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Atlanta  
January 2024

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### PUBLISHER'S TOP 10 OF 2023

Our most-read article of the year was our interview with Indian spiritual master Sadhguru. It was an honor and a privilege to interview this wildly popular leader. Another interviewee was Tammy Billups, an Atlanta-based energy healer who specializes in animals and has authored three books on animal-human relationships.

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After three special sections in 2022, we slowed down in 2023 with just one, on health coaching.

Three Atlanta institutions celebrated anniversaries: Kadampa Meditation Center of Georgia and Peachtree Yoga Center celebrated 25 years, and the Wonderful Wizards of Raw celebrated 10 years.

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Publisher's Letter



# Reflect, Renew, Resolve

## It's That Time of the Year

Another new year! If you are one who invests time in reflecting upon your journey, renewing your energy for the road ahead, and resolving to make progress in your chosen areas of focus, we welcome you to our annual reboot issue!

This year, it's particularly packed. Whether you're going to focus on manifesting your life goals or health goals or developing a more peaceful mind, we've got you covered.

We kick off 2024 with a three-issue series—January through March—on pranayama, the breathing practices most associated with yoga classes here in the U.S. January's article is an overview of breathwork and pranayama and its benefits, which include reducing the impacts of stress, anxiety and depression and boosting one's mood. In other words, how we might go about developing a more peaceful mind!

February's article will describe several practices that yoga practitioners might discover in Atlanta's yoga studios, and the March installment will look at pranayama within the context of the eight limbs of yoga, the spiritual path expounded upon by the Indian sage Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras*, written in the early centuries CE.

In 2022, we kicked off the new year with a special section on life coaching, containing reader questions along with answers provided by local life coaches. One of those coaches, Diane Martinez, recently released her book, *Open Up and Get Unstuck*, and we offer an excerpt of it in this issue.



Continuing in that vein, in October, we ran a special section on featuring advice from health. This month, we kick off a bimonthly column, Ask a Health Coach, featuring health coach and yoga teacher Hope Knosher. To submit questions for Hope to answer, go to [bit.ly/naa-ask-a-coach](https://bit.ly/naa-ask-a-coach).

Finally, we've created a graphic on page 25 to point you to the in-depth coverage and articles from our Conscious Evolution department. After several years of creating refreshing stories for this department, we now have a library of content that can serve readers well into the future.

As we embark on an extremely consequential year in the history of our country, let us endeavor to continue evolving as individuals, and may our progress be reflected in our ever-growing capacities for excellent health, love for those dear to us, compassion for those in need and those we often consider as "other," and our connection to Source and all there is. And may the progress we see in ourselves be reflected in society as a whole. 🙏



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

Letters to the Editor

### A Muslim Perspective

As a long-time reader of the Atlanta edition of *Natural Awakenings*, I read with particular interest the December Letter from the Publisher and the article, "Our Spiritual Leaders Speak"—about the horrid conflict waging in Gaza.

I appreciate publisher Paul Chen's bold assertion of the Christian edict to "Love thy Enemy" as well as the call for a return to humanity from diverse religious leaders. I am compelled, as a practicing Muslim, to offer an Islamic perspective that aligns with these sentiments.

The Quran states, "Whoever kills an innocent person, it is as if he has killed all of humanity." (5:32) No matter the claim or motive—attacks on the innocent have no support in Islamic teachings. Prophet Muhammed and his followers were persecuted constantly during his early sojourn. He did not retaliate for many years until he was given divine revelation to defend himself and the small Muslim community.

Even then, acts of war were to be measured with a long list of prohibitions to prevent excessive loss of life and property including the protection of synagogues, churches, temples, and other places of worship. The brazen, cowardly acts of Hamas and the resulting toll on human life is not characteristic of the Palestinian people.

Unrestrained extremism of any stripe is condemnable and cannot stand. Likewise, the disproportionate response by Israel is to be denounced as it has been by many Jewish groups, anti-Zionists and people of goodwill all over the world.

Ultimately war is the utter lack of imagination in a Universe full of Abundance. Only lacking mentalities resort to violence for a just end. Humanity must prevail or I fear hope will be our greatest casualty.

*Angelo Omari, Decatur*

### Submissions

We invite pitches, submissions letters to the editor, and contributions to our column *Walking Each Other Home*. Email our managing editor at [diane@naAtlanta.com](mailto:diane@naAtlanta.com), or scan the QR code below.



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## Conscious Dying Coach Services Launched



Susan Patterson  
[Photo: Robert Patterson]

Susan Patterson, a certified conscious dying coach, has launched Gifts From the End, a company providing personal conscious dying coaching sessions, small group programs, workshops and retreats.

Patterson helps clients by guiding them as they contemplate the final months of their lives. Coaching sessions are confidential and appropriate for adults at all stages of life. "Through guided and supported contemplation, you can identify and focus on your most meaningful priorities and connections, thereby enriching your living," she says.

The private sessions are held in a comfortable space at The Cathedral of St. Philip, located at 2744 Peachtree Road in Buckhead. Sessions include conversation, relaxing postures and sacred silence. Clients learn about conscious dying and learn practices geared toward letting go of the body. A free initial consultation can be booked at [GiftsFromTheEnd.net](http://GiftsFromTheEnd.net). The cost of a two-hour session is \$150.

Patterson is also presenting "The Ultimate Letting Go Workshop" on January 13 from 9:30 a.m. to noon at Peachtree Yoga Center, located at 6046 Sandy Springs Circle in Sandy Springs.

"The workshop is geared toward anyone curious about death and dying who wants a safe and supportive environment to explore ideas around it," she says. "We'll have group conversations, guided meditations, gentle yoga postures and silent time to contemplate your ideas of letting go of the physical body." Music, artwork and journaling support the process. The fee of \$49 includes handouts and materials. Register for the class by visiting [WellnessLiving.com](http://WellnessLiving.com) and click on the Events tab.

"I am delighted to share with others so that they can reflect on and surface their ideas about death and use that knowledge to prioritize action in their lives," says Patterson.

For more information, reach Patterson at [GoingThereWithSusan@gmail.com](mailto:GoingThereWithSusan@gmail.com).

## Schenk, Cunningham Lead Celtic Wisdom and Sound Workshop

Internationally renowned vocal artists Virginia Schenck and Ruth Cunningham will facilitate a half-day, interactive workshop drawing on Celtic wisdom through poetry, songs and chants. The experiential event will take place on February 3 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Mary & Martha's Place in Atlanta. The cost is \$30.

The workshop is part of an ongoing series of programs celebrating the 30th anniversary of Mary & Martha's Place, a community of people that works to create opportunities for personal spiritual transformation and expanded consciousness in order to support the commitment to the common good.

"Participants will have the opportunity to find within themselves fresh insights and the healing power of sound," says Edie Krakowiak, Operations Manager at Mary & Martha's Place. "In these unsettling times, the capacity to ground ourselves in inner grace and power can be a stabilizing, healing and renewing force in the world."

Virginia Schenck is a vocal artist and jazz performer who has studied under Bobby McFerrin and shared the stage with Krista Tippett, Marianne Williamson, Richard Rohr and poet David Whyte. She offers retreats exploring improvisation and the voice as a spiritual tool. Ruth Cunningham is an early music chant expert and sound healer and a founding member of the female a cappella quartet, Anonymous 4. The two have worked together in New York and New Mexico and are excited to bring their work to Atlanta.

Mary & Martha's Place is located at 4393 Garmon Rd., NW, in Atlanta. For more information or to register, visit [MaryAndMarthasPlace.com/special-events](http://MaryAndMarthasPlace.com/special-events).



Virginia Schenck



Ruth Cunningham



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# The Frazer Center

75 Years of Empowerment and Inclusion

by Diane Eaton



**T**ucked away on a 39-acre old-growth forest in Atlanta lies a small oasis of inclusion, care and respect that is having a very large impact on Atlanta communities. Inspired by the needs of one child 75 years ago, it now touches the lives of children, adults, families, neighborhoods and local businesses in an expanding circle of influence.

## An Organization That Likes to Grow

“Well—he just told that to the wrong two women!”

It was 1948, and Ann Lane had just told her friend Rebecca Frazer that her pediatrician advised that she institutionalize her daughter Anita, who had recently been diagnosed with cerebral palsy. The two would have none of the doctor’s recommendation. They decided to join forces and launch the Cerebral Palsy Center—now named the Frazer Center—in Atlanta, which is now celebrating its 75th year of public service.

The women opened the doors of the facility for the first time in 1949, with a classroom of seven students. Three years later, they purchased the expansive Cator Woodford estate in the heart of historic Druid Hills, deciding it would make a wonderful place for a campus.

Frazer Center has gone through many growth spurts since its inception. Initially, the organization only served children with cerebral palsy, aiming to give them the education they needed and offering them a way to avoid institutionalization. They could stay home with their families, go to their places of worship on Sundays, and so forth.

But a few years later, organizers realized that when those children turn into adults, they still need support and guidance—of a different sort. To that end, they launched the Adult Program to help adults with disabilities become active decision-makers, receive classes and training, and find and keep jobs in the community. To date, they’ve helped match numerous adults with disabilities with jobs at Home Depot, Salesforce, Kroger, Publix and other businesses in town.

Fast forward a few more years and Frazer broadened its reach further by opening its doors to people with any kind of intellectual disability or developmental delay, not just cerebral palsy.

In 1975, the organization’s role changed once again when the newly signed Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) mandated that public schools must provide free public education to all children with disabilities. Frazer Center pivoted slightly, deciding to “bookend the public school system,” as CEO Paige McKay Kubik describes it. The Center would focus on preparing the young children for kindergarten and then be there for them once they graduated to support them as adults.

## Guiding, Serving and Supporting

Today, Frazer Center’s Child Development Program serves children six weeks to five years old. Priority is given to those with special needs—physical, cognitive and/or medical—but fully 80 percent are “typically developing” kids who get to participate in Frazer’s learn-through-play, nature-forward, inclusive curriculum. Frazer has served 200 children and nearly 70 adults over the last year.

“[Frazer Center] helped me grow and understand different things in life and what I want in my life,” says Alicia Day, who had shown signs of developmental delays as an infant and was soon diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Day attended Frazer as a



Paige McKay Kubik

child and then returned to Frazer after she graduated from high school in 2010, entering the Adult Program.

“When I first came here [as a child], everyone made me feel like family,” affirms Day. When she returned as an adult, the Adult Program staff helped set her up as a volunteer at neighborhood businesses, “getting me ready for the real world,” she says. She landed a job at Home Depot in 2012 and still works there today. “I love Home Depot!” she says.

Day is also an ex-officio member of the Frazer board of directors. “I’m there to advocate for some of the clients who can’t talk like me. I like to be a voice for people who can’t speak up for themselves.”

## Spreading Inclusiveness in the Community

“Our end goal,” says Kubik, “is that everybody in the community is making sure people with disabilities are included in their work and their leisure.” Kubik’s career has predominantly been with early education nonprofits, many with inclusion as a focus, and she has been a guiding force at Frazer Center for ten years. While Frazer’s chief aim is to help people with disabilities, equally important is its mission to encourage inclusiveness to take root in the greater community. “We want to help the community at large be welcoming and open and understand what an asset it is to have

people with disabilities in their communities, engaging with them side-by-side,” explains Kubik. That way, the difference they make expands exponentially.

To accomplish this, Frazer staff engages everyone who walks through their doors. “People come to enjoy the beautiful property or to book [weddings or events], but when they’re here, they learn about the work that we do. We help raise their awareness about the roles people with disabilities can play in the community,” says Kubik. The hope is that newcomers ultimately become virtual ambassadors themselves, encouraging inclusion in their community’s businesses and places of employment.

Inclusion Program Coordinator and Admissions Coordinator Denise Amos is one of two inclusion coaches in Frazer’s Child Development Program. Kubik calls these coaches “the hub in the wheel” for the way they facilitate collaboration between parents, therapists and teachers when parents would otherwise have to manage a distressing and disjointed set of tasks on their own. Part scheduling facilitator, part communication and training coordinator, most of their work involves serving children with identified needs or delays.

“Inclusion is about belonging to a community, a group of friends, a school or a neighborhood,” says Amos. “All children need care, education and nurturing, and it’s

pretty tough for families with children with disabilities to find places to go—especially in Georgia. And, of course, we want the kids to have that foundation of tolerance and acceptance from when they’re little.”

Her compassion is palpable. One five-year-old girl Amos works with in pre-K classes has a genetic disorder and is mostly non-verbal. And Amos is smitten. “Just the way that you can connect with a child that’s not talking is incredible. Everyone around her is talking and she’s full-on having relationships and communicating and building connections,” she says. “It’s just beautiful.”

## A Creative, Nature-Forward Curriculum

Frazer Center uses The Creative Curriculum—a state-approved, evidence-based teaching framework that emphasizes play-based learning. The approach is based on the premise that children learn better through interactions with their social and physical environment. Teachers can also customize activities according to a child’s abilities and interests.

The Center also makes the most of its lush outdoor setting with “outdoor classrooms,” which include shade-covered playgrounds, a large courtyard with plants, vegetables and herbs, and teacher-led access to forest trails. “These are great for all the things little children are learning—teamwork and social/emotional skills, for exploring and creativity



Alicia Day working at Home Depot





Denise Amos

and asking questions. And, of course, just the physical benefits of getting outside and exercising,” says Kubik. Frazer Center uses a nature-based curriculum geared toward young children that it developed with faculty at Georgia State University.

### Expanding its Reach

Partnering with other Atlanta organizations and sharing Frazer Center’s curriculum with other programs in Atlanta is another way the organization touches many more people than those who participate in its programs. For example, many of Atlanta’s kids “don’t have access to nature-based programs like summer camps and other [outdoor] learning,” says Kubik. So Frazer Center shares its curriculum, provides teacher training and helps kids receive outdoor learning with other Atlanta programs, such as Our House in Decatur, a homeless shelter and service hub serving children who are facing homelessness.

Frazer Center will celebrate 75 years of service at its Gather in the Gardens gala on April 20. In the meantime, its growth trajectory continues well into the future, as it is always on the lookout for new ways to serve, partner and share its vision with the community. 🌱

The Frazer Center is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization and is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. For more information, visit [FrazerCenter.org](http://FrazerCenter.org).

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# Thyroid-Friendly Eating

How to Treat Hypothyroidism With Food

by Veronica Hinke



Shaped like a butterfly, the thyroid gland in the neck plays a critical role in overall health, as it produces a series of hormones that regulate metabolism, brain development, bone maintenance, and heart, muscle and digestive functions. Thyroid health can be achieved by eating clean, unprocessed foods and maintaining appropriate levels of iodine.

According to the National Institutes of Health, nearly five in 100 Americans suffer from hypothyroidism, which occurs when the body does not produce adequate

amounts of thyroid hormones. Common symptoms like weight gain, fatigue, inability to tolerate cold temperatures and hair loss should not be ignored. Diagnosis is aided by a blood test that measures levels of thyroid-stimulating hormones. While most cases of an underactive thyroid are mild or cause few obvious symptoms, the disease can become severe if it is left untreated.

“Only 10 percent of the population is aware of their thyroid problem and trying to manage it. Thyroid disease is a big

thing. If people don’t know if they have it, they should be screened for it. If they have it, they should have hope,” says Alan Christianson, a naturopathic endocrinologist and author of *The Thyroid Reset Diet: Reverse Hypothyroidism and Hashimoto’s Symptoms With a Proven Iodine-Balancing Plan*.

“For women, an especially critical time to check thyroid health is during perimenopause years, when thyroid function can often waver, becoming underactive. Even if lab tests are normal, it is important to speak with a physician that understands the symptoms of hypothyroidism,” says Anna Cabeca, an obstetrician-gynecologist and women’s health expert in Brunswick, Georgia. “Most people can improve or reverse it radically. Diet is very powerful. Start with your shopping list and at the top write: Food is medicine.”

Offering hope, Michigan-based obstetrician-gynecologist Tabatha Barber says, “It’s often about doing less, not more, to help improve thyroid function. Don’t be afraid that this is something you have to live with forever.” As a teenager, Barber was diagnosed with Hashimoto’s disease, an autoimmune condition that affects the thyroid gland and often causes hypothyroidism. She has learned how to modify her diet for relief.

## Skip the Gluten

“Gluten is the main trigger that really seems to irritate the immune system,” says Barber. “A lot of people don’t realize that gluten is in some sauces, salad dressings, seasonings, medication fillers and more. It can be enough to keep the inflammation associated with hypothyroidism going.”

## Balance Iodine

“Iodine is the Goldilocks mineral,” says Christianson. “It’s important to not consume too much or too little. Those with thyroid disease usually get too much.

When they do, it inflames and slows the thyroid.” In such cases, he recommends eating a wide range of unprocessed food and avoiding ingredients with the highest iodine content, such as fish and other seafood, iodized salt, seaweeds, grains and most dairy.

## Monitor Ingredients

Barber prioritizes the elimination of artificial ingredients and additives, saying, “It’s about really getting back to basics, eating unprocessed meats, vegetables and some fruits.” She recommends consuming foods rich in zinc and selenium, such as shellfish, legumes, seeds, nuts and dairy, as they send signals to the thyroid to produce the right hormone levels.

Cabeca shaves selenium-rich Brazil nuts on soups or salads. “Keep them as a staple in the kitchen,” she advises, adding that balance is important when selecting zinc- and selenium-rich foods because some of them, like dairy, may also contain high levels of iodine.

## Eat Anti-Inflammatory Foods

Cabeca finds clever ways to sneak anti-inflammatory ingredients into her recipes. For her kafta kabobs, for example, she combines ground meat with finely chopped parsley, garlic, tomatoes or dried shiso leaves and tops them with cashew butter or tahini sauce. Similarly, she uses plenty of parsley in her tabouleh—a traditional Middle Eastern salad—and replaces the customary bulgur wheat with chopped Brussels sprouts or cauliflower.

According to Northwestern Medicine, cauliflower can be part of a healthy thyroid diet, along with other cruciferous vegetables. “These are foods that I grew up on,” Cabeca says, noting that parsley is a natural diuretic that is also good for the thyroid.

Veronica Hinke is a food historian and author of *The Last Night on the Titanic: Unsinkable Drinking, Dining and Style; Titanic: The Official Cookbook* and *Harry Potter: Afternoon Tea Magic*. Learn more at [FoodStringer.com](http://FoodStringer.com).

## Kiwi Chia Pudding

**YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS**

- 3 Tbsp chia seeds
- 1 cup unsweetened flax milk
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 cup kiwi, peeled and diced (about 3 fruits)
- 2 Tbsp pistachios, chopped

Add the ingredients, except pistachios, to a blender and blend for one to two minutes until smooth. Pour into a bowl, cover and



refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Garnish with chopped pistachios.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Dr. Alan Christianson, NMD, from *The Hormone Healing Cookbook*.

## Roasted Beet and Pistachio Salad

**YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS**

- 8 medium or 4 large beets, peeled and cut into 1-inch wedges
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup unsalted pistachios
- 2 cups baby leaf spinach leaves
- ¼ cup rice wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Misting oil

Preheat the oven to 350° F. In a medium bowl, toss the beets with the garlic and a mist of oil. Pour into a baking dish and lightly cover with foil. Bake for 30 minutes or until the beets are tender. Let sit for 15 minutes until cool.



In a salad bowl, combine the beets with the pistachios, spinach leaves, vinegar and olive oil. Salt and pepper to taste.

Recipe courtesy of Dr. Alan Christianson, NMD, from *The Hormone Healing Cookbook*.


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# Graceful Aging

Living Longer, Healthier and More Fulfilled

by Carrie Jackson

People are living longer, and as we age, we increasingly become aware of a desire to remain healthy, vibrant and active for as long as possible. It's about extending our health span as much as our lifespan. While genetics play a role in how we experience the aging process, advancements in science are helping us understand that how we manage our mindset, physical activity, stress levels and diet can have just as much of an impact. By redefining what it means to get older and finding deeper meaning, we can embrace aging with grace and gratitude, rather than resist it. Many factors are within our control, and it is possible to live a fulfilling and vibrant life well into our twilight years.

At nearly 103 years young, Dr. Gladys McGarey wrote the book on graceful aging. As the author of *The Well-Lived Life: A 102-Year-Old Doctor's Six Secrets to Health*

and *Happiness at Every Age*, she suggests that we reframe aging as an opportunity rather than a loss, thereby pioneering a new way of thinking about disease and health. "At 102, I'm losing my eyesight, but my insight has improved," says the cofounder of the American Holistic Medical Association. "I have trouble reading but can listen to audiobooks and have deep conversations with people. If we look for illness and pain at the end of life, that's what our bodies will show us. But if we reach for health, joy, laughter and other realities of true humanity, that's what we will find."

McGarey asserts that our medical community is trained to eliminate pain and illness rather than learn from their messages. "If we can lean into what understanding a disease shows us, we can discover true wisdom," she explains. "You can hold onto the pain, or you can hold onto what you learn from the

pain. When my son was training to be an orthopedic surgeon, he confided that he was afraid to have people's lives in his hands. I responded that if he thinks he's the one who does the healing, he has a right to be scared. Doctors provide the technology to turn the healing over to the patient, and we have the core knowledge of what to do inside of us."

McGarey is a firm believer that forgiveness is essential to freeing up stuck energy. Life has to move, she says, and letting go of feelings that may be lingering in our subconscious allows us to move forward with grace. "If we hang on to the dark places in our lives, we will get stuck. Pay attention to your dreams, both during the day and night, because they hold the truth. We all came here for a reason and have our life's purpose. If you find that, you will always be fulfilled and can embrace the aging process instead of fighting it," she says.

Renowned alternative-medicine advocate Deepak Chopra, M.D., is an author, speaker and founder of the Chopra Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to research on well-being and humanitarianism. His latest book, *Quantum Body: The New Science for Living a Longer, Healthier, More Vital Life*, outlines how we can harness the power of

the quantum body to significantly improve our physical and mental wellness, leading to a more fulfilling aging process.

According to Chopra, our well-being depends entirely on the quantum field, which exists on a subatomic level and is the infinite source of everyday reality that affects our thoughts, feelings, sensations and biological responses. "Your quantum body is the central hub for every process that requires intelligence, just as a power plant is the central hub for everything that requires electricity. The prospect of having your quantum body fail you is far more serious than any single symptom of disease and aging. Well-being is weakened whenever there is a failure of intelligence and is strengthened when intelligence flows naturally," he explains.

Disease and aging are further downstream in the intelligence flow, Chopra notes, and when someone succumbs to a heart attack or cancer, intelligence has failed in either the cardiovascular system or a single malignant cell. "Instead of being anxious about cells, tissues, organs and systems, which aren't under your control, you can live from the source where all controls are overseen by your quantum body. Here, all information is perfect, the flow of intelligence is never wrong or distorted, and the creative possibilities for the future are boundless," Chopra contends.

One vital aspect of healthy aging that we can control is our approach to stress management, which Chopra says most people don't take seriously enough. Stress can come from myriad sources, including family and social relationships; workplace stresses; a poor-quality diet; deficient sleeping habits; lack of exercise and downtime; and constant distractions from texting, video games and around-the-clock news reports. That is why it is more important than ever to develop tools for self-care.

"The frenetic pace of modern life has overwhelmed the autonomic nervous system, which is responsible for all the processes, from heartbeat to respiration and digestion, that run independently of your conscious actions," Chopra advises. "Medical research

validates how essential stress management is, but what needs to change are socially ingrained attitudes that persuade us to tolerate stress beyond what our bodies and psyches are designed for."


Chopra encourages prioritizing deep sleep, tuning into breath and awareness, and mindful exercises to return to our zero point—a state of rest from which activity springs. "Your awareness experiences the zero point as silent, calm, alert and pregnant with boundless possibilities, where you have access to your next thought," he explains.

Embracing instead of resisting our quantum body further helps the energy flow. "The most natural way to live is in your dharma, or your truth," Chopra says. "The greatest gift of self-awareness is that you can prove this to yourself every day by living with love, truth, beauty and bliss as your goal. Ultimate well-being requires no less, and living from your source reveals that the infinite is personal and within reach. Physical well-being exists if you are able to live a long life in good health; mental well-being exists if you retain clear, sharp thinking; psychological well-being

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From left, Tom O'Bryan, Gladys McGarey and Deepak Chopra



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exists if you are free of anxiety and depression; and spiritual well-being exists if your life has higher purpose and meaning."

With more than 40 years of experience as a functional medicine doctor, Tom O'Bryan, DC, DACBN, CIFM, is an internationally recognized speaker and writer on chronic disease and metabolic disorders. He defines graceful aging as a state of full body function, without limitations and with rational expectations for what the body can do. O'Bryan points to the so-called Blue Zones, with an extraordinarily high percentage of people living into their 90s and above, as examples of those gracefully aging. "The lifestyle of people living in these areas includes daily rituals that reduce stress and reverse the inflammation associated with stress. As a result, they are able to live long, fruitful, happy lives as contributing and engaged members of society," he notes.

O'Bryan believes that the greatest contribution to living a vital life is identifying and reducing the triggers of inflammation in our bodies, which can largely be accomplished with lifestyle modifications. "According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 14 of the top 15 causes of death are related to chronic inflammatory diseases. Many people address inflammation with medication, but they don't realize that food is the best medicine," he explains. "With diet being the largest source of inflammation activation in the body, it's important to question what's on the end of our fork and nourish the body with an anti-inflammatory diet, including berries, leafy greens, garlic, curcumin and plenty of pure water. Your body always wants to be healthier, and if we identify and reduce our exposure to the triggers of inflammation, the inflammation calms down."

Reducing inflammation also allows the central nervous system to settle into rest-and-digest mode, which can help the body age more gracefully. "Inflammation is the immune system's response to harmful stimuli," O'Bryan says. "An activated immune system is a life-saving, non-negotiable state that sets our sympathetic nervous system into fight-or-flight mode. When we are stressed or fighting for our lives, our heart rate is fast; our breathing is short, sharp and shallow; and our muscles are tight and ready for action. When inflammation decreases, our bodies are able to calm down and activate the parasympathetic nervous system. In that very relaxed state, your heart rate is slow; your breath is deep; your muscles are relaxed; and your brain is open, expansive and daydreaming of new possibilities in life. That's when healing and regeneration occurs." 🌱

Carrie Jackson is a Chicago-based freelance writer. Connect at [CarrieJacksonWrites.com](http://CarrieJacksonWrites.com).





# Individualized Alzheimer's Treatments

A New Frontier in Disease Reversal

by Dana Thacker, BSN, RN



Photoboy/Canva Pro

According to the Alzheimer's Association, more than 6 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's disease, and the numbers are expected to rise to nearly 13 million by 2050. In addition to the loss of cherished memories, more than 11 million unpaid caregivers provide an estimated 18 billion hours of care for Alzheimer's and dementia patients annually. Given the costs and burdens of

the disease, many people wonder whether Alzheimer's is reversible. Recent discoveries indicate that may be possible.

## Mechanisms of Alzheimer's

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention describe Alzheimer's disease as a neurodegenerative condition that

results in cognitive decline, memory loss and deficits in language and behavior. It is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States and the most common reason for dementia in older adults. During the early stages of the disease, neurons within the brain become damaged without apparent symptoms. This destruction can occur for a decade without recognition, resulting in delayed diagnosis and treatment. Protein buildup forces healthy neurons to stop functioning and sever connections, which likely provokes brain cell death and shrinkage.

## Breakthrough in Treatment

Research published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* offers new hope for patients. Twenty-five participants with pre-Alzheimer's or early-stage dementia were evaluated to identify potential contributors to cognitive decline using brain magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), genetic testing and other biomarkers. The scientists

then designed an individualized, precision medical protocol for each patient.

Cognitive testing after the nine-month treatments showed that 84 percent of the participants not only maintained neurological function, but also improved cognition. A follow-up MRI also showed an increase in gray matter volume. The researchers noted in their report that a larger, controlled trial is warranted.

"Dementia is not a death sentence," states Kat Toups, a functional medicine psychiatrist and co-contributor to the precision treatment research. In her own practice, she embraces a patient-centric, multimodal approach to treating Alzheimer's that focuses on three components—infection, inflammation and immunity. By reducing inflammation and treating infections, she asserts, the body is ready to receive immune-building therapies.

## Answering the Skeptics

"Mainstream medicine has been going about [Alzheimer's treatment] the wrong way. I was taught to make a diagnosis, then write a prescription for something that doesn't work," says Dr. Dale Bredesen, a co-contributor to the aforementioned study. Recent trials have suggested that current pharmaceutical treatments for Alzheimer's, such as Donanemab, merely slow the rate of disease progression, rather than reverse its effects.

With his personalized, precision-medicine approach, Bredesen aims to do better. He

equates Alzheimer's to COVID-19, noting, "When the pandemic hit, nations entered protection mode. Economies suffered and went into a recession. In the same way, receptors within our brain can also go into a recession or protection mode. However, when these same receptors receive adequate resources, they continue to grow and make connections. Neurons shift from protection mode to connection mode, reversing the effects of Alzheimer's."

## The Bredesen Protocol

Based on his research, Bredesen asserts that Alzheimer's is the result of an imbalance in the brain's neuroplasticity signaling. He has identified 36 factors that can trigger downsizing in the brain, including metabolic derangement, poor nutrient status, lack of trophic support [chemical signaling] and exposure to viruses. The Bredesen Protocol is designed to change a patient's biochemistry to correct those imbalances by addressing patient-specific triggers.

Apollo Health, where Bredesen is chief science officer, has developed a software algorithm that uses patient data from medical questionnaires, laboratory testing and cognitive assessments to offer an analysis of the patient's cognitive risk factors and a personalized treatment plan designed to prevent and reverse cognitive decline. The patient works with practitioners and coaches trained in the protocol to implement the treatment plan, which covers seven areas: nutrition, exercise, sleep, stress, brain stimulation, detoxification and supplements. The individualized nature of Bredesen's Protocol is foundational to the program's success.

To learn more or to find a practitioner or coach trained in the Bredesen Protocol visit [ApolloHealthCo.com/bredesen-protocol](https://ApolloHealthCo.com/bredesen-protocol).

Dana Thacker is a registered nurse with a passion for cures over treatments and naturopathy over pharmaceuticals.

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I understand your frustration, and it's great that you're seeking guidance to make a lasting change in your weight and overall health. Achieving long-term weight loss success involves more than just diet and exercise; it's about making sustainable lifestyle changes. Here are some steps to help you start a plan that will “stick” this time.

**Set Realistic Goals.** Begin by setting specific, achievable goals. Instead of aiming for a drastic weight loss, focus on smaller, attainable milestones. This approach makes your journey more manageable and less daunting.

**Understand Your Motivation.** Reflect on why you want to lose weight. Your motivation is a crucial driving force. Whether it's for better health, increased energy, or improved self-esteem, knowing your “why” will keep you committed.

**Develop a Balanced Diet.** Focus on a balanced diet that includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and healthy fats. Avoid crash diets and extreme restrictions as they tend to be unsustainable. Ask yourself if the changes you make are sustainable over the long term.

**Practice Portion Control.** Pay attention to portion sizes since overeating can contribute to weight regain. To effectively achieve portion control, here are two great hacks: practice mindful eating and use smaller plates during meals.

**Commit to Regular Exercise.** Incorporate regular physical activity into your routine. Find exercises you enjoy—for example, walking, swimming, cycling or dancing—and aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise each week.

**Create a Support System.** Share your goals with friends and family, or consider working with a certified

health coach. Having a support system can provide encouragement and accountability.

**Manage Stress.** Stress can lead to emotional eating and weight gain. Incorporate stress-reduction techniques such as meditation, yoga or deep breathing exercises into your daily life.

**Track Your Progress.** Keep a journal to track your meals, your exercise and your feelings. Monitoring your progress can help you identify areas that would benefit from improvement and support you in celebrating your successes.

*Continues on page 44.*



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# Getting Unstuck

by Diane Martinez

## Lessons from Hollywood

For more than 100 years, Hollywood has turned out some incredible films. From the earliest black-and-white silent movies to the incredible features we see today, there is truly something for everyone. There are so many different genres—and yet they all have one thing in common: something goes wrong.

Think about your favorite films. When did things get interesting? It was when something unexpected happened. There was an accident, a crime, a misunderstanding, a natural disaster.

If you were to settle into your chair at a nearby theater with popcorn, snacks, and an overly large soft drink only to watch a movie in which things go along just fine, how long would you sit there? How incredibly boring would it be? I don't think many people would tolerate such an uneventful movie.

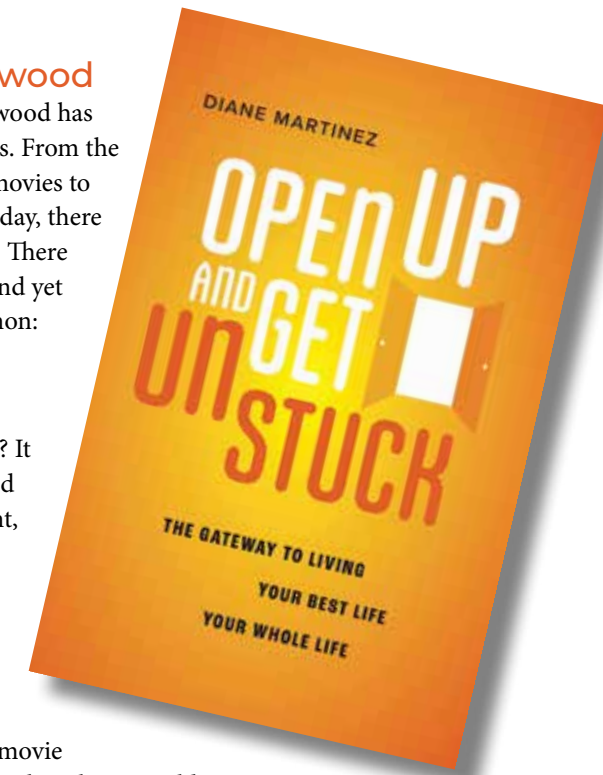
And if it would make a dull movie, it would make a dull life.

It is common for people to yearn to go through life where nothing goes wrong—no challenges at work, no lay-offs, no serious relationship troubles, no health issues, no challenges that make us dig deep and grow in character, wisdom, and all the traits we admire in our movie heroes. But that's not how life is.

**Life calls us to deepen and evolve through the challenges and lessons it presents to us.**

Of course, it's not necessary to jump for joy when you get a flat tire or rejoice when your child's teacher requests an impromptu conference. That would be quite a stretch for most of us, myself included. Perhaps that comes in time. For now, can you focus on meeting those challenges without resistance? Can you see it as a plot twist instead—one in which our intrepid heroine (you) will not be undone by the challenges and even crises she faces? You could meet life more openly. You'd be ready to experience and embrace the richness that makes your life the interesting—dare I say, compelling—movie that it is.

It is worth recognizing that it is in those uncomfortable moments when things go wrong that growth happens. It is not a given that we mature, evolve, or become more compassionate by facing life's challenges. Do you know someone who has simply become embittered by life? Someone that hashes and rehashes their laundry list of how they have been treated unfairly by life to anyone who will listen? These people make their own lives



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miserable by living in a state of perpetual resistance to life. They are closed off to the opportunities that the challenges present to them. Those moments can be seen as a lovely gift wrapped up in stinky, used butcher paper from a fishmonger's shop. The outside might be gross and repulsive, but the inside holds a real treasure. In order to access the treasure within, we must get through the offensive wrapping. Refusal to accept and learn from the situation prevents us from receiving the gift.

Thus, the goal isn't to try to get through life by avoiding as many problems as possible by hiding in a small, boring life. Lessons are here for all of us; we cannot hide from them. But *how* we meet them is up to us. We cannot control what events happen to us, but we can control how we respond to them. If we are living life in an open way, we accept situations as they are and then we consider if an action or response is required on our part. If it is appropriate to take action, we do so from a place of calm, clear thinking. Our

hearts and minds are open to seeing the blessings wrapped inside the undesired circumstance. Often, the gift within the experience doesn't become clear to us until later—even months or years later. Then, finally, we recognize it and receive it, and we are better, not bitter, for it.

Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is a stellar example of this principle and how we can evolve through the process of learning our lessons. Ebenezer Scrooge is a curmudgeonly old money-lender in London in the mid-1800s. A solitary, stingy man, he refuses to show any mercy to the people struggling to repay him. The monkey wrench in Scrooge's life comes in the form of a visit on Christmas Eve from the ghost of his

deceased business partner, Jacob Marley. Marley explains to Scrooge the error of his mean-spirited ways and tells him he will be visited by three spirits that night, spirits who are meant to save Scrooge's soul.

At first, Scrooge is closed to the experience and what the spirits show him, but over the course of the night, he comes to see how his heartless business practices affected people and how his lack of appreciation and love for the people in his life was hurtful to them.

By the time the church bells ring the next morning—Christmas morning—Scrooge is indeed a changed man.

He accepts the lessons the frightening and unwelcome Christmas spirits offered and awakens, transformed.



Diane Martinez [Photo: Manuel Martinez]

While Scrooge's transformation is sudden, learning to see the rough patches in life as the opportunities they are is usually a process. Here again, baby steps are the best way forward. Don't hold yourself to unrealistic expectations. It shows real progress to come around after losing your cool and recognize that the situation is as it is. With that understanding and acceptance, you're free to deal with the situation appropriately with little, if any, drama.

### Practices to Open Body, Mind, and Spirit

**Body.** Bring awareness to your posture. Are your shoulders slumped forward? Is your head jutting forward from your body? Bring yourself back into alignment, and as you go through your day, check in with yourself. How is your posture? Avoid sitting for long periods, especially in odd positions. Become aware of your body in space and practice good posture.

**Mind.** Choose one of your favorite mov-

ies and watch it again, observing when the crisis enters the story and how the main character deals with it. Note pivotal moments when profound change takes place. What did the main character learn through the challenges they faced and overcame?

**Spirit.** Sit comfortably in silence and focus on your breath. Allow your thinking mind to slow and calm. Breathe deeply and slowly. Reflect on challenges you have faced in your life. Is there one that revealed itself as a true blessing later on? What was the gift concealed in the trouble? Place one hand on your heart and one hand on your belly. Bring your awareness to those two places—where guidance is often sensed—and nurture a feeling of gratitude for the lessons you have learned and the guidance for the journey.

### Journaling prompts

Reflect on a time when something that initially seemed like a big problem ended

up being a blessing. How did it feel in the moment? What blessing was contained in the challenge? How much later did the gift within become apparent?

### Affirmation

I am open to receiving the gifts hidden within life's challenges. 🙏

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Jacob Lund/Canva Pro

# Preventing Falls in Advanced Age

Essential Tips for a Life in Balance

by David J. Sautter, NASM (CPT, FNS, PES), ACE (SCS)

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one out of every four adults aged 65 and older report trips and falls each year, and 9 million of those falls result in an injury. These sobering statistics highlight the importance of learning how to prevent such mishaps. Here are five easy-to-follow tips.

- **Create a Safe Living Environment:** De-cluttering walkways, securing loose rugs and keeping spaces clear can reduce the chances of tripping and falling.
- **Light Spaces:** Low-light conditions can be a major culprit in falls. Install bright lights and nightlights in essential areas

like staircases and corridors to prevent missteps.

- **Equip the Home With Assistive Tools:** For added safety, especially in potentially slippery places like bathrooms, install handrails, grab bars and non-slip mats.
- **Make Smart Footwear Choices:** Opt for shoes that fit snugly, offer good grip and are comfortable. It is best to avoid high heels or any footwear with slippery soles.

**Commit to Regular Exercise:** Focusing on exercises that enhance strength, balance and flexibility can significantly lower the risk of falls. Whether it's yoga, walking or tailored balance exercises, staying active is key.

## Importance of Exercise in Preventing Falls

Physical activity isn't just about staying fit or losing weight. "Exercise plays a big role in fall prevention," says Debra Atkinson, certified strength and conditioning specialist and host of the Flipping 50 podcast. "Exercise goes far beyond strength, though. In fact, studies have shown just getting stronger doesn't always lend itself to better balance."

For older adults, a combination of regular exercise and balance training can play a pivotal role in preventing falls. Here's why:

- **Strengthening Muscle Tone:** Regular exercise helps to build and maintain muscle tone, which is crucial for everyday movements. Stronger muscles support the joints, making it easier to get up from a chair, climb stairs or recover quickly when starting to fall.
- **Improving Balance:** Balance exercises, such as tai chi and certain yoga poses, train the body to control and distribute weight in a centered manner. With better balance, the chances of stumbling or tipping are substantially reduced.
- **Enhancing Flexibility:** Flexibility exercises can improve the range of motion in joints, resulting in smoother, more fluid movements, which can help prevent missteps and sudden falls.
- **Building Bone Density:** Weight-bearing exercises like walking or resistance training can strengthen bones, reducing the risk of fractures in the event of a fall.
- **Boosting Confidence:** Regular exercise can instill a sense of physical confidence. When individuals feel physically strong and agile, they're less likely to be overly cautious or afraid of falling. This can lead to a more active lifestyle, further reinforcing physical strength and balance.

## Exercising Tips

Exercise for fall prevention focuses on consistency and the right activities, not just intensity. Here's a concise guide:

- **Start Gradually:** Begin with gentle activities like walking and stretching. As stamina is gained, increase the intensity.
- **Strength Training:** Use resistance bands or body weight. Emphasize leg and core exercises, such as squats and leg lifts, to enhance stability. "Increase intensity by closing your eyes, then moving your head left to right during single-leg lift variations," recommends personal trainer Scott Elliott, of Del Mar, California.
- **Balance Exercises:** Enhance balance with activities like standing on one foot, walking heel-to-toe or standing up without hand support. Atkinson recommends disruption practice during balance exercises. "Have someone gently come up and push a bit on your shoulder, hip or leg. You will have to react and respond just as you would if you were righting a fall. Do it on both sides."
- **Flexibility Workouts:** Opt for yoga or tai chi, both of which boost flexibility and coordination.
- **Join Group Classes:** Consider activities that offer physical and social benefits, such as Pilates. Elliot encourages older adults to try dancing or boxing. "The art of coordinating left foot, right foot not only moves your joints but also exercises the brain. Mind-to-muscle is a necessary component to building strength, awareness and balance."
- **Safety First:** Exercise in a hazard-free space. If unfamiliar with equipment or exercises, seek guidance.
- **Set Goals:** Stay motivated with achievable targets, whether walking longer distances or mastering new exercises. 🧘

David J. Sautter is a certified trainer, fitness-nutrition specialist, and health and fitness writer.

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Healthy Kids 

# Kidfluencers

Using Social Media for Positive Change

by Megy Karydes



Cash Daniels speaks to his peers about waterway conservation.

Social media has made it easier than ever to share ideas, and today's generation of digital natives are adept at using it. With one video post, they can reach thousands in minutes. Welcome to the world of "kidfluencers": young people with throngs of online followers that use their platforms to sway their peers (and adults, too). Aged 16 or younger, these engaged leaders know the ins-and-outs of the latest technology and understand that there is power in becoming more than just a passive viewer. While some use social media outlets to earn sponsorships or market products, others leverage their online brands to inspire agents of change and make a positive difference in the world.

## Reaching the Reading Masses

When eighth-graders Kyra and Phallon Pierce noticed a racially insensitive book and zero multi-cultural authors on an assigned reading list, the Chicagoland-based identical twins decided to take action. They launched Positive Change Charities, a nonprofit that awards book grants to promote diverse authors to kids in need and underfunded K-12 libraries across Illinois.

"We've given out about 4,000 books, and I'm really excited about that because we go to the schools and personally get to give those books out," Kyra says. The twins are competitive dancers and use social media to promote their performances, and they employ those same venues to get the word out about their book-focused work.

On Instagram, for example, the Pierce girls encourage Illinois kids to check out their curated reading list, apply for a grant or push for state legislation that compels the inclusion of diverse authors in K-12 curriculums. "I feel like [social media] is a really good tool to use, because it allows you to get to a wide variety of people," Phallon notes. "It hits adults; it hits teenagers; it hits anybody. It allows you to really push your message out there."

## Mobilizing Community Cleanups

Known as The Conservation Kid, Cash Daniels is a 14-year-old influencer from Chattanooga who uses Instagram to promote Tennessee River preservation efforts. Since he began this work at age 7, he has helped recycle 2,000 miles of fishing line and remove more than 30,000 pounds of trash and two tons of aluminum cans from area waterways. He leads community cleanups and often speaks directly to children at school functions.

"Kids may be a small part of the population, but we're 100 percent of the future," Daniels asserts. "And if somebody says you can't do it, get out there and prove them wrong." Instagram is his preferred outlet because that's where he feels he can reach the most people in the limited time he can commit to online endeavors. In addition to leveraging social media to inspire others, he has met some of his best friends online, as well as people wanting to collaborate with him to amplify his message.

## Protecting Young Influencers

While influencers like the Pierce twins and Daniels work hard to promote positive messages online, they are not immune to the more negative realities of being in the spotlight. If their interests or values don't align with abusive keyboard warriors, these well-meaning kids may be subjected to trolling, online bullying and hate speech.

Dr. Meg Arroll, a psychologist and author of *Tiny Traumas: When You Don't Know*

What's Wrong, but Nothing Feels Quite Right, believes that online influencing is a form of work and families should try to strike the right work-life balance. "How many hours a day would we allow our kids to work, even if it's something that they wanted to do?" she asks.

Arroll highlights the complexities that parents must navigate when a child starts to earn money or products in exchange for social media influence. Those likes, shares and other types of engagement, she says, trigger the reward center in human brains, and that can lead to addictive-like behavior.

Recognizing the dangers, the parents of both the Pierce twins and Daniels limit their kids' social media use and monitor posts so that they can address any worrisome events or behaviors before they get out of control.

## Inspiring New Kidfluencers

When the Pierce twins visit schools, their audiences are comprised of kids just like them. "There's no difference between us; we're all the same," says Phallon, and Kyra chimes in that this commonality can be inspiring. Daniels believes that when kids see him in action on social media, they are motivated to act, as well. He is a role model—opening new possibilities for future kidfluencers. 🌱

Megy Karydes is a Chicago-based writer and author of *50 Ways to More Calm, Less Stress: Scientifically Proven Ways to Relieve Anxiety and Boost Your Mental Health Using Your Five Senses*.



A successful cleanup inspired by Cash Daniels.

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# Mind and Body

A Journey through Breathwork and Pranayama

by Noah Chen



For thousands of years, specialized breathing practices have been used by healers, yogis, shamans and everyday people to strengthen the body and focus the mind. In ancient India, the founders of yoga used the breath to influence their life force and expand their spiritual awareness. The ancient people of Egypt used their breath to align themselves with the energy of the universe. Today, there are breathing techniques to quiet anxiety, increase energy and even release trauma.

Science has gone on to prove many of the benefits touted by various breathwork techniques. For instance, in a study published by the *National Library of Medicine*, slow breathing exercises were shown to significantly lower blood pressure and heart rate. Another study by the *International Journal of Health Sciences and Research* concluded that a specific breathing exercise played a role in improving lung function and decreasing stress and depression.

Even so, there are aspects of breathwork that some of its practitioners claim science can't speak to. For many, there is a spiritual aspect to the practice that goes beyond what can be scientifically measured. For example, they find it can help provide insight into the Self and foster connections to the Earth and the beings that live on it.



Tracy Jennings Hill

## Pranayama Today

Certain breathwork techniques remain quite popular today and are frequently taught in yoga studios and similar venues, while others are a little more obscure. Many of today's breathing techniques can be traced back to or fall within the scope of the ancient practices of *pranayama*, a yoga practice whose origins can be traced back to more than 5,000 years ago.

Pranayama was originally conceived as a way to prepare the mind for spiritual growth. "Some of the earliest texts of the practice show that pranayama was a practice that was conducted by Pundits, or Hindu religious figures," explains Meera Dhawan, a California-based yoga teacher who was first introduced to pranayama as a child by her grandmother in India. "These pundits had to sing mantra for long periods and they found that connecting with the breath not only helped them do so, but also helped them tap into their spirituality."

The Sanskrit word *pranayama* consists of *prana*, meaning "life force," and *yama*, meaning "expansion" or "control." Those practicing pranayama with its original intention see it as a tool to influence their life force, allowing it to move throughout the body and gather in key areas.

## Casual Pranayama

Today, while pranayama still holds spiritual importance, it is often taught before or after yoga lessons more casually than when utilized by yogis to attain enlightenment. "I usually like to teach pranayama at the beginning or at the close of a practice," affirms Trishna Patel-Grigowski, a Michigan-based yoga teacher who incor-



Kelly Walden

porates pranayama into her lessons. The techniques, she says, "bring in this calming energy so that [my students] can be more present and focused and aware."

For Patel-Grigowski, the initial introduction to pranayama is also meant to inspire those in her class to take the practice off the mat. Yoga, she explains, is a lifestyle, and she stresses that the more consistent the practice, the greater the benefits. "I do believe pranayama is one of those tools you can build upon. Ultimately, it comes to a state where you can practice it everywhere."

Jenn Cook, an Atlanta-based yoga teacher, also describes how pranayama can be utilized during stretches and physical activity to increase performance. Cook says breathing properly during a twist can be beneficial. "Twists are notoriously difficult to breathe in," she says, noting they also work muscles that many of us might not be used to working. "But if you can find the support to find your breath, you will start to bring that tension out of your shoulders, out of your jaw, out of your neck, out of your belly even, and into the areas that are actually going to support you for a more spacious and healthier long-term rotation of the spine."

## The Benefits

Removed from any spiritual context, the benefits of pranayama have been well

demonstrated. The breathwork study mentioned earlier that exhibited decreased stress and depression was done on a control group practicing a pranayama technique. A further study showed pranayama decreased anxiety and modulated brain regions associated with emotional processing, such as the amygdala. Elsewhere, scientists have proven a connection between the breath and the physical body, showing that, by calming the breath, the body calms as well.

## Breathwork

Of course, some breathwork practices are not necessarily pranayama techniques. When distinguishing between the two, some believe the key differentiator is the retention of breath. According to Adrian Cox of BreathYoga in Japan, many pranayama techniques focus on "extending the pause between the inhalation and exhalation rather than removing it—like in breathwork." While this definition is not entirely accurate—some of those interviewed for this article reference pranayama techniques with no breath retention—it still serves as a common differentiator that often appears in texts comparing breathwork to pranayama. Cox also traces the term "breathwork" back to breathing techniques that were pioneered in the 1960s. These techniques are still used today, although they are commonly executed slightly differently.

Kelly Walden, who has been providing breathing technique instruction and running the Atlanta Breathwork Center for more than 30 years, teaches a therapeutic technique called Conscious Connected Circular Breathing (CCCB), which was originally developed in the 1960s. For years, the technique was done while submerged in water, says Walden, but these days, the practice is mainly done without water present. Either way, the effects of the practice are reportedly quite potent. Walden says that CCCB has led to a wide variety of reactions from her clients, from emotional release to creative stimulation. "I love it because it releases trauma and grief and stress," says Walden. It can also help develop lung tissue.

The most common experience is emotional release. "Because our lungs are connected to our emotions, and since the breath is under our control, it is connected to our emotions," she says. "You can make a decision to take a breath, but like with your heart, you can't make a decision to take a heartbeat, right? So, there are emotions involved."

Walden's sessions are a solid hour of CCCB, which follow an initial pre-session interview when she gets the opportunity to learn about her client, their goals and what brought them to her. The technique remains the same throughout the session, "but it's all about the rhythm," she says. "You have to get into a rhythm. That's where the training comes in."

In CCCB, the breath itself is quite simple—just a smooth inhalation followed by a



Jenn Cook





Meera Dhawan

smooth exhalation, with no pauses or retention of breath between them. Walden explains it's important not to "push the exhale," which she says can lead to hyperventilation. Instead, she advises clients to let the pressure exhale for them so that "the oxygen going in and the carbon dioxide going out are in equal measures."

A study of CCCB found that a certain technique can reduce negative effects such as anger, tension, confusion and depression and increase self-esteem. Some evidence also suggests that, under certain circumstances, the practice could have a hallucinogenic effect similar to those after medium to high doses of psilocybin.

Branton Box, a breathwork teacher and practitioner who frequently works with addicts and teaches in yoga studios in Georgia, teaches a similar practice. However, Box's method has one variation: it includes a second, smaller inhale right after the first. Box practices the technique himself, saying it allows him to "remove blocks—stuff that I'm not even aware of."

Box says many people come to him in states of distress. "Most people are moving at the rate of pain," he says. "They're coming because there's something causing them pain. Sometimes it's very raw." The effects of the practice, he says, are often hard

to put into words. However, it did help him gain awareness of how a difficult relationship in his childhood had caused emotional issues that had persisted for years under the surface. "This kind of awareness continues to expand the deeper one delves into breathwork," he says.

Box says people begin to realize they're not their thoughts. "[My thoughts are] dictating the quality of my life, depending on my acceptance of them or resistance to them." But beneath thoughts, he says, "there is a stable, always-aware awareness. That is actually my real reference point." With this understanding, Box has become aware of certain feelings that have influenced his behavior—and allowed him to change them.

For Box, asking questions of himself has led him to a certain type of spirituality, one which his breath practice seems to suit very well. "What I fundamentally want people to get to is the typical quest for knowledge," he says. "On the spiritual path, I've found it's asking less and less questions till you get to the last question of 'Who am I?'" In

the pursuit of understanding the Self, the awareness Box finds from his breathing practice is invaluable.

### Pranayama as Spiritual Practice

From a spiritual standpoint, the ultimate goal of pranayama is to cultivate the ability to facilitate spiritual pursuits. Abha Rajbhandari, Ph.D., a researcher at Mount Sinai Hospital and also a teacher at Tejal Yoga, had similar feelings following pranayama sessions as those experienced by people who have been guided through breathwork by Walden and Box. She says it felt "almost like touching bliss—where I've actually cried and laughed at the same time."

For many who practice and teach pranayama, its spiritual benefits are just as important, if not more so, than the physical ones. "These practices have been passed down for thousands of years, and what they found is that connecting the breath with spiritual significance enhances the benefits of the practice," explains Dhawan. Pranayama can enable "people to connect



Abha Rajbhandari

with themselves and the universe with more meaning," she says. And finding that meaning can feed back into the practice, enabling consistency, which is "a critical aspect to access the benefits of pranayama."

Numerous breathing techniques fit under the umbrella of "pranayama." Integral to many of the techniques is *kumbhaka*, or the holding of the breath. Atlanta-based yoga teacher Tracy Jennings-Hill calls *kumbhaka* "an essential part of really any good breathing practice." She points out two key benefits to practicing this breath retention—one is physical, and the other is more mental.

Physically, Jennings-Hill says *kumbhaka* increases breath capacity. Mentally, she says, it helps to "dispel the fear of not having the breath."

Indeed. According to Paramahansa Yogananda, the yogi largely responsible for bringing yoga to the West in the early 20th century, the original purpose of pranayama was the "gradual cessation of breathing." The reasons one would want to do this lie in the origins of pranayama as one of the eight limbs of yoga.

In the Western world, "yoga" commonly refers to a form of physical exercise, but the practice of yoga originated in India more than 5,000 years ago and was originally meant to achieve *samadhi*, a state of union with the divine energy of the universe. As a spiritual path, yoga consists of eight "limbs"—in Western culture, they might be considered "foundations"—to achieve that union. Two of those limbs—*asana*, the physical yogic poses, and pranayama—are the third and fourth limbs, respectively. Rajbhandari says the original goal of the first four limbs of yoga is to "prepare your body and mind so you can go to the higher state."

Pranayama is the "bridge that connects the physical aspect of our being to that subtle aspect of our being through the breath," says Rajbhandari.

It is said that when someone proficient enough at pranayama uses the practice, they disconnect input from the five senses to the mind, thereby naturally reaching the fifth limb of yoga—*pratyahara*, or withdrawal of the senses.

But why is this retreat from the senses necessary? Jennings-Hill says it is so we can "sit inside the chaos and not be affected by the mind." When the senses are stimulated, they stimulate the mind, she says. But when one focuses on the breath so completely and the senses fade away, there is nothing to distract the mind from spiritual self-awareness.

Pratyahara, then, leads to the final three limbs of yoga: *dharana*, or concentration, *dhyana*, or meditative absorption, and *samadhi* or enlightenment. Thus, as the limb prior to pratyahara, pranayama proves itself to be a foundation for reaching that final stage of spiritual pursuit.

Continues on page 39.

## Why a Naturopath?

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healinghandsreikiatl@gmail.com

## calendar

### MONDAY, JANUARY 1

**New Year's Day Ceremonial Sound Bath** – 1-3pm. Join Danielle Goldfarb and Mara Anthony for a powerful despacho ceremony and sound healing event to bring balance and blessings to your new year. \$50/advance, \$55/at door. Vista Yoga, 2836 Lavista Rd, Ste D, Decatur. 404-929-9642. VistaYoga.com.

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 12

**The Art of Self Practice** – Jan 12-14. 2:30-8:30pm, Fri; 9am-5:30pm, Sat & Sun. With Marti Yura and Marnie Memmolo. Dive deep into your own personal relationship with yoga for an opportunity to notice where yoga is in your life and where it is not. \$395. Vista Yoga, 2836 Lavista Rd, Ste D, Decatur. 404-929-9642. VistaYoga.com.

To place an ad in our Yoga section, inquire at [ads@naAtlanta.com](mailto:ads@naAtlanta.com).

## Trauma-Sensitive Yoga

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TSYAtlanta.com  
TSYAtlanta@gmail.com  
404-202-3929

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

#### THE ULTIMATE LETTING GO WORKSHOP

9:30am-12pm

Join Susan Patterson, Certified Conscious Dying Coach, for a session of open conversation, relaxing postures and sacred silence to learn the concept of conscious dying and how to integrate practices into your life for letting go of your body. \$49.

Peachtree Yoga Center  
6046 Sandy Springs Cir, Atlanta.  
404-847-9642

Ilona@PeachTreeYoga.com  
PeachtreeYoga.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. Lift Dunwoody, 1705 Mt Vernon Rd, Ste E, Dunwoody. Also at Lift Alpharetta, 501 S Main St, Ste 101, Alpharetta. LiftYogaStudio.com.

### SATURDAYS

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

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

### SUNDAYS

**Reiki-Infused Restorative Yoga** – 1-3pm. Calm the mind & nervous system, while turning inward and focusing your breath. \$25. Healing Hands Reiki & Spiritual Development, 27 Waddell St NE Suite #A.

**GIVING TREE YOGA CENTER**  
1295 W. Spring Street SE, Suite 200  
Smyrna, GA 30080  
www.givingtreeyogasmymrna.com  
770-626-1559

### HOPE'S YOGA

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### METTA YOGA

www.mettayoga.studio  
mila@mettayoga.studio



Metta Yoga provides small group, private and virtual yoga to students of all levels in a friendly, nurturing environment. Offerings also include workshops, teacher trainings and retreat experiences.

### SUN DRAGON YOGA

313-303-0096  
sundragonyoga.com  
david@sundragonyoga.com



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### SATI YOGA AND WELLNESS

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*Yoga is not a religion. It is a science, science of well-being, science of youthfulness, science of integrating body, mind and soul.*

—Amit Ray

Continued from page 37.

### A Flexible Practice

But many who teach pranayama today stress that it is a flexible practice, and one doesn't need such a grand spiritual end goal to engage with and benefit from it. "Unlike the yogis [of India], we live in a lifestyle where we have careers. We're not leaving everything and going into the mountains and trying to find our higher selves. We have our daily lives going on. And in that chaos of our daily life, how do we find balance and that connection to ourselves? And so in that way, we can use pranayama for that connection," says Rajbhandari.

From pranayama to CCCB, breathwork is available in many forms. Most share similar benefits, including decreased stress, increased lung capacity and greater clarity

of thought. And for those willing to take their practice deeper, breathwork can be a gateway to finding balance within one's mind and body and facilitating one's path toward awakening. 🙏

#### RESOURCES:

Meera Dhawan: @Meerav108, [truetoyoga.com](http://truetoyoga.com), [tejalyoga.com](http://tejalyoga.com)

Trishna Patel-Grigowski: @Grow\_with\_th\_flow, [yogawithtrishna.com](http://yogawithtrishna.com)

Jenn Cook: @Wellnesswithjenn, [wellnesswithjenn.com](http://wellnesswithjenn.com)

Kelly Walden: 404-310-5336, [breathworkers.com](http://breathworkers.com)

Branton Box: @Breathewithbranton, [breathewithbranton.com](http://breathewithbranton.com)

Abha Rajbhandari, Ph.D.: @Neurobreathe, [www.tejalyoga.as.me/satsang](http://www.tejalyoga.as.me/satsang)

Tracy Jennings-Hill: @Tracyofliveuryoga, [liveuryoga.com](http://liveuryoga.com)

## Jaya Ramamurthy

Clinical Ayurveda Specialist

Trained at the California College of Ayurveda, Jaya offers consultations and Ayurveda teaching – YTT modules, wellness workshops and cooking classes – all across the southeast.

ayurjaya.com  
ayurwellness@gmail.com





Publicize your event! This section hosts free and paid listings. Each month, we select a limited number of events — they must have broad appeal and cost no more than \$25 to attend — to list for free. Otherwise, basic listings are \$40 and enhanced listings are \$75.

Submit free listings to [calendar@naAtlanta.com](mailto:calendar@naAtlanta.com) and paid listings to [ads@naAtlanta.com](mailto:ads@naAtlanta.com).

## PHOENIX & DRAGON BOOKSTORE

5531 Roswell Rd NE, Atlanta  
404-255-5207  
[PhoenixAndDragon.com](http://PhoenixAndDragon.com)

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 7

**Annual Vision Board Project** – 10am-12pm. With Candace Apple. Supplies of poster board, glue, scissors and a wide array of magazines will be available to provide inspirational statements and images to express your vision. You are welcome to bring any materials you wish to add. Space limited. Free.

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

**Fairy Crafting 101: Foundations of Fairy Magic** – 1-6pm. With Daniela Simina. Get acquainted with different theories about the origin and identity of fairies in different traditions; learn about the benefits of connecting with fairies and the appropriate ways to engage and much more. \$40.

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

**Soundbath Meditation** – 4-5pm. With Sonia Thame. A deeply immersive full-body listening experience that uses sound to invite powerful therapeutic restorative processes to the entire body. Great for anyone who wants to find a new way to relax or reduce stress levels. \$20.

### MONDAY, JANUARY 1

**Amitayus New Year's Day Retreat** – 9am-3:15pm. Spending a day in retreat on Amitayus at the start of the year is considered very auspicious for what the whole of the rest of the year will bring. With American Buddhist nun, Kelsang Dechok. Everyone welcome. No prior experience needed. \$25/advance, \$30/door. Kadampa Meditation Center GA, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. For schedule: [MeditationInGeorgia.org](http://MeditationInGeorgia.org).

**AADE 38th Kwanzaa Fest** – 12-6pm. With the African American Dance Ensemble; performance at 2pm. Free. Durham Armory, 220 Foster St, Durham. [aadekwanzaafest.com](http://aadekwanzaafest.com).

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 4

**Evening Restore Yoga in the Salt Cave** – 6:30-7:30pm. For all levels. Restorative yoga is a restful practice that allows your body to effortlessly hold yoga poses by use of yoga blocks, blankets and bolsters. \$25.

Saltville Grotto & Spa, 2447 Main St E, Ste 3, Snellville. 678-585-1153. [SaltvilleGrotto.com](http://SaltvilleGrotto.com).

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 5

**Sweetwater Creek Day Hike** – 10am-1pm. Join Georgia Conservancy for a hike through this incredible Georgia State Park. \$15 donation; \$5 visitor parking pass. Sweetwater Creek State Park, Park Office, 1750 Mt Vernon Rd, Lithia Springs. [GeorgiaConservancy.org](http://GeorgiaConservancy.org).

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 6

**2024 Beyond Vision Experience** – 8am-12pm. We will aid you in organizing your plan for 2024 and enable the achievement of your goals. \$25. The Healing Environment, 1675 Cumberland Pkwy SE, Ste 202, Smyrna. [Momence.com](http://Momence.com).

**Sally Bethea** – 1-3pm. Author of *Keeping the Chattahoochee*. This month's theme is "Rivers and Streams" where families and the community can come together to explore the wonders of water. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. Register: [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

### 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](http://UnityAtl.org).

**Explore the Freedom of Wholeness** – 11:15am-12pm. Everyone has the innate ability to heal themselves and to help others heal. Using Healing Arts we will safely experience a self-healing where we call in the parts of ourself that we may not be comfortable with or that seem too big for us to own. Free. UUMAN, 11420 Crabapple Rd, Roswell. Fredrika Healing.com.

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 12

**Second Friday Walk in the Park** – 9-10am. Learn more about this neighborhood park from our Friends of the Park group. Melvin Drive Park, 3895 Melvin Dr SW, Atlanta. [ParkPride.org](http://ParkPride.org).

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

**Hypnotherapy Certification Begins** – 9am-5pm. Boost your practice or start anew! Un-

lock 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](http://Tinyurl.com/Hypno2024).

**Family Night Hike** – 7-9pm. Explore the sounds and sights of the forest. Includes an animal encounter and a relaxing campfire where you can roast a marshmallow. Limited space available. All ages. \$15/general public, \$12/members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Register by Jan 11: [ChattNatureCenter.org](http://ChattNatureCenter.org).

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

**Stillness and Laughter Workshop** – 12-1pm. Unlock the power of both silence and laughter to cultivate profound inner peace and lasting happiness. \$20. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. [AumStudioForWellness.com](http://AumStudioForWellness.com).

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 25

**Energy Clearing** – 6-7pm. Be guided through grounding your energy in the present, letting go of unbeneficial energies, and calling back all your energy that has been scattered. You will leave feeling restored and revitalized. \$25. The Open Mind Center, 1425 Market Blvd, Ste 500, Roswell. 678-629-3630. [TheOpenMindCenter.com](http://TheOpenMindCenter.com).

**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](mailto:Info-SE@Share-International.us). Register: [Tinyurl.com/5t3dpx5z](http://Tinyurl.com/5t3dpx5z).

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

**Language of Compassion Workshop**  
2-5pm

Learn to stay connected to your compassionate self—your best self—during these challenging times. Based on the book *Nonviolent Communications* by Marshall Rosenberg. Remote via Zoom.

Free. Contact: Clarice L. Belcher, [clarice33@bellsouth.net](mailto:clarice33@bellsouth.net).

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3

**BRIGID: Maker of Song**  
9am-1pm

Internationally-renowned vocal artists Virginia Schenck and Ruth Cunningham facilitate an interactive workshop drawing on Celtic wisdom through poetry, songs and chants. \$30.

Register: [bit.ly/mmp-events](http://bit.ly/mmp-events).

Mary & Martha's Place,  
4393 Garmon Rd NW  
404-239-9382  
[staff@maryandmarthasplace.com](mailto:staff@maryandmarthasplace.com)



### 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](mailto:MWilkinson@leadstrat.com). [UnityAtl.org](http://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](http://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](http://RedClaySangha.org).

**The Quest: A Journey of Spiritual Rediscovery** – 9:30-10:45am. As Unity Atlanta Church celebrates its 100th year in 2024, we embark on a yearlong adventure with other like-minded seekers to revisit and apply the ancient Truths that are foundational to our beliefs and experiences. In-person and Zoom. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. [UnityAtl.org](http://UnityAtl.org).

**Online: NWUUC** – 10am. Via Zoom. North-west Unitarian Universalist Congregation: 770-955-1408 or [nwuuc.org](http://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](http://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](http://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/yjzutjf4](http://Tinyurl.com/yjzutjf4).

**One World Spiritual Center Sunday Service** – 11am. To watch: [OneWorldSpiritualCenter.net](http://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](http://UnityAtl.org).

**Online: UUCA Service** – 11am. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta: [uuca.org/live](http://uuca.org/live).

**SRF Atlanta Reading and Inspirational Service** – 11am-12pm. An opportunity to meet with other truth-seekers to com-

mune with God and share spiritual fellowship. 4000 King Springs Rd, Smyrna. 770-434-7200. [srfatlanta.org](http://srfatlanta.org).

**Sunday Morning Talks and Discussion** – 11am-12pm. With Vedanta Center of Atlanta via Zoom. To watch: [VedantaAtlanta.org](http://VedantaAtlanta.org).

**Unity North Online & In-Person Sunday Service** – 11:15am. 4255 Sandy Plains Rd, Marietta. More info: [UnityNorth.org](http://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](mailto:MeditationWellnessClub@gmail.com). [MeditationWellnessClub.com](http://MeditationWellnessClub.com).

### Mondays

**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](http://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](http://MeditationInGeorgia.org).

### Tuesdays

**Online Meditation Open House** – 7pm. A 30-min meditation and a 30-min discussion via Zoom. To watch: [Atlanta.Shambhala.org](http://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](http://Meetup.com/Twin-Hearts-Meditation).

**Metro Atlanta Sierra Club Meeting** – 7:30pm. 2nd Tues. More info: [SierraClub.org/georgia/atlanta](http://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](http://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](http://MeditationCircle.org).

### 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](http://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](http://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 Pranica Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: [AtIPranicHealing.com](http://AtIPranicHealing.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](http://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](http://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](mailto:MeditationWellnessClub@gmail.com). [MeditationWellnessClub.com](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://Tinyurl.com/2rykarft).





**natural**  
awakenings

**30th Anniversary**



by Kimberly Whittle

Humans are social creatures by nature, and leaning into community is key to a long and healthy life. Look no further than the five so-called Blue Zones in places around the planet where people regularly live to be 100 years old. While eating nutritious food and exercising regularly are important aspects to a healthy lifestyle, Dan Buettner, a Blue Zones expert, believes part of the secret to a long and healthy life is finding purpose and doing it with help from a meaningful community.

Buettner's observations are supported by research. An article published in the *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine* summarized the significant evidence that connection to a community helps people physically and mentally with improvements in weight control, blood sugar levels, cancer survival, cardiovascular health and overall mental health, as well as a notable mitigation of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. In a Brigham Young University meta-analysis of 148 studies to determine the effect of social relationships on the risk of mortality, researchers reported that social connections with friends, family, neighbors or colleagues improved the odds of living longer by 50 percent.

#### **A Nexus for Consciousness, Healing and Hope**

*Natural Awakenings*, a pioneering magazine founded to educate and connect communities for healthy living on a healthy planet, is celebrating its 30th anniversary. In this digital era, *Natural Awakenings* continues to stand at the vanguard along with its parent company, KnoWEwell, and its Regenerative Whole Health Hub (Hub). The one-of-its-kind Hub uniquely builds communities, enables trusted connections to people and businesses, provides evidence-based resources, as well as local provider and thought-leader education and healing programs.

As global stressors continue to arise, now more than ever, it's important to us at Natural Awakenings Publishing Corporation and KnoWEwell to expand our community's impact to inspire, empower and connect our ecosystem locally, nationally and globally. We will be bringing our readers immersive engagement and learning opportunities, and amplifying our local businesses through multimedia publishing and business services in our local *Natural Awakenings* online communities, as well as within KnoWEwell's Regenerative Whole Health Hub.

As we enter our fourth decade, our print magazine will continue to grow while we embrace the ever-expanding new era of digital enlightenment. We intend to continue to be a beacon of hope and a connector for safe, trusted connections to real people, authentic experts, education, and our natural, integrative and whole-health communities. We are creating new opportunities for our readers to learn from and engage with local business owners, as well as national and global experts through the Hub by:



**natural**  
awakenings

**30th Anniversary**



- Bringing articles to life and expanding services to local business owners to help them share their unique qualities, expertise and stories in online inspirational and educational webcasts and videos
- Engaging online community book discussions with luminaries such as Deepak Chopra (see *ChopraQuantumBodyDiscussion.KnoWEwell.com*)
- Providing access to immersive learning directories and 200-plus topic-specific communities
- Helping people find their best-matched providers, community members, businesses and locally grown foods based on their needs, values and preferences
- Saving members money with discounts on organic foods, courses, healing programs, products and services
- We promise to remain steadfast in our commitment to high-quality, evidence-based journalism to help our readers stay current and make informed decisions for sustainable, regenerative healthy living. Beginning this month and throughout our 30th year, we invite our readers and business owners to check out what's new in our print magazines and online. We hope everyone loves our fresh new magazine design this month.

We invite all to engage and connect with like-minded communities, submit feedback for a chance to be included in the new, "Members Comments" department of our magazine, and share your favorite businesses to help us continue to build trusted resources locally and globally. Together, we will be the change we seek in the world to build regenerative communities one at a time to achieve WELLthier Living: Happy. Healthy. Abundant. Purpose-Filled, People and Planet.

*Kimberly Whittle is the founder and CEO of KnoWEwell, P.B.C., and the CEO of Natural Awakenings Publishing Corporation. Learn more about her personal journey and purpose at [KnoWEwell.com/written-content/steppingstones-WELLthier-living](https://KnoWEwell.com/written-content/steppingstones-WELLthier-living).*

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**Focus on Long-term Habits.** Shift your mindset from short-term fixes to long-term habits. Think of it as a lifestyle change rather than a temporary diet.

**Be Patient and Persistent.** Understand that weight loss takes time and setbacks are a part of the process. Stay committed and keep working towards your goals—even if you face challenges.

**Seek Professional Guidance.** Consider consulting with a certified health and wellness coach. Health and wellness coaching is a partnership between a coach—who understands how human behavior impacts motivation and health—and their client, who wants to change. Health coaches help their clients set and achieve goals and build new habits. Simply put, they are change agents. They support their clients to make lifestyle and behavioral changes critical to their health.

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to weight loss, and it's okay to seek professional guidance to tailor a plan specifically to your needs. The key to lasting success is making gradual, sustainable changes and staying dedicated to your health and wellness journey. Take care not to be too hard on yourself. Take it one step at a time, and you'll see great progress. 🌱

Based in Atlanta, Hope Knosher is the founder of *Healthy Living with Hope*, which offers health coaching, yoga classes, and retreats. She is a national board-certified health and wellness coach, a certified yoga therapist and a certified E-RYT 500 yoga teacher. Contact her at 770-789-7782.



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# The Skies of January

by Linda Minnick



For most of my life, January hasn't been my favorite month. Being a warm-weather person, the first month of the year was always too cold, gray and wet for me. I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, where the sky turns gray in November and stays that way until the end of March. While it was typically cold and snowy in November and December, January saw temperatures fall even more. So, the combination of freezing temperatures, gray skies, and the need to walk to school in snow that quickly became dirty slush fostered in me a strong dislike for January and an ever-growing yearning for the sunshine and warmth of spring and summer.

A few years later, I married and moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and eventually ended up south of the Mason-Dixon line. While the South didn't get the same amount of snow as St. Louis, the trees still became naked, flowers still withered and died, ice or snow made its appearance and the cold temperatures and slate skies of January still prevailed.

My husband and I have four kids and were involved in many church organizations over the years. Because of those responsibilities and since we also spent most Christmases traveling back to St. Louis to visit grandparents, I'd spend the first week in January recouping from the busy holiday season. I was also working as a professional salesperson, and January was when new quotas and commission plans were distributed. I dedicated the rest of the month to determining how I would meet my annual quota. While many others were setting high and lofty goals for themselves, reaching quota was the only goal I had time for.

For the first several decades of my life, January's weather and gray skies set the background of a life filled with commitments and to-dos. But, like many of us, as I aged, so did my recognition that there was more to life and more to me.

Spirit guided me through my learning stages of self-awareness and empowerment. Vision boards, affirmations, written goals and meditation became the tools I used in January to attract success and realize my desires for the new year. Success after success kept me motivated. The lack of success kept me learning and improving. These processes worked then, and they work now. They work to the point that I still use a vision board, but I am cautious of putting anything on it that I'm not ready to receive.

I soon became more acutely aware of the energy that permeates everything. As time progressed and my self-awareness grew, my recognition of the existence of life-giving energy switched from being a faith-based acceptance to a physical recognition. At this time in my life, I am more keenly aware than ever when the energy within and around me changes.

Because of the pandemic, this awareness has intensified. During the period of confinement and quarantine, it became clear to me that we—that is, the entire world—were being prepared for a shift. When in history has all of civilization had to deal with the same event at the same time? An event that put us in neutral for a long time? When have we experienced so much universal chaos and pain, which we know accompanies growth and the birth of something new?

In fact, these events have given me a brand-new appreciation for January and all of winter. Instead of dreading winter, I now recognize the beauty of the winter skies and the season. It's a time for relinquishing the past, taking a deep breath, and preparing ourselves for the forward movement and growth that will come with the warmth of tomorrow.

Now, instead of spending the first two weeks of the year working on quotas and tangible goals, I take the time to reflect on who I was last year and who I am to be this year. I am still asking what my lesson during our recent period of dormancy was and how I am to apply it today and as we move into a new year. I now choose to appreciate the month of January and all the preparation for growth that is being cultivated, unseen, beneath the surface.

Because I know we're all in this together, I choose to see humanity reaching a new level of understanding and love in 2024 and to recognize the part I play in that movement. That's the picture on my vision board this year.

Happy New Year. 🌱



Linda Minnick is a speaker, author, life coach and Preferred PSYCH-K facilitator. She lives in Roswell with her husband, John. Her most recent book, *New Day, New Life*, can be found on Amazon.

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