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2:00 pm - 4:00 pm: Hammered Dulcimer Tunes by Susan Nease Musical selections will include a mixture of songs and some lesser-heard traditional carols.

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm: David Stample's One-Card Readings to provide insight and clarity into the present moment.



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3:00 pm - 5:00 pm: Reiki-Infused Hot Cocoa Hour with Chef David Hot cocoa served with a collective reading, providing insights and clarity from spirit through oracle cards.

4:00 pm - 5:30 pm: Drumming Circle with Jen Huber, Spiritual Intuitive and Connection Coach, is a sacred event that helps facilitate a higher level of healing, connection and community.



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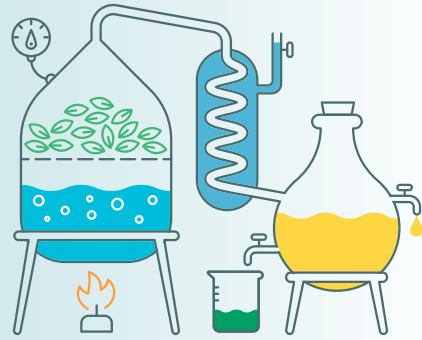
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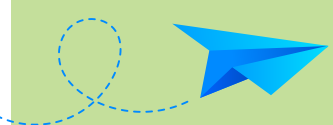
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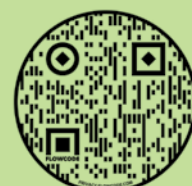


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SUSAN GONZALEZ ON SKINCARE



It goes without saying that a male publisher of a magazine whose readers are 80% female is going to miss some important things, maybe a lot of important things! A few years ago it dawned on me that I never think about skincare, whereas my readers think about it a lot. That prompted us to ask holistic esthetician Susan Gonzalez of MOON Organics to contribute her wealth of knowledge to our pages.

This month's article from Susan marks her sixth article for us. Here's a look back at her other pieces. Thanks so much for sharing Susan!

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CORRECTION: In September's news brief, "David Wright Launches Life Advice," coaching, advice and self-improvement services were incorrectly described as only being available online, but they are also offered via phone and email. Also, the cost of Wright's annual plan is \$2,500.

Natural Awakenings is a network of natural lifestyle magazine publishers empowering local communities with knowledge, resources and connections to lead healthier lives on a healthy planet.

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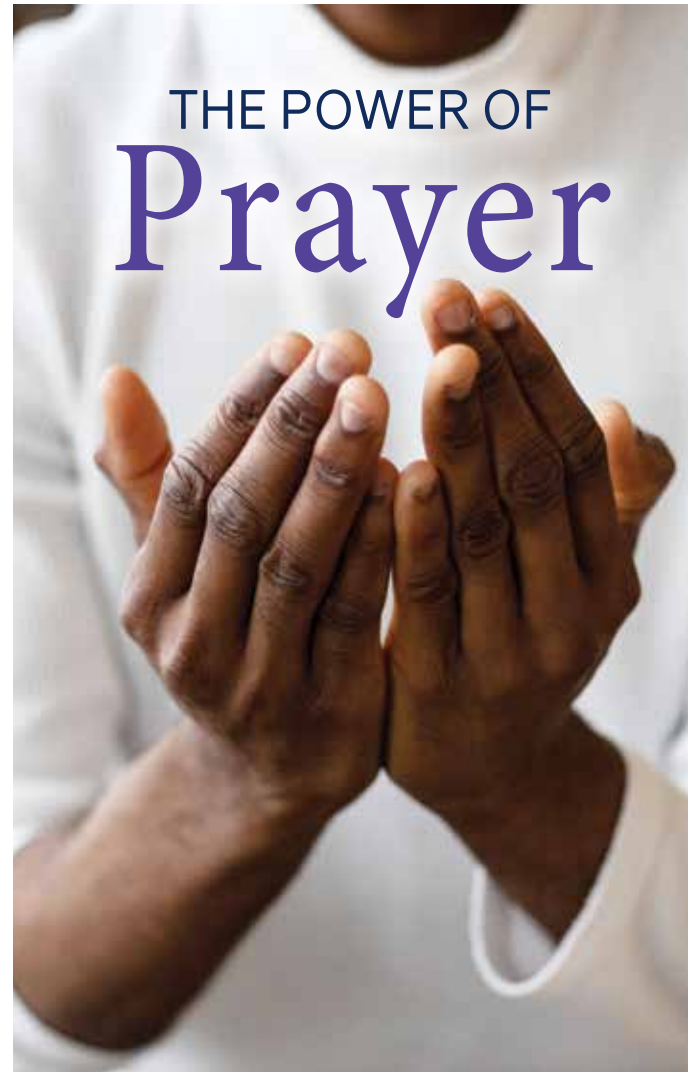
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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



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I believe in the power of prayer. "Believe" is appropriate here since I haven't seen enough evidence to move it from that column to the "know" column. However, something happened last week that is definitely nudging me towards "know."

I misplaced my keys on Wednesday. Now, I know that hardly sounds unusual, but I don't misplace keys; I'm very good about putting them in the same place every time I'm done using them.

I started freaking out a bit because I don't have a spare key to my car. It's an electronic key, and electronic keys are expensive to replace, and since I no longer had the original, programming one from scratch would be even more costly. My mechanic thought a visit to the dealer to replace it could well exceed \$500. For a key!

What was particularly maddening was that I knew exactly when and where I had them last, so I checked all the pockets of the clothes I was wearing and retraced my steps across the community to our mailbox, sweeping the sidewalk with the beam of my flashlight. Nada.

Thursday, I got on the phone with a sales prospect and told him of my key problem. He wasn't just any prospect, however. The news brief we published about the opening of his business two years ago holds the unbeatable record of most clicks on a news

brief in the first month. Popular briefs receive 20 to 30 clicks. His received 900!

I checked out his social media sites and noticed he wasn't publicizing our news brief, so I called him to ask how in the world that was happening. He professed ignorance, and furthermore, he reported that his new website received 10,000 pageviews in the first month. What!?!? *Natural Awakenings* website has never come close to that; 7,200 is our record. While it's easy to think it's bots, he simply remarked: "I try to be a good person, and I say my prayers."

Anyway, in last week's conversation, I told him about my lost keys. He took about five seconds to say a little prayer, which ended with something like, "...and may Paul find his keys right away."

After the call, I made some coffee. While preparing it, I thought how nice it was of him to offer that prayer. And then I offered one of my own. As soon as I finished, I walked over to my large bookcase, opened a drawer, and there they were.

Here's the really interesting thing, though. I did *not* have the thought: "Go to that drawer to look for your keys." On the other hand, I had consciously, repeatedly, opened many drawers the previous night, knowingly, purposefully, looking for those keys. I had looked in the creases of my couch even though I hadn't sat on it; I had gone through my garbage. I had even looked in my refrigerator. All in an intentional manner.

But not this final act. In fact, if anything, it felt as if I had given up control of my body. I had no idea where I was walking to. And even as my hand reached out for the drawer handle, I didn't think that the keys might be there. It was, to be sure, very weird.

Actually, the only other time that I felt as if some entity had taken over my body was far more dramatic. My partner and I attended an Atlanta Friends Meeting— aka Quakers—in the late 90s. Friends worship in silence, waiting for Spirit to descend upon them, and if the Spirit so moves a worshipper, that person stands and delivers a spoken message, and many times, the speaker trembles. Thus, "Quakers."

It seemed to me that many, if not most, of those who spoke had come prepared to speak. But then, it happened. One day, before I knew it, without having even one thought of speaking, I was standing up. I distinctly remember the shock of discovering that I was rising from my seat without having made the decision to do so. And I started speaking. And indeed, I was *quaking*. What dark magic was this that forced me to stand and speak about who knows what?

After the service, I shared this experience with a Friend, telling him that I did not decide to speak—that it was as if my being had been hijacked for someone else's purpose. Well, that's how Spirit works, he explained; someone needed to hear whatever it was I spoke about.

Yes, I believe in the power of prayer. A few more episodes like these two, however, and I will no longer have to rely on mere belief. 🙏



Publisher of Natural Awakenings Atlanta since 2017, Paul Chen's professional background includes strategic planning, marketing management and qualitative research. He practices Mahayana Buddhism and kriya yoga.

Chrysalis Yoga and Dance Studio Opens in Alpharetta



Owners Warren and Andrea Hall

Husband-and-wife team Andrea and Warren Hall combined their passions and talents to open Chrysalis Yoga and Dance Studio in Alpharetta in September. Andrea taught ballet, tap and jazz dance to students at area schools for 10 years and opened the Dance with Miss Andrea (DWMA) Ballet Academy in Marietta in 2019. Warren completed a 200-hour yoga teacher training and is a certified aerial yoga instructor.

Chrysalis offers classes for adults and children including a variety of yoga, aerial yoga, ballet, Pilates, meditation, Zumba, belly dance and Bollywood dance classes.

Several class packages are offered, ranging from a four-class pack for \$89 per month to an unlimited-class monthly package for \$140 per month. Those aged 65 and up can attend unlimited classes for \$100 a month, and the children's monthly ballet or yoga class package is \$70 per month. The cost for attending a single class is \$25.

"We are very excited to begin this new adventure, bringing together our passions for yoga and dance!" says Andrea. "We really want to create a community where our students will feel at home and have peace in mind, body and spirit!"

Chrysalis Yoga and Dance Studio is located at 7391 North Point Parkway Ste. 1440 in Alpharetta. For more information, visit ChrysalisYogaAndDance.net, email ChrysalisYogaAndDance@gmail.com or call 770-797-5102.



Silks Yoga Class

YOU ARE THE LIGHT ACADEMY OFFERS Chakra Course



Photo: Gaki Media

Ilona Moore is offering a new course, Radiant Body, a seven-day online course designed to awaken one's *chakras*, or energy centers, and activate one's spirit with physical, breathing and meditation techniques.

The course is for those who feel stuck in life and want to learn to find freedom to express who they truly are.

Moore is the owner of Peachtree Yoga Center and creator of You Are the Light Academy, a platform for hosting online courses. "It seems that we have forgotten who we are, forgotten how to listen to the body and read its important signals," says Moore. The course is the result of many years of research and implementation, she says, but it only takes a week to put it into practice and "enjoy the benefits for life."

The cost of the program is \$77 and is available online.

"We all need an energy boost right now, but not one that fades away. So I asked myself, 'How can I help stressed-out individuals change their attitude toward their body, mind and spirit connection?' The answer was the Radiant Body Online Course."

For more information, visit YouAreTheLightAcademy.com or email Ilona@YouAreTheLightAcademy.com.

CHANTLANTA AND DIRTY SOUTH YOGA FEST RAISE FUNDS FOR NONPROFITS



ChantLanta. From left to right: Susan Clancy, Jennifer Gorell, Karen Dorfman, Sophia Loner, Lawanda Jordan, Margo Gomes, and Ian Boccio. All except Jordan are with ChantLanta. [Photo: Stan Holt]

Two recent Atlanta events, the Dirty South Yoga Fest, which took place in late August, and ChantLanta, held in early September, raised thousands of dollars for two Atlanta nonprofits, the Dharma Project and Feet of Clay, respectively.

While attracting somewhat overlapping audiences, the organizations behind the events are very different. Dirty South Yoga Fest is a for-profit business with paid staff, while ChantLanta, a sacred music festival, is an all-volunteer effort. Dirty South, led by founder Jessica Murphy, pledged 20 percent of its profits to Dharma Project, led by founder Rutu Chaudhari, and delivered \$4,000 to the yoga nonprofit.

ChantLanta, led by co-founders Ian Boccio and Karen Dorfman, donated 100 percent of their net income to Feet of Clay, an organization that supports survivors of domestic abuse.

The founder and CEO of Feet of Clay, Lawanda Jordan, accepted \$10,000 from ChantLanta at a recent presentation ceremony.

"The Atlanta yoga community members are our greatest stakeholders," says Chaudhari. "They know more than anyone the power of yoga to transform circumstances. As those that benefit from yoga, it is our responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to healing, to be seen and to have a seat at the table."

Chaudhari will apply the funds to serving 10 incarcerated men by providing them with a 200-hour yoga teacher training program.

Dharma Project has served 1,150 individuals in Atlanta, bringing mindfulness and yoga to communities and organizations that experience chronic stress or trauma. It serves incarcerated men, women and youth in five facilities, students and teachers in three low-income schools, seniors in low-income housing, and refugee women and girls.

Founded in 2019, Feet of Clay's mission is "to provide survivors of domestic violence with safe shelter and resources to ensure a successful transition to a life free of violence." In addition to shelter, the nonprofit provides food, clothing, parenting and cooking classes, counseling and life coaching, and training in work skills and resume writing.

Jordan met Dorfman when the latter called Feet of Clay to request a pickup of items for donation. The two spent time chatting about Jordan's organization. But when she was informed that Feet of Clay had been selected as ChantLanta's charity partner, Jordan had to Google "kirtan," the sacred Hindu music that ChantLanta celebrates. And she found it to be "cool" in that people seem so free in the way they revel in the music.

Jordan's reaction to the first night of the ChantLanta festival was emotional. "In order to run an organization, people have to actually believe in what you do," she says. "So I was emotional because they believed in what we did. Not only that, they created an atmosphere to help others believe in what we did. And that's like gold."

A large portion of the proceeds Feet of Clay received is going toward the purchase of a truck; the rest will help meet client needs, for example, by paying initial deposits and first months' rent.

Disclosure: Natural Awakenings is a sponsor of both Dirty South Yoga Fest and ChantLanta.



Dharma Project. From left to right: Sarah Landrum, Jamaal Davis, Safia Icgoren, Rutu Chaudhari, Ashley Erwin, Nicole Ware, Liz Vanderhoff, Sumanah Khan.

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METAPHYSICAL SHOPS FEATURE WORKS BY LOCAL ARTISTS



Mystery Man by Meagan Murphy

The Well of Roswell is presenting a set of works by artist Meagan Murphy titled "The Egyptian Gods and Goddesses: Unleash Your Ancient Essence" now through December 9.

A multimedia producer and artist, Murphy specializes in portraiture and documentary film. She worked for PBS in Boston, where she produced award-winning content. Following a transformational tour through Egypt in 2011, she sketched and researched many of the deities she saw there.

"With so many of us having strong past-life ties to Egypt, the exhibit is powerful," says Becky Arrington, co-owner of The Well. "The energy of each of the gods and goddesses comes through and speaks to the viewer."

Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore, in partnership with Art Career Mentoring Services (ACMS) at Kennesaw State University (KSU), is presenting "The Celestial Show," an art exhibit featuring art students at KSU. The exhibition will be on display from November 5 through January 7 and is free to the public.

The public is invited to meet the artists at the exhibit's opening on November 5 from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore hosts the exhibition annually to "celebrate the ethereal realms and the magic within our skies," says the bookstore's owner, Candace Apple. Curator Rachel Mara seeks to showcase up-and-coming artists who find themselves "at home among the stars."



Aries by Chantelle Chapman



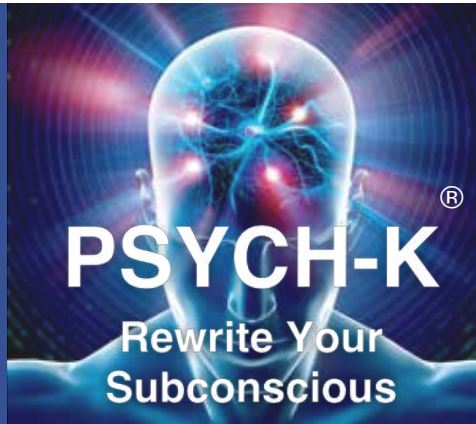
Butterfly Effect by Brooklyn Etzel

Heart Soul and Art, a metaphysical shop in Marietta, is presenting "It's All Magic," a juried art show now through December 2. The exhibit showcases more than 50 artists from the Atlanta area. The theme of the show "embraces the infinite possibilities of the mystical, surreal, and unexplainable to awaken the magic within each one of us," says Sharron Ragan, owner of Heart Soul and Art.

An artist's reception will be held November 11 from 5 to 6:30 p.m., and winners' ribbons and a total of \$500 in cash rewards will be presented.

The Well of Roswell is located at 900 Old Roswell Lakes Parkway, Suite 300 in Roswell. Call 770-778-2051 or email TheWellOfRoswell@gmail.com to verify a viewing time. Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore is located at 5531 Roswell Road in Sandy Springs. The exhibit at Heart Soul & Art will be in their gallery, located at 1470 Roswell Road in Marietta.

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Plant-Forward Holidays

FESTIVE FOODS EVERYONE WILL CRAVE

by Veronica Hinke



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A plant-forward menu can be one of the best gifts that a host can give this holiday season. It is also more likely than ever that guests will welcome a celebration menu filled with vegetables and fruits.

A 2023 survey by the International Food Information Council found that six out of 10 people reported eating a more plant-based diet to be healthier. “About 20 years ago, there might be one or two people at a party who followed a plant-forward diet. Now, we have to plan our menus to have more plant-based options,” notes Ojai, California-based dietician Sharon Palmer. “Even if only half of the guests follow a plant-based diet, my dishes are gone. Even the carnivores love them.”

Plant-Forward Eating

“When we think about plant-forward eating, what we are really going to do is add more vitamins, minerals and fiber and reduce the amount of calories that we consume,” says Sherry Coleman Collins, a registered dietitian and nutritionist in Marietta, Georgia. “That is especially important during the holidays when we are inclined toward eating more calorie-dense foods that have more fat, sugar and salt. A plant-forward meal can naturally reduce some of that without losing the flavor and enjoyment of eating.”

All in the Presentation

The name of a recipe can make a difference. “Why even say vegan?” Palmer asks. “Research shows that using the word vegan loses the crowd. There are people who will immediately think less tasty. If you lead with a description and its flavors, people are much more interested in trying it.”

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Delicious Plant-Based Starters

Minnesota-based Instagram influencer Kristi Erdal makes a plant-based holiday party snack that can double as a holiday gift. “It is important to have a nutritionally balanced meal, especially during the holidays, which tend to be more meat- and carb-forward with all the roasts and gravies,” she says. “My rosemary spicy roasted nuts are a party snack with savory, smoky, spicy and sweet flavors. A huge amount of fresh, chopped rosemary gives them an amazing flavor boost along with added health benefits. I have several favorite plant-forward recipes that I make during the holidays, including my jalapeño cranberry sauce and my kohlrabi slaw, but the nuts are the most popular.”

Palmer makes meatless appetizers that stand up to their classic meat-based counterparts. One of her favorites is golden beet vegan meatballs with almond sage cranberry cream. It is made with shredded golden beets and showcases flavors of the season like hazelnuts, flaxseed, sage and thyme. “They’re just so colorful, which is especially nice at holiday time,” she says. “More and more people are realizing that [plant-forward food] is going to be delicious. They’re not going to miss out. It’s going to be satisfying, colorful and amazing.” 🌱

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.

CREAMY LEEK POLENTA

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

2 Tbsp nondairy butter, divided
3 large leeks (white and pale green parts only),
washed and thinly sliced
4¼ cups water (or half vegetable stock and half water)
1 cup coarse cornmeal (polenta)
¼ cup nutritional yeast flakes
1 tsp salt, added gradually to taste
Freshly ground pepper, to taste

Melt 1 tablespoon of the nondairy butter in a 4-quart saucepan over medium heat.

Add the leeks and stir to coat. Cover and cook until the leeks soften, stirring occasionally for 7 to 10 minutes.

Add the water and broth, cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and slowly pour in the polenta while whisking simultaneously. Whisking is essential, otherwise the cornmeal will clump up. Continue stirring until the mixture is thick and creamy.

At this point, switch from a whisk to a wooden spoon and continue to stir. Add the nutritional yeast and salt and continue to stir until it is thoroughly combined and the mixture is thick and creamy.

Remove the saucepan from the heat and stir in the remaining tablespoon of nondairy butter. Cover and let sit for 15 minutes before serving.

Season with salt and pepper, to taste, and divide the polenta among plates.

Reprinted with permission from *The 30-Day Vegan Challenge: The Ultimate Guide to Eating Healthfully and Living Compassionately* by Colleen Patrick-Goudreau.



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ROASTED WHOLE CAULIFLOWER WITH CASHEW CREAM



photo courtesy of Bart Potenza and Joy Pierson

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

CAULIFLOWER:

1 medium cauliflower
1 cup prepared vegetable broth

CASHEW CREAM:

½ cup raw, unsalted cashews, soaked overnight, or for 15 minutes in hot water (see Note)
1 clove garlic, minced

1 tsp onion powder
½ tsp dried rosemary (or 1 tsp if fresh)
½ tsp dried thyme (or 1 tsp if fresh)
¼ cup olive oil
½ cup prepared vegetable broth
½ cup chopped thyme, parsley or herbs of choice for garnish

Preheat the oven to 350° F.

Pour 1 cup of vegetable broth on the bottom of a baking dish.

Trim the cauliflower by removing the outer leaves. Wash the cauliflower. Cut the bottom, but leave the stem intact so it stands upright.

Place the cauliflower in the prepared baking dish on top of the broth. Roast uncovered for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, place the cashews, garlic, onion powder, herbs, oil and broth in a blender to make a paste.

After the cauliflower is roasted, keep it in the baking pan and use a spatula or a butter knife to “frost” it with ¾ of the cashew cream, like you would a cake.

Return the cauliflower to the oven and bake it until it is golden brown, about 30 minutes.

Remove the cauliflower from the oven.

Drizzle the remaining cashew cream over the cauliflower and garnish with the ½ cup of fresh herbs.

NOTE: It is not necessary to soak cashews if using a high-speed blender.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS: Serve with all the holiday classics: sweet potatoes with marshmallows, mashed potatoes, wild rice, roasted vegetables and cranberry sauce. Can be served with sautéed mushrooms, gravy and cranberry relish.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Bart Potenza and Joy Pierson.



photo courtesy of Sharon Palmer

MINI CURRIED LENTIL WELLINGTONS

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

CURRIED LENTIL FILLING:

1 tsp extra virgin olive oil
½ medium onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tbsp water
1 medium carrot, chopped
½ cup brown mushrooms, chopped
½ cup frozen peas, thawed
1 Tbsp curry powder
¼ tsp black pepper
½ cup small green or brown lentils, uncooked
2 cups vegetable broth
¼ cup chopped walnuts

PASTRY:

1 package vegan puff pastry, defrosted
(1 pound 1.5 ounces cut into 8 5-by-5-inch squares)
½ cup water
2 Tbsp plant-based milk, plain, unsweetened

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil.

Sauté the onion and garlic for 4 minutes. Add water and stir.

Add the carrots, mushrooms, peas, curry powder and black pepper and sauté for an additional 5 minutes, stirring frequently.

Add the lentils and vegetable broth, stirring to combine. Cover and let simmer for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Then remove the lid and allow to simmer for another 15 minutes until the liquid is absorbed and the lentils are tender but



not mushy. Adjust moisture as needed by adding water if too much is lost to evaporation during cooking. Should achieve a moist texture, with no residual liquid.

Stir the walnuts into the mixture and remove from the stove.

Preheat the oven to 400° F.

Prepare the pastry by lining a baking sheet with parchment paper. Lay out 8 puff pastry squares evenly over the baking sheet.

Fill the center of each pastry square with ¼ cup of filling.

Place water in a small dish. Moisten fingertips with water and swipe across the bottom two edges of each pastry.

Fold over the top edge of the pastry to line up with the bottom edge, forming a triangle.

Dip a pastry brush in a small dish of water and moisten the bottom edge of the pastry.

Using a fork, secure the top edge to the bottom edge of the pastry by pressing with the fork around the entire edge.

Place plant-based milk in a small dish. Dip a pastry brush into the plant-based milk and moisten the surface of the pastries with the brush.

Place in the oven and bake until golden brown, about 18 to 22 minutes.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Sharon Palmer, MSFS, RDN.

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FACIAL TONERS

Not Just for Toning Anymore!

by Susan Gonzalez



Are you skipping the toner in your skincare routine? Why? Facial toners should be part of every complete skincare routine, but they're often overlooked or considered an optional step.

Some people use toners even though they're not sure what they do, while others have trouble choosing the right one since it can be quite confusing. Yet applying a toner is often exactly what is needed to solve many skincare issues, such as balancing oil, suppressing acne and smoothing, hydrating and plumping skin to improve complexion.

In basic terms, a facial toner is a liquid formulation that is applied to the skin after cleansing mainly to bring the skin's pH—its level of acidity—down. The skin has a pH level of around 4.5, which is acidic, and most cleansers are typically in the 7 to 8 pH range. Cleansers need to be a bit alkaline—have a higher pH—to remove dirt and oil and do their job. But skin, as well as its protective barrier—a combination of layers that keep skin healthy—are acidic. So, returning the skin to its desired pH not only makes sense for skin health but also prepares it to receive the serums, oils or moisturizers that follow in a typical routine, allowing those products to be better utilized by the skin barrier.

However, toners can do so much more than lower the skin's pH. There are several kinds of toners, and each one does something different on the skin. They are chosen based on one's skin type and skin condition. The three general categories of toners are fresheners, which are sometimes called hydrating toners, basic toners and astringents. There are also "active" toners that contain acids such as lactic or glycolic acid, which have an exfoliating property. *[For more information about exfoliation, see "Exfoliation Revealed" in Gonzalez's May 2021 article. —Ed.]*

Fresheners and Hydrating Toners

Fresheners, also known as hydrating toners, help to restore the skin's hydration level with ingredients such as glycerin, hyaluronic acid, aloe vera and hydrosols. They contain no alcohol or any other active

ingredient, such as exfoliants. While other types of toners are swiped over the skin using a soft cotton pad, hydrating toners can also be sprayed on the skin and pressed in.

Hydrating toners are great to spritz on any time during the day, in dry climates, when traveling by plane or if the skin is irritated or overworked. Any skin type, from dry to oily, can use hydrating toners since they don't typically contain any oil. Hydrating toners are often recommended for sensitive skin or when using ingredients that might dry the skin out, such as benzoyl peroxide or certain oral acne medications. They are also a nice way to end a clay mask treatment.

Basic Toners

Basic Toners are designed to remove cleanser residue and can also tighten the skin. Some brands contain a small amount of alcohol, which is a bit drying, but the main ingredients are usually soothing and neutral, like witch hazel or hydrosols, which can remove residue without drying. The toner is applied to a cotton pad or soft application pad and gently swiped over the skin. It should be allowed to dry fully before going on to the next skincare step. Any skin type can use these basic toners, but those with dry skin should avoid basic toner formulations that contain alcohol. Basic toners come in many scents, and they often contain herbals or herbal scents such as lemon, cucumber or rose for a pleasant experience. But that can be a problem for those who are sensitive to artificial fragrances, so check the labels for ingredients.

Astringents

Astringents are used to remove excess oil from the skin's surface and to temporarily reduce pore size. Astringent formulations contain moderate or high levels of alcohol and can contain salicylic acid and witch hazel as well. Astringents are used as part of a routine for those with oily skin, oily combination skin or acne-prone skin. They are very harsh and should be avoided by those with rosacea and those with dry, mature or sensitive skin. Take care when using astringents and watch for signs of irritation such as redness, especially around the mouth, or a burning or tingling sensation.

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Exfoliating Toners

These toners are similar to exfoliating serums since they contain active toners, or *actives*, that work a bit deeper in the skin. Actives are categorized as alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs), such as glycolic acid and lactic acid, and beta hydroxy acids (BHAs), such as salicylic acid. Actives penetrate the skin and help with issues such as fine lines, scarring, acne, slight texture and dark spots called *hyperpigmentation*.

Acids help prevent fine lines by keeping the surface free of dead skin cells, which encourages the skin cells to replicate more frequently. Fresh new skin cells that aren't covered by dull, dead ones are more luminous and give a glowing appearance. Because acids turn skin cells over more rapidly, they allow scars and hyperpigmentation to be worked up and out of the skin's surface as well. Using a toner that contains an acid can also improve the skin's ability to retain moisture.

Since dead skin can clog pores, an exfoliating toner can help control acne and open *comedones*, otherwise known as blackheads. Toners containing AHAs or BHAs or both are effective.

When using exfoliating toners, it's important to always wear sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher since the acids make skin more prone to sun damage. If a retinol or acid serum is already being used as an exfoliating step in a routine, and you want a bit more brightening action, adding an exfoliating toner can help, but be careful to ease into using it slowly and watch for and signs of tingling, redness or irritation, especially in the creases of your face. When starting an exfoliating toner, begin by using it every other day for about two weeks. If there are no signs of irritation, you can begin using it daily.

Some people don't need to cleanse their face in the morning every day. For those with sensitive skin or skin that is easily irritated or imbalanced, instead of cleansing, swiping with an appropriate toner can take the place of cleansing and can successfully prepare the skin for the next skincare step.

Other Solutions

There are other solutions that aren't technically toners that can be used both

before and after cleansing. One is micellar water, which is a water-based solution with tiny beads of oil suspended in it. Because of the oil component, this solution is effective for removing makeup before cleansing; however, it has a neutral pH (usually around 7) and is not classified as a toner. However, micellar water can also contain many ingredients that are not appropriate for some skin types. For example, some are formulated with coconut oil, which will clog pores. Reading labels is important.


Using toners is an excellent way to enhance your skincare routine and increase the performance of other skincare products. Careful consideration is needed to help choose the right one for the job, however. First, identify your skin type, then choose a product that will support your skincare goals. If help is needed, seeing a skincare therapist for evaluation and recommendations is a great option. 🌸



Susan Gonzalez is a holistic licensed esthetician, author, nurse and owner of MOON Organics, a skincare company providing clean, healthy skincare and personal care products. Reach her on FB, IG and TW: @MoonOrganics or visit MoonOrganics.com.

Photo: Audrey Pruitt

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The Magic of Parent-Child Synchrony

HOW SKIN-TO-SKIN CONTACT HELPS DEVELOPMENT

by Christine Ramos, RN, CLC, CCM, IBCLC (retired)



Creative Images/Shutterstock.com

contact initiates a cascade of physiological effects that optimize every organ system in the infant's body and promote breastfeeding. The mother also receives benefits, such as reduced stress hormone levels and greater amounts of oxytocin, the hormone that plays a vital role in postpartum healing, breastfeeding and pair bonding.

Benefits of Close Physical Contact

In 2021, the Proceedings for the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America published a study examining the long-term effects of kangaroo care. For two decades, researchers followed preterm and full-term babies; some had received kangaroo care (or skin-to-skin contact), and others had not. The children were assessed at four months, three years, 12 years and 20 years.

The scientists concluded that early experiences of frequent, close physical contact play an important role in a child's social-emotional development and were predictive of a child's ability later in life to interact with peers, regulate emo-

tions, manage stress and show empathic understanding. According to the authors, bodily contact may provide a bridge from prenatal life to postnatal social life.

Using a method called hyper-scanning, with advanced imaging techniques, scientists sought to identify what was being exchanged between mother and child that yielded such dramatic outcomes. They found that the pair's neural activity coordinated or synchronized with one another, which led to benefits for the child's nervous system, immune system, body function and behavioral development.

Bodily contact may provide a bridge from prenatal life to postnatal social life.

This synchrony was also present when the parent and child were near one another, not just when practicing kangaroo care. Certain factors strengthened synchrony, such as physical proximity and affectionate touch, which activates dopamine and other feel-good chemicals in the child's brain, enhancing cognitive functioning such as social learning and reward processing, vital in preventing major mood disorders and addictions.

In effect, kangaroo care (both with or without clothing), carrying an infant in a carrier or sling, frequent or on-demand

feedings, sleeping near one another and infant touch or massage promote what has been scientifically termed parent-child interaction synchrony.

Emerging Understanding of Carry Care

A child's brain continues to grow after birth, and by age 1, the average baby's brain is about 60 percent of an adult's brain size. During that first year of postpartum development, caretakers must provide the correct habitat to help the infant cope with its immaturity.

According to anthropological evidence, an optimal habitat can be provided through what is termed carry care, which provides opportunities for close contact and promotes parent-child interaction synchrony. Anthropologists also point out that in Western society parents have evolved away from carry care and toward nest care, where the baby is placed apart from the caregiver.

However, the science suggests that closer contact is beneficial. Interaction synchrony seems so impactful that lack of it may have implications for the development of autism spectrum disorder and other neurobehavioral disorders. Currently, interaction synchrony is one of the most studied subjects in modern science, as it has recently been found to exist in a variety of relationships, not just between a

parent and child. Yet, for all its profound implications, its relational and developmental dynamics remain a mystery.

Until interaction synchrony unveils more of its secrets, holding and embracing our babies just a little bit longer may be advisable for the health of their growing minds and bodies. 🧡

Christine Ramos, the author of A Journey Into Being: Knowing and Nurturing Our Children As Spirit, is a maternal-child health registered nurse who has worked as a certified childbirth educator, certified doula, certified case manager and an internationally board-certified lactation consultant.

This article first appeared in EcoParent magazine and is adapted and reprinted with permission.

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Mark Buhrke

Imagine being an infant born only moments ago. The onslaught of new sensations must be overwhelming as they suddenly feel the weight of a once-buoyant body. Eyes that saw only muted shades are now confronted by the harshness of bright lights.

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The Joys of Minimalism

A RICH LIFE WITH LESS STUFF

by Carrie Jackson



After a pandemic largely spent at home, many Americans are holding up a mirror to their lives and examining what really matters. Finding that material possessions weigh them down, people are turning to minimalism to simplify their physical, mental and emotional space. According to a study in *ScienceDirect*, a decluttered lifestyle improves sustainability and boosts emotional well-being. By paring down our possessions, we can become more authentic, simplify our finances and pave an easier pathway for the next generation.

According to Joshua Becker, author of four books on the subject, including *The More of Less* and *Things That Matter*, “Minimalism is the intentional promotion of the things we most value by removing everything that distracts us from them. This provides a refreshing sense of freedom with a new level of independence that comes from no longer being tied to material possessions. Modern culture has bought into the lie that more is better and happiness can be purchased at a department store, but embracing minimalism brings freedom from the all-consuming passion to possess and dares to seek happiness elsewhere. It values relationships, experiences and soul-

care, and lets us see all that we already have and reminds us to be grateful.”

Choosing the Essentials

Monica Friel is the founder and chief executive organizer of Chicago-based Chaos to Order, which works with clients to improve organization in their lives. She advises that our homes have essentially become storage units filled with unused items. With the average American house more than double the size it was in 1950, according to National Public Radio, we have more space than ever to store what we don't need. “For most people, our home

is the biggest purchase we make, yet it's so full of stuff it has actually become a burden. We're embarrassed to have people over because of the clutter. I encourage clients to examine what's weighing them down and start removing excess items that are adding to physical and emotional space. Think about if you were moving in three months, what would you want to take with you,” she says.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Americans spend \$1.2 trillion annually on things they don't essentially need. Becker says that focusing on minimalism allows us to invest our money where it truly



matters. “Choosing to accumulate only the essentials can lead the way to financial freedom. Spending less on things you don't really need will cut your financial expenses and provide an opportunity to not just save money for the sake of keeping it for yourself, but to use it to further causes that you believe in. It also allows you to seek out jobs that are not necessarily tied to income,” he says.

Declutter Strategies



When starting to declutter, Becker recommends parting with the easiest stuff first. “Start by eliminating everyday things around the house you no longer need, such as duplicate items. For example, your family needs towels, so you will never remove them completely, but you could simplify your life by reducing the number of towels you own. You will enjoy the refreshing feeling of a less-cluttered linen closet or bathroom drawer. As you experience the benefits in your life, you'll become better at finding solutions for the more difficult items,” he explains.

Friel says that it is often not the actual physical object people are attached to, but the memories associated with it. She points out that with younger generations increasingly accessing digital and online information, they don't necessarily have the same ties to objects as their parents do. “That rocking chair in the corner of the basement may have been important to Grandma, but now it's just taking up space. It's the story behind the chair, not the actual piece of furniture itself, that matters. People can take a photo of the object and share its history with digital storage, and the memory will last forever,” she says.

Family heirlooms can become even more

complicated for the sandwich generation—those taking care of both aging parents and their own children. Friel says that the best thing parents can do is to start downsizing early. For adult children sorting their parents' stuff, it is often best to ask for help. “Life transitions, such as a death in the family or moving elderly parents into a retirement community, can be difficult and draining endeavors. Find someone to help who is not emotionally attached, such as a professional organizer. They can provide unbiased guidance and help defuse any conflicts that may arise. This can even be done remotely now with families online via Zoom. So much of downsizing is about control. But making responsible choices with how to allocate your belongings actually helps put you in control of your legacy and makes it easier for your kids and other family members,” she explains.

Benefits for the Planet



Adopting a minimalist approach is also better for the planet. Vourneen McElwain, the creator of The Plain Simple Life, says that embracing minimalism and sustainability has a positive impact on the world around us. “At its core, minimalism is all about living with less. So, when we choose this lifestyle, we reduce the demand for the excessive production of goods. Minimalism also encourages us to be more mindful about our consumption, so we tend to invest in higher-quality items that last longer, instead of falling into the fast-fashion or disposable-products trap. Plus, when we own fewer items we can choose to live in a smaller and more energy-efficient home,” she advises.

Being mindful of how we downsize can help keep the environmental impact to

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a minimum. McElwain points out, “We never want our unused items ending up polluting the environment in a landfill or in the sea. The most eco-friendly way to declutter is to donate things that are still in good condition or to give them away to family and friends. This way, we can give these items a brand-new life and help others without over-consuming new products.”

“You’d be surprised how something that may appear meaningless to some can hold great value for others. You can also sell unwanted items, which helps others get access to something they might need without having to buy new and produce more waste. Finally, if an item is truly broken and unusable, there are ways to repurpose it. Even if you’re not a DIY person yourself, there are many who would be happy to take your broken, three-legged chair and turn it into a beautiful and unique piece of furniture.”

McElwain notes that minimalism encourages us to become conscious consumers. “A minimalist lifestyle prompts us to ask ourselves if we really need or love an item, and if we have a place for it in our lives. As we become more intentional with our choices, we also start to look into the origins of the things we buy. We try harder to support businesses that align with our values, such as those that prioritize fair trade, ethical manufacturing practices or eco-friendly operations,” she explains. “By adopting minimalism,



we don’t just declutter our spaces, we also contribute to social and environmental causes that shape a sustainable future.”

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

YOGA

Fly Like an Eagle

THE EAGLE POSE AND THE MYTHOLOGY OF GARUDASANA

by Sheila Ewers

[This issue, we offer a reprint of one of our most popular yoga articles. It originally appeared in our June 2021 issue. —Ed.]

In cultures around the world, the eagle has long been a symbol of strength, vision and perseverance. In Greek mythology, the *Aetos Dios*, a giant eagle, serves as Zeus’s constant companion and messenger. In Native American folklore, the eagle flies between heaven and earth, carrying messages from the people to God. In Aztec culture, the sun-god *Huitzilopochtli* takes the form of an eagle in a well-known prophecy that leads to the settlement of Mexico. And in Norse mythology, the storm god *Thiassi* often appears as an eagle to take in a view of the entire planet. In India, Indonesia and Southeast Asia, tales of the powerful eagle, Garuda, have inspired state symbols, a national airline, peacekeeping forces and even a yoga pose.



According to the *Mahabharata*, one of the primary mythological texts of Hinduism, Garuda emerged from his eggshell with the body of a man and the head and wings of an eagle, more radiant than the sun and larger than all of the *devas*, or gods, in heaven. When Indra, the king of the heavens, and all the other *devas* beheld his bright shining light, they went blind and sent messengers to extol his virtues and to implore him to reduce his brightness so that they would not be burned by his radiance. In humility and obedience, Garuda complied with their request, diminishing his light and size a thousandfold.

Meanwhile, Garuda’s mother, Vinata, had lost a wager to her sister, who was the mother of 1000 serpent sons called “the Nagi.” She became their prisoner and servant, compelled to do their bidding in all things, and eventually, the diminished Garuda joined her in servitude. One day, having grown tired of obeying the commands of his serpent cousins and eager to free his mother and himself, Garuda asked the Nagi to propose a price for freedom. The Nagi told Garuda that if he could steal the nectar of immortality, *amrita*, from heaven, he and his mother would be set free.

To steal the nectar, Garuda had to fight against the entire army of heavenly guards. He first resumed his full size and radiance, flapping his wings and blinding his opponents with the dust from the earth until they scattered in all directions. When he reached the *amrita*, he found it surrounded on all sides by great flames reaching up to the sky. Garuda made his mouth very large, flew away and swallowed the contents of many rivers to extinguish the flames. Then, confronted by a wheel with razor-sharp edges spinning very fast to block access to the nectar, he assumed a tiny form and quickly flew between the spokes. He broke open the mechanism that was guarding the *amrita* and rose to the skies, carrying the vessel in his claws.

Eventually, Indra struck a deal with Garuda so that he could take back the nectar of immortality from the serpents, but he allowed Garuda to deliver it first and ransom his mother. As a reward for his selflessness and courage, Garuda then became the vehicle and companion to Vishnu, helping him to preserve the Universe.

The Eagle Pose on the Mat

When we practice *Garudasana* on the yoga mat, we embody the qualities and stories of this great mythical being. The pose involves a shrinking of sorts as we cross our arms and legs and hug everything to the midline, folding the body into a smaller shape than is comfortable, while tenuously balancing on one foot. The philosophy of yoga teaches us that this “shrinking” is part of our human condition. The soul is unbounded, infinite and as vast as the ocean, but through birth, we take on a limited form and often forget our own magnificence. We learn to play small, as Garuda did, to fit in and please those around us. To gain eternity, we need only remember our true nature. When we heed the call of our higher consciousness, we are freed from the cycle of rebirth just as Garuda’s mother is freed from servitude.

In *Garudasana*, entangled in our own limbs, we remember how we have diminished ourselves. Our sight is limited by the tangled arms and hands before us, and our breath is more difficult to fully access. When we release and stand fully expanded and upright, we remind ourselves that it is our nature to be fully open and free from the bonds that restrain us.

Try it yourself and see how it feels!

- From standing Mountain pose, bend your right knee slightly. Lift your left foot off of the mat and cross your left leg over your right. You can allow the toes of the left foot to gently touch the floor to assist with balance, or you can wrap your toes behind your lower right calf. Once the legs are fully engaged, bend your right knee more deeply.
- Reach both arms wide with palms facing outward. Then scoop your left arm under your right and nestle the right elbow into the crook of the left arm. Press your forearms together with the backs of your hands pressing into each other. If possible, cross your forearms and press your palms together. Lift your elbows to the same height as your shoulders.
- Hold for five to seven breaths. Then untangle the arms and legs and return to Mountain pose. Give yourself a few moments to savor the feeling of spaciousness and release, then repeat on the other side.

For an extra challenge, try shrinking even more:

When you are fully in *Garudasana*, exhale and lean your torso forward until you can press your elbows or forearms against the top of your thigh. Hold for five breaths, then inhale and rise. Unwind your arms and legs and remain in mountain pose for a few breaths before repeating on the opposite side. 🦅



Sheila Ewers, ERYT500, YACEP, is a former yoga editor of this publication. She previously founded and owned Johns Creek Yoga and Duluth Yoga. She now concentrates on leading retreats with her company Seek Yoga and Travel at Seek.Yoga.com.

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calendar

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11

New Moon Cacao Ceremony + Sound Bath
- 7:30-10pm. With Radha Rose. Be guided on a journey of astrology, meditation, breathwork, intention-setting, ceremonial cacao, communal sharing, medicine songs, plus Sound Bath featuring quartz crystal sound bowls, shamanic drum and chakapa. Vista Yoga, 2836 Lavista Rd, Ste D, Decatur. 404-929-9642. VistaYoga.com.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25

The Doug Johnson Kirtan Band - 6:30-9pm. The Doug Johnson Kirtan Band combines the traditional yoga practice of call-and-response chanting in Sanskrit, known as Kirtan, with psychedelic improvisations influenced by bands like The Grateful Dead. Vista Yoga, 2836 Lavista Rd, Ste D, Decatur. 404-929-9642. VistaYoga.com.

WEDNESDAYS

Community Yoga - 11am-12pm. Aynil guides a series of poses and movements that are suitable for all levels of experience and ability. Free. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Ste B2, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

FRIDAYS

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

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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. LiffYogaStudio.com.

Zen Sound Bath - 11:30am-1pm. 3rd Sat. With Gabriel Nelson Sears featuring crystal and Himalayan singing bowls, gongs, bells, flutes, drums and chimes. \$16. Trinity Center for Spiritual Living, 1095 Zonolite Rd, Atlanta. Registration required: TrinityCenterAtlanta.org.

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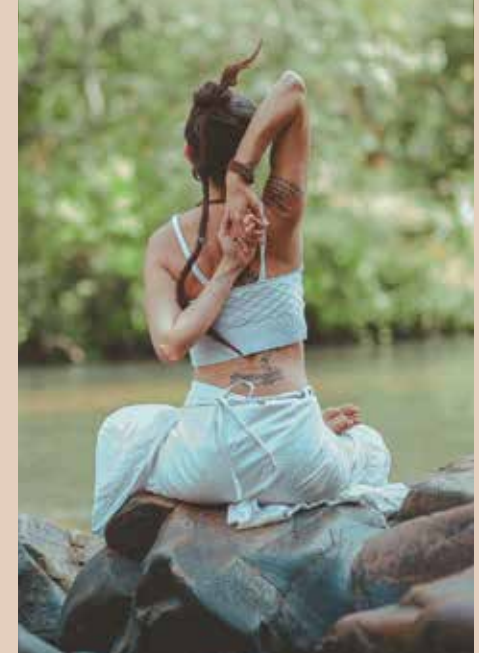
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Sam Stedman

ON HELPING KIDS MAKE CONSCIENTIOUS CHOICES

by Sandra Yeyati

Sam Stedman is the co-founder and publisher of *EcoParent*, a quarterly print magazine distributed in North America that is designed to help parents make better choices for their families. He holds a Ph.D. in experimental theater and ethical philosophy from the University of Toronto and was a university professor for more than 10 years in Ontario. Stedman lives in Belize with his 12-year-old son, Ransom.



How can parents inspire children to make eco-friendly choices?

We need to get into the habit of doing the work, taking the time to research, learn, educate and be conscious of the choices in front of us so that we don't make default decisions. Once you get past the surface level of reading labels and knowing what organic certification is, you have to keep taking it deeper. It's ever-shifting sands. Science keeps developing. New certifications and concerns arise. New chemicals are developed to replace old chemicals that were bad.

We might get to a point where we realize we can't make a reasonable choice because the information is impenetrable or requires another 15 hours of research. It might be a toss-up, a lesser of evils or an equal of evils, but being conscious and present to it is so important, and that's what I want to instill in my son. I want him to know that I thought about the things we did and the choices we made, and that he can, too.

How do you help your child cope with eco-anxiety?

The word of the day around here has been acceptance. You have to accept situations as they are, and frustrating and heart-wrenching as they may be, when you literally can't make a good choice, you also have to let yourself live in this world.

If you've ever done one of those carbon footprint calculators, most North Americans use up their global annual share of resources within a few months. I definitely use less than I used to and less than average, but I'm still using more than my share well before the year mark is over. How do you live with that? I wish I had good answers, but if we're trying and we make our choices well, then we're heading in the right direction.

Do you homeschool your son?

At the start of COVID, we started homeschooling, but I discovered that I'm not a great homeschool dad in the sense of having all kinds of time to prepare curriculum and open up interesting possibilities. What we ultimately settled on, and this was a part of the shift and move to Belize, was an unschooling approach, which is the term for learning in the classroom of life, not having a set curriculum and instead being self-directed.

My son is free to create his own projects. It's an interesting social experiment and a process of deinstitutionalization or de-

schooling, as it's called in the unschooling community, for myself and for him. I spent 30 years in school, from kindergarten to finishing my Ph.D., and what did it get me? I was a straight-A student, but when I graduated, nobody was giving me a job on a silver platter, and I had never been taught how to go out and make something happen. The hardest thing I ever did was give up my academic career to become an entrepreneur, but it was the best thing I ever did. So what I've been trying to teach my son is how to learn on his own, but more importantly how to make things happen in the world.

Can you give an example of this self-directed learning?

My son is a devotee of Minecraft, so he has built a lot of his education around that. He started a YouTube channel, which required him to learn how to edit videos. He also wants to build a survival multiplayer environment, which means that he has to be able to code his own twist on Minecraft. He had to create an excellent promotional video, which required that he write marketing copy, and he's learning how to write the rules of the multiplayer environment in a clear way, which is technical writing. We never know where these projects are going to go, but it involves reading, writing, coding, video editing and an endless amount of troubleshooting and interfacing with different systems.

What is the key to successful parenting in this setting?

If your kid is going to sit and play video games all the time and do nothing productive, and it's not going to lead into fruitful territories, then they need more structure. You have to remain engaged. It's great to allow him to direct everything, but his sphere of experience is still pretty myopic compared to an adult that has seen a lot more, so my job is to keep finding side trips and lateral movements that will keep him opening doors that he doesn't even necessarily know are there. 🍌

Sandra Yeyati is national editor of Natural Awakenings.



photo by Blaise Misteck/SamStedman



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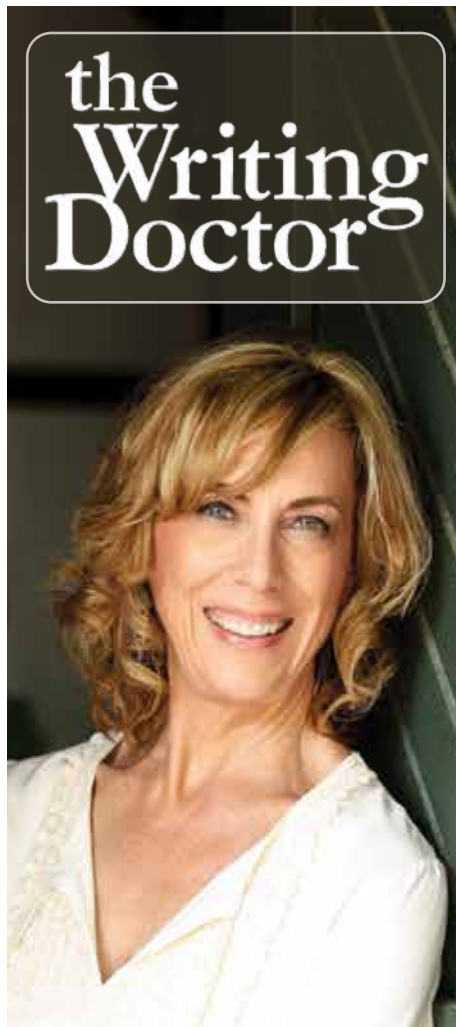
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FIT BODY

Green Fitness

CHOOSING AN EARTH-FRIENDLY GYM

by Kiki Powers



The green gym is redefining fitness with an emphasis on sustainability. Traditional fitness centers consume significant amounts of electricity, water and other resources, but more gyms are rising to the challenge of reducing their environmental impact and employing strategies to increase energy efficiency, decrease waste and provide a healthier workout environment.

Eco-Friendly Workouts

The concept of harnessing human power is not new, but its application in fitness centers is driving a paradigm shift. Equipment manufacturers have developed machines that convert kinetic energy generated by exercise into renewable electricity. UK-based Energygym claims that 40 of their indoor cycling bikes can generate enough electricity to power 18,000 homes for a day

SportsArt fitness offers a complete line of electricity-generating gym equipment, including treadmills, cross-trainers, elliptical machines and bikes. "We breathe sustainability," affirms Ruben Mejia, executive vice president of SportsArt America. "From the inception, we have prioritized reducing our environmental footprint. We've woven this commitment into our products and manufacturing processes. Converting a workout into usable power not only reduces the gym's carbon footprint and operating costs, but also provides gym-goers a sense of purpose and satisfaction, knowing their efforts contribute to a greener planet."

Eco-friendly gyms not only benefit the environment, but also enhance the well-being of their members. The use of natural light and high-efficiency LED lighting, non-toxic cleaning supplies and improved air quality contribute to a healthier

workout environment. Innovative centers that merge fitness with environmental consciousness often incorporate recycled and natural elements into their design, creating a calming, invigorating environment that enhances both physical workouts and mental well-being.

Pioneering Fitness Centers

The Green Microgym-Belmont, in Portland, Oregon, has taken sustainability to a whole new level. Founder Adam Boesel says, "I created this gym to offer a green, eco-friendly alternative to conventional health clubs. The goal was to operate with conservation in mind on every level possible, from electricity to equipment to mindset for staff and clients."

Terra Hale is London's first eco-friendly fitness destination. Their three locations are designed to put the principle of sustainability at the center. The floor is made of reconverted rubber; walls are made of recycled wood; and the members' towels are biodegradable.

Sustainability is important to large fitness center chains, too. Life Time and Planet Fitness annually report how they are reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving water, minimizing waste, educating members about eco-friendly living and supporting sustainability initiatives in their communities.

Selecting an Eco-Friendly Gym

When touring a fitness center, look beyond the number of free-weight stations and consider these eco-friendly features:

- **Location:** Find a gym close to home or work to save both time and fuel.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Check for renewable energy sources like solar and energy-efficient lighting.
- **Building Materials:** Consider how sustainable and recycled materials are incorporated in construction and décor. Look for facilities with certifications, such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) from the U.S. Green Building Council or B Corporation from B Lab. A facility that incorporates natural lighting and temperature controls is a plus. Sustainable floor materials include recycled rubber, bamboo and cork.
- **Equipment:** Search for gyms with equipment made from recycled materials and that invest in energy-efficient or power-generating machines. Look for brands like Precor, Life Fitness and SportsArt, which prioritize sustainability in their equipment design.
- **Waste Reduction:** Look for gyms that avoid single-use items, including towels, cups, water bottles and paper schedules, notices and pamphlets. A comprehensive recycling program should be a minimum standard.
- **Water Conservation:** Prioritize gyms with water-saving facilities, such as low-flow showers and toilets.

- **Air Quality:** Ask about the gym's ventilation and air filtering systems to ensure a healthier workout. Gyms with moss- or plant-covered walls bring the outdoors in and naturally purify the air.
- **Cleaning Products:** Choose a gym that uses environmentally friendly cleaning products, preferably those that are biodegradable and made from natural ingredients.
- **Education:** Check out the gym's website and schedule to see if they educate and engage with their members about green habits and environmental conservation.
- **Community Involvement:** Inquire if the gym actively participates in local environmental initiatives.

Kiki Powers is a health writer, blogger and national speaker specializing in plant-based nutrition and healthy green living. Learn more at RawKiki.com.

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Qigong with Brigitte – 6:30-7:30pm. Learn flowing dynamic movements and sequences, deep breathing practices and meditation, ways to generate energy, self-care: self-massage techniques for restoring energy flow of hands, feet, face, lower back and more. \$25.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2

Celestial Soiree – 11am-6pm. From hot apple cider and ginger cookies, to the drumming circle, bring own drum or borrow ours. Join us and enjoy. Includes The Wish Wizard of Wonder; make own magic herbal bottle; reiki blessing, music and much more. Free. See PhoenixAndDragon.com for details.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Remote Reiki Healing – 2:30-3:18pm. Jamie will invite Dr. Usui to come in with a supportive reiki team and work on physical, mental and emotional healing. The healing itself will take place for 33 mins and there will be a 15-min discussion and sharing afterward. Donation based. Register: JamieButlerMedium.com.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Serenity Within: Exploring Yoga Nidra and Reiki – 6-7:30pm. The combination of yoga nidra (yogic sleep) and reiki allows you to experience deep relaxation, inner exploration and support the release of physical and emotional blockages. Decatur Healing Arts, 619 E College Ave, Ste B, Decatur. 404-378-6288. DecaturHealingArts.com.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Coffee House – 7-9:30pm. All are invited to our Thanksgiving Celebration. We're gathering together to express gratitude for all the blessings in our lives, through sharing personal stories, writings, songs and more. Potluck meal. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Soul Acceleration Workshop 2024 – 1-2:30pm. Experience an unfolding of Tarot/Oracle drawn for each moon cycle of 2024. Create a roadmap for success. Free. Zoom. [Tinyurl.com/4z8hf9p6](https://tinyurl.com/4z8hf9p6).

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Atlanta Streets Alive – 1-5pm. 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, Atlanta. AtlantaStreetsAlive.org.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15

Remote Healing for Deep Grounding with the Earth Chakra – 2:30-3:15pm. Jamie and her team will focus on strengthening this Chakra for 30 minutes to allow for a larger frequency exchange so you can stay grounded even in high emotional situations. \$20. Online. JamieButlerMedium.com.

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.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Georgia Audubon Society Bird Walk – 8-10am. A great way to learn more about Georgia's resident and migrating birds. All welcome. Free. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

Developing Genuine Gratitude

– 10am-1pm. In this half-day silent retreat, Kelsang Dechok will guide meditations and give practical instructions on how to train our mind in authentic gratitude. No experience is necessary. All welcome. \$25. Kadampa Meditation Center GA, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org/gratitude.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Shamanic Journeying – 7-8:30pm. With Vicki Evans. We will do two journeys where you will travel to meet the guides using guided journeys and the steady beat of the drum. No experience necessary. \$20. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28

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/bdzd92b8](https://tinyurl.com/bdzd92b8).

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2

Back to Nature Holiday Market – 10am-5pm. Explore local artisans who have unique, handmade, and/or eco-friendly gifts for the holiday season. Art, jewelry, candles, children's gifts, bath products, food, nature gifts and more. Free admission. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChattNatureCenter.org.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

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Ynyurl.com/Hypno2024

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](https://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.

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](https://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, followed 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 bless the planet, our loved ones and every part of our life. With Atlanta Pranik Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: AtlPranicHealing.com.

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/2rykarft.

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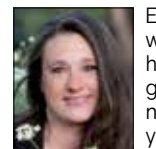
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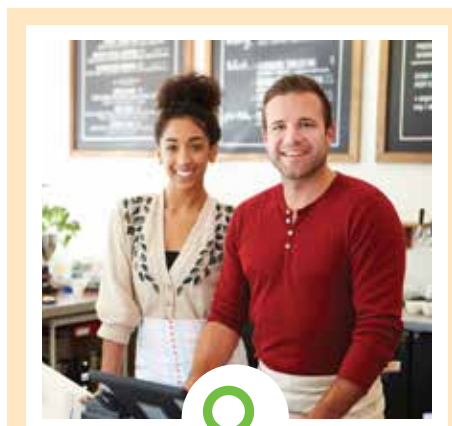
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There All Along

by Rosemary Kimble



EAPexels.com

I have been a traveler all of my life. I have traveled thousands of miles to have wildlife encounters. I have been to the Amazon, where I have seen and heard the rare oropendola, a bird of beautiful color with an unusual song that sounds like it is underwater. I have traveled to Africa, where I have seen some of the biggest and the smallest animals in the world, including the tiny bush baby, whose large eyes peered at me in the dark from a small tree, and the enormous rhino, that stomped through the dirt, creating a cloud of dust around itself.

I've done the same for spiritual experiences. I've traveled thousands of miles to participate in ceremonies of different cultures around the world. I have been blessed by Voodoo Orishis in a Candomblé ceremony in Brazil; I've sat with medicine people for vision quests in Colombia; and I've been given a bone reading session by a Sangoma mystic in South Africa.

Each time I come home, I'm already thinking about where to go for my next adventure. I am so charged from the last experience that I can't wait to leave again. I am excited to experience something else new all over again. I have traveled away from home to have these deep experiences so many times. It has been the story of my life for many years now.

Over the years, I've sometimes wondered why I have to travel so far to do that. What if the experiences I was seeking could be found right in front of me all along? If I paid closer attention, could I find it nearby more easily?

Recently, I had a eureka moment. I was in my backyard, listening to a sound I've heard for many years—a sound I'd always assumed was a birdcall. But when I listened and looked more closely, I was delighted to discover that the sound I've been hearing all these years was not from a bird at all—but a squirrel! Why hadn't I noticed that before? I began to wonder: *What else have I been missing?*

It was not until I met a medicine man here in Georgia that it occurred to me that I could be a part of special ceremonies in the U.S. He'd been living in the same city I grew up in for as long as I have lived here. His community welcomed me, having been in my own town all along!

I started to think about all of the things that were right in front of me that I might have missed throughout my life journey. I always thought I had to travel far away to have a unique wildlife encounter or to be in ceremony. How often are we seeking something that can be found in plain sight? If I take the time to notice more of what is happening around me, maybe I'll have many more wildlife encounters and more spiritual experiences.

The realization gave me a whole new outlook on how to experience the world. After all these years, I'm discovering that I don't have to go far at all to discover new things or to have profound spiritual experiences. The medicine person I might have traveled quite a ways to meet was in my neighborhood all along! A special wildlife encounter can happen in my own backyard! I can explore what's right around me and have just as enlightening or exciting of a spiritual experience or wildlife encounter as I'd get from traveling across the globe to find it.

Today, I am excited to explore more of what is already happening here in my own town, just waiting for me to see it. 🌿



Rosemary Kimble is an animal communicator, medium, intuitive healer, ceremonialist and death doula. Visit VisionsAndReflections.com or email Info@VisionsAndReflections.com.

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