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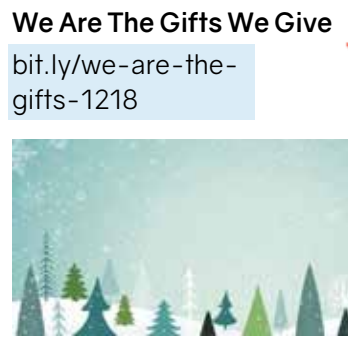
WORDS FOR TROUBLED TIMES

The last few years have been the most divisive I have lived through. As a matter of personal values, this magazine stands on the side of more understanding, more compassion, and more love when it comes to that which divides. For that reason, over the past few years, we have invited spiritual leaders to contribute prayers and wisdom when it seems the world was in need for more voices speaking to our inherent goodness and divinity vs. the screeching voices stoking fear and resentment. Here are our past offerings.



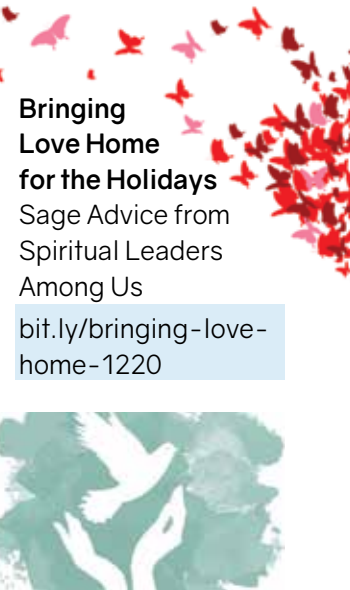
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CORRECTION: In our October article, "Yin Yoga: The Power of Slow and Receptive," Amanda Pawlowski's last name was misspelled.

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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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



Love ^{THY} Enemy

“Jordan Peterson is pretty provocative,” my son told me. Without thinking, words I’ve never said before escaped my lips: “The most provocative thing I’ve ever heard is ‘Love thy enemy.’”

There was no response. Perhaps because he knew that most humans would be outraged and seismically angry if you suggest that they love the person that just called them fat or stupid. Or the person that criticized them in front of their boss. Or the person that scammed them out of thousands of dollars.

Or members of a terrorist group committed to wiping your country off the face of the earth, a group that had just murdered more than a thousand of your people.

Or the government and the people of a country that has illegally occupied your lands and treated your people as unequal.

The degree of division and hostility between people in *this* country over the events of the Middle East startles me. The animus of Jews toward Palestinians and vice versa is understandable, but what isn’t, to me, is the celebration of the killing of innocent civilians and the assertion of members of both sides that there are no innocent civilians on the other side.

Something that a sangha member related to me has stuck in my craw. A young therapist—an Arab woman who has experienced war first-hand—was sharing with another young Arab woman that she had compassion for the Jewish people that were killed and the survivors that had lost family and friends. The other woman’s response was quick. She felt the therapist was enjoying a privileged compassion since she was not directly affected by

Israeli actions. She, the second woman, wasn’t going to waste a moment’s worth of energy having compassion for the persecutors.

To be fair, my sangha member said the conversation was quiet and civil, but, to me, the mere thought that people are now criticized for having and expressing compassion for their enemies goes over the line. I don’t believe many of my countrymen love their enemies—it is a very tall order. But to disparage another’s compassion as privileged is shocking and depressing; this current orgy of hatred for the “other” seems to have eroded our capacity for empathy.

I remember learning of Jesus’ words on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” I was awestruck. How can anyone love so much? That’s what I should aspire to. And stories of modern-day Jesuses are just as compelling and unfathomable—stories of mothers and fathers forgiving their children’s killers and even developing relationships with them. Reading such stories always chokes me up and makes me wonder what it would take for me to achieve that level of sainthood.

Matthew 5:44-47 says:

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

Isn’t the entirety of life’s purpose that we work to improve ourselves, to overcome our shortcomings, to expand our capacities for love and compassion? Isn’t it obvious that this is a road to pure happiness, a joy that is not conditioned upon external factors such as money, partner, career or social status?

Of course, loving your enemy is hard—very hard. Perhaps nearly impossible. But that is exactly the point; the essence of Christian practice is to become more like Christ, is it not?

Buddhism teaches the same principle. I vividly remember the astonishment I felt when my teacher said that if one comes upon an adult abusing a child, it is the adult that’s in need of more compassion. This makes perfect sense if one believes in karma and rebirth; when receiving harm, the child is burning off negative karma, whereas the adult, by committing a wrongful act, is incurring future suffering as a function of karma.

Buddhists define compassion as the wish that others do not suffer. Interestingly, mustering compassion remains difficult for me in many situations, but loving my enemies is easier. Love is the wish that others are purely happy. The key word here is “purely”—it means that happiness comes from within; it isn’t conditioned by external factors, as mentioned above. Loving our enemies is easier because if your enemy is purely happy, they won’t commit non-virtuous actions that trigger anger and hatred in others.

May we all strive to be better tomorrow. May we all strive to love our enemies. 🙏



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.

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ALIVE! EXPO AND HOLISTIC AND WELLNESS EXPO SET DATES IN 2024



Valhalla Resort Hotel

Alive! Expo, Atlanta's oldest and largest consumer trade show for holistic health and green living, is scheduled for May 4 and 5 at the Gas South Convention Center in Duluth. This marks a move from its previous location at Cobb Galleria, where it has been operating for several years. The 2024 event will be Alive! Expo's 19th show in the Atlanta area.

The expo has moved for several reasons, says founder and CEO Patrycja Towns. First, Cobb Galleria is raising fees for the fourth year in a row. Second, parking is an issue when there is an Atlanta Braves day game; baseball fans and show attendees vie for the same parking spaces. Moreover, the parking rate at Cobb is twice that of Gas South. Third, because Cobb Galleria has an in-house food vending service, Alive! Expo was not allowed to bring in food vendors to sell products. Now, they'll be able to.

A more recent addition to area expos, the Holistic & Wellness Expo at the Valhalla Resort Hotel in Helen, Georgia, makes its third annual appearance on March 2. This date represents a change of scheduling from the first Saturday in February to the first Saturday in March.

Attendance at last year's Holistic & Wellness Expo doubled from its first year—welcoming 300 people. Expo director Irene Faith is pushing the date back to accommodate more vendors and attendees outside in the warmer March weather. "This is our third expo, and it promises to be bigger and better," says Faith. "Last year, over 30 vendors and five speakers participated. Next year, with more space, we hope to double our vendors and classes."

For more information, visit AliveExpo.com, ValhallaResortHotel.com and iBynum@ValhallaResortHotel.com.

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MICHAEL BURKE CELEBRATES RELEASE OF NEW BOOK



Michael Murphy Burke will celebrate the release of his new book, *Dancing with the Shadows*, at Unity North Atlanta in Marietta at the church's 11:15 service on December 10.

Burke will read several of his poems during the service and, after the service, he will be available to sign books and have conversations in the Peace Chapel until 6 p.m.

Dancing with the Shadows is Burke's second book. It "comes at a time when we could all learn from embracing the dance with our own shadows," he says. Burke's first book, *Dancing with the Divine*, will also be available for sale on the same day. The third book in his *Dancing* series will be available in the future.

"I am extremely excited and honored to release my second book at my spiritual home, Unity North. There shall be much time for discussion and sharing of ideas that led to the development of these poems."

Unity North Atlanta is located at 4255 Sandy Plains Rd. in Marietta. For more information, call or text Burke at 678-469-0340.

REGENERATIVE FARMING PRODUCTS NOW AT Nuts 'n Berries

Nuts 'n Berries Neighborhood Market in Brookhaven recently started carrying products from White Oak Pastures, a six-generation Georgia farm that employs regenerative practices and promotes zero-waste. All of White Oak's livestock are raised without the use of antibiotics, steroids, added growth hormones or mRNA. Prices are set at or below market list price. The cost of regenerative organic ground beef is \$8.99 per pound.

"Local matters," says owner Mari Geier. "Every chance we get, we want to supply our customers with food and products that are not just sourced from local people but made locally, too. Staying connected to our food and the products we use is important. And when you know the people making your food, you get an extra ingredient for free: love. That cannot be made and distributed commercially. It's just that special something that you can feel when you eat and buy local."

Regenerative farming can help to rebuild soil health, improve nutrition density, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and add to microbial diversity. White Oak Pastures' cattle are certified



grass-fed by the American Grassfed Association, and its meats are hand-butchered.

Nuts 'n Berries Neighborhood Market is located at 4274 Peachtree Rd. NE in Brookhaven. A second outlet, at 2118 North Decatur Rd. NE in Decatur, sells local eggs, raw milk and hemp products.

Advanced Wellness Hires Coordinator for Integrative Therapies

Advanced Wellness of Atlanta, a functional and integrative medical practice, recently hired Cayla McKelton as their new integrative therapies and marketing coordinator. McKelton helps prospective and existing patients determine which integrative therapies might be best for them based on their needs and helps them set up sessions.

Advanced Wellness offers three holistic integrative therapies: detoxification footbaths, light therapy and *cyma*therapy, or sound healing, which help to improve health, balance the body, free blockages and relieve pain.

McKelton was formerly marketing manager for yoga and wellness studio Plug & Play Namaste and for Uptown Exclusives Boutique in Columbus, Georgia. The experience opened her eyes to taking better care of her health and inspiring others to do the same. She recently moved to Atlanta to grow her personal experience.

"I have always felt that my calling is to help and positively influence others, and thankfully, I'm able to do that here," says McKelton. "My vision is that anyone who I come in contact with will be hopeful in their healing journey and feel better holistically."

Advanced Wellness' integrative therapies are offered in 30-minute sessions. *Cyma*therapy and light therapy cost \$30, and the detoxification footbaths cost \$40. Packages are also available: 10 light therapy sessions for \$200, 12 *cyma*therapy sessions for \$360, and 10 footbath sessions for \$300.

Advanced Wellness of Atlanta is located at 1549 Clairmont Rd., Ste. 105, in Decatur. To book appointments or for more information, email Info@AdvancedWellnessATL.com or call 404-320-0204.



Cayla McKelton [Photo: T. Pringle]

NATURAL LIFE HOSTS GRAND OPENING IN EAST ATLANTA



NL Mushroom Tincture

Dave Alford, Sr. and Tamecia M Jordan recently hosted the grand opening of their new store, Natural Life, in East Atlanta.

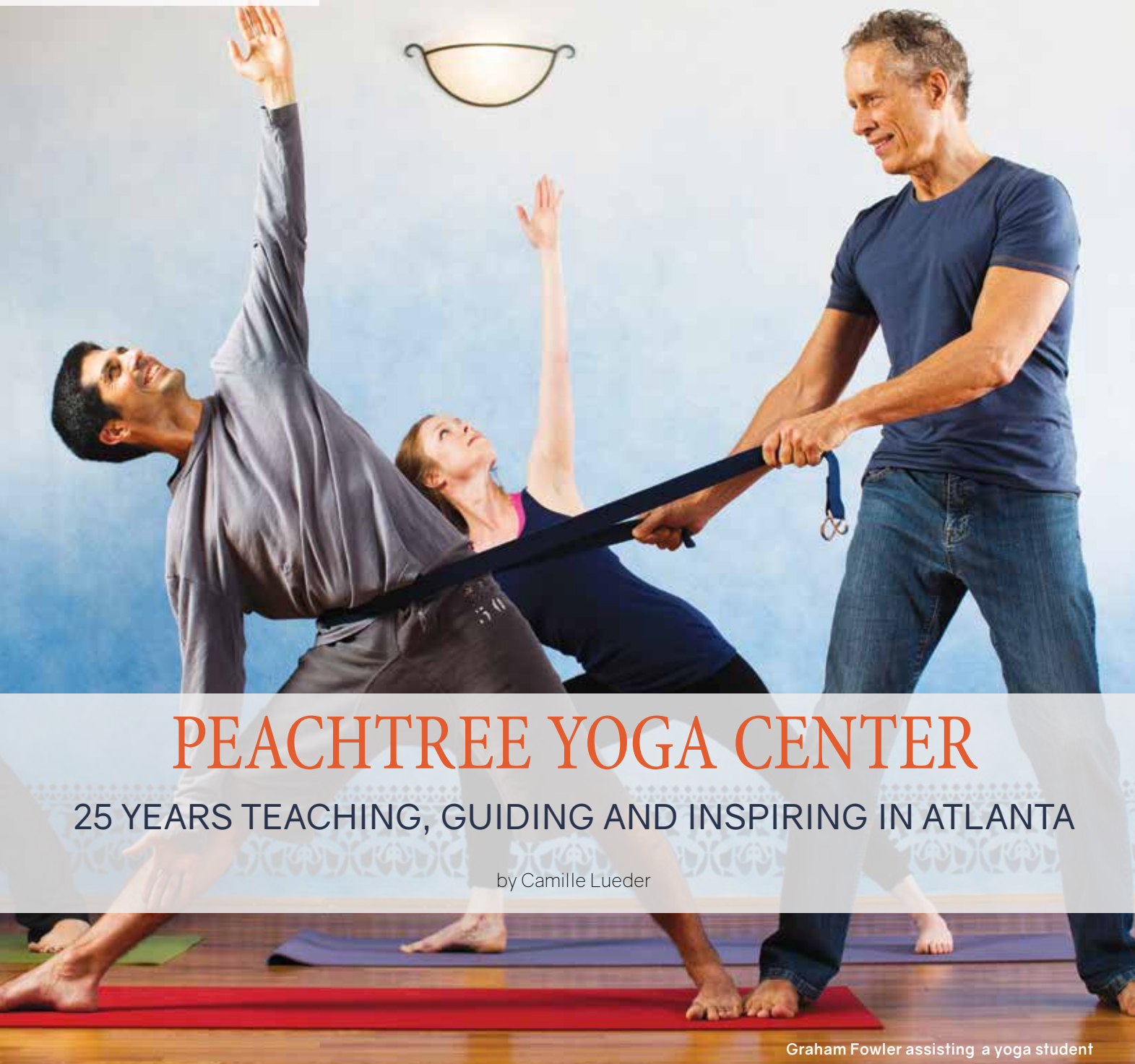
Natural Life aims to support Atlantans' wellness journeys by providing high-quality herbal supplements and other wellness products that offer alternative solutions to many common ailments such as anxiety, stress, pain and arthritis. For example, they offer hemp flower, CBD, D8-THC, extracts, oils, lotions, kava, kratom and mushrooms. All products are third-party tested by state-approved labs, helping to ensure consistent quality across products.

"We are excited about bringing consistent wellness products to the metro Atlanta area," says Jordan. "Customers have the opportunity to buy bulk, high-quality supplements, such as lion's mane, reishi, ashwagandha, spirulina, kratom, kava and more. Natural Life is a place where good health happens. We are highly trained problem-solvers, so no matter what illness or ailment brings you to a Natural Life store, we're ready to help."

"Our holistic, transparent approach to wellness comes from a deep understanding of how proper use of natural elements can help you conquer your wellness challenges, from muscle aches to anxiety to substance dependence," says Alford. "We carry a full spectrum of the most honest, helpful natural solutions on the market."

Natural Life Atlanta is located at 830 Glenwood Ave. SE, Ste. 520, in Atlanta. For more information, visit ShopNaturalLife.com/natural-life-store-atlanta-georgia, call 770-758-0989 or email nl1022@NaturalLifeFranchise.com.





PEACHTREE YOGA CENTER

25 YEARS TEACHING, GUIDING AND INSPIRING IN ATLANTA

by Camille Lueder

Graham Fowler assisting a yoga student

What started as a dream ended up as a great success. The founder of Peachtree Yoga Center (PYC), Graham Fowler, describes how he got motivated to quit his job and open a yoga studio.

“I had a dream one night that I was at a yoga workshop in Colorado. As I was walking across the parking lot, some thug grabbed me by the throat and said, ‘If you don’t start living the life you’re supposed to live, I’ll make it happen—and it won’t be pretty.’ I woke up in a cold sweat—and I knew what it was about,” says Fowler. He knew he’d have to listen to his heart if he wanted to be successful.

One of the oldest yoga studios in Atlanta, PYC is celebrating its 25th anniversary this month. The center opened in December 1998, following the opening of Kashi Atlanta Urban Yoga Ashram earlier in 1998 and the Pierce Yoga Program in 1973. Since its inception, PYC has had two owners—its founder, Graham Fowler, and its current owner, Ilona Moore. It has flourished in Atlanta by offering numerous classes, including a variety of yoga styles, meditation, pranayama, tai chi, qigong as well as a teacher training program.

Launching PYC

Soon after his vivid dream, Fowler had another strange interaction with his subconscious mind. He was alone in his office when he heard a voice that told him to shut down Fowler Communications, his business at that time. Emotionally, he was on board with the idea, but his logical side resisted. Then, his business began to flounder, and a competitor offered to buy the business. It was enough to fund the opening of PYC.

At the time—the late 90s—the yoga community in Atlanta was in its infancy. Fowler says that landlords didn’t even want to give him a lease because they didn’t think a yoga studio could survive for long. But, with the help of students and friends who offered to help him build a new studio, Fowler persevered.

“Twenty people came in and volunteered their time to help get the studio ready. It was a beautiful community kind of experience, which is what keeps me [at PYC]. I still teach a couple of classes a week and still help with teacher training. A major motivator for me to keep coming to Peachtree Yoga is all the friends that I have made over all those years. Really close, close friendships,” says Fowler.

Passing the Torch

Moore was looking for a career change after her son went off to college and felt that she needed to find out who she was. With a background as an English teacher, she felt confident she was being pulled to teach yoga and signed up for a 200-hour yoga teacher training class. Moore dove into the practice, and once she completed the teacher training in 2015, she began to teach.

“After about six months, I started to realize that I really enjoy teaching, even though I had never seen myself as a yoga teacher. It was what I wanted to do. So I quit my job and just devoted my life to teaching yoga,” says Moore.

By 2017, Fowler was training several people to take over the studio, and once Moore completed a 300-hour teacher training class, he felt he saw tremendous potential in her. He sent her to teach at retreats and conferences and began to show her the business side of the job to challenge her and build her confidence. Moore says that Fowler never wanted the transfer of ownership to be just a business transaction; rather, he wanted somebody who would carry out his mission for the studio.

In 2018, Moore purchased Peachtree Yoga from Fowler.



Ilona Moore

“The main quality he was looking for was having your soul in it, being dedicated to the yoga tradition, and carrying it forth into the community. He wanted the tradition of yoga to be continued the way that he envisioned it in a way that it was valued. He wanted to make sure that the new owner was established in both the mind and body principals of yoga and could not be torn by the fluctuations of the mind or of the world,” says Moore.

Moore says PYC is unique among Atlanta yoga studios because its teachings are not fitness-based; it offers spiritual teachings and body and mind practices. “It is about much more than the physical body; it is about the [mind’s] alignment with the physical body, and it is absolutely about being present in the physical body. At the same time, it is about connecting the physical body to the mind and the spirit. Meditation classes are not offered at all yoga studios. To us, it is a very sacred and valuable tradition,” says Moore.

Training the Next Generation

PYC has played a large role in the proliferation of yoga in Atlanta; approximately 1,000 yoga teachers have gotten their training through the studio’s teacher training program. Fowler has watched as interest in yoga has exploded in that time. More graduates of PYC’s teacher training program are, or have been owners of yoga studios in the Atlanta area than any other teacher training program, including Chandra Fowler’s Sanskrit Moon Yoga in Hapeville, and Sheila Ewers’ former studios in Johns Creek and Duluth. PYC’s graduates have also gone on to other states and countries to open their own yoga studios.

“When I was in Oregon,” says Fowler, “I took a yoga class, and it somehow felt very familiar to me. Afterward, I asked the teacher, whom I did not recognize, where she did her teacher training. She said, ‘Peachtree Yoga.’ It’s not unusual for that to happen.”

Fowler believes one of the reasons PYC’s graduates are so successful is because its students get opportunities to teach and practice their skills in front of the class.

Kim Hobbs had been looking for a career change, and after falling in love with yoga at PYC, she decided to enroll in the studio’s yoga teacher training courses. She completed the 200-hour course in 2018 and the 300-hour course in 2020.

“Peachtree really feels like a family environment . . . The people there feel open. I knew that I was getting a quality training that was authentic and that entrusted the practice and the teachings of yoga, which just hooked me right away,” says Hobbs. After graduating, she taught classes at other studios in Atlanta and then circled back to PYC, where she mentored students, taught classes and became the studio manager. Eventually, Hobbs purchased her own studio, Downtown Yoga Fargo, in Fargo, North Dakota.

“I think that if you love something, then it is in you, and you have no choice. You have to share it with other people,” says Fowler. 🌱



Camille Lueder is a senior at Berry College pursuing a BA in journalism. She is the issues and impact editor for the school’s Valkyrie magazine, and served as Natural Awakenings intern this past summer.

Holiday Parties for Every Diet

HOW TO PLAN AN INCLUSIVE AND SAFE FEAST

by Madiha Saeed, M.D.



Inclusivity and respect are at the heart of a memorable and enjoyable experience around the holiday table. “Nothing can spoil a wonderful holiday faster than when your family or friends are unable to enjoy your delicious food,” says Julie Matthews, a certified nutrition consultant and founder of Nourishing Hope. From allergies to religious restrictions and ethical choices, understanding and accommodating guests’ diverse dietary needs is the foundation of a successful gathering.

According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, more than 17 percent of the adult population is on a special diet on any given day. Food Allergy Research and Education reports that 85 million Americans have life-threatening food allergies and intolerances. Plant-based diets are also on the rise, with 5 to 6 percent of Americans identifying as vegetarians.

Preparation and Communication

With a little creativity and careful planning, the holiday table can offer a diverse and delicious spread that everyone will enjoy.

“Communication is an important first step when it comes to accommodating your guests’ dietary needs,” advises Yvonne Maffei, chef and creator of *MyHalalKitchen.com*. “Speak to them in advance to gain insight into their needs, giving yourself enough time to plan your menu and shop for any unique ingredients you might need.”

“To make sure that guests with specific dietary constraints don’t feel isolated or singled out at the table, try to replicate the same dishes for everyone. It’s also helpful for each dish to be labeled so guests don’t have to ask, particularly if it’s a large gathering or buffet style,” says Maffei.

“Prepare as much as possible ahead of time, if not all of it,” says Matthews. “It makes the environment feel more inviting, and you are able to focus on your guests. If other people are bringing dishes, ask them for the recipe ahead of time so that you can inform your guests.”

Food Allergies

Party hosts need to pay special attention to food allergies, intolerances and sensitivities, which can cause uncomfortable or even life-threatening reactions, including bloating, diarrhea, skin reactions, swelling, breathing difficulties and anaphylactic shock. To prevent cross-contamination and provide peace of mind for guests, designate allergy-friendly cooking utensils, cutting boards and dishes. Here are a few substitutions for the most common offenders.

DAIRY: For those with lactose intolerance or a dairy allergy, serve plant-based milks made with almonds, soy or oats. Replace butter with coconut oil, olive oil or plant-based butters.

EGGS: Substitute with applesauce, mashed bananas or commercial egg replacers, especially in baking. Tofu is a good alternative for scrambled eggs.

PEANUTS: Eliminate the potential for crossover allergies by avoiding other nuts that are processed in the same facilities as peanuts. Sunflower seed butter, tahini and almond butter are tasty and healthy alternatives in recipes.

TREE NUTS: Use sunflower, pumpkin and flax seeds instead of tree nuts. Coconut or dried fruits can add texture and flavor. Roasted chickpeas are a crunchy, nutritious alternative.

SEAFOOD: Lean meats, legumes, tofu, seitan, jackfruit and mushrooms can be used as alternatives to fish and shellfish in recipes. Vegan fish substitutes are also available.

GLUTEN: Use flours made with almonds, coconut, rice or buckwheat. Quinoa works well in salads or as a main dish. Cross-contamination is a concern; choose products that are labeled gluten-free. Use gluten-free flour to thicken gravies.

SOY: Coconut aminos or tamari can substitute for soy sauce. For recipes that call for tofu, seitan or jackfruit may be used.

SESAME: Sunflower or pumpkin seeds and almond butter can replace sesame seeds or tahini in recipes.

MUSTARD: Turmeric mixed with a little vinegar can be a suitable alternative in many recipes.

Restrictive Diets

Whether for health, weight loss, ethical or religious reasons, guests may be following a specific diet that omits ingredients. To respect and support their needs, here are a few recommended substitutions.

VEGAN: Offer recipes made with tofu, lentils and beans as protein sources, and nutritional yeast as a cheese substitute. Replace dairy with plant-based milks.

VEGETARIAN: Celebrate the wonders of the plant kingdom with hearty vegetable roasts and scrumptious vegan desserts.

PALEO: For this diet that focuses on whole foods, substitute regular flour with almond or coconut flour, and refined sugar with honey or pure maple syrup.

KETOGENIC: Common low-carb, high-fat alternatives include non-starchy vegetables, such as cauliflower, and sweeteners like stevia or erythritol.

Low-FODMAP: This diet for people with irritable bowel syndrome eliminates numerous irritants. Garlic-infused oil can be an alternative to fresh garlic, and lactose-free dairy or almond milk can replace regular milk.

HALAL: Omit alcohol and pork products. Use meat and poultry that is processed according to Islamic law. Replace alcohol-based flavor extracts with real vanilla beans.

KOSHER: Follow the dietary laws of kashrut based on the Torah and the oral tradition. 🥯

Madiha Saeed is a holistic, functional and integrative doctor in Naperville, Illinois, and director of education for Documenting Hope and KnoWEwell.



ANTI-INFLAMMATORY CHICKEN

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 tsp grated or finely diced fresh garlic
- 1 tsp grated or finely diced fresh ginger
- 2 lb chicken, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp cumin powder
- 1 small tomato, diced

Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add ginger and garlic and cook for one minute. Add the remaining ingredients except the tomatoes and cook for five to six minutes until the chicken is done. Add the tomatoes and cover, simmering until the liquid evaporates.

Recipe reprinted with permission of Madiha Saeed, M.D.




DATE COOKIES

YIELD: 25 COOKIES

- 3 cups almond flour
- ½ cup nut butter of choice
- ½ cup honey
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1½ cups baking dates, pitted and chopped

Preheat oven to 350° F. In a large mixing bowl, combine all the ingredients except the dates until smooth. Line a cookie sheet with unbleached parchment paper. Scoop about a tablespoon of batter and roll into a round ball. In the middle of the ball, press ½ teaspoon of dates into the center, rolling again to surround the dates with cookie dough. Place on a cookie sheet, flattening slightly. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove and let cool before serving.

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STIR-FRIED OKRA

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- 16-oz package of frozen, cut okra
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1½ medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- ¼ tsp finely diced fresh ginger
- 1 tsp chopped garlic clove
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- ¼ tsp turmeric powder
- ½ tsp paprika powder
- ¼ tsp cumin powder

Preheat oven to 400° F. Bake okra until lightly brown on unbleached parchment paper that has been sprayed with a bit of oil. Remove from heat and set aside.

In a medium, ceramic skillet sauté sliced onions in the oil until they start to become transparent. Add tomatoes and spices and mix. Incorporate the baked okra to the tomato-onion mixture and cook for 25 minutes on low heat.

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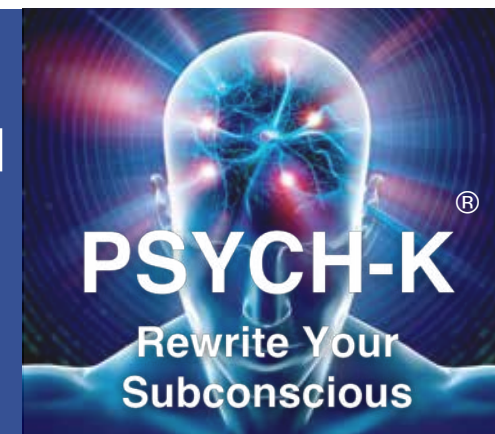
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THE GRACE OF GIVING AND RECEIVING

HEALING THROUGH GENEROSITY

by Carrie Jackson



In today's fast-paced world, where self-interest often takes precedence, the capacity for generosity can make a huge impact. Giving and supporting others fosters a more openhearted society, paving the way for greater connection and unity.

A study published in *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being* shows that gratitude can increase self-esteem and long-term well-being, leading to greater fulfillment in myriad areas of life. In this season of giving (and throughout the year), gratitude can help shift perspectives on everyday circumstances and remind us of what really matters. Stories of people supporting one another through their generosity can move and inspire us to make every day a little brighter.

Facilitating Health Care

Gratitude is often felt the most by those that have been helped through a loss or trauma. When her young adult son was afflicted with devastating ulcerative colitis, Phyllis Johnson remembers feeling desperate and frustrated by traditional medicine practitioners unable to help. "Watching a loved one suffer is the most helpless and isolating feeling," she recalls. Her son finally found relief after introducing complementary and integrative therapies, and Johnson set out to help others that were not so fortunate.

"If I didn't have the cash, I don't know what we would have done," Johnson remarks, acknowledging her privilege. In 2013, she founded *eFundYourHealth.org*, a South Carolina-based nonprofit, to encourage and support community giving when conventional health care and health insurance are inadequate. "We pull from a team of passionate experts in the integrative and alternative health community who want to change the world," she explains.



Patients apply for grants for the care they need that is not covered by insurance. They are required to raise a minimum of \$500 on their own, and *eFundYourHealth.org* connects with donors to meet the rest. According to Johnson, this model of people helping each other benefits everyone, including donors, patients and healthcare providers. "The patients are able to receive the often essential care they need and deserve to heal, and the donors and practitioners are making a vital difference in someone else's life. The sense of gratitude connects everyone and heightens the healing process," she says.

Johnson identifies with the desperation of family members that would do anything to help their loved ones and says that serving others is the only option for her. "When someone you care about is suffering, not being able to make them better is excruciating. Once you've been through a traumatic experience, it builds a fire within you. Turning that into empowerment becomes part of your calling, and you are driven to ensure that others don't have to go through the same thing," she asserts.

Feeding the Hungry

Generosity is often shared by the very people that have been on the receiving end. For Frieda Holly, experiencing homelessness changed her perspective and ignited a desire to help others. More than three decades ago, the Chicago resident was forced to move her family out of their apartment when her youngest son tested positive for lead poisoning. Unable to find housing on such short notice, Holly lived for six

months with her children in a nearby shelter and was transformed by the experience.

"It was not what I expected," she remembers. "They treated us with extreme kindness, and I had never felt so loved and taken care of, especially in such a down moment. When we moved out, I wanted to share that feeling and generosity with others."

Holly began collecting food from nearby pantries and making soup for the community out of her new home. What started as providing a meal to a few people quickly grew into a bustling soup kitchen. Today, Frieda's Place has been a cornerstone in the community for 35 years. "A soup kitchen is different from a pantry, because a warm meal touches people's heart and soul. I put a little love into every meal and make my guests feel special," she muses. Some of her guests are regulars, others come by once or twice, and everyone is welcome at her table.

While Holly runs the kitchen on her own, she is never alone. "Volunteers from the community stop by all the time to help out. Every day that we're open, people drop off clothing, toiletries and other essential items," she says. Much of the food is donated from nonprofits, such as the Chicago Greater Food Depository, and businesses, such as Trader Joe's, and Holly makes do with whatever she's given.

"Most days, I wake up not knowing what I'm serving that day, but it always works out, and my guests are always grateful for a hot meal," says Holly. "People come to Frieda's Place for more than just the food; they are craving emotional attention and connection. If I can give them more love or even just listen, it's a spark in their day that may have ripple effects."

Leveraging Art for Positive Outcome

Ruth Westreich never thought she would become a philanthropist. The California native grew up in poverty as a young caregiver for her ill mother. When a generous

employer from a teenage job funded her college tuition, she was inspired to pay it forward. Westreich set out to help anyone she could by sharing her time, attention and financial resources.

A passion for the arts set the groundwork for The Westreich Foundation, primarily funded by her affluent husband, who saw how impactful her work could be with the right support. Now in its 20th year, the organization funds programs and individuals at the intersection of art and healing, focusing on the welfare and education of youth, restorative farming and organic agriculture, scientific research and independent investigative journalism.

"Art, science and intergenerational dialogue are inextricably linked, and harnessing them helps move beyond the societal and political entanglements that interfere with overall health," Westreich explains. "We fund a lot of early adopters with big ideas that need investigating. We are especially interested in highlighting the dangers that need to be exposed in things

like PFAS [per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances] and other chemicals that are harmful to the overall health of the planet." The Westreich Foundation helped fund the nonprofits, scientific research and journalists that eventually uncovered the dangers of Monsanto's weedkiller RoundUp.

A painter herself, Westreich is deeply moved by the power of the arts in healing, and the foundation combines thought-provoking art, activism and philanthropy to engage and unite people. "By supporting and elevating these passionate groups, we are encouraged that their work will result in an exponential impact that can be scaled for dramatic changes in human and planetary health," she asserts. "Gratitude emanates between our donors and our recipients. They are incredibly grateful for the support, and I am equally grateful to be able to give. More than the money, it's the relationships that make us all feel the richest. I believe in the law of attraction and know in my heart that the more you give, the more you get back."

Spreading Holistic Hope and Gratitude

When Suzan Walter co-founded the American Holistic Health Association (AHHA), her knowledge and understanding of holistic health was limited. The businesswoman and parent of two children had no intention of entering the health world, but her life changed course when a close friend was diagnosed with cancer and given two weeks to live.

"During my grief, I read Bernie Siegel's book *Love, Medicine & Miracles* and learned about terminally ill patients who took control of their illnesses and extended their lives beyond medical predictions," she recalls, adding that her friend with cancer came to believe that he would recover. He accepted treatment and lived another two months. According to Walter, when he stopped believing, the treatments stopped working, and he died.

Seeing firsthand the power that positivity could have in healing, Walter committed to learning more about holistic wellness and eventually founded AHHA, a free, online clearinghouse of resources and articles to support active self-care and healthy lifestyle changes.

"We encourage the powerful, whole-person approach to health care that integrates physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. We are connecting and empowering holistic warriors with the resources to help them heal and a community to help support them," Walter explains. "I am humbled and blessed that by being willing to serve, these opportunities to leave the world a little better have emerged. My friend was asked at the end of his life if there was any meaning he could take away from his suffering, to which he responded, 'It allowed me to let others in and receive their love.' Gratitude enabled him to find a gift, even under the most dire circumstances, and that is a beautiful lesson."

In this hectic season, slowing down and helping others can make a world of difference. By nurturing a culture of giving, we can help create a grateful, united community that reflects the values we want to instill. 🌱

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

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HEALING WAYS

EXPLORING INTERMITTENT FASTING

TIPS AND BENEFITS FOR IMPROVED HEALTH

by Steven Masley, M.D., FAHA, FACN, CNS



Fasting has long played a role in major religions, but we did not begin to understand it from a scientific standpoint until Yoshinori Ohsumi, a Japanese cell biologist, discovered how cells recycle and renew themselves during fasting, for which he was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2016. Since then, multiple clinical trials have proven the health benefits of intermittent fasting (IF).

How Intermittent Fasting Works

IF influences the body's blood sugar control, energy production, gut bacteria load and hormone levels. When abstaining from food for a period of time, the body begins to rely on fat stores for cellular fuel.

This shift in energy metabolism also allows for enhanced autophagy, a process that removes damaged cellular components and promotes cellular renewal and repair.

Regimen Types

- **TIME-RESTRICTED FEEDING (TRF)** involves limiting the daily eating window to a specific period, typically eight to 10 hours, followed by a fasting period of 14 to 16 hours. This regimen can be followed daily or limited to a few days per week.
- **ALTERNATE-DAY FASTING** involves alternating between days of normal caloric intake and days of severe calorie restriction.

- **5:2 DIET** entails consuming a normal diet for five days and restricting calorie intake to 500 to 600 calories on two non-consecutive days.
- **THE WARRIOR DIET** involves fasting for 20 hours followed by a four-hour eating window, typically in the evening.

Selecting a Regimen

All forms of IF have similar health benefits. Each approach has its own merits, and it is crucial to choose the one that aligns with personal goals, lifestyle, fasting tolerance and overall well-being. Before adopting an IF routine, it is important to consult with a healthcare professional.

The easiest approach for many people is TRF, where eating stops at 9 p.m., breakfast is limited to coffee or tea without sugar or milk and eating resumes at noon. TRF has been shown to have similar benefits if followed every day or even just three days per week.

Fasting for a minimum of 12 hours provides some benefits, but a fasting period of 15 hours or more often yields greater benefits. The best fasting hours depend on an individual's work schedule and goals. Some individuals may find it more convenient to begin their fast in the evening and skip breakfast, while others prefer to omit dinner and have an early lunch, thus extending their overnight fast. The most critical factor is finding a pattern that can be maintained consistently.

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Benefits of Intermittent Fasting

Intermittent fasting has been associated with numerous health benefits, including enhanced cognitive performance, weight loss, reduced cardiovascular risk factors and better blood sugar control.

A study published in *Cell Metabolism* suggests that IF might correct circadian rhythm disruptions, which are believed to play a role in the progression of Alzheimer's disease. The researchers found that IF improves memory and reduces the accumulation of fibrous amyloid proteins in the brain. Other studies have also found that IF enhances memory, attention, brain processing speed and cognitive function.

Multiple randomized clinical trials have shown that intermittent fasting is effective for modest weight loss, varying from five to 15 pounds, as well as reductions in waist circumference, body mass index and cardiometabolic risk factors.

IF is a safe dietary option to improve several markers of cardiometabolic health. A meta-analysis of 130 randomized clinical trials of subjects following all forms of IF showed improvements in insulin sensitivity, plus improvements in weight, cholesterol profiles, fasting blood sugar levels and blood pressure control. These findings suggest that IF is effective in helping to prevent heart disease.

An article in the *Journal of Restorative Medicine* highlighted the potential


benefits of IF in preventing and treating cancer, although more research is needed. The authors noted that IF can promote recycling of cells, enhance DNA repair in normal cells, improve cell regeneration in tissues and protect against the toxic effects of chemotherapy.

Safety and Other Considerations

Intermittent fasting is generally considered safe for most healthy individuals. However, young children, pregnant or breastfeeding women, and individuals with epilepsy, a history of eating disorders and those taking medications that can lower blood sugar levels should exercise caution or avoid fasting altogether.

While intermittent fasting can offer numerous benefits, some individuals may experience increased hunger and food cravings, poor sleep quality, an excessive drop in blood sugar levels in individuals prone to hypoglycemia and adverse effects on hormonal balance, especially for women that are menstruating. 🍌

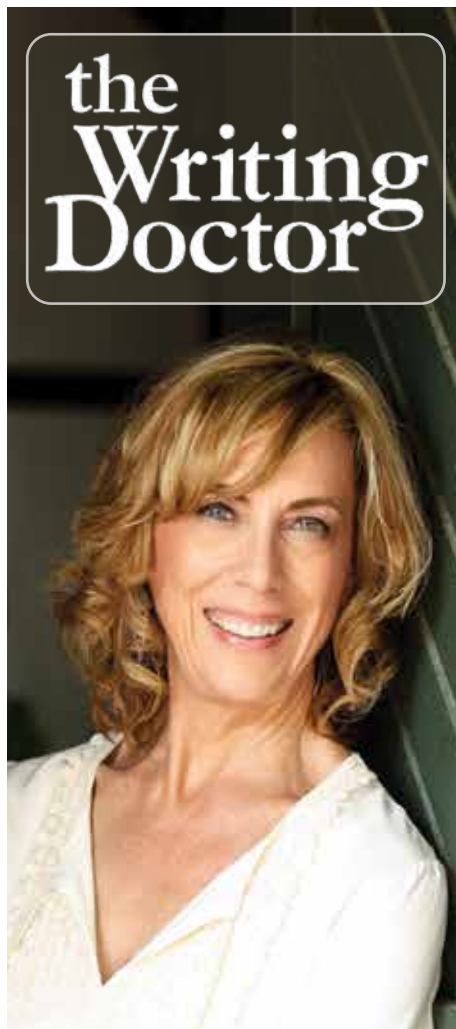
Steven Masley is a physician, nutritionist, trained chef, clinical professor at the University of South Florida and creator of health programs for public television. He is the author of The 30-Day Heart Tune-Up. Learn more at DrMasley.com.



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FIT BODY

Taking Charge of the Fitness Journey

HOW TO FIND MOTIVATION IN 2024

by Cristina Parker, DPT



One of the most common New Year's resolutions involves improving health, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. A great way to stay motivated and fulfilled in 2024 is to combine a personal goal for better health with the larger purpose of nourishing our planet and giving back to the community.

Equipment and Gear

When planning a fitness routine, consider the sustainability and carbon footprint of the equipment and gear. "There are several greener initiatives you can take, such as utilizing power-generating exercise equipment or reducing paper and packaging waste through purchasing fewer items," advises Jamie Temple, a healthcare customer-success executive. Many companies are utilizing recycled materials for fitness equipment, such as the 100-percent recycled cork yoga mats by 42 Birds or Iron Company's line of green fitness equipment, including barbells, medicine balls and weight storage systems made of recycled materials.

Purchase exercise clothes from brands that offer clothing made with fair trade and collection practices that include natural and recycled fabrics. Karen Thomas, a doctor of physical therapy and founder of Venture Out Wellness, in Virginia, observes, "Now more than ever in fashion, comfort is being merged with sustainable, high-performance fabrics that offer you a great opportunity to be kind to Planet Earth and your body simultaneously."

Winter Workouts

Getting exercise outdoors may require more thought during the winter months. According to the American Heart Association, colder weather constricts the blood vessels, which can decrease blood flow and oxygen. Monitoring symptoms such as shortness of breath, chest pain and dizziness is important during any exercise, but heightened for those exercising outdoors in the cold.

Factors such as the weather, the temperature, lack of daylight and chaotic holiday schedules can interfere with the goal of creating a realistic, attainable outdoor workout. Hiking, walking and cycling can still be performed outside in dry conditions with the appropriate clothing, or indoors using an elliptical, treadmill or recumbent bike.

Stressing the need for safety when exercising outdoors in the winter, Temple says, "Avoid icy roads and sidewalks; stretch or walk in place to warm up first; protect your eyes and ears; and always wear non-slip shoes." Alternatively, snow shoeing, cross-country skiing and ice skating can be fun ways to take advantage of the winter and get moving while trying something new.

Another consideration when exercising in weather extremes is staying hydrated. Cold weather studies at the University of New Hampshire show an increased risk for dehydration because people don't feel as thirsty when the weather is cold. Thomas recommends going green while hydrating by eliminating single-use water bottles in favor of a reusable, BPA-free water bottle.

TheRoundup.org, an organization dedicated to promoting environmental awareness and sustainability, reports, "Every year, 50 billion single-use water bottles are sold in the U.S., the vast majority of which either end up in landfills or add to the 5.25 trillion items of plastic waste already in our oceans."

Virtual fitness classes offer a great way to stay active on a cold, snowy day by combining the cozy convenience of in-home exertion with the guidance of trained professionals. Online platforms, such as YouTube, stream affordable and free sessions in a wide variety of modalities, from low-intensity options like yoga to high-intensity interval training. Some large health insurance companies collaborate with fitness providers to facilitate accessibility. One example is United-Healthcare, which offers Apple Fitness+ subscriptions to fully insured members.

Community Support

Getting involved in community initiatives is a wonderful way to seek out support and motivation, connect with

likeminded individuals and build a health-conscious community. Stay active during the winter while giving back. Many organizations host activities such as volunteering at the local food bank or home meal delivery programs.

Thomas suggests establishing a fitness community to motivate each other and to find ways to reduce the group's carbon footprint. To cut emissions, walk together or use walking as a warmup and cool down to and from a workout, take mass transit or carpool—with bonus points if the group has access to a hybrid or electric vehicle.

We don't have to be among the 80 percent of Americans that fail to achieve their New Year's resolution. Feel well and feel good about achieving better health in the new year. 🏃‍♀️

Cristina Parker, a researcher, health content writer, educator and clinician specializing in neurologic disorders, limb-loss rehabilitation and adaptive sports techniques, holds a doctorate in physical therapy.

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The Art of Letting Go

YOGA'S ROLE IN RELEASING ATTACHMENTS

by Lana Kravtsova



In our fast-paced modern society—burdened with technology, deadlines and unending to-do lists—ancient practices of mindfulness have reemerged as a refuge. However, as we strive for presence, we often find that our minds are entangled in various attachments—material, emotional or spiritual.

“Attachment” refers to the deep-seated habit of seeking happiness in transient things, leading to a cycle of craving and aversion. We become attached to people and places, titles and possessions. We also cling to our past traumas and experiences. Most importantly, we hold onto our identities and past versions of ourselves, even when we desperately want to grow and change. Transformation and growth become challenging when we carry so many attachments within our psyches.

As we navigate the waves of change that life offers, yoga serves as both an anchor and a sail, grounding us in awareness while propelling us toward growth. It gives us the mental clarity to recognize what must be let go and the emotional strength to actually do it.

Freeing One's Higher Purpose

What if we could relinquish our attachments through a practice that has stood the test of time?

Yoga, a spiritual and physical discipline originating over 5,000 years ago, is designed for just that. While modern Western interpretations often focus on *asanas*, or physical postures, of yoga, in its entirety, yoga is a holistic lifestyle that teaches the art of letting go.

Lisa Harmon, a yoga teacher and spiritual guide, explains, “Letting go allows us to live more fully, and for practitioners of

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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, Dun-

woody. Also at Liff Alpharetta, 501 S Main St, Ste 101, Alpharetta. LiffYogaStudio.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. 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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yoga, this is the ultimate aim. Through yoga, we learn to recognize and release attachments that are inconsistent with our higher purpose.”

“It’s a profound experience—realizing that letting go is not a loss but a gain, a return to your authentic self,” shares Janet Matthews, a longtime yoga practitioner.

When we let go of past versions of ourselves, we don’t lose our essence; we allow it to shine brighter. Yoga enables this shedding of old skins, inviting us to step into newer, fuller versions of ourselves.

“The only constant is change,” states Dr. Linda Green, a psychologist and yoga therapist. “Yoga helps us internalize this fundamental truth, making it easier to let go of outdated self-concepts.”

The Role of the Breath

The role of breathing in yoga is not just physiological; it serves as a vital link between the mind and body. Controlled breathing practices, or *pranayama*, help practitioners achieve mental clarity and emotional calm. A secondary analysis of multiple studies in

the *International Journal of Yoga Therapy* suggests that pranayama can significantly reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, aiding the process of letting go.

“As you deepen your breath, you deepen your awareness. Detaching from something requires first being fully aware of it,” says Harmon. Deepening your awareness is key to noticing and identifying emotions, thoughts and behaviors that don’t serve you anymore.

“Breathing is like a soft breeze that clears the fog,” says yoga instructor Sarah Evans. “With every conscious inhalation and exhalation, you’re not just enriching your body with oxygen; you’re also clarifying your sense of self.”

The Role of Asanas

Some yoga postures are specifically designed to target emotional blockages stored in the body, like the hips or heart area. These asanas can serve as catalysts for releasing past traumas and stress. For example, a deep hip opener, pigeon pose, is popular for eliciting emotional release.

“In my 20 years of practice, pigeon pose has always been the go-to asana for emotional healing,” says Evans. “People often hold back tears when they first experience the intensity of this pose.”

Child’s pose is another profound asana for emotional release. By folding ourselves into a fetal position, we invoke the primal sense of safety and nurturing. This protective posture can unearth vulnerable emotions, offering an opportunity to confront and release them.

“Child’s pose brings us back to a womb-like state of safety,” explains Dr. Melanie Johnson, a psychologist and yoga therapist. “For those dealing with anxiety or past traumas, this pose can facilitate a gentle letting go.”

Through these asanas, we are given a physical and psychological space to meet, acknowledge, and ultimately let go of our old identities.

The Role of Meditation

Through practices like mindfulness meditation, we become better at observing our thoughts and emotions without judgment. This increased self-awareness enables us to recognize aspects of ourselves that are transient, facilitating the process of letting go.

Meditation techniques that involve visualization or mantras can be potent tools for self-transformation. By focusing on an image or sound that resonates with the version of ourselves we aspire to be, we’re more readily able to release past versions that hinder our growth.

“Mantra meditation is particularly powerful,” notes Green. “Sound frequencies can alter brain waves, making it easier for us to access and reform deep-seated beliefs about ourselves.”

The art of letting go, as offered by yoga, isn’t merely an ancient teaching; it’s a relevant, living practice inviting us to more fully embrace life in its most beautiful and most challenging moments. 🌱



Lana Kravtsova is a coach and a creator of personal development programs. Her exploration into conscious life change led her to discover yoga as a transformative tool. She develops practices for conscious growth at Aum Center for Wellness, Alpharetta.

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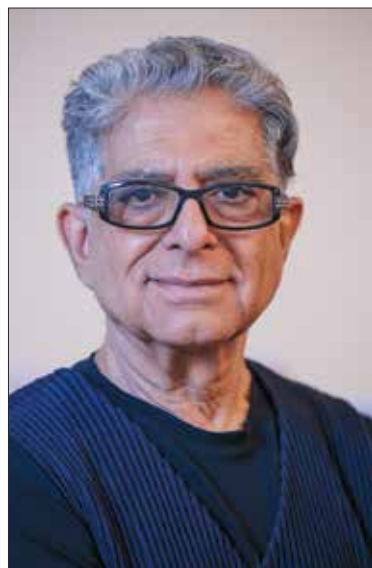
WISE WORDS

Deepak Chopra

ON THE QUANTUM BODY AND ACHIEVING PEACE

by Kimberly Whittle

Deepak Chopra, M.D., is a pioneer in the field of mind-body medicine and one of the most inspiring philosophers of our time. He is the founder of The Chopra Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to research on well-being and humanitarianism, and Chopra Global, a health company at the intersection of science and spirituality. Chopra also is a clinical professor of family medicine and public health at the University of California San Diego and serves as a senior scientist with Gallup, Inc. He has authored more than 90 books translated into more than 43 languages, including numerous bestsellers. Chopra collaborated with Jack Tuszynski, Ph.D., a physicist, and Brian Fertig, M.D., an endocrinologist, on his latest book, *Quantum Body: The New Science of Living a Longer, Healthier, More Vital Life*.



What inspired you to write this book?

It is a celebration of the most surprising turn in my life. When I was practicing medicine at an exhaustive, hectic pace more than 30 years ago, I started meditating and had a life-changing breakthrough vision of a human body shimmering as a visual image—the quantum mechanical body. I became a writer, and my book, *Quantum Healing*, gave me my first boost. But at the time, the topic of meditation was considered fringe. Thirty-seven years later, the fringe has moved to the center, and new studies are overturning long-held mainstream medical beliefs. Hence, the time seemed right to take a second bite of the apple.

What do you mean by the quantum body?

Our physical body is an activity in consciousness. You experience your body through the five senses. Physical reality is experienced

in the field of awareness that is outside of our body, and the field of awareness inside our body is called the interoceptive awareness. Meditation helps us transcend our physical and mental body and takes us to the source of all experience, including the experience of mind and body. Pure consciousness is the source of mind-body and the universe. The causal body is the source of every experience we have; it is your soul and the same thing as your quantum body. Quantum body exists to bring about all the healing needed at every level.

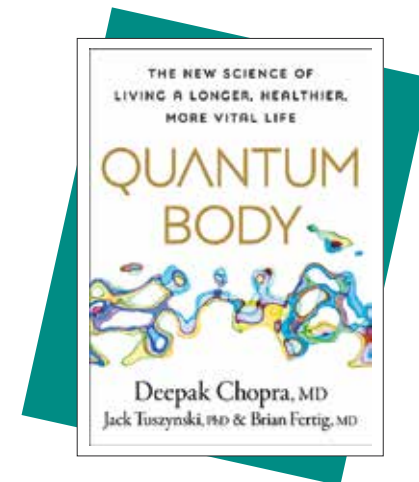
How can we modulate our epigenetic activity and restore homeostasis to reduce stress and inflammation?

Mind and body are inseparably one. By increasing our awareness of bodily processes through interoception, we can self-regulate our body. We can do this through meditation, practicing vagal breathing and vagal activation, doing yoga and through movement. The greatest gift of self-awareness is to live with love, truth, beauty and bliss as your goal. Ultimate well-being requires no less.

Why is the quantum model for well-being important, and how do you plan to reach a critical mass of participants?

Today, everyone is taking sides and is in conflict because they don't agree with the perspective of others. As long as you engage in recycling trauma, the trauma leads to inflammation and disease in the body and in mental disorders. We have an inflamed world and will never solve this problem by any one side becoming the victor, because the intergenerational trauma will last for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

This is the history of humanity since we were hunters and gatherers. Now the same tribal mindset spells extinction. We are sleepwalking to extinction unless we wake up. There is no hope for climate change, social and economic justice, racism, prejudice, health or joy. We need to cool down the world's inflammation by starting with



ourselves and creating an ecosystem where we can bring peace to our own families, social environment, ecosystem of relationships and communities; then we can reach a critical mass. A lot of people do agree that consciousness is a field and that we can aspire to a more peaceful, just, sustainable, healthier and joyful world.

The Chopra Foundation has launched two programs. The Certification in the Soul of Leadership is about how you become a spiritual leader, which I have taught at Kellogg [School of Management at Northwestern University] and Columbia [University] and given talks about at Harvard [University]. We received a grant to offer it free of charge. The other certification, Becoming a Peace as the Way Facilitator, is only \$9.99. If you can't afford it, we give it for free. If you focus on these two things and get the critical mass of people out there, the change we want to see in the world will happen.

That you exist should be a perpetual surprise, and you should be full of gratitude for existence itself. That is the most holy and sacred experience that we can have. What I am grateful for is that I exist. 🙏

Certification courses can be found at cfi.ChopraFoundation.org. To join the *Quantum Body* book discussion group, visit ChopraQuantumBodyDiscussion.KnoWEwell.com.

Kimberly Whittle is the founder and CEO of *KnoWEwell, P.B.C.* and the CEO of *Natural Awakenings Publishing Corporation*.

Messages from MAITREYA

The World Teacher

My Teaching is simple.
Know, then, the joys
of Brotherhood.

The principle of Sharing
will lead you thereto.

Commit yourselves to
this cause and know
the joy of Service.

Commit yourselves to
this work and realise
your potential.

Make known by all
means your stand for
Justice and Peace, and
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Our Spiritual Leaders Speak

Occasionally, when times get difficult, we have called upon some of our spiritual leaders in the Atlanta area to share their thoughts with us. With the war in Ukraine well into its second year showing no sign of abating, and with the Middle East exploding in unmitigated violence, we once again turn to those whose jobs are all about love and compassion. All wars divide, but the Mideast conflagration has surprised me in how it is dividing America. I feel like a naive, frustrated child, always quoting Rodney King: “Can we all get along?”

Although President John Kennedy was not a spiritual leader, we begin with his words, which always remain close to mind. —*Publisher*

“And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s future. And we are all mortal.”

~ *President John F. Kennedy*



President John F. Kennedy

“There is no future in hatred—only futile spasms of anger and pain that end in despair. May we be blessed to learn from those who have followed that path and come to destruction. History is littered with their bones, paved with their ashes.

May we be blessed to see the Divine Person—the soul—in every person, and look on them accordingly, even when they give us reason for outrage.

~ *Brother Shankara, Vedanta Center of Atlanta*

“We pray that the people who die will find a good rebirth and that world leaders gain wisdom. We pray that those who are suffering receive blessings from the Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—and are swiftly released from their suffering. It is clear that without compassion and wisdom, there is no possibility of being released from this kind of tragedy. We should learn from this how Dharma [the Buddha’s teachings] is the truth. Without inner peace, outer peace or world peace is impossible.

~ *Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, New Kadampa Tradition-International Kadampa Buddhist Union. Spoken after the events of 9/11.*



Geshe Kelsang Gyatso

“The holiday season is here, but so much news seems bleak. Some of us feel edgy, not as festive or as serene as we’d like. In our contemplative moments, perhaps we’ve noticed an inner turmoil, a desire to do something, anything, to foster peace. Maybe we’ve even looked into the sky and prayed for peace on Earth, hoping it will appear suddenly, like a rainbow.

But hope is fleeting when we look into the world and wish for peace. Even when conflicts are resolved in one place, tempers can flare somewhere else. So, Jesus invites us to find another way to peace. He knows that worldly peace alone never satisfies and says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives” (John 14:27). He reminds us that his peace can be ours, too, because it’s already here, within us, in what we think, say and do. In the encouragement that overrides criticism. In the meals served at the soup kitchen. In the comfort to a grieving widow.

At Unity Atlanta Church, we often sing: “Let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with me.” When we begin with peace, we can be grounded in equanimity, tranquil in the midst of chaos. And while we have little control over others, we know that peace can prevail because it begins with us. In this season of birth and light, may our peace be the greatest gift we give.

~ *Rev. Jenn Sacks, Unity Atlanta*



Rev. Jennifer Sacks

“If we believe in the concept of a moral test, I think the primary test is this: Can we open our hearts to the suffering, to the grieving, of all people? If our primary experience of this moment is horror and mourning for Jewish children, can we expand the borders of our wounded hearts to grieve for the besieged and traumatized civilians in Gaza? And if our primary experience of this moment is horror and mourning for Palestinian children, can we expand the borders of our wounded hearts to hold the trauma and terror Israelis are experiencing?

“Can we feel the grief and brokenness of so much death? The lines are getting drawn more sharply, the divisions felt more



Rabbi Michael Rothbaum

deeply. There is heartache there, there and here. I am convinced, now more than ever, that the only way we get out of this nightmare is to expand our sphere of compassion to include all human life. If you are automatically ready to dismiss this as a platitude, I invite you to pause. Take a breath. Breathe again.

The Torah’s teaching that all human life is imbued with God’s sacred presence sounds like a cliché. It isn’t. It is a radical, root truth. I am not a pacifist. War is sometimes necessary. But it is always an indictment against us. All of our leaders have failed us. We haven’t demanded better from them. So we must remind them and ourselves of what we know is true. We can’t bomb our way to serenity. We will have to find paths of compassion, dialogue and mutual dignity. It is our only hope. It is also the only holy way.

~ *Rabbi Michael Rothbaum, Congregation Bet Haverim*



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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 website for details.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4

Holiday Soul Salons – Dec 4 & 18. 7:30-9pm. Embrace the holiday spirit with Comedian and Spiritual Speaker Rachel LaForce, who wants to give you a reason to receive. This salon-style gathering will feature intuitive insights from Rachel, complemented by group oracle card readings by Chef and Reiki Master David Stample. \$25/event.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

Ann Hite Book Signing: Haints of Black Mountain – 3-5pm. Ann Hite takes her readers back to Black Mountain with this haunted short story collection. This telling introduces spirits that intervene in the spookiest of ways. Afterwards, Meet the Witches of Moon Rock Mountain, 5:30-7pm. Free.

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.

Voice of Clarity Blue Women's Circle – 4-9pm. Engage in various practices specifically designed to balance and heal the throat chakra: dance, singing and chanting, meditation and journaling, expressive art and body-oriented practices. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3

First Sunday of Advent Service – 11am-12pm. Featured message: "Faith Keeps Watch." In-person and virtually by livestream.

Youth Sunday School held at 11am for ages 5-18. Childcare for infants through age 4 also available 10am-12:30pm. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

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, DECEMBER 6

Remote Reiki Healing – 2:30-3:15pm. 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.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

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.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

Coffee House: Celebrating the Holidays – 7-9:30pm. Join the festivities as we celebrate Christmas and other spiritual and cultural holidays in Dec. We'll share beloved traditions, music and storytelling. Potluck meal. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

Vision Board – 4-8pm. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

Second Sunday of Advent Service – 11am-12pm. Featured message: "Peace Provides Security." In-person and virtually by livestream. Youth Sunday School held at 11am for ages 5-18. Childcare for infants through age 4 also available 10am-12:30pm. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Enchanted Woodland Wonders – 12-4pm. Includes live reindeer, seasonal festivities, partner booths, crafts, lawn games and more. Included with General Admission, free/members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChattNatureCenter.org.

2,000 Years of Christmas – 12:30-2pm. Hang on tight for a whirlwind ride with Rev Larry Bergmann as he takes you through 2,000 years of Christmas history and tradition. Explore the holiday from multiple perspectives: sacred and secular, origins, meanings and more. Includes a 45-min DVD from The History Channel, delving into the history and lore behind the Christmas traditions. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

New Moon Blue Lotus + Cacao Ceremony – 7pm. A guided journey of astrology, meditation, breathwork, intention-setting, blue lotus-infused ceremonial cacao, sharing, medicine songs, plus an extended Sound Bath feat. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

Third Sunday of Advent Service – 11am-12pm. Featured message: "Love Brings Comfort" and Remembrance Sunday with Flower Wreath Ceremony. In-person and virtually by livestream. Youth Sunday School held at 11am for ages 5-18. Childcare for infants through age 4 also available 10am-12:30pm. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

Remote Healing to Get Energetically Prepped for 2024 – 2:30-3:15pm. Jamie and her team will work with your guides to help cut and remove energy threads and cords to prep you for the new year. The healing itself will take place for 33 mins and there will be a 15-min discussion and sharing afterward. \$20. Register: JamieButlerMedium.com.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21

Winter Solstice Service – 7-8pm. Sound Healing and Yuletide Celebration with Lighting of Joy Advent Candle. In-person only. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve Sunday Morning Service – 11am-12pm. Featured message: "Christmas Wishes Come True." In-person and virtually by livestream. Youth are invited to join their parents in this Family Sunday Service. Childcare for infants through age 4 also available 10am-12:30pm. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

Burning Bowl Sunday Morning Service – 11am-12pm. Come release what needs to be released, into the burning bowl and start the New Year afresh. Bring letters to God, of what you want to affirm for next year, in a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be mailed back to you next Dec. Youth are invited to join their parents in this Family Sunday Service. Childcare for infants through age 4 also available 10am-12:30pm. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

PLAN AHEAD

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7

White Stone Ceremony Sunday Morning Service – 11am-12pm. Take this opportunity to center into yourself and see who you truly are. In-person and virtually by livestream. Youth Sunday School held at 11am for ages 5-18. Childcare for infants through age 4 also available 10am-12:30pm. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

Hypnotherapy Certification Begins – 9am-5pm. Boost your practice or start anew! Unlock the power of mind with a 100-hr NGH Accredited Certificate. Learn theory, techniques and ethical practices. We ensure graduates are able to help clients overcome challenges and grow. Becky: 770-778-2051; Sharon: 678-754-7703. Tinyurl.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. North-west 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/yjzutj4f.

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 months 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 Kelsang Dechok. 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

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.

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.

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 Pranich Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: AtlPranichHealing.com.

Beyond Limits Weekly Conscious Dance – 7:45-9:45pm. With Marisa Skolky. An intentional dance activated by vocal toning and singing during an hour and a half dance through our emotions, lifecycle, archetypes and levels of consciousness. Followed by a singing bowl meditation, a closing circle and community tea time. \$20. Beyond Limits Expressive Arts Therapy LLC, 4528 King Springs Rd SE, Smyrna. 770-235-3183. MarisaSkolky.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.

Saturdays

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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Spiraling to Love

by Dena Martin

Tirachard Kumiamom/pexels.com

On an evening in November 2018, I found myself numbly drawing small spirals with a pen across a sheet of white paper. It was my way of processing the news I'd just heard that my father had taken his life.

I love and accept myself exactly as I am. This is the single sentence that could have saved my father's life. No one else could tell him so and make him believe it.

The moment marked the start of a new path I would take to love myself more deeply. For most of my life, I felt like I was missing something. I had expectations about what should or shouldn't happen, and they kept me from enjoying the moment. My new path involved letting go of a life and habits I adopted when I believed happiness could be found in things outside of myself, such as a lucrative career, a marriage, a large home, alcohol and even caffeine. The more I focused on loving myself, the less I needed these things. Releasing them happened slowly over time in a way that was best for my soul.

I began by spending more time than ever in stillness. I learned my life moves as a spiral—there's no true beginning or end. *What* I experience matters less than *how* I feel as I'm experiencing it.

Since childhood, I accepted beliefs about what was good or bad based on the way I felt. I cycled through these feelings as I drew from the past to interpret the events of my life. For example, one day I might have felt I was falling behind and I needed to work hard. I hadn't felt that way the previous day, but I had felt it before. It was the limiting belief that my worth was based on what I did, which I'd experienced since my childhood. It was then I decided I would receive more love if I made good grades or kept my room clean.

As I doodled spirals that evening, I was subconsciously asking for a way out. But there is no way to escape the spiral of my life. No white horse will ever come to carry me away.

It can only be done within, through loving myself now as I am. The more I do this, the more I'm able to view everything in my life as love. My perspective of negative feeling events from my past shifts until I see them as love and as opportunities to love myself even more. This draws more loving experiences my way.

One way I have healed my limiting beliefs is by reconditioning my thoughts and feelings to accept that I don't *need* anything but my own love. In the past, I thought I needed at least the most basic things—food, water, shelter and air. In reality, I never have needed them. I don't even need to be alive. My heart chooses to be here to love myself entirely and experience that love in the things I do. When I think I need things, I stop being what I believe we all are—love—to obtain them. When I fill myself with love, my heart guides me to the things I'm meant to experience for my highest and greatest good.

I've learned to trust that my heart already has everything worked out for me. I never need to worry about anything. When I don't trust myself, I allow the outside world to dictate what I should be doing, but living that way has never led me true. Only my own heart knows what is best for me.

I say three things to myself every day, especially when a negative thought pattern surfaces: *I love and accept myself exactly as I am. I need nothing from this day but my own love. I always have everything I need and more.*

Afterward, I feel relaxed, and I often find clarity for any actions to take next.

My life looks completely different than it did five years ago, and the biggest difference is in how it feels. Now, my spiral mostly moves me into deeper feelings of peace, joy and love. 🌱



Dena Martin is a personal development mentor living in Smyrna with her three kids, Max, Clara, and Sydney. You can contact her at

Dena.M.Martin@gmail.com.

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