

# HOPE

## HEALTH LETTER

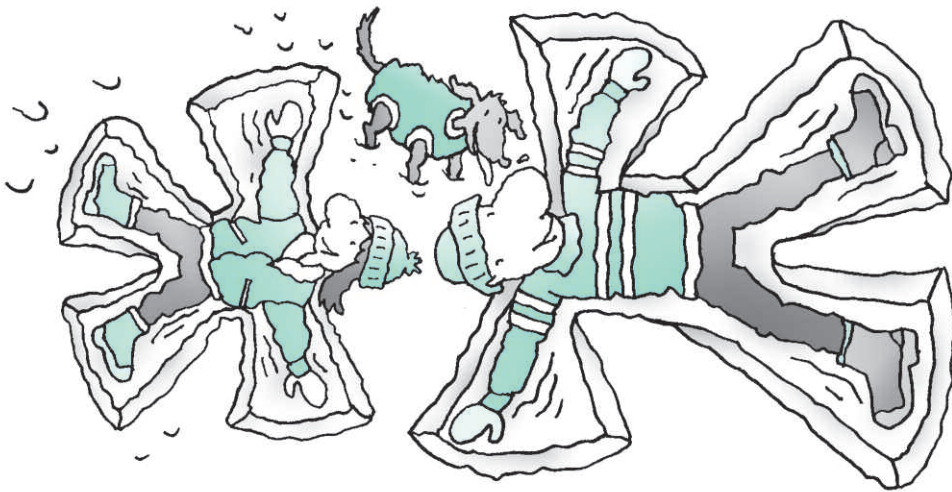


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“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

DECEMBER 2010

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## You're never too old to have the heart of a kid...

If you think like a kid you'll discover ways to pass meaningful values on to your children. Kids love to:

- **Be generous**

By sponsoring a family in need during the holidays or delivering a home-cooked meal to a senior citizen, kids will learn what it means to share their good fortune. The act of giving and allowing them to present the gift will make them happy.

- **Explore and be surprised**

Taking a weekly hike or bike ride or participating in a 5k charity fun run or walk can foster a love of physical activity and introduce kids to new places and experiences.

- **Play games**

A game night once a week will engage the entire family in face to face communication as well as teach kids sportsmanship and how to win and lose graciously.

In the long run, simple family rituals or traditions like these may build more happy memories than expensive gifts and flashy celebrations.

Source: Families and Work Institute

## Here's a tip for safe texting

Hold your smartphone in one hand and type with the pointer finger of your opposite hand.

This will help prevent “Blackberry Thumb,” a swelling of the tendons that connect the thumbs to the wrists, which makes it painful to lift things.

Reading the tiny screen can also make distant objects look blurry after you use a smartphone for long periods of time. Soothe your eyes by looking up often and focusing on a spot far away.

And one more non-negotiable reminder: never text while you're driving.

Source: Alan Hedge, PhD and Director of the Human Factors and Ergonomics program at Cornell University

## Give of yourself



see page 7...

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# How sweet it is!



### Surprising facts about one of nature's nearly perfect foods

November and December are the peak season for sweet potatoes — which just may be one of the reasons they're such a popular holiday dish.

But no matter what time of year you enjoy them, sweet potatoes are one of the most nutritious foods you can eat. In addition to being high in vitamin C and fiber, a medium-sized sweet potato has only 95 calories and contains more than double the daily recommended amount of vitamin A. Their low glycemic number (how fast they turn to sugar in the blood stream) also makes sweet potatoes a better choice than white potatoes and other starches such as white rice and refined pasta.

### Glazed Root Vegetables with Pomegranates

A colorful twist on a traditional dish

- 2 large sweet potatoes scrubbed and chopped into bite-sized pieces
- 10 medium carrots, sliced into thick rounds
- 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 6 Tbsp. 100% pomegranate juice
- Kosher salt to taste
- ½ cup fresh pomegranate seeds
- fresh black pepper, a few grinds

Preheat oven to 400°F. Coat a baking sheet with olive oil cooking spray. In a medium bowl, whisk together the olive oil, pomegranate juice, salt, and pepper. Add the sweet potatoes and carrots to the bowl and toss to evenly coat with the pomegranate mixture. Spread the vegetables onto the prepared baking sheet and roast for about 40 minutes (stirring once or twice) until softened and glazed. Sprinkle seeds on when serving.

Serves 4. Per serving: 220 calories, 3 g protein, 38 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 7 g total fat (1 g saturated fat), 204 mg sodium (does not include extra add salted to taste)

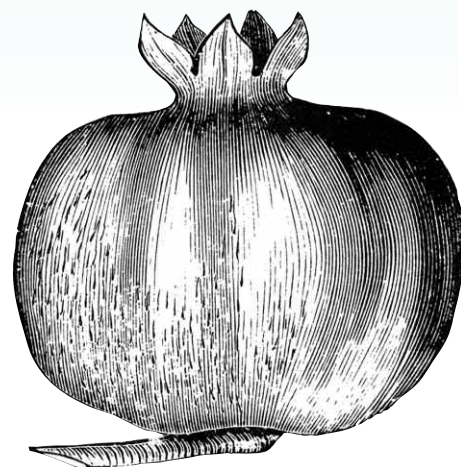
## 'Tater trivia

- **The brighter the color**, the higher the antioxidant content.
- **Cold temperatures** can alter the taste of sweet potatoes, so avoid storing them in the refrigerator. They keep best in a cool, well-ventilated place that's not close to a stove or other heat source.
- **To prevent the flesh from turning dark**, cook sweet potatoes immediately after peeling or keep them completely covered with water in a bowl.
- **Sweet potatoes and yams are not the same vegetable.** Although they are often labeled as yams in many markets, sweet potatoes are actually from a different vegetable family.

## The jewel fruit

Pomegranates are hailed for their high content of vitamin C and other health promoting antioxidants. Although they appear exotic, they can be easily cleaned and prepared and will add a tangy flavor and crunch to salads and savory dishes. For tips on cleaning and preparation visit [www.pomegranates.org](http://www.pomegranates.org).

Source: The California Pomegranate Council



# get moving

## THE SECRET TO STAYING ACTIVE FOR A LIFETIME: Treat your knees with TLC

### Easy on the knees... Not so easy...

Smooth, low impact activities such as:

Stretching  
Swimming  
Water aerobics  
Cycling  
Walking  
Elliptical trainers

Activities that repeatedly pound, twist, and turn the knee joint, such as:

Running  
Tennis  
Racquetball  
Squash  
Basketball  
Baseball

### Other ways to protect one of your body's most important joints:

- Always warm up before any physical activity — even if it's just housework.
- Do exercises to strengthen your thighs and legs — the muscles that support your knees.
- When gardening, scrubbing floors, or tackling other similar tasks, kneel on one knee at a time and change knees frequently.
- Aim for a healthy body weight. Every extra pound you carry puts 5 to 7 extra pounds of pressure on your knees, which increases your risk for osteoarthritis of the knee.

Sources: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons; The Arthritis Foundation



BRR!!

## What to wear for outdoor winter workouts

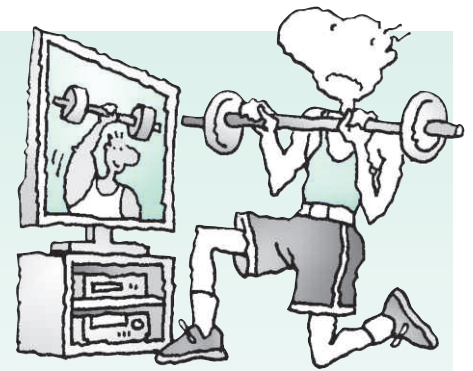
**Learn how to layer your clothing: choose socks and underwear made with moisture-wicking, synthetic fabrics.** Avoid cotton — it holds moisture next to your skin, and you'll get colder if you start sweating.

**Lightweight fleece** gives you the most warmth and the least bulk for the middle or outer layers.

**A waterproof jacket** of a lightweight nylon blend will protect you from ice and snow. Make sure jackets have vents to avoid trapping too much heat.

**Carry a lightweight hat and gloves or glove liners** that can be easily tucked away if you get too warm and replaced when you're chilled.

**Shoes with wide, low heels, and rubber — not leather — soles** give you the most traction on ice and snow. Shoes with treads will also improve traction. Most running shoes perform best in moderate, dry temperatures.



## Exercise videos

### 5 questions to ask before you push play

Exercise videos are an easy way to move your workouts indoors during cold weather. Answering these questions will help you find the right fit:

1. Does the video meet your specific needs and goals? Check the label to see if it's for beginners or for people with more experience.
2. Do you have enough room to do the workout safely and comfortably?
3. Do you need special equipment such as steps, barbells, or balls?
4. Is the instructor certified by an accredited fitness organization? Avoid videos that use celebrities as their main selling point — especially if they are leading the instruction alone.
5. Before I buy it can I rent it or borrow it from a friend or the library?

Source: American Council on Exercise

## Smart Living



For outdoor winter activities dress for temperatures about 20 degrees higher than they actually are. The air may feel chilly when you start, but your body will warm up once you get moving.

### POWER TO THE PATIENT

## Winter Wonderland

One of the more picturesque images of winter is a landscape covered in a fresh blanket of snow. Beyond appreciating the beauty of such scenes, being in them can provoke joy and hardship — joy for those who love sledding, skiing, snowboarding, and ice skating; and hardship for those who shovel drives and walkways. To help ensure safe outdoor winter work and fun, be sure to follow these tips:

1. Dress for the weather, including head covering — especially nose, cheeks, and ears prone to frostbite — and warm boots and mittens or gloves; go indoors if skin appears red and swollen or waxy.
2. When shoveling snow, take small amounts per shovelful and use your legs to lift and turn, not your back; talk with your doctor first if you do not do regular physical activity equivalent to shoveling. Back strain and heart attacks are common causes of emergency room visits for older shovelers.
3. Sled away from trees and other sledders and obstacles; don't sled head-first.
4. Ski and snowboard only with proper-fitting equipment, stay in control, and always wear a helmet.
5. Don't mix alcohol and outdoor winter activities.

Taking these precautions can help you enjoy your winter wonderland without a visit to the emergency room.

Happy holidays!

**William J. Mayer, MD, MPH**  
Medical Editor

*Do you have a subject you would like the doctor to discuss? E-mail DocTalk@HopeHealth.com.*



### Eco-friendly plants

Palms, rubber plants, Boston ferns, and ivy are houseplants that act as natural air filters to help clean the air in homes or office buildings. Indoor air contains chemical vapors that are emitted by products made with synthetic substances, such as some carpets and furniture.

In addition to sucking up carbon dioxide and giving off pure oxygen, houseplants add moisture to rooms.

Two to four houseplants per 100 square feet may be enough to remove many pollutants, says former NASA researcher Bill Wolverton, who has been studying the cleaning effects of indoor plants for 25 years.

### Home blood pressure monitoring

People who take their blood pressure at home may be able to control it more successfully than those treated with conventional methods.

In one study of adults with high blood pressure, those who took daily readings and then sent the information to their doctor's office via a fax, text, or e-mail showed a greater reduction in blood pressure over six and 12 months than those who received standard care.

Researchers believe that working actively to control blood pressure made the self-management group more successful. If participants in the self-monitoring group were not reaching their blood pressure goals, they were able to change their medication according to pre-arranged guidelines with their physician.

Source: *The Lancet*, Vol. 376, pg. 173

# Healthy

Timely Wellness News & Ideas

### Some good news

Early detection, a decline in smoking, and better treatment have contributed to a steady decrease in cancer deaths over the last 20 years.

Since screenings such as colonoscopies for colon cancer and mammograms for breast cancer are an important part of the defense against cancer, talk to your doctor about which screening tests are appropriate for your age, sex, and family history.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 10,000 premature deaths could be prevented each year through screenings for breast and colon cancer.

Source: *American Cancer Society*



*Each morning review your activities for the day and plan how you will make them go well. In the evening, review and celebrate your accomplishments.*

### Now that I have your attention...

Setting limits on "screen time" may do more than decrease kids' risk for childhood obesity.

Researchers learned that children and young adults who spend more than two hours total per day watching television or playing video games had more than double the risk for attention problems.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting screen time to a total of no more than two hours per day for children age two or older.

Source: *Pediatrics*, Vol. 126, pg. 214

# Snip-its!

## Less is more

If you find yourself bewildered when you have several options to choose from — whether it's everyday items like shoes or more important things like car insurance — pick several that are “good enough” and then make a random choice, advises Barry Schwartz, PhD.

Limiting your options will make the decision easier and will help you stop worrying about whether or not a different choice would have made you happier.

Source: *The Paradox of Choice, Why More is Less*, by Barry Schwartz, PhD

## Staying on track

For help remembering what you read, use a pen with the tip retracted or covered to “underline” the copy. (You're not actually writing on the page, you're just keeping your place.) When using a computer, use the cursor to guide your eyes. Tracking where you are on the page can improve concentration, comprehension, and long-term memory.

The average college student loses his or her place seven times per page, says Hal Wechsler, an educational consultant with Speed-Learning Tutoring Centers ([www.speedlearning.org](http://www.speedlearning.org)).

## A note to caregivers

You deserve a break today... and everyday. Try to carve out an hour a day to do something that will give you pleasure and entertainment.

Instead of feeling selfish about taking time for yourself remember that your loved one will benefit by being around people who can offer stimulation of a different kind.

Source: *Passages In Caregiving: Turning Chaos into Confidence*, by Gail Sheehey

## What to do if your child is too scared to go to sleep

- Talk to your child during the day about how he or she can be less frightened at night and explain how you deal with something when you are afraid.
- Read stories out loud about children who have fears but conquer them.
- Make being in the dark “fun” by playing tag with flashlights or glow sticks.
- Use creative ways to deal with the fear — fill a spray bottle with water and label it “monster spray.”
- Have a pet sleep in the room with your child or use a night-light and leave the bedroom door open so he or she doesn't feel isolated.
- Whenever possible, get your child actively involved in finding a solution that will help him or her feel safe and gain a sense of control.

Source: *SleepMatters*, Vol. 11, pg 5; published by the National Sleep Foundation

## Easy does it...

Take it gradually when you increase your level of activity, especially if you're a jogger, runner, or dancer. Suddenly exercising more frequently or much more vigorously can increase your risk for pain or tenderness in the lower leg, a common condition known as shin splints.

New recruits in military training, along with people that are flatfooted or have extremely firm arches, are also at increased risk for shin splints.

Source: *American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons*

The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your health-care providers, *not* to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.

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## December Health Observances

### Safe Toys and Gifts

If sports equipment is on your shopping list, include protective eye gear such as goggles with a basketball or a face shield and a batter's helmet with a baseball bat.

Avoid toys that shoot or have parts that fly off. BB guns and air guns are not toys. In fact, thousands of eye injuries are caused by flying toys every year.

Learn about recalls of unsafe toys at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) or call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772.

Source: [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org)

### Handwashing Awareness

To see a fun video with a catchy song that teaches kids the importance of handwashing, go to [www.henrythehand.com](http://www.henrythehand.com).

Kids will learn that these steps can help stop the spread of cold and flu germs: Wash your hands several times a day and before and after eating. Cough or sneeze into your elbow — not your hands. Avoid putting your fingers in your eyes, mouth, or nose.



Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn.

Medical Editor: William Mayer, MD, MPH  
Managing Editor: Kate Barton

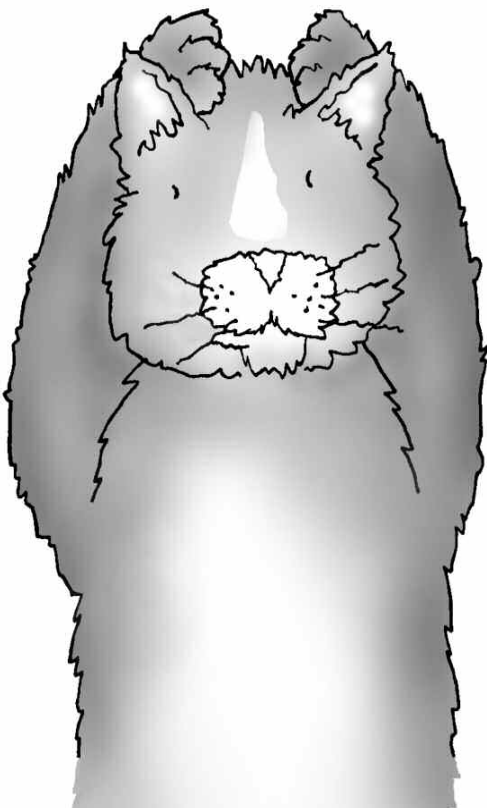
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## Relax with these easy self-massage techniques

- **Place your thumbs behind your ears while spreading your fingers on top of your head.** Move your scalp back and forth by making small circles with your fingertips for 15–20 seconds.
- **Reach one arm across the front of your body to the opposite shoulder.** Press firmly on the muscle above your shoulder blade, using a circular motion. Repeat on the other side.
- **Sit in a comfortable place and rest one foot on the opposite leg.** Place one hand on top of the other, and stroke your foot from your toes to your ankles, then glide hands back to your toes. Hold your foot with both hands, one on either side. Using both thumbs, firmly press down the center of the sole of the foot while making slight, gentle circles on the arch and ball of the foot.

Source: Northwestern Health Sciences University



## the whole you



## 10 great tips for happy, healthy, and safe holidays

1. **Count your blessings and let go of unrealistic expectations.** During the holidays people tend to think about how they wish their lives were different in some way. Gratitude is an appreciation of your life right now and can help you avoid a case of the holiday blues.
2. **Ask each family member to make a “wish list” of holiday activities they want to do.** Then have a family meeting to cut the wish list in half. Limiting activities and saying no to unwanted invitations will make the season less stressful.
3. **Use LED lights for decorating.** They are shatterproof, shock resistant, and produce almost no heat, which reduces the risk for fires.
4. **If you use a ladder to hang lights or other decorations make sure it's on firm ground** and won't hit any trees or electrical wires. Never stand above the third rung from the top of an extension ladder or on the shelf or back section of a stepladder. Move the ladder when needed and avoid overreaching.
5. **Consider an artificial tree if someone in your home has allergies or asthma.** Real trees bring pollen and mold spores into the house. Clean artificial trees, decorations, and lights, since they collect dust and mold, which can trigger allergies. If you use artificial snow be sure to follow directions. It can irritate lungs if inhaled.
6. **Avoid placing the tree near a fireplace or heat vent to keep it from drying out and becoming a fire risk.** Secure trees and other decorations so they can't be pulled down by children or pets. One more tip: poinsettias can be toxic to pets and tinsel is another hazard, especially for cats since they are attracted by the shine.
7. **When you host a holiday party, serve alcohol in moderation, offer nonalcoholic beverages,** and remind your guests to plan ahead and pick a designated driver.
8. **Have a meal or snack before you go shopping.** Heading for the grocery store on an empty stomach can increase impulse buying and overspending.
9. **Defrost turkey and other meats in the refrigerator** and use a meat thermometer to make sure they are thoroughly cooked. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within two hours.
10. **If you give a bike, skateboard, or similar gift, make sure the recipient has a helmet or include one in the gift.** Remember that any toy with parts small enough to fit inside the cardboard tube of a toilet paper roll poses a choking hazard. Toys with string, straps or cords longer than 7 inches pose a risk for strangulation.

Sources: Puget Sound Energy; American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology; American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons; [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

## fiscal fitness

# Gifts from the heart: how to be strategic when giving

While people and organizations are in need throughout the year, your family may be like countless others; at the holidays, thoughts often turn to giving to others.

If you plan to donate money, be a smart charitable donor. Charity Navigator suggests using these “best practices:”

- **Give to causes you feel strongly about.** Instead of giving to generic cancer charities, for example, target programs with specific goals, such as a children’s cancer hospital.
- **Concentrate your giving.** Smart donors focus their giving on one or two well-run organizations devoted to a cause for which they share the passion.
- **Be careful of sound-alike names.** The Children’s Charity Fund and Children’s Defense Fund may sound like the same organization, but they are different charities. The Children’s Defense Fund champions children from backgrounds of poverty, abuse, or neglect. The Children’s Charity Fund works to help disabled children, according to Charity Navigator. Informed donors take the time to uncover the difference.
- **Confirm a charity’s 501(c)(3) status.** Smart givers only support groups granted tax-exempt status in the Internal Revenue Code.

Your main motivation for giving obviously includes that you have the “heart” for helping others less fortunate. But don’t forget that charitable donations are tax deductible. Your CPA can advise you in this matter. For all the best practices of smart donors, visit [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org).

You’ll also find information on the six questions to ask before donating, giving in times of crisis, and a complete list of “4-Star Charities.” The Better Business Bureau offers the Wise Giving Alliance, which has more than a century of experience in charity evaluation. The Alliance doesn’t rank charities but seeks to assist donors in making informed decisions about charities they may wish to support. Read more at [www.bbb.org/us/Wise-Giving/](http://www.bbb.org/us/Wise-Giving/).



## Give of yourself

An April 2010 survey by UnitedHealthcare and VolunteerMatch found that 68% of those who volunteered in the past year reported that volunteering made them feel physically healthier. In fact, 29% of volunteers who suffer from a chronic condition say that volunteering has helped them better manage their illness.

According to a recent government study, 63.4 million Americans volunteered last year. How do you find the right outlet for your desire to volunteer? You could start with VolunteerMatch ([www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)), a national nonprofit dedicated to strengthening communities by helping good people and good causes to connect. VolunteerMatch can provide you either physical or virtual opportunities with thousands of nonprofits, including organizations such as the American Red Cross, the National MS Society, Easter Seals, Girl Scouts of the USA, and Ronald McDonald House Charities.

*“I’ve never been a millionaire but I know I’d be just darling at it.”*

— Dorothy Parker

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# HOPE HEALTH LETTER

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## weight control

### Set your home up for success

The idea that we're a product of our environment may be especially true when it comes to staying at a healthy weight.

In one study people who had fewer TVs and four or more pieces of exercise equipment around their home were the most successful at losing weight and keeping it off.

"If you want to succeed pay attention to your environment," says Suzanne Phelan, PhD. "Do you have TVs in every room? When you walk into the kitchen do you see high-fat/high-calorie foods?"

The more prompts you have to be active the more likely you are to do it, adds Phelan. There's no need to build a home gym. Stability balls, resistance bands, and hand weights that are in visible, convenient locations will remind you to get moving.

Source: *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, October 22, 2009

### Cats, dogs, and cold weather



Always keep your dog on a leash when on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm — when dogs can lose their scent and easily become lost.

Once you get back indoors, wipe off your dog's paws, legs, and stomach. They can ingest salt, antifreeze, or other chemicals when they lick their paws.

Keep cats inside. Felines can freeze, get hurt, or be exposed to infectious diseases if left outside.

If there are outdoor cats in your neighborhood, bang loudly on the car hood before starting the engine. Cats may sleep under the hoods of cars to stay warm. The noise will give them a chance to escape before the engine starts.

Source: *American Society For the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*

## body, mind, & soul

“Think of every step in a workout as a step in the right direction.”

— Valerie Bertinelli

“Don't let life discourage you. Everyone who got where he is had to begin where he was.”

— Richard L. Evans

“Most people have seen worse things in private than they pretend to be shocked at in public.”

— Edgar Watson Howe

“The opposite of talking isn't listening. The opposite of talking is waiting.”

— Fran Lebowitz

“Things should be as simple as possible, but not simpler.”

— Albert Einstein