



blot

***THE
BODY
ISSUE***

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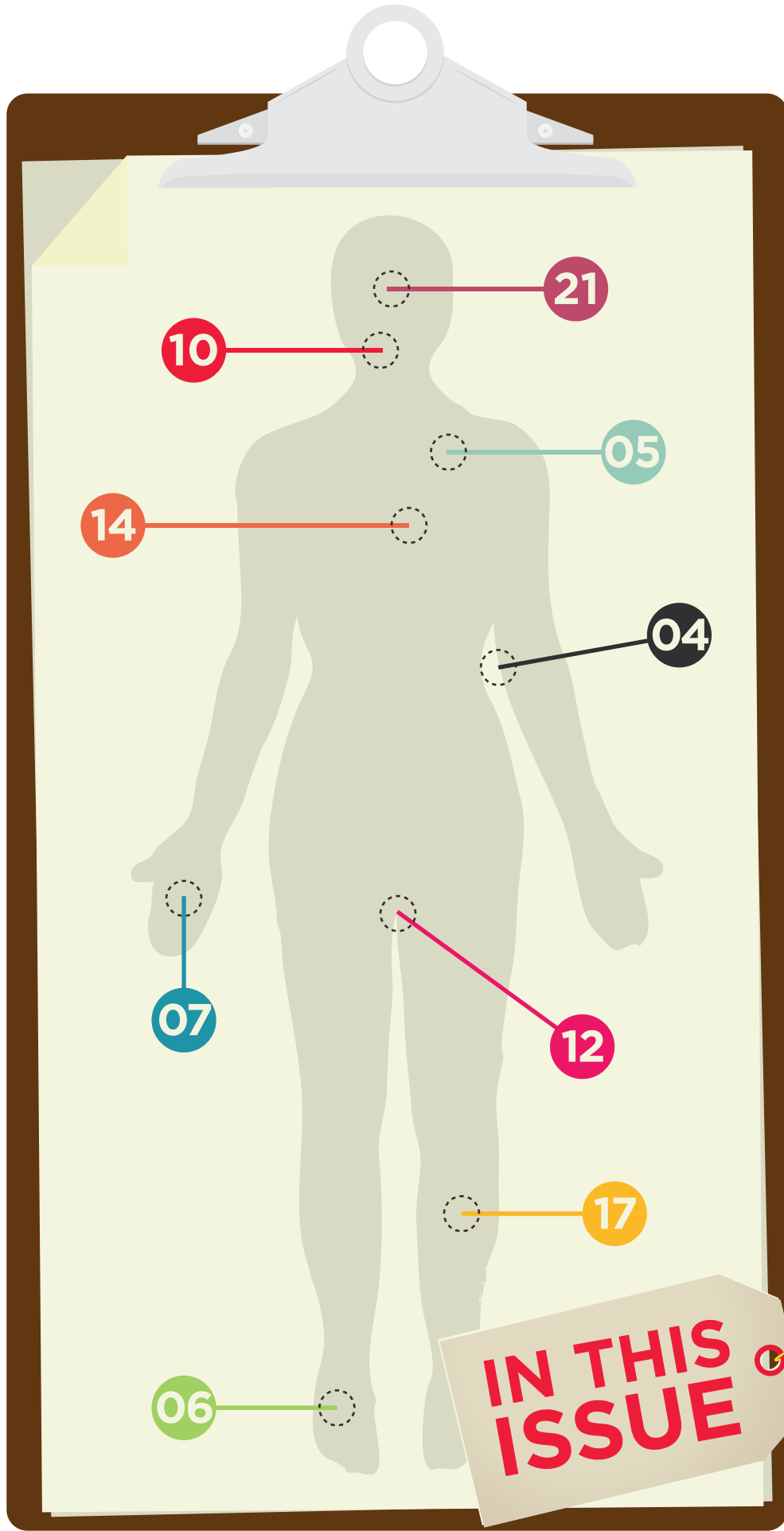
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The Body Issue

There are 206 bones, 639 muscles and about 23 feet of intestine packed into the human body. We have learned thousands of facts, stats and obscure oddities about ourselves through medicine, technology and education.

But after all our research, the human race can agree on a single conclusion about our bodies.

We don't know anything.

The human body is vast — nearly impossible to describe in one magazine.

But we hope this collection of stories and images reminds us how impressive the shell we live in truly is.

On the cover

Michelle Polansky performs aerial silk. Polansky, a senior at the University of Idaho, said her love for circus arts stems from gymnastics, which she started at age 2.

Cover photo by Philip Vukelich and Amrah Canul.

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“HUMMER” US

A look into what makes us laugh
photography by Zach Edwards

■ The funny bone — it’s the one part of your body you can only find accidentally. Try laughing.

Go ahead, launch into a round of hysterical laughter.

Truly laughing is just about impossible without provocation. With this in mind, I set out to find this most elusive body part.

Enter White Tie Improv, a comedy troupe at the University of Idaho that specializes in spontaneous silliness.

White Tie does improvisational performances, which is essentially theater made up on the spot. It is often comedic.

We sit down in Shoup Hall. It’s hard not to feel a little boring in company like this. I am sitting in the middle of the room surrounded by big personalities. Every single person gives off the impression of being funnier, more in control and more interesting than I am.

Eager to solve this comedic conundrum, I cleave to the point as directly as I can.

“All right, funny people,” I say. “Tell me a joke.”

Every one of them, seasoned veterans of making it up as they go, sits in silence for a moment.

While I am eventually treated to jokes about a talking muffin, a killer elephant, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, a polar bear trap, a lost doughnut, a found doughnut and a fire at the circus — I learn when it comes to real humor, funny can’t be forced.

“You don’t necessarily try (to be funny,) because if you are too direct about it, then the audience can

kind of tell that you are faking and trying to force it,” said White Tie member Blaine Fannesbeck.

In order to be funny, a scene has to have situations to which the audience can relate.



Joseph Engle

“It’s funny because it gives the audience something to connect to,” UI senior Richard Ayad said. “(Suppose) we do an entire scene about missing the bus, and that scene involves somebody killing themselves. They are all going to laugh, because they have all been there and they know how much it sucks. Seeing it multiplied a hundred times makes it funny.”

Group member Quinn Hatch arrives just as we are plumbing the depths of un-funny.

“What makes me laugh?” Hatch said. “Things that are unexpected, things that are socially inappropriate. Fundamentally, a good joke is just a surprise.”

Hatch, who also does stand-up comedy, lets rip one of his jokes. It involves things couples are willing to put into their mouths except their significant other’s toothbrush. No one laughs.

Admittedly, not everyone has the same sense of humor.

The funny bone is the most socially useful part of the human body. Laughter can break the ice in a tense situation and bring us closer together.

“Comedy in and of itself is the purest form of trying to seek approval from



someone,” Hatch said. “You are trying to get them to laugh. You are trying to get them to acknowledge what you did was good.”

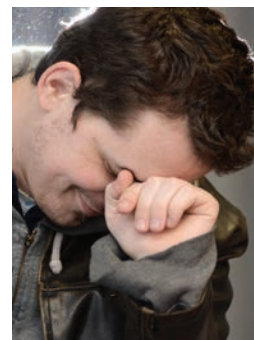
And as I ponder comedy as approval-seeking behavior, I come to realize Hatch is right. There is nothing more intensely gratifying than making a smooth retort that sets a room laughing. As good as it feels to laugh, it feels even better when your peers laugh because of something you said.

So where, exactly, in the human body can you find your funny bone? That’s a trick question.

Humor is not something that can be forced or contrived. Real laughter is the only human expression that is always fundamentally honest.

The funny bone is not something we find alone — it is something we find in others. ■

Hannah Whisenant, top, and Chance Rush, bottom, of White Tie Improv respond to each other’s jokes.





Chloe, top, and Izzy Baker, bottom, put their flexibility to the test in their living room, where 2-year-old Izzy literally put her foot in her mouth. The sisters spoke bluntly about the quirks of their bodies and personalities.

BODY TALK through the ages

Silly tricks and talents that change with time by Kaitlyn Krasselt, photography by Alex Aguirre

■ From first steps to the first day of school, the human body and all of the gross, weird and otherwise interesting things it can do cater to the curiosity of all ages.

The way we view our bodies — and how we feel about discussing them — changes from early childhood to adulthood. For children, the human body is fascinating because its oddities and abilities are new. By adulthood people are fairly confident in their body's ability to distinguish fatigue, pain, hunger and emotion.

Two-year-old Izzy Baker is recently potty-trained and constantly on the move. The fresh discovery of sucking on her toes provides entertainment for a few minutes before something new catches her attention.

"The grossest thing Izzy does is pick her nose," said Izzy's 8-year old sister Chloe Baker.

Chloe, a middle child, knows she isn't as flexible as her baby sister, but that doesn't stop her from trying. Chloe is still comfortable talking about her body and the weird

things she can do with it, though she doesn't think anything she does is gross.

"I'm more weird than gross," Chloe said. "I say weird things every day — every minute of every day — like I am now. I'm weird."

Peyton Baker, the oldest of the Baker children, is 11 years old and said the grossest thing his body does is "sneeze, burp and fart at the same time," but he was unwilling to demonstrate. Peyton found making funny faces less entertaining than his younger sisters, but jumped at the chance to show off the muscles he's gained from playing sports.

Peyton showed off his double-jointed thumbs and demonstrated the weird noises he can make because his friends at school "think it's awesome."

"I can make a weird noise with my throat," Peyton said. "I don't know how I learned to do it. I just tried it one day and my friends laughed."

People tend to become more reserved as they mature, and the gross things the human body does become less interesting.

Lizzy Ryan, a freshman in horticulture studies, said she thinks the human body is capable of incredible things.

"It's an awesome feeling, the things our bodies can do."
— Lizzy Ryan

"Like that moment when you're running and you think you can't go any further, and your brain just shuts off and your body keeps going. It's an awesome feeling the things our bodies can do," Ryan said. "(The human body) is obviously designed for a purpose. I find it funny that people think it came from chaos when it's so perfectly designed, symmetrical."

Children learn new things every day. A new face, a strange noise, how to cross their eyes, curl their tongues and flex their muscles. As we grow up, discovery of new talents becomes less frequent and the ability to literally put our foot in our mouth diminishes. ■

MORE THAN JUST KICKS



The sneakerhead culture of basketball by Sean Kramer, photo by Zach Edwards

■ Michael Jordan left a legacy on the court, but his most widespread impact might be what he perpetuated off it.

The “sneakerhead” culture is a community of individuals whose hobby is collecting shoes and sneakers, and is closely associated with the game of basketball — even at the University of Idaho among Vandal basketball players.

“Playing basketball goes hand-in-hand with sneakers,” junior guard Mike McChristian said. “My first pair of meaningful shoes were basketball shoes.”

McChristian’s first kicks were a pair of Kobe Bryant “Crazy 8s.”

“I just think everyone around the culture of basketball and anyone who is into shoes kind of knows the tradition between basketball shoes, regular shoes and everything in between,” he said.

The correlation between kicks and basketball is universal for many youngsters who grew up around hoops.

“Before I could even walk I had a pair of Jordans,” senior guard Deremy Geiger said. “I

had a pair when I was 3 years old.”

As he grew up Geiger became so involved in the culture he saved lunch money to buy new pairs.

“Never got caught. Take a lil’ lunch to school and save my money,” Geiger said.

Geiger said shoes are more than foot protection or sports equipment, and the 35 pairs he has in Moscow speak to his commitment.

“I don’t think people who aren’t involved actively know how much shoes matter to basketball,” Geiger said.

Geiger grew up with a different shoe for every occasion — practice, game day, certain opponents — you name it, he had it covered.

“I used to base it off either who we were playing or how I was feeling in the morning,” he said. “Try to mix it up a lot during games. Just a little fashion sense.”

Becoming a sneakerhead helped McChristian forge an identity as he progressed as a player through high school and now as a Vandal.

“I thought it was extra important I always step out on to the court in something I felt was presentable,” McChristian said. “I can definitely appreciate any shoes that look good.”

Once these two players became Vandals, however, they had to conform to team-mandated Nikes.

“That’s not a bad thing. We get to all get out there and look like a team, and just look right. It’s a good fit for us,” Geiger said. “You look good, you feel good, you play good — that’s the philosophy.” ■

Bring **Body rEvolution** to your residence hall, sorority or fraternity chapter house, or class! Email bodyrevolution@uidaho.edu or call 885-6616 to schedule a presentation.

WARNING:
Reflections in this mirror may be distorted by socially constructed ideas of 'beauty'

body rEVOLUTION
bod·y rev·o·lu·tion |bod-ee rev-uh-loo-shuhn|

1. an overthrow and thorough replacement of established societal norms
2. a radical change in society regarding body image
3. a sudden, complete or marked change within yourself

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GOT SEX?

SPRING 2012 DATES
February 23, March 22, April 12
5:30-7:00 PM - Women's Center Lounge

"Got Sex?" is a campus forum to promote discussion around issues of sexuality, reproductive health, birth control, social pressures, sexual practices, and risky behaviors.

Co-sponsors: Women's Center, the Violence Prevention Programs office, UI VOX, B.E.A.R., Alternatives to Violence of the Palouse, Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest, and Dr. Larry Forney



PLEASE, WAIT TOUCH THE ART

Sculpture stimulates more than the eye

by Lindsey Treffry,
photography by
Philip Vukelich

■ Jon Harty can't keep his hands off art.

"Working with my hands was the main reason why I got into doing sculpture," Harty said.

The 40-year-old University of Idaho graduate likes to play with clay, wood and metal.

Working with these materials has left Harty's hands cracked and covered in calluses. Manual labor, splinters and sanding wood have reduced his fingernails to stubs.

"You want that dexterity and to be able to grab things and work with things," Harty said. "My nails seem to be something I use a lot — scratching at things, pulling things, twisting a bolt or nut."

Of his fingernails, his index and thumb are damaged the most. He said it is instinctual for him to use those fingers, which wears on the skin.

"My hands get tired and stiff," he said. "The pain connects me to my work even more."

Jon Harty, a graduate from the University of Idaho and freelance sculptor, forms a piece using a pottery wheel in the UI ceramics lab. Harty said he doesn't want people to feel limited to just looking at the artwork.



The motion of turning a clay pot, Harty said, allows him to focus through discomfort.

"I get in there and do anything with it," Harty said. "You can put your hands in it, squeeze it, hit it, throw it."

As for sculpting with metal, Harty said there is still a connection between his hands and his work, despite the tool between them. He once produced a 5-foot-5-inch metal sculpture for people to walk through that ended in a 24-inch crawling hole. When he welds, he can see the form taking place — from the bead, to the color, to how it cools.

But his most organic work grows from the relationship between art and people.

"My interest is in the body," Harty said. "How we interact within the environment — where we live, where we spend our work, our school or play or whatever — (and) how our bodies are connected to the environment."

Harty's installation, "Body Space," stemmed from this idea. He said the sculptures focused on how personal space is not universally compatible.

Harty built three wooden boxes based on the physical dimensions of people he knew, including himself. The first box was based off a female friend with a small physical frame.

"I can't fit in that box," Harty said. "A lot (of people) can't.

Her space maybe isn't always accessible to other people — and other people's (spaces) are more accessible."

The second box was inspired by a male friend with a larger frame, and the third was designed specifically for Harty, perfectly measured to accommodate only him in a sitting position.

Even though his sculptures are designed to portray personal space, Harty wants to ensure his art allows others to connect with it.

Harty showcased "Body Space" as part of the 2011 Moscow Artwalk.

"(Touch is) something that is taboo when you go into an art gallery," Harty said. "Don't

touch the artwork."

But Harty said he wants to draw the viewer in more than a regular gallery does. He doesn't want people to feel limited to looking, thinking and comprehending artwork.

"That's more of a mental interaction," he said. "I want something more physical."

When he saw people touching his art and parents shutting kids' fingers in the doors of his wooden work, Harty deemed his showcase a success. People were interacting.

"Open your mind a little bit and think about what you're looking at a little bit more," Harty said. "(Think) about what the artist is trying to get across to you." ■



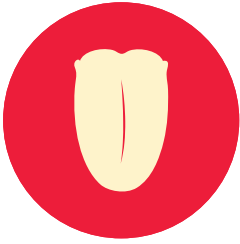
***“OPEN YOUR MIND A LITTLE
BIT AND **THINK** ABOUT
WHAT YOU’RE LOOKING AT
A LITTLE BIT MORE.”
— JON HARTY***





SUCK IT

Journey to the center



by Molly Spencer, photo illustration by Philip Vukelich

■ How many licks does it take to get to the center of a Tootsie Pop?

University of Idaho student Sean Nutter discovered the answer eight minutes and 237 licks later.

Nutter and five other UI students averaged 265 licks from wrapper to stick, with 47 being the lowest and 817 the highest.

Nutter said the best part of the pop is the center, and his pursuit of the chewy chocolate caused him to change his technique. Nutter took a short water break to rehydrate and make sure his tongue was in top licking condition.

Jeff Bohlscheid, UI food science faculty member, said the science behind a Tootsie Pop is simple — when a person sucks on a sucker, they are melting it.

“It would be the same idea as taking crystalline sugar, table sugar, and dipping it in water,” Bohlscheid said. “Water is attracted to certain things. Water will dissolve things — sugars and salts and things like that.”

It’s a combination of literally scraping off sugar molecules with saliva and melting the sugars because of the warmth in one’s mouth, Bohlscheid said.

“It also depends on what you think is a lick. If you put the

whole thing in your mouth there is much more surface and there’s obviously more saliva and things like that,” he said. “If you put it in your mouth and kind of roll it around a little bit — more time, more temperature in there, more saliva.”

Nutter experimented with several different approaches.

“My first technique was just licking one side, but then it was too delicious so I ended up going the full distance and licking all the way around,” Nutter said. “I covered more of the sucker when I was spinning the sucker around, and made the licks count for more.”

Nutter may be an efficient Tootsie Pop consumer, but he said he thought finding an Indian shooting a star on a Tootsie Pop wrapper for a free sucker was a myth.

“To this day I still do not know where you can claim the prize for a free sucker,” he said.

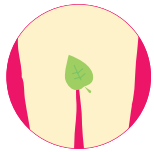
The company’s website tracks this tradition back to the 1970s.

Tootsie Pops engage the mind, tongue and soul — from the playful wrapper, to the shiny candy shell and the satisfying Tootsie Roll center. It may take a thousand licks or as few as one... two-hoo... three — chomp.

The world may never know. ■



PSYCHOLOGY OF SEX



How we fall in love and into bed by Katy Sword, illustration by Kim Ellsworth

“Young people aren’t committal for a reason. It’s a stage. They’re trying to figure out who they are.”
— Erin Chapman

■ Sally Ames said she was still living with her parents, in what she called a bad environment, during third grade. Ames said she really wanted her teacher to like her, but she wasn’t the kind to nurture her students.

“I remember writing about something we liked about third grade and I wrote I hope my teacher likes me,” Ames said. “I know it was because I wanted her to reassure me that she did. While she never did, after my experience with her I became more secure.”

Ames, University of Idaho senior studying psychology, said she thinks she grew up with a dismissing attachment style, one of four styles that apply in some way to everyone.

The way people relate intimately engages every part of who they are and was set in motion during infancy.

How we attach, react and love is determined by relationships developed early in life. The question then becomes why we stick with those styles, and can they be changed?

How we attach

Secure, ambivalent, avoidant and dismissing — everyone can fit into one of the four defined attachment styles.

Psychologist Mary Ainsworth laid out the four styles and connected them to a mother’s interaction with her child.

While these styles and personality traits may alter as we mature, there is evidence that basic attachment styles affect how we interact in sexual situations.

“You see similar types of patterns in adult relationships,” Kenneth Locke, UI psychology department chair said. “We’ve seen that these patterns people take into sexual interactions as well as motivations for sex.”

Children identified as secure feel safe and comfortable, Locke said. As adults they easily transition from promiscuity to long-term relationships without significant emotional upheaval. Locke said secure individuals may be comfortable cuddling, but can stay away from their partner for a few days without emotional repercussions.

Others, specifically ambivalent, become very attached to a lover and experience distress when they are separated.

“There are others that are clingy,” Locke said. “As soon as the partner isn’t around they will be calling and texting seeing what they are up to.”

Locke said others feel uncomfortable getting close.

Avoidant individuals tend to be fearful and use sex purely for physical release and to gain status, while a dismissive person will show few signs of needing anyone and may not often engage in sex.

“Take a clingy individual — the reason why I’m engaging in sex is to make them closer — to make sure I’m keeping that bond,” Locke said. “While a more avoidant individual will say sex is about pleasure, need, but not about relationship. They don’t like to cuddle or be close afterward.”

Secure individuals tend to have the healthiest relationships because they enjoy the relationship building that occurs through sex, but do not need it to feel secure in the relationship, Locke said.

“Whereas anxious dismissing people are not always savvy shoppers,” Locke said. “They feel so anxious and their sense of worth is so low they are dependent on being in relationship. They will pick whoever will give them attention first.”

Can we change?

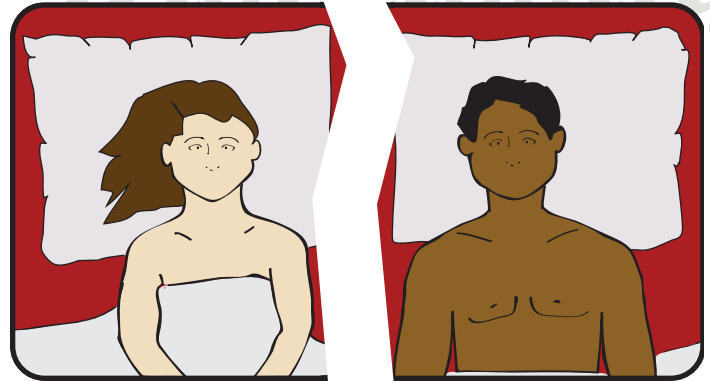
One attachment style may best describe an individual, but Erin Chapman, assistant professor of family and consumer sciences, said these categories are fluid.

“We like to pigeon-hole everyone, but everyone has a little bit of each,” Chapman

Secure Ambivalent



Avoidant Dismissing



said. "Attachment styles depend on our experiences."

Chapman said although secure individuals will more than likely stay secure throughout their adulthood, anxious and avoidant individuals may be able to change how they relate to others.

"They may be able to come out of their shell and become more open to commitment," Chapman said. "It is also speculated that certain styles are indicative of age."

Ames said that although she grew up with a specific style, she has seen a change in how she relates intimately as she has matured.

"As I grew up and developed positive styles it started to change," Ames said. "In my relationship there are hints of insecurity and anxiety, but everyone is scared."

Chapman said people in their teens and early 20s tend to be non-committal, regardless of their attachment style.

"Young people aren't committal for a reason," Chapman said. "It's a stage. They're trying to figure out who they are."

Despite how we attach, change or interact, one thing is clear — sex is a part of us. The difference is how it affects our daily lives.

How we love

The relationship between love and sex is hard to define. Does love need to exist to have sex? Can sex be enjoyed without love? While these questions are without a definitive answer, evaluating a person's love style is an effective place to start.

Psychologist and researcher John Lee developed a theory in the early 1970s that defines six different love styles and the characteristics of each. While people can associate themselves with more than one style, each has a distinct preference. With preferences go tendencies, but Chapman said all we can do is speculate.

According to Lee's theory, eros lovers are sensual and often considered hopelessly romantic while ludus lovers are more interested in the chase than the relationship.

"Ludics are about the excitement from seeking a new relationship," Chapman said. "So are they crazy wild or do they get their jollies and move on?"

Storge love, as defined by Lee, searches for compatibility rather than passion, and pragmatic lovers are more interested in the usefulness of the relationship.

Chapman said storge lovers tend to act lovey, drink some wine and fall into bed, while pragmatic lovers might prefer to get the job done.

Mania lovers crave intensity, but worry about losing the person they are involved with.

"Mania love is controlling and jealous, so does this mean they use it as a pawn?" Chapman said.

Agape lovers, Lee's last category, will do anything for their partner regardless of personal consequences.

So, what does all this mean for sex?

"We don't know," Chapman said. "Love and sex are different things."

Love styles may influence defined roles within a relationship, but when it comes to sex any rules or definitions go out the window — and into our bedrooms. ■



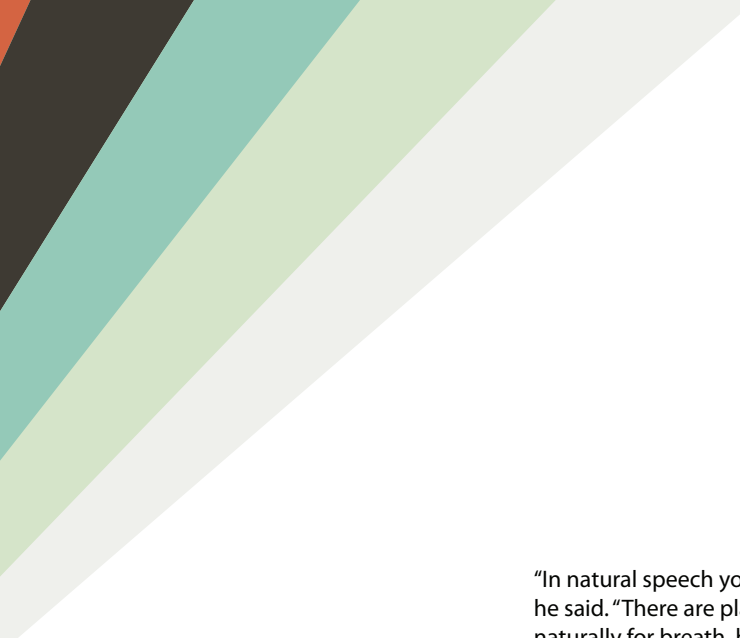
BREATHE IT FORWARD

Musicians move air forward with purpose by Elisa Eiguren, photo by Alex Aguirre

■ From the moment we enter the world until the day we leave it, we breathe without thinking. But after the initial perfect breath when our lungs inflate for the first time, bad habits begin to form. Wind and brass instrument musicians are determined to break those bad habits.

“When you don’t have good breath support and you’re not relaxed the instrument sounds tense, weak or unsupported,” trumpet player Kyle Gemberling said. “You have to constantly be on top of it. It’s not quite the same as muscle memory, breathing doesn’t come as naturally.”

Gemberling, a University of Idaho senior majoring in instrumental performance, started playing trumpet the summer after third grade. Brass musicians must learn to breathe in an efficient manner — to breathe the way babies do when they are zero seconds old, Gemberling said.



Sarah Bigelow, senior Anthropology major and tenor saxophone player, shows the power behind her breath as she plays and holds steady notes.

“In natural speech you never run out of air,” he said. “There are places where you pause naturally for breath, but you never keep talking until you run out of air. It’s a conscious thing when you are playing an instrument and taking in air.”

Breathing correctly is an action and an idea, and analogies and metaphors are often used for explanation. Pretending to inflate a beach ball or basketball in your stomach is a common way to explain proper breathing, Gemberling said. It’s not about learning to take a bigger breath, but a better breath.

“Breathing correctly is fine-tuning what you are capable of,” Gemberling said. “Not so much like weight lifting, but like toning.”

UI Assistant Professor of Saxophone Vanessa Sielert said saxophones perform best when air moves past the body and forward through the instrument in an efficient manner, which is impossible to do with normal breaths.

“In the same way you would if you had a match at arm’s length and you were trying to blow that match out,” Sielert said. “You’re blowing the air at a certain velocity that would make that happen and you’re thinking about moving the air past your body. So you can’t just breathe into the saxophone — you have to create a certain air speed.”

Airflow from the diaphragm to the point of contact with the mouthpiece should be free and easy, Sielert said, without constraining or constricting the body. If musicians create a false pressure or tension in their bodies while breathing it affects the entire function of the instrument.

“That affects not only the sound, the timbre of the tone that’s coming out, but it also affects the intonation,” Sielert said.

She explained that musicians whose breathing technique is irregular or incorrect throw off the tuning of their instrument.



“So where, say, they are playing a D on their instrument, if they would move the air up to the front of the mouthpiece every single time to that same spot the D would be in tune,” Sielert said. “But if they move the air a little bit back it will go sharper so all of a sudden the intonation on their instrument is out of whack and it’s because they aren’t moving their air to the same spot every time.”

Sielert said the most common problems she sees with students’ breathing is inconsistency in moving enough air to the mouthpiece, and an unnecessary tension that creates stress and moves energy away from the music.

Many people don’t recognize the physicality and focus required to play an instrument, which is very similar to playing a sport, Sielert said. Musicians try to manipulate their instruments, and they have to eliminate tension and focus their energy or it won’t happen. Sielert said most of the books musicians read are athletic training books to learn about focus and concentration.

“It’s as much of a sport as Tiger Woods playing golf,” she said. “When you think about what he does he’s completely focused. He has to do a repetitive motion over and over again. It’s exactly the same thing playing an instrument — you’re just producing a sound rather than hitting a ball.”

UI senior Sarah Bigelow said she learned about natural breathing while watching “American Idol.”

“Chris Daughtry was on the show and the judges told him he wasn’t singing with a supported sound,” Bigelow said. “They made him lay down and do a partial crunch and then sing and you could instantly hear the difference.”

Bigelow said the concept of breathing correctly sank in after watching Daughtry — move air forward using the diaphragm, not the stomach, throat or sinuses. The tenor saxophone leader of UI's marching band said breathing is excruciatingly important and requires going back to the fundamentals.

"When someone is breathing in their stomach their tone is fuzzy and dull, whereas someone breathing from their diaphragm (has) a supported sound and nice, circular tone," she said.

If Bigelow notices a problem with a musician's sound while leading tenor saxophone practice, she makes that person lean forward against her closed fist. Leaning against her fist forces breath through the diaphragm, not the stomach, and results

in an instant improvement in sound.

"One little thing affects the entire performance," Bigelow said.

Everything goes back to being comfortable and using proper posture, Sielert said. Quirky habits like practicing cross-legged will eventually equate to poor sound quality. But breathing is something a musician will never completely master.

The constant struggle of relearning to breathe makes Gemberling sometimes wish he had chosen percussion instead. But he continues to practice and break the bad habits he has been forming since birth.

"The musicians who are truly great don't allow themselves to let little things go," he said. ■



Find what moves you





DESPAIR. AMPUTATED

For one Moscow coach, a peg leg makes
for one hell of a story by **Dylan Brown**,
photography by **Philip Vukelich**

IT'S THE FIRST THING YOU SEE, AND THE LAST YOU TALK ABOUT.



■ Long-time Moscow Junior High School social studies teacher and football coach Jason Albrecht has solved the problem.

"I start the school year off with it. I say 'Now most of you already know this but ...'"

That's when Albrecht pops off his below-the-knee prosthetic leg, plops it on the table and tells his wide-eyed students, "Ask any question you want to ask — let's get it out of the way."

Albrecht then waits, answer-ready, for the inevitable first question: What happened?

"The biggest bass you have ever seen in your life came up when we were fishing and just snatched it and ran away," Albrecht says.

The students laugh, especially since keeping a straight face isn't really Albrecht's style.

The irony is that fishing was actually involved.

"I did go bass fishing when I knew I had a pretty decent, mild infection going in my foot and I made sure I made it worse," Albrecht said.

Albrecht's relationship with his prosthetic defies the morose attitude people with all their arms and legs associate with a fake limb.

"Best thing that ever happened to me," Albrecht said. "Trust me this is the best thing ever, people. I would not trade it for anything else — to get rid of that nasty thing

and have a good one that works — happy as a clam."

Albrecht's story differs from that of most amputees. Born with muscular dystrophy, his legs never worked right. He had little feeling in them, and his feet were perpetually covered in sores and prone to infection.

"I have had a number of different surgeries to try and correct my feet and get them straight and narrow and the whole nine yards," Albrecht said. "And finally one of them just wasn't working."

So he went fishing.

"And I tell you, it was the best day of fishing I ever had."

Three days later the mild infection had gotten much worse, so on the fifth day he went to the hospital. Doctors were immediately concerned.

"They said 'What do you want done?' I said let's get rid of it and they took it off the next morning," Albrecht said.

Albrecht, who isn't a fan of anesthesia, watched in a mirror as doctors hacked off what Albrecht called "that old that was attached to me, but I wasn't attached to it." The surgery was in 2006 when Albrecht was 35 years old.

Albrecht is one of more than 1.6 million Americans, according to the Amputee Coalition of America, who have lost limbs.

While the most common cases are car and farming accidents, and the more than 1,200 soldiers reported to have lost appendages in the Middle East since 9/11 — most amputations in the U.S are caused by disease not trauma.

Milo Griffin, a therapy specialist at Gritman Medical Center's Therapy Solutions, said amputations — and therefore prosthetics — are everywhere.

"In the general population they are relatively common, especially with increasing diabetics," Griffin said.

Senior citizens are the most vulnerable demographic, Griffin said, because as lifestyles slow and mobility decreases circulation becomes an issue. Diabetes and other diseases choke circulation to the lower extremities.

When limbs become unsalvageable surgeons amputate the appendage, leaving enough muscle to sew over the exposed bone, which is vulnerable to infection.

The wound is allowed to heal for a month. Meanwhile the surrounding muscles shrink with inactivity and a compression stocking is used to shape the fresh "stump." Once healing is complete, the patient goes to a prosthetist. The prosthetist creates a mold of the stump, but the tender surface, unused to bearing weight, continues to shrink and shape and a patient goes through a series of prosthetic adjustments.

Before assigning an artificial limb, Griffin said he must evaluate the patient's mobility, age and lifestyle.

"What you would look at is how mobile the person is in general and a little into how old they are," Griffin said. "If somebody is like 90 years old and in a wheelchair they are not going to get a prosthetic."

Another limit to prosthetics is the cost, Griffin said. People without insurance may be stuck with the bare minimum.

"Unfortunately in this country, a lot of healthcare is run by money," Griffin said. "You lose a hand you might be stuck with the two-hook version — the higher-end guys you are talking hundreds of thousands of dollars."

Albrecht said his basic design, a titanium rod and foot without a joint, costs upward of \$10,000. He also has a tendency to break his prosthetic while coaching football players on how to run particular routes.

Once the prosthetic is complete, Griffin said it is a long road to recovery, full of weekly visits, extensive rehabilitation and frustration.

"There is a whole lot of learning once you get a prosthetic on — how do you stand on it, how do you walk on it, how do you get your balance?" Griffin said.

Amputation and recovery take a psychological toll as well. Griffin remembers his father coping with amputation.

"He was in the hospital with basically gangrene of the foot and going to take it off, and he was saying 'Go ahead and kill me,'" Griffin said. "A year later he was playing golf. You have to go through that, it is the loss of part of you."

Depending on their age and fitness level, many patients return to form within six months of surgery. They are able to do just about anything, Griffin said. Amputees play basketball, hike or, like South African sprinter Oscar Pistorius, compete in the Olympics.

Corny as it sounds, attitude makes all the difference in recovery and life afterward, Albrecht said.



Jason Albrecht removes his titanium-rod prosthetic leg in a locker room at Moscow Junior High School where he coaches football. Albrecht said, "Your arms and legs aren't your limitations — it's your head."



He continues to fish and enjoy the outdoors. He has also traveled to Israel to study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, with another teacher, is taking a group of 60 students and parents to Italy this summer. A peg leg just makes for one hell of a story, not an excuse.

"You can't ask for a better visual for any group of kids whether they're struggling in class or struggling on the football field," Albrecht said. "You can sit and cry about it or you can suck it up and see what you can do."

The 17-year veteran of the classroom has also had a chance to help people on the cusp of amputation.

"Being able to talk to them and just say you know it's not terrible. You are actually a lot better off," Albrecht

said. "If your leg has been diseased and has hurt you for this long, this is not going to be that bad. Six months from now you will be up and going."

While an unexpected accident is much different from the slow decline of disease, the lesson remains the same for Albrecht, and he has relished being able to help people through the process.

"I think for people to realize that there aren't any limitations, that you can pretty much do anything you want to do," Albrecht said. "Your arms and legs aren't your limitations — it's your head. And if you decide in your head you're not going to stop, there you go."

Not a bad halftime speech, Coach. ■

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Big Wigs

Drag queens complete mind, body transformation by Britt Kiser,
photography by Amrah Canul



■ With plenty of makeup, bobby pins, glue, a wig and body shape-wear, Chris can transform into Claudia in less than four hours.

"Throughout the whole process, I start to get a little bit sassier," Chris Bidiman said. "I do my 'head bopping' a lot more too."

Bidiman said there are two different people — the boy and the drag queen. He said this personal transformation begins the second he starts applying makeup.

"The first year I was doing drag there was a running joke that my makeup looked like I was gang-raped by rodeo clowns in the alley," Bidiman said. "It's

a very true story, but I've been doing it since 2004 so I've definitely changed things."

Bidiman said he begins his transformation at 5:30 p.m. for a drag show at 9.

His first step is to glue his sideburns and eyebrows down because he said he refuses to shave them off.

Max Leu, known in the drag world as Roxanna Hardplace, said he prefers using a glue stick.

"You do a couple layers of that and then you powder over it," Leu said. "And then when your foundation goes on, your eyebrows disappear and then you can draw them on wherever you want."



Cole Gibson, left, “Loui” Council and Max “Roxanna Hardplace” Leu, prepare for the TabiKat drag show Feb. 4 at Leu’s Moscow residence. Leu’s transformation took around three hours, while Council’s lasted about two. Leu performed that night to a Moose Lodge auditorium at near-maximum capacity.

Leu said facial hair leaves a “5 o’clock shadow” creating a blue tint on the face, which can be neutralized with different shades of blush. The self-proclaimed artist said he enjoys the illusion of drag — using the face and body as a canvas — and putting an entire look together. He said he also hopes to commend women through drag.

“For me, and actually most queens, we are very comfortable with our gender,” Leu said. “I mean, I don’t want to be a woman, but I have a lot of respect and admiration for women so I try to glorify them.”

Bidiman said the entire gluing and blocking out process takes approximately 30 minutes.

Bidiman then puts his eye makeup on using several different colors and combinations depending on the theme of his performance, followed by the application of fake eyelashes.

Queen Aquasha DeLusty, or Gordon Mellott, said he follows his eye makeup with contouring — using highlight and shadow powders — to visually change the shape of his face. A combination of light and dark shades around the cheek bones makes them more prominent and dark shades around the temples and hairline makes the forehead look rounder.

Leu said he completes his makeup with lipstick.

“I have to have giant lips,” he said. “It’s a pretty feminine thing to have.”

Leu said the next step is to transform his body, which includes putting on fake breasts and hips.

“I wear a ton of nylons because I don’t shave my legs,” he said. “And then I put the (fake hips) under so I kind of have a shape going on.”

Some queens prefer to do without fake hips or butts, but most wear fake breasts that come in several different forms, Mellott said.

“There’s the breast plate, which is all one piece,” he said. “And then I have these sort of chicken cutlets, and I stack those up and stuff them in my bra.”

Leu said several queens also duct tape their chests for cleavage, and use a combination of bronzers, blushes and highlighters to create the illusion of even more cleavage.

Fake hair completes every queen’s look.

Bidiman said he has twelve different wigs in the same color family that vary in style.

“I’m kind of known as the red head, so I pretty much stay within the same color,” he said. “The style and shade of red will change though. It all depends on what song I’m doing. If I’m doing an ‘80s piece, I’m going to have the teased-out awesome ‘80s hair.”

Leu said he sticks to one standard Brunette

wig that he parts differently, puts in a ponytail or adds ribbons to depending on what song he’s performing.

Mellott, on the other hand, said he uses at least three different pieces of fake hair, similar to extensions or “claw-clip ponies,” that add volume and body.

The final stage of a drag queen’s physical transformation is costume. Mellott said his costumes vary depending on the songs he plans to perform.

“A lot of times I’ll try to keep it close so that my makeup works for both costumes,” he said. “I don’t want to go gothic one set and then pretty girl the next.”

Bidiman said he relies on a standard wardrobe, but occasionally changes things up.

“If I’m doing a specialty or a theme number, I’ll try to come up with a costume that works with what I’m doing,” he said. “So for October, the theme was heroes and villains and I chose Ursula from ‘The Little Mermaid,’ and actually had an octopus costume. It really just depends on what we’re doing.”

After all the gluing, tucking and taping, no drag queen is complete without an attitude to match.

As Claudia, Bidiman said he’s more assertive, especially when it comes to people he finds attractive, and that he also makes more inappropriate jokes.

"I mean, I have a pretty gutter mind as it is — I have the maturity of a 12-year-old — but even more so in drag," he said.

Mellott said personality transformations are less prominent in those who have been doing drag longer, because their personalities start to meld together.

"You don't realize you're doing it, because after a while it just becomes a part of you," he said. "Back in the day I used to put on drag and my personality would do a complete (180), whereas now it's more like an amplifier of my usual self. It's like putting a magnifying glass on yourself and having everything pop."

Star power turns a man in makeup into a divine diva. Most queens' performances consist of lip syncing, Bidiman said. He said occasionally performers sing live or do a choreographed dance.

"It can't be choreographed to the second because we also accept tips throughout the process, so there's always a margin for adaptation," Bidiman said.

Mellott said he also has a magic act that doesn't require any lip syncing or choreography.

Performing in drag is addictive, but every glamour girl has a reason for getting hooked.

Mellott said he gets a rush from being in the spotlight.

"It's just fun to entertain," he said. "You know you're doing a good job when the crowd's either cheering or laughing, or if you're doing a sad ballad and you've got them crying. Whatever emotion you're trying to portray through a song — if you get that out of the audience, then you're hooked."

Bidiman said he enjoys drag because it's provided him with a larger circle of friends, and a chance to promote social change. He said there's a set of standards for all drag shows that include rules like not allowing hate speech. Bidiman said having a platform, as well as the ability and outlet to express that platform, is exciting.

Leu said some queens take dressing in drag too seriously, and get wrapped up in trying to look pretty.

"I'm always going to have a giant nose and an angular face, and I'll probably never make a pretty girl," he said. "No matter what, at the end of the day, I'm still a boy in a dress lip syncing to a girl's song." ■


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