

ALIGN YOUR LIFE

Year of The Snake

EVERY NEW YEAR brings with it new hopes, new energies and new dreams. No two years are similar. Every year has its own impact. So what exactly is 2013 going to be?

The Chinese calendar differs from the Western calendar since the beginning of Chinese New Year changes every year, on dates ranging between late January and late February. Each year of the Chinese Zodiac is represented by an animal: the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. In addition to that, much of Chinese philosophy is built around five elements, and the belief that they interact with natural phenomena.

The five elements, including metal, water, wood, fire, and earth, have existed in Chinese culture for thousands of years, and affect the Chinese Zodiac. Each element has different traits. Characteristics of the five elements are assigned to the 12 animal signs, creating 60 possible characteristic combinations. The concept of Yin and Yang also affects the Chinese Zodiac by assigning opposing forces to each animal sign - odd years are Yin years and even years are Yang years. Yin is perceived as earth, female, dark, and passive. Yang is perceived as male, heaven, light, and active. Assigning each of the five elements to the 12 years creates 60 different combinations that results in a 60-year cycle.

Based on the interaction between the elements and the characteristics of each animal, certain general energies can be described for each year.

According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2013 is the year of the Snake, symbolising water sitting on top of the fire. As per the cycle of destruction, water extinguishes fire and both elements are in conflict with one another. The direct result of such a situation will promote disharmony, and imbalance throughout 2013. In general, snakes are a tricky lot. If it wants to move forward, its body undulates and it's not easy to tell which direction it is going to go in. That's the same with 2013. It will seem to go in one direction, and then, very unexpectedly, it will veer in completely another direction. That's why it will be difficult to plan for it. However in my opinion it is also the best time of the year to let go of the past and old energies and implement Feng Shui to invite new energies to create a way forward. Throw out old things, clean the clutter, and open up space in your house and in your mind. Let go of the emotional baggage that you have been carrying for so long. List your goals and find ways to achieve them.

I believe the New Year is a way for us all to have a fresh start and leave behind that which no longer serves us. New energy is needed to usher the old out and manifest those things that will take us to that next level of our being. Feng Shui is about enhancing the human experience, which encompasses relationships, wealth, and health. It is a great way to use the new energy in your home as a catalyst to achieve your heart's desire and find the much-needed balance in your home and your life.

The year of the Snake will be what you make of it, so make it a great year. The power is in your hands.

Shivani Adalja is an Abu Dhabi-based well-being expert. She runs the Alignment Institute which offers unique solutions that focus on stress management and overall wellbeing. Email align@shivaniadalja.com



Yoga to cure OCD

Researchers believe a holistic approach may be the key to tackling psychological disorders

RESEARCHERS AT THE Dev Sanskriti University in Haridwar, India, say that a holistic way involving yoga and herbal medicines can combat psychological disorders.

The researchers subjected 60 patients of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) to a combination of yoga, pranayam and herbal medicines.

The 60 participants were equally divided into males and females. They got 45 individual sessions of therapeutic interventions of holistic approach.

Each session was of 60 minutes, with patients doing pranayam and reciting Gayatri Mantra for 10 minutes each and yoga for 20 minutes.

The most widely utilised treatments now are pharmacological management and behaviour modification, said an article in the first issue of the Dev Sanskriti University's Interdisciplinary International Journal.

A major disadvantage of drug treatment for anxiety disorders was that the relapse rate was very high, said researchers Deepak Singh, Pranav Pandya, O.P. Mishra and Pragya S. Lodhi.

Pandya is the chancellor



of the university. Mishra is the Emeritus Professor of psychology while Deepak Singh and Pragya Singh are assistant professors in the department of psychology.

The "holistic approach produced significant reduction in the level of OCD", said the research paper.

"The combination of these specific techniques has collective effect on the patients and causes significant reduction in the symptoms of OCD," the university said.

"Thus, the holistic approach can provide a new strategy for management of OCD. The

findings are an important exploration with wide scope for further research and applications," it said.

The paper also said some of the medicines in the market "cause many side effects" and approximately 90 per cent of patients suffer a relapse if they discontinue medication.

It said a new holistic approach was developed to provide maximum relief to the patients.

"The holistic approach is based on the principle of psychology, yoga and ayurveda," the journal said. IANS

Cold soup for blood pressure

A REGULAR BOWL of gazpacho soup, made up of a range of superfoods including tomato, cucumber, garlic and olive oil, could be the key to beating high blood pressure, a research has found.

Experts found that even though the cold Spanish dish contains salt, which people with high blood pressure are told to avoid, those having it regularly saw their BP levels drop, *Daily Express* reported.

The soup, the experts believe, could be used to help prevent the condition, reducing the risk of developing hypertension by as much as 27 percent.

The latest findings - by scientists at the University of Barcelona and published in the journal *Nutrition, Metabolism & Cardiovascular Diseases* - have major implications for millions of Britons blighted by ill health due to high blood pressure.

The research, into the effects of a Mediterranean diet on people at high risk of cardiovascular diseases, looked at 3,995 people taking gazpacho. IANS



LIFESTYLE

Beat arthritis with exercise

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE suffering from arthritis can beat it with regular exercise and early treatment, a research has found.

Physical activity can reduce the risk of disability and ease the pain of a range of conditions including arthritis, back pain and brittle bone disease, *Daily Express* reported.

A review of scientific research found that for some, the level of improvement increases with the number of exercise sessions.

A second study also hails the benefits of aggressive, early treatment for rheumatoid arthritis. The chances of disability could be significantly reduced when drugs are started soon after it begins.

"We know that exercise is one of the best things you can do if you have arthritis or a musculoskeletal complaint. People should keep moving as much as they can and exercise to the best of their ability," said Jane Tadmán, a spokeswoman for Arthritis Research UK.

"The current accepted way of treating rheumatoid arthritis is aggressive, early treatment to get the disease under control before the joints become damaged and deformed."

Experts at the National Resource Centre for Rehabilitation in Rheumatology in Norway found that exercise therapy for bone and muscle conditions had clear medical benefits. IANS