



Author Bruce Feiler will hold a virtual discussion, presented by Festival of the Arts Boca. JONICA MOORE PHOTOGRAPHY

## Learn how to cope with inevitable ‘lifequakes’

Transformed festival focuses on resiliency



### Boomer Health

Steve Dorfman  
Palm Beach Post  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The 15th annual Festival of the Arts Boca — which kicks off Saturday and runs through March 14 — will be unlike any other in the event’s history.

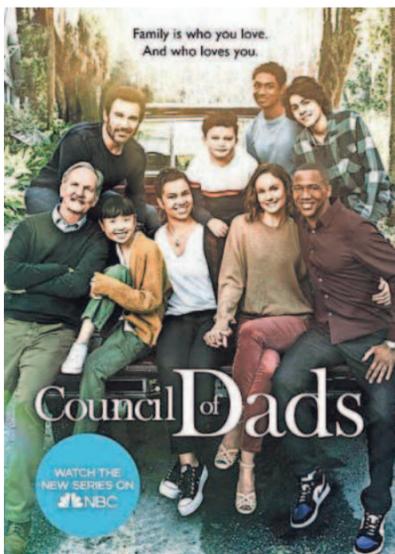
That’s because all performers and speakers will be appearing remotely.

But rather than bemoan the lack of in-person audiences, event organizers have chosen to focus on a silver lining.

“Our 15th installment will celebrate the tremendous talent in South Florida, showcase the beauty of Boca from various venues and honor the legacy of our late co-founder, Charlie Siemon,” said Joanna Marie Kaye, executive director of Festival of the Arts Boca. “Charlie would have been thrilled to see that, paradoxically, we have the opportunity to reach our biggest audience ever in 2021 with all of our events filmed and broadcast worldwide.”

One of the most anticipated speakers is best-selling author Bruce Feiler, whose latest book — “Life is in the Transitions: Mastering Change at Any Age” — speaks to both our current moment and the timeless challenges all of us eventually face. His discussion begins at 7 p.m. on March 9.

Feiler, whose other works include the New York Times best-sellers “Walk-



Inspired by author Bruce Feiler’s 2010 best-selling book about his journey with a rare form of bone cancer, NBC’s “Council of Dads” premiered in March 2020. PROVIDED

ing the Bible: A Journey by Land Through the Five Books of Moses,” “The Secrets of Happy Families” and “The Council of Dads: My Daughters, My Illness, and the Men Who Could Be Me” (the latter of which was turned into an NBC drama in 2020), is especially well-equipped to offer wisdom during these unique pandemic times.

That’s because he’s spent the last several years traveling near and far, exploring how those of all ages and from all backgrounds, cultures and walks of life successfully navigate life’s inevita-

### Festival of the Arts Boca

Festival of the Arts Boca runs from Saturday through March 14. All events are free and will be streamed online. The performance schedule is as follows:

Saturday, 7 p.m. : Nadine Sierra & Friends.

Sunday, 7 p.m.: James Ehnes in Concert.

Monday, 7 p.m.: Admiral James Stavridis Talks Geopolitics.

March 9, 7 p.m.: Bruce Feiler on Transitions.

March 11, 7 p.m.: An Evening with Sonia Shah.

March 13, 7 p.m.: Constantine Kitsopoulos & The Festival All Stars.

March 14, 7 p.m.: Festival Finale with Nestor Torres.

For more information or to register for events, visit [festivalboca.org](http://festivalboca.org).

ble transitions.

“These are what I call ‘lifequakes,’” says the 56-year-old Feiler of those times when your existence is upended and forever altered.

Originally, the project was simply aimed at helping people tell their stories. But after collecting so many biographies, Feiler says “I saw that certain patterns started to emerge.”

Among them:

- We all go through at least three to

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What you were thinking, doing or feeling right before your last binge episode might be a trigger for out-of-control eating. GETTY IMAGES

## Say goodbye to binge eating

Angie Ferguson

Special to Fort Myers News-Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

There is a saying that awareness is curative and when it comes to binge eating, it is spot on. Being aware of the emotions attached to your eating behaviors can get you on the path to healthy food habits.

Start by identifying the emotions that trigger non-hungry eating. For example, are you angry, sad or scared preceding an episode? Make a list of alternative things to do when you experience non-hungry eating emotions and stick it on the fridge and the pantry. The primary reason people overeat is to soothe overwhelming emotions.

Next, map the events that lead to binge-eating episodes. With knowledge comes the power to change. You know that you’re likely to binge eat at night when everyone else has gone to bed, but do you know why? Work out what you were thinking, doing and feeling right before your last binge episode. Chances are one or more of these things will be a trigger for an out-of-control eating episode. When you work out what the trigger is, you can change it.

Write down why losing weight is important to you and commit to reading your list before every single meal or snack. It sounds like a chore, but it

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## Inability to smell after COVID-19 agonizing

John Leicester

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NICE, France — The doctor slid a miniature camera into the patient’s right nostril, making her whole nose glow red with its bright miniature light.

“Tickles a bit, eh?” he asked as he rummaged around her nasal passages, the discomfort causing tears to well in her eyes and roll down her cheeks.

The patient, Gabriella Forgione, wasn’t complaining. The 25-year-old pharmacy worker was happy to be prodded and poked at the hospital in Nice, in southern France, to advance her increasingly pressing quest to recover her sense of smell. Along with her sense of taste, it suddenly vanished when she fell ill with COVID-19 in November, and neither has returned.

Being deprived of the pleasures of food and the scents of things that she loves are proving tough on her body and mind. Shorn of odors both good and bad, Forgione is losing weight and self-confidence.

“Sometimes I ask myself, ‘Do I stink?’” she confessed. “Normally, I

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# Dorfman

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five major lifequakes.

- From onset to full acceptance of one's new circumstances, they tend to last on average around five years.

- They're equally split between being voluntary and involuntary transitions.

- Involuntary lifequakes — such as job loss, death of a loved one, major illness, etc. — are usually far more emotionally traumatic.

- About 92% of lifequakes are personal — as opposed to being “collective,” which is how he'd term the lifequake that COVID-19 has imposed on all of us.

Feiler, a Savannah, Ga. native and longtime Brooklyn, N.Y. resident, suffered his own involuntary lifequake in 2008 — just months before the collective lifequake of the global financial meltdown — when he was diagnosed with an osteosarcoma in his left leg.

It's an incredibly rare form of what is usually a pediatric bone cancer. Doctors see just 600 cases annually in the U.S. — and fewer than 100 of them are in adults.

At the time, Feiler and his wife, Linda Rottenberg, were planning to celebrate their fifth wedding anniversary. They were going to take a short vacation in

Nantucket — their first time alone since their identical twin daughters had been born three years earlier.

“Up until then, my life had been a pretty linear progression — college, career, marriage, parenthood,” he says.

Feiler would undergo an incredibly complicated surgery that affected his femur and quadriceps muscle, then spend the next two years on crutches and endure a year of arduous chemotherapy.

“I was scared of dying. I was scared of leaving my wife a young widow and my daughters without a father.”

So he reached out to six of the most important and influential men in his life and asked them to be present in the lives of his daughters.

As he wrote to them: “I believe my daughters will have plenty of opportunities in their lives. They'll have loving families. They'll have each other. But they may not have me. They may not have their dad. Will you help be their dad?”

And thus was born the “The Council of Dads.”

As CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta said of the simultaneously heart-wrenching, heartwarming — and ultimately uplifting — tale, “The story of Bruce Feiler profoundly connected with me and left me speechless. It made me rethink how

I'd live my life and how I would take care of the three little girls I might leave behind.”

It also set the stage for him to embark on “Life is in the Transitions.”

He believes there's a three-tiered structure to life's transitions. The first stage is “the long goodbye.” This is when you feel all of the visceral emotions of having your life upended.

The second stage is “the messy middle,” when you try to shed the old version of yourself and your life, and establish new habits and new internal identity.

The third stage is “the new beginning,” when you tell, and truly project, a new narrative about yourself.

During each phase, Feiler says “we all have transition superpowers and transition kryptonite.”

Recognizing the areas that trip you up during transitions is the key to moving through each phase as quickly as possible.

Feiler says he's found that the three most prevalent emotions people feel during transitions are fear, sadness and shame.

To cope with transitions, he believes people should incorporate the following seven tools:

1. **Accept it.** You must internalize the fact that your old reality is no more.

2. **Mark it.** This can be a form of literal or figurative memorialization of your former reality.

3. **Shed it.** Now you're taking concrete steps, whatever they may be, to move away from or beyond your old reality.

4. **Create it.** A new reality means you now have to come up with a new internal — and perhaps external — narrative.

5. **Unveil it.** This is when you begin taking real steps toward doing or being whatever your new reality requires.

6. **Tell it.** Now your new internal narrative — whether you verbalize it aloud or not — becomes more apparent to the outside world as you start truly living in your new reality.

7. **Share it.** Knowing that you're not the only person who is going through, or went through, a life transition like yours can be incredibly beneficial — both to you and to others.

Feiler's voluminous research — and own firsthand experiences — have convinced him that we'd all be well-served to learn how to cope with transitions in our unpredictable and everchanging world.

“The old idea of a linear life,” he says, “is dead.”

# Smell

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wear perfume and like for things to smell nice. Not being able to smell bothers me greatly.”

A year into the coronavirus pandemic, doctors and researchers are still striving to better understand and treat the accompanying epidemic of COVID-19-related anosmia — loss of smell — draining much of the joy of life from an increasing number of sensorially frustrated longer-term sufferers like Forgiione.

Even specialist doctors say there is much about the condition they still don't know and they are learning as they go along in their diagnoses and treatments. Impairment and alteration of smell have become so common with COVID-19 that some researchers suggest that simple odor tests could be used to track coronavirus infections in countries with few laboratories.

For most people, the olfactory problems are temporary, often improving on their own in weeks. But a small minority are complaining of persistent dysfunction long after other COVID-19 symptoms have disappeared. Some have reported continued total or partial loss of smell six months after infection. The longest, some doctors say, are now approaching a full year.

Researchers working on the vexing disability say they are optimistic that most will eventually recover but fear some will not. Some doctors are concerned that growing numbers of smell-deprived patients, many of them young, could be more prone to depression and other difficulties and weigh on strained health systems.

“They are losing color in their lives,” said Dr. Thomas Hummel, who heads the smell and taste outpatients clinic at University Hospital in Dresden, Germany.

“These people will survive and they'll be successful in their lives, in their professions,” Hummel added. “But their lives will be much poorer.”

At the Face and Neck University Institute in Nice, Dr. Clair Vandersteen wafted tube after tube of odors under Forgiione's nose after he had rooted around in her nostrils with his camera.

“Do you perceive any smell? Nothing? Zero? OK,” he asked, as she repeat-



**Evan Cesa, a patient, smells a small pot of fragrance during tests in a clinic in Nice, France, on Feb. 8 to help determine how his sense of smell and taste have been degraded since he contracted COVID-19 in September 2020. A year into the coronavirus pandemic, doctors are striving to better understand and treat patients who lose their sense of smell.** JOHN LEICESTER/AP

edly and apologetically responded with negatives.

Only the last tube provoked an unequivocal reaction.

“Urgh! Oh, that stinks,” Forgiione yelled. “Fish!”

Test complete, Vandersteen delivered his diagnosis.

“You need an enormous amount of an odor to be able to smell something,” he told her. “You haven't completely lost your sense of smell but nor is it good.”

He sent her away with homework: six months of olfactory rehab. Twice daily, choose two or three scented things, like a sprig of lavender or jars of fragrances, and smell them for two to three minutes, he ordered.

“If you smell something, great. If not, no problem. Try again, concentrating hard on picturing the lavender, a beautiful purple bloom,” he said. “You have to persevere.”

Losing the sense of smell can be more than a mere inconvenience. Smoke from a spreading fire, a gas leak, or the stink of rotten food can all pass dangerously unnoticed. Fumes from a used diaper, dog's dirt on a shoe or sweaty armpits can be embarrassingly ignored.

And as poets have long known, scents and emotions are often like lovers entwined.

Evan Cesa used to relish meal times. Now they're a chore. A fish dinner in September that suddenly seemed flavorless first flagged to the 18-year-old sports student that COVID-19 had attacked his senses. Foodstuffs became mere textures, with only residual hints of sweet and saltiness.

Five months later, breakfasting on

chocolate cookies before classes, Cesa still chewed without joy, as though swallowing cardboard.

“Eating no longer has any purpose for me,” he said. “It is just a waste of time.”

Cesa is among the anosmia sufferers being studied by researchers in Nice who, before the pandemic, had been using scents in the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. They also used comforting fragrances to treat post-traumatic stress among children after a truck terror attack in Nice in 2016, when a driver plowed through holiday crowds, killing 86 people.

The researchers are now turning their expertise to COVID-19, teaming up with perfumers from the nearby fragrance-producing town of Grasse. Perfumer Aude Galouye worked on the fragrant waxes that were wafted under Cesa's nose to measure his olfactory impairment, with scents at varying concentrations.

“The sense of smell is a sense that is fundamentally forgotten,” Galouye said. “We don't realize the effect it has on our lives except, obviously, when we no longer have it.”

The examinations on Cesa and other patients also include language and attention tests. The Nice researchers are exploring whether olfactory complaints are linked to COVID-related cognitive difficulties, including problems with concentrating. Cesa stumbled by picking the word “ship” when “kayak” was the obvious choice on one test.

“That is completely unexpected,” said Magali Payne, a speech therapist on the team. “This young man shouldn't be experiencing linguistic problems.”

“We have to keep digging,” she said. “We are finding things out as we see patients.”

Cesa longs to have his senses restored, to celebrate the taste of pasta in carbonara sauce, his favorite dish, and a run through the fragrant wonders of the great outdoors.

“One might think that it is not important to be able to smell nature, trees, forests,” he said. “But when you lose the sense of smell, you realize how truly lucky we are to be able to smell these things.”

# Eating

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works. Write down your list of five or 10 reasons why you must lose weight now. Enter it into your phone, laminate a copy of it and keep it in your wallet, or paste it on your fridge or inside the pantry door. The important thing is to read it, read it, read it.

Move! A positive approach to exercise is an important key to developing healthy habits. When it comes to reasons and excuses for not exercising, lack of motivation to pound the pavement or hit the gym is right up there with feeling too tired. The fact is exercise actually creates energy and improves mood. Emotion is created by motion.

Plan ahead. Some people dread weekends or meals out because they know they are likely to overeat and struggle to get back to healthy eating af-

terward. However, a healthy eating regime shouldn't stop you from going out and enjoying yourself. When you plan ahead, you stop pretending that you're not going to treat yourself. Instead, you accept that this is your reality, and you plan for it accordingly.

By being aware of the emotions attached to your eating behaviors, and following these steps, you can get on the path to healthy food habits. Keeping a food and exercise journal is valuable too — to keep you honest and on track.

Finally, don't despair if you slip up — forgive yourself for being human and restart the next day.

*Angie Ferguson is an exercise physiologist and Tony Robbins Results Coach from Fort Myers, Fla. She also is a Corrective Biomechanics Specialist, USA Triathlon Advanced Level 2 coach, USA Cycling coach, has a Specialty in Sports Nutrition certification, and a PhD in results! For more training tips, contact her at [www.geardup.biz](http://www.geardup.biz)*

## REVIEW FROM PATIENT:

“Today was my first visit at Dr. Mittleman Eye office. I was beyond impressed with every single staff member with how they greeted not just me but other patients.

I will definitely recommend my patients and family to this office.

Job well done everyone... I know some days aren't easy working to take care of people but hang in there.

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