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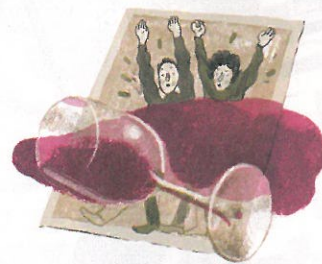
SMART SOLUTIONS FOR LIFE'S LITTLE DISASTERS



"I've tried lighting a candle, yet I still cry whenever I slice onions."

Kate Guideau, via Facebook

THE FIX: That "solution," like chewing gum or breathing through your mouth, is an old wives' tale, says Christopher Coad, an ophthalmologist at Chelsea Eye Associates, in New York City. What *does* work: chilling the onion for an hour in the refrigerator before chopping. The cold temperature slows the formation of the sulfur compounds that are released when the onion is cut. If you chop quickly enough while the onion is cold, you may not tear up at all, says Susan Percival, the chair of the department of food science and human nutrition at the University of Florida, in Gainesville. Another plan: Position a fan so that it blows the fumes away as you work. Also, make sure that the knife is sharp. A dull or serrated blade can damage an onion's cell walls, sending even more irritants into the air. If all else fails and you have a lot of onions to chop, protect your eyes with swim or ski goggles.



"I spilled wine on cherished photos!"

Liza G., via e-mail

THE FIX: You'll need a pro, whether you're dealing with Pinot or pineapple juice, an old stain or a fresh one. (Advice on fresh stains: Don't touch the surface; just shake the liquid off.) You can find a skilled photo conservator through conservation-us.org, says Monique C. Fischer, a senior photograph conservator for the Northeast Document Conservation Center, in Andover, Massachusetts. (Click on Find a Conservator, then type in your ZIP code.) Expect to pay \$100 to \$250 an hour. Simple jobs can take one hour, while complex ones (like old, large stains) may call for a few hours of washing, which involves cleaning the photo with a special solvent, says Lisa Duncan, a paper and photograph conservator in Seattle. As a cheaper alternative, a digital restoration service can make a computer-generated version. Keep in mind that some details may not match the original exactly. American Photo Restoration (amerphotorestoration.com) charges \$39 for both a print and a digital image of your restored picture.

"I get static shocks all over my apartment."

Donna House, via e-mail

THE FIX: The reason you keep getting zinged involves a bit of science—protons, electrons, and other scary terms from eighth grade. All you really need to know, though, is that the problem is too much friction between clothing and furniture and between shoes and carpet, says Steve Fowler, an electrical engineer in Moore, South Carolina. To decrease static, fill a spray bottle with equal parts water and liquid fabric softener, then spritz it on your furniture every few months. When you're at home, wear natural fibers, like cotton socks and leather-soled slippers, since synthetic fabrics and soles encourage sparks. Static also flourishes in dry air, so it will help to run a humidifier. One last tip: To lessen a static charge that you may be carrying, touch wood before reaching for anything metallic.



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