

# Stuff

## ▶ RUNNING THE NUMBERS

5.2 American's average stress level, on a 10-point scale, in 2011

6.2 What it was in 2007



75 Percentage of respondents who cited money as their main stressor, followed by work  
— American Psychological Association

### ▶ MY STUFF



## Holly Halftone

Artist, co-founder of Drawn & Plastered themed art nights

**If your house were on fire, heaven forbid, what's the one item contained within that you would try to take with you?** (People, pets and computers not included.)

That's easy, my camera. It would also be easy to escape the burning house quickly with, as it's usually very nearby.

**What's the one clothing/fashion item you can't live without?**

Hmm, hard to say. I have way too many of those. I'm going to go with my newest favourites though — my Jeffrey Campbell "Nightwalk" black lace heels.

**What's your favourite knick-knack and why?**

I hope these count as knick-knacks: I have a set of Dexter blood slide coasters that are pretty cool.

**What's the oldest thing you own?**

I have two slightly old items that I love. First off is my hot pink Pantagis dress from the 1980s. The same design was most memorably seen in red, on (actress) Rose McGowan. The second is a rhinestone necklace that was my Grammie's. It's ridiculously sparkly, which makes it awesome.

**Describe your most beloved piece of furniture.**

An old steamer trunk. I don't have a lot of furniture, but I actually have two of these — one at home and one at my studio (my second home). They're great for storage. Here, I keep all my mom's old belly dance costumes, and at home, all of my art.

**Is there an edible item we'll always find in your pantry or fridge?**

Energy drinks.

### POLYAMORY CONTINUED

Polyamory ("poly" being Greek for many, and "amor" Latin for love) is a term coined in the early '90s to describe the practice of having more than romantic relationship at the same time. It's perhaps best defined by what it is not.

Polyamory is not swinging, which is more about recreational sex. It is not an orgy, which is group sex. And it is not (Listen up, Newt Gingrich) a one-sided open relationship, which is cheating.

"We're not terribly fond of people who come along on our forum and say, 'I'm polyamorous but my wife doesn't know,'" says Anita Sheng, a Winnipeg polyamory activist and moderator at polywinnipeg.com. The forum has about 200 members in and around Manitoba.

You might say polyamory is free love with strings attached. Although practitioners have multiple romantic partners, openness and honesty are core tenets of the lifestyle.

Sheng, a 29-year-old freelance graphic and web designer, has a live-in boyfriend, a Winnipeg girlfriend, and casual male partners in both Illinois and the Yukon. They all know about each other.

"This feels really natural to me. It's not something I chose," says the one-time Green Party candidate, who has been "poly dating" since she was a teen and likens being polyamorous to being gay.

Sheng, who is divorced, says that while she and her husband had a sexually open relationship, "he wasn't open to multiple romantic connections."

Although polyamory's profile has risen in recent years because of the Internet, it's impossible to know how many people practise it since there's no applicable box to tick on any census form — and it's still a crime in Canada to have more than one lawfully wedded husband or wife.

John Ince, a Vancouver lawyer and spokesman for the Canadian Polyamory Advocacy Association, estimates that about three per cent of Canadians live in multiple-partner relationships.

Polyamory, for the record, is quite distinct from polygamy, which, thanks to TV shows such as the fictional drama *Big Love* and the reality series *Sister Wives*, people tend to associate with fundamentalist Mormons who practise plural marriages.

Polyamorous relationships are post-modern, secular, egalitarian and consensual, says Ince, while traditional polygamy is a pre-modern institution with religious and patriarchal roots.

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**'A critical distinction is that (in polyamory) there's no stigma attached to any form of sexual orientation'**

says the founder of the Sex Party, a political party based in B.C., who has been involved in poly relationships for more than 30 years.

The relational groupings can be triads — a triangle if all three partners are intimately involved, or a V if only two of the three pairs have a sexual bond (Michelle, Michael and Liam are a V) — quads, or more. Groupings of three or more are sometimes called "meshworks." They can be all women or all men and include transgender and transsexual persons.

Ince, 59, who was in a long-term polyamorous relationship with two women but is recently single and currently "between other relationships," says it's a myth that polyamory is driven by the male ego and "fundamentally about men getting their rocks off."

For one thing, most polyamory authors are women, he says, including Deborah Anapol, a pioneer of the modern polyamory movement in the

1980s and author of the seminal book, *Polyamory: Love Without Limits*.

Most poly people aren't just in it for the sex, Ince says, but seek "intimacy to a very high degree."

And while he concedes that polyamory works best for people with high self-esteem, Ince would argue that possessiveness and jealousy are more highly associated with the prevailing monogamous relationship model.

"In monogamy, if your partner is attracted to someone else, you're going to lose that partner."

Her feelings for Liam did not negate or interfere with her love for her husband — which has only deepened and grown for her ability to stay together through the whole experience, Michelle says.

"What I had to learn through this whole process is that fidelity does not have to be defined through exclusivity," she says.

"Polyamory provided me with a context to make sense of my feelings for both (men), understanding that just as a parent can have deep and equal love for more than one child, so can an adult have deep and equal love for more than one partner."

Although Michelle and Michael were legally married in a religious ceremony in 1996, there has been no ceremony or rite to mark her relationship with Liam, although they do often talk about having one. And they do wear matching rings to reflect their commitment.

The trio asked that their real names not be published in order to protect the identities of their four children, ages eight to 16, three of whom live in the home full time. They have faced criticism from family and friends, and severed relationships because of their lifestyle choices.

But they consider themselves a "blended family," and enjoy recreational activities and vacations together as a family. Michelle also makes sure she spends travel and leisure time with each partner individually to nurture both relationships.

As polyamorous couples go, Michelle and Michael are unusual because they didn't go looking for a third partner.

When asked why he didn't issue his wife of 16 years an ultimatum, Michael, who is soft-spoken and bears a striking resemblance to Liam, replies: "I think I understood what I'd be asking of her to give up."

"Which is exactly why I love him as much as I do," Michelle says. For more info on Winnipeg's poly community, go to [www.polywinnipeg.com](http://www.polywinnipeg.com).

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### ▶ DAILY HOROSCOPE / by Georgia Nicolis

#### Saturday, Jan. 28

**MOON ALERT** We have the all clear today to shop and make important decisions. The moon is in Aries.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19) Bosses, parents, teachers and VIPs might surprise you today. Ditto for the police. (Therefore, watch for speeding traps). These surprises might be pleasant or unpleasant. Best to stay on your toes and be ready to jump in either direction. (You're good at this.)

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20) Unexpected opportunities to travel might fall in your lap today. Ditto for chances to take a course or get further training or education. Expect a few curve balls with publishing, the media, medicine and the law. (Who knew?)

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 20) Surprise gifts, goodies and favours from others might come your way today. Make friends with your bank account so you know what's happening. Something unexpected related to inheritances, shared property, taxes and debt might occur. (Good or bad.)

**CANCER** (June 21-July 22) Partners and close friends are completely unpredictable today. (But these could be pleasant, exciting diversions.) Possibly, someone catches you off guard and you're not too pleased. Hard to say but do expect a few surprises today. Someone close to you might demand more space or more freedom in the relationship.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22) Computer crashes, power outages, staff shortages and cancelled meetings are par for the course today. Some Leos will be excited about the introduction of new, high-tech equipment at work. Others will be thrilled to flirt with new staff. Unusual news related to small pets (or possibly your health) is also likely.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) This is an accident-prone day for your kids, so be extra vigilant. Surprise invitations to fun events might materialize. Today is definitely full of spontaneous, fun opportunities to flirt, enjoy sports and schmooze with others. Be alert! (The world needs more leerts.)

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) Stock the fridge because unexpected company

might drop by today. Alternatively, expected company could be a no-show. Something will interrupt your daily routine, but hopefully, in a pleasant way. New high-tech toys at home are likely. A family member might have surprising news.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) This is a mildly accident-prone day for your sign, so be careful. Slow down and take it easy. However, you're also full of bright ideas. You're excited to meet new and unusual people who can introduce you to different places and ways of thinking.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Everything to do with your cash flow, earnings and possessions is unpredictable today. You might find a new job or a new source of earnings. However, you might lose money (or find it). Therefore, be on your toes. Guard your possessions against theft and loss.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Today is full of new discoveries and encounters with exciting people. Your daily routine will be disrupted but you will probably welcome this. Because you have a fresh way of seeing things, you might discover solutions to old problems. A good day to study math, science and high-tech stuff.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Your research abilities are excellent today, especially in fields related to mathematics, astronomy, aviation and even astrology. (These are all subjects that fall under the ruler ship of Aquarius, hence your childhood desire to fly a helicopter or become an astronaut.) Secrets might also be revealed today.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20) Friends, especially in group situations, might surprise you today. Some of you might meet someone who is a real character. Whatever the situation, you'll enjoy the company of others because people are unpredictable today. Stay spontaneous and ready to go with the flow. (Chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.)

**TODAY'S BIRTHDAY** Novelist Colette (1873-1954) shares your birthday. You think with originality and you do things that are highly original. You amaze people! You are a trendsetter whether you care to be or not. Personally, you will always rise to a challenge because it gives life some sizzle! And you will not be dictated to. In the year ahead, you will have a chance to learn or discover something valuable to you.

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#### Sunday, Jan. 29

**MOON ALERT** We have the all clear today to shop and make important decisions. The moon is in Aries.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19) Do remember, this is the year where you can really boost your income. You can either get a better paying job or make more money on the side. Therefore, trust your money-making ideas and explore your gutsy urges. (Money is so handy when you want to buy things.)

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20) Be confident you can achieve more than usual because, for the first half of this year, lucky, moneybags Jupiter is in your sign. This happens only once every 12 years, and it definitely brings you good fortune by attracting auspicious circumstances and important people to you. Trust your good luck!

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 20) It's no coincidence that some of you are having experiences (with or without a guru or teacher) that make you feel more spiritual or more tuned in to a deeper level of understanding and appreciation of life. This can help you deal with some of the increased activity and chaos at home. Oh yeah.

**CANCER** (June 21-July 22) Enjoy your increased popularity this year. Furthermore, don't hesitate to make big plans for the future. These plans might be bigger than you dared to dream possible, but why not start off with the perfect picture and scale back from there?

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22) Most Leos are looking at 18 months ahead, filled with promotions, kudos, increased praise and recognition. And, of course, you've earned it. You'll see that bosses and other authority will start to take you more seriously. Everyone will regard you with respect.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Travel opportunities and chances to explore avenues in publishing, the media, medicine and the law are exciting this year for Virgos. Some will have chances to explore classes and higher education or advanced training. Whatever happens will broaden your experience of your world.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) It's good to know that this is an excellent year to get mortgages and loans or do fundraising or receive benefits in other ways from the wealth and resources of other people, especially partners. Some of you will benefit indirectly because your partner gets a raise or bonus. Either way, you're laughing all the way to the bank.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Be re-assured that close friendships and partnerships will be sources of joy for most of this year. Those of you who enter into committed partnerships (and marriage) will do so with someone richer, older, wiser or more worldly.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) This is a gentle reminder that this is your year to improve your health and your job. Believe this. You can get a better job or better duties or better working conditions or your horrible boss will leave.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Even though you have quite likely recently travelled, make vacation plans for the year ahead because 2012 is all about romance, love affairs, vacations and fun social times! This is your greatest opportunity in years, to travel for pleasure. Don't let it slip by.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) You have much to look forward to this year because your home and your family will become greater sources of joy for you in 2012. Similarly, real-estate deals will benefit you. Your home will feel enriched.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20) You will be much happier in 2012 because your sense of optimism and your ability to manifest a positive frame of mind will guarantee this. You feel better about life and more hopeful about your future. Relations with siblings will improve.

**TODAY'S BIRTHDAY** Actor Tom Selleck (1945) shares your birthday. You have high ideals and often promote worthy causes. You want to make the world a better place. Personally, you are playful and fun-loving. Others enjoy your company. Nevertheless, you can achieve a lot because you work so hard and think fast on your feet. Good news! Your year ahead might be one of the most powerful years of your life. Dream big!

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