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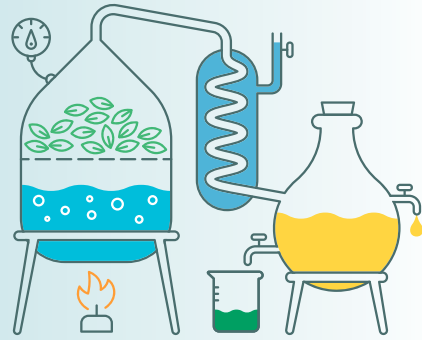
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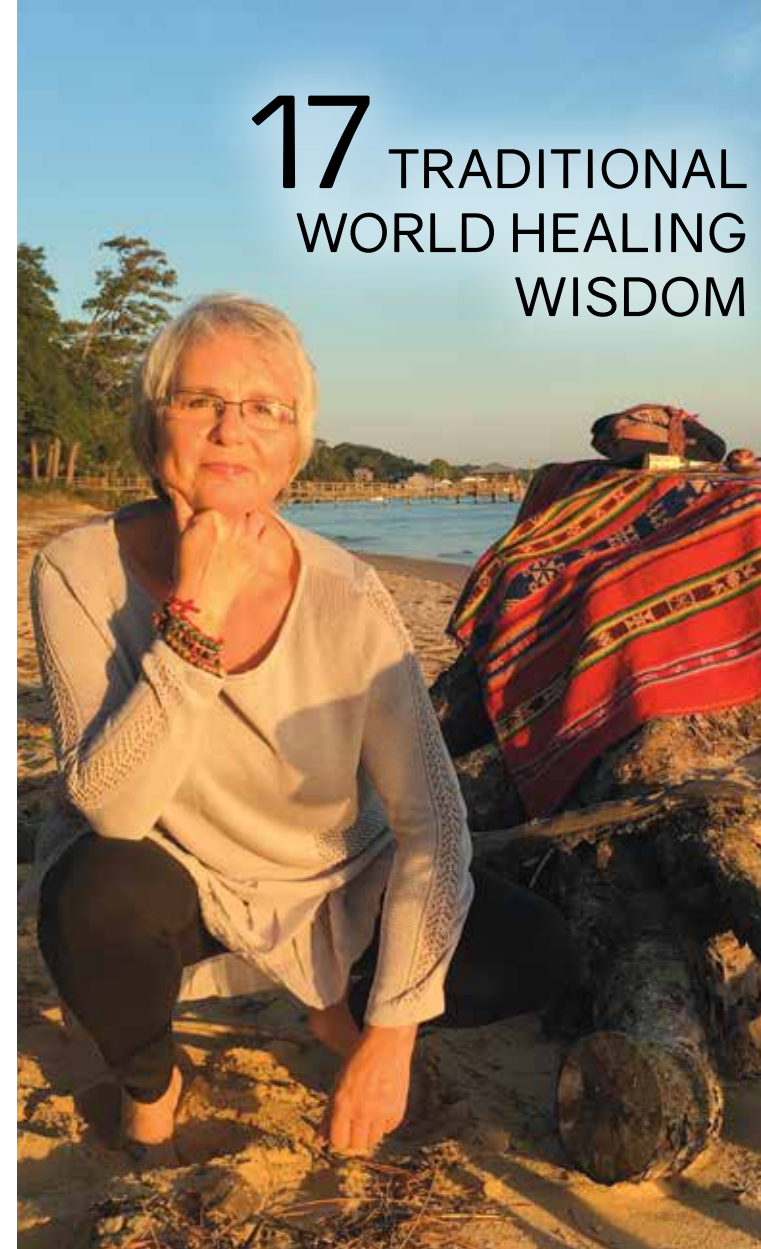


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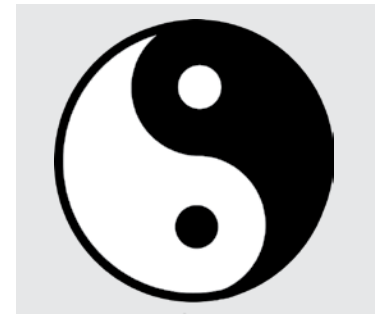
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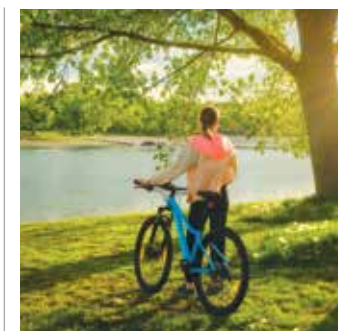
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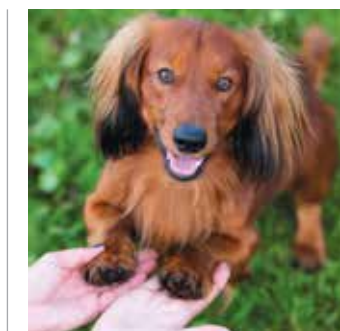
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PROACTIVE HEALTHCARE

This issue's special section is on health coaching. Most people engage health coaches when they have a condition to address. However, since most major health issues take years to develop—heart disease, cancer, chronic conditions, etc.—wise ones will take proactive measures to ensure good health even when they're asymptomatic.

A visit to our archives finds plenty of articles that encourage taking proactive steps. Interestingly, three of these four articles were published within four months, from March to June 2019. Two articles offer specific action steps while the other two offer useful perspectives on holistic and functional/integrative medicine.

Be Healthy and Stay Healthy

Top 10 Keys to Wellness

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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



THE BENEFITS OF Health Coaching

This month, we're pleased to offer a special section on health coaching, a three-story package anchored by health coach Hope Knosher, who also happens to be a yoga instructor and one of the many multitalented individuals with whom we're so privileged and honored to be associated.

With holistic health as the main focus of this publication, a natural topic of inquiry for us is what health coaches offer and how they can help us. As we noted long ago, a significant health concern in America is that many of us are asymptomatic but have significant and growing health conditions that simply have yet to manifest. The problem is, by the time symptoms arise, a lot of damage is done—think heart disease, type 2 diabetes and many other chronic conditions.

That's why we advise and encourage readers to be proactive and take control of their health. It's one of the reasons we publish so much content about Ayurvedic principles; Ayurveda is one of the world's oldest health enhancement and maintenance systems proven over millennia. And that's why we're presenting this month's health coaching special section.

As many, if not most of our readers know, seeing functional and integrative medicine doctors can be an expensive proposition, especially since most don't accept insurance. Most health coaches don't either, and while they are in no way a substitute for functional/integrative doctors, their fees are considerably less. There are also numerous ways they can help you improve your health, not the least of which is showing you how you can take control, establish a program and habits, and become your own best health advocate.

Finally! The Return of Dirty South Yoga Fest and ChantLanta

Given that I publish this magazine, it is not surprising that I often find myself at odds with mainstream America. That said, I'm surprised to be part of the minority who has long thought that life has been pretty "normal" vis-à-vis the pandemic; I thought we were pretty much "there" about a year ago.

Gallup is tracking America's opinion on the topic, and about a year ago, they reported that only 31 percent felt that life was "completely back to normal." The most recent measure from June 2023 shows that 43 percent of Americans now feel that way. That narrowly beats out the 41 percent who believe things will never return to normal!

Of course, one's response is a function of what they see as "normal." My perspective is this: Everything that was closed is open; people can gather in large crowds; and I don't feel it's necessary to wear a mask. Yes, I felt all these conditions were met by autumn 2022.

That said, I did enjoy feeling that things were back to normal with the return of two events that this magazine sponsored prior to the pandemic: the Dirty South Yoga Fest and ChantLanta. The two took place in the span of three weekends. Dirty South came first. While the vibe there is always high—warm and welcoming—there was a distinct difference in the energy field, a sense of excitement, which, not surprisingly, organizers credited to the sense that things are returning to normal. My experience of ChantLanta was truncated because I only attended the Saturday evening performances. But, as with Dirty South, I enjoyed seeing, meeting and talking with old friends; I couldn't enter the front door without enjoying multiple hugs.

In the end, the two festivals felt like reunions! I saw at least a dozen people I hadn't seen since March 2020. As the pandemic continues to fade in our rearview mirrors, perhaps reconnecting with friends and loved ones that we have not seen in years will finally bring a sense of normalcy to us all. 🙌



Publisher of Natural Awakenings Atlanta since 2017, Paul Chen's professional background includes strategic planning, marketing management and qualitative research.

LumiSummit Retreat RETURNS TO ATLANTA



LumiSummit, a weekend retreat helping people connect with their intuition, is returning to Atlanta October 20 through 22 at Full Circle Studio. The annual program was first held in 2017 at The Center for Love and Light in Atlanta, but organizers had to shut it down in 2020 due to the pandemic.

"Atlanta lost over half of its metaphysical healing spaces during the pandemic," says Bonnie Casamassima, an intuitive medium, founder of Intuitive By Nature and organizer of LumiSummit. "It's an empowering weekend of community, transformation and tuning into your intuition," she says.

Atlanta author, psychic medium and frequent podcast guest, Jamie Butler founded the event. A total of 12 metaphysical leaders, healers and channelers will teach and guide participants to tune into their intuition. Quiet areas for reflection and introspection will also be available.

Class offerings include Energy Integration: Healing Through Parallel Timelines; Connecting to Your Intuition: A Channeling; How to Effortlessly Own Your Destiny; Strengthening Your Intuition Through Sacral Chakra Opening and Sexual Energy; and Align Your Life with Human Design. Holistic vendors, reiki, massage and aura photography will also be available.

"I'm so honored to help bring LumiSummit back to Atlanta this year," says Casamassima. "It can be profound when we gather with like-minded people on our journey of intuitive connection, healing and expansion."

The cost of the LumiSummit weekend program ranges from \$395 to \$465. Full Circle Studio is located at 655 Highland Ave. NE, Studio 8, in the Old Fourth Ward/Inman Park area of Atlanta. For more information, visit IntuitiveByNature.com/lumisummit or email Bonnie@IntuitiveByNature.com.

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MEDICAL MARIJUANA CLINIC OPENS IN EAST COBB

Whole Plant Wellness, a clinic for Atlantans seeking relief from pain and certain health conditions with the help of medical marijuana, opened its doors in East Cobb last month.

People with various health conditions—including cancer, seizure disorders, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, autism spectrum disorder, PTSD and intractable pain—can now apply and get approval for a Georgia medical marijuana card if their condition fits certain criteria and if they are certified by a physician.

Whole Plant Wellness's physician can facilitate that process by providing in-person and virtual consultations to educate, inform and assist patients in getting the best medical marijuana solution for them. Founder and director Mary Adams says, "We like to help patients before they go to the dispensary to know what medicine is available for them and what we would recommend for their diagnosis." Staff might also recommend which type of product—gummies, tinctures or lotions, for example—would serve their condition best.

Medical marijuana was legalized in Georgia in April 2015, but it wasn't until April of this year that the first dispensary, Trulieve in Marietta, opened in Atlanta. Adams says that the reason for the eight-year gap between legislation and availability is primarily due to the Georgia legislature's insistence that the medical marijuana sold in Georgia must be grown in Georgia. Other aspects of the law pushed the timeline as well, such as requiring a starting inventory of \$1 million.

Whole Plant Wellness does not dispense medical marijuana; it writes prescriptions for it. Patients receive a 15 to 30-minute intake and information consultation, plus a consultation with the clinic's physician. Virtual appointments cost \$150, and in-person appointments cost \$200. Veterans and minors get a reduced rate of \$100.

"Half of the [online] companies that offer a medical cannabis card are out-of-state conglomerates with doctors' offices. You have no real relationship with them," says Adams. "We take our job and our relationship with our patients very seriously. We want them to get the most for the money, time and effort that goes into it."

Whole Plant Wellness is located at 4317 Canton Rd., Suite 2, in Marietta. For more information, visit WholePlantWellness.net, email Mary@WholePlantWellness.net or call 404-858-9286.



Mary Adams [Photo: Glen Treadwell]



Asili Wellness Hosts Grand Opening

Asili Wellness, a holistic therapy service that also offers healing products to nourish one's well-being, has relocated to a new office in Tucker.

Owner Dr. Nicole Ware Spencer is a licensed clinical psychologist and yoga therapist who works with women of color to enhance, nourish and transform their health through yoga, holistic talk therapy, meditation and mindfulness.

"I am thrilled to establish a brick-and-mortar wellness destination in Tucker! Here, clients can practice yoga and barre, receive holistic therapy, meditate, experience sound baths, drink wellness teas, purchase sustainable healing products and connect with plants for happier, more mindful living. I hope that, through Asili Wellness Home, customers become stronger mentally, find inner peace, receive refreshing energy for the body and get back in touch with nature."

Asili Wellness' new location is at 4940 Lavista Rd. in Tucker. For more information, visit AsiliWellness.com, email DrNicole@AsiliWellness.com or call 470-810-781.



Dr. Nicole Ware Spencer [submitted photo]

FIRST ANNUAL PEACE OF MIND EXPO ANNOUNCED FOR 2024

Mother and daughter duo, Nancy and Sara Hartman, will bring the first annual Peace of Mind Expo to Atlanta in 2024. The two have been producing a holistic wellness expo event twice a year in Pennsylvania for the last 10 years and now want to bring something similar to Georgia.

The Peace of Mind Expo, a holistic wellness and gem expo, will be held at the Gwinnett County Fairgrounds in Lawrenceville on June 1 and 2, 2024. Lectures will be held throughout the weekend, and more than 100 vendors will showcase a wide variety of modalities, herbal products, crystals, metaphysical products, CBD products, aura photos and more. The cost to attend will be \$10 per day. It will be an indoor event.

"We are so excited to bring this event to Gwinnett County Fairgrounds," says event manager Sara Hartman.



"Our vision for producing this Expo is to bring awareness and education in a safe space with loving, positive energy. Our hope is that each visitor takes away a sense of inner peace from not only the modalities and therapies they might receive, the wellness products available and the connections they acquire over the weekend, but also the information they can refer to long after they leave. In this time of spiritual awakening, people are looking for answers and we are here to help them find what they are looking for."

The Peace of Mind Expo will take place at Gwinnett County Fairgrounds, Gate 1 in Lawrenceville. For more information, visit PeaceOfMindExpo.com, email PeaceOfMindExpo@gmail.com or call 404-343-5038.

KMC-GA Gets New Resident Teacher



Kelsang Dechok
[Photo courtesy New Kadampa Tradition]

As soon as this magazine published an article about the 25th anniversary of the Kadampa Meditation Center of Georgia (KMC-GA), its resident teacher, Gen Norden, was recalled to the U.K. The new resident teacher is Kelsang Dechok.

Dechok, originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico, was ordained in 2006 and since then has worked in center management in New Mexico, California, Texas, Arizona, New York and Chicago. "I've also had the opportunity to help with Kadampa temple art projects in England, Arizona, Brazil and Baltimore," says Dechok, who received six months of intensive teacher training at the tradition's mother center in England.

Indeed, Atlanta is her first assignment as a resident teacher, and the newly minted instructor gave her first teaching in Atlanta on September 3. "I love Atlanta!" says Dechok. "I've never spent time in the South, and I'm pleasantly surprised by the friendly people, green spaces and hub of activity nearby our meditation center in Inman Park."

KMC-GA is part of the New Kadampa Tradition, a Mahayana Buddhist organization. "I'm looking forward to sharing the methods taught by Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche, my teacher, which allow us to bring Buddha's teachings into our daily life, put them into practice and make progress in our spiritual path, not to mention help us solve our daily problems. In particular, I'm looking forward to the Sunday morning class, where we will be exploring various topics such as The Healing Power of Meditation, Beyond Anger and Love and Connection."

KMC-GA is located at 741 Edgewood Ave. NE in Atlanta. For more information, visit MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Books about Getting Unstuck, Breast Cancer Just Released



Diane Martinez with her new book
[Photo: Diane Martinez]

Two books by *Natural Awakenings* contributors are hitting the shelves in October.

Life coach Diane Martinez celebrated her first book, *Open Up and Get Unstuck: The Gateway to Living Your Best Life, Your Whole Life*, at a launch party in Marietta in early September.

"I was inspired to write *Open Up and Get Unstuck* after observing how many people feel unfulfilled in their lives, yet know at some level, life can offer more," says Martinez. "It is my intention that the book will be helpful to those who sense that low hum of discontentment in their lives, but don't know what to do about it or where to begin."

At the end of each chapter, Martinez offers practices to open body, mind and spirit and to help readers get unstuck. At the end of the book, she interviews four of her coaching clients who move from being stuck to a place of "clarity, confidence and contentment."

Martinez's book is available in print and e-book formats on Amazon and Barnes and Noble sites.

For more information, visit ConsciousCreatingLifeCoaching.com.

BreastQuake: Ten Proven Steps to Healing and Preventing Breast Cancer Without Surgery, Radiation, or Chemotherapy, Dr. Toni Galardi's second book, will become available on October 10 in print and e-book formats on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

Galardi's book is about her personal journey healing from breast cancer naturally, in do-it-yourself fashion. "It examines the role that body shame, food addiction, toxic partnerships, career burnout, childhood trauma and chronic stress play in the formation of breast cancer cells," says Galardi, a life coach, psychotherapist and astrologer. She developed a 10-point protocol for her own healing and health maintenance and includes meditations and/or coaching exercises in each chapter.

In addition, Galardi interviewed 100 women about their views of their breasts, which she calls "eye opening." She notes, too, that even though the book is a primer on breast health, the functional medicine interventions she writes about have also been used to heal prostate cancer.

For more information, visit DrToniGalardi.com.



Decatur Healing Arts VOTED #1 SELF-CARE SANCTUARY

In a recent poll of *Best Self* readers, Decatur Healing Arts (DHA) was voted the No. 1 self-care sanctuary in the metro area.

"What sets Decatur Healing Arts apart is our dedicated team of passionate healers, therapists, practitioners and teachers who are devoted to helping you achieve balance, relaxation and healing of mind, body and spirit," says co-owner Nataly Baiz. "We offer a wide range of holistic services, from massage therapy and acupuncture to salt therapy, yoga and meditation, all designed to support your self-care journey."

In celebration of its placement in the Top 10, DHA is offering



a 20 percent discount for new clients when they register for their first service. Use promotional code SelfCare20 at DHA's website, DecaturHealingArts.com. The code is good for one year.

Also notable in the rankings is CentreSpringMD + Spa, which placed fourth. CentreSpringMD is one of Atlanta's leading functional/integrative medicine practices.

Decatur Healing Arts has been in business for 19 years and is located just outside downtown Decatur at 619-A East College Avenue. Treatments can be scheduled online, or readers can call 404-378-6288.

The Modern Macrobiotic Diet

MORE THAN TOFU AND SEAWEED

by Veronica Hinke

So much has evolved in the 100 years since Japanese educator George Ohsawa created the macrobiotic diet. For one thing, the recipes have become more flexible, empowering people to save time and use ingredients that they love. “The modern macrobiotic diet is about much more than tofu, seaweed and miso,” says chef and author Christina Pirello, the Emmy Award-winning host of *Christina Cooks*, on PBS. “It’s about seasonal, whole, unprocessed food cooked in accordance with each person’s condition and lifestyle.”

“In the beginning, there was rigidity that didn’t give you the freedom to say, ‘I don’t want to eat adzuki beans again,’” Pirello says. “Variety is key. You can’t just eat kale and drink smoothies and hope for the best. You have to get balanced nutrition with enough protein, fats and carbohydrates.”

According to Pirello, “What we eat determines how we move through the world. Are we comfortable or uncomfortable? In Chinese medicine, we are either in a state of ease or *dis-ease*, which became the word disease, but in Chinese medicine, it really means uncomfortable. What do you do to get back into that state of ease, or balance? That’s really what macrobiotics is about; how do you rebalance the body—the organs—to be comfortable?”

Eating in accordance with the natural order—with the seasons—is an essential concept of the macrobiotic diet and includes



fall, winter, spring, summer and a fifth season, “late harvest.” The idea is to follow our intuition, Pirello advises: “If you walk into the supermarket in November, you’re not immediately attracted to cherry tomatoes and strawberries, but the winter squashes, pumpkins and parsnips call your name. Macrobiotics allows us to understand that—even here in the United States where foods are so widely available that you can have strawberries at Christmas.”

Her recipe for Winter Squash Risotto, which is featured in her new cookbook, *VegEdibles*, is just one example of the delicious macrobiotic dishes she has developed. “This risotto is perfect for cooler weather, when we need to keep energy in our middle organs so we are warm and cozy, centered and balanced,” Pirello says. “Come winter and fall, we want foods that are going to help the body hold onto heat. Squash, pumpkin, turnips and rutabaga are going to help relax the body and the middle organs and help us stay grounded, centered and warm. The risotto is cooked really long, so there’s a lot of warming energy that will help you in cold weather.”

“There has to be a period when the body transitions from the heat of summer into the cool of the fall,” says Chicago area-based macrobiotic counselor Karla Walter. “That’s when we have those beautiful orange foods starting to come out, and the squashes start

arriving. We have this really lovely, sweet time of the year that actually nourishes the body and helps the immune system ramp up and get ready for colder weather.”

Walter recommends the macrobiotic diet for finding calmness and rhythm. “When we eat healthy foods that sustain us, our goals come to the surface where we can see them a lot clearer. People don’t know their potential until they start to feel good about themselves,” she says.

Lisa Books-Williams, a plant-based chef, educator and therapist in the San Francisco area, encourages people to find their own plant-based path. “I found my answer at the end of a fork, instead of in a

bottle of pills,” she says. “The most loving thing I ever did for myself started with changing my food choices. Sure, it would be more delicious to be eating a pizza, but eating a salad with beans and rice is how I love myself.”

Books-Williams believes that taking the extra time that is required to follow a plant-based lifestyle is worthwhile. “We can eat well inexpensively if we are willing to take an extra couple of hours each week to chop vegetables. We are worth the time it takes to batch-cook and freeze beans in single servings so we have them when we need them. Each of us has to be committed to our own well-being. No one is going to do it for us.”

While much has changed since Ohsawa introduced the macrobiotic diet, Pirello still adheres to its three core ingredients. “I still eat rice, seaweed and miso soup,” she says. “Not as much as I used to, but I still do, because miso is the greatest probiotic on the planet, followed by kimchi. Those are the greatest macrobiotics we could ever eat in our lives, and both are delicious.”

Veronica Hinke is a food historian and the author of *The Last Night on the Titanic: Unsinkable Drinking, Dining and Style and Titanic: The Official Cookbook*. Learn more at FoodStringer.com.



WINTER SQUASH RISOTTO

YIELD: 4-6 SERVINGS

FOR THE BROTH:

- ¼ red onion, diced
- ½ carrot, diced
- ¼ cup diced winter squash
- Splash of white wine or mirin
- 3 cups spring or filtered water

FOR THE RISOTTO:

- 2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ red onion, finely diced
- ¼ tsp sea salt
- Splash of white wine or mirin
- ½ cup carnaroli or Arborio rice
- ¼ winter squash, unpeeled and finely diced
- 4-5 sprigs fresh basil, leaves removed, hand-shredded

To make the broth, combine all of the listed ingredients in a large saucepan over low heat and simmer for 30 minutes before making the risotto. This can be done the day before.

For the risotto, place the olive oil in a deep skillet along with the onion over medium heat. When the onion begins to sizzle, add a pinch of salt and cook, stirring until translucent. Add the rice and a generous splash of wine, and cook, stirring until the wine is absorbed. Add ¼ cup broth and cook, stirring frequently, until the broth is absorbed. Add another ¼ cup of broth and repeat the process. Stir in half of the diced squash and cook, stirring.

In a small saucepan over medium heat, place the remaining squash with enough water to cover halfway. Add a pinch of salt. Cook over medium heat until the squash is soft, about 20 minutes.

Continue adding the remaining broth to the rice—¼ cup at a time—and stirring until the rice is tender but al dente, about 25 minutes.

Take the remaining squash and use an emulsion blender or a food processor to purée until smooth. Stir the puréed squash into the cooked risotto. Season it lightly with salt and cook over low heat until the squash is absorbed into the rice.

Serve immediately, garnished with fresh basil.

Recipe courtesy of Christina Pirello.

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BEETROOT AND ORANGE MISO SOUP

YIELD: 4-6 SERVINGS

4 medium beets, washed and with stems trimmed to about 1 inch
 2 tsp ginger, finely chopped
 2 Tbsp green onions, finely chopped
 2 cups water or vegetable stock
 1¼ cup orange juice
 2 Tbsp raspberry vinegar
 1 Tbsp barley (mugi) miso
 ½ cup chopped chives or green onions

Place the beetroot in a large saucepan, cover with water and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat and simmer until tender, about 40 minutes. Drain the beets.

Next, run the beets under cold water and peel them. The skin and stalks should fall off easily. Chop the beets into ½-inch cubes.

Reserve ½ cup chopped beets and set aside.

In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the remaining beets, ginger, green onions, water or vegetable stock plus one extra cup of water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes.

Remove from heat and stir in orange juice.

Purée soup in small batches in a blender until smooth.

Remove a small portion of the soup into a bowl and dissolve the miso. Add miso back into the soup and stir through. Add the vinegar and stir through.

Garnish with the chives or green onions.

Recipe courtesy of Karla Walter.

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TRADITIONAL WORLD HEALING WISDOM

LOST PRACTICES GAIN NEW RESPECT

by Carrie Jackson

With time-tested wisdom and natural roots, traditional and Indigenous medicine has been an integral resource for centuries in communities around the world. According to the World Health Organization, 88 percent of all countries are estimated to use traditional medicine, such as herbal remedies, acupuncture and shamanism. The contribution of these practices is increasingly being recognized by Western medicine, especially in collaboration with integrative, holistic and regenerative medicine. The pandemic prompted renewed interest in traditional treatments, and incorporating them into wellness and healing modalities is easier and more valuable than ever.

Herbalism

Herbalist and spiritual coach Lucretia VanDyke integrates rituals, plant-spirit meditation, holistic food and ancestor reverence into her practice. An expert on Southern folk healing, VanDyke notes in her book, *African American Herbalism*, that Indigenous practices were never lost, but people had to go underground for fear of persecution.

"Herbal and sacred ceremonial practices of enslaved people of African descent were highly regulated or banned by the United States government in an effort to control the people most affected by colonization," she explains. "In the mid-18th century, Virginia and South Carolina made it a capital offense to practice herbalism, resulting in harsh punishment or even execution if found guilty. Additionally, in 1883, the U.S.



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Department of Interior came up with the Code of Indian Offenses, which implemented laws that applied only to Native people until 1978. They were punished for dances and feasts by imprisonment or withholding food rations for up to 30 days.”

Noting a resurgence of these once-forbidden practices, VanDyke adds, “Today, I see people trying to branch out on their spiritual journey and seeking sources outside their Christian upbringing to answer questions within themselves with practices like herbalism and African traditional religion coming more into the mainstream.”

Linda M. Conroy, MSS, MLSP, is an educator, herbalist and community organizer who dedicates her life to connecting with the green world. She is the founder of two annual gatherings: the Midwest Women’s Herbal Conference and the Mycelium Mysteries Women’s Mushroom Conference. She also provides herbal education, workshops and individual consultations through her Wisconsin-based business, Moonwise Herbs.

“Herbalism is a practice where people connect and work with plants for healing and nourishment,” she says. “Plants, herbs and mushrooms have been around long before we have and provide an innate connection to the earth. Everyone has ancestors that grew and foraged for their own food, and we remember that in our being. It’s a different experience from buying a plant or pill from the store shelf.”

Misconceptions about herbalism are common in America, Conroy asserts. “In other countries such as Cuba, Germany and China, conventionally trained physi-

cians still learn about more than 50 herbs in their training, but the United States all but abandoned herbalism after the development of antibiotics and pharmaceuticals,” she explains. “The pandemic has helped spawn a resurgence of interest, with people increasingly disappointed by Western medicine and turning to herbs for respiratory support, stress management and other conditions.”

Conroy stresses that working with herbs is both an art and a science. Learning their unique properties is key. “In order to be truly effective, it’s imperative that people know how to properly choose and use the correct herb for each situation. This includes being mindful of the dosage, method of delivery and sourcing. Herbs are much safer than most things out there, and with the right assessment skills, they can be truly transformative,” she says.

Another recommendation is to establish a wellness routine that incorporates herbs as maintenance to remind the body of their healing value. “Herbs are not drugs but can work in synergy with them. Many common ingredients can be used every day, such as a stinging nettle infusion to nourish the kidneys and lungs, and oats to fortify the nervous system,” Conroy says. “Acquiring our herbs and foods from local sources also strengthens our connection to the plants. Most things we need, such as garlic, cabbage, eggs and raw honey, we can find in our own garden, from neighbors or at a farmers market.”

Energy Healing

Billie Topa Tate, a member of the Mesquero Apache tribe, is founder of MSI Wellness, in Evanston, Illinois, and author of the upcoming book, *Spirit Guide Invocations: Seeking Wisdom from Sacred Helpers*. Dedicated to creating a sacred space one person at a time through her Indigenous teachings, she is a mentor, teacher and healer. Her work has been shared by several universities and publications.

Although Indigenous healing practices do not have scientific studies to support their efficacy, they do have the observational and traditional support of her people, Topa Tate says. “The Apache learned medicinal properties from the plants and

honored the position of being stewards of the land,” she asserts. “We learned from our virtuous elders that plants provide us with medicine and food, as well as spiritual qualities, such as smudging, essential oils and incense, which help to cleanse the body, mind and spirit.”

According to Topa Tate, a shamanic journey is a visit to the energy world and can lead someone to insightful wisdom regarding their life’s purpose. “The spirit world provides a release of the thoughts that limit us and brings us into a realm where we can be guided by higher thought,” she explains. “Visiting the spirit world with proper guidance allows us to access the worlds of healing, wisdom, angels, the past, the future and even the symbolic energies of our present lives through our mind. Another way to find this release is to understand that words are energy carriers and can provide our mind, body and spirit with a source of enlightenment. We do this through our drumming songs and ceremonies, but also by becoming more aware and harnessing the power of words as medicine in everyday actions.”

Energy work can help us reconnect with that part of ourselves that facilitates healing, says Topa Tate. “I recommend beginning the day with a five-minute morning ceremony that gives thanks to the creator for a beautiful day and invokes our helpers to offer assistance with particular projects. As a healer, it is important to teach people how to manage their stress with more productive platforms, such as meditation, nature walks and seeking out



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their life’s purpose. There is a misconception that only Native people can do this energy work, but we are all one family and can learn how to integrate the natural wellness that the Native people have used for centuries,” she explains.

Traditional Chinese Medicine



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Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is based on the philosophy, experiments and experiences indigenous to Chinese culture. It has been practiced for more than 2,500 years and is used for health maintenance as well as the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental illness. According to Dr. Heming Zhu, NCCAOM, a board-certified acupuncturist and Chinese herbalist, author, educator, scientist and founder of Harmony Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine, in Maryland, the basis of TCM lies in the belief that the human body is a holistic system deeply connected to the universe.

“TCM is influenced by the flow of vital energy called *qi*. To restore the balance of *qi* and gain the harmony of life’s paired aspects

known as yin and yang, TCM practitioners use various techniques, including acupuncture, moxibustion [burning herbs at acupressure points], herbal medicine, massage, qigong and dietary therapy,” Zhu explains.

Zhu says that TCM modalities fit into either a physical therapy or chemical therapy category and can be introduced for regular maintenance. “Acupuncture is commonly used for addressing fatigue, stress, pain, gastrointestinal issues, arthritis and improving overall well-being. Cupping is beneficial for relieving stress and muscle soreness. Tui-na, a form of therapeutic massage, is used for musculoskeletal disorders, digestive issues, pain and more. Gua sha helps manage stress and alleviate muscle tension and pain. Moxibustion can boost energy, improve digestion and address cold-related ailments. Qigong and tai chi are gentle, mind-body exercises that reduce stress and promote relaxation and overall mental well-being. Chemical therapy includes herbal medicine and dietary therapy to emphasize the connection



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between food and health,” he says.

TCM can be incorporated into an established wellness routine, and Zhu offers a few guidelines to ensure the best results. “People should seek education on the basic principles of TCM and be intentional not to judge it by Western medicine standards. They should find a licensed and experienced TCM practitioner and keep an open mind in initial consultations. Simple TCM practices, such as mindful breathing, gentle stretching or drinking herbal teas, can be incorporated into a daily wellness routine, and lifestyle changes, such as sleep routines and stress management, are part of the healing process,” Zhu says.

Emotional Healing

“There are multiple factors to illness, but often our emotions and trauma, either intergenerational or personal, are at the core,” VanDyke says. “Creating ceremonies based on the old ways gives you the strength to show up for yourself and makes it a little easier to move through the experience. Grief is a multilayer process, and it takes a holistic approach to co-create a path to a new normal. Our emotions are like invisible chains that bind us in a trauma loop, and having support for that is important. Nurturing the spirit is one thing that Western medicine does not talk about. I find that laughter, joy, pleasure and feeding the child-like spirit in us helps with this when life gets heavy. Ask yourself how you prioritize joy, and create your own rituals that center traditions while honoring your true self.” 🌱

Carrie Jackson is a Chicago-based freelance writer. Connect at CarrieJacksonWrites.com.

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The Healing Arts of Qigong and Tai Chi

WELL-BEING THROUGH INTENTIONAL MOVEMENTS

by Nadia Linda Hole, M.D.



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Qigong is more than a modern wellness practice. It's a 5,000-year-old Chinese healing art steeped in tradition. At its core, qigong revolves around the concept of *qi* (pronounced "chee"), considered to be the life-force energy that permeates the universe. Like love, *qi* can act as a potent healing agent, restoring inner peace, balance and harmony. *Gong* refers to the dedication and effort invested in mastering this skill, a journey marked by patience and repetition. Qigong is a moving, meditative practice aimed at harmonizing internal energies, and it is related to tai chi, which originated as a martial art.

Benefits and Scientific Validation

The practice of qigong involves breath work, movement, mindfulness and stretching. It is performed with intention, yet emptiness (*wuji*), enabling practitioners to cultivate a stronger, deeper mind-body-spirit connection that allows for heightened stillness, clarity, vitality, awareness and sense of self. It has been clinically documented to alleviate stress, enhance energy levels, improve physical fitness and promote cardiopulmonary and immune function.

A 2020 study published in *Frontiers in Medicine* reported that qigong improved balance and coordination in older adults. In presenting their scientific approach and rationale, the researchers noted, "Qigong is an integral part of both ancient and modern Chinese medical practice and is now a popular mind-body wellness technique in the United States, as well. An estimated 2.9 million U.S. adults practiced either tai chi, qigong or both in 2012."

In a 2012 study published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, researchers found that tai chi could enhance brain size and improve neuropsychological measures in elderly

individuals, potentially delaying the onset of Alzheimer's. A systematic review of 11 studies involving 1,061 seniors with mild cognitive impairment suggested that tai chi training could be effective in improving cognitive function, including memory, learning, mental speed and attention. And, a 10-week study by Brown University researchers reported that cancer patients that practiced qigong displayed clinically significant improvements in fatigue.

Accelerating the Healing Process

"Knowing yourself is the real practice," says David Stokes Hone, a naturopathic doctor, medical qigong master and founder of the Elements of Life Institute. "As practitioners, all we're doing is reminding people of the divine connection that's inside of them. Qigong helps clear blockages and move the stuck qi out. Just doing the practices, we allow our bodies to heal through the movement that helps us have the faith to heal. The blocks and addictions melt into the light formed by the exercises."

According to Hone, the profound transformations achieved through qigong can range from the dramatic, such as restoring sensation in a paraplegic's legs, to the more subtle, like the emergence of a smile. He recalls the story of a young woman entrenched in addiction who managed to turn her life around after embracing the practice.

Kevin Chen, Ph.D., a qigong master and associate professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, introduced qigong to his father with chronic back pain as a way to alleviate his suffering and avoid a recommended surgery.

Principles of Qigong

For beginners, Tai Chi Master Violet Li emphasizes relaxation and mindfulness. "True relaxation is more a state of mind," she explains. "When we pay attention to our body, the qi will follow."

Troy Bennett, a doctor of acupuncture and qigong master from Newfoundland, Canada, shares eight principles that he learned from Qigong Grandmaster Effie Chow.

MEDITATE. Whenever a problem arises, meditate and wait for the answer to come. If you come to the conclusion that you can't fix the problem, then it's not in your hands, so don't worry about it.

BE LIKE THE WILLOW TREE. Learn to be flexible in the body, mind and spirit.

BREATHE. The quality of your breath will determine the quality of your life. Breathe like a newborn baby.

CONNECT. Everyone and everything in the universe is connected through qi. Remember the smallest thing you do in life will have an effect on the universe. Always hold the intention of love.

TRAIN FOR SUCCESS. Remember to always help people become the best that they can become.

LEAVE A BLESSING. Whenever you meet someone, always give a blessing. Your kindness can have the most powerful effect on someone's life and transform them in ways you can only dream of.

EXPERIENCE EIGHT HUGS AND THREE BELLY-ACHING LAUGHS DAILY. Don't take life so seriously. Learn to laugh and enjoy life.

LIVE. When Dr. Chow was asked, "What happens when you die?" she laughed and said, "I cannot answer that question. There is no such thing as death. There is only life."

Nadia Linda Hole is a medical doctor and qigong master. She was a consulting editor for the book Chinese Medical Qigong and contributing author for medical textbooks on complementary medicine.

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What is Health and Wellness Coaching?

by Hope Knosher



Most Americans are aware that they should implement healthy habits. The difficulty, however, is not that they lack knowledge or don't know what to do; the difficulty is that they don't know how to get started, what is standing in their way or how to stay on track.

Especially as stress levels in today's society are high, many people struggle to cope with life's demands and develop lifestyle habits that can negatively affect their health. Many feel uncertain about how to correct bad habits and imbalances so they can lead a healthier lifestyle. It isn't that they lack information. There are so many seemingly simple recommendations available today about how to live a healthy life: practice self-care, eat healthy, stay active and get enough sleep. There are also plenty of self-help strategies, books and social media posts for people to digest. For people working with physicians, treatment plans can also get overwhelming once they get back home, where they are mired in the busy pace of life.

So where does one start? What should one do first? And how? These are great questions, but without specific guidance or support, the answers might not come easily. That is where a health or wellness coach can help.

WebMD reports that health coaching helps patients control high blood pressure, lower cholesterol, lower waist circumference, lose weight and become more physically active. But, unlike physicians, health and wellness coaches do not diagnose, prescribe medication or focus on treating the symptoms of an illness.

Instead, they take a 360-degree view, look at a person as a whole and work to address the root cause of the condition by encouraging behavior change. Health coaches observe, ask questions, and manage strategy, guiding people "play by play" and keeping them on track toward their goals for more successful outcomes.

A PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

As the Cleveland Clinic puts it, "A health coach is your personal cheerleader, guide and partner." Health and wellness coaching is a partnership between a coach, who understands how human behavior impacts motivation and health, and their client, who wants to change. Health coaches use their expertise to help their clients set and achieve goals and build new habits. Simply put, they are change agents. They support their clients to make lifestyle and behavioral changes that are critical to their health.

Health coaches use a collaborative approach in working with their clients. They don't lecture or prescribe; they act as partners or guides. According to the National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (NBHWC), "Health coaches facilitate the change process and support clients as they create plans and strive for their health goals."

Under this model, the client takes on the role of expert—after all, they are the experts regarding their bodies and health. The collaborative approach creates an environment where clients can set their agenda and choose their focus areas, which paves the way for lasting change.

THE EMERGENCE OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACHING

Employers began exploring wellness programs in the 1950s due to high rates of illness in their workforces. They wanted to reduce healthcare costs as well as improve employees' health. By the 1980s, many large companies had well-established wellness programs covering a variety of health concerns. As the programs evolved, the idea of health coaches began to gain more acceptance.

Health coaches help people discover the "why" behind their health goals. They help people identify what challenges are preventing the change they seek, provide support and accountability to keep moving in the right direction and use broad health and wellness knowledge to help people navigate their health concerns. Ultimately, they empower their clients as the experts of their own bodies, minds and circumstances.

A client of this writer, Cragin Boyle, described it this way: "My coach made me feel understood and supported, which helped me make positive changes. She helps me understand my reactions and behaviors and helps me understand what is truly important to me. With this knowledge and my coach's support and guidance, we chart a specific weekly action plan."

Health and wellness coaches have a working knowledge of diet, lifestyle and nutrition. They understand how these factors affect the body, and that awareness helps them recognize and empathize with clients' health challenges. Coaches also help clients build new habits and make lasting changes. This is critical because making authentic, lasting lifestyle and behavior changes takes ongoing effort and support. Whether the goal is getting into peak physical shape, restarting an exercise regimen, reducing stress, managing diabetes, following autoimmune protocols or achieving weight loss, a health coach works to guide their client to success.

WHY HIRE A HEALTH COACH?

Health and wellness coaching has proven results. The *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* published a study demonstrating a statistically significant, clinically meaningful improve-

ment after a 12-week coaching program in all five quality of life domains: physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual. Most importantly, the improvements were shown to have been maintained at a 24-week follow-up. Here are a few reasons why people choose to seek the help of a health coach.

- **Maintain accountability.** Support in staying accountable helps people achieve their goals. "Coaches are not there to enforce accountability," writes Eamon McGrath on the Quenza website. "Instead, they cultivate an environment that encourages clients to take ownership of their actions and outcomes." The health coaching process includes making "SMART" goals—ones that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time sensitive. Taking small steps over time evolves into big changes without being overwhelming. And a good coach will help clients identify potential obstacles and develop contingency plans, says McGrath.

- **Get a personalized approach.** Anyone can find a diet plan, exercise routine or

other health and wellness technique or practice to try, but how does one know which one will lead to success? Everyone's situation is unique. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Having a coach helps people sort out the issues and the data, tease out underlying issues and chart a course to address them.

- **Manage chronic illness.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, six in 10 Americans have a chronic disease, and four in 10 have multiple long-term illnesses. Chronic disease is the nation's leading cause of death, and over one-quarter of American children suffer from chronic health conditions. These conditions are often preventable and manageable through healthy lifestyle choices.

Physicians and health coaches often go hand-in-hand. Sometimes physicians recommend health coaches to help their clients understand and implement recommendations from their physicians. According to The Institute for Functional

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Medicine, “Health coaches extend the provider’s reach by offering individualized guidance and support in implementing therapeutic plans, addressing barriers and working through the day-to-day challenges that arise as patients continue on their journey toward health and well-being. Collaborative healthcare teams that include health coaches not only empower the therapeutic partnership but also enhance lifestyle treatment sustainability.”

■ **Increase fulfillment and build self-confidence.** People often struggle with their health and wellness because they don’t believe they can make the necessary changes to build a healthier lifestyle. They may have tried and failed to make changes in the past. According to the Health Coach Institute, “Surrounding yourself with people who support, uplift and ‘get’ you is an excellent motivator and confidence booster.” By helping clients break down their goals into small, digestible steps over time, health and wellness coaches help people begin to recognize that they can change, which builds self-confidence.

■ **Make a permanent lifestyle change.** According to the American Psychological Association (APA), long-term behavioral changes are necessary to overcome one’s barriers to healthy living. In fact, fewer than one in five adults reported being very successful at making health-related improvements such



Nataliya Vaitkevich/pexels.com

as losing weight, starting a regular exercise program, eating a healthier diet and reducing stress, according to an APA poll by Harris Interactive. The study showed that around 78 percent of those who made health-related resolutions reported that significant obstacles—such as willpower, making changes alone and experiencing too much stress—blocked them from making progress.

WHO PAYS FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACHING?

There are many ways to access a health or wellness coach. Employers and insur-

ers offer health and wellness coaching to help increase wellness, decrease healthcare costs and reduce workplace downtime. They are often offered as employment benefits. Health coaches who work directly with clients in the private sector usually require the client to pay directly for the services.

The NBHWC has been working with the American Medical Association to establish a way to reimburse health and wellness coaches through healthcare plans. To date, this is still under consideration.

Health savings accounts and flexible spending accounts provide opportunities to pay for qualified medical expenses that can result in tax savings. People can consult with their physician to discuss possible medical treatment and care planning. If a physician determines a patient’s condition warrants the support of a health or wellness coach, they can submit a letter of necessity and follow the instructions in their plan.

“The coaching experience has catalyzed a more positive self-image and overall improvement in my quality of life, health and well-being,” says Boyle. “I have gained strength and resilience both mentally and physically. My belief in myself and my ability to handle life’s hurdles with more grace has exponentially improved, and so have my relationships with others.”

Information is not always enough to change behavior—but having the support of a trained health coach can make a difference. 🙌



Based in Atlanta, Hope Knosher is the founder of Healthy Living with Hope, offering health coaching, yoga classes and retreats. She is a national

board-certified health and wellness coach, a certified yoga therapist and a certified E-RYT 500 yoga teacher. Contact her at 770-789-7782.



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Top Six Reasons People Seek Health Coaching

by Noah Chen

Since the pandemic started, the wellness industry has reportedly grown by almost 10 percent a year. As Americans learn about the potential health hurdles of our modern life, many have begun to seek out individuals to help them progress on their journey to increase wellness. Enter the health coach: someone who is trained in providing clients with personalized support to improve their well-being and lifestyle choices. As Shika Daniels, a board-certified holistic nurse coach and owner of WELLIV in Atlanta, puts it, “A health coach should inspire you, hold you accountable and help facilitate your goal attainment—with you in the driver’s seat.”

Natural Awakenings interviewed several health coaches in the greater Atlanta area to find out the top reasons people choose to engage in this particular kind of coaching.

1 WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

“I would say that, by far, people come with [the goal of managing their weight],” says Gail Turner-Cooper, the founder of Align Health Coaching in Atlanta. However, she stressed that weight is just one aspect of a broader health picture. In fact, a health coach is really aiming to tackle the reasons weight became an issue in the first place.

The founder and owner of Healthy Living with Hope in John’s Creek, Hope Knosher, NBC-HWC, I-AYT, RYT 500, recalls a client who initially came to her for weight loss, but it soon became clear there were other factors that needed to be addressed. “One by one, we worked through the underlying issues and eventually came full circle to weight loss,” Knosher says. “She was then successful in making sustainable lifestyle changes and losing weight.”



Gail Turner-Cooper

2 LOW ENERGY AND FATIGUE

Turner-Cooper reports that many clients come to her saying their energy is getting depleted faster and faster. This fatigue can significantly impact one’s quality of life and frequently leads to a desire to change. As with weight loss, the underlying factors—such as dietary habits, sleep patterns and lifestyle choices—need to be understood by the health coach to effectively address the problem. Once these things are understood, the coach can provide personalized guidance to help their client regain energy.

3 SLEEP TROUBLES

“A very, very common reason why people come to see me is because they have lost the ability to sleep,” says Turner-Cooper. Sleep plays a pivotal role in maintaining and sustaining optimal health, and disturbances in sleep patterns can impact many aspects of the body and mind. Health coaches work with clients to understand the root causes of sleep problems and develop strategies to improve sleep length, consistency and quality.

4 INFORMATION OVERLOAD

“Some clients have no idea what to do or where to begin or how to stick to their goals,” says Daniels. Some of her clients have tried numerous times to make changes but could not generate results. With so much information in the world about what is and isn’t good for you, it can be very difficult for anyone lacking specialized knowledge in personal health to know how to begin facilitating the changes they desire. Many individuals turn to health coaches for help on this front. Health coaches often educate clients on the best ways to achieve their goals and help them differentiate between what past strategies might have been working for them and what strategies might have been based on misinformation.

5 QUALITY OF LIFE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Study after study reports that mental health concerns have become increasingly common, especially in the wake of the pandemic, and many seek out health coaches for help. “Health coaching has been shown to improve all the major quality of life measures, including social, physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual,” says Knosher.

She explains that health coaches are often called upon to lower stress levels and improve relationships with others and with themselves. While health coaches do not replace mental health professionals, they can play an important role in helping clients improve their mental health and raise their quality of life.

6 ADVICE FOLLOWING A DOCTOR'S VISIT

Clients often seek health coaches following a diagnosis from a doctor. Daniels notes that “everyone should always first consult a doctor or health care professional for any health, mental or physical conditions of concern.” Once they have consulted a

doctor, Daniels explains it’s the job of health coaches to facilitate the change necessary to address the issues the doctor found.

However, Turner-Cooper mentioned that sometimes individuals walk through her door first, only to be later referred to doctors, and vice versa. At the end of the day, health coaches are there to provide support, knowledge and guidance as they help their clients move forward on their health journey.

The demand for health coaches continues to rise as people seek personalized support and guidance. Weight management, energy depletion, sleep issues, information overload, mental health and concerns raised by doctors are some of the main reasons individuals turn to health coaches. These professionals are trained to get to the bottom of the health issue at hand and provide a holistic path toward healing and personal betterment. While health coaches work in conjunction with medical professionals, they bring unique insights to help clients achieve lasting improvements in their health and lifestyle. 🌱

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How to Choose a Health and Wellness Coach

by Hope Knosher



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- **Credentials.** Look for a coach with training and certifications in their field.
- **Experience.** Consider the coach's experience working with clients with similar needs and goals as yours.
- **Personal connection.** Working with a coach you feel comfortable with and who understands your unique situation is essential.
- **Coaching style.** Coaches have different styles, so consider the best approach for you.
- **Location and availability.** These are often important considerations.
- **Cost and payment options.** It is important to consider your budget and how you intend to pay for the service when choosing a coach.

Credentials

Health coaching is a relatively new field, and the industry is unregulated. Health coaches don't need any certification to practice. According to the Harvard Medical School, although there can be effective coaches without a certified training program in their resume, looking for a health coach who has completed an accredited health and wellness program is an excellent way to start.

Look for approved certifications from accredited organizations, such as the National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (NBHWC) or the International Coaching Federation (ICF). Some approved certification programs

include Duke Integrative Medicine, Wellcoaches School of Coaching, the National Society of Health Coaches, Dr. Sears Wellness Institute and Emory University Continuing Education. Although not a necessary step in the evaluation process, some level of training and experience is assured when choosing a certified coach.

Kara Flowers, founder of The Wellness Lane, is pursuing a health coaching certification from Emory Continuing Education. Flowers says doing so provides her with an opportunity to grow professionally in the field of health and wellness—an area she is passionate about. “I want to stay abreast of the changes in our industry. Pursuing the certification provides structured guidelines and helps to ensure I am practicing in an ethical, professional way, providing the highest standards of coaching.”

These approved certification programs also provide training and education to prepare for the National Health and Wellness Certification Exam to become a board-certified health and wellness coach.

Flowers plans to pursue NBHWC certification as well. “Coaching trends and styles have evolved,” she says, “and credentialing will help set me apart by having the knowledge and skills to help clients reach their health and wellness goals. It may also provide opportunities to coach in other settings.”

Since 2016, the NBHWC has collaborated with the National Board of Medical Examiners, which has certified more than 9,400 health and wellness coaches to date. Their credential, the National Board Certified Health and Wellness Coaches certification (NBC-HWC), represents training, education and assessment standards, allowing the profession to advance in all aspects of health care and wellness.

As mentioned, such certification is not mandatory in the industry. Some consider the NBHWC certification the highest-level professional credential.

Experience

Has the coach had success helping people with your situation or concern? Do they have an expertise that aligns with your needs? What about their credentials and longevity in the field? Do they work one-on-one or in a group coaching setting? Looking at experience can be helpful to find a coach with a successful background and track record of helping others achieve their goals.

Personal Connection

A good coach is someone you feel comfortable talking to and someone who understands your unique goals and challenges. The American Medical Association says that personal connection is important. “A coach should ask clients how they feel about their health concerns and stressors and reflect, validate and confirm their perceptions.” This interaction makes the client feel heard and builds a trusting relationship.

Health coaching is more than an occupation, too. Jennifer Wannan of The Primal Health Coach Institute states, “For the most dedicated, it's a calling to assist others in living the full measure of their vitality. Health coaching is an opportunity to guide people through what may be one of the most impactful transformations of their lives.”

The bottom line is to look for a coach that resonates with you. It's important that you feel comfortable confiding in your coach and that you have a feeling of trust.

Coaching Style

Consider whether you prefer a more supportive or directive coach and find one who matches your style. Additionally, consider their experience and approach to coaching. A good coach should be collaborative, supportive and focused on helping you achieve your unique goals.

It is also a good idea to have a screening call to gauge their style and approach before making a long-term commitment.

Location and Availability

Consider the coach's availability and location before committing to a program. Do you want to meet in person or remotely? With virtual platforms, location is less of an issue and can offer additional flexibility. Ensure your coach is available and willing to work with your schedule.

Cost and Payment Options

While cost shouldn't be the only factor, it's important to find a coach whose fees are reasonable and within your budget. Also, what are the payment options? These can be helpful factors to consider for the long run.

No matter which resource you choose, finding a qualified health and wellness coach can help you improve your overall well-being and achieve your health goals. 🌱

HELPFUL RESOURCES TO FIND HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACHES

ONLINE DIRECTORIES

National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching's Directory of Certified Coaches: bit.ly/naa-nbhwc

ICF's Credentialed Coach Finder (CCF): bit.ly/naa-icf

WORD OF MOUTH

Someone who has successfully worked with a health coach can provide valuable information and insights that can help you make an informed decision when choosing a health coach. Recommendations can help save valuable time.

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

A local doctor or healthcare provider might also help recommend a qualified health coach. More and more, healthcare providers are partnering with health coaches, and they might be able to provide referrals that are specific to your needs.

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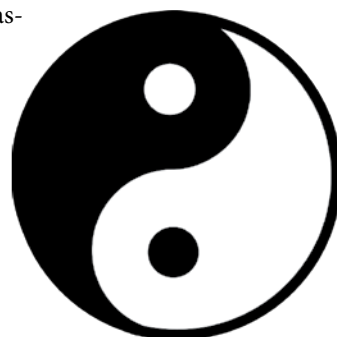
YIN YOGA

THE POWER OF SLOW AND RECEPTIVE

by David Penn

The Yin and Yang of Things

The *taijitu*, commonly known in the West as the *yin* and *yang* symbol, is the celebrated symbol of a black and white circle divided into two halves. The black half represents yin, and the white half represents yang. Each half also contains a small dot of the opposite color, representing the presence of the other force. Qualities of yin are seen as being more nurturing, intuitive and compassionate. In contrast, the qualities of yang are seen as more assertive, logical and decisive.



The Receptive Yin

The “yin” in yin yoga refers to the receptive and passive qualities of the body. It is a slow-paced style of yoga that focuses on the connective tissues of the body, such as the ligaments, tendons and fascia. Ligaments are fibrous connective tissues that attach bone to bone while keeping them stable. Tendons move the bones. Fascia tissue is more present in our bodies than most of us realize. This thin casing of connective tissue surrounds and holds every muscle, organ, blood vessel, nerve fiber and bone in place. In addition to providing a vital internal structure, fascia also has nerves that make it nearly as sensitive as skin.

Esther Eckhart, the founder of Eckhart Yoga, a popular yoga academy in Ireland, explains, “While Yang yoga practices, like Ashtanga and vinyasa, physically target superficial muscles, in yin yoga, we target the deep connective tissues of the body—the ligaments, joints, bones and deep fascia networks. A yin class usually consists of a series of passive floor poses held for up to five minutes or more. These poses mainly work the hips, pelvis, inner thighs and lower spine. These areas are especially rich in connective tissues.”

More Than a Physical Practice

In the West, yoga is most often considered a physical activity, and discussions about it usually revolve around its physical postures, but this hardly scratches the surface. Annelise Kristoffersen, E-RYT 500, the founder of Sacred Fire Yoga in East Atlanta and Sacred Thread



Yoga in Summerhill, says her journey with yin yoga has had a profound effect on how she teaches and lives. “I’ve been practicing for more than 20 years, and I am sure I ended up in a yin class just out of curiosity and out of my quest to always remain a student. But, like most of the softer practices, I didn’t love yin at first. It was an acquired taste that developed with age and wisdom. Then, as I learned more about the science of this practice, I started to realize how much I needed yin.”

Kristoffersen extols the benefits—on and off the mat: “Yin has this unique benefit of interoception and connection to the nervous system as well. It helps us sense our body in space, and the passive approach to the practice can be really powerful mentally. In our culture, passivity is not valued. Passivity, though, has real wisdom to it. And yin helps us get a sense for how this can be a tool to use in life.”



Melting Stress and Anxiety

With its slower pace, yin is commonly recommended as a good place to begin practicing yoga. Amanda Powlowski, RYT 200, a yoga teacher at Stillness Yoga and Meditation Center in Marietta, points out that it’s also a fantastic place for those in a state of stress or anxiety. “Most people benefit from yin, but those under high stress benefit greatly. I was particularly stressed a few weeks ago and took a yin class and noticed that most of my anxiety had dissipated by the end of the class without any real conscious effort to change my thinking. This is a meditative practice. The process of holding the stretches and allowing thoughts to come and go is so helpful for chronically stressed individuals.

“The biggest benefit, in my opinion, is the effect on the nervous system. Yin provides the opportunity to slow down so the nervous system can unwind. Our way of life causes many of us to live in a state of high stress, which leaves us feeling depleted. Yin can restore some of our energy. As we decide to stay in the stretch and follow our breath or allow our thoughts to drift, we begin to unwind and release deeply held tension, not just in the body, but in the mind as well.”

A Great Place to Begin. But Still be Cautious.

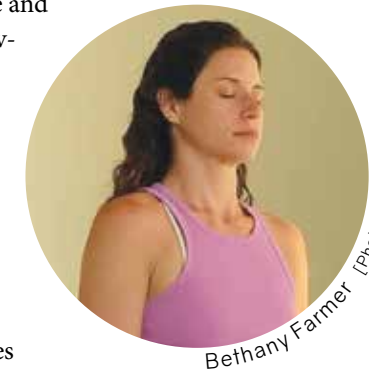
Yin yoga provides a good place to start as it is a gentle and accessible practice for people of all ages and fitness levels. It is a great way to improve flexibility, reduce pain and improve one’s overall health and well-being. But as with all yoga practices, each individual needs to listen to their own body as they practice.

Bethany Farmer, E-RYT 500, teaches yin yoga at Sacred Fire Yoga and leads retreats for metro Atlantans in Greece. Farmer mentions the importance of being aware of over-stretching. She gives the example of practicing caution with forward bends. “Some poses in Yin have a deep forward bending position that can be unhealthy for any practitioner who has bulging or herniated discs in their spine. They would want to modify these poses by keeping their spine as straight as possible and hinge only at the hips in any of the forward bending postures. If a person is going to practice yin and has any of these contraindications, I would suggest letting an experienced teacher know so they can give them the proper adjustments and modifications to keep them safe and not cause any further harm.”

With yin, as with all styles of yoga, it is important to start slowly and listen to the body as the practice takes place. It’s also wise to chat with the teacher before class if there are any questions or concerns. Practitioners may find that they thrive with yin’s unique path to the fascia, ligaments, joints and bones and the connection with the mind and body.



David Penn, E-RYT 200, founded Sun Dragon Yoga studio in 2015. He offers private instruction at homes and businesses throughout metro Atlanta and offers classes online. Contact him at 313-303-0096.



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Atlanta Laughter Yoga Club – 12-12:30pm. 1st Wed. With Celeste Greene. Come as you are. Free. Trolley Barn, 963 Edgewood Ave NE, Atlanta. CelesteGreeneLaughs.com.

FRIDAYS

Community Vinyasa Flow – 6pm. Pre-registration required. Donations welcome. Lift Dunwoody, 1705 Mt Vernon Rd, Ste E, Dunwoody. Also at Lift Alpharetta, 501 S Main St, Ste 101, Alpharetta. LiftYogaStudio.com.

SATURDAYS

Online Sunrise Yoga Meditation – 7-8am. Simple mantras, gentle asanas, pranayama and guided meditation. Love offering. Zoom. UnityNorth.org.

Yoga at Preston Ridge Community Center – 9am. Grab your mat and join our amazing instructors for a complimentary class. 3655 Preston Ridge Rd, Ste 100, Alpharetta. LiftYogaStudio.com.

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Aum Studio for Wellness

WHERE YOGA IS JUST THE BEGINNING

by Diane Eaton



Yoga Room [Photo: Anastasia Alkema]

Even though about 70 percent of the classes at Aum Studio for Wellness are yoga classes, owner Yuliya Stepanov decided not to put the word “yoga” in the studio’s name. She didn’t want to limit it. So, while yoga remains at the heart of the studio’s identity, it makes up just a part of Stepanov’s expansive vision for it.

The studio blossomed into existence incredibly quickly. Just last year, Stepanov had been working independently, teaching yoga, leading art classes, taking people on retreats, conducting women’s circles—even teaching people how to stand on nails—as a part of her passion to help people feel more balanced, enhance their self-awareness and thrive more in their lives.



Yuliya Stepanov [Photo: Nadezhda Mikhel]

So it was a surprise when Stepanov woke up on January 1, 2023, with a “very clear and confident idea” to open a space that would nurture well-being and help people feel that “life is getting better,” she says. She knew several professionals in town who had valuable practices, techniques and workshops to share with the public, but they had no space from which to teach. After spending nearly two weeks asking the hard questions and having deep discussions with her husband, businessman Eugene Stepanov, about it, they decided to launch the business. By February, they’d found the Alpharetta studio location and fell in love with it. And on April 23—in just over three months—Aum Studio held its grand opening with nearly 200 people in attendance.

Something for Everybody

Stepanov planned to offer a wide variety of yoga classes for the studio, but her instincts guided her to also offer classes and workshops that would support creative expression, self-inquiry, building of community, and even having fun. Dance classes, Pilates, meditation,

journaling and belly dancing are now regular class offerings. But the studio also offers unique workshops that deepen awareness and creativity and facilitate personal and spiritual development. Become Your Unstoppable Self, Goddess Yoga, a Mandala Art Workshop and a women’s circle are a few of the selections.

Alison Gurevich, a yoga and meditation teacher and certified Grief Movement Guide who teaches at Aum, loved what she saw being built. “I love the physical practice [of yoga],” says Gurevich, “but Yuliya recognizes that it can be a gateway to so much more. I love that she is so open to exploring way beyond just the asana, and I was fascinated by her approach—that she wanted to approach dance and art and kids club and make it into a whole community.”



Alison Gurevich

“I wanted to bring something for everybody,” says Stepanov. “I have people who come to dance classes. They’re not interested in yoga, but they can connect with us, and they can connect with themselves, and they really have fun and enjoy taking a dance class. I have people who just come for the art classes. Maybe they have their own physical practice, and they just come for the art classes and enjoy that. I have people who come just for the workshops and, again, some don’t care about the classes—maybe they live far away, and they can only come for the transformational workshop that’s happening over the weekend. And I love this idea that we can communicate on different levels with different people, depending on their needs and where they are.”

While it might sound like a smorgasbord of disparate choices, there is a palpable aura of connectivity among all of Aum Studio’s classes and workshops. To Stepanov, all of the elements have the intention to help people nurture their wellness and well-being in common.

Gurevich says her experience in the studio’s five-hour meditative art class transformed her “lack of” artistic skill, thanks in part to Stepanov’s knowledge of sacred geometry. “Everything she brings together is so thoughtful, with nourishment for mind, body and soul,” says Gurevich.

Welcoming Family and Building Community

Another way that Aum Studio goes beyond the expected is that it is a place for the whole family. “Where some yoga



Photo: Yana Abramchuk

studios are more of a tiny retreat space,” says Gurevich, “I think what lands most uniquely about Aum Studio is its family dynamic. There will be gatherings on a Friday night with kids and spouses and siblings and just people coming out.”

Aum Studio offers several classes just for kids, including Kids Yoga, Kids Dance and Kids Discussion and Games, but its most unique and ambitious offering for

young people is its Kids Club membership. From 4 to 6 p.m., kids can hang out, take a class or do something creative in a room set aside just for them. “They can choose what they want—they don’t want to be forced to do something after school,” says Stepanov. She’s seen kids play with colored paper, play board games, and even teach themselves how to knit. There’s always studio staff to watch the kids, and parents are welcome to hang out with them or take a yoga class if they want.

Stepanov believes in the power of community—that conscious communities of like-minded people can foster well-being. She surmises that part of the rampant depression in our times is that people feel alone; they feel that nobody understands them. Community can be a powerful antidote to that. “It’s like what happens in



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our women's circle. When they feel safe to express themselves, when they can relax—wow. Magic happens,” she says.

A Safe Space to Grow



Chhavi Mehrotra
[Photo: Anoushka Mehrotra]

Creating a safe space for people to explore, create, move and learn without limits is a priority at Aum Studio. “I never used to prioritize myself,” says Chhavi Mehrotra, a math teacher who has been attending classes at Aum since it opened. She faced challenging health problems last year and needed healing and time to recover. “I knew my life needed something, so I tried many classes [at Aum]. And I'm just loving it. It's been a perfect way for me to combine my spirituality and my fitness needs.” Mehrotra says friends and family have commented on how great she looks. “I'm just enjoying my journey through this,” she says.

With such a diverse and extensive set of offerings, is Aum Studio trying to do too much too fast? No one knows, of course. The studio is still in its early stages and is growing and evolving quickly. Stepanov seems to have a system that works for her. “I trust myself and go with the flow; I choose things that feel right to me. I've learned more and more to listen to my body and how it reacts to things. I don't know exactly where I'm going to be in a year, but I love to be where I am.”

Aum Studio is located at 11550 Webb Bridge Way in Alpharetta. For more information, visit AumStudioForWellness.com.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Publicize your event! This section hosts free and paid listings. Each month, we select a limited number of events — they must have broad appeal and cost no more than \$20 to attend — to list for free. Otherwise, basic listings are \$35 and enhanced listings are \$75.

Submit free listings to calendar@naAtlanta.com and paid listings to ads@naAtlanta.com.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1

Artist Reception: Egyptian Gods & Goddesses – 2-4pm. Take a trip back in time to ancient Egypt with multi-media artist Megan Murphy with this amazing exhibit. Immerse yourself in the energies from the Egyptian deities as you experience Megan's art. Free. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5

Evening Restore with Nadine – 6:30-7:30pm. This restorative gentle yoga class is suitable for practitioners of all levels. All yoga props provided. \$25. Saltville Grotto & Spa, 2447 Main St E, Ste 3, Snellville. 678-585-1153. SaltvilleGrotto.com.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7

Health Fair and Open House: Lotus of Life Chiropractic and Wellness Center – 10am-2pm. Meet the practitioners and staff, check out the guest vendors, and participate in some kid's games. All welcome. 603 Church St, Decatur. 404-377-7743. LotusOfLifeChiropractic.com.

Free First Saturday – 11am-12pm. Free. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 9

Sacred Beats Drumming – 7-8pm. Join our drumming circle led by Jen Huber, shamanic guide and healer, as we clear away blocks, release emotions and gain greater clarity. Free; donations for Native American Charity. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11

The Coming Out and Coming into Unity Monologues – 7-8:30pm. In the setting of a black box theater, LGBTQ+ individuals share stories of their spiritual journeys. Taken together, the stories reveal how embracing and affirming identities is a pathway to creating a beloved community where all are included, valued and recognized as God's love in the world. Free. Unity North, 4255 Sandy Plains Rd, Marietta. UnityNorth.org.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13

Coffee House: Costume Party – 7-9:30pm. All are invited to celebrate costumed fun. Use your creativity to transform into whatever your imagination conceives for the evening.

Entertainment. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18

Yoga in the Park – 6-7pm. Join us for a peaceful full-body flow under the canopy of trees right at sunset. With yoga instructor Jesse Hughes. \$12. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. Register: DunwoodyNature.org.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22

Atlanta Streets Alive – 2-6pm. A beloved event attracting thousands of participants to engage in cycling, walking, rolling, jogging, strolling, scooting, etc, or just to experience a fun day on the 3-mile street closure. Peachtree St, Between 14th St and Mitchell St. AtlantaStreetsAlive.org.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26

Great Pumpkin-Carving Festival – 5-9pm. Watch as contestants compete for the most creative pumpkin head designs in the Garden while enjoying a supersized Fest-of-Ale. Atlanta Botanical Garden, 1345 Piedmont Ave NE, Atlanta. AtlantaBG.org.

The Nature Club Dine and Discover – 7-9pm. Join Jason Love, Associate Director of the Highlands Biological Station of Western Carolina University, for a presentation on the impacts humans are having on one of the most diverse regions in the temperate world: the Southern Appalachian Mountains. \$10/general, \$5/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChattNatureCenter.org.

Online: Transmission Meditation – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA SE Region. Free. Via Eventbrite. Info: 770-302-2208 or Info-SE@Share-International.us. Register: Tinyurl.com/4jwhn8wx.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27

38th Annual Halloween Hikes – Oct 27-29. 6-10pm. Explore the colorful forest to meet woodland creatures and hear about how they live. Take part in world music, crafts, campfire and festival fun. It's the perfect non-scary alternative to traditional Halloween events for all ages. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChattNatureCenter.org.

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14

Book Signing: Home Sweet Casa – 2-4pm. Adopted as an infant from Colombia and raised in the United States, author Mariela Andersen shares the story of her birth family and her journey to Colombia to meet them. She takes the reader on a roller coaster ride of emotions as she sorts through the multifaceted layers of her own identity. Free.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21

7 Chakra Brunch – 1-3pm. Certified Yoga Instructor Jeryn Turner will lead a mindful movement chair yoga tailored for beginners while Chef David Stample shares reiki-infused brunch bites and healing reiki energy during this chakra balancing group session. \$30.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28

Goat Yoga – 1-2pm. With GGA Dwarf Goat Yoga. Perform breathing exercises and various yoga positions. While doing so, dwarf goats can hop around you, climb your back, sit on top of you, even nap on you or your yoga mats while you let go of all your stress. \$35.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28

Dealing with Difficult People – 2-5pm. Gen Norden will give teachings on meditation practices that can help us to handle challenging situations and to develop the ability to improve difficult relationships that are so common in our daily lives. All welcome. \$25/advance, \$30/door. Kadampa Meditation Center GA, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29

Trunk or Treat – 1-2pm. Kids of all ages are invited to visit the decorated displays and collect treats and enjoy music and games. Wear your costume and bring your treat bucket. Free. Unity Atlanta Church, front parking lot, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

ONGOING

Sundays

A Course in Miracles: Practicing the Presence – 8:45-10:30am. This virtual weekly study group aims at removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence. Facilitator: Michael Wilkinson. An open and ongoing class. All welcome. Drop-in any time. New people are very welcome to join. Via Zoom. Unity Atlanta Church: 770-441-0585. Register: MWilkinson@leadstrat.com. UnityAtl.org.

Online & In-Person Sunday Experience – 9am, Adult Study; 9:30am, Meditation; 10am, Music; 10:30am, Service. Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta, 3107 Clairmont Rd, Ste A, Atlanta. More info: slc-atlanta.org.

Red Clay Sangha Sunday Morning Service – 9am, meditation; 10:30-11:30am, service & dharma discussion. Via Zoom or in person. 3420 W Hospital Ave, Ste 102, Chamblee. More info: RedClaySangha.org.

Online: NWUUC – 10am. Via Zoom. Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation: 770-955-1408 or nwuuc.org.

SRF Atlanta Meditation Service – 10-10:45am. An opportunity to meet with other truth-seekers to commune with God and share spiritual fellowship. 4000 King Springs Rd, Smyrna. 770-434-7200. srfatlanta.org.

Meditation Open House – 10-11:30am. Discussion at 11:30am and tea at 12pm. Meditation instruction available from 10-11am for those new to the practice. Atlanta Shambhala Center, 1447 Church St, Decatur. More info: Atlanta.Shambhala.org.

Second Sunday Sober Bike Ride – 10:30am. 2nd Sun. Brings together people from all walks of sober living who are seeking fun and active ways to connect with likeminded people. BTA Bicycle Tours of Atlanta will provide a bike at no charge if needed. Bicycle Tours of Atlanta, 659 Auburn Ave NE, Atlanta. Register: Tinyurl.com/yjzutj4.

One World Spiritual Center Sunday Service – 11am. To watch: OneWorldSpiritualCenter.net.

Unity Atlanta Church Sunday Services – 11am. Attend in-person or watch via livestream. Youth Sunday School is also held in-person at 11am for ages 5-18. Nursery service available for ages 2-4, 10am-12:30pm. 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Online: UUCA Service – 11am. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta: uuca.org/live.

SRF Atlanta Reading and Inspirational Service – 11am-12pm. An opportunity to meet with other truth-seekers to commune with God and share spiritual fellowship. 4000 King Springs Rd, Smyrna. 770-434-7200. srfatlanta.org.

Sunday Morning Talks and Discussion – 11am-12pm. With Vedanta Center of Atlanta via Zoom. To watch: VedantaAtlanta.org.

Unity North Online & In-Person Sunday Service – 11:15am. 4255 Sandy Plains Rd, Marietta. More info: UnityNorth.org.

Meditation Classes – 4-5pm, Level I; 5-6pm, Level II. All religions, all ages and all people. Learn how to meditate for spiritual enlightenment. \$15. 5161 Brook Hollow Parkway, Ste 220/225, Norcross. Register, Andrea: 404-557-4306. MeditationWellnessClub@gmail.com. MeditationWellnessClub.com.

Healing Strong Support Group – 4:30-8:30pm. 4th Sun. Healing Strong is a non-profit organization that promotes education about natural healing strategies through community support groups. Free. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. TheWellOfRoswell.com. HealingStrong.org.

Mondays

Top Shelf Toastmasters Club – 6:30-8pm. Meets in-person 2nd, 3rd, 4th Mondays. Looking for an opportunity to improve your public speaking and presentation skills? Toastmasters International Clubs empower members to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth. Guests are welcome to visit for free. New members pay a \$20 one-time fee. Dues paid every 6 mos

include \$15 Local and \$45 International. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. More info, Ajaye Hopper: 678-622-2225, tm.ajhopper@gmail.com.

Online: Monday Night Meditation – 7-8pm. A live, instructor-led meditation and discussion. Develop a meditation practice by maintaining a moment-to-moment relaxed awareness of our surrounding environment, bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions. All levels. \$10. Register: TheOpenMindCenter.com.

Meditation & Modern Buddhism – 7:30-9pm. With Resident Teacher, Gen Kelsang Norden. Talks, guided meditation, discussion and Q&A. All welcome. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Tuesdays

Online Meditation Open House – 7pm. A 30-min meditation and a 30-min discussion via Zoom. To watch: Atlanta.Shambhala.org.

Twin Hearts Meditation – 7-8:30pm. A short, guided meditation blessing the Earth with loving kindness, peace and good will. Donation. Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta, 3107 Clairmont Rd, Unit A, Atlanta. 404-417-0008. Meetup.com/Twin-Hearts-Meditation.

Metro Atlanta Sierra Club Meeting – 7:30pm. 2nd Tues. More info: SierraClub.org/georgia/atlanta.

Wednesdays

30-Minute Guided Meditation – 8am. Be guided through a simple yet powerful meditation that gives rise to an experience of mental peace and wellbeing. No experience necessary. Beginners welcome. \$5. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Zoom Check-In: Wellness Wednesdays – 10am. Check in with your community during COVID-19 crisis. slc-atlanta.org.

30-Minute Guided Meditation – 12:15pm. Be guided through a simple yet powerful meditation that gives rise to an experience of mental peace and wellbeing. No experience necessary. Beginners welcome. \$5. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Online: Joy of Breathing Class – 1-1:30pm. Learn the Joy of Breathing technique, practice a deep Pranayama session and enjoy the benefits. Free. Register: Tinyurl.com/muwwanm9.

Decatur Farmers Market – Thru Nov 15. 4-7pm. First Baptist Church of Decatur, 308 Clairmont Ave, Decatur. 404-373-1653. cfmatl.org/Decatur.

Weekly Wednesday Meditation Class – 7-8:30pm. Open to all levels. Experience true inner peace. With the Venerable Nicholas Thannissaro of the Georgia Meditation Center via Zoom. To register: MeditationCircle.org.

She Recovers Foundation Atlanta Sharing Circle – 7:30-8:30pm. 2nd Wed. Come join us as we support one another on our journey to wholeness. We are all recovering from something. With Allison Stanley. Free. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

Thursdays

Tai Chi & Qigong – 9:30am. For beginners. \$7/at door. Meets in The Jefferson Parks and Recreation Dept, 2495 Old Pendergrass Rd, Jefferson. 678-510-9573. CarolOsborne.org. Dunwoody Beekeeping Club – 6:30-7:30pm. 1st Thurs. Meeting features a program, fol-

lowed by a question and answer session with the ability to meet and learn from other local beekeepers. Free. 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

Meditation Fundamentals – 6:30-7:30pm. Suitable for complete beginners. Get a practical introduction to meditation and includes topics such as the benefits of meditation, mindfulness, good posture, types of meditation, and how to start a daily meditation practice. In-person & online. \$15. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Twin Hearts Meditation – 7pm. This meditation is an act of service. We use divine energy to

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Fridays

Qigong Exercises & Meditations – 12-12:45pm. 1st & 3rd. Led by Master Cheng, who has been teaching in Atlanta since 1976. Free/ member, \$8/nonmember. Tai Chi Association, 3079 Midway Rd, Decatur. More info & registration: Tai-Chi-Association.com.

Meditation Classes – 6pm, Level I; 7pm, Level II. See Sun listing. 5161 Brook Hollow Parkway, Ste 220/225, Norcross. Register, Andrea:404-557-4306. MeditationWellnessClub@gmail.com. MeditationWellnessClub.com.

Prayers for World Peace – 6:30-7:15pm. Includes a guided meditation, a short teaching and chanted prayers for world peace. No experience necessary. All welcome. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Saturdays

Free Saturday Meditations – 8-8:30am. A guided meditation to start your day with a positive state of mind and carry that inner light with you for the rest of the day. No prior meditation experience necessary; all welcome. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Morningside Farmers Market – 8-11:30am. Year-round. Offers organic produce, bread, pastries, grains, meat, honey, along with chef pop-ups, prepared foods, coffee, in-season fruits, and locally produced crafts. Morningside Presbyterian, 1411 N Morningside Dr NE, Atlanta. MorningsideMarket.com.

Dunwoody Nature Center Saturday Volunteers – 9am-12pm. 2nd Sat. For anyone in the community who wishes to volunteer. A wonderful way to start off your weekend in nature and service. To promote social distancing, sign-up is mandatory; limited to 24 people. 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

Oakhurst Farmers Market – 9am-1pm. Year-round. Fresh produce, meat, baked treats, and more. Additional offerings include live music and chef demonstrations featuring seasonal recipes. Masks required. Sceptre Brewing Arts, 630 E Lake Dr, Decatur. cfmatl.org/oakhurst.

Free Online Guided Meditation for All – 9:45-11am. Will go over basics and guided meditation. No prior experience is needed. Classes meant to come together and meditate and learn little by little. Via Zoom. Register: Tinyurl.com/y3x5yy2s.

Reiki Share Group – 3:30-5:30pm. Last Sat. A gathering of like-minded reiki practitioners who participate in group healing treatments on each other. \$21. Healing Hands Reiki & Spiritual Development, Inc, 27 Waddell St, Ste A, Atlanta. Tinyurl.com/2rykarff.

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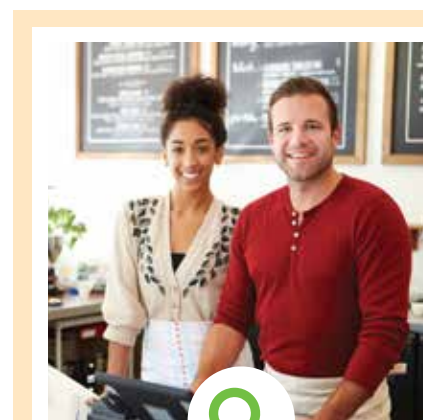
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TREATS for the Season

by Rev. Jenn Sacks

Yaroslav Shurayev/Pexels.com

Halloween starts right after the Fourth of July—at least, that’s what many major retailers would have us think. But I still wait for the first touch of fall before I plan my costume. I think of Halloweens past, remembering them like spiritual passages.

At age nine, I dressed as a princess in an old, lacy pink, sleeveless nightgown and gold paper crown. I reluctantly wore a coat over my shoulders as I traversed the streets because temperatures had plummeted into the 40s. A few years later, for a high school Halloween party, I was a devil in a body-hugging black leotard with red horns, tail and pitchfork, trying not to perspire when temps neared 70.

In my neighborhood, a group of us trick-or-treated together, using favorite pillowcases to collect our candy, exchanging Reese’s Pieces for Twizzlers or Baby Ruths for Gummy Bears. Halloween was a shared holiday, distinct from the individual family time spent during Chanukah and Christmas.

When I was teaching high school English, I became Dorothy Gale from Kansas for Halloween, my outfit complete with ruby slippers and white socks, my little dog, Toto, in his basket by my side. In my classroom, I wrote “Ms. Gale” in orange chalk on the blackboard. I hid a smile when students tried calling me “Ms. Sacks” and pretended I didn’t know who she was, but I beamed when I offered them treats.

In seminary one year, my classmates and I hosted a Halloween chapel service. We set a cardboard tombstone reading “R.I.P.” by the entry doors, scattered cobwebs and spiders around the pulpit and piped “Thriller” into the halls. Ushers passed candy around, and we served pumpkin cupcakes for fellowship after the service.

The year following the COVID lockdown, I dressed as Little Bo Peep at my church. Many congregants arrived at Sunday services in their own costumes or Halloween-themed shirts, ties or hats. Energy ran high as cars were decorated for the afternoon Trunk or Treat. Children ran and giggled, and candy flowed. I walked from car to car, joining in dozens of photo ops with families who came from all over town to reconnect and enjoy the day. I went home later that afternoon with tired feet but a happy heart.

So, I felt some sadness when I received a certain letter from someone new to the ministry. He wrote that he’d been trying to decide whether to join the church. He noted a few things he liked: the easy parking, the warm greeting he received each week and the tone of my Sunday sermons. But then he said he was “shocked” that a church celebrated Halloween. He thought it was sacrilegious, an insult to Jesus. He was “disgusted” that I’d worn a costume on the pulpit and said I was “making a mockery of God’s house.” He closed by saying he would find somewhere else “more devout” to worship.

When I reflect on this Halloween yet to come, I remember his words, but they do not dampen my spirit. I honor and appreciate All Hallow’s Eve for its ancient Celtic purpose: a time to celebrate the end of harvest and prepare for winter. I think of the words in Ecclesiastes 3, “To everything, there is a season.” Seasons of loss as well as growth. Seasons of despair and hope. Seasons of tears and laughter. With all the seasons of our lives, those we endure and those we savor, a season for treats holds a sacred place on my calendar.

As I anticipate this year’s Trunk or Treat, I prepare my costume and the encouraging words I’ll share on Sunday morning. I especially look forward to those few hours when the parking lot is filled with masked and painted faces, the scent of sugar and spice in the air and hundreds of voices, like one gleeful chorus, singing “trick or treat.”

I close my eyes and feel Spirit flowing. I’m ready for another passage, another season to enjoy the sweetness of community and the bountiful harvest of generosity we want to share. 🍬



Photo: Nicole Tyler Photography

Senior minister of Unity Atlanta Church in Peachtree Corners, Rev. Jennifer Sacks is a preacher, writer and spiritual leader. She holds a Master of Divinity from Unity Institute & Seminary. Learn more and connect with her at RevJenn.com.

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