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Editorial

Pop Doris

The third edition—and a special month, April. It's spring; like those short compositions we used to write in elementary school, the trees have blossomed, nature is smiling, and we admire the greenery on our way to school.

Back to the present, we really can admire nature again—wherever it still lingers in the city, or, if you have the privilege of living in rural or greener areas, everywhere. But we're intellectuals, so enough with writing about cute little trees; let's get down to serious matters.

A culturally shaped emblem of spring in Europe is rebirth. We could add blossoming, freshness, color, life, the joy of achievement—but above all it's nature's return to life after the harsh winter. We got through this winter with hot chocolate and daydreams of warmer cities, and now we already have the freedom to wear things purely for aesthetics, not just to keep our bodies warm.

The cool of evening offers the chance to savor a glass of wine with friends, watch a movie with the window open, take a leisurely stroll. But the sun—oh, have you seen the sun? And the lack of interest of

those too caught up in life's worries? I walked through the city focused on what I had to get done until I saw the first tree; then I decided this view deserves respect, and that thinking about problems wouldn't be a form of respect. So while I was on my way, I paid attention to the changes, to the flowers, to those patches of beauty that slip in among the grays and neutrality of the buildings.

We dedicate this third edition to renewal, opportunity, and the new. I hope these lines bring you the change you want and that you find inspiration in what we write.

Organizarea și curățarea spațiului mental

Pop Doris

It may seem like the exact equivalent of cleaning your house, but it's actually a bit different, even if the steps are similar. Overall, this process is a set of decisions and actions meant to ease thinking, help us feel “emotionally lighter,” handle everyday situations better, and boost our performance. The cleansing is directed at useless or dysfunctional thoughts, distractions from our goals, and unhealed negative memories. Its purpose is to improve focus, reduce perceived stress, increase well-being, and build tolerance for doing what we set out to do—without taking refuge in distractions.

Some see this process as eliminating excess and creating a space where every thought, emotion, desire, and goal has its abstract place, and where we keep only what aligns with our values, objectives, and wishes. At first glance it may seem easy: we sort, decide what to keep, and then enjoy a new life. In reality, it's a process that requires daily, periodic effort—accepting setbacks and then rising back up to the new level we want.

Why would someone choose to do this kind of meticulous work that demands constant effort to

maintain a state of clear, analytical thinking? It seems like a paradox, because we exert effort to reduce difficulty, yet that effort—at least initially—is much harder than the spontaneous, easy way we're used to.

A few benefits it can bring include:

- Improved concentration, which we need when tackling more complex tasks, so we can focus on the tasks that truly matter to us
- Reduced worry, fostering a sense of calm
- Clearer, more informed decisions, because we can consider our emotions without being controlled by them
- Better well-being, because we become more resilient, adaptable, and self-assured

Steps to follow:

1. **Identify the sources of clutter.** Create open lists (that you can add to later) of worries, self-criticism, unpleasant memories, unresolved problems—anything that clutters the mind.
2. **Practice intention,** either through meditation or by consciously choosing your thoughts and observing reality without judgment.
3. **Set priorities.** Now that the issues are on paper and your mind is intentional, establish priorities:

what's important, what truly matters, what's urgent, etc.

4. **Make a to-do list**, organized into long-, medium-, and short-term tasks.
5. **Limit information intake** by intentionally seeking relevant information and ignoring what doesn't align with your personal goals.
6. **Add creative or relaxing elements** to the list. Alongside the necessities, include time for a simple walk, a sketch, a movie—anything that brings pleasure, innocent or not—so you can enjoy your time.
7. **Optionally or in parallel**, give yourself a visually uncluttered space if you need it, by rearranging or reducing décor and what you keep in sight.
8. **Once you know what to do**, set a few routines—self-care, meditation, work, fun, family, etc. Try to weave these anchors of certainty among your other activities.
9. **If you find you're struggling**, consider working with a specialist—a coach or a psychologist—for guidance.
10. **Practice gratitude.** Choose a moment each day or each week to spend a few minutes writing down or mentally reflecting on what makes you feel grateful that week.

The practice of mental decluttering is valuable and useful when applied in moderation and tailored to each

person's individual needs. By using the strategies and steps described here, you can improve your emotional state, lighten your daily life, and enhance your overall quality of life.

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The Five Dimensions of Personality and Related Behaviors

Doris Pop

Personality is as complex as it is easy to describe and understand, because we can recognize ourselves in trait descriptions, recognize people we know, and, in most cases, give examples of different behaviors when someone names a personality trait. For example, if I mention agreeableness, you probably think of cooperative behaviors, compromise, pleasing others, and doing socially desirable things.

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE

The essence of this cluster of traits or behavior patterns is the desire and willingness to engage in new, exciting, or simply interesting experiences—the openness, as the name suggests, to have diverse experiences, to live life, to change, to improve, to try something new.

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

This involves attention to detail, respecting rules, a preference for structure, meticulousness, as well as perseverance—continuing sustained effort even after the initial enthusiasm has faded.

EXTRAVERSION

Probably the best-known label of all, this refers to the desire, pleasure, and tendency to communicate,

connect, and spend time with others. Extroverts usually feel more energized and full of life in others' presence than when they are alone.

AGREEABLENESS

A set of characteristics found in people who would rather please, be kind, and maintain harmonious relationships—even at the expense of their own goals and priorities.

NEUROTICISM

This is the emotional-regulation component. People high in neuroticism tend to be more emotionally unstable; they struggle to self-regulate and react quickly and impulsively—whether that shows up as crying easily, anger, or exaggerated joy. In contrast, those low in neuroticism are calm, stable, and remain rational in stressful moments.

Now that we've defined what each group of traits involves, I suggest a little exercise: try identifying them in friends, family, colleagues, or new people you meet, to see what you can spot. Keep in mind that a single specific behavior does not imply the presence of a trait. If someone is very enthusiastic about trying a new work program for their job, they might be motivated by openness to experience—but they might also just be fed up with the old program, or they may have realized they have a chance to learn something new and are simply being conscientious.

It matters to know these categories of traits so we can identify them in ourselves and in others.

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Recommended Resorts and Getaways for Well-Being

Tuscany, Italy

A place for those who want to get away from the gray concrete of the city and find farms, vine-covered hills and wine experts, soothing landscapes, and flavors to match. The local offerings cater more to gourmands and lovers of the picturesque—but this kind of relaxation is beneficial, too.

Bali, Indonesia

The dreamlike scenery is rivaled by nature-inspired accommodations that offer a fresh setting for anyone used to modern living. Outdoor showers, a diet centered on exotic fruits and vegetables with unparalleled flavors, flowers in your hair, the salty sea air, wooden huts, and friendly locals—all invite you to discover life differently. The lifestyle there can be addictive.

Santorini, Greece

Oh, how Greece has become a symbol of summers with white dresses, blue rooftops, and relaxing stays—whether with family, friends, or solo. The Greek islands are full of tourists, but there are resorts where a calm, restful atmosphere is preserved. It can be the perfect haven to savor Mediterranean cuisine after a

day of reading by the sea, visiting the spa, getting a massage, or gazing at the water from a cool room.

Lake Bled, Slovenia

A dream landscape of cliff, forest, green, and wide horizons offers a chance to relax and disconnect from stress. Resorts and hotels in the area organize day trips for hiking, opportunities for swimming, yoga, mindful meditation sessions, and much more.

Costa Brava, Spain

Part city, part beach—and plenty of fun. Ideal for those who want to unwind under an umbrella by the water as well as for those who prefer to relax through dancing and the high spirits of effervescent Spanish music.

Algarve, Portugal

Another destination with beaches, sunshine, and plenty of warmth—perfect for the relaxation we need after hard work. As in any resort area, hotels offer pools, spas, treatments, massages, and loungers. An evening stroll along the seafront, with the scent of the sea, can remind us just how beautiful life can be.

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Setting Goals for (Almost) Guaranteed Success

Pop Doris

SMART goals—used, reused, and recommended by coaches and psychologists, by teachers and trainers. There hasn't been a time-management or personal-development workshop that didn't mention this way of organizing our thinking to plan and implement a goal. So why not include it in this edition too, since our theme is spring cleaning?

What does the SMART acronym stand for?

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Relevant

Time-bound

SPECIFIC — to know exactly what we want to achieve.

Good example: I want to run a half-marathon by the next Wizz marathon.

Poor example: I'd like to be able to run more.

MEASURABLE — so we can check whether it's been achieved and to what extent.

Good example: I will meditate for 5 minutes a day, every day, in the new year.

Poor example: I will meditate this new year.

ATTAINABLE — so we can actually accomplish it; otherwise it's just a wish, not a goal.

Good example: Read one book per month for 12 months.

Poor example: Read 5,000 books this year.

RELEVANT — it should make sense for us.

Good example: Something aligned with our values, preferences, desires, personality, context, lifestyle, and our broader personal and professional aims.

Poor example: Something we do to impress others, or just because someone else wants it.

TIME-BOUND — so we know by when it needs to be completed.

Good example: I want to master the taste and texture of seafood when I cook it—by the end of this summer.

Poor example: Get better at cooking seafood.

How do you build this kind of goal?

Brainstorm wishes, values, broader aims, etc. Once the list is made, take them one by one and rephrase each so that it meets all the SMART criteria.

After they're formulated, **prioritize** them so you actually have time to do what you set out to do. Good luck achieving your goals!

How do you implement them?

Create a plan or a monitoring sheet, depending on the type of goal. If it's a **new habit**, make a tracker where you tick off whether you did the behaviors daily, weekly, etc. You can add a comments section—for example, to note how you felt, why you didn't manage it, why you did, how the experience was—by adding fields for these.

If the goal involves a **complex project** (e.g., building a small dog house, writing a bachelor's thesis), list the stages and, for each stage, the appropriate actions, with intermediate and final deadlines, required resources, etc.

How do SMART goals help?

They offer an organized, predictable way to monitor and plan our aims.

What makes them better and more efficient?

Evaluating what we did well, what needs improvement, and **celebrating** what we've achieved.

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Why Are Some Songs Catchy and Others Aren't? — A Psychological Perspective

Cristea Sonia

Catchy songs—the kind that stick in your head for a long time—are a fascinating phenomenon. The question “Why do some songs become instantly popular while others vanish without a trace?” has deep roots in the psychology of music. Below, we’ll explore the psychological factors that contribute to making songs catchy and discuss musical structure, repetition, familiarity, and the emotional impact these songs have on listeners.

The first essential element is **musical structure**. Most catchy songs follow a simple structure, such as the verse–chorus form. This familiar framework makes them easier to remember. A 2009 study by Levitin and Tirovolas showed that simple musical structure and repetition are key elements in melodic retention (Levitin, D. J.; Tirovolas, A. K., 2009). Repetitive structure helps form strong memories. Such songs become part of our auditory experience, making them easier to recognize and sing.

Another important factor is **familiarity**. When we listen to a song multiple times, our brains grow more comfortable with it. This gives us a pleasant sense of familiarity. Research published in the *Journal of*

Experimental Psychology shows that people tend to prefer songs they've previously become familiar with (Zhang, Y. & Kwan, Y., 2017). With repeated exposure, music—with all its complexity—becomes easier to process. That's why many current hits are played on the radio several times a day.

Emotions also play a crucial role. Songs that evoke strong feelings are often the ones that become catchy. When we listen to a song that makes us feel happy or nostalgic, the brain releases dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure. A 2001 study by Blood and Zatorre showed increased brain activity when people listened to their favorite music, and this activity is often linked to pleasure (Blood, A. J. & Zatorre, R. J., 2001). This suggests a deep link between the emotions we feel and the songs that stick in our minds.

Beyond all these factors, **diversity in how industry creators compose catchy songs** is essential. Artists like Max Martin and Pharrell Williams have reshaped pop music, crafting sound arrangements that appeal to a wide range of listeners. These songwriters have mastered the art of the catchy tune, blending traditional and contemporary elements to tap into emotions and capture the public's attention. This shows that songwriting isn't just a simple creative act—it's a science that requires a deep understanding of human psychology.

Still, not all songs have the same impact. Some may sound catchy at first listen but quickly fade from collective awareness. This can be explained by the **desensitization effect**, where excessive exposure to a song leads to a loss of pleasure (Hargreaves, D. J. & North, A. C., 1999). After a while, a song that once seemed enjoyable becomes mere noise, prompting us to avoid it.

In sum, catchy songs result from a complex combination of musical structure, familiarity, emotion, and the skill of the composers. These elements help create memorable tracks that resonate with us on a deep level. In the future, research may expand to explore the impact of technology on how we **create** and listen to music, which could bring new perspectives to music studies. Catchy songs will continue to evolve, and understanding them psychologically will remain a fascinating topic for musicians and researchers alike.

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Book Review: “The Mystery of Room 622”

Cristea Sonia

For this spring, I invite readers of the “psycho magazine” to wrap themselves in mystery and give a chance to a gripping thriller that will constantly make you question your trust in a character. *The Mystery of Room 622*, written by Joël Dicker, brings together all the elements needed to hook the reader from the very first pages: an intriguing mystery, complex characters, and a continuous atmosphere of suspense. Recently published, the book continues to draw the attention of mystery and crime fans, showcasing the author’s ability to craft stories that not only entertain but also provoke thought.

The story unfolds in an elegant setting—a luxury hotel in Switzerland—where a murder shocks the entire community. What makes this book special is the way Dicker weaves the narrative threads, captivating the reader with meticulously chosen details. Events are presented from the perspectives of multiple characters, giving the reader the chance to uncover the mystery from different angles and thus maintaining suspense throughout.

Another remarkable aspect of the novel is its character development. Through them, Dicker explores themes such as betrayal, love, and identity. The protagonist, a

renowned writer, becomes involved in solving the mystery, and over the course of his quest we discover not only the facts, but also the emotions and moral dilemmas he faces. This invites the reader to connect more deeply with the story, asking themselves what they would do in similar situations.

Dicker's writing style is also accessible without sacrificing depth. He manages to create a tense yet pleasant atmosphere, guiding the reader through a series of clues and twists that make the reading experience unpredictable. Each chapter is an invitation to reveal secrets and to step into the characters' minds, which makes the book highly engaging.

The Mystery of Room 622 by Joël Dicker is well worth reading—not only for its intricate plot, but also for its thoughtful reflections on human relationships. The author skillfully blends mystery with emotional exploration, offering the reader a memorable experience. I warmly recommend this book to all who enjoy the mystery genre and want to be surprised by an unpredictable unfolding of events. This book is not just a simple read, but a true journey into the world of enigmas and personal discovery.

Competence Begins with Self-Acceptance

Pop Doris

Change and goal implementation start with self-acceptance—and so does expertise. Why? Because we need to accept that we don't know something in order to learn it; to accept that we may need to read or rehearse once more to memorize a verse; to tolerate the reality that, at the beginning, everyone has to learn before becoming an expert, a champion, or someone who can solve a problem.

The talent trap lies in failing to specify that some occupations require talent while others do not—so a lack of talent does not imply a lack of competence. A fitting illustration is the difference between **building** a piano and **playing** it. To play the piano, you need musical aptitude which, even with practice, won't turn into the divine voice of a Mariah Carey—perhaps only something average, or good enough for party music where a vast vocal range isn't required. The person who **builds** the piano, however, can learn all the skills, refine their finesse in sanding wood, tuning strings, bending wood, and so on.

What is self-acceptance, really? It's a **skill**—yes, one we can learn—that helps us recognize and love ourselves as we are, so we can enjoy life more and improve. Weaknesses, like strengths (or better said,

qualities), are ours to modify if we can—and to accept if we cannot.

Considered an important factor in maintaining mental health, self-acceptance involves a neutral yet positive approach to self-image, and viewing oneself as worthy—just like anyone else. I’m tempted to mention elements of compassion, which shares some overlap with this concept; what differentiates them is that acceptance is part of compassion, as a subcomponent alongside common humanity and mindfulness.

Common humanity is the awareness and acceptance that we all have flaws, we can all make mistakes, and we all deserve compassion anyway. **Mindfulness** is observing external and internal reality (our thoughts) without judging—only describing, without adjectives: *I notice a notebook on the table; I notice I’m thinking about my partner instead of focusing on the lecture; without judging myself, I bring my attention back to the lecture.*

The benefits of practicing self-acceptance are substantial, underscoring its role in identity and self-relation: people who practiced self-acceptance showed lower levels of stress and anxiety (Minarti et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022), had more fulfilling relationships and did not seek others’ validation (Crapolicchio et al., 2020), recovered more effectively from negative events (Park & Shin, 2023), and were more satisfied with life (Cai et al., 2021).

A few practice methods

- **Think critically about self-criticism.** When you notice a negative thought about yourself, ask whether it's truly accurate (usually it isn't). Look for evidence that the opposite or an alternative might be true. Ask where you "received" that thought from—and what you could replace it with.
- **Adopt a compassionate stance toward yourself,** especially in times of need: treat yourself like your best friend, or like a child who needs a hug, not a scolding.
- **Journal,** to reread later, notice connections between interpretations, and keep track of progress.
- **Notice your preferences over time:** the more you practice, the more you'll find you prefer supportive people over critical ones.
- **Mindfulness meditations** (you can find breathing and mindfulness exercises on the site).
- **Seek professional help**—often the easiest and fastest path is asking a specialist who can guide you toward genuine self-acceptance.

Assessing acceptance

- **Write down your self-beliefs,** as a list or an essay on how you perceive yourself.

- **Ask for feedback** from people who know you and can tell you whether they observe a tendency toward self-acceptance, self-criticism, etc.
- **Observe over time** how you think about yourself when you make mistakes, when you're happy about something, when you're surprised, when something displeases you, and so on.

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Four Good Days

Miruna Botezan

Substance use disorders and addictions (DSM-5-TR).

Four Good Days (2020) is a drama directed and produced by Rodrigo García, based on the Washington Post article “Amanda? A Story of Truth, Lies and an American Addiction.” The lead roles are played by Glenn Close, Mila Kunis, and Stephen Root. Mila Kunis plays Molly, a 30-year-old struggling with substance dependence. The film revolves around Molly’s relationship with her mother (Glenn Close) and the difficult past they share.

The movie follows not only the life of the person suffering from addiction, but also the lives of those around her—family, friends, children, acquaintances. It portrays the ups and downs of the recovery process. Relapses are frequent and often bring feelings of helplessness, depression, and anxiety, along with the belief that the person trying to quit drugs will never be able to.

According to the DSM-5-TR: “All substances that are taken in excess have in common the direct activation of the brain’s reward system, which is involved in reinforcement behaviors and the creation of memories. These substances produce such an intense activation of

the reward system that the individual neglects normal activities. Drugs of abuse directly stimulate the reward pathways and do not activate this system through adaptive behavior.

The pharmacological mechanisms by which each class of substances produces pleasure differ, but all characteristically activate the reward system and produce a sensation of pleasure known as a 'high.' In addition, individuals with lower levels of self-control—reflecting deficits in the brain's inhibitory mechanisms—may be more predisposed to developing substance use disorders, suggesting that the basis of these disorders, for some people, can be observed in behavior long before the onset of the current disorder.”

The road to detox is not linear, not a steady climb toward social reintegration full of successes where each day gets easier. It is a path filled with relapses, pain, sadness, anger, and shame—testing both the person with the addiction and those around them. Suffering is shared on many levels and in different ways, depending on the role each person plays in the addict's life.

When we talk about addictions and use, we need to look at the triggers that push a person to consume. In the film, Molly cites boredom, anxiety, shame, and loneliness as triggers. How could someone who lives with such feelings—who sees themselves as a failure and believes nothing good can happen—move through

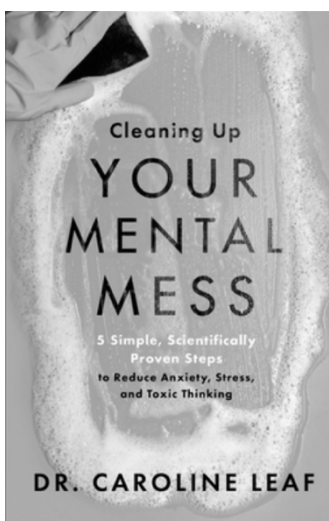
these emotions and manage them other than by developing an addiction?

Substances offer relief and warmth; they provide a way out of a mind that constantly reminds you how bad you feel or are. Addictions offer comfort and support in difficult moments and help the sufferer avoid thinking about what has happened to them. So it is with Molly. Heroin, crack cocaine, or whatever drug she took helped her take her mind off her life and how it had come to this. Why feel all those intense emotions when you can take something that numbs them—and even brings comfort?

I don't want to give spoilers about what happens in the film or how it ends, so I encourage you to watch it yourself (it's still available on Netflix). I hope you view it with empathy, understanding, and without judging the characters.

Recenzii scurte pentru cărți lungi

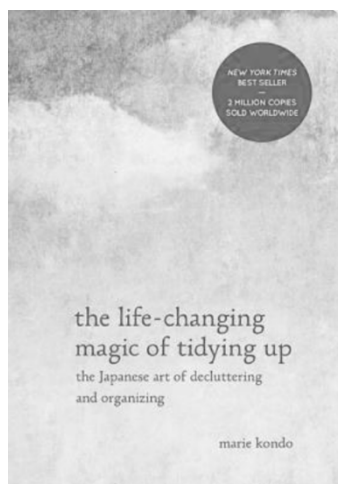
Pop Doris



Three drier, more practical books—but with useful content we can learn from. I believe they all fit this edition's theme, each in its own area: the mind and the home space.

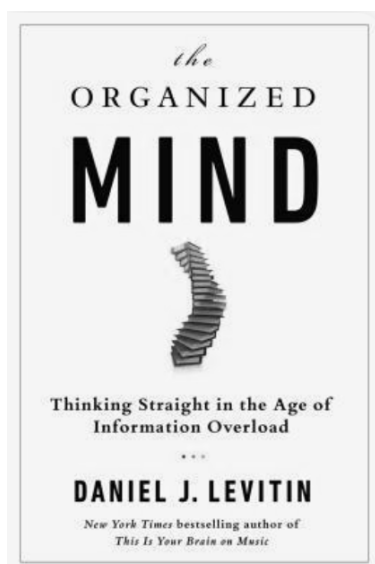
I read it so quickly and with such passion that I would've read it again if I didn't have so many others on my list. It's a practical guide that explains what it means to let go of unhelpful thoughts, how to consciously choose what you think, and how to use your mind to live better.

When it comes to organization, the ideological camps split between those who pay attention to things and those who don't care. Among the attentive, some prefer order, while others prefer a kind of chaos that mirrors how they organize their minds. Marie proposes a method—



unvalidated—that has helped quite a number of people around the world find a way to decide which items they want in their space. This practice of asking whether something brings joy—whether we feel that metaphorical spark when we hold, look at, or use an object—works for some.

I tried it and, honestly, I still don't feel a great tremor of joy, but I also didn't find items that left me indifferent, so I didn't end up giving away anything from my collection. I also watched documentaries featuring people who used the method: most managed to sort their belongings this way, while others didn't see concrete results. It seems to me that if someone is chasing happiness—dopamine—it certainly works; but if objects carry meaning, emotions, and memories, or conversely are just objects with purely pragmatic value, the method is useless.



On thinking errors, digitalization, and the post-information era, more and more of us are aware; what I liked about the book is that it offers an objective, very well-explained perspective on the mind's challenges.

How to Make Water Less Boring for Adults

Pop Doris

Coconut water

Some people love it, others don't. Different brands use different concentrations and add various flavors, so it's worth trying a few to find what suits your preferences.

Herbal tea

Aim for something closer to water than to black tea. I'd suggest fruit teas, and green tea diluted with lemonade.

Fruit-infused water

I've tried many combinations; the most successful were strawberry–blueberry, lemon–cucumber, and orange–lemon. Any combo can work—the trick is that even if you don't taste much at first, after about 10 minutes the flavor starts to come through. Some fruits can be reused for another round of water, not just once.

Vegetable juices

These are obvious options, but you can mix them with lemonade or sparkling water for a lighter taste.

Plant-based milk

It's like water with nutrients and flavor—a win-win for your taste buds and your health.

Sparkling water

An obvious choice, but consume with care: the carbonation can cause bloating.

Electrolyte water

I debated including this, but concluded it fits—especially the sugar-free versions, which are fairly healthy and don't carry serious downsides for the body.

Broth

A small glass of clear broth can help with digestion as well as hydration.

Kefir

It's not my favorite, but it has hydration benefits and is even used in desert regions to boost water and nutrient intake.

Vegetable water

Cucumber water tastes great, and celery water is almost as good. Tomato juice is also a viable option.

Reference

Pegoretti, C., Antunes, A. E. C., de Barros Manchado-Gobatto, F., & Capitani, C. D. (2015). Milk: An alternative beverage for hydration?. *Food and Nutrition Sciences*, 6(06), 547.

Întrebări de reflectare la activitatea și mentalitatea de primăvară

1. *Did I admire the beauty of nature today?*

2. *How can I use this summer to my advantage in the best way?*

3. *Where should I refresh my life? Which domains, which relationships?*

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