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Atlanta  
February 2024

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## FROM THE ARCHIVES

Our archive is rich with stories about romantic love from years past, so we offer many of the popular ones below. One of our favorites is a rare video interview from 2021 with Atlanta couples therapists talking about how to grow closer.

Not all of the articles listed below are about romantic love, though. One of the most-read over the years is from 2020, exploring the meaning of “self-love.”

The final story below isn't about love at all, but it did appear in a February issue like the others. It's a contribution from Nicole Hale Bettis, a Montessori teacher, and it's about teaching meditation to young ones using hot chocolate!



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Romantic Relationships Aren't About Unconditional Love



Ashley Williams/ Pexels.com

fection based on admiration, benevolence or common interests." All three have something subtle in common: love has to do with our personal identity or benefit. For example, kinship means "my family" and "personal ties" means "my friends." Sexual desire, of course, has very much to do with what people want for themselves. Admiration is a positive feeling we experience, so again, "love" is defined in such a way that there is personal benefit. Receiving another's benevolence speaks for itself, as does sharing common interests with others.

And yet, the word that we use to express the highest level of love imaginable—"unconditional"—is understood to mean that we expect no benefit from the love we offer to the point that we don't even expect that love will be given back in return. In other words, our highest ideal of love has nothing to do with our identities or desires.

That's why I believe that romantic love—as much as we worship the ideal and wish for it in our own lives, treasuring the passionate moments shared with romantic partners—is the least "unconditional" of all so-called "loving relationships." We expect to be as close to the center of our partners' lives as possible, to be an object of their love, devotion, attention and sexual desire. These expectations place conditions upon our romantic relationships.

The evidence that supports the assertion that romantic love rarely involves unconditional love is the animosity that follows break-ups. A YouGov poll found that 58 percent of Americans surveyed report that breakups "are usually dramatic and/or messy," and 38 percent say that "staying in touch with an ex will do more harm than good." Only 17 percent say the opposite. If romantic love was truly unconditional, it wouldn't matter if the relationship endured; love would.

A song titled "Let Her Go" by the English folk singer known as Passenger captures this truth for me. Here's a portion of the lyrics:

Only know you've been high when you're feeling low
Only hate the road when you're missing home
Only know you love her when you let her go
And you let her go

We asked readers to contribute to this issue by responding to a simple question: How do you define "love"? It's the first time we've done so, and I have no idea why it took us so long!

I worked as a qualitative market research professional in a previous life; in other words, I conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews and provided analysis and reporting. While I would normally enjoy delving into this small sample to see if there's some "center of gravity" in the responses, I am more content with the facts that 1) we received a number of responses, 2) for the most part, contributions were well written, 3) it is clear that people gave thought to what they wrote and 4) while it is impossible to draw conclusions, I'll lean into my bias that all of our readers are lovely human beings.

The first definition Merriam-Webster offers for "love" has three parts: a) "strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties," b) "attraction based on sexual desire," and c) "af-

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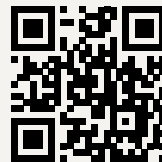
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Correction

In the Atlanta Briefs in our January issue, Virginia Schenck's last name was misspelled in the headline.

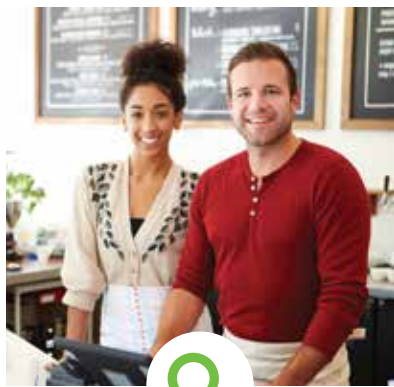
These words describe perhaps the most ironic of all life situations: that if we express undying love while in a romantic relationship, we will only know that it is truly undying when it comes time to part. Are we able to do so with grace and gratitude and wish nothing but the best for the person who no longer wants to be with us?

As with many things in this life, my understanding of love is a function of spiritual teachings. My Buddhist tradition defines love as the wish that another is purely happy. "Purely" is an essential concept here. It refers to a happiness that comes from within, one that is not predicated upon external factors such as wealth, status, partner and so forth; it arises from a peaceful mind. Unlike Merriam-Webster's definition, this definition of love has nothing to do with the identity or desires of the person offering love. It is truly unconditional.

As we celebrate the month of love, may we all endeavor to inquire about the true nature of love and to revise our definitions accordingly. 🙏



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



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“I’m so excited about my recent certification in Belief Code,” says Glazer. “This modality represents a significant milestone in my journey as an energy healer and has greatly enhanced the results for my clients. I’m passionate about utilizing its transformative power to facilitate healing and personal growth.”

In addition to her Belief Code certification, Glazer has earned certifications in Emotion Code, Body Code and reiki. She connects with her clients by phone or over Zoom.

For more information, visit [FierceInnerAlchemy.com](http://FierceInnerAlchemy.com), call 404-954-0158 or email [FierceInnerAlchemy@gmail.com](mailto:FierceInnerAlchemy@gmail.com).



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## Many Paths Wellness Adds More Healing Circles

In response to popular demand, Many Paths Wellness in Roswell now offers its Women’s Goddess Circle on two evenings each month. The gatherings welcome women of all backgrounds who are seeking refuge and support in navigating life’s challenges and includes meditation, stress and energy release, journaling, self-inquiry and shared experiences.

Many Paths has also begun offering a new Co-Ed Adult circle and is adding a second Teen Healing Circle to its schedule each month due to big turnouts. These groups integrate yoga, mindfulness and stress relief techniques while fostering a confidential and safe space for attendees to explore healthy ways of engaging with life. .

“I’m incredibly excited about the growth of the women’s circles and the introduction of new offerings,” says Jessica Otieno, founder and owner of Many Paths Wellness. “The expansion to include men aligns with my vision of inclusivity, recognizing the universal need for support, and the success of the teen circle has been especially heartening.”

Many Paths Wellness offers a variety of services, including yoga classes and private sessions, health and life coaching, wellness journeys, retreats and more.

The cost to attend any of the circles is \$20. The monthly class membership entitles one to 50% discount on any class. Many Paths Wellness is located at 4795 Keota Run NE, Roswell. For more information, visit [ManyPathsWellness.com](http://ManyPathsWellness.com) or email [JessicaManyPathsWellness@gmail.com](mailto:JessicaManyPathsWellness@gmail.com).





# Plant-Based Milk Alternatives

## Benefits for People and the Planet

by Carrie Jackson



While plant-based milks have been around for centuries, they have historically played second fiddle to other dairy alternatives, but not anymore. As people are becoming more conscious of the impact their food choices have on their health and the planet, plant-based milk has turned into a mainstay in most grocery stores. Touting sustainability benefits, a creamy texture and pleasing flavors, soy, oat, almond, cashew and even macadamia nut milks are having their moment.

According to the Good Food Institute, 41 percent of American households purchased

plant-based milk in 2022. Most major milk brands, such as Nestlé, are offering plant-based alternatives, while specialty companies like Elmhurst 1925 and Eden Foods are continually expanding their selection.

“Plant-based dairy is now more than 15 percent of the milk industry,” says Elysabeth Alfano, co-founder and CEO of VegTech Invest, a firm that manages the first exchange-traded fund dedicated to plant-based companies. “This is driven by the quality of the products, including oat, almond, soy, pea and hemp milks as proven options. With 65 percent of people worldwide and more than 80 percent of African Americans and

more than 90 percent of Asian Americans being lactose intolerant, plant-based milk is a great alternative.”

When selecting beverage options, many consumers also weigh a company’s ethical choices. Alfano predicts the beginning of the end of traditional factory farming, saying, “People are seeing how inefficient and harmful meat production is and are making the connection between saving the environment and their lifestyle choices.”

Leah Hoxie, senior vice president of innovation at Oatly North America, observes, “People opt for nondairy milk for a variety of reasons that are usually personal and nuanced. These can include allergies, nutrition, ethical and environmental concerns, and, of course, taste. Oatly makes nondairy milk alternatives that have the same creamy taste, frothy feel and functionality as cow’s milk while also generally having a lower climate impact. We’re also seeing generational differences in milk preferences, with a recent Oatly flash poll finding that 54 percent of Gen Z and 49 percent of Millennials prefer plant-based milk to cow’s milk.”

Like many other plant-based companies, Oatly has expressed a commitment to creating lasting environmental change. “With roughly one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions coming from the food system, and about half of those emissions coming from the livestock or the animal-based sector, the greatest impact we at Oatly can have as a company is to convert people from dairy milk to oat milk. Our research shows that Oatly Barista sold in the U.S. has a 46 percent lower climate impact than comparable cow’s milk, supporting our larger mission to make it easy for people to eat better and live healthier lives without recklessly taxing the planet’s resources in the process,” explains Hoxie.

While plant-based milk alternatives may tout health benefits, the specific ingredients and processing methods play a role in their nutritional value. Just because something

is plant-based doesn’t automatically make it healthier. “There are misconceptions that either nondairy milks are automatically less healthy than cow milk or that they are inherently more nutritious, but the truth is it depends on what’s in the milk,” says Taylor Wolfram, a registered dietitian who specializes in vegan nutrition.

Plant-based dairy alternatives have differing nutritional advantages, and it is best for consumers to make their own comparison. “Soy and pea milk—the protein superstars of plant milks—contain some fat and, when fortified, are an excellent source of calcium and vitamin D,” Wolfram explains. “Hemp has a little less protein, and oat and almond milks are very low in protein. Hemp milk is rich in ALA [alpha-linolenic acid, a type of omega-3 fatty acid found in plants]. Nondairy milks may or may not contain added sugars and fats or be fortified, so it is best to check the nutrition facts panel to see what levels of nutrients each specific product contains.”

Ultimately, the best plant-based dairy may be the one we love to consume. “Enjoyment and taste are highly subjective experiences,” Wolfram says. “I encourage folks to try different options and find what they like.”

Carrie Jackson is an Illinois-based freelance writer and frequent contributor to Natural Awakenings. Connect at [CarrieJacksonWrites.com](http://CarrieJacksonWrites.com).

## No-Bake Pumpkin Dairy-Free Cheesecake

YIELD: 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

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4 Tbsp coconut oil, gently warmed  
16 oz nondairy cream cheese, room temperature

1 cup powdered sugar  
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1 Tbsp pumpkin pie spice  
1/2 tsp salt

In the food processor, grind the graham crackers until they are as fine as possible. Add the coconut oil and pulse to combine. Transfer the mixture to an 8-inch springform pan and firmly press into an even layer, bringing the mixture about 1 inch up the sides of the pan. Transfer to the fridge to chill while making the filling. In a mixer with a paddle attachment, or using a hand beater, mix the nondairy cream cheese, powdered sugar, pumpkin puree, pumpkin pie spice and salt until smooth and uniform. Pour into the prepared crust and smooth into an even layer. Transfer to the fridge and chill for 3 hours, or overnight. When ready to serve, remove the outer ring of the springform pan. Slice and enjoy.

Recipe courtesy of Caroline Schiff, a James Beard-nominated executive pastry chef.



Love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get—only with what you are expecting to give—which is everything. —Katharine Hepburn



# Delicious Dairy-Free Recipes



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## Chef AJ's Popeye's Perfection

**YIELD: 2 SERVINGS**

1 cup water or unsweetened nondairy milk	1 large date (or more to taste), soaked	3 oz oil-free, salt-free sun-dried tomatoes
12 oz baby organic spinach	1 cup ripe avocado	Hemp seeds for garnish
1 small shallot	2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice	

Place the water or nondairy milk and the sun-dried tomatoes in a high-powered blender and process until dissolved. Add the spinach, shallot and date and process again until smooth. Add the avocado and lemon juice and blend briefly until smooth. Sprinkle with hemp seeds, if desired.

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## Chef AJ's Caramel Blondies

**YIELD: 16-20 COOKIES**

8 oz pitted dates	½ cup millet, ground into flour
8 oz unsweetened nondairy milk	1 tsp cinnamon
3 tsp vanilla powder, divided	2 cups mashed banana (approximately 3 bananas)
2 cups white sweet potato flesh	Reduced-fat shredded coconut
1½ cups rolled oats	

Soak the dates in the nondairy milk for several hours or overnight so they are very soft. Create a paste by placing the dates, soaking liquid and 1 teaspoon of vanilla powder into a food processor fitted with the “S” blade, and processing until smooth. Remove ¾ cup of the date paste and place in the refrigerator to chill; this will be the frosting.

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Place the remaining ingredients, including 2 teaspoons of vanilla powder, into the food processor with the remaining date paste, and process until smooth. Pour the batter into a 9-inch square silicone baking pan and bake for 30 to 40 minutes (a shorter baking time will produce a moister blondie). Turn the oven off and allow the pan to cool in the oven.

Once the blondies are completely cool, frost with the chilled frosting. Sprinkling the cookies with reduced-fat shredded coconut is optional. Chill and cut into bars.

*Chef's Notes:* White sweet potatoes are also called Hannah or Jersey yams. Japanese or Murasaki sweet potatoes, which have a purple skin and white flesh, could be used as a substitute. Orange and purple sweet potatoes are not recommended for this recipe. Millet helps mitigate the gummy texture of oats.

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# The Power of Mushrooms

## Nutrition, Benefits and Risks of Edible Mushrooms

by Ocean Robbins and Nicole Dandrea-Russert

Excerpted from *Real Superfoods: Everyday Ingredients to Elevate Your Health* by Ocean Robbins and Nichole Dandrea-Russert, MS, RDN. Reprinted with permission by Hay House Publishing.

### What are Mushrooms?

Mushrooms are members of the fungi kingdom and are not the same as plants. In fact, fungi are more closely related to animals than plants; like us, they don't photosynthesize. The compound that provides structure to fungi's cell walls is chitin, which makes up the exoskeletons of lobsters and ants and the scales of fish.

Mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of fungi in the same way that a pear is the fruiting body of a pear tree. They're made up of three parts: the stipe (stem), the pileus (cap), and the lamellae (gills). The “seeds” of the mushroom “fruit” are its spores, which form a network of microscopic rooting threads called mycelium. This is a mass of thread-like branches that mushrooms use to decompose nearby plant material in order to extract nutrients. A mycelium can live for many years, communicating with plants and sending up its annual crop of mushrooms.

The mycelium can be small and compact or can span underground over thousands of acres with mushrooms popping up out of the ground sporadically or in clusters. The world's largest organism is thought to be a mycelium network belonging to a mushroom technically called *Armillaria ostoyae*, commonly known as the honey mushroom, found in Malheur National Forest, Oregon. How enormous is it? This mushroom's mycelium network covers two square miles and is around 8,650 years old. So if you ever get tired of knock-knock jokes, you can try this riddle: “What's two and a half miles across, 8,650 years old, and lives in Oregon?”



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### Types of Mushrooms

In addition to white button mushrooms, which are readily available and typically less expensive than other varieties partly because it's possible to cultivate them commercially on a giant scale, there are many other kinds. Button, brown cremini and portobello mushrooms are the same variety, just aged longer or allowed to grow bigger (buttons are the youngsters, brown cremini are the teens, and portobello are the grown-ups).

Other increasingly common mushrooms include oyster, shiitake, enoki, lion's mane, turkey tail, hen-of-the-woods, beech, chanterelle, porcini, and morel.

### Mushroom Nutrition

You'll find different kinds and ratios of nutrients in different mushroom varieties, so for this section, I'll focus exclusively on that surprising superfood, white button mushrooms (since they're generally the most affordable of the fungi). They're low calorie and high in protein. They're loaded

with antioxidants — beating out such formidable plant foods as tomatoes, green peppers, pumpkins, zucchini, carrots, and green beans — and even topping more expensive shiitake and oyster mushrooms.

Button mushrooms are also packed with vitamins and minerals like B vitamins, selenium, potassium, and copper. They contain two types of important dietary fibers, beta-glucans and chitin. Interestingly, when mushrooms are exposed to sunlight while growing, they are one of the few natural dietary sources of vitamin D.

### Why White Button Mushrooms Deserve Superfood Status

OK, this is where I have to remind myself that this is just a chapter, not an entire book. Because science has discovered over 200 conditions affecting human health that can be treated to some extent with mushrooms, and at least 100 mechanisms by which mushrooms support our health. So what follows is a very short list.

## Mushrooms Can Improve Your Gut Health

Mushrooms are a gut-friendly food, offering the good bacteria in your gut lots of prebiotic fiber. They've also been found to balance the microbiome's beneficial bacteria, such as acidophilus and Bifidobacterium.

## Mushrooms Can Protect Your Heart

One of the amino acids found in mushrooms, ergothioneine, has been associated with a lower risk of heart disease. In a study concluded in 2019 (started in 1998), researchers measured 112 different aspects of blood chemistry of over 3,000 people who didn't have heart disease at the start of the study, and then followed them for an average of 21 years. The blood marker that best predicted continued freedom from heart disease was ergothioneine. The researchers concluded that a diet high in ergothioneine-rich foods was a good way to obtain that protection.

## Mushrooms Can Support Your Brain Health

Several studies have shown that eating mushrooms can help protect your brain. In 2010, researchers found that Norwegians in their 70s who ate mushrooms at least three times a week had a 19% lower risk of developing dementia. Seven years later, Japanese researchers analyzed a 2006 population study and discovered a linear relationship between mushroom consumption and lower incidences of dementia. And this relationship held even when eliminating other factors that might also support brain health, like consumption of fruits and vegetables and educational level attained.

In 2017, a research team in Singapore found that eating more mushrooms lowered the risk of mild cognitive decline, which brain researchers see as an intermediate step on the way to full-blown dementia.

## Mushrooms Can Help Prevent Cancer

Roughly one in nine women will develop breast cancer during her lifetime. While early detection and medical advances have

improved survival rates, it's still a terrifying diagnosis for many people. And early detection is not the same as prevention. What if there were a food that could actually reduce a woman's risk of developing this dreaded disease?

Can you picture a white button mushroom? Now imagine cutting that single mushroom in half, and then cooking and eating it. And having just that much mushroom every day.

Congratulations! In that modest thought experiment, you just cut your risk of developing breast cancer by two thirds. You read that right — a study of over 2,000 Chinese women found that eating just a third of an ounce of (about a half of one) mushroom daily cut the risk of breast cancer by 64%.

Men shouldn't feel left out; white button mushrooms have been shown to lower blood levels of prostate-specific antigen (PSA), a marker associated with the development of prostate cancer. They may do this by suppressing androgen receptors, thereby slowing the growth of cancer cells.

## Mushrooms Can Support Your Immune System

Mushrooms enhance the ability of dendritic cells, found in bone marrow, to produce T cells that kill disease-causing pathogens. They are also a rich source of compounds called beta-glucans, which activate white blood cells to help fight off foreign substances and diseases.

## Mushrooms Can Support Your Digestive and Metabolic Health

The more fiber you eat, the lower your chances of developing type 2 diabetes, according to a giant meta-analysis published in *The Lancet* in early 2019. And mushrooms are one of the best sources of fiber out there. In particular, they contain lots of prebiotic fiber, which is yummy food for the "good" gut bacteria that do incredibly important jobs in your body. And a healthy gut is one of the best defenses against literally dozens of maladies including type 2 diabetes and digestive disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome.

## Mushrooms Can Help You with Weight Management

Eating more fiber is one of the most reliable ways to lose excess weight and keep it off. One cause of obesity is the modern industrialized diet, which is largely made up of animal products that contain no fiber and processed plant foods that have had the fiber removed. One of fiber's important functions is to make us feel full, so we stop eating before downing more calories than we need.

In one study, researchers asked some people to substitute mushrooms for meat in some of their recipes. Those who consumed at least 2¼ ounces of mushrooms per day (that's roughly 4 medium button mushrooms) experienced significantly more weight loss than those who didn't. They also ended up with a lower body mass index and a smaller waist circumference after one year.

## Culinary Uses for Edible Mushrooms

Mushrooms are a great substitute for meat in lots of dishes, thanks both to their strong umami flavor and meaty texture.

First, a word of caution: some edible mushrooms may contain a slightly toxic compound called agaratine. The good news is, agaratine breaks down when exposed to heat. So mushrooms should be cooked, not eaten raw.

But that's all right, because cooked mushrooms are delicious, and they're very easy to prepare in all sorts of ways. They're wonderful in stir-fries and casseroles. You can marinate and grill them, or slice them for a pizza topping. Mushroom soup is a classic; with an immersion blender, you can make it thick and comforting — a steaming anchor for a simple winter peasant meal.

You can also use mushrooms as a basis for vegetarian burgers and other meat analogues.

However you choose to include mushrooms in your diet on a regular basis, your taste buds, your tummy, and your body as a whole will thank you! 🍄



Photo by Angela MacNeil

## SUPERGREEN MUSHROOM AND POTATO SOUP

Serves 4. Prep time 20 minutes. Cooking time 20 minutes.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 cup yellow or white onion, chopped
- 1 bunch Swiss chard, stemmed and chopped (separate leaves from stems and reserve both parts)
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 cups broccoli, cut into 1-inch florets
- 2 cups cremini, button, or portobello mushrooms, chopped
- 1 Tbsp vegan Worcestershire sauce
- 1 Tbsp onion powder
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme, minced
- 8 cups unsalted or low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 cups red potatoes, cut into 1-inch cubes

### DIRECTIONS

- Heat the celery, onion and Swiss chard stems in a large stockpot on medium-high heat, stirring frequently until the onions are translucent, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of water as needed to deglaze the pot.
- Stir in the garlic, turn down the heat to medium, and cook for 1 minute.
- Stir in the broccoli, mushrooms, Worcestershire sauce, onion powder and thyme, and cook for 1 minute.
- Pour in the vegetable broth and turn up the heat to high. Once the broth is boiling, add the potatoes and lower the heat to a simmer until the potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes.

5. Stir in the Swiss chard leaves, cooking until tender.

6. Taste the soup and boost it with additional seasoning or some salt and pepper if you like.

### SUBSTITUTIONS

In place of red potatoes, use any potato variety you enjoy.

In place of potatoes, add your favorite (cooked) whole grain like barley, brown rice or farro.

Use kale, mustard or collard greens in place of Swiss chard.

Substitute cauliflower for broccoli.

Use fresh rosemary or oregano in place of thyme.

### PREP AHEAD

Chop your celery, onion, Swiss chard (separate the leaves and stems), broccoli and mushrooms ahead of time and store in airtight containers in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

### STORAGE

Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

*Recipe by Nichole Dandrea-Russert. Recipe and photo reprinted with permission by Hay House Publishing.*

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Healing Ways 

# Oral Health Tips to Prevent Heart Disease

How Regular Trips to the Dentist Can Save a Life

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



**H**ear disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, and, despite public opinion, it is just as deadly for women as it is for men. The illness was responsible for a staggering one in every four male deaths and one in every five female deaths in 2021, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And yet, it is preventable 90 percent of the time with the right lifestyle choices, such as saying goodbye to cigarettes, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, reducing alcohol intake and keeping stress at bay.

Other powerful precautions relate to oral health. Left untreated, gum disease and sleep apnea have the potential to cause dire cardiovascular consequences. The good news is that treatments are available to decrease and often eradicate their threat.

## Gum Disease and the Heart

Although blood pressure and cholesterol are considered major risk factors for heart disease, there is another culprit that should not be ignored: inflammation. While arterial inflammation may be the vascular response to harmful assaults such as infections or injuries, it can also arise when there is an imbalance in the gut microbiome or inflammation of the gums—also known as periodontal disease.

According to the National Institutes of Health, gum disease affects 47 percent of adults aged 30 or older and 70 percent of adults by age 65. Bleeding gums are telltale signs of gingivitis, which can promote the growth of disease-causing bacteria and produce substantial, body-wide inflammation.

A 2021 study published in *Scientific Reports* evaluated the effect that oral health problems had on all-cause, cardiovascular disease and respiratory mortality. Scientists followed almost 3,000 white and African American men and women aged 70 to 79, as well as just over 7,700 British men aged 40 to 59 for nine and 15 years, respectively. Researchers reported that periodontal disease was associated with increased cardiovascular mortality in the American group, a finding that was consistent with a similar study of older people in Taiwan. The scientists also noted that tooth loss and cumulative oral health problems correlated with higher all-cause mortality and higher respiratory mortality, while dry mouth appeared to be related to only all-cause mortality.

A 2012 study published in *Kardiologia Polska* of people with diabetes and periodontal disease showed that gum inflammation was highly correlated with increasing arterial plaque, as well as increases in markers of inflammation and blood pressure levels, suggesting a significant connection between periodontal disease and an increased risk of atherosclerosis.

Another study published in 2013 in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*

followed more than 400 subjects over three years and found that greater gum inflammation and higher growth of pathological bacterial species in the gums were strongly associated with increased growth of arterial plaque. The researchers concluded that an improvement in periodontal status was associated with less progression in carotid atherosclerosis, thereby emphasizing the importance of gum care as a possible preventive health measure.

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## Preventing Gum Inflammation

In addition to a healthy diet, exercise and stress management, taking measures to improve dental hygiene will go a long way toward reducing the risk of heart disease. A dental hygienist can easily identify gingivitis and probe for deep gum pockets—an indication of periodontal disease—while a simple saliva test can determine the presence of disease-causing gum species. The following measures are recommended:

- Brush teeth for two minutes twice daily, ideally with an electric toothbrush.
- Floss and use a Waterpik every day.
- Visit the dental hygienist two to four times per year for a thorough cleaning.
- Have the dentist measure gum-pocket depth to check for inflammation.
- Especially for those with gum disease, have saliva tested for bad bacteria at least annually.

## Sleep Apnea

Considered and treated as an oral health issue, sleep apnea increases the risk for heart disease. According to the American Medical Association, approximately 30 million Americans experience sleep apnea,

but only 6 million are diagnosed with the condition where breathing and air flow repeatedly stops and starts. People that suffer from this ailment are more likely to experience abnormal heart rhythms, hypertension, heart attacks, strokes and diabetes, the Mayo Clinic cautions.

Sleep apnea gradually worsens over time. As the airway increasingly fails to deliver air to the lungs, oxygen levels drop, causing adverse impacts on the heart and brain. Three factors decrease airflow: weight gain, aging and, for some people, genetics. When a person puts on extra weight, their neck thickens, diminishing the airway, and as we age, tissues in the neck become softer and sag.

The symptoms for sleep apnea include excessive daytime sleepiness, loud snoring, noticeable stops in breathing at night, awakening with a dry mouth and morning headaches. These symptoms should prompt a discussion with a physician or dentist to schedule an overnight sleep test to confirm a diagnosis—either in a sleep laboratory or at home, depending on the degree of symptoms.

The mainstay of treatment for those with sleep apnea is a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) device worn over the nose or mouth to maintain pressure in the airway, keeping it open during sleep. Alternatively, a dentist can fit a patient with a mandibular device to help open the airway. The implement looks like a mouthguard that pushes the jaw forward to make the airway larger and improve airflow at night.

Another technique is to tape a patient's mouth shut while sleeping to force breathing through the nose. Continuous nose breathing helps promote nitric oxide in the bloodstream, which induces the relaxation and dilation of blood vessels and airways. Duct tape or another household tape should not be used for this, as there are specially designed, hypoallergenic strips that are shaped to sit directly on the lips. Some have a small vent that allows for a little mouth breathing. In a small study



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published in *JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery*, mouth taping led to significantly less snoring and fewer instances of lapsed breathing in 30 patients with mild sleep apnea.

After starting a chosen therapy, the overnight sleep test should be repeated to confirm that the airway is open and adequate oxygenation levels are being maintained. Additional tips to reduce sleep apnea include:

- Lose weight. According to the Sleep Foundation, a loss of 5 to 10 percent of total weight improves obstructive sleep apnea by 38 percent, and weight loss of more than 10 percent results in a nearly 49 percent improvement.
- Avoid alcohol and sleeping medications before bedtime, which suppress breathing and cause the airway to sag.
- Change from back-sleeping to side-sleeping. More than 50 percent of people with sleep apnea find that their symptoms worsen when they sleep on their backs.

Steven Masley is a physician, nutritionist, trained chef, clinical professor at the University of South Florida, chief medical director of KnoWEwell and creator of health programs for public television. He is the author of *The 30-Day Heart Tune-Up*. Connect at [DrMasley.com](http://DrMasley.com).

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# Homeopathy for Athletes

## Remedies to Address Common Sports Challenges

by Lauri Grossman, DC, CCH, RSHom(NA)

Being physically active is vital to good health, but accidents and injuries are bound to happen. This is where homeopathy can shine. The soccer star David Beckham used homeopathy for his broken foot before competing in the World Cup. James Ellington, the British Olympic sprinter, used homeopathy for muscle and joint pain before his competitions. Champion figure skaters Jayne Torvill and Elvis Stojko used homeopathy for their bruises. These world-class athletes recognized that homeopathic medicines speed healing and get them back in training quickly, and without troublesome side effects.

Arnica, bryonia, hypericum and ruta are go-to remedies for sports injuries. According to the National Institutes of Health, more than 6 million Americans and 200 million people worldwide use homeopathy on a regular basis.

Evaluating sports and activity injuries has changed. The most helpful remedies may turn out to be those that are not typically thought of for sports injuries. A person's underlying sensitivities may necessitate a different remedy, one that addresses the whole person, even

when their chief complaint is a sprain, bump or bruise.

At other times, athletes are looking for ways to get their mind in gear for fierce competitions and extreme training. The following remedies often prove helpful in such situations. These remedies are based on traditional homeopathic practices and have not been evaluated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. For dosages, consult with a local homeopath.

**Gelsemium sempervirens** can bolster the timid athlete that reports a weak stomach, a jittery feeling and weak knees before the starting gun goes off. It can restore their calm and equilibrium. This remedy can ease performance anxiety in other settings as well; it's a favorite of actors and musicians to relieve stage fright, and executives choose it to calm nerves before major business deals.

**Nux vomica** can help the athlete that is irritable, on edge and needs to chill out before climbing onto the racing block. It can also help the super-competitive kid that loses a game and lambasts fellow team members about how their actions led to the loss. Nux vomica helps them become more amenable to the idea that it is not okay to yell at teammates and shift their focus away from the loss and toward enjoyment of their sport.

**Aurum metallicum** is suited to the intense, idealistic competitor that sets impossibly high goals. From their perspective, it is their duty to win and become depressed if their team does not win. These people, young and old, are hard on themselves. Aurum metallicum can help soften the perspective on winning or losing and shift the mood away from depression. This remedy is also known for its ability to heal headaches that come on after experiencing loss or failure.

**Natrum sulphuricum** can help the athlete that becomes seriously depressed after sustaining a head injury in football, field hockey or other contact sport. It can also help with other types of mood changes after head injuries, as well as troubling physical symptoms.

**Magnesia phosphorica**, which is made from magnesium and phosphorus, can help alleviate cramps and muscle spasms that

would be improved by heat, such as those earned after a hard workout or challenging day on the golf course. It also offers temporary relief of menstrual cramps.

**Cuprum metallicum** is another approach to managing sudden cramps, especially those in the limbs, hands and feet.

**Arnica**, which is made from a type of mountain daisy, assists the athlete and weekend warrior to relieve muscle aches and stiffness, swelling and discoloration

from bruises. It is also available in topical gel, cream and ointment forms that may be applied to the affected area.

Lauri Grossman is a chiropractor and certified homeopath in New York City. She has been practicing, teaching and presenting on homeopathy for more than 40 years, and she serves as president of the board of directors for the National Center for Homeopathy, a leader in homeopathic education for 50 years.

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# What is Love?

For our February issue, we asked readers to tell us how they would define love. Here's what many shared with us, lightly edited.

Love is the most common and sought-after feeling in the world. People are either running toward love or the opposite, and it is the best feeling in the world when it finds you. When someone loves you, you are confident they will be there for you no matter what comes your way. No matter what, your love will prevail.

The love from a parent looking into their baby's eyes for the first time, a spouse waking up with a kink in their neck from sleeping in an uncomfortable chair next to you in the hospital, and that faithful pet sitting with you in front of the fireplace—that is love defined. Love embodies care, trust and, at times, not having to say a word because a look is all that is needed. Telling our loved ones how much we care and not taking those we love for granted is so important.

Tomorrow is not promised to any one of us, and love is far too important not to be shared.

I have always said it just takes one person; everyone needs at least one individual to love them. If we spread more love and touch more hearts, just think about what it would do for a world that is starving for more. I'm blessed to have a lot of love in my life, and for that, I am forever grateful.

— Camie Vincent



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- Love is caring for others
- Love is sharing resources and not expecting anything in return
- Love is taking care of yourself
- Love is an action word
- Love is holding a newborn baby
- Love is helping someone in need
- Love is fighting for what's right
- Love is smelling a blooming flower
- Love is watching your plants grow from day to day
- Love is making sure no one is hungry in your home
- Love is checking on those in pain
- Love is meditation
- Love is intimacy
- Love is feeling love
- Love is keeping in touch with family members far away
- Love is picking up trash off the ground
- Love is praying for the abundance around you
- Love is knowing how to listen without judgment
- Love is going without so others can have
- Love is forgiving those who have hurt you
- Love is apologizing for something you did wrong

— Nobantu Ankoanda

Love is a light in the darkness, a smile when there are tears, an embrace when you feel defeated. Love is an ear when you don't feel heard. It is compromise and selflessness. It is tender and painfully honest. It is a warm welcome and a difficult goodbye.

— Sally Tansky

Love is practicing servitude in everything you do to make others feel worthy, needed and ecstatic to be alive. The feeling of sharing love with others is returned, full circle, to the giver. The more you give love, the more you receive love.

— RiChawn, reiki practitioner



Puwadon Saing-ngerny/Pexels.com

Love is the fabric of all that is. When you sit quietly with a still mind, the feeling is love. The dictionary says that hate is the opposite of love, but I don't believe that love has an opposite. Love tenderly wraps itself around all negativity, all hurt and all dysfunction. It nudges us to be centered in our hearts where all the silly arguments and "I am rights" don't matter. It unites us with ourselves and with each other.

Love has no fear. Love is patient and kind. When our pendulum swings us into our negative stories of the past and we act in hurtful ways, love doesn't judge. Love guides us back home. Love expands us and helps us be who we want to be and who we innately are. It reminds us where we came from and where we are going.

— Fredrika Mele Stillwater Scruggs, healing arts practitioner

There are three ways in which humanity has learned to love, based on Greek philosophy. These are *philia*, the love easily shared with others, *eros*, or erotic love, and *agape*, or Divine love. It's dividing up love, done by the ego, that alters the genuine nature of love. Love is the absolute reality of our souls. It's the makeup of our spirit, connected to the Divine—which is pure love. We're to love all humanity equally, as our soul implies universal love.

Spiritual awakening is an awakening to authentic love. You can live completely and die well because of the love you give and the love you receive from others. Love is the ultimate spiritual currency and the only one that matters because we all want to love and be loved.

True love wants the best for the other person, and since love is not selfish, if that person is better without us, we're willing to leave. Love is a connection, not an attachment. True love may come about due to need, but need and attachment don't sustain love.

— Terri Kozlowski, life coach, author

What is love? It is a process. It requires constant nurturing to achieve success and satisfaction. It is a desire, an emotion, and it comes from the origin of the word "evolution."

Many people tell others they love one another, not knowing what they are really saying. And so, before you know it, the desired relationship is dead.

Love requires time, energy, understanding, communication, consent, honesty and many other factors since it is an ongoing process similar to evolution. In order for love to blossom and thrive, there must be respect, the precursor to love. It is caring for someone despite their differences.

If a few more people were to start practicing respect, can you imagine what our world would be like? That would really be a successful evolution!

Let's practice greeting and saying to each other, "I respect you." Then, let's sit back and see the positive changes that occur in our world.


— Joan Crichlow



Helena Lopes/Pexels.com

“Many there are across the world  
who call Me, beg for My return.  
*I answer their pleas...*”

Maitreya, the World Teacher



Love starts with a healthy love of self—then our planet and all the other sentient beings we share it with. The ability to love and express love defines the human experience.

There are so many pathways our love takes that have an impact. For example, to love your family is the inborn survival instinct of love. Romantic love gives you the freedom and opportunity to express sexuality and the social philosophy of social relationships. There is also the love of country and economic status. These forms are rarely considered romantic, but they show the attraction and attachment needed to define the feeling they bring to the individual or group.

To me, the most enduring and engaging relationship is with planet Earth. How to nurture, sustain and regenerate her resources has to be the greatest love for all humanity to show and give.

— Peace Warden, health coach, herbalist, soap maker

Love is when two people are energetically connected and have no expectations of what it looks like. Expectations are fantasy, and love that is based on fantasy doesn't last. This isn't limited to a sexual relationship.

Both parties take responsibility for their words and actions, knowing that no one is going anywhere and that they will work through anything together—no matter how difficult. Their love is a priority above anything else. Nothing else is more important. They can tell each other anything and not fear repercussions or judgments. There's an understanding and acceptance of each other's core values and beliefs.

There's a caring and giving on both sides with no need to receive back because they love themselves enough on a deeper, non-selfish level. No one can take responsibility for another; we have to love ourselves like no other can. Therefore, we can't love anyone else more than we love ourselves.

— Diana Cohen



# Helping America's Kids Eat Better

## How Three Women are Leading the Movement

by Megy Karydes



Nik\_happyjark/Canva Pro

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly half of children aged 1 to 5 have not eaten a vegetable today. Each week, nearly one in three won't eat a piece of fruit, and more than half will have had at least one sugar-sweetened beverage. Kids consume 66 grams of sugar per day—that is a whopping 53 pounds of added sugar a year, according to the American Heart Association.

The foods and drinks kids consume have tremendous impact on their overall health, and these statistics suggest that many parents and guardians need to do a better job of steering their offspring toward more

nutritious options. Mounting scientific evidence reveals that a healthy lifestyle from infancy to adulthood helps people maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Many youngsters today don't eat enough nutritious meals, playing a major role in how they perform in school, according to a study published in *Journal of School Health*.

Prompted by perceived needed changes in childhood nutrition, the private sector is stepping up to improve the ways we teach and feed our youngest, hoping to raise healthier future generations. Here are three examples.

## Putting Nutrition First

Former First Lady Michelle Obama launched the "Let's Move!" national campaign in 2010 to reduce childhood obesity and teach children and their caregivers how to create healthier eating habits and lifestyles, and her work didn't end when she left the White House. In May 2023, she helped launch PLEZi Nutrition, a food and beverage company for children with a stated mission "to be a driver of change, creating higher standards for how we make and market food and beverages for our kids, leading with nutrition, taste and truth."

"I've learned that on this issue, if you want to change the game, you can't just work from the outside. You've got to get inside—you've got to find ways to change the food and beverage industry itself," Obama said at *The Wall Street Journal's* Future of Everything Festival. "I'm proud to announce the national launch of a company designed not just to provide better products, but to jumpstart a race to the top that will transform the entire food industry."

## Teaching Healthy Eating in Schools

In 2009, Jyl Steinback created the national nonprofit Shape Up US to provide teachers, children, parents and communities with the tools they need to adopt healthy, lifelong habits. Rather than trying to impact school lunch programs that are notoriously difficult to change, the author and co-author of multiple books, including *Think Outside the Lunchbox Cookbook*, brings her nutritional curriculum into classrooms.

She created five booklets with hands-on activities that support sustainable living and plant-based nutrition, as well as the Hip Hop Healthy Heart Program for Children that focuses on cardiovascular health. Since 2009, her programs have been used in 34 states, reaching more than 100,000 children.

Steinback believes in the power of early education. "If you start with K [kindergarten] through sixth grade, you're planting that seed," she explains, adding that children are naturally curious and willing to try new things as long as they're involved in the decision-making process. One way she coaxes kids to make better choices is by prompting them to go grocery shopping with their parents and pick a food they've never eaten before.

## Modeling Healthy Behavior

"We have this belief that we can feed children anything," says public health nurse Meryl Fury, the president and CEO of Plant Based Nutrition Movement. "People will say, 'Let them be kids; let them eat donuts; let them eat Pop Tarts.' We feed them mac and cheese and chicken nuggets, and we think it's fine, but our data shows that children have increasing rates of obesity, high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes. These are things that never occurred in children before, and it's very much connected to our lifestyle."

Fury recommends that parents and teachers model better behavior and improve the school food culture in general. Instead of

using candy as rewards in the classroom, other incentives can be offered such as stickers, pencils or other non-food treats. She reminds parents and teachers that some children might have attention deficit disorder or other challenges that relate to impulse control or self-regulation, and high-sugar or highly processed foods and dyes are not good for them, or anyone.

If children initially resist trying new foods, Fury encourages adults not to give up. "Boil it, mash it, sauté it, simmer it, roast it, serve it raw, serve it with sauce or serve it as a dip," she suggests. It can take one to two dozen times of exposing a child to a new food before they're even willing to try it, but the healthy benefits could be lifelong.

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*.

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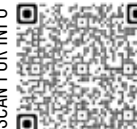
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# THE POWER, PRACTICES AND BENEFITS OF Pranayama

by David Penn



Ivan Samkov/ Pexels.com

This is the second of a three-part series we're featuring on *pranayama*, a variety of specialized breathing methods that yogis and spiritual masters have practiced for—literally—millennia. Today, millions of people around the world practice them to improve mental and physical health and to further their spiritual goals. See last month's introduction at [bit.ly/prana-0124](https://bit.ly/prana-0124) —Ed.

**P**ranayama. Like ripples dissipating into a pond, slow, deep breaths quiet mental chatter, and rhythmic inhalations and exhalations become a mantra, anchoring the present moment. The practice of pranayama is often a bridge to deeper meditation, where *prana*—life force energy—and consciousness merge.

There are many techniques to explore and experience the dance between breath and energy through pranayama. Some seek stress relief, mental clarity or a deeper connection to their inner self. Every conscious breath can become a brushstroke on the canvas of well-being. Every inhale can be a fresh start. Every exhale, a release.

## The Gateway of Life

Tracy Jennings-Hill began her yoga practice 20 years ago as a way to heal after her husband was killed while on active duty. Her discovery came organically as she was searching for happiness without medications or stimulants. Yoga helped her begin to rebuild her life. After retiring from the U.S. Air Force, she continued to practice, and pranayama was an integral part of that practice. In 2017, she founded the LiveURYoga studio in Roswell.

“The practices that I teach and have practiced for over 20 years have been more focused on the breath than anything else,” says Jennings-Hill. “It’s the only way that we can create the balance we need. It’s not necessarily the control of the breath, but the relationship we have with breath.”

Jennings-Hill’s classes start by creating a meditative state, and then they move into an “awakening breath, a pranayama,” she says. “When the breath isn’t steady, the mind isn’t steady. The only way the mind can be steady is through the practice of the breath. The breath supports our meditative mind.”

## The Realm of the Unfamiliar

William Hufschmidt, LMT, E-RYT 500, has been involved with yoga and movement for more than 30 years. In 1989, he began exploring hatha yoga and its inseparable connection to pranayama and meditation. Over the course of his career, Hufschmidt has owned a successful yoga studio in Atlanta, trained more than 200 yoga teachers, and taught well over 20,000 hours of yoga classes through 2020, when he stopped counting. His current work includes Thai massage, structural integration, yoga and movement therapies, and breathing practices at his home in Decatur.

“Pranayama is a part of the yoga practice that explores energy and navigating or channeling that energy. You could say we’re composed of matter and energy together. How we breathe affects our energy. If we don’t have good breathing hygiene, it has

consequences for our physical health, our metabolism, and our mental health,” says Hufschmidt. “Pranayama could be thought of as energy control. If you go into an *asana* practice and you hold a pose you’re not used to for a long time, that’s going to challenge your sense of self. You will get shaky and uncertain. You’ll go past the realm of what’s familiar into the realm of what’s unfamiliar. Pranayama techniques can do that as well.”

## Pranayama Practices

The following are several pranayama practices commonly taught in yoga studios.

### Nadi Shodhana Pranayama — Alternate Nostril Breathing

Nadi shodhana pranayama involves inhaling and exhaling through alternate nostrils. It balances the two sides of the brain, promotes mental clarity and harmonizes the energy channels in the body. To practice nadi shodhana pranayama:

1. Find a comfortable seated position and close your eyes.
2. Using your right hand, place your index and middle fingers on your forehead, between the eyebrows. Rest your thumb on the right nostril and your ring and pinky fingers on your left nostril.

3. Close your right nostril with your thumb and inhale slowly through your left nostril.
4. At the top of the inhale, close your left nostril with your ring finger while releasing the thumb from the right nostril. Exhale.
5. Inhale through your right nostril, closing it at the top of the inhale with your thumb.
6. Release your left nostril with your ring finger and exhale through the left nostril.
7. Repeat the process, inhaling through your left nostril, then exhaling through your right, inhaling through your right nostril, then exhaling through your left. This completes one round. Continue practicing for 5 to 10 minutes.

The benefits of nadi shodhana pranayama include balancing the two sides of the brain, promoting mental clarity, harmonizing the body’s energy channels, reducing stress and anxiety, cleansing the lungs and respiratory system and promoting healthy sleep.

### Viloma Pranayama — Ladder Breath

Viloma pranayama is the intentional pausing of the breath at different points during the inhale and exhale cycle. “Viloma” translates to “against the grain” or “oppo-

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site to the natural flow.” The natural flow of breath is a continuous cycle of inhalation and exhalation. Viloma disrupts that pattern by introducing pauses, thereby going “against the grain” of the natural rhythm. This interruption is similar to climbing a ladder. The practitioner is constantly stopping and changing direction to ascend or descend. To practice viloma pranayama:

1. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed and breathe naturally for a few moments.
2. Inhale slowly, then hold your breath for a brief moment. Breathe in again, hold, then complete the inhale.

8. Exhale fully, followed by a pause in the breath. Exhale again, pause, fully emptying the lungs.

9. Repeat the process. Begin slowly, working up to cycles of interrupted inhales and exhales for 5 to 10 minutes, focusing on the pauses.

Viloma pranayama is known to help reduce anxiety and stress, promote relaxation, enhance concentration and memory, revitalize the body and mind, regulate the flow of vital energy and promote restful and restorative sleep.

### Sama Vritti Pranayama — Equal Flow Breath

Sama vritti pranayama is a simple, effective, calming breathing exercise where inhalations and exhalations last the same amount of time. The Navy SEALs refer to this technique as “box breathing” because of the four-count rhythm of the breath. It is known to be one of their regular practices for its ability to provide calm under pressure. To practice sama vritti pranayama:

1. Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
2. Imagine drawing the breath in a square or box. Each side of the square has a slow, steady count of four.
3. Inhale for a count of four, hold for four, exhale for four and hold for four.

4. Repeat for 5 to 10 minutes.

Sama vritti pranayama has been shown to help reduce fatigue and anxiety, improve focus and concentration, provide calm in a stressful environment, improve sleep and reduce blood pressure.

### Bhramari Pranayama — Bee Breath

Bhramari pranayama is a calming breathwork technique that involves creating a humming sound while inhaling and exhaling through the nostrils. This practice is said to promote relaxation, reduce anxiety and soothe the nervous system. To practice bhramari pranayama:

1. Find a comfortable seated position and close your eyes.
2. Place your hands on your face, with your thumbs on your ears, index fingers above the eyebrows, and the rest of the fingers over your eyes.
3. Inhale deeply through the nostrils.

4. Upon exhalation, create a humming sound with your mouth in a relaxed, closed position.

5. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

Bhramari pranayama is recognized for calming the mind and soothing the nervous system, helping to reduce anxiety and stress, regulating blood pressure and heart rate, improving concentration and memory and promoting healthy sleep.

### Ujjayi Pranayama — Ocean Breath

Ujjayi pranayama involves inhaling and exhaling through the nose and creating a soft whispering sound, similar to the sound of waves crashing against the shore. To practice ujjayi pranayama:

1. Find a comfortable seated position and close your eyes.
2. Begin by taking a few deep breaths.

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### WEDNESDAYS

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### 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](http://LiftYogaStudio.com).

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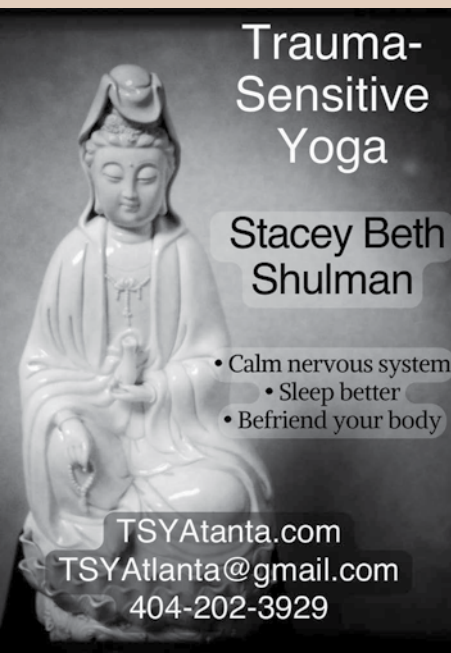
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3. Take a deep inhale through your nose, allowing the breath to fill up your belly and then your chest.

4. Upon exhaling, gently contract the back of your throat, creating a soft whispering sound with your mouth lightly closed and the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth.

5. Repeat the process, making sure to maintain the whispering sound throughout each inhale and exhale. Begin with 12 cycles and gradually increase to 5 minutes or longer.

Ujjayi pranayama helps to balance the energy in the body, enhance respiratory function and lung capacity and reduce stress and anxiety. It calms the mind, promotes mental clarity and cultivates a sense of focus and mindfulness.

### Bhastrika Pranayama — Bellows Breath

Bhastrika pranayama is a forceful breathing technique that involves rapid inhalations and exhalations through the nose, creating a pumping motion with the abdomen and diaphragm. To practice bhastrika pranayama:

1. Find a comfortable seated position and close your eyes.

2. Begin by taking a few deep breaths.

3. Inhale quickly and deeply through the nose.

4. Follow this with a powerful, rapid exhalation through the nose, compressing the abdominal muscles.

5. Inhale rapidly, then exhale rapidly at an even, consistent pace.

6. Aim to complete 3 to 5 rounds of 20 breaths each, with a rest period between each round.

Bhastrika pranayama is said to stimulate the nervous system, enhance lung capacity, oxygenate the blood and promote mental and physical vitality. It can also improve digestion and metabolism, and it can be used to alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety.

### Dirga Pranayama — Three-Part Breath

Dirga pranayama is a gentle exploration of the lungs, inviting a connection to prana. As you practice it, you can imagine three chambers: the belly, the ribcage, and the collarbones. The belly is where gentle waves of breath rise and fall, and the ribcage expands and contracts like a bellows. The collarbones are like an attic for the very top of the breath to touch. To practice dirga pranayama:

1. As you inhale slowly and deeply through the nose, fill your belly until it expands.

2. Feel the ribcage gently lift as the lungs fill further, drawing the breath upwards.

3. Next, feel the breath rise to the collarbones.

4. Exhale smoothly through the nose, emptying the belly first, then the ribcage, and finally the upper chest.

5. Briefly pause before the next inhale.

Dirga pranayama has many benefits. Slow, deep breaths may activate the parasympathetic nervous system, lowering cortisol. The practice is known to stimulate the lymphatic system, helping to eliminate waste and toxins. It also quiets the mind of mental chatter, improves concentration and increases self-awareness and inner clarity. 🧘



David Penn, E-RYT 200, founded Sun Dragon Yoga studio in 2015. He offers private instruction at homes and businesses throughout metro Atlanta and offers

classes online. Contact him at 313-303-0096.



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# Mimi Guarneri on Treating the Heart With Love

by Sandra Yeyati

**A**fter graduating first in her class at The State University of New York Medical Center, Dr. Mimi Guarneri began her career at Scripps Clinic, in San Diego, as an attending physician in interventional cardiology, where she placed thousands of coronary stents. Recognizing the need for more comprehensive and holistic approaches, she founded the Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine and served as medical director for 15 years, combining state-of-the-art cardiac imaging technology with lifestyle programs and alternative therapies like acupuncture, healing touch, meditation and yoga to diagnose, prevent and treat cardiovascular disease.

Guarneri is board certified in cardiovascular disease, internal medicine, nuclear cardiology and integrative holistic medicine. She is a founder and president of The Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine; co-founder and medical director of Guarneri Integrative Health, in La Jolla, California; and a clinical associate professor at University of California, San Diego. In 2012, The Institute for Functional Medicine honored her with the Linus Pauling Functional Medicine Lifetime Achievement Award. Guarneri is the author of *The Heart Speaks: A Cardiologist Reveals the Secret Language of Healing* and *108 Pearls to Awaken Your Healing Potential*.

## What is holistic cardiology?

It's about treating the whole person—body, mind, emotions and spirit. If you have a tree with sick fruit on it, you can keep cutting off the branches, or you can ask, what does the tree need? Does it need more sunlight or water? How is the soil? Does it have minerals?

With patients, the question we should be asking is why does someone have diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease? And then you ask, what is the soil of a human life made of? That soil is made of micro and macro nutrients, physical activity, having a purpose in life, joy and a good night's sleep. At our center we call these the pearls of health.



MimiGuarneriMD.com

## How do you diagnose people by listening to their stories?

We know through research that relationships between patients and physicians affect outcome. People who bond with their physicians have lower cholesterol or blood sugar levels because they're more likely to be compliant with medications. We also know that events don't happen in isolation. When people have major, life-changing events—death of a spouse or child, divorce—all of a sudden, they start having cancer, sudden death and heart attacks.

So, when I look at someone that had a heart attack, I don't just want to know about their symptoms the day of the attack. I also want to know what was going on six months before, because that's where you find the story. "I've been under stress. I lost my

job. I lost my house. My wife told me they wanted a divorce." This is where you start to get the stories that add up to the ultimate cardiovascular event.

## How do you translate that inquiry into the healing journey?

Everyone needs something different at a different point in their life. Some people need to change what they're eating or start walking, but then you have to look at why they're not taking care of their physical body. Depressed people say, "I have 20 friends in this pack of cigarettes." They don't say, "Let me eat Brussels sprouts and take a walk." I have to deal with the underlying issue, which could be things like depression, stress or loneliness. I also want to know my patient's spirituality, because if they believe in a higher power, we can tap into that to give them strength and help transform what's going on.

## What tools do you have in your integrative medical arsenal?

The whole framework of integrative medicine is to understand and use the wisdom of other global healing traditions. For a patient with back pain, I may use healing touch, acupuncture, massage and medication. I may send somebody who is stressed to transcendental meditation training. I may pull from Ayurveda to help people with digestive issues.

The most important thing is looking at your life and finding joy, meaning, purpose, looking at where you can serve, where you can connect. This is the piece that is missing in many people's lives. Also, look at where you are holding onto anger. Have you done your forgiveness work? How can you begin to practice gratitude?

## Why do you say that patients are motivated not by fear but by caring?

They're motivated by love. Love is the secret ingredient. People will do everything for three months after a heart attack because they're terrified, and then they go back to their old ways. They start to gain weight because they never did the deep work to look at what got them there in the first place.

A perfect example is one of my heart patients who came in with a walker. She said she had sciatica, and immediately we gave her a shot for her pain. We also did some acupuncture. I got a beautiful message from her the next day, which made no mention of the shot or the acupuncture. Instead, she said, "I felt so much better from the second you gave me a hug." It's that kind of connection that makes all the difference. 🙏

Sandra Yeyati is national editor of Natural Awakenings.

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**Saturday, February 17**

**Goat Yoga** – 11am-12pm. With GGA Dwarf Goat Yoga. Perform breathing exercises and various yoga positions. While doing so, dwarf goats can hop around you, climb your back, sit on top of you, even nap on you or your yoga mats while you let go of all your stress. \$35.

**Friday, February 23**

**Full Moon Ceremony** – 6:30-7:30pm. Evenings of a full moon are action-forward times that prompt “release.” Join renowned Atlanta Astrologer, Maxine Taylor, for a full moon ceremony on the back deck. Free.

**Saturday, February 24**

**Drumming Circle** – 2-5pm. With Jen Huber, Spiritual Intuitive and Connection Coach. She specializes in helping her clients connect to their Souls essence, release energetic blocks and live a more heart-filled empowered life. Donation. [Three-Feather-Studios.com/thewiseoutreach](http://Three-Feather-Studios.com/thewiseoutreach).

**Saturday, February 3**

**Morning Restore Yoga in the Salt Cave** – 10:30-11:30am. Gentle yoga class suitable for practitioners of all levels. All yoga props provided. \$25. Saltville Grotto & Spa, 2447 Main St E, Ste 3, Snellville. 678-585-1153. [SaltvilleGrotto.com](http://SaltvilleGrotto.com).

**Editor's Choice** **Free First Saturday: Wonderful Wetlands** – 1-2pm. Where families and the community can come together to explore the wonders of our park's wetland ecosystem. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. Register: [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

**Monday, February 5**

**Divine Conversations** – 7-8:30pm. With Mindy Stritch. An intimate gathering of women where we can hold space for each other and take the time to share whatever is in our hearts and our minds. Topic: The Upside, Downside and Spiritual Side of Anger. \$25. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. [TheWellOfRoswell.com](http://TheWellOfRoswell.com).

**Friday, February 9**

**Editor's Choice** **Coffee House: Karaoke & Game Night** – 7-9:30pm. “Love” is our theme. Singles, friends and all couples are welcome. Potluck meal. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. [UnityAtl.org](http://UnityAtl.org).

**Saturday, February 10**

**75th Annual Camellia Show** – Feb 10-11. Experience “the rose of winter” with dozens of cut specimens. Included with Garden Admission. Atlanta Botanical Garden, 1345 Piedmont Ave NE, Atlanta. [Atlantabg.org](http://Atlantabg.org).

**Developing Real Confidence: Half-Day Retreat** – 10am-1pm. With Senior Teacher, Melanie Boyd. Explore how to use our meditation practice to develop reliable states of mind, inner space and clarity. \$20/advance, \$25/at door. Kadampa Meditation Center GA, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. [MeditationInGeorgia.org](http://MeditationInGeorgia.org).

**Editor's Choice** **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).

**Monday, February 12**

**Virtual: Invoking the Archangels** – 7-8:15pm. Class designed to discuss the fundamental principles of reaching out to your Archangels. Will go over 7 of the prominent Archangels and describe what they offer as well as ways to connect with each. \$25. Register: [TheOpenMindCenter.com](http://TheOpenMindCenter.com).

**Thursday, February 22**

**The Nature Club Dine and Discover** – 7-9pm. Sally Bathea on Keeping the Chattahoochee. \$10/general, \$5/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. [ChattNatureCenter.org](http://ChattNatureCenter.org).

**Online: Transmission Meditation** – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA SE Region. Free. Via Eventbrite. Info: 770-302-2208 or [Info-SE@Share-International.us](mailto:Info-SE@Share-International.us). Register: [Tinyurl.com/mr3b4zfw](http://Tinyurl.com/mr3b4zfw).

**Sunday, February 25**

**Editor's Choice** **Wildlife Baby Shower** – 12-4pm. Fundraiser and supply drive to prepare for the upcoming raptor and reptile baby season in rehab. Game stations, an educational slideshow of baby animals, and private aviary tours. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. [ChattNatureCenter.org](http://ChattNatureCenter.org).

**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).

**Grant Park Farmers Market** – 9am-1pm. The Beacon ATL, 1030 Grant St SE, Atlanta. [cfmatl.org/markets](http://cfmatl.org/markets).

**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. Northwest 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/yjzutj4](http://Tinyurl.com/yjzutj4).

**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 is available, 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 commune 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/TwinHearts-Meditation](http://Meetup.com/TwinHearts-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 Nich-

olas 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 Pranik Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: [AtlPranicHealing.com](http://AtlPranicHealing.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).

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## Fridays

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

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

## Saturdays

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

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

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

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

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

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# Let's Talk About Love

by Fred Stevens



Jonathan Borba: Pexels.com

What is love? After two failed marriages and countless short-term relationships, my love life stumbled from one hot mess to another. Frustrated, I spent more than a few lonely nights agonizing over what went wrong. A simple solution had to be found.

Love confused me time and again—and it's no wonder. When I consider how I learned what love is, I see that guidance came complete with innumerable competing and often contradictory baggage. My parents, family members and caregivers first modeled it for me. Then, I received directions from Holy Scripture, childhood and teenage peers, sex-ed classes, and the institution of marriage. Throw in the arts, romance, music, movie and fashion industries and pornography, and we've got a brief but complex mishmash of love's instructors.

Just the word "love" itself has many meanings. Love is hooking up. Love is helping the homeless. It is the brand of a car. God is love, and love is blind. With so many possible meanings, could there be an answer to the question? After having endured a lot of experience, study and therapy, I'm pleased to report—yes!

What is love? Uncovering the answer hasn't been easy. I am a codependent. That was a gift to me from my parents, who, despite

all appearances of being loving and in love, were clueless about it themselves. Following in their footsteps, I grew up fearful of rejection while depending on others to make me feel good about myself. This practice set me up to lose at love every time.

After a lot of hurt, I've come to accept that I was hooked by and continue to struggle with what I call the fantasy of being in love, which is not the real thing. As Dr. Rangan Chatterjee suggests in his book *Happy Mind Happy Life: The New Science of Mental Well-Being*, "When you depend on people acting a certain way, you make yourself their prisoner." I'm just thankful that it's not a life sentence. I now know that true love starts with me being healthfully in love with me.

What makes love real? Studies connecting loving relationships to good health lead me to think that love exercises the heart in life-giving ways that no physical workout can. Without the workout a healthy and loving relationship gives it, the heart will wither and attack itself. They call losing at love "heartbreak" for a reason!

I've come to believe that love is the interaction of two epigenetic feelings: empathy and vulnerability. They are what make love personal, universal and real. This is the essence of all love: feeling what each other feels. It's about sensing what it's like to be who they are and communicating about it. It's an energy exchange found in all forms of living.

For me, empathy takes place in the most tender moments at the beginning of a relationship and continues from there. But when it comes to experiencing love, there's that quirky little fear factor called vulnerability. If I risk sharing with you what I'm feeling and what I sense you're feeling, I might get hurt for it. For empathy to occur, I have to negotiate with a personal awareness of feeling vulnerable. If I can't manage my vulnerable feelings, I can't be successful at being empathic.

What is love? Empathy and vulnerability: you can't have one without the other. The two work together to create what love is all about. 📖



Fred Stevens is a speaker, love coach and author of the soon-to-be-released book, *Winning at Love: The Manual*. His eBook series, *Bless Yourself for a Blessed Life*, is available on Amazon.



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