3368) can provide consultation services. Alternatively, your friend may be relieved that someone has noticed and wants to help them. There are lots of resources available on campus to get your friend the help they need. Your R.As & R.Ds, and the staff at the Counseling & Student Health Centers can help get you started. Letting your friends know that you are looking out for them is one way to show you care. You would expect them to do the same if it was you who needed help.