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FORT LIFE

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EDITORIAL

LOSS

Can Belief Really Help You Move on?



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Life is but a dream they say! I see it more as a compilation of decisions made for us as children, with the responsibility later transferred to us as struggling adolescents, all while trying to find a place in a rapidly changing world; Decisions which ultimately create a “reference film” for immediate playback often necessary in times of need, despair, but also joy.

As we march through the corridors of life, we slowly but surely learn that there are many types of loss, and that our production set is constantly changing; It’s full of cycles, both long and short, with different cast members partaking and contributing to its development.

There are main characters, supporting roles, stage hands, and even extras who assist in every aspect of our story. And although with time we learn that change is indeed inevitable, that some of these cast members will eventually move on to other projects, sudden changes in what we erroneously believe is our final script, may throw us for an unexpected spin, one which may uproot and derail our forward progress emotionally, professionally, and spiritually, jeopardizing both our sanity and emotional well-being, IF we are not careful and diligent to set guard rails against the dreaded and ever lurking bandit... "self-sabotage."

Dealing and coping with any loss is extremely difficult, and through my own grievances and losses, coupled with those of individuals close to me, I have seen a remarkable commonality in those who use these painful times as catalysts for their own growth, and a better-defined forward journey.

Again, loss comes in many forms, but for the sake of this article we will focus on the 3 most common types; Personal, professional, and spiritual (The loss of self), and how I and others I've crossed paths with, have dealt with them to be able to continue playing our roles with happiness and hope, as opposed to the alternative, anger and bitterness inside. After all, all of these emotions are very closely related.

1) The Loss of a loved one – Acceptance

We control very little in life outside of our decisions, furthermore, those decisions are usually influenced by external factors we are seldom in command of.

The feeling of helplessness is one of the most profound and disturbing sensations we can experience in life.

Resources we may have accumulated through the years will not and cannot reverse tragedy. I learned this painfully through the loss of my own twin grandchildren in an accident 7 years ago, an event which turned my family's world upside down in a matter of seconds.

I have often heard the argument that faith/belief is nothing more than a tool used by many to justify their actions, whether positive or negative, but I can assure you that in my case, my faith and set of beliefs were the only thing that kept me grounded and level headed in a moment of complete impotence.

Accepting that I was not in control was the first step- Understanding and coming to grips with the fact that there was nothing I could have done to undo those dreaded circumstances, forced humility down my spine, which allowed me the opportunity to become the support beam my son and family desperately needed at the time.

Remembering that we are all here for a purpose bigger than ourselves, and that our lives are cyclical without a known expiration date, also helped me accept that their journey came to an end for a reason bigger than my own understanding, but it also served as a stout reminder to live life intentionally, because truth be told, tomorrow is indeed not guaranteed nor promised.



2) The Loss of Career - Balance

Having seen first hand the downward spirals many professionals go through due to a failed venture, the loss of a job title, the closing of a company, or the aging of the body in professional sports, has taught me the importance of balance. Nothing, not a singular physical or material thing in life should by any means become your end all be all. Whether you believe in a higher power or not, an afterlife or not, having diversity in your professional life in the form of interests that can be matched to your current skills, is vital for emotional stability.

Have you asked yourself... If I could not be a _____, what would I do for a living?

The answer to this question may be the first tool you utilize to prepare yourself for a pivot or perhaps the enactment of one. Being unable to do what you have done for a number of years

may easily bring on feelings of depression and feelings of failure, but I encourage you to look at it as an opportunity to do something new, to practice and develop those God given talents which life might have forced to the back of queue to be stored in a closet of unfulfilled dreams, but can now magically serve as a new lifeline. It's all about balance.

3) The Loss of Self - Awareness

In a previous edition, I discussed how establishing filters to recognize potential hazardous situations, whether personal or professional, is a great way to prevent unnecessary conflict in our lives.

Oftentimes, decisions made in moments of passion can lead to a series of events which can fast-track us into an ordinary life, as opposed to an extraordinary one. This can lead to feelings of shame, underachievement, and self-punishment, all resulting in a version of yourself completely different from the one you envisioned as a child.



regardless of what state of turmoil you find yourself in, remember that success leaves clues, so work tirelessly and endlessly in becoming aware and conscious of those negative decisions, so the outcomes of tomorrow, based on the decisions of today, propel you forward and into the version of the self you once dreamed of.

Can faith, belief, or hope really help you move on? This my friend is a question only you can answer.

What I do know is that in my life, having a robust belief system, a God as a compass and point of reference, has helped me tremendously overcome some very difficult moments, as without him, I strongly doubt I'd be writing to you today, especially given my sinful nature.

The truth is belief like anything else is a choice, but I think we can all agree with the famous quote...

“If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.”

It is also a choice to play a happy character in your story film, so I encourage you to set guard rails and filters, not with the intentions of preparing you for the unexpected, as that would be futile, but to prepare you to recognize when you might be lingering in a dark place a little bit too long, as the journey will certainly give you dark times, not necessarily to derail you, but to strengthen you and push you to be the hero of your own movie.

That’s the balance of life.

A version where you feel lost and alone in a dark cave with no sense of direction or exit in sight. It’s lonely there!

In these instances, we must find the strength to remember that every morning presents an opportunity for self-redemption, and although emotional resources will be limited in these times, you must begin by being still, and listen for the sound of silence. This quiet time will enhance your senses and allow you to map, think, and execute on a strategy which will lead you out of this dark place, and into a purpose driven life.

Too often I see people living under the shadow of guilt because they can not forgive themselves. You must stop punishing yourself for ill decisions made on eves prior, and



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FORT's Kitchen: A Taste of Shakshuka

As we welcome September, we're excited to kick off a new series in "FORT's Kitchen" that dives into not just healthy food tips, but also the stories and origins behind each dish. Each month, we'll spotlight one special recipe, offering insights into its history, health benefits, and preparation tips.

This month, we're starting with a bold and flavorful dish: Shakshuka.

Shakshuka is a beloved dish that originated in North Africa, but it has become a staple across the Middle East, particularly in countries like Israel, Tunisia, and Morocco. The word "Shakshuka" means "a mixture" in Arabic, which is fitting for a dish that combines simple ingredients in a vibrant, hearty way. It's a one-pan meal that features poached eggs in a rich tomato, pepper, and onion sauce, spiced with cumin, paprika, and chili.

Shakshuka is not just flavorful, it's also packed with nutrients. Tomatoes are an excellent source of vitamins C and K, as well as antioxidants like lycopene, which have been linked to heart health. Eggs provide high-quality protein and essential nutrients like vitamin B12, selenium, and riboflavin. Together, these ingredients make Shakshuka a satisfying and balanced meal that fuels the body and keeps you energized throughout the day.



Photo from RF...studio - Pexels

How to Prepare Shakshuka:

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon chili powder (optional)
- 1 can (14 oz) crushed tomatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 large eggs
- Fresh parsley or cilantro for garnish
- Crusty bread or toast, for serving

Instructions:

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and bell pepper, sautéing until they soften, about 5 minutes.

Stir in the garlic, cumin, paprika, and chili powder. Cook for another minute until fragrant. Pour in the crushed tomatoes, season with salt and pepper, and let the mixture simmer for 10 minutes, allowing the flavors to blend and the sauce to thicken.

Using a spoon, create small wells in the sauce, and crack the eggs into each well. Cover the skillet and cook until the eggs are poached to your desired doneness, about 5 to 7 minutes. Garnish with fresh parsley or cilantro and serve immediately with crusty bread for dipping.



Shakshuka is versatile—you can adjust the spice level to your taste or add ingredients like feta cheese or spinach for extra richness. It's perfect for breakfast, lunch, or dinner and can be made in under 30 minutes!

We hope you enjoy trying this dish, which not only nourishes the body but also brings a bit of cultural flavor into your kitchen. Share your results or any twists you make to the recipe, and stay tuned for more in "FORT's Kitchen" as we continue to explore food, history, and wellness together!

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Hispanic Heritage Month

(Sept. 15 to Oct. 15)

Hispanic Heritage Month, celebrated annually from September 15 to October 15, is a time to recognize and honor the contributions, culture, and history of Hispanic and Latino Americans in the United States. This month-long celebration was officially established in 1988, but its origins trace back to 1968 when President Lyndon B. Johnson first recognized Hispanic Heritage Week. The decision to expand it to a full month was made by President Ronald Reagan, acknowledging the growing influence and impact of the Hispanic community in shaping the nation's cultural and historical landscape.

The timing of Hispanic Heritage Month is significant, as it aligns with the independence days of several Latin American countries, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, all of which celebrate their independence on September 15. Additionally, Mexico's independence day is September 16, followed by Chile's on September 18. This period is a symbolic reminder of the shared history and cultural ties between the United States and Latin America, further strengthening the bond between these diverse communities.



Photo of Nicolas Torres on Pexels

Throughout Hispanic Heritage Month, communities across the U.S. come together to celebrate the achievements of Hispanic Americans in all areas of society—from politics and civil rights to the arts, sciences, and sports. Notable figures like civil rights leader César Chávez, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, and author Sandra Cisneros have broken barriers and made significant strides in their respective fields, serving as inspirations to future generations. These stories of perseverance and success reflect the resilience and determination of Hispanic and Latino communities.

Hispanic Heritage Month is not just a time for celebration, but also for education and reflection. It serves as a platform to explore the complex history of Hispanic Americans, including the challenges of immigration, social injustice, and the fight for equality. It encourages the wider population to learn about the rich cultural diversity within the Hispanic community, from the vibrancy of Latin American traditions to the evolving role of Latinos in shaping the future of the United States.

In workplaces, schools, and communities, Hispanic Heritage Month offers a chance to host events, discussions, and cultural activities that foster understanding and appreciation of Hispanic culture. From music and dance to food and art, this month is an opportunity to embrace the unique contributions of Hispanic Americans while celebrating their ongoing legacy in shaping the cultural fabric of the United States.



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FORT Travel: Hidden Gems

Discover the Beauty of San Sebastián, Spain



Photo of Lucian Alexe on Unsplash

Discover the Beauty of San Sebastián, Spain
Welcome to our new travel segment, **FORT Travel: Hidden Gems**, where we take you off the beaten path to explore unique, lesser-known travel destinations. Whether you're dreaming of your next getaway or just love learning about new places, this series will spotlight cities, towns, and regions with rich histories, beautiful landscapes, and vibrant cultures—hidden gems waiting to be discovered.

Our first stop? San Sebastián, a coastal city in Spain's Basque Country, known for its stunning beaches, world-class cuisine, and old-world charm.

Why Visit San Sebastián?

While cities like Barcelona and Madrid attract the majority of travelers, San Sebastián offers a more relaxed, yet equally enriching experience. Nestled between lush hills and the sparkling Bay of Biscay, this city seamlessly blends natural beauty with urban sophistication. Its small size allows for easy exploration on foot, but don't be fooled—San Sebastián is bursting with cultural and culinary treasures.

What to See:

- La Concha Beach: Widely regarded as one of the most beautiful urban beaches in the world, La Concha is perfect for sunbathing, swimming, or taking a scenic stroll along the promenade.
-
- Parte Vieja (Old Town): Wander through narrow streets lined with pintxo (Basque tapas) bars, and stop by the 18th-century San Vicente Church for a taste of local history.
-
- Monte Igueldo: Take the funicular up to the top of this hill for panoramic views of the city and the bay. The journey itself is a charming experience, reminiscent of old-fashioned train rides, and the view at the top is unbeatable.

Culinary Scene:

San Sebastián is a culinary mecca, boasting more Michelin stars per square kilometer than any other city in Europe. If you're a foodie, this is your dream destination. But you don't need to dine at a Michelin-starred restaurant to taste its vibrant culinary culture. The city's pintxo tradition is a must-try: small bites packed with flavor, often enjoyed standing at the bar with a glass of local txakoli wine.

Some must-visit pintxo spots include Bar Néstor, known for its simple yet mouth watering tomato salad and steak, and Borda Berri, where you'll find delicious bites like braised veal cheek and risotto-style orzo.



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Hidden Gem:

While La Concha Beach is the most famous, don't miss Zurriola Beach on the other side of the city. It's less crowded and popular with surfers, offering a more laid-back vibe. If you're feeling adventurous, you can even take a surf lesson or simply enjoy the sight of locals riding the waves.

Why It's a Hidden Gem:

San Sebastián may be known to some, but it's often overshadowed by Spain's larger cities. The city's laid-back atmosphere, along with its stunning landscapes and culinary wonders, make it a destination that feels like a well-kept secret. Whether you're a food lover, a beachgoer, or a history buff, San Sebastián offers something for everyone without the large crowds.

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SALES

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FORT Health

Pilates Training

As the cooler weather sets in, it's easy to let fitness routines slide. But staying active is essential year-round, regardless of the season. This month, we're highlighting the benefits of pilates, a low-impact workout that offers numerous benefits for both the mind and body. Whether you're new to pilates or a seasoned pro, this versatile practice can help you maintain strength, flexibility, and mental clarity as the days grow shorter.

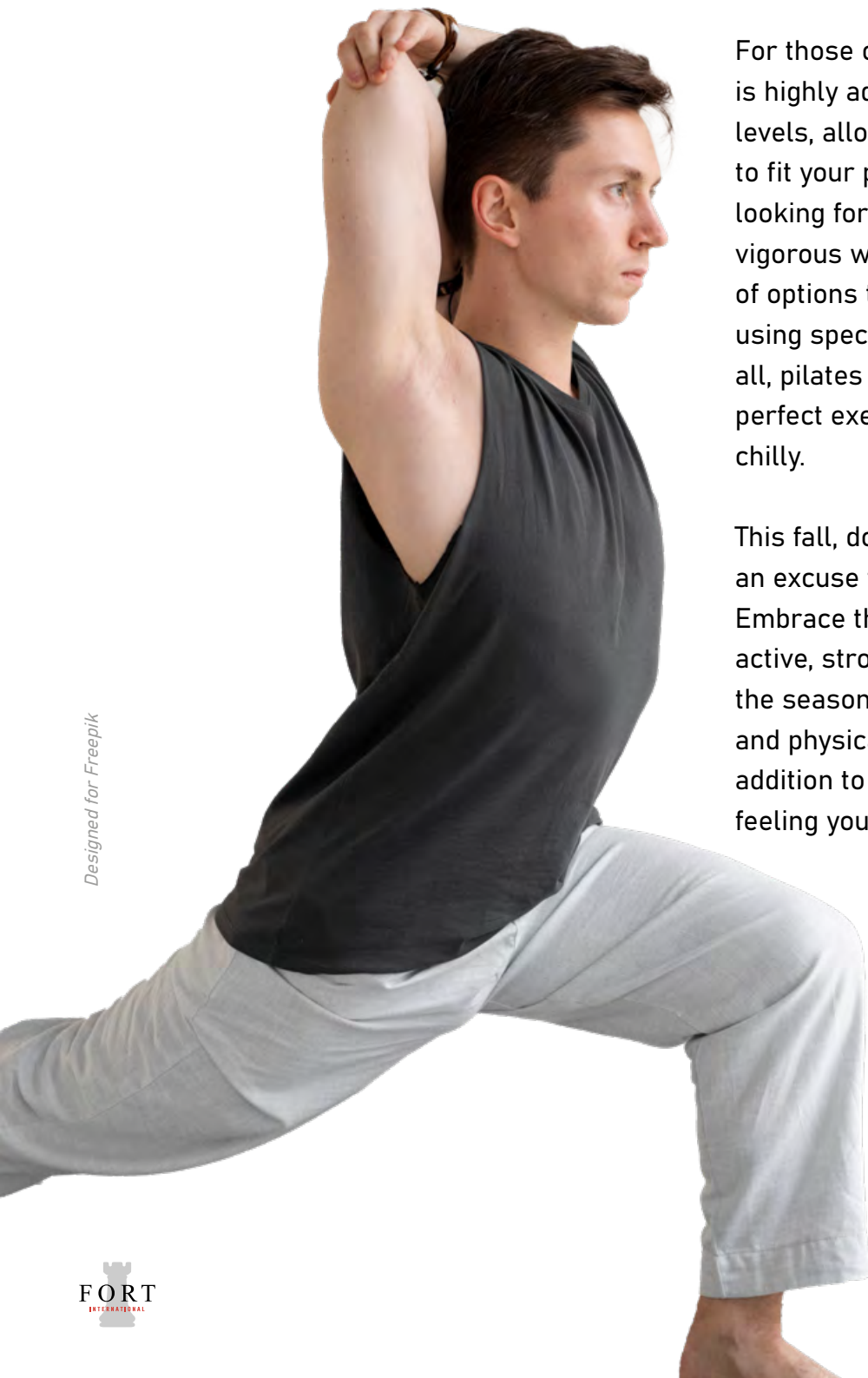
Pilates is renowned for its focus on core strength, which not only tones the body but also improves posture and reduces the risk of injury. By incorporating slow, controlled movements, pilates targets deep muscles that are often neglected in other workouts. This is particularly beneficial as we prepare for colder months when staying active might feel more challenging. Pilates helps build a strong foundation that supports everyday movements and ensures your body remains flexible and balanced even as temperatures drop.



Beyond the physical benefits, pilates also provides a mental boost. The emphasis on breath control and mindfulness during each movement encourages mental focus and reduces stress. As the weather cools and days get shorter, many people experience a dip in mood or energy. Incorporating pilates into your routine can help combat these feelings, promoting relaxation and mental well-being. It's an ideal way to counter the seasonal blues and maintain a positive outlook.

For those concerned about intensity, pilates is highly adaptable. It's suitable for all fitness levels, allowing you to modify exercises to fit your personal needs. Whether you're looking for a gentle stretch or a more vigorous workout, pilates offers a variety of options that can be done on a mat or using specialized equipment. And best of all, pilates can be done indoors, making it a perfect exercise choice as the weather turns chilly.

This fall, don't let the colder weather be an excuse to neglect your fitness goals. Embrace the benefits of pilates and stay active, strong, and balanced throughout the season. With a focus on both mental and physical health, pilates is the perfect addition to your workout routine to keep you feeling your best all year long.



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Emails

Do's & Don'ts

When it comes to communicating effectively in the workplace, email remains a crucial tool. However, the ease of firing off a quick message can sometimes lead to mistakes that may affect how others perceive your professionalism. Understanding a few basic do's and don'ts can improve the clarity and impact of your emails while maintaining strong professional relationships.

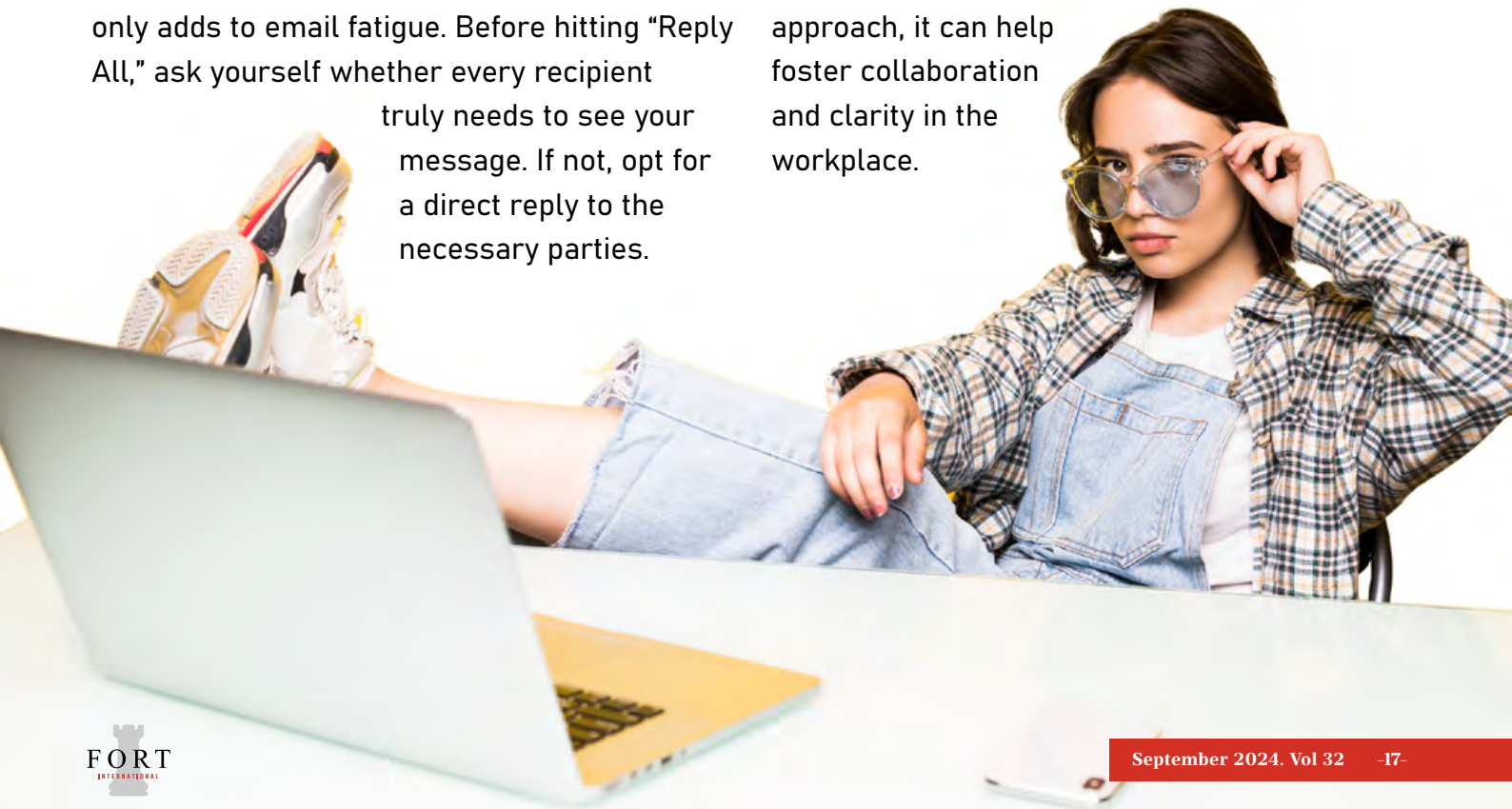
Do: Keep your emails concise. Time is valuable, and most professionals are juggling multiple tasks. Clearly state your message in a way that's easy to digest. Whether you're updating someone on a project or making a request, getting to the point helps avoid misunderstandings and ensures your message is well-received.

Don't: Overuse the "Reply All" button. It can be tempting to include everyone in your response, but flooding inboxes with irrelevant information only adds to email fatigue. Before hitting "Reply All," ask yourself whether every recipient truly needs to see your message. If not, opt for a direct reply to the necessary parties.

Do: Use a clear subject line. Your subject line sets the tone and context for your email. Avoid vague phrases like "Update" or "Meeting" and opt for more specific ones like "Project Update: Q3 Sales Figures" or "Team Meeting on October 12th." This way, recipients know exactly what to expect and can prioritize their responses accordingly.

Don't: Forget to proofread. Typos, grammatical errors, and unclear wording can distract from your message and diminish your professionalism. Taking a minute to review your email before sending can prevent avoidable miscommunication and demonstrate your attention to detail.

By adhering to these simple guidelines, you'll ensure your emails are efficient, effective, and respectful of everyone's time. Email remains one of the most powerful communication tools, and with the right approach, it can help foster collaboration and clarity in the workplace.



Word Search

Entertain yourself for a while and solve this word search as quickly as possible. If you prefer you can click on the link below and solve the challenge from your cell phone or computer.

Autumn

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