

# Voya Life Matters<sup>SM</sup>

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Ahh, the smell of fresh cut grass. Beautiful flowers in full bloom. The sweet voices of children playing outside. Whiffs of juicy hamburgers and hot dogs coming from the grill (or your neighbor's, in my case).....and oh yeah, coughing, sneezing and watering eyes. It could only mean one thing. Summer is finally here!

Another sure sign that summer is upon us is scrambling to find camps or somewhere to offload the kiddos while you work. Thankfully, with some normalcy restored, it's a bit easier to find space this year. It's incredible, but did you know there is a camp for just about anything? Sports, arts, science, baking – you name it. And even better, due to gracious volunteers, there are many affordable, or even free, options offered through your local parks and recreation department, place of worship or arts council. I suggest you give it a look if you need some options. There may even be a camp out there for YOU!

Whatever you do this summer, we wish you a peaceful and safe season. Although Voya Financial Lifeline can't offer up a camp for you or your family, we are always available to speak to if you have any questions on your account. It's not water skiing or sing-alongs, but I think we're still pretty fun!

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## Home care instead of hospital stay

The COVID-19 pandemic forced all of us to make many of changes. As we return to a new normal, one change that may remain intact is the increase in telemedicine and home care in lieu of hospital admission for certain medical conditions.

Home care had been a growing trend to treat some conditions before the pandemic. The shortage of hospital beds in 2020 and the risk of contracting the coronavirus in a hospital setting prompted medical personnel to authorize home treatment for additional conditions. Currently about 60 illnesses qualify for home acute care if the patient is sufficiently stable. Among them are COVID-19, chronic heart conditions, pneumonia and other respiratory ailments, diabetes complications, infected wounds, deep vein thrombosis (DVT), some cancers, pre-surgical care and some psychiatric disorders.

Elderly hospitalized patients are especially susceptible to infections, bed sores, blood clots and delirium. They may also lose mobility. Treatment from trained health care workers in one's own home near their loved ones and pets is preferred by most patients for convenience, level of care, and a more independent lifestyle. Health care workers are able to monitor the patients virtually, 24/7, from a command center where vital signs are transmitted from remote devices in the patient's home. Doctors conduct regular video conferences; and a nurse or other practitioner visits the patient daily to provide basic care, draw blood, conduct x-rays and ultrasounds, administer IV medications and fluids, and perform physical therapy. Special meals are provided if necessary. Paramedics are available for immediate dispatch.

Portable medical equipment is brought into the home. Patients are equipped with a hospital bed, supplies such as oxygen

tanks, EKG machines, and the latest technology to monitor vital signs. They are given a wearable emergency call device. After stabilization, the patient returns to a primary care physician who is in contact with the hospital-based team.

Evidence shows that home treatment promotes faster recovery with fewer complications. Both patients and their families report greater satisfaction with such care. Readmission rates are reduced by 25% and, significantly, one study found that mortality was reduced by 20%. The cost can be much lower than a hospital stay. Many private insurers have authorized reimbursement for such care and Medicare and Medicaid have continued the temporary reimbursement for these services that was instituted when the pandemic started.

Similar programs are well accepted in Australia, Canada, England and Israel. In the U.S., health systems in 30 states and 12 Veterans Health Administration facilities now offer the "hospital at home" option, and the numbers continue to grow. In order to qualify, a patient must live within 30 minutes from emergency care and live in a home with high-speed internet, heat and air conditioning, and not be at imminent risk of rapid admission to an ICU.

While home health care will not replace a hospital setting for those in critical condition, it is a viable alternative for many patients.





## Choosing the right executor

Having end-of-life documents, regardless of your age or assets, reduces stress and expense for those you leave behind. Why is it that nearly 60% of all Americans (and only 36% of parents with children under age 18) still don't have either a Will or a Trust? Apart from inertia and the discomfort of contemplating their death, many people become paralyzed when it comes to making important and very personal decisions. The process of selecting executors and Trustees is also a barrier.

The tasks of an executor, who is named in a Will, is to file for probate and oversee the estate. Trustees are the persons who have the duty to make sure the assets are managed and distributed according to the wishes of the person who set up the Trust. When naming someone to handle your estate, remember that these roles often require considerable time and effort and always involve responsibility.

If there is only one beneficiary, it makes sense to name that person as executor if s/he is a competent adult. When there are multiple beneficiaries, select someone such as a friend or family member in whom you have utmost faith and who cares about your beneficiaries. Successor executors should be named as well.

Integrity and fairness are critical because serving as an executor or Trustee usually entails dividing property among your designated family members, friends and charities. You want to be assured that the person will carry out your wishes without a personal agenda. Financial experience also can be important, particularly if the assets are to be held for a long time, as with a Trust set up for minors or young adults.

Parents may be concerned about offending other children if only one is named to oversee the estate. If you are confident that your children will treat each other fairly, it usually makes sense to name only one as executor and to name the other children as successors should the executor be unable or unwilling to do the job.

If you have a large or complex estate, own a family business, or don't know someone with the financial skills or the time required to handle the role, consider naming an impartial "corporate fiduciary" as executor or as a co-executor to serve along with an individual.

## Vacant home insurance for snowbirds

If you own a second home where you spend extended time during the year, it is important to make sure that you have the proper home insurance coverage. An empty home represents a greater risk to insurance companies since no one is there to detect a small leak, a fire that could result in major damage, or quickly notice that a burglar or vandal has wreaked havoc.

Many standard homeowners' policies cut off coverage after a home is left vacant and/or unoccupied for a period of from 30 to 60 days. Maintaining full coverage after such a period often requires a special rider and a higher premium.

Read your policies – both for your primary and secondary residences and have your homeowner's carrier or agent clarify exclusions in writing so that you are fully protected and your claim won't be denied.

# Leftover 529 funds

If your child or grandchild didn't use all of the funds in the 529 college savings account you established on his or her behalf, you have several options. You can keep it in the account for possible future graduate school or for other qualified continuing education expenses including some outdoor education classes like those run by Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School. Qualified 529 expenses include tuition, books, fees, supplies, computers and certain room and board expenses. You may be able to use up to \$10,000 from a 529 plan to pay off a child's student loan debt.

As an account owner you also can change the beneficiary to a qualifying member of the original beneficiary's family or request a rollover to another existing 529 plan without incurring taxes or fees. It may be possible to keep the excess funds for a future grandchild, naming the child as the new beneficiary.

You are permitted to withdraw the funds; but unless they are used for the beneficiary's educational purposes, you must pay taxes on the account earnings plus a 10% federal penalty and a possible state penalty on the withdrawn earnings. The penalty may be waived in certain circumstances, such as the disability or death of the beneficiary or if the beneficiary receives a scholarship. See IRS Publication 970 on tax credits for education costs, including specifics on 529 plans.



## Lessons from Luminaries

### Dr. Jane Goodall continues to advocate for chimpanzees and the environment

Dr. Jane Goodall, legendary primatologist and conservationist, is the latest recipient of the prestigious Templeton Prize that is awarded for using science to explore deep questions. Her 60+ years of work have changed our way of thinking about animal intelligence and have given us greater insight into our own humanity.

Born in London in 1934, Goodall's scientific curiosity and fascination with Africa and its animals started at a young age. Because she couldn't afford to go to college, she attended secretarial school to learn skills to support herself financially and waitressed to earn money for an extended trip to Kenya where a friend lived. While there, she was offered a job at a museum working alongside Kenyan/British paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey. In 1960, he sent her into the wild to observe the social lives of chimpanzees at Gombe National Park in what is now Tanzania. Leakey wanted to gain insight into the behavior of early humans inasmuch as humans share 98% of their DNA with chimpanzees.

Goodall immersed herself in the chimps' habitat and discovered that these animals were much more like us than scientists had previously thought. Her perseverance led to important discoveries that transformed our knowledge about chimpanzees. She found that chimpanzees have distinct personalities, develop emotional and intricate long-term bonds, have complex social interactions, and even engage in warfare. Her observations also showed that they are capable of making tools. Leakey later said that her lack of formal academic training and keen observational skills led her to record personality traits and give her subjects names instead of numbers as scientists traditionally do.

Goodall earned a Ph.D. in ethology—the science of animal behavior—from Cambridge University in 1966 despite having no undergraduate degree. Her classmates were dismissive of her research methods, unorthodox approach, and unconventional practices.

In 1986, while attending a conference, she learned that deforestation in Africa seriously impacted the chimpanzee population. She said, "I went to the conference as a scientist but left as an activist." Through her Jane Goodall Institute, over 1.5 million acres of forests have now been conserved to create safe habitats for 5,000 chimps and gorillas.

In 2002, she was named a UN Messenger of Peace, and two years later she was named a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. She has written more than two dozen books for children and adults and is the subject of many documentaries. Goodall has a son from her first marriage. Her second husband died in 1980, and she never remarried. Goodall wrote in her book, *Reason for Hope*, that she remained positive and optimistic despite her sorrow.

Even into her late 80s, Goodall traveled an average of 300 days a year to advocate on behalf of chimpanzees and the environment. During the pandemic she participated in virtual events and lectures and educated millions of people through social media and her podcast, *The Hopecast*. Her five reasons for hope are: the passion of youth, human intelligence, the resilience of nature, the power of social media, and the strength of human spirit.

### Lessons:

- 1) It doesn't take an undergraduate degree to make groundbreaking discoveries or to become a notable scientist.
- 2) Dr. Jane Goodall opened our eyes to the dangers facing our environment. Now it is up to each of us to forge ahead to make conservation efforts.

# The “Ta Da” list

Do you ever have days when you feel that you’ve completed nothing at all? One survey found that 46% of Americans feel overwhelmed, and 60% are so overcommitted that they can’t finish everything they set out to do on any given day.

Many of us are focused on what we have left on our “To Do” list rather than celebrating what we’ve accomplished. To better gauge how much is feasible to accomplish in a given time frame, consider complementing your “To Do” list with a “Ta Da” list – one in which you keep track of what you achieved.

For example, the list can include big things like completing a major project for work or returning an important phone call. There may be more mundane (but no less significant) tasks such as emptying the dishwasher, grocery shopping, making dinner, setting up a doctor appointment, taxiing the kids or grandkids to school or reaching out to an old friend.

Writing your tasks down on paper takes them out of your head. That alone can help you stay on track and prioritize what needs to get done. Combining a “To Do” list with a “Ta Da” list can give you satisfaction for the small stuff you’ve completed and provide a reason to feel good at the end of the day. Focusing on the positive can also motivate you to achieve even more successes tomorrow.



# The benefits of lemon water

For a quick pick-me-up that can have health benefits, try drinking a glass of lemon-infused water. Staying hydrated is always important and adding a squeeze of fresh lemon juice can be a tasty way to ingest vitamin C, a powerful antioxidant that can help the immune system.

Lemon water, like most fruit-infused waters, is a diuretic that can reduce bloating from fluid retention. Studies show that drinking fluids before a meal can effectively reduce calorie intake, aiding in losing weight. If you swap a 110-calorie glass of orange juice each morning for a 5-calorie lemon water, you will save enough calories to lose close to ten pounds in one year.

There is evidence that those with a citric acid deficiency can develop kidney stones, and lemon water may be helpful in preventing them. While consumption of acidic foods can aid digestion by breaking down food in the stomach, some people may experience digestive issues because of lemon’s high acidity; discuss your situation with your doctor if that is the case.

Limes have a similar nutritional profile to lemons. However, as limes are generally smaller than lemons, it may take two limes to equal the juice from one lemon. Additionally, lime juice has about half the potassium, vitamin C and folate as the equivalent amount of lemon juice. In contrast, the same amount of fresh-squeezed orange juice has twice the calories and three times more sugar.

Simply squeeze a ½ lemon into cold or hot water and enjoy this refreshing healthful low-calorie beverage.



**Sources used in this issue include:** NPR, British Medical Journal, JAMA, Modern Healthcare, Fast Company, The Commonwealth Fund, Caring.com, Wealth Magazine, Kiplinger’s, MarketWatch.com, IRS, Savingforcollege.com, TempletonPrize.org, National Geographic, Biography.com, Medical News Today, National Institutes of Health, Cleveland Clinic, EatThisHomies.com, ADDitude Magazine, Forbes, Gretchen Ruben Happier podcast.

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