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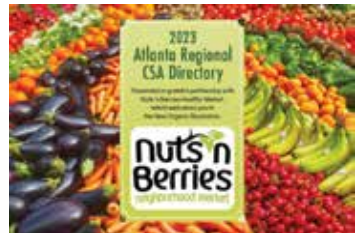


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The cover photo is by Kimberly Pickering of Photography by Kimberly, LLC. Her first camera was a hand-me-down from her father. After learning how to use the aperture and lighting settings, she was hooked. While taking candid is her specialty, she also photographs interior design, pets and family and graduation portraits.

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Publisher's Letter



BFFs

"Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

I am, generally speaking, a positive, upbeat kind of guy, waking up each morning ready to embrace the world and everyone with whom I come in contact. It's relatively rare for me, but from time to time, I do get despondent, feeling small and unloved. It is by no means a horrible feeling, like true depression, but when it comes around, it's a time when friends matter most.

Sure enough, over the last two days, I was in a deep funk, so I called my very good friend to come see me. I hadn't needed that kind of attention for years, but something magical happened. By the time she departed, I was practically ebullient! I was amazed; I didn't expect to feel that much better that fast.

Now, to me, a "best friend" is someone with whom you can share the ugliest aspects of yourself and the bad things you've done and not feel judged, but loved, despite it all. I was the fortunate recipient of such loving care last night—and more. My friend is into astrology, and as we dug into my astrological chart, we discovered things about me that made sense and helped explain certain aspects of my life.

We can't see ourselves in the eyes of others, and, in the vast majority of cases, we shouldn't care about what others think of us. As the saying goes, "What others think of you is none of your business." More importantly, we shouldn't try to be a certain way just for the benefit of others. However, if someone who really loves you makes a keen observation about you, it's probably worth listening to.

My friend told me that I can present as somewhat "detached" in loving relationships. I was shocked to hear it because I absolutely feel that I love unconditionally and with all my heart. She felt that, because I'm so left-brained, the cool, logical, intellectual part of me overshadows the loving energy. In fact, she dissected my language to show me! While I get what she means, I think it has more to do with the fact that I feel relatively "non-attached."

Now, "detached" and "non-attached" sound the same, but they mean different things. In Buddhism, attachment is one of three major delusions. It is defined as seeing an object, liking it and exaggerating its good aspects to the point of believing that one must "possess" the object in order to be happy—whether that object is a thing, a person, a circumstance, a job, a reputation, and so forth. To me, "detached" implies that one doesn't care about something, whereas "non-attached" means that one doesn't believe the object in question is the cause of happiness.

So, we can be deeply in love with another person in a romantic relationship, remain non-attached and therefore present a very different energy profile or feeling within the relationship than one that is solidly based on attachment. I see so many romantic relationships where people crave the sense of being pursued, or they crave their partner feeling that they "can't live without them," or they even crave being obsessed over. In other words, they crave attachment. In fact, one of my former partners once told me, "I wish you were more attached!"

My friend and I also talked about the meaning of self-love, something I couldn't immediately define in a way that I could embrace. When we talked about it in the context of my situation, my friend landed upon one aspect of self-love that I found really useful—taking the time to reflect and learn something new about myself. Journaling can be considered a great tool of self-love in this regard.

Well, of course I googled "self-love" before writing this, and I looked through two of the top-ranked articles I found. One of them enumerated seven aspects of self-love; the other listed eight. And —this is how smart my friend is—sitting at the top of both lists were "self-awareness" and "know thyself."

When I originally reached out to my friend, I only expected her to listen and attempt to comfort me. I didn't realize that I was going to learn so much and have so much fun exploring new thoughts along the way. The transformation of mood was beyond striking. The power of friendship should not be underestimated. 🙏



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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Pranayama

An Addendum



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Over the last three months, this magazine has published a three-part series on *pranayama*, and we consider it our most important content pertaining to conscious evolution. Within the context of the “eight limbs” of yoga, pranayama is an essential step on the road to *samadhi*, the state of enlightenment.

In all three articles, the authors characterize pranayama as “control” of breath, largely based on its translation from Sanskrit. One article states, for example: “The practice of pranayama—yogic practices involving conscious control of the breath ...”

Several articles from third-party sources reveal the same definition, describing pranayama as “control of breath.” However, after we published the series, we discovered a subtle yet significant difference in meaning we found in the introduction to Alistair

Shearer’s translation of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Essentially, he says the meaning of “pranayama” is “expansion and increase of the life-energy.”

Indeed, in our interview with Swami Kaivalyananda of the Center for Spiritual Awareness, he stated something similar. “Pranayama does not mean life force control,” he said. “That’s a misnomer. Originally, the word meant ‘life force extension.’”

“Prana has an intelligence to it,” he continued. “It’s intelligent energy. We create an environment for it to return to its source. Practitioners are not trying to force something to happen but encouraging the flow of prana in a certain direction. Prana is ... quantumly entangled; one particle knows what all other particles experience. It doesn’t recognize being forced. It is always returning to the source when allowed. We set up the environment with the right intention and right breath, allowing it to go up the spine to higher brain centers. This [kriya yoga] technique encourages the flow in a specific way.”

Sometimes a subtle change of perspective can make a big difference in results, and we wanted to share this perspective with you through this Addendum. However, if you haven’t yet immersed yourself in our series on pranayama, check it out at bit.ly/naa-pranayama.

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Gloria Parker, Atlanta Metaphysical Luminary, Transitions



Gloria Parker / Photo: Arthur Usherson

Gloria Parker, a longtime fixture in Atlanta’s metaphysical community, passed away on March 2.

Parker’s metaphysical life included starting and owning a bookstore, a magazine and a radio show, as well as producing psychic fairs. Before delving into metaphysics, she was a bartender; in fact, in a 2018 interview with *VoyageATL* magazine, she claimed she was the first female to tend bar in Atlanta. A series of dreams led her away from bartending to metaphysics.

In 1989, she founded the Sun Glo bookstore in Atlanta. In 1993, she founded the *Aquarius: A Sign of the Times* magazine and sold it in 2014. At its height, circulation was 40,000. “How Aquarius got started is quite a story,” said Parker in her *VoyageATL* interview. “It was brought in from a series of dreams that kept me up at night over a nine-month period.”

Her radio show, *The Psychic Bartender Show*, was produced from 2016 to 2021.

Parker also hosted the Big Psychic Fair every month for 35 years. Anna Banguilan, a friend of many years who has been “tasked” with maintaining Parker’s legacy, says the fair will continue being held today, although it’s now called Gloria Parker’s Big Psychic Fair. “The psychic fair will keep her energy in play and keep the community alive,” says Banguilan.

Parker was born on January 31, 1946, to Frank and Nellie Parker. She is survived by her brother, John Horvers, and nieces, Cathy Hoovers, Darlene Mataraza and Mary Merrihew. Parker’s daughter, Jodi, passed away in 2012 at the age of 36.

Decatur Healing Arts Celebrates 20 Years with Open House



Sol room



Salt Therapy room

Decatur Healing Arts (DHA) welcomes the public to an Open House celebration being held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on May 4. The event commemorates 20 years of fostering holistic well-being in Decatur and the broader Atlanta community. Promotions, offers and discounts will be available at the event as well as on the wellness center’s website and social media throughout the month of May.

The Open House celebration is designed to provide attendees with an immersive experience of DHA’s wide array of services. “Our offerings range from massage, energy healing and acupuncture to yoga and meditation classes and our healing salt therapy room,” says Nataly Baiz, who became the new owner of DHA in 2021.

“As we embark on this celebratory journey, my heart swells with gratitude and excitement,” says Baiz. “The 20th anniversary and open house are not just events; they embody the essence of our commitment to holistic health and to serving our community. My wish is for our readers to feel the transformative power of our space, the harmony of our community, and the joy of embracing holistic well-being.”

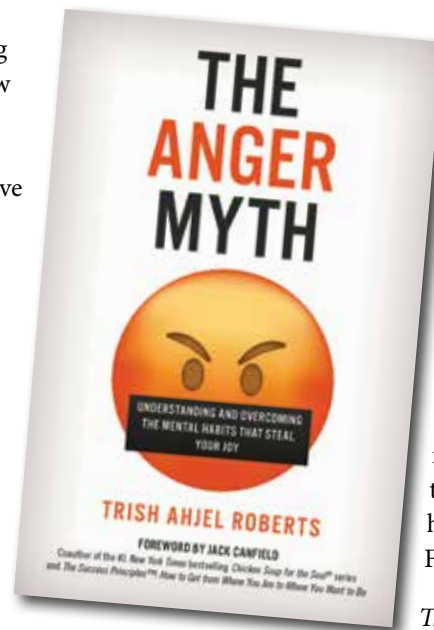
The event is free to the public. Decatur Healing Arts is located at 619 E. College Ave. Ste. A, in Decatur. For more information: 404-378-6288, DecaturHealingArts.com, @DecaturHealingArts on Instagram.

Roberts Announces Newest Book and Wellness Retreat

Transformational coach, happiness expert and founder of the Mind-Blowing Happiness coaching company, Trish Ahjel Roberts, is releasing her new book, *The Anger Myth: Understanding and Overcoming the Mental Habits That Steal Your Joy*, and offering a half-day retreat that offers a personal dive into the topics of the book.

“No matter what your relationship with anger is, this event is an opportunity for rejuvenation of mind, body and spirit in a beautiful retreat environment,” says Roberts. “Before I learned the lessons revealed in my book, disappointment and frustration had a daily impact on my life. As we manage global turbulence and the upcoming presidential election, it’s more important than ever to address the issue of anger as a barrier to happiness.”

Roberts’ wellness retreat will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on April 21 at Paradise Park, Atlanta’s new black-woman-owned retreat center. The event features a guided meditation, gentle yoga, and a workshop on topics explored in her book. It also includes



a light breakfast, a plant-based lunch and book-signing opportunities.

The Anger Myth is now available for presale from Rowman and Littlefield, and its release date is scheduled for April 16. Jack Canfield, co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, and spiritual coach and TV personality Iyanla Vanzant have endorsed the book.

Roberts is a registered yoga and meditation instructor, certified life coach, reiki practitioner, and MBA graduate and has spent more than a decade studying Buddhist thought. She has appeared on CBS46-TV Atlanta, WBLS-FM New York and other major media outlets.

The cost of the workshop is \$147. To register and purchase a book, visit TheAngerMyth.com.

Paradise Park is located at 3330 Duncan Memorial Hwy. in Douglasville. For more information, email info@TrishAhjelRoberts.com, text or call 404-981-8889 or DM @TrishAhjelRoberts.

Alive! Expo Comes to Duluth May 4

Alive! Expo, the Atlanta area’s oldest natural products, green living and health and wellness event, is being held May 4 and 5 in Duluth. In its 19th year, the indoor event features local, regional and national vendors, wellness seminars, product demos, yoga and fitness demonstrations and a myriad of free samples. The event welcomes everyone interested in learning about the latest wellness products and service.

The show features several seminars with health experts including Marjorie Roberts, President and CEO of Newton Homeopathics in Conyers; Marc Ellis, DC, of the Georgia Chiropractic Neurology Center in Marietta; and natural products industry expert Michael Schwartz, President of Michael’s Naturopathic Programs, headquartered in Texas.

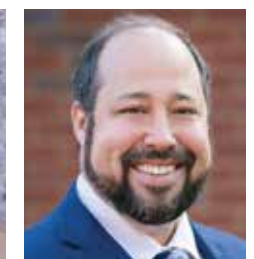
Proceeds from Alive! Expo will go to Project Green, a local 501(c)(3) children’s nonprofit that sponsors kids to attend summer camps and school excursions. The expo will also host a food drive for Gwinnett residents in need. Attendees will automatically receive half off the general admission price or \$5 off the VIP admission price by bringing three or more food items to donate.

The first 250 people in the door each day will receive a free gift. Advance online general admission tickets are \$5 and VIP tickets are \$20. Tickets at the door are \$10 and \$25. Seniors get a 50 percent discount, and active military and kids under 12 get in for free.

Alive! Expo will be held May 4 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and May 5 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Gas South Convention Center, Hall C, 6400 Sugarloaf Pkwy. in Duluth. For general information, visit AliveExpo.com. For information about sponsoring or vending, call 770-806-7492 or email kim@aliveexpo.com.



Michael Schwartz



Marc Ellis, DC

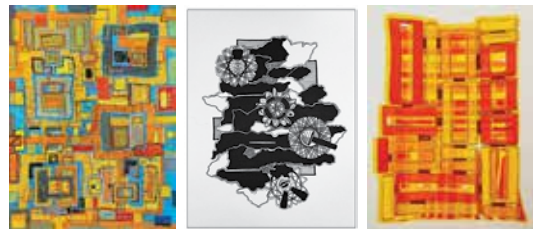


Marjorie Roberts



Local Artists' Works on Display at Area Metaphysical Shops

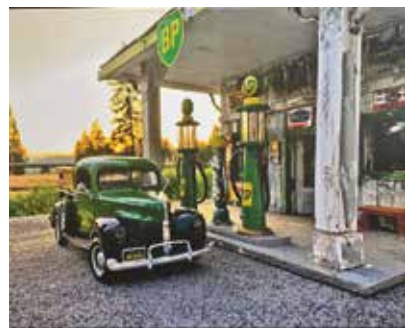
Three metaphysical businesses will feature works by local visual artists in April and May.



The Well of Roswell, a holistic healing center offering services, workshops and events for personal transformation, is featuring the works of Michael Orr, also known as Pone, now through June 7. "The true heart of Michael's art is the joy of creative

expression and its power to bring purpose and sanity to our existence," says Becky Arrington, co-owner of the Well of Roswell. According to Orr, much of the displayed works are about childhood trauma, addiction and healing. The artist reception will be held April 7 from 2 to 4 p.m.

The Well of Roswell is located at 900 Old Roswell Lakes Parkway, Ste. 300, in Roswell. Call 770-778-2051 or email Becky@TheWellofRoswell.com to arrange a showing.



The photographic works of Anthony Schmidt are featured at Phoenix & Dragon metaphysical bookstore through April 30. Schmidt's artistry was born after he was expelled from school at the age of five—he's 16 now—due to behaviors associated with his undiagnosed autism spectrum disorder. Soon, he began taking pictures of model cars, finessing the details to make them look as real as possible. When fans complimented him about what he could do in spite of his autism, he

often replied, "It is because of my autism that I can follow my dream rather than in spite of it." Schmidt's exhibit at Phoenix & Dragon includes photos of miniature cars, trucks, buses and more—set in impossible settings—from his published books. The artist's reception will be held April 9 from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore is located at 5531 Roswell Road, NE in Sandy Springs.



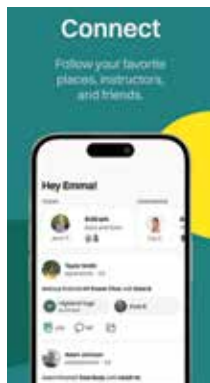
Heart Soul & Art, a metaphysical shop in Marietta, is announcing a call for artists from April 7 through April 28. The opening reception will be held May 11, and the juried show, titled "Code of Color," will take place May 11 through June 22. "We want artists to explore the dynamic relationship between art and color dynamics and push the boundaries of traditional mediums," says Sharron Reagan, owner of Heart Soul & Art. "We invite creators to weave their narratives through the vibrant tapestry of colors. Celebrate innovative, colorful approaches to storytelling, symbolism and aesthetic exploration."

Artists are invited to submit works at HeartSoulAndArt.com/art-show no later than April 28.

Heart Soul & Art is located at 1470 Roswell Road in Marietta.

Stolte and Ford release Roeme app

Roeme, an app that combines the ability to book yoga and fitness classes in Atlanta with a design that encourages community building, has been released as a beta version in the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.



According to company founders, Atlanta natives Allie Stolte and Jackson Ford, "Roeme is purposefully designed to emulate the camaraderie found in the boutique fitness space." The pair, both avid runners, use the Strava app, which has built-in social elements. "We felt that class-booking apps were missing the opportunity to create community as well," says Stolte.

A Roeme user can book classes with Atlanta yoga and fitness studios, follow friends to see when and where they worked out, and "compete" in a leaderboard. "Through Roeme, users can connect with friends, classmates, instructors and favorite businesses, simplifying the booking process while cultivating community," says Stolte. "The app's home button lists completed workouts by the people you follow."

At the time of writing, there were 18 participating fitness and yoga companies on the app, including Bring It OM Yoga, Nectar Yoga, Dancing Dogs Yoga, Stellar Power Yoga, Highland Yoga, M3 Yoga & Hot Pilates, Red Hot Yoga, onYoga and The Yoga Loft.

Roeme generates revenue via bookings and integrates with the studio's current booking solution.

"We love to host in-person meetups and events in Atlanta and are very excited about upcoming pop-ups at our partner studios and events," adds Stolte.

For more information, visit GetRoeme.com or connect with @GetRoeme on Instagram and TikTok.

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Photo by Kimberly Pickering

Alice Rolls

Guiding Georgia Organics For 20 Years

by Noah Chen

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average amount of time an individual works the same job is a little over four years. This would make Alice Rolls anything but average. For the past 20 years, she has served as president of Georgia Organics, a nonprofit organization with a mission to invest in, support and promote organic farmers and the organic farming movement. The root of the organization can be traced back to the 1950s, when they were supporting organic farmers on a much smaller scale than they do now. Rolls describes its beginnings as a Georgia “grower support organization.”

“There were a lot of farmers—those with small acreage who were growing with sustainable methods,” explains Rolls. “And they were collaborating and working together to support and lift each other.”

By the early 2000s, Rolls had already immersed herself in the environmental nonprofit community. When she heard that Georgia Organics was looking to hire its first-ever executive director, she decided to throw her name in the hat. “It just seemed like all the stars were aligned,” she says. As she recalls, the organization was “poised for great things, and it would be an exciting opportunity to help make some of that change happen.”

A Crucial Moment

Rolls joined Georgia Organics in 2004, arguably the organization’s most crucial moment and a very interesting time for organics. Two years before, the USDA had established the National Organic Program (NOP) to create national guidelines to officially label produce as organic. While it took a decade to create the program, Rolls says it wasn’t immediately appreciated. “A lot of people within our own community were not happy with the National Organic Program because they felt [the push for organics] was being sort of ‘corporatized.’”

According to Rolls, many people felt the NOP regulations didn’t reflect their intention to build a flourishing organics community; it was more beneficial to large farming operations. She credits that initial pushback as being a key factor that caused an explosion of growth in the local food movement. As farmers and growers were discontent with the national guidelines, they started looking to local organizations to help them navigate a new era of organic farming.

“Georgia Organics was squarely in the middle of that, and we rode that wave of interest to continue to do good work on behalf of farmers while trying to get the public involved in community-based food system work,” says Rolls. One of the organization’s programs supporting local food initiatives, Farm to School, was focused on educating teachers and students about local farms and on getting schools around the state to serve local food.

Farm to School

Erin Croom met Rolls in 2005, shortly after graduating from the University of Vermont, where she studied farm-to-school programs. When she moved to Georgia, she began asking people how to join the organic food movement. “When I started asking who I should talk to that’s working in this field, there was really just one person everyone said I needed to talk to. And that was Alice Rolls,” says Croom.

When Croom met Rolls for the first time, she walked into Rolls’ office, her arms full of books and papers she’d written on the topic of farm-to-school programs. “I really want to start a farm-to-school program here in Georgia,” she told Rolls, “and I want you to hire me to work at Georgia Organics to start it.”

In 2006, after her efforts caught the attention of a donor who funded a follow-up program, Croom was hired full-time at Georgia Organics, where she continued to develop the Farm to School program. Croom describes Rolls as a “truly great leader” who would support her co-workers and help them achieve their goals in a practical and strategic manner. “She always kept the big goal and vision at the forefront,” says Croom, while still allowing her the freedom to take charge in building out the program.

Under Croom’s direction, the reach of Georgia Organics’ Farm to School program grew from two to more than 75 schools. Croom credits many others for helping to grow the program. “We’ve got so many strong champions within the Department of Education and Department of Agriculture as well as school districts,” she says. Croom left Georgia Organics in 2018 to start her own nonprofit, the Small Bites Adventure Club, which continues to work with teachers and students to ease and facilitate access to and learning about local organic foods.

As Georgia Organics helped farmers navigate the world of organic farming, more and more farming organizations and farmers emerged. Rolls says that in her first 10 years at Georgia Organics, the number of Georgia farmers markets rose from seven to more than 150. To her, this explosive growth presented an opportunity to connect new organizations and farmers so they could all support each other. She built a network of key players over the years, including Concrete Jungle and Wholesome Wave Georgia, an organization that works with the food stamp program to increase the access and availability of fresh, local fruits and vegetables.

Much of Rolls’ work is framed toward cultivating a community around local and organic farmers, and this philosophy is noticeable as she develops relationships with other organizations. However, she is also adept at welcoming outsiders and putting them to work in the movement.



2023 Conference and Expo attendees attend a Farm Tour at Rag & Frass Farm in Jeffersonville, Georgia. Rag & Frass has been a Certified Organic farm since 2015. / Photo: Jenna Shea Photojournalism

Opportunities Open Up

William Sellers IV met Rolls in 2013 when she was raising support to help pass the Urban Agriculture Ordinance. At the time, Sellers was working with a government affairs firm and had no knowledge of local organic farming. With Sellers’ help building support and communicating with the city of Atlanta, the ordinance passed in 2014.

“So what ended up happening was just like most things in life—once you have success in one area and other people see that you can do something well, other opportunities open up for you,” says Sellers. He began volunteering with Food Well Alliance and eventually leveraged his experience into his current position as the Executive Director of Wholesome Wave Georgia.

“None of that would have happened without Alice. There was nothing in my background that said I would be a good fit,” says Sellers. “But she saw something in me—and Alice has done this for many people, so I’m not unique here. She saw where I could be of service and that I wanted to be of service. I think she saw that I want to have a greater impact, and she took a chance on me. Not many leaders do that.”

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Throughout her 20-year tenure, Rolls has witnessed a lot of change in organic farming. As more organizations sprang up, so too did public interest in local and organic foods. The number of organic farms in Georgia multiplied twentyfold, and local governments gained a new interest and appreciation for the work of organic farmers. The organization now interacts with farms throughout the state and is planning its first regional conference. If the pace continues, its community of organic farmers may soon cover the United States.

Georgia Organics has also accelerated its push to promote social justice in organic farming by welcoming farmers of color and supporting urban agriculture movements that often seek to eliminate food deserts and provide healthy, accessible food options. Their actions have, in turn, strengthened the community.

Time for a Change

While Rolls is immensely grateful for the time she has been president of Georgia Organics, she has decided to step down. "It's not for lack of interest," she says, citing both a desire to take a break from the

workload of managing a nonprofit and the intention to give the organization a chance to welcome new leadership with fresh ideas.

Seeing the community grow and gel stands as one of the things that makes Rolls most proud. The Georgia Organics Conference, too, holds much meaning for her. Describing farmers who are coming to the conference for the first time, she says, "When they see this beautiful community of farmers and advocates and teachers, and agricultural professionals supporting this type of agriculture, they're blown away." The conference serves as a focal point within the movement where farmers can link up, form partnerships and friendships, and learn from and support each other.

"When you see farmers feel loved and supported by a community of people who are willing to answer questions and share their experiences and best practices—that, to me, is success." 🌱

Noah Chen is an Atlanta writer and journalist who writes for a wide variety of large companies and publications.



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From Organic to Grass-Fed to Regenerative

Finding the Best Farming Practices

by Sara English

Embarking on a journey toward healthier eating often begins with a quest for a better understanding of food labeling and food sourcing options. For those taking their first steps into the world of healthy eating and sustainable agriculture, terms like grass-fed, organic and regenerative can be both intriguing and perplexing. Understanding these distinctions empowers consumers to make choices aligned with their values and priorities when selecting food products.

Conventional Farming

“Conventional farming practices involve very heavy equipment, heavy tillage and a lot of inputs—chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides,” says Elizabeth Whitlow, the executive director of the Regenerative Organic Alliance. “Despite its high outputs, conventional farming does not necessarily guarantee nutritious, healthy crops.”

A majority of our meat originates from animal feeding operations (AFOs), where animals are commonly raised in confinement and fed genetically modified grains, as opposed to grazing or foraging in pastures or rangelands. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Manure and wastewater from [AFOs] have the potential to contribute pollutants such as nitrogen and phosphorus, organic matter, sediments, pathogens, hormones and antibiotics to the environment.”

Grass-Fed Beef

Grass-fed farming focuses on feeding livestock grass rather than grains and, in some cases, allowing them to forage for their food, which is considered more humane than AFOs. Rotational grazing, common in grass-fed farming, contributes to environmental sustainability by promoting soil fertility and biodiversity.

According to a 2019 review published in *Nutrition Journal* that compared the nutritional profiles of grass-fed and grain-fed beef,



urban_light/DepositPhotos.com

scientists from the California State University College of Agriculture noted that grass-fed beef tends to be lower in overall fat and higher in several heart-healthy fatty acids and antioxidants, including omega-3s, conjugated linoleic acid, precursors for vitamins A and E, and glutathione. The authors also note, “To maximize the favorable lipid profile and to guarantee the elevated antioxidant content, animals should be finished [fed before slaughter] in 100 percent grass or pasture-based diets.”

While there is no federal standard for a grass-fed label, third-party certifiers that may lend a level of reliability include the American Grassfed Association and A Greener World. Look for 100 percent grass-fed and grass-finished certification, and remember that a grass-fed label doesn’t automatically mean that the product is organic or regenerative organic.

USDA Organic Certification

Established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1990, the USDA Organic certification and farming practices focus on soil health, biodiversity and natural methods of pest and weed control, rather than using synthetic inputs like chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, as well as genetically modified organisms. According to the USDA, 17,445 certified organic farms operated a total of 4.9 million acres in 2021, amounting to less than 1 percent of U.S. farmland. From 2019 to 2021, sales of organic crops increased 5 percent to \$6.1 billion.

A 2019 study published in the journal *Environmental Research* reported that an organic diet may reduce exposure to a range of pesticides in children and adults. A 2024 review of studies in the journal *Food* noted that certain health benefits have been associated with a higher consumption of organic foods, including a reduction in obesity, improvements in blood nutrient composition and a reduction in the development of non-Hodgkin lymphoma and colorectal cancers. Rodale Institute’s Vegetable Systems Trial, a long-term, side-by-side comparison of conventional and organic methods, is designed to analyze nutrient density and explore the links between soil health and human health.

Regenerative Farming

In addition to adhering to the core principles of organic farming, regenerative agriculture sets out to actively rejuvenate and improve ecosystems, nurture soil health, foster biodiversity and promote water retention, with the added benefit of sequestering environmental carbon by returning it to the soil. According to Kegan Hilaire, a small farms consultant for Rodale Institute, this type of farming prioritizes human health, farmworker conditions, animal welfare and animal integration into farming methods. Farms and products that bear the Regenerative Organic Certification (ROC) label “meet the highest standards in soil

health, animal welfare and social fairness,” Whitlow explains. As of 2023, 156 farms and about 1.1 million acres have received this certification, which is overseen by the Regenerative Organic Alliance, a nonprofit group of experts in farming, ranching, soil health, animal welfare, and farmer and worker fairness.

Voting With Our Pocketbooks

Hilaire points out that only about 1 percent of the U.S. population are farmers, fewer are certified organic or regenerative, and many small farms employ these methods without getting the official paperwork. “The best certification is meeting your farmer and deciding if you trust where your food is coming from,” he suggests.

Grass-fed, organic and regenerative organic foods each offer unique benefits, from improved nutrition to environmental sustainability. Every purchase becomes a vote for the kind of world we want to live in. By selecting products aligned with our values, we can collectively drive positive change in the food system and shape a healthier, more sustainable future for generations to come. 🌱

Sara English is the owner of Wild Roots Farm Marketing, a digital marketing firm for regenerative farmers and ranchers. Connect at WildRootsFarmMarketing.com.

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Relief for Parkinson's Patients

How Traditional and Complementary Interventions Can Help

by Madiha Saeed, M.D.



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There is no cure for PD, and by the time a patient is diagnosed, they may have already lost 60 to 80 percent of their dopamine-producing cells. According to Kenneth Sharlin, a board-certified neurologist and certified functional medicine doctor, the first line of defense for PD is levodopa (L-Dopa), a pharmaceutical that is converted to dopamine in the body. “Unfortunately, natural strategies don’t get a lot of research, so no supplement has been shown to effectively treat the disease,” he asserts. “Mucuna pruriens, a tropical legume that grows in Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands, naturally contains levodopa, but studies have shown it to be unreliable.”

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that plays a role in controlling memory, mood, sleep, learning, concentration and movement. “If the car doesn’t have gas, then you can’t drive it,” explains Sharlin. Once a patient is taking levodopa to bring dopamine levels up, complementary strategies can be employed to help manage PD symptoms by as much as 73 percent, according to a panel of doctors participating in The Parkinson’s Solutions Summit. Exercise, sleep and even intimacy with a partner can all be managed well once the car has “gas” to drive it.

Exercise

According to Sharlin, the number one strategy for PD patients to maintain their motor function is exercise such as bicycling, chair yoga, movement classes in warm water pools, Pilates and dance. A meta-analysis published in *Gerontology and Geriatrics* analyzed 15 randomized controlled trials involving 498 participants in several countries to investigate the health impacts of self-directed physical

activity (SDPA) on patients with early and mid-stage PD. The study examined the effects of moderate-intensity exercises, including aerobics, dance, strength training, flexibility exercises and Nordic walking. The researchers found that the SDPA significantly enhanced gait function, balance, mobility, function and postural control.

Gut Health

Monitoring gut function is very important for patients with PD, as constipation is very common,” states Trupti Gokani, a board-certified neurologist, health and mindset coach, and Ayurvedic expert. Improving gut function with the help of key nutrients from vegetables, fruits, clean protein, nuts and seeds, olive oil, herbs and spices has been shown to slow the progression of the disease. It is best to choose organic when possible, as that will decrease the exposure to brain-toxic chemicals. A gluten-free diet has also been found to improve PD symptoms.

Sharlin recommends an antioxidant-rich diet packed with polyphenols, along with green tea that contains catechins called epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), a natural antioxidant with neuroprotective properties.

Stress Reduction

Anxiety linked to PD can worsen the symptoms,” Gokani points out. Chronic stress is a risk factor for PD, because it elevates the hormone cortisol, which can interfere with neuronal plasticity and damage dopamine-producing neurons in the brain.

Incorporating deep breathing, meditation and other relaxation techniques is integral to improving the patient’s quality of life. According to Sharlin, “Mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques to self-regulate have a positive impact in regulating Parkinsonism.”

New Test to Confirm Diagnosis

When a patient comes to his office exhibiting PD symptoms, Sharlin now has a new way to confirm a PD diagnosis by taking a small tissue sample and sending it to the

lab to look for a neural protein called alpha synuclein, which is associated with PD. In a 2023 National Institutes of Health study involving 428 people with PD and 120 control volunteers, this skin biopsy was found to be very accurate, with 92.7 percent sensitivity.

Deep Brain Stimulation

According to Sharlin, deep brain stimulation (DBS) is a well-researched and well-developed treatment for PD. The surgical therapy involves implanting electrodes within areas of the brain to interrupt irregular signals that cause movement-related symptoms. A 2019 retrospective study of 400 patients that underwent DBS implantation found that 75 percent of the participants felt the procedure provided symptom control.

Focused ultrasound is another PD tool, using ultrasound beams to destroy areas in the brain cells that are causing movement problems. This procedure is permanent and can be done on only one side of the brain, so it helps symptoms on only one side of the body. Treatment to both sides could cause speech, swallowing or memory problems. Sharlin notes that the results from focused ultrasound are no better than DBS and involve more intense intervention. Also, not all Parkinson’s patients are good candidates for this procedure. 📌

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

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According to the Parkinson’s Foundation, more than 10 million people worldwide and nearly 1 million Americans are living with Parkinson’s disease (PD). Every year, nearly 90,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with this ailment, which causes the gradual loss of dopamine-producing neurons in the brain. Symptoms that develop slowly over years include tremors; stiff muscles; a slow, shuffling gait; and difficulties with movement and speech.

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The Genius of Empathy by Dr. Judith Orloff

According to *New York Times* bestselling author and psychiatrist Judith Orloff, M.D., empathy is a superpower that can transform your life, your relationships, and the world. In her new book *The Genius of Empathy: Practical Skills to Heal Your Sensitive Self, Your Relationships and the World* (with foreword by The Dalai Lama), Dr. Orloff shows readers how to ignite and embody the emotional intelligence of empathy as a daily healing practice.

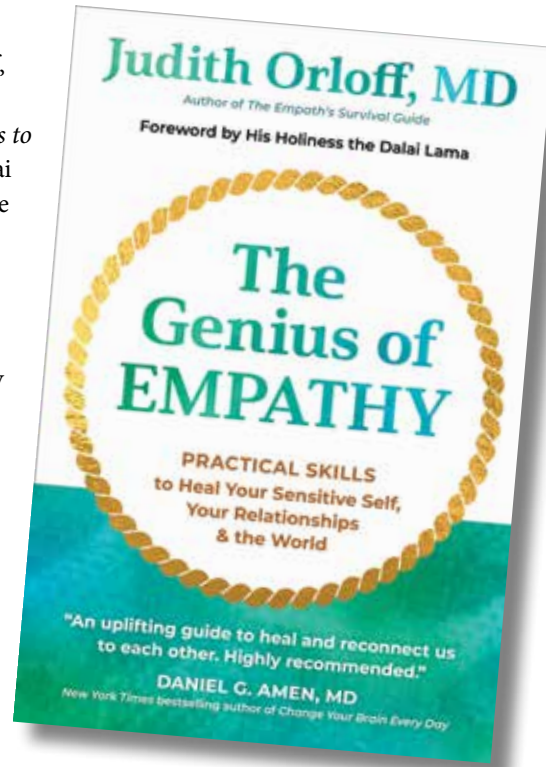
The Genius of Empathy demonstrates ways to tap into the gift of one's sensitivities without being drained. Readers will learn how to soothe their nervous system and stop absorbing other people's emotions. It's a practical, action-driven guide for highly sensitive people and for those who want to develop empathy as a healing skill.

The book is divided into three sections. It begins with the magic of empathy to find greater self-love and healing—including from trauma. Subsequent chapters teach readers how to apply empathy to their relationships, communities and the world. Exploring each chapter's practices, readers will learn the art of empathic listening, how to stop overthinking, and the importance of setting healthy boundaries and showing loving detachment to prevent overwhelm and compassion fatigue.

Throughout the book Orloff uses insights from neuroscience, psychology and energy medicine to teach readers how to use and amplify their empathy without feeling overwhelmed. The book also offers tips on how to prevent empathy burnout, techniques to enhance self-empathy and healthy giving, how to use empathic communication and leadership skills at work and home, how to show empathy for others—even when you're not in agreement, and how to protect oneself from those with "empathy-deficient disorder" such as narcissists, sociopaths and bullies.

Each chapter has compelling anecdotes of how Orloff's patients enhanced their lives with this book's techniques. "Cultivating empathy is a kind of peaceful warrior training," says Orloff. "You will learn to be both strong and loving, neither a pushover nor rigid. Wherever you are in your life, this book can meet you there and lift you higher."

Judith Orloff, M.D., is a New York Times bestselling author with the NEW book The Genius of Empathy. She has also written The Empath's Survival Guide and Thriving as an Empath, which offers daily self-care tools for sensitive people. Dr. Orloff integrates the pearls of con-



ventional medicine with cutting edge knowledge of intuition, empathy, energy medicine and spirituality. She will host a global online webinar about empathic healing techniques based on The Genius of Empathy on April 20 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. PDT. To get a free empathy eBook and empathy gift collection with purchase of book visit DrJudithOrloff.com.

The Genius of Empathy was reviewed by Ronald Alexander, Ph.D., author of Core Creativity.

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Sustainable Travel

Wanderlust With the Earth in Mind

by Sara Kaplan



Xyeng/CanvaPro

Whether travel is enjoyed for much-needed relaxation, cultural immersion or the opportunity to volunteer in an eco-program spotlighting permaculture or farming, journeying to places far and near greatly enriches our human experience. During these environmentally critical times, our travels may carry a hefty price tag that the planet can no longer afford. This does not mean we need to sacrifice adventure. Every traveler can make a difference not only for the Earth but for the local communities they visit.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, 8.1 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions can be attributed to travel and tourism. Being in the know and taking more responsibility for our environmental impact can be easier than commonly assumed, all the while inviting unexpected enjoyment.

Amanda Reiser, a global sustainable tourism specialist based in Pennsylvania, encourages her clients to consider the three pillars of sustainable tourism: environment, economy and equity. “We all can play a part in fostering sustainable tourism and creating a more sustainable world. Ask yourself: Does my participation in this activity create a negative impact on the natural environment? Are there any actions to help reduce my environmental impact?” she explains, noting that a green-minded approach benefits not only the traveler but also the destination.

A traveler’s footprint extends to the socio-cultural fabric of the destination, too. Reiser reminds travelers, “You may be in your destination for only a week, but the people who live there year-round feel the impacts of visitors every day, for better or worse.” By respecting local traditions and engaging locals in a respectful and inclusive manner, tourists can contribute positively to the cultural integrity of the communities they visit.

Greener Horizons

Instead of hitting all the trendy, transportation-reliant sights, opt to slow down and stay in one place for a longer period. This not only invites a richer, deeper experience but minimizes the need to hop onto another plane or bus. To support the local economy of a desired destination, buy locally produced items and book small, private hotels and inns, rather than international chains. Dining at locally owned eateries supports small business while giving travelers higher-quality fare and a more authentic cultural experience.

When planning a trip, contemplate the many treasures of domestic travel or choose a location that is not drowning in overtourism. The influx of tourists can significantly strain fragile ecosystems, deplete resources and disrupt the lives of local communities. Consider destinations that can be crossed via boat, train or bus, such as the New York-Montreal border or clusters of countries in Europe or Southeast Asia.

Packing With Purpose

Making small choices even when packing a suitcase goes a long way. Bring eco-friendly sunscreen and opt for brands that avoid chemicals harmful to coral reefs and tropical environments. Pack a cloth tote bag for daily excursions and a reusable water bottle to avoid single-use plastics. Remember that by using plastic containers more than once, we reduce the amount of waste that is released over time. Try not to overpack—bring only the most necessary items,

preferably those that can be recycled, reused and disposed of properly.

Sojourning With Savvy

To avoid getaway glitches, become acquainted with local laws and regulations. When planning a fishing excursion, for example, identify the legally designated fishing spots and avoid harming endangered species, which are heavily protected under national and international regulations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) offers an interactive map to show where legal fishing areas are by state ([fws.gov/fishing/map](https://www.fws.gov/fishing/map)). Historical resources should also be taken into consideration. For instance, the Florida Keys require special permits for cultural, maritime, heritage and archaeological explorations, including snorkeling expeditions of ancient shipwrecks and other unique, underwater sites.

It is always best to ask whether a destination is a naturally protected sanctuary or requires special permits. The FWS is a good reference site for information on activities in national wildlife refuges and the endangered animals that live there. To enjoy these areas to their fullest, make sure to find a knowledgeable local tour guide that understands the laws of the land.

Traveling consciously involves personal responsibility toward the environment through individual actions. “You can make a difference,” says David Knight, a professor of tourism management at Colorado State University. “Regenerative travel is not just leaving things the way you found them. It’s a matter of giving more than you take.”

Don’t Be Greenwashed

Greenwashing is a corrupt practice by companies that claim to support conscious tourism but fail to live up to their claims. Vetting businesses when planning a trip means delving into third-party research and reports to check the fine print. Before booking, make sure the ecolodge or ecotouring company being considered has a legitimate certification on their website. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) sets global standards and provides

accreditations for destination managers, hotels and tour operators. There are also certifying groups in specific locations, such as the Sustainable Tourism Association of Hawaii, and others that are accredited by the GSTC, like Preferred by Nature.

For tourism operations that have not been certified, the onus is on the traveler. “Check with the local chambers of commerce. They should know who is working toward sustainability and can direct you to those aligned with what you are looking for,” says Claudia Gil Arroyo, an agricultural agent for the Rutgers University Cooperative Extension, in New Jersey. “If a tour operator or destination does not have a clear goal on how they’re contributing to the environment, it is unlikely that they are actually green.”

For tourism to be truly sustainable, it must also be economically viable for local communities. Economic sustainability ensures that tourism dollars benefit the local economy, creating fair wages, local sourcing and community empowerment, and allowing communities to thrive while preserving their cultural heritage. When traveling, support local, eco-friendly businesses that provide sustainable products.

A good example is agritourism—a vacation stay at a participating local farm—which can provide exciting, hands-on learning experiences. “Get out there. Look for your local growers and check out the services and activities they offer,” says Gil Arroyo. “People have this idea that agritourism is just picking your pumpkins and that’s it, and there’s so much more that can be done at a farm.”

Eco-Friendly North American Parks

North America is home to many national parks—63 in the United States and 48 in Canada. Here are five exceptional examples that provide a sustainable, eco-friendly vacation experience.

Yellowstone National Park is known for its geothermal features, including

the famous Old Faithful geyser. It also has a diverse range of wildlife, including grizzly bears, wolves and herds of bison. This U.S. park has implemented sustainable practices such as renewable energy installations, waste management programs and educational initiatives to promote conservation.

Great Bear Rainforest is a temperate locale on the central and northern coasts of British Columbia, Canada. It is home to a variety of wildlife, including the rare Kermode bear, also known as the spirit bear. The park works closely with First Nations communities, implementing conservation measures to protect biodiversity and support eco-conscious businesses.

Everglades National Park is a unique wetland ecosystem in Florida known as the “River of Grass”. It provides habitat for numerous endangered species, such as the Florida panther and the West Indian manatee. The park employs restoration efforts to preserve the natural water flow and conserve wildlife, with plenty of opportunities for eco-friendly recreational activities like kayaking and hiking.

Cape Breton Highlands National Park is located on the northern tip of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. It offers breathtaking coastal views, rugged cliffs and stunning hiking trails. The park implements waste reduction, energy conservation, ecological restoration and educational programs to promote environmental stewardship.

Redwood National and State Parks, in California, are home to the tallest trees on Earth, the majestic coast redwoods. Sustainable eco-practices include trail maintenance and restoration, wildlife protection, interpretation programs to educate visitors about the delicate ecosystem and conservation efforts to combat climate change and preserve redwood habitat. 🌲

Sara Kaplan is an environmentally conscious freelance writer and eco-traveler from Fort Collins, CO.

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A Look at Single-Use Plastics

Understanding the Challenges and Solutions

by Sheryl DeVore



We might be tempted to bring plastic forks to a picnic or succumb to the expediency of prepackaged chips for our kids' lunches, but single-use plastics wreak havoc on the environment and human health. Although marketed as disposable, most of these fossil fuel-derived, non-biodegradable items are not being recycled, so they languish indefinitely in landfills or pollute our waterways in the form of microplastics. "Plastic pollution has been linked to everything from infertility and cancer in humans to severe injury and death in wildlife," says Veena Singla, senior scientist for the National Resources Defense Council, in New York.

Plastic Use Is Rampant

Roughly 30 percent of garbage in the U.S. comes from single-use plastics," says Shawn Flood, a partner and vice president of operations and customer care at SBC Waste Solutions, a waste collection company based in Broadview, Illinois.

Marketed for their inexpensive, lightweight, flexible and impermeable qualities, we have come to rely on plastic grocery bags, shrink wrapping, drink bottles, stickers, K-cups, straws, gloves, takeout containers and other throwaway products. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, approximately 380 billion plastic bags and wraps are used annually, which require 12 million barrels of oil to make.

Recycling Is Not Happening

Many plastic products that could be recycled are still getting tossed into the landfill. "The biggest problem is contamination," Flood explains. "When someone puts a plastic milk jug into the recycling bin and there's still milk inside of it, that ends up getting trashed. Those products become single-use plastics when consumers don't do the correct job of washing recyclables."

Banning Single-Use Plastics

Over the past few decades, countries including Costa Rica, France and Italy, as well as some U.S. states, have introduced laws that prohibit or tax single-use plastics. "They are banning single-use plastics in California," Flood notes. "Everything is paper. Basically, you cannot find a plastic straw," Flood notes.

Other states following the trend to ban certain plastics include Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New York, Oregon, New Jersey and Vermont. The U.S. Department of the Interior is phasing out single-use plastics on public lands, including national parks, by 2032. A Los Angeles County public works study reports that a ban on plastic bags in San Jose has led to reductions of plastic bags found in storm drains (89 percent), rivers (60 percent) and residential areas (59 percent).

Some states, however, have chosen to protect the continued use of these items. For example, Indiana passed a bill in 2016 prohibiting city and county officials from taxing or restricting the use of disposable plastic bags by certain retailers. Similar laws have been enacted or proposed in Wisconsin, Idaho, Florida and Arizona.

Beware of Greenwashing

New single-use products are continually being introduced that claim to be better for the environment, but consumers need to be cautious of such promises, says Brandon Leeds, co-founder of SOFi Paper Products, based in Miami, Florida. "There's a tremendous amount of greenwashing going on," he explains. "They stamp the products as eco-friendly. For example, some agave straws are predominantly made with plastic and just mixed with agave."

SOFi manufactures straws and drinking cups that are 100 percent paper, 100 percent plastic free and 100 percent compostable. They sell to 4,000 businesses in the U.S., including mom-and-pop coffee shops, high-end restaurants, convenience stores and

popular food chains. Leeds remarks, "Our company mission is to educate people."

Choosing Better Options

Alternatives to plastic, such as cotton or paper bags, also have environmental impacts, and the jury is out on whether single-use plastic bans can really improve the environment, according to Enhesa, a company that helps businesses with regulatory compliance.

A study commissioned by the American Recyclable Plastic Bag Alliance, a group that represents U.S. manufacturers and recyclers of plastic bags, found that New Jersey's ban resulted in a 60 percent decline in bag volume. However, the study also found six times more woven and non-woven polypropylene plastic was used to produce reusable bags, which are not widely recycled. The non-woven bags consume 15 times more plastic, and their production generates five times the greenhouse gas emissions per bag than the thin plastic bags.

Flood says one solution may be "to go back to the early days when glass was used for everything, and it could be used over and over." Several states have created container deposit laws related to glass and plastic. In Oregon, for example, nearly every business that sells certain beverages in redeemable sealed containers is legally required to accept returned containers that can be recycled or reused.

The bottom line, Flood asserts, is that people need to move away from a throwaway mentality and stop using single-use plastics. "The consumer has the power to do anything," he says. "When I go on vacation and I'm walking on the beach, I'm picking up pieces of plastic everywhere." ♻️

Sheryl DeVore is a frequent contributor to national and regional publications and has authored six books on science, health and nature. Learn more at SherylDeVore.wordpress.com.

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Exploring Beyond the Classroom

Nurturing Healthy Minds Through Travel

by Megy Karydes



BADZOXLSplE/CanvaPro

When Desiree Miller and her daughter visited Rome, they met a couple from Ukraine celebrating their honeymoon. There was talk of a possible war, so they chatted about what that might mean for the newlyweds. Later that day, her daughter asked their Italian driver his thoughts about the impending conflict in Ukraine with Russia, and he said he didn't like it because it was going to raise gas prices.

"Traveling feels like it shrinks the world," says Miller, an Atlanta-based travel writer, vlogger, digital streaming producer, co-host of the "Time to Talk Travel" podcast and mother of four. "So many children these days only know what's in their backyard or their general neighborhood or community, the school they go to, and that's the extent of their communication with other people. But when I take my daughter to other countries, she gets to experience people from those countries and beyond."

According to the 2023 U.S. Family Travel Survey released by the Family Travel Association, 80 percent of the respondents indicated that travel helps children see the world from a broader perspective, and 67 percent said their children have become more interested in other cultures because of their travel experiences.

Nasreen Stump agrees that travel expands a child's worldview. "I want my kids to be curious, because curiosity leads to lifelong learning," says the mother of four, a content creator and co-host of the "Time to Talk Travel" podcast. "When you're in different places, and you see something that's different, you think, 'Oh, what's that?' and want to learn more about it. It's the same with similarities."

Managing Expenses

Families need not break the bank to enjoy meaningful experiences away from home. Here are a few money-saving travel ideas suggested by Stump and Miller.

- **Take shorter trips.** As they've grown older, each of Stump's children have developed different interests, so instead of traveling as a family all the time, she takes each of them on one-on-one trips based on their interests. When the family does come together for an excursion, a day trip or weekend getaway is a more affordable option.
- **Hop on the internet.** Miller's youngest daughter, now 18 years old, loves using TikTok as a jumping-off point to research travel destinations, local restaurants, activities and events. Other kids rely on YouTube to get ideas or travel virtually.
- **Enjoy a staycation.** For families that can't afford multiple plane tickets, closer-to-home experiences offer fun learning opportunities such as attending a multi-cultural fair to watch live performances or trying a new cuisine at a nearby restaurant or in a cooking class.
- **Take advantage of free or discounted deals.** Some libraries offer free passes to museums for library card holders. National parks have free entrance days throughout the year. Check [nps.gov](https://www.nps.gov) for upcoming dates. Flights and hotels are often discounted during the shoulder season—the period between a region's

peak season and offseason. Some credit cards allow members to use their reward points for travel-related discounts.

Preparing for Travel

- **Research destinations.** Bookmark areas of interest on a Google map or add them to a Pinterest board. Read books, magazine articles and travel blogs about different locales.
- **Sample the cuisine.** Much can be learned about a culture through food. Experiment with new ingredients by visiting specialized grocery stores that cater to different cultures, or join a snack subscription with selections from around the world.
- **Learn a new language.** Check out apps like Duolingo, Babbel and Rosetta Stone.

Traveling Is Empowering

Life is full of challenges, and traveling, especially to foreign ports, can test anyone's patience. Some of Miller's children don't love to travel because of flight delays or other unexpected mishaps. Her youngest is more adaptable. According to Miller, dealing with adversity is part of life, and travel is a great teacher.

Traveling allows kids to get out of their comfort zones, and for many, that sense of adventure is powerful. Whether exploring historical landmarks, taking part in hiking excursions, trying new foods, hearing different languages and dialects, or meeting new people, family travel can help children feel more comfortable, less isolated and see the world in a new light.

Making Memories

Children love to collect souvenirs on their travels as a way to remember their experiences. Miller and her daughter usually buy a piece of jewelry because it is small and doesn't take up any suitcase space. Stump's family likes to take lots of photographs and bring home candy from the culture. Rocks or shells, if permitted, also make wonderful keepsakes.

Memories go beyond objects. Multi-generational travel allows children to see their grandparents from a fresh perspective. Kids will remember travel experiences long after they return home. "Travel gives you a real appreciation of the world beyond what you see every day," Miller says, adding that her daughter has befriended other travelers with whom she still stays in contact. 🌍

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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natural awakenings

Kundalini Yoga

Awakening the Energy Within

by David Penn

Kundalini yoga is an ancient form of yoga with a focus on awakening the dormant spiritual energy within the body known as *kundalini*. This powerful practice combines breathwork, physical movement, meditation and chanting to activate and balance the *chakras*, or energy centers, and can lead to heightened awareness, overall well-being and spiritual enlightenment.



Avesun/DepositPhotos.com

Origins of Kundalini Yoga

Boasting a rich and enigmatic heritage, this secretive practice stretches back thousands of years. Its roots lie deep within the ancient philosophies and practices of *tantra*, a vast spiritual system that emerged in India around the eighth century. Tantra emphasized the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms, and kundalini yoga served as a powerful tool for yogis and seekers on their path to enlightenment.

For centuries, knowledge was meticulously passed down through oral tradition from teacher to student, ensuring a deep understanding and commitment from those chosen to receive the potent practice. These lineages, often familial or based on teacher-student relationships, carefully guarded the practice and its secrets, believing it to be too powerful for indiscriminate use. Initiates underwent rigorous training and preparation before embarking on the transformative journey kundalini yoga offered.

The emphasis on secrecy and selective transmission shrouded the practice in an aura of mystique. It was seen as a powerful tool for awakening the potent kundalini energy, a dormant spiritual force that resides at the base of the spine. By awakening and directing the kundalini energy upward through the chakras, practitioners aimed to achieve profound spiritual experiences, heightened consciousness and, ultimately, union with the Divine.

Kriya: Stimulation and Balance

Delving deeper into the kundalini practice is the experience of *kriya*, a set of techniques and/or practices within a yoga discipline meant to achieve a specific result.

Ann (Hari Kaur) Ritter, Ph.D., a yoga teacher for more than 24 years, teaches at Vista Yoga in Decatur. “Kriyas are designed to address a particular area of concern or issue. Kriya means a completed action. Examples might be a spinal energy kriya for a healthy, flexible spine or a kriya for disease



Ann Ritter / Photo: Margaret Graff

resistance to help strengthen the immune system,” she explains. “The kriya might be followed directly by deep relaxation followed by a group meditation.”

Recently, influential spiritual leader Sadhguru has professed the power the practice holds. Sadhguru is the founder of the Isha Foundation, a worldwide non-profit organization offering yoga programs and promoting human well-being through spiritual practices and social initiatives. Founded in India in 1992, Isha now has more than 300 centers worldwide, including a large, popular satellite campus in McMinnville, Tennessee. A renowned yogi and mystic,

Sadhguru has dedicated his life to spreading the knowledge and practices of yoga.

Sadhguru acknowledges the significance of kundalini yoga. He often speaks about the awakening of kundalini energy and emphasizes the importance of activating the dormant potential within. He has said, “If kundalini rises, it unleashes a flood that wipes away your petty creations and leaves you as the Creator intended you to be.” While Sadhguru’s teachings encompass a wide range of yogic practices, kundalini yoga remains an integral part of his teachings and offerings.

Kundalini Yoga in the United States

Kundalini yoga has experienced a surge in popularity in the United States in recent years. There are several reasons for its growing appeal among yogis and spiritual seekers.


Spiritual awakening: Many are drawn to an emphasis on spiritual awakening and inner transformation. Kundalini yoga offers a unique combination of physical movement, meditation and energetic practices that can help people connect with their true essence and experience higher states of consciousness.

Energetic healing: The practice is known for its ability to activate and balance the chakras. By working with specific kriyas, mantra chanting, and breathwork

techniques, practitioners can release energetic blockages and promote healing on physical, mental and emotional levels.

Emphasis on self-expression: Individuals can express themselves authentically and embrace their true selves. The practice often incorporates chanting, singing and movement, providing a creative outlet for practitioners to connect with their inner voice and express their emotions.

Stress relief and emotional well-being: The dynamic movements, conscious breathing techniques and meditation practices are effective in reducing stress, anxiety and



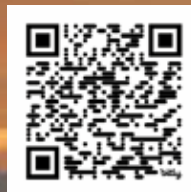
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Open House: A Day of Wellness, Movement, and Transformation – 9am-3pm Celebrate AUM Yoga Studio’s first anniversary! Enjoy a variety of yoga classes, dance demos, sound healing sessions, and journaling and meditation. Kids’ activities and local vendors. \$10. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Ste B2, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

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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.

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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.

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Mukta Khalsa / Photo: Gurudarshan Khalsa

Mukta Khalsa: A Reflection on 50 Years of Teaching in Atlanta

Mukta Khalsa, who has been a kundalini yoga instructor in Atlanta since the 1970s, teaches at GRD Yoga and Meditation Center in Dunwoody. She speaks fondly of an extraordinary odyssey. “As I reflect on sharing my journey with kundalini yoga, it feels like unraveling the layers of an infinite, luminous spiral, each turn revealing deeper insights and more profound transformations. For over 50 years, I have been both a student and a teacher of this remarkable practice, a journey that has not only shaped my physical existence but has also guided my spiritual awakening and my understanding of the universe and interconnectedness.”

In addition to sharing the virtues the practice has on the individual, Khalsa points out the importance of the community and the support and connection students receive within the practice. “Kundalini yoga fosters a strong sense of community among practitioners, often referred to as ‘sangat.’ This supportive environment encourages the sharing of experiences, mutual growth and collective uplifting,” he says. “The practice teaches that through connection with others, one can find a

greater sense of connection to the self and the universe, reinforcing the idea that we are all interconnected and can help each other achieve our highest potential.”



Cheryl Crawford / Photo: Loyal Hart

Cheryl Crawford, E-RYT 500, is a yoga instructor at Highland Yoga in Atlanta and has been teaching adults and children since 2007. When asked to describe a typical kundalini class, she says, “There’s nothing typical about kundalini yoga! But for each class, we engage mantra, breath and *mudra* [hand postures designed to elicit a specific response]. We do yogic sequences designed to align energy. Expect the unexpected. Expect to shift and lift and get high on your own supply. Bring an openness of mind.”

Kundalini yoga’s emphasis on spiritual awakening, energetic healing, self-expression and well-being has resonated with practitioners seeking a holistic approach to personal growth and transformation. As more individuals recognize its power, its influence continues to expand, inspiring countless souls along the path of self-discovery and enlightenment. 🙏



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.



Ashley Walsh

From Personal Health Crisis to Organic Farming

by Carrie Jackson



Ashley Walsh-PoconoOrganics

As the founder of Pocono Organics, a leading regenerative organic farm in Pennsylvania, Ashley Walsh understands that the way food is grown can determine its nutritional properties and significantly impact the environment. Her own journey from illness to wellness led her to organic foods and responsible farming practices. It is a remarkable story of triumph over adversity and can inspire others on the path to lifelong well-being.

In her late 20s, Walsh was diagnosed with gastroparesis, a devastating condition that involves the partial paralysis of the stomach, making every meal a painful prospect. “I couldn’t digest most fruits, vegetables or meat, and was in excruciating pain with vomiting and nausea, which led to malnutrition,” she recalls.

Desperate for help, Walsh exhausted every treatment Western medicine had to offer. “I cycled through medications without relief and even tried Botox. When my doctors recommended feeding tubes and cutting out parts of my stomach, I turned to functional medicine,” she explains. “After experimenting with juicing and smoothies, I was finally able to get nutrients and

nourishment from real food. This led to a broader detox. I cut out processed food, additives and dyes and introduced plant-based supplements and non-toxic personal care items.”

The more Walsh moved toward an organic diet and lifestyle, the better she felt. “I started seeing undeniable results and went from feeling sick five days a week to having symptoms only five days a month. My whole life, I’d eaten low-quality food like corn chips, cheese sandwiches and pizza, not realizing what I was putting in my body,” she muses.

While she transitioned to a healthier lifestyle, Walsh was assistant director at Fox Sports, a job that required constant travel, and finding the healthy ingredients she needed was difficult. “I was frustrated that the supply did not meet the demand for nutritious, whole food. At the same time, I wanted to share my passion for using food as medicine, and it was in the back of my mind to start a small community farm for a while,” she recalls.

At a 2015 impact investing conference, Walsh learned how a business could help

people and the planet, while still making a profit. “This truly resonated with me, and the seed was planted,” she explains. “I leased a 50-acre parcel of land from the family business and called Rodale Institute, the leader in organic and regenerative farming practices, for consultation.”

Pocono Organics opened its gates to the public in 2019 and has flourished ever since. The 380-acre farm hosts tours, community events, cooking classes, an organic market and a café. It is a global center for research and discovery, as well as an agritourism destination for guest retreats. “Pocono Organics creates moments and experiences that inspire change and transform lives through wellness, health, food diversity and sustainability,” Walsh asserts. “We give people emotional souvenirs through experiences where they can taste and touch real foods and learn why things like soil health are important. Guests develop a connection with nature and see where their food comes from.”

Walsh hopes to instill preventative wellness and lifelong healthy habits to a younger generation. “We have a program called Clean Foods, Healthy Hands, which teaches kids to plant, harvest and cook in a healthy way. From an early age, they’re out in the fields eating raw broccoli and cauliflower! They can still have their favorite foods, but they learn to add squash to the macaroni and cheese and end up liking it better. These habits stay with them their whole lives,” she says.

More than anything, Walsh wants people to be mindful of the impact their food choices have. “Every day you have at least three opportunities to make a difference in how you nourish yourself,” she says. “The more we can get food from farms and not factories, the better we can live and work in harmony with nature. Food truly is medicine, and making an investment in your health helps the planet, and therefore other people, too.” 🌱

Carrie Jackson is a Chicago-based freelance writer and frequent contributor to *Natural Awakenings*. Connect at CarrieJacksonWrites.com.



Farm Vacations

American Agritourism Grows in Post-Pandemic Times

by April Thompson



boggy22/DepositPhotos.com

Long a staple of European travel, agritourism is growing in popularity in the United States, as concrete-weary urbanites seek out a taste of country living and a way to support small-scale farms. The concept broadly covers any activity linking agriculture with tourism, and it takes as many forms as there are farms. Farm stay options run the gamut from helping with farm chores like feeding chickens and collecting eggs to structured classes on weaving, soap making or beekeeping.

“Living in towns and cities, most Americans are very disconnected from nature and agriculture. Farm stays are helping to make an important urban-rural connection,” says Scottie Jones, founder of Farm Stay USA, an association connecting travelers with working farms and ranches that offer hands-on opportunities and overnight accommodations.

Since 2007, Jones has operated her own farm stay, the 70-acre Leaping Lamb Farm, in Alsea, Oregon. She has been surprised at many guests’ “agricultural illiteracy”, underscoring the importance of the educational experiences that farm stays like hers offer. “I used to send guests off to graze in the garden alone, but then realized many people don’t know what carrots look like in the field,” says Jones. “I would get questions like, ‘Don’t you need a brown cow to make chocolate milk?’”

More than one in three guests to Leaping Lamb Farm return for subsequent stays, a very high retention rate for the lodging industry. “We get to watch families grow up as they return to the farm year after year. That has a real impact, as we need the next generation to get involved in farming and food systems,” Jones notes.

Justin Bolois, of Los Angeles, got introduced to agritourism in Tuscany, later seeking out the farm experience closer to home. “We had been living in New York City at the time and came to value the expansive countryside being in Italy,” he says. “The family, which ran a vineyard, would cook incredible meals for us. Vacations are great when they mirror the experience of living in a place, and agritourism is one of the closest ways to access that.”

Bolois and his wife later discovered Straus Home Ranch, in Marshall, California, and fell in love with the place and its people so deeply they hosted their wedding there. The ranch was founded by a pair of pioneers in organic farming and land conservation in Marin County, and it was later revitalized to include a farm stay by siblings Vivien, Miriam and Michael Straus after their parents’ deaths. “You can tell that Vivian and Michael not only care about what they do, they also care about you, and about you enjoying their life mission. That’s a very special bond to develop with an agritourism owner,” Bolois says.

The ranch features special touches, including a beautifully equipped kitchen to shuck local oysters or to host private chefs for farm-fresh meals served on a handcrafted table made of reclaimed redwood from their old hay barn. There is no cellphone reception on the ranch, encouraging guests to kayak, hike, birdwatch and stargaze.

“After being cooped up during COVID, people want to see wildlife and biodiversity again. People are aching to disconnect from their screens and reconnect with nature—what we call ‘dirt therapy,’” says Ashley Walsh, president and founder of Poconos Organics, one of the largest Regenerative Organic Certified farms on the continent, sprawling across 380 acres in Long Pond, Pennsylvania.

Walsh built the boutique resort, The Village at Pocono, with her grandfather when she was 25 as a sister destination to the farm. The accommodations feature full kitchens where guests can cook a cornucopia of produce fresh from the fields. Visitors can enjoy luxurious amenities on site, then pop over to the farm to attend hands-on cooking classes, wellness retreats, farm tours and more.

Beyond connecting with rural life, farm stays are a meaningful, mutually beneficial way for farmers and consumers to reconnect on a personal level. “Agritourism puts a face to farming. We want to educate people so they can make better choices in food and get to experience what really fresh food tastes like,” Jones says. 🌱

Connect with Washington, D.C., freelance writer April Thompson at AprilWrites.com.

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Community Calendar

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 and paid listings to ads@naAtlanta.com.

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Sunday, April 7

The Great Awakening – 10am-2pm. With Marilyn DuMont. Astrological exploration of the Great Awakening. This Eclipse represents a conscious open access to the Ascension Dimensions that will now be available to the physical plane of Earth. \$45.

Tuesday, April 23

Full Moon Ceremony – 6:30-7:30pm. With renowned Atlanta Astrologer, Maxine Taylor. Free.

Saturday, April 27

Chakra Alignment – 1:30-2:30pm. With Imber Tyler. This practical magic class enhances awareness of your chakra energy and flow. Connect with these chakra energies and grasp their true alignment for your soul's purpose. \$22.

Monday, April 1

Healing Circle – 7-8:30pm. With Catherine Philippe. Start your month feeling grounded, give your nervous system a break, get relief from pain and much more. \$25. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

Tuesday, April 2

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: Is It Love or Is It Attachment. \$25. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

Thursday, April 4

Intuition: A Journey Within – 6-7pm. We continue to unravel the mysteries of your inner compass and help you develop intuitive/psychic abilities. This Month's Theme: Creative Awakening. \$25. The Open Mind

Center, 1425 Market Blvd, Ste 500, Roswell. 678-629-3630. TheOpenMindCenter.com.

Friday, April 5

Arabia Mountain Day Hike – 9am-1pm. Guided hikes through the Preserve's forests, wetlands and rock outcroppings, including a hike to the top of Arabia Mountain. \$15 suggested donation. Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Nature Center, 3787 Klondike Rd, Lithonia. GeorgiaConservancy.org.

Editor's Choice **Native Plant Sale** – Apr 5-6. 9am-5pm. A unique opportunity for you to shop from an incredible selection of plants native to Georgia. Free admission. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChattNatureCenter.org.

Saturday, April 6

Free First Saturday: Wonderful Wetlands – 1-2pm. Learn about our amazing wildflowers. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. Register: DunwoodyNature.org.

Friday, April 12

Second Friday Walk in the Park – 9am-12pm. Learn more about this neighborhood park from our Friends of the Park group. Spink-Collins Park, 2101 Collins Dr NW, Atlanta. ParkPride.org.

Coffee House with Karaoke & Games – 7-9:30pm. All are invited to this family-friendly night of singing and fun. Whether you're a first-time karaoke singer, a seasoned performer, a poet, or a storyteller, this open-mic event is the place to showcase your talent. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Saturday, April 13

Honey Bee Hive Inspection – 1-2pm. Join Master Beekeeper Cindy Hodges for an up close look at the beehives of DNC. \$15. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. Register: DunwoodyNature.org.

Thursday, April 18

Editor's Choice **Healing Sound Bath** – 7-8pm. Come join Certified Vibrational Sound Therapist, Raye Andrews, as she creates vibrational sound

blessings of abundance that blossom for all to enjoy. This beautiful symphony of sound is a full body listening experience that can bring relaxation and a sense of calm to your mind, body and spirit. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Friday, April 19

The Atlanta International Night Market: Glow in the Park – Apr 19-20. 5-10pm, Fri; 2-10pm, Sat. 2-day celebration of diversity, community, culture and creativity. There will be a lantern parade and dozens of performances on stage. Over 60 vendors on-site. Suwanee Town Center, 330 Town Center Ave, Suwanee. AtlNightMarket.org.

Saturday, April 20

Earth Day Volunteer Event – 9am-12pm. Volunteers will work together to remove litter, clear and blaze a walking trail and remove fallen limbs. Herbert Greene Nature Preserve, 4401 Boulder Park Dr SW, Atlanta. ParkPride.org.

Editor's Choice **North Fulton Master Gardeners 23rd Annual Garden Faire** – 9am-3pm. Features plant sales from Alpharetta's Community Agriculture Program and the North Metro Atlanta Chapter of the Georgia Native Plant Society. There will be something for everyone. Free. The Grove at Wills Park, 175 Roswell St, Alpharetta. nfmng.net/garden-faire.html.

Healing Psychic Fair

Saturday, April 20 • 10am - 7pm

Burning questions about your destiny? Seeking guidance for your spiritual development? Do you want to connect to the spirit world? Come and participate in your own healing! \$20 at the door. \$60 for table vendors.

27 Waddell Street, Suite A (upstairs), Atlanta, 30307.

Tuesday, April 23

Wesak Festival Transmission Meditation Online – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA. Free. Via Eventbrite. Info: 770-302-2208 or Info-SE@Share-International.us. Register: Tinyurl.com/27j6rmbc.

Saturday, May 4

Editor's Choice **Alive! Expo** – May 4-5. 10am-6pm, Sat; 11am-5pm, Sun. Interactive demos, live health lectures and kids' activities. Learn how to integrate natural products and green living into daily life. Gas South Convention Center, 6400 Sugarloaf Pkwy, Duluth. AliveExpo.com.

To place a classified ad, email your listing to ads@naAtlanta.com. Cost is \$1/word; minimum \$25. Deadline: Fifth of each month for the next month's issue.

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SPACE FOR RENT – Sacred, healing space for private sessions, classes, events, conferences. AV and kitchen options. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners, 770-441-0585, Pam@unityatl.org.

For Sale

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Sundays

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

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

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

Grant Park Farmers Market – 9am-1pm. The Beacon ATL, 1030 Grant St SE, Atlanta. 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.

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

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

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

Second Sunday Sober Bike Ride – 10:30am. 2nd Sun. Brings together people from all walks of sober living who are seeking fun and active ways to connect with likeminded people. BTA Bicycle Tours of Atlanta will provide a bike at no charge if needed. Bicycle Tours of Atlanta, 659 Auburn Ave NE, Atlanta. Register: Tinyurl.com/yjzutjf4.

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

ing a moment-to-moment relaxed awareness of our surrounding environment, bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions. All levels. \$10. Register: TheOpenMindCenter.com.

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

Tuesdays

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

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

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

Wednesdays

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

Decatur Farmers Market – Thru Nov. 4-7pm. Rain or shine. First Baptist Church of

Decatur, 308 Clairmont Ave, Decatur. 404-373-1653. cfmatl.org/Decatur.

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

Thursdays

Tai Chi & Qigong – 9:30am. For beginners. \$7/at door. Meets in The Jefferson Parks and Recreation Dept, 2495 Old Pendergrass Rd, Jefferson. 678-510-9573. CarolOsborne.org.

Dunwoody Beekeeping Club – 6:30-7:30pm. 1st Thurs. Meeting features a program, followed by a question and answer session with the ability to meet and learn from other local beekeepers. Free. 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

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 Pranic Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: 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,



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a closing circle and community tea time. \$20. Beyond Limits Expressive Arts Therapy LLC, 4528 King Springs Rd SE, Smyrna. 770-235-3183. MarisaSkolky.com.

Fridays

Qigong Exercises & Meditations – 12-12:45pm. 1st & 3rd. Led by Master Cheng, who has been teaching in Atlanta since 1976. Free/member, \$8/honmember. 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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Anger Is Not a Solution

by Trish Ahjel Roberts



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It was a sunny day in the spring of 1985, and I was furious. In the Brooklyn brownstone where I grew up, I searched my bedroom for something to throw. My eyes settled on a clear plastic bottle of lemon body oil. It looked satisfying. That would do it. I grabbed the bottle and hurled it against the wall, but instead of bouncing off and landing gently on my bed, the bottle broke, and lemon oil splattered everywhere. I felt like an idiot. I was going to have to clean up that mess. That was the last time I threw anything in anger—at least anything breakable.

When I was a teenager, I was angry, confused and sometimes suicidal. I was a #metoo survivor from the age of eight, long before the movement. In those days, there was very little conversation about sexual assault, and survivors like me were left to figure things out on our own, even if we were only children. I took the well-worn route of rebellion. If the adults in my life couldn't help me, I would have to help myself. I took the path of many kids with trauma—partying, drinking, smoking and cutting classes. I couldn't see the value in my life if the people I loved the most couldn't seem to see my pain. I was angry with my parents. Angry with society. And, particularly, angry with men.

Over time, the wounds healed, but not without doing damage. I lost time that I couldn't get back. I made decisions from a place of brokenness that changed the

trajectory of my life. I used to wonder who I would have been without the childhood trauma I endured. As I went through my healing journey, first with books and therapy and then with yoga and Buddhism, I mourned the loss of that innocent little girl. I cried for her. Then, I finally let her go.

As I got older, I realized that trauma did more than just hurt me. As the poet Rumi said, "The wound is the place where the light enters you." Experiencing trauma made me more compassionate, resilient and knowing than I would have been if I'd simply studied the traumas of other people. It helped me become the gifted healer I am today.

When I read Oprah Winfrey's book, *What Happened to You?*, I came across the term "post traumatic wisdom" for the first time. *Ahhhhh*, I thought. *That's it!* A perfect term to describe what happens when you successfully heal from trauma—you end up with a unique, somatic wisdom that runs from your heart and extends to every corner of your body. It's not the same as *thinking* you know something. It's a profound insight that allows you to hold space for people in need because you know the brutality of trauma, its legs and its reach.

I'll never forget when my favorite pastor said, "Have you ever met someone who doesn't understand anything because they've never been through anything?" Wow. It stopped me in my tracks. At the time, it made me think of

my sister decades before we would become estranged. She never seemed to understand much. It was as if her wounds either didn't exist or they were so deeply scarred, they didn't let in any of Rumi's "light."

I learned early in life that my anger was destructive. It broke things. It caused messes. It was a placeholder but not a healer. It took decades before I realized that my anger *never* helped me. It made me feel falsely empowered when I was at my most vulnerable. It led me down dangerous paths.

To heal from trauma and process my disappointments, annoyances, frustrations, jealousy, impatience, guilt and resentment, I learned to slow down. To breathe. To use my imagination and empathy. And to seek solutions and constructive actions. I learned to transform my anger and, instead of living in guilt, shame and pain, I've found healing for myself and for the many lives I touch through my work. Anger is not a solution. It's an emotional reaction that should be thoughtfully and artfully transformed to positive action. 🌱



Trish Ahjel Roberts is a transformational coach, inspirational speaker and author of the new book, *The Anger Myth: Understanding and Overcoming the*

Mental Habits That Steal Your Joy, published by Rowman and Littlefield. Learn more at TheAngerMyth.com.

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