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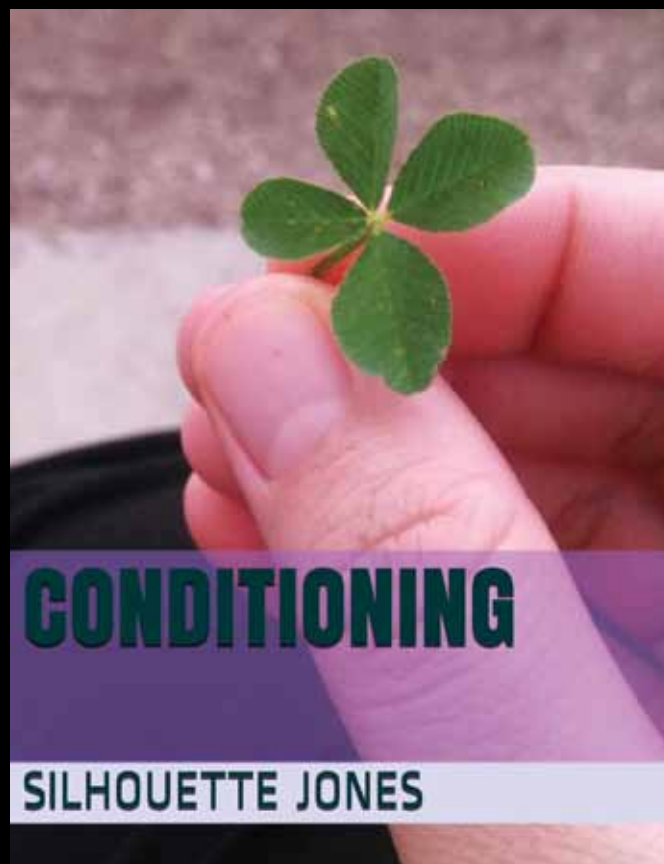
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18
SPRING
CLEANING
THE BODY

DEPARTMENTS

10	atlanta briefs	26	healthy kids
14	business spotlight	29	yoga
15	community spotlight	32	green living
18	conscious eating	34	calendar
24	healing ways	36	community directory
		38	walking each other home

Contents



21
AYURVEDIC TIPS
FOR THE SPRING



24
NATURAL
ALLERGY RELIEF



26
NATURE HELPING
KIDS THRIVE



29
YOGA FOR A
HEALTHY PSOAS



38
ZEN AND
DIRT BIKES

WEB EXCLUSIVES



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INDEX OF DISPLAY ADVERTISERS

A Wonderful Approach	18	Natural Awakenings Atlanta	18 & 33
Atlanta Dental Wellness.....	03	Naturally Healthy.....	25
Cassie Gaub	17	Nature's Rite.....	37
Celestial Azul.....	04	Parker University.....	28 & 39
Center for Spiritual Awareness	30	Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore	16
Dawn Carrie.....	17	Ready for Reboot	22
Dragon Rises College.....	22	Rose Dental	40
Forever & A Day.....	06	Self-Realization Fellowship.....	13
Georgia Eye Center.....	21	Sevananda.....	18
Heal Center.....	23	Share International	26
Healworks.....	02	StrayFit	27
Infinity Floating	06	Tammy Billups	18
Inga's Skin & Body Care.....	22	Tassili's Raw Reality Café.....	18
KnowWEwell	20	Vibrate Higher	17
LaVida Massage.....	17	Vista Yoga	30
Leah Merriweather.....	30	Writing Doctor	24
Linda Minnick Consulting	17	Yogardener.....	06
Lisa Watson.....	17		
Mindy Strich.....	17		
MOON Organics.....	22		

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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



When They Come After You,
FORGIVE

Upon waking this morning, the first thing I learned was that there was a killing of eight people in Atlanta, six of whom look like me.

It was easy to conclude that it was a hate crime. But just a few hours later, we learned that the suspect claimed that his motive had to do with sex addiction.

Whether or not this case is pursued as a hate crime does not mitigate the horror of what happened. But, if true, it does undermine the basis for the subject of this letter. However, the message that appeared to my mind this morning remains relevant in a more general sense, so I'm going with it anyway.

My first reaction to this morning's news was one of sorrow, and I immediately thought of all my Chinese childhood friends, wondering how they were reacting. I thought of my son's Vietnamese girlfriend and how she was doing. I texted my biracial children, asking how they were.

But most of all, I thought of the families of the victims of Dylann Roof. I remember, with clarity and astonishment, that several of those families forgave Roof. I was doubly impressed that they did so just two days after the massacre at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, at Roof's first court appearance. Here is a quote from one of them in a *Washington Post* article:

"I forgive you," Nadine Collier, the daughter of 70-year-old Ethel Lance, said at the hearing, her voice breaking with emotion. "You took something very precious from me. I will never talk to her again. I

will never, ever hold her again. But I forgive you. And have mercy on your soul."

Recently, *Natural Awakenings* contributor Trish Ahjel Roberts and I had a brief conversation around forgiveness. Aside from our collegial relationship, Trish and I belong to the same Buddhist center, and we share personal struggles with anger. Trish had just written a blog post entitled *Reframing Anger: Does Forgiveness Make Sense?* in which she wrote about how she avoids using both the word and the practice of forgiveness. It was yet one more thing we have shared. Here's the opening to her post:

"To me, forgiveness implies that you are excusing the abuse or betrayal of another person. I was surprised to find that Merriam-Webster defines the word forgive as 'to cease to feel resentment against (an offender).' *Dictionary.com* offers a definition closer to my own, which includes absolution. They define the word absolve as 'to free from guilt, blame or their consequences.' This is where the waters get muddy. You can forgive someone so you don't harbor anger or resentment without absolving them of their own responsibility and repercussions. That's not your job."

I had found the first definition some years ago, too, and I have been much more comfortable saying "I forgive" in recent years. Nevertheless, the word still implies something more than merely losing one's anger. But if not absolution, then what?

A call to our tradition's resident teacher, Gen Norden, provided the answer.

Norden reminded me that Buddhists do not speak of forgiveness. Instead, the essence of forgiveness is patient acceptance and love. To patiently accept the bad things that happen to you, whether by accident or by another's malevolence, it significantly helps to keep the law of karma front and center. We receive what we give, even as what is returned can manifest many lifetimes after the causal action occurred.

Gen Norden continued. To love one's tormentors and assailants requires recognizing the difference between a person and their deluded actions. There are three delusions: attachment, hatred and ignorance, and none reflect our true nature. As my tradition likes to say, delusions are like clouds in the sky; clouds are not the sky, just as delusions are not the person. Indeed, when clouds disappear, the sky is revealed, just as our true selves emerge when our delusions disappear.

Thus, we can judge actions harshly and yet still love the person committing malevolent actions.

"Don't reject anyone," says Gen Norden. And so it is. 🙏



Paul Chen has been owner/publisher of Natural Awakenings Atlanta franchise since January 2017. He is a practicing Buddhist and a founding member of East Lake Commons, a cohousing community.

Center for Love and Light Launches Virtual Community

The Center for Love and Light is launching its global online community with a wide variety of offerings. Live online educational classes, workshops and events focus on the human experience and address the needs of mind, body, emotions and soul. Daily classes and workshops also offer information, inspiration and meaningful connection to students and members.

Live classes, workshops and events are offered at \$10 each. A monthly membership of \$24.99 includes 12 livestream classes per month and 50% off all other membership classes and events.

Founded by medium, clairvoyant and educator Jamie Butler, The Center for Love and Light had to close its physical doors in 2020 due to the global pandemic. Community leader Shannon Maley



is spearheading the center's move online. "I am honored and thrilled to lead a diverse and supportive community of experienced and knowledgeable practitioners at the virtual Center for Love and

Light," says Maley, "where all who seek growth, awareness-expanding education and joy are welcomed and empowered."

In the time of a global pandemic, community is needed more than ever, Maley says. "For like-minded souls across the globe, an online platform is an ideal way to connect with others. It is a hub of connection, creativity and joy that can be accessed from anywhere at any time."

For more information, visit WithLoveAndLight.com or CFL.LearnItLive.com. Or email Unite@WithLoveAndLight.com.



Participants at 2019 Alive! Expo

Alive! EXPO Returns in September

Due to an abundance of caution related to the pandemic, Atlanta's Alive! Expo, a consumer event featuring natural products and green living, has been rescheduled for the weekend of September 18 and 19, 2021.

"We are disappointed that we had to reschedule the Alive! Expo again, but we felt it was the right decision for the safety of our sponsors, vendors, attendees and employees," says Patrycja Siewert Towns, the Expo's president.

Towns believes that people will feel safer and more comfortable attending the indoor event in September. The Alive! Expo is in its 17th year of operation but had to cancel its activities in 2020 due to restrictions necessitated by the pandemic.

"2020 was a very hard year for everyone and we are counting our blessings that we were able to survive as a small business," says Towns. "We were able to keep our staff and we are back to celebrate another green living health event in Atlanta."

Every year, Alive! Expo brings together local and national companies that specialize in natural and organic food and products and green and eco-friendly products for the whole family. Health practitioners and non-profit organizations will offer information, consultations, products and services.

The Alive! Expo will be held at Cobb Galleria Centre at Two Galleria Parkway in Atlanta on September 18 and 19. More information about vendors and speakers will be available soon.

Advanced Wellness Program Helps Break the Sugar Habit

Consuming too much sugar can have a negative impact on one's physical, chemical, and emotional health, leading to weight gain, reduced energy levels, increased risk of cancer, skin problems, and cognitive decline.

Healer, chiropractor and owner of Advanced Wellness Atlanta, Dr. Karen Tedeschi, and health coach Molly Lindberg have teamed up to produce "The Sugar-Free Solution," an online six-week program to help people break free from sugar. The program combines lecture and group coaching, skill building and detox.

The program will meet on Zoom from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. beginning May 6 and run for six weeks over Zoom. The cost is \$350 per household.

Tedeschi has studied Reiki energy healing, chiropractic, applied kinesiology, Brimhall technique, TBM, cranial-sacral therapy, nutrition and pranic healing. "Although the focus of this class is on sugar, the teachings and experience will permeate into other areas in your life," she says. "Our intention is that The Sugar-Free Solution will be transformative for your mind, body and spirit."

Lindberg trained at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. "Processed 'food' is laden with hidden sugar, and companies constantly market to us to buy," says Lindberg. "It's also easy to use sugar as a coping mechanism for stress. Breaking the cycle of over-consumption of sugar can seem overwhelming and even unattainable at times. But it is possible!"

For more information, email Info@AdvancedWellnessATL.com, call 404-320-0204 or visit AdvancedWellnessATL.com.



Molly Lindberg and Dr. Karen Tedeschi
(Photo: Courtesy of Advanced Wellness Atlanta)

Strich Launches Online Course for Heart-Centered Life



Mindy Strich (Photo: Jennifer Connelly)

Certified healing therapist and life coach since 2012, Mindy Strich is introducing an online course to educate and support people who want to live a more heart-centered life.

"Prescriptions for a Heart-Centered Life" is a self-paced course that includes seven educational modules, guided meditations, a 35-page workbook, and exercises that help people learn to trust their intuition, connect with their heart's wisdom, heal old wounds and more.

"One of the major reasons there is so much pain and struggle in our lives is we haven't been taught to listen to our hearts," says Strich, owner of Healing Hearts,

LLC. "In the 10 years I have been in practice as a healer, I have found one common thread, which is, to heal our lives, we need to heal our hearts. And that is something that has to be experienced. You can show someone a piece of cake and tell them how delicious it is, but no matter how good it may look, you have to taste it to really experience the sweetness. The same can be said for listening to your heart. 'Prescriptions for a Heart-Centered Life' is an experience for your heart. The more present you are, the more you will savor it."

The cost of the course is \$149.00 and includes a free healing session. For more information, visit MindyStrich.com.

KAIKUDO MARTIAL ARTS Goes Online

Kaikudo Martial Arts has moved its Tai Chi and Qi Gong classes online and changed its name to QiMethods. Qi Methods offers online streaming, on-demand videos, Zoom classes, as well as socially-distanced, in-person classes at Brook Run Park. Streaming classes are available for free on Wednesdays and park classes are free on Saturday mornings.

"Our beloved studio in Dunwoody Village has closed down; however, a new vision has started with Qi Methods," says Michael Issa, founder of Qi Methods, LLC. "Although I am sad to let go of our studio, I am genuinely excited to start fresh with a new focus on outdoor classes and online lessons. During a crisis, personal or otherwise, it's important to be flexible, to adapt and see what doors open. I view this as an opportunity for rebirth!"

Michael Issa has been a student of traditional martial arts since he was six years old. He studied Taido karate under Uchida Sensei and Okochi Sensei for 10 years before exploring other styles such as Aikido, Wing Chun and wrestling. In 2006, Issa began training under Wudang Master Yun Xiang Tseng, a 14th-generation lineage holder and 26th-generation Longmen Priest in Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Xing Yi, Sword

and External Qi Healing. Issa prides himself on his easy-to-follow instructions and his ability to translate Eastern theory into a Western context.

For more information, see QiMethods.com. Or contact Issa at Info@QiMethods.com or 404-314-7949.



Michael Issa (Photo: Michael Issa)



INDEPENDENT WELLNESS

Offers Independent Preventive Care

Helping to bring independent preventive care to the elderly and those with long-term chronic conditions, Independent Wellness Group (IWG), a subsidiary of Visiting Nurse Private Home Care, recently launched its professional home health care monitoring services.

The company offers around-the-clock home monitoring services, also known as “remote patient monitoring” (RPM). Using company-installed equipment, IWG monitors vital signs and sends medication reminders. Licensed nurses communicate directly with the treating physician.

IWG also partners with a lab group to offer pharmacogenomic testing—the study of how someone’s genetics respond to a drug—to help identify the medications that the patient will respond to best.

After the initial deductible of \$148, Medicare covers all remote patient monitoring costs, minus the standard co-pay, making it easier for people to receive remote monitoring services.

“The incredible vulnerability of our elderly communities and chronically ill patients—diabetic, cardiovascular and others—has been eye-opening during this time of pandemic, when preventive care has been impeded,” says Sia Checketts, COO of the company.

“Daily monitoring is an unsurpassed way to take control of one’s health independently while still keeping the doctor updated about one’s condition and any clinical or lifestyle changes that need to be addressed,” says Checketts.

For more information, visit IWG-GA.com, call 800-422-2346 or email Info@IWG-GA.com



Punjani Joins O'Shea Dentistry in Decatur

O'Shea Dentistry, a full-service dentistry and orthodontics clinic for more than 40 years, recently welcomed Dr. Zahra Punjani to their team of dentists in Decatur.

“I am thrilled to be joining a team of like-minded practitioners who share the common goal of delivering excellent comprehensive care to patients,” says Punjani. She is dedicated to creating a healthy balance in the mouth for optimal overall health and well-being.

One of O'Shea Dentistry's unique specialties is airway dentistry, a new and growing field that focuses on the structure of the mouth and how it impacts breathing. Improper breathing and many sleep disorders are caused by collapsing airways. The dentistry's approach to airway health is to find the root cause of breathing problems and correct them using a variety of methods, including oral appliances, expansion techniques and an integrative approach with other medical professionals. Punjani and the practice's other two dentists are all trained in airway dentistry.

Punjani received her doctorate in dental medicine from Midwestern University in Illinois and has been practicing general dentistry since then. She also has volunteered with dental projects worldwide, her focus being on prevention, restoration and rehabilitation. A follower of Ayurveda and a trained yoga instructor, Punjani believes that dental health and whole-body health go hand in hand.

O'Shea Dentistry is located at 755 Commerce Drive, Unit 520 in Decatur. For more information, visit OsheaDentistry.com.



Dr. Zahra Punjani (Photo: Karim Kara)

Dandrea-Russert Releases *The Fiber Effect*

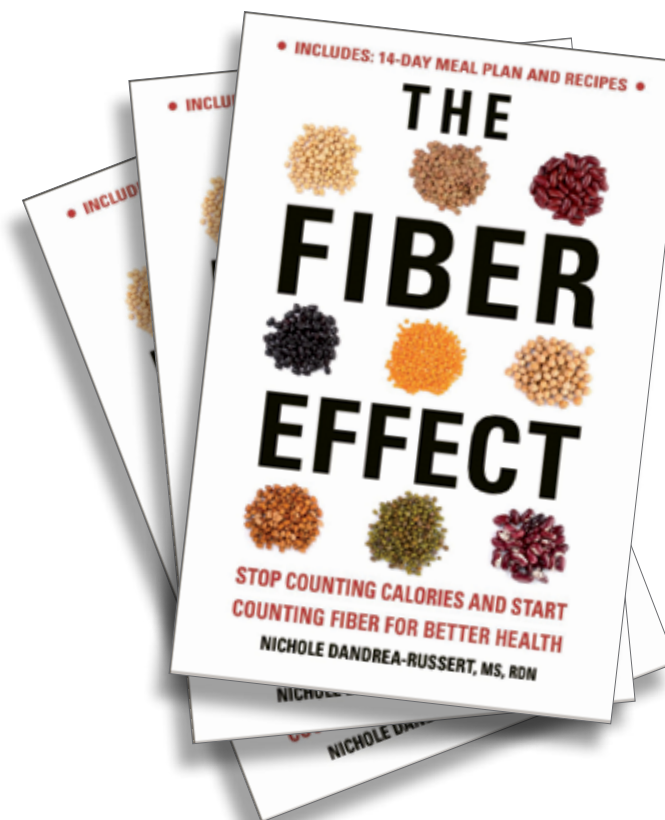
Registered dietician Nichole Dandrea-Russert, MS, RDN, recently released her first book, *The Fiber Effect: Stop Counting Calories and Start Counting Fiber for Better Health*.

Dandrea-Russert has been featured in *Yoga Journal*, *Veg News* and *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* for her plant-based chocolate company, nicobella organics. A registered dietitian/nutritionist for 25 years, she specializes in heart disease, diabetes, sports nutrition and women's health. For 10 years, she has been focusing on plant-based lifestyles and on educating people about plant-based eating for optimal personal and planetary health. Her plant-based blog, “purely planted,” offers wellness tips, recipes and inspiration.

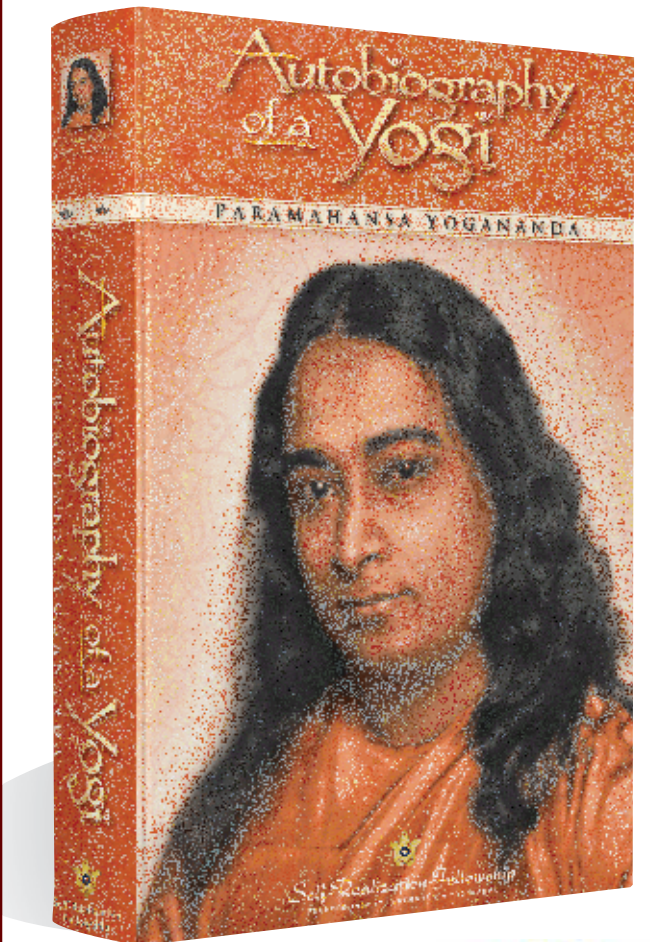
“*The Fiber Effect* is the opposite of typical diet culture,” says Dandrea-Russert, “which restricts certain foods or food groups and results in the negative mentality of ‘I can't have [fill in the blank].’ The book emphasizes adding whole, vibrant foods to your plate that are energizing and health-promoting. Eventually, you don't need to count anything since adding high-fiber foods becomes a healthy habit.”

Dandrea-Russert says that she was inspired to write the book by working with nutrition clients that typically focus on counting calories, carbohydrates and sugar rather than focusing on fiber, one of the most important aspects of a healthy diet. Fiber is critical for digestion and for heart, brain, gut and skin health, yet only 5% of Americans get the recommended amount of fiber each day.

The Fiber Effect is sold through popular booksellers and at PurelyPlanted.com.



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INFINITY FLOATING

Diagnosis Leads to 18k-Sq.-Ft. Holistic Health Center

by Paul B. Chen

In May 2013, Deborah Helms was a regional vice president for CarMax. One morning, she woke up to—*nothing*. She had no memory at all, neither short-term nor long-term.

What followed was months upon months of extreme pain, unending migraines, exhaustion and exasperation. Nineteen doctors later, Helms was still searching for answers.

A Chiropractic Visit and Groupon

Eventually, Helms was diagnosed with trigeminal neuralgia, sometimes called the “suicide disease” because the pain is so excruciating that it leads some to take their own lives. A neurologist recommended brain surgery.

“He said ‘the only way to stop the pain is to sever the nerve endings,’” explains Helms. “And I was like, ‘what happens when you sever the nerve endings?’ And he said, ‘Your memory will never come back.’”

That was not acceptable to Helms. She started weekly chiropractic treatments, and they helped the pain. Then, during a visit in 2014, her chiropractor told her about “float therapy.” He thought it could help.

Helms left the chiropractor’s office and climbed into her car; her son was at

the wheel. Unaware of the chiropractor’s recommendation, he told her about a Groupon he had just discovered that might interest her; it was for a float facility 10 minutes from their home.

“So the very next day, I was floating,” says Helms. “And my pain levels were literally gone. And it was with no medication and no doctors. I could not believe it.”

Building Georgia’s Largest Holistic Health Center

Like many who overcome serious health challenges, Helms felt it was time to give back. In 2015, she opened Infinity Floating & Healing Center in Braselton.

“The two things that our bodies are continually challenged by are circulation and inflammation,” says Helms. “And the two things floating takes care of are circulation and inflammation.”

Starting with two float tanks, the business quickly outgrew the space and moved to the center’s current 18,000-sq.-ft. location in March 2016. Her sister, Lyn Ragan, joined her in the business, and they subsequently added cryotherapy and massage to their menu of services. They now lease space to eight other health and wellness practitioners to expand service further. Allstar Shape & Fitness, the latest

addition, opened in February. Services by other businesses in the complex include chiropractic care, acupuncture, hypnotherapy, esthetician services and yoni steaming. In addition, The Atlanta Vitality Center offers a range of services, including infusion therapy, stem cell therapy and sexual dysfunction therapy.

Helms calls Infinity Floating “Georgia’s largest home to alternative health.”

Walk-In Discovers Whole-Body Cryotherapy

Helms says the business receives walk-in clients every day—in spite of the fact that it’s building stands alone and there are no sidewalks leading to it.

Caine Tate walked in a few years back with sciatic pain. Daily sessions of cryotherapy cleared it up in a few weeks, and it felt so good, he continued treatments for two years. His six-minute sessions of cryotherapy did wonders for his pain. “I lift weights six days a week, and I had a lot of joint pain I thought was just normal,” says Tate. “That all went away. It just took all the inflammation out. And I dropped 10 pounds without even trying.”

The Better You Are for You

While there is no formal consultation and referral process at Infinity, Helms’ staff are young adults looking to go into healing professions. They are, says Helms, particularly motivated to learn about everything offered, listen to customers and make suggestions accordingly.

“We want to educate people about the benefits of different therapies and let them choose,” says Helms.

“If you do not do something about [your health], it will catch up with you. And I’m the perfect example of that,” she says. “You have to take time for yourself. You have to make positive deposits in the number one asset you have—and that’s you. The better you are for you, the better you are for others.”

Infinity Floating & Healing Center is located at 32 Johnson Drive in Braselton. For more: InfinityFloating.com or 706-654-7118.



by Dawn M. Myers

In early 2020, Atlanta pranic healer and life coach Dawn M. Myers met online nightly with a few energy healers to study the energetics of COVID-19 and explore how pranic healing might help mitigate the ravages of the pandemic. As a result of their work, they launched Project Hope for Healing, a growing collaboration of pranic healers around the world dedicated to helping as many people suffering with the virus as they could. Since then, many pranic healing “pods” have formed worldwide to remotely help thousands heal from the elusive virus.

In the early months of the COVID-19 outbreak, as people around the world withdrew in response to the emerging, unknown virus, a group of 12 senior pranic healers gathered on Zoom late at night to try to understand the energetic impact the COVID-19 virus was having on people they knew. Night after night, they spent hours doing pranic energy techniques on people remotely while exploring the energetic effects on their subjects and monitoring and documenting progress. The understanding they gained gave them insight into how to proceed effectively.

Pranic healing is an energetic “no-touch” healing system based on utilizing the body’s life force, or *prana*, to accelerate its natural ability to heal. Pranic healing can help improve a full spectrum of physical and psychological conditions and is practiced by hundreds of thousands in more than 120 countries around the world. Studies have shown that the method is a safe, non-invasive way to address the energetic aspects of physical, emotional and psychological ailments. It also has proven itself to be a complimentary practice alongside more traditional medical treatments.

Leading the effort of the small group of pranic healers was Dr. Glenn J. Mendoza,

Executive Medical Director of the Pranic Healing Research Institute, and one of only eight people worldwide granted the title “Master of Pranic Healing.” From their late-night research, the group developed a pranic healing protocol for use on people with COVID-19, which they distributed to more than 60 “healing pod” groups around the world. Averaging 10 healers per pod, the groups worked on thousands of people with COVID symptoms every day.

“At first, COVID-19 seemed foreign to us,” admits Mendoza. “We barely knew anyone who was infected, but we knew the virus would eventually touch every one of our lives in some way. So we organized early, hoping and praying for the best, preparing for the worst, and expecting the unpredictable.”

Every Wednesday, Mendoza led group meetings of 100 to 300 pranic healers, in which they discussed updates and feedback, asked and answered questions, and participated in meditation and inspiration to keep the healers’ energy and spirits high.

“We found strength together and continued to help in the best way we knew how. And although we were physically separated, we inspired each other, received more strength of intention and got closer as a community,” says Mendoza.

They named their efforts “Project Hope for Healing.”

By December 2020, more than 80,000 pranic healing sessions were administered to more than 3,000 patients, averaging about 18 sessions per patient. Patient demographic data was obtained and fed into a pranic healing dashboard that allowed all of the healers to stay updated about the progress of patients and to share their experiences. Privacy and confidentiality of patient data were strictly maintained.

Kim Siar, a senior pranic healer from Norristown, Pennsylvania, has led a healing pod every day since March 2020, doing remote healings on friends, family and strangers around the world. “Our collective energies, our capacity to heal and the protocol guided us and allowed each of us to break through insurmountable odds and do something to help.” [See the group’s COVID protocol at bit.ly/pranic-healers-unite—Ed.]

Nicole Fouche owns a pranic healing center in Tampa, Florida, and shares that the most impactful part of the healing pods for her was when her group focused on her husband, who had contracted COVID-19. “My husband had shortness of breath and a slight fever and was extremely weak. He could not take a full breath in and was

starting to panic. After calling the hospital, I recruited our pod healing team, and what happened next was nothing short of miraculous. Within 25 minutes, my husband was breathing more calmly. The team repeated the healing every few hours that first day. The next day, he was breathing completely normally and was able to recover at home. I know for sure that if it were not for this healing, we would have been on the way to the hospital. Having a dedicated team with expert skills is truly a game-changer. I am forever grateful to have received this care for my husband as well as to be able to offer it to those suffering with severe illness."

Erin Lynch teaches pranic healing and runs a healing pod in Boston. "I had extreme difficulty breathing, a very high temperature, sore throat, body aches and a terrible cough," she says. "I was so fortunate to have healing pods work on me at different times throughout the day. My body would instantly react to the healing. My fever came down, and that lessened my body aches, and my lungs opened up as if I had just had a breathing treatment. It was an incredible feeling. I believe that without these amazing healing pod

PROJECT HOPE *For Healing*

workers, I would have been admitted to the hospital because my body and lungs were attacked by the virus." Lynch continues leading her pod every day, helping others who are still struggling with this virus.

"The response from our community does not surprise me," says Mendoza. "Our healers were struggling with their own personal issues, changes in jobs, family life and juggling the effects of COVID-19 themselves. Still, the will to do good is embedded in their hearts and has been the ultimate driving force in moving this project forward."

Mendoza was deeply moved by the generosity of the healers who asked for nothing in return. "These are the kindest, most

compassionate and hard-working people who are dedicated to doing all they can to help. I did my very best to inspire them. But it turned out it was me who got inspired."

Project Hope for Healing continues to operate. Many healing pods continue to meet daily, helping COVID patients heal and addressing post-COVID recovery. Requests for healing continue to come in at its website, ProjectHopeForHealing.org.

"I believe that team-centered healing to be the future of energy healing," says Mendoza. "We see doctors working together in teams in the medical field; the teamwork we have established and implemented [with the healing pods] will carry forward in [pranic healing] as well." ♡



Dawn Myer is a full-time pranic healer and life coach in Atlanta and works closely with Dr. Mendoza and The Center for Pranic Healing USA in New Jersey.

For more information, visit DawnHealerCoach.com. To learn about Project Hope for Healing, visit ProjectHopeForHealing.org.

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CONSCIOUS EATING

Spring Cleaning the Body

Simple Ways to Detox Naturally

by April Thompson

As we shake off the sluggishness of winter, many of us feel an urge to “spring clean” our bodies with a detox or cleanse. Yet health experts say such programs should help jumpstart new healthy habits and not necessarily be seen as a short-term fix.

“The air we breathe, the water we drink, the cosmetics we use, the materials we build with and most notably, the food that we eat, are loaded with chemicals that are toxic to our metabolism,” says Alejandro Junger, a Los Angeles cardiologist, author and founder of *CleanProgram.com*. “The systems in the body designed to clear toxicity are overwhelmed, and this leads to the imbalances and damage that is at the root of most diseases today.”

Detoxification functions are performed by many different organs and tissues, including intestinal flora, the immune system, the nervous system and the liver, so its imbalances can manifest in diverse ways, according to Junger. “Symptoms of detox imbalance include sleep and mood disorders, anxiety, rashes, lack of energy and libido, autoimmune disorders, inflammation and cancer.”

While some health professionals say that detoxes are unnecessary because the body is capable of cleansing itself, others make a compelling case for the need to help it along, given our heightened exposure to manmade toxic elements. Information of varying reputations swirls around the internet, offering approaches ranging from juice cleanses to total fasts.

Everyday Toxin Cleaners

Simple dietary strategies can help sweep out toxins, explains Robin Foroutan, an integrative dietitian and nutritionist in New York City. She points to cruciferous vegetables like cabbage, broccoli, collards and kale, which promote cytochromes P450, a family of enzymes critical in helping toxins clear the body. She also recommends foods high in fiber that can bind to toxins and bile, and transport them out of the body through the stool. Berries, green tea and turmeric are also helpful for their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties; even water facilitates the excretion process, supports the lymphatic system and replenishes fluids lost through sweat. Using a water filter and eating organic foods when possible also reduces incoming toxins, she says.

Healthy smoothies are a great way to get water, fiber and easily digestible nutrients into our body at the same time, according to



knapp/Gerfly Images

Junger. “When using a good, clean, protein powder in addition to fruits and leafy greens, healthy fats such as nuts, and coconut or cashew milk, a smoothie can provide us the nutrients needed to support our energy for hours,” he says. Adding herbs like mint or holy basil (tulsi) and spices like turmeric and cinnamon elevate both flavor and healing. Liquids such as celery juice provide highly concentrated nutrients and hydration, but lack the fiber of a blended drink. Both juices and smoothies give overtaxed digestive systems a needed break.

Deep Detox

Fasting (occasionally for a prolonged period, such as three days without food) and intermittent fasting (abstaining from food for a shorter period, such as 16 hours per day on a regular basis) are great tools for deeper detoxification, says Junger. “Digestion takes energy and resources from the detox functions, so eating less, eating less often and allowing time for digestion to stop so that detox can intensify is crucial.”

For a comprehensive detox, experts recommend working with a health practitioner to assess toxic burdens and develop a personalized plan. Russell Jaffe, a physician in Ashburn, Virginia, crafts a detox program based on four self-assessments, including digestive transit time, urine pH, hydration levels and vitamin C levels.

Jaffe claims our bodies are burdened by excess acid, rendering them less resilient to stress and resulting in fatigue, illness and infection risks. “When we enjoy a diet rich in greens, fruits, vegetables, minerals and antioxidants, our cells become more alkaline and more resistant to everyday stress,” he states.

Experts emphasize that a short-term program must be part of a longer-lasting lifestyle and diet shift. “It is not enough to do periodic detoxes if you go back to old habits. I offer these programs as a jumpstart in hopes that participants feel so much better that they never want to go back to what they were doing and eating before,” says Junger. 🍃

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

Detox Delights

Sweet Mango Smoothie

Sweet fruit paired with spinach for an extra dose of fiber, vitamins and super-green-detoxifying antioxidants won't change the taste of this beloved fruit smoothie.

- 1 cup fresh or frozen mango
- 1 to 3 cups spinach
- ¼ cup packed mint
- ½ cup coconut water
- ½ cup coconut milk
- 1 Tbsp chia seeds
- 1 serving dairy-free protein powder
- Handful of ice



photo by kaitlyn noble

Skin and chop mango. Wash spinach. Remove mint leaves from their stems and rinse them with water. Place all ingredients in a blender. Blend on high until smooth (30-60 seconds). Pour and serve immediately. Sprinkle chia seeds on top if desired.

Recipe by Kaitlyn Noble of the Clean Program.

Vegetable Yum Soup

Soups help provide the body with nutrient- and fiber-rich vegetables in an easy-to-digest format, while soup broths help supply water for detoxification and a sense of satiety.

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 Tbsp fresh ginger, grated
- 1 stalk lemongrass, minced
- ½ tsp crushed red pepper
- ¾ cup shiitake mushrooms, sliced
- 2 cups sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped
- ½ cup green bell pepper, chopped
- 5 to 6 cups vegetable stock
- 1 (14-oz) can coconut milk
- 2 Tbsp low-sodium soy sauce
- 3 Tbsp cilantro or parsley, chopped

Heat the oil in a large pot and sauté garlic, ginger, lemongrass and crushed red pepper. Stir in the mushrooms, sweet potatoes and bell pepper, and cook for 1-2 minutes. Add the stock, bring to boil and then reduce heat. Simmer for 10 minutes until the vegetables are tender. Add the coconut milk and soy sauce, and stir. Serve sprinkled with cilantro or parsley (optional).

Source: Russell Jaffe, *The Joy in Living: The Alkaline Way*.



photo by kaitlyn noble

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HARMONIZING WITH SPRING

Ayurvedic Tips for Good Health

by Jayashree Ramamurthy

As the earth thaws from winter’s freeze, nature stirs in every nook and corner, bursting forth in vibrant hues. It’s spring! Ayurveda, a system of holistic wellness and healing from ancient India, speaks of spring as a beginning of birth and growth.

According to Ayurveda, everything in the world is made of five elements—earth, water, air, fire, and space—which combine in unique ways to manifest life. At the same time, the three fundamental building blocks, or *doshas*—*vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*—are how the five elements manifest in the body and combine in unique ways to make up our natural constitutions. The foods we eat and the seasons we experience are also influenced by the three doshas, so each has certain qualities that are predominant.

Spring is the kapha time of year. It is heralded by warmer, wetter days, but a little bit of winter’s chill and dryness still linger in the air. As a result, the qualities that are enhanced are cool, wet, heavy, static or immobile. In Ayurveda, the word “kapha” can also mean “mucus,” and who hasn’t had some experience with that at this time of year?

To stay in harmony with the shifting seasons, our daily routines must shift slowly from one season to the next. As we move from the cold and dry winter into the cool wetness of spring, we might experience more mucus-related symptoms, lethargy, some weight gain, and a lowered digestive fire. The season is cooling and dampening to our metabolic fire, too. We might not feel as hungry as we did in winter, or we might not be able to digest heavier foods well.

Morning Routines

Ayurveda offers a smart way to manage the spring season well by lightening up—literally and figuratively. Spring is a good time to reset one’s routines, whether it be exercise, food, or self-care, and pay attention to one’s mental-emotional health. As days get a bit longer, it is not unusual to start waking earlier, and those early morning hours provide a great time for Ayurvedic self-care routines.

Neti is the act of washing the sinus and nasal cavities with warm salt water to keep the passages free of allergens and clear of any congestion. It is invaluable, especially for allergy sufferers. Neti pots are easily available online and at natural health stores.

Nasya is the practice of placing a few drops of oil inside each nostril with a dropper and inhaling deeply. This keeps the passages from drying out and breaking down, thus providing a strong barrier against passing germs and irritants that can plague us during the spring season.

Two helpful additions to oral hygiene routines are tongue scraping, using a specially designed tool, and oil-pulling, which involves vigorously swishing a couple of tablespoons of oil in the mouth to help cleanse the mouth and boost gum health. Make sure to spit out the swished oil so that the toxins released are not swallowed. Sesame oil is the traditional oil for both nasya and oil pulling.

After this hygiene ritual, Ayurveda recommends a short breathwork practice to begin the day, providing a relaxing and meditative

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experience. “So-Hum” breathing is a simple technique of inhalation and exhalation to the sound of “SO” on the inhale and “HUM” on the exhale. The practice calms the mind and supports a sense of mindfulness for the day. Following it with a morning exercise routine can help to shake off lethargy and energize one’s whole being. Finally, a yoga practice grounded in creating openness and flow can keep kapha from being blocked. Asanas that work the lower and denser parts of the body are very beneficial, followed by opening up the upper body to allow the free movement of the breath.

When time permits, the practice of *garshana*, or dry-brushing the body before a shower, is an invigorating way to give oneself a healthful scrub/massage. The practice helps the lymphatic system drain and keeps the kapha moving in the body. Many women even say that it helps reduce cellulite build-up and keeps the skin smooth and radiant. Raw silk garshana gloves are readily available.

Spring is also often associated with spring cleaning, so when the urge to spring-clean strikes, we must think first of our bodies—our true home. Nothing cleanses like water, especially sipped warm all through the day. Water hydrates and loosens the debris from the heavy foods of winter.

Eating in Harmony with Spring

Eating seasonal foods is an Ayurvedic practice that mitigates the more challenging effects of each of the seasons. As spring arrives, it is best to gradually eat lighter and more cleansing foods while continuing to avoid cold foods and beverages. As the weather gets warmer, resist the temptation to indulge in cold foods such as smoothies or ice-cream and focus on foods and beverages that are room temperature or a little warm for another few weeks so as not to aggravate kapha.

Produce aisles in supermarkets start to look colorful in the spring—including fresh greens and seasonal, colorful berries. These foods help to combat mucus conditions and to move the lymph to keep kapha from stagnating. Beneficial spices for the season include turmeric, cumin, coriander, ginger, cinnamon, and black pepper. A tea brewed with the latter three spices is soothing and restores a healthy appetite when kapha dulls digestion.

Dairy and fried foods can dull digestion further and create *ama*, the partially digested waste products from food that the body finds difficult to discard. Ama is sticky and provides a place for bad bacteria to thrive—so it has a rather unpleasant odor. One can see ama upon examination of one’s tongue. A healthy tongue should look pink and clear of any coating. When ama is present, one can see a yellow, whitish, or greyish coating on the tongue. While tongue scraping every morning and night helps to clean it off the tongue, according to

Ayurveda, the coating on the tongue also indicates a coating all along the digestive tract. Ama acts as a film or barrier preventing the proper digestion and absorption of food. In order to break down the ama and discard it, one can simply sip warm to hot water, hydrating slowly with small sips throughout the day. Spices such as cumin, coriander, black pepper and ginger also help to break down and discard ama.

In Ayurveda, honey is used as a decongestant. A spoonful of honey with warm water and a squirt of lemon juice, first thing in the morning, is a good way to start the day.

How and when one eats is at least as important as what one eats when it comes to Ayurvedic teachings. Eating regular meals and avoiding snacking in between is vital to restore a sluggish digestive system or maintain a healthy one. Allowing the body to digest a meal completely before eating more food and avoiding cold beverages and meals allows kapha to flow without accumulation.

With these simple Ayurvedic self-care strategies, one can enjoy the beautiful new spring season to the fullest. 🌱



Jaya Ramamurthy, whose Indian roots inspired her to share the restorative wellness offered by Ayurveda’s health care methods, is a state-certified clinical Ayurveda specialist in private practice. Reach her at AyurWellness@gmail.com or AyurJaya.com.

Recipe:
Spring Spice Blend

Spices are best extracted in fats to get the most flavor out of them during cooking.

The following simple blend of dry roasted cumin, black pepper, organic turmeric and organic ginger is perfect for balancing the season’s cool, heavy and wet qualities. It boosts digestion and assimilation of spring foods while breaking up congestion, which is typical for this time of year.

This combination of spices is used in Ayurvedic cooking to season any savory food. It can be used as the main spice blend in savory spring dishes such as roast vegetables, light brothy soups and popular Indian foods such as daal and kitchidee.

½ cup cumin seeds
½ cup coriander seeds
¼ cup black peppercorns
1 tablespoon dry ginger powder
1 tablespoon turmeric powder

In a dry skillet, roast the cumin and coriander seeds along with the peppercorns for 6 to 8 minutes. The seeds will start to darken, maybe pop, and release a spicy aroma. Shut off heat and let cool. In a coffee mill reserved for spices, grind all the seeds to a fine powder. Mix in the dry ginger powder and turmeric. Store in an airtight jar.

Natural Awakenings recommends using organic, non-gmo (genetically modified) and non-bromated ingredients whenever possible.




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Breathe Easy

Natural Remedies for Allergy Woes

by Ronica O'Hara

As the one in five Americans suffering from allergic rhinitis can miserably testify, the fragrant breezes of spring aren't much fun when they bring on sneezing, coughing, watery eyes and a runny nose. The fifth-most common chronic disease in the country, allergic rhinitis—also known as hay fever—is aggravated in spring by rising pollen levels, but can occur year-round from exposure to mold, household dust mites, pet dander and vehicular air pollution.

Common remedies like over-the-counter antihistamines and decongestants bring their own share of afflictions, including drowsiness, dry mouth, blurred vision and dizziness. “By undertaking natural therapy for allergies, however, one can avoid and mitigate the unpleasant symptoms of allergies with no need for medication,” says Carrie Lam, M.D., an integrative and functional medicine doctor in Tustin, California. “Instead of loading

up on drugs, you can take care of yourself in a more natural way and avoid nasty side effects.” Here are some non-pharmaceutical approaches.

Probiotics: In a 173-person, double-blind study, a probiotic blend of *Lactobacillus gasseri* KS-13, *Bifidobacterium bifidum* G9-1 and *Bifidobacterium longum* MM-2 lowered hay fever symptoms and improved participants' quality of life during allergy season, report University of Florida researchers in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. (Read labels to locate these strains in yogurts, kefir and supplements.)

Sublingual Immunotherapy: To desensitize the body, small amounts of specific allergens in the form of tablets or liquid drops are placed under the tongue, making it a gentler and safer process than allergy shots. Numerous studies have shown it to be safe and efficient in the treatment of respiratory tract allergies, reports JoAnn Yanez, ND, executive director of the Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges (AANMC). After getting a diagnosis and a first dose from a health practitioner, the tablets or drops can be taken at home.

Quercetin: Found naturally in apples, berries, red grapes, red onions, red wine and black tea, this antioxidant inhibits the release of histamine and hampers the IgE antibodies formed during allergic reactions. As a 400-milligram (mg) supplement, it takes about a month to kick in.

Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*): When freeze-dried as an extract or used as a tea, this prickly roadside weed is a nontoxic natural antihistamine. In one study, 58 percent of participants found that 300 mg per day relieved their symptoms.

Omega-3s: Anti-inflammatory fatty acids found in such foods as tuna, salmon, walnuts and flaxseed oil can help reduce symptoms, research suggests. In a Japanese study, eating fish lowered respiratory symptoms for women, while fast food and sugary drinks worsened respiratory stress.

Nasal Rinse: Using a neti pot with saline solution to rinse allergens out of nasal passages provides quick relief for stuffy, runny, irritated noses. In one study, people using them reported a 64 percent improvement in chronic sinus symptoms and a better quality of life. An ancient Ayurveda technique popularized by Oprah Winfrey and Dr. Oz, the pots cost about \$20 in pharmacies. Nasal sprays, although easier to use initially, aren't as effective, studies show.

Unpasteurized Honey: “Local honey contains tiny amounts of pollen from nearby flowers, which can make you less sensitive when you're exposed to them outdoors,” says chiropractor and nutritionist Josh Axe, Nashville-based author of *Ancient Remedies*. A Malaysian study of 40 hay fever sufferers found that high doses of local honey, taken along with an antihistamine, reduced

sneezing and nasal decongestion more effectively than the anti-histamine alone.

Acupuncture: Based on established research, the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Foundation recommends acupuncture for hay fever patients that want to avoid pharmaceuticals.

Homeopathy: To stimulate the body's natural healing process, homeopathy uses highly diluted doses of herbs and other substances. Although it's best to work with a homeopath, two helpful remedies commonly found in health food stores are *Allium cepa* 30C, for watery eyes, sneezing and a runny or irritated nose; and *Kali bichromicum* 30C, for persistent sinus congestion with thick nasal discharge.

Anti-Allergen Cleaning: Simple steps recommended by AANMC to lower airborne allergens include using a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter in the vacuum cleaner; replacing AC filters frequently; changing out of clothes and showering when coming in from the outdoors to rinse off pollen; leaving shoes outside; changing the air filter in the car; and avoiding toxic inhalants with synthetic ingredients like perfumes, body sprays, scented candles, room sprays, air fresheners and dryer sheets. 🌿

Ronica O'Hara, a natural health writer, can be reached at OHaraRonica@gmail.com.

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And bring to light the
love which underlies the
happenings of the time.

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HEALTHY KIDS



Image courtesy of Meraliko

Nature to the Rescue Kids Come Alive Outdoors

by Ronica O'Hara

As Angela Hanscom of Barrington, New Hampshire, watched her preschool daughters at play, she realized that a surprising number of their friends had problems with balance, coordination and muscle weakness, conditions she was attuned to as a pediatric occupational therapist. Teachers told her that compared to past years, young children were falling out of chairs and bumping into each other and walls more often—all evidence of poor proprioceptive skills, the “sixth sense” ability to feel and position the body in space.

Hanscom also realized that almost none of the children played outdoors, which “fascinated and scared” her. Nationwide, even before the lockdowns and online schooling brought on by the pandemic, the average child spent seven hours per day looking at screens and only seven minutes per day playing freely outdoors. Recent studies show that today’s children have poorer hand grip strength, slower running speeds and lower cardiovascular fitness levels than previous generations. Meanwhile, a growing body of research finds that spending time in nature makes kids happier, healthier and more functional.

Hanscom’s solution was to establish TimberNook, camps in which children from 18 months to 14 years of age are encouraged to explore natural settings in imaginative, largely unstructured, minimally supervised play. Now in its eighth year, 38 TimberNook-affiliated camps are located in the U.S., Canada, the UK and Australia. Hanscom’s book, *Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children*, has garnered more than 300 five-star reviews on *Amazon.com*.

“Children thrive physically, mentally and emotionally when they are given frequent outdoor play experiences, especially with other children. When children do not get enough of these opportunities, it comes at a great cost to their development,” she says.

Journalist Richard Louv, author of the seminal *Last Child in the Woods*, agrees. “The scientists who study the human senses no longer talk about five senses, they list conservatively nine or 10, and some believe that humans have as many as 30 senses,” he says. “Yet today, children and adults who work and learn in a dominating digital environment expend enormous energy blocking out many of the human senses—including ones we don’t even know we have—to focus narrowly on the screen in front of the eyes. That’s the very definition of being less alive. What parent wants his or her child to be less alive? Who among us wants to be less alive?”

That dawning realization is motivating parents and teachers to find ways to get their children actively involved with nature in ways that open their senses while also moving their bodies. This often means hitting the local trails and nature preserves, sometimes with binoculars, bug jars, bird and plant guides and a scavenger list in hand. “Hiking” can be a bit of a drag to young children, but “exploring” (while still hiking) helps open their minds to the beauty and wonder of the outdoors,” says Tanya Gray of Woodstock, Georgia, a homeschooling blogger at *TwoPineAdventure.com*.

To improve kids’ hearing, Lilach Saperstein, an Israeli audiologist who hosts the podcast *All About Audiology*, asks children to close their eyes and describe only what they hear. “The wind, the rustle of leaves, a running water stream, crickets, birds, their own breathing, the swish of their sleeve or pant—this is a great way to introduce mindfulness, as well.”

To awaken sight, sound and smell, Boston plein air artist Diana Stelin hands kids paper and art supplies out in nature. “Allowing kids to sit with sounds around them and with smells of various seasons makes them truly feel part of our grand universe. It also allows their minds to quiet down and reset, making them pay more attention

to detail, to their inner landscapes and to people around them.”

To engage the sense of taste, Malorie Thompson, editor of *TheVeganInsider.com*, takes her children foraging for edible plants on treasure hunts on a trail or around their Northern California neighborhood. She says, “Bonus activity: use the foraged food to make a meal afterward!”

Most of all, nature should be both physical and fun. “Point excitedly at the full moon, shout at it and say hello. Pick up leaves and chestnuts and rocks and create beautiful art together. Stop to smell

the twigs and flowers and roll on the grass—who can make it faster down the hill? Make sandcastles and animals. Tie colorful ribbons on tree branches. Look for the shapes of animals in the clouds,” says Milana Perepyolkina, of Salt Lake City, who wrote about forest bathing in *Gypsy Energy Secrets*.

“The only way to get your children to be excited about nature is for you to be excited about nature first,” she notes. 🌿

Health writer Ronica O’Hara can be reached at OHaraRonica@gmail.com.

Family Time in the Woods

Richard Louv, a prominent nature writer and a co-founder of The Children & Nature Network (C&NN), offers 500 ways for families and communities to connect to the natural world in his book *Vitamin N: The Essential Guide to a Nature-Rich Life*. Here are more wise words.

Be a hummingbird parent. One parent says, “In the range from helicopter to neglect—I probably fall a bit more toward helicopter. In fact, I call myself a hummingbird parent. I tend to stay physically distant to let them explore and problem-solve, but zoom in at moments when safety is an issue (which isn’t very often).” Notice that she isn’t hovering over her kids with nature flash cards. She stands back and makes space for independent nature play—albeit not as free as she experienced as a child; this play is important, nonetheless.

Create or join a family nature club. Nature clubs for families are beginning to catch on across the country; some have membership lists of 400-plus families. The idea is that multiple families meet to go for a hike, garden together or even do stream reclamation. We hear from family nature club leaders that when families get together, the kids tend to play more creatively—with other kids or independently—than during single-family outings. C&NN’s Nature Clubs for Families offers a free downloadable guide on how to start your own.

Get the safety information you need. Become familiar with good resources for safety tips in the outdoors, including those with information on how to guard against ticks. Check out the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). [AudubonPortland.org](https://www.audubonportland.org) offers tips on living with a variety of urban wildlife.



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Parker University

EMBRACES COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO HEALTHCARE

by Sheila Julson

As society continues to embrace integrative health care models, students pursuing careers in wellness disciplines and health professionals that want to enhance skills they can offer to patients are seeking formal training to meet current needs. Because of today's growing demand for collaborative care, Parker University has developed curricula that employ more interdisciplinary approaches.

"Eastern and conventional medicine both work well, but when you combine the disciplines, they work even better," advises Dr. Tammy Fogarty, dean of health and human performance. "We like to use a collaborative approach, not just in academics, but also in our on-campus clinics."

In addition to being ambitious, compassionate and energetic, students are prepared for careers as industry leaders with techniques and knowledge gained from real-world experience. Founder Dr. James Parker established a set of principles that continues to guide students on a campus that honors tradition, but encourages innovation.

Parker University offers a wide variety of degree programs, including bachelor's degrees in Integrative health, psychology, strength and human performance, as well as associate degrees in massage therapy, occupational therapy assistant and radiologic technology.

Several online master's degrees are also offered in functional nutrition, strength and human performance, neuroscience and clinical neuroscience, and public health. The university continues to offer the doctor of chiropractic degree. Due to their diverse offerings, Parker is fortunate to have a faculty from different health-related fields that contributes to its interdisciplinary approach to health and wellness.

"In our programs, the curriculum encourages students to identify the root cause of an ailment or disease, and in some instances, they need to seek treatment options outside of one field," Fogarty says. "Our chiropractic students, while going through the chiropractic program, are eligible to enroll in any of our master's degree programs. When they graduate, not only are they chiropractors, but they also have a master's in a complementary field. This gives them an opportunity to provide an interdisciplinary approach to health and wellness."

Fogarty cites Parker's neuroscience program as another example of the university's interdisciplinary approach. The new Synapse: Human Performance

Center exemplifies this approach by offering the latest in neuroscience and evidence-based therapies for patients and brings together diverse healthcare professionals to one location. This prototype clinic showcases professionals from such diverse fields as chiropractic, neurology, physiology, occupational therapy, massage therapy and nutrition, working together to provide a patient-centered, collaborative approach to care.

Fogarty says that when chiropractors attend continuing education seminars, they take an hour-long class in nutrition or exercise training to earn continuing education credits, but there's no formal education. "So, what we can offer our students is to not only graduate with a chiropractic degree, but also a master's degree in a related field they want to specialize in."

The master's degree in functional nutrition is an interprofessional graduate program for chiropractors, doctors of osteopathic medicine, nurse practitioners, exercise physiologists and dietitians seeking to enhance their skills and promote nutrition education in a variety of settings at the mastery level. The program's mission is to provide graduates with the ability to communicate the link between functional nutrition, health promotion and disease prevention with more extensive credentials.

"We have chiropractors, nurses and nurse practitioners that are enrolling into the program," Fogarty explains. "They are licensed professionals. Within their license, nutrition is included in their scope of practice, but they don't have formal training. We're starting to see more healthcare practitioners that want to be able to offer nutrition to their clients, but want more than just a certification."

Parker University is also developing bridge programs that more easily allow students to gain knowledge across disciplines to better serve patients. "We offer our students a variety of degrees, so they can earn an associate's, bachelor's and a master's degree in another field that supports a collaborative health approach," Fogarty concludes.

Parker University is located at 2540 Walnut Hill Ln., in Dallas; Synapse is located at 2618 Electronic Ln., Ste. 100. For more information, call 1-800-637-8337 or 214-902-2429, or visit Parker.edu.

Sheila Julson is a regular contributor to Natural Awakenings magazine.



YOGA

FOR A HEALTHY PSOAS

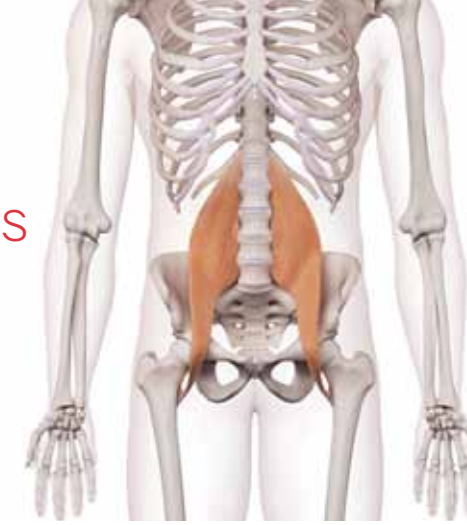
Possibly the Second Most Important Muscle of All

by Sheila Ewers

While many fitness modalities prioritize "strengthening your core," many students have little concrete understanding of what that really means. According to Liz Koch, bodyworker, internationally recognized somatic educator and author of *The Psoas Book*, "Feeling vibrant within your core ultimately depends upon a healthy, juicy and responsive psoas."

The psoas muscle grows out of both sides of the spine laterally from the 12th thoracic vertebrae (T12) to each of the five lumbar vertebrae. From there, it flows down through the abdominal core and the pelvis and attaches to the top of the thigh bone, or *femur*. The psoas is the only muscle in the body that connects the spine to the legs. As the major hip flexor, it helps to keep us upright and to lift our legs to move forward. Located behind the abdominal muscles and the digestive and reproductive organs and alongside the spine, it is set deep in the body, supporting the core. It also works in harmony with the respiratory diaphragm through a web of connective tissue that binds the two together.

Neurologically, the psoas muscle is connected to the *amygdala*, the primitive brain associated with the flight or fight response. When one feels threatened or afraid, the amygdala sends signals to release stress hormones, preparing the body to contract the psoas muscle in preparation to fight or flee. That messaging runs primarily through the vagus nerve, which is embedded deeply within the psoas muscle. The amygdala's response can be activated in two ways: The *top-down* response happens when the brain interprets a stimulus as threatening. The *bottom-up* response is triggered when an instinctive reaction by the sensors deep within the core sends a stress signal up-



wards to the amygdala. For example, when we are exposed to a startling noise or when we lose our balance, the perceived danger turns on the stress response, bringing the psoas into contraction, and that tension sends signals back to the brain that the danger is still present. In cases of trauma, this loop can become embedded, creating a chronic imbalance in the psoas that can lead to back pain, postural misalignment, knee and hip injury and more.

Liz Koch asserts that "the psoas is so intimately involved in such basic physical and emotional reactions, that a chronically tightened psoas continually signals your body that you're in danger, eventually exhausting the adrenal glands and depleting the immune system." Furthermore, according to Koch, this situation is exacerbated by many things in our modern lifestyle, from constrictive clothing to chairs that distort our posture, curtail our natural movements and further constrict our psoas.

A healthy psoas is able to both contract and fully release, allowing us to spring into action when necessary, but also to let go of tension easily in order to dance, move, play and feel connected to the earth and its rhythms. Yoga teacher and filmmaker Danielle Prohom-Olson notes that the Taoist tradition considers the psoas integral to the lower *dantian*, a storehouse of *Qi*, or vital energy, located just below the navel. For this reason, she names the psoas the "muscle of the soul." When the psoas is strong and supple, it allows subtle energies to flow through the bones, muscles and joints, balancing our lifeforce.

The key to letting go of unnecessary tension in the psoas is to create a safe space for surrender and conscious release. This can

happen spontaneously when you are relaxed and the muscle is activated or stretching. It might be accompanied by trembling or a shaking sensation, a perfectly healthy somatic response to deep release. When the physical release is processed by the brain, it can sometimes be accompanied by emotional release or processing of long-held feelings, including trauma. Due to the complexity and sensitivity of the psoas, it is advisable to explore slowly and gently rather than push to the edge of sensation or awareness.

The following yoga poses help to down-regulate the nervous system and encourage gentle release in the psoas muscle.

Deep Diaphragmatic Breathing

Because the psoas is connected to the diaphragm with myofascial connective tissue, deep diaphragmatic breathing can restore healthy movement and vitality to the muscle. In turn, a supple psoas muscle can create space and mobility in the breath as the two work together.



Diaphragmatic Breathing in Constructive Rest (Photos: Sheila Ewers)

Lie on your back in *constructive rest position*—with knees bent and feet slightly wider than hip-distance apart. Let your knees fall together at the midline for support and rest your hands gently on your abdomen. As you breathe in, focus on the rise of the abdomen into the palms of the hands, expanding as fully as you comfortably can, and as you breathe out, feel the abdomen descend and draw back towards the spine. Continue like this for eight to 10 breaths, increasing your capacity without strain.

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Supine Psoas Contraction and Release

By actively engaging the psoas muscle under stress and then releasing, you can train a more reflexive release response.



Supine Psoas Contraction and Release

From a supine position, draw your knees above your hips. Place your palms on your upper thighs. Try to move your thighs towards you while pushing away with your hands. Ideally, you will experience very little movement but a great deal of sensation deep in the abdominal core and psoas. Hold for five breaths, then lengthen both legs onto the floor and fully relax the muscles. Repeat this process, again noting any differences in sensation.

Low Lunge

The extension of the back leg in a lunging position brings the psoas into a deep stretch.



Low Lunge

From a standing position, step your left leg far behind you and gently lower your knee to the mat. Use a blanket to support the knee if you experience discomfort. Ensure

that your right knee is stacked directly above the right ankle. Bring your hands to your right knee, keeping the torso upright and engaging the abdominal muscles to prevent tension in the lumbar spine. Lengthen your exhalations and soften the front of the left hip. For a deeper stretch, you can reach your arms overhead. Hold for five breaths, then repeat on the opposite side.

Supported Bridge Modification

Adding a layer of support to lift the hips can add stability and give your body "permission" to let go and release.



Supported Bridge Modification

From a supine position, with knees bent, press into the soles of your feet to lift your hips. Slide a bolster or stacked blankets beneath your lumbar spine, then lower the hips onto the support. Straighten your legs forward. Remain in the pose for three to five minutes.

Legs Up the Wall



Legs Up the Wall

Find a clear wall space and bring your hips as close to the wall as possible. Lie on your back and bring your legs up the wall with the soles of the feet facing the ceiling. You can elevate your hips on a pillow for greater ease. Remain in the pose for 10 to 15 minutes, breathing into your belly and letting your muscles be heavy. 🧘



Sheila Ewers, ERYT500, YACEP, owns Blue Lotus Yoga in Johns Creek. A former professor of writing and literature, she leads group and private lessons, yoga philosophy workshops, yoga teacher training and retreats. Contact Sheila at Sheila@JohnsCreekYoga.com.

Yoga is
the fountain of youth.
You're only as young as
your spine is flexible.

~Bob Harper

Atlanta Yoga Studios Top Georgia's "Best of Year" List

In its annual "Best of the Year" list, the *Georgia Business Journal* (GBJ) placed many of Atlanta's yoga studios among the best in the state.

The list, which covers more than 20 categories, including Arts & Entertainment, Real Estate, Utility Companies and Sports & Fitness, accepts votes from readers around the state to find the best businesses in each category.

The *Georgia Business Journal* acknowledges that getting voted "best of Georgia" carries some weight, so they ensure a credible process by vetting the leading companies through the Better Business Bureau and screening for people who vote more than once.

Out of the 16 yoga studios in Georgia that made the list, nine were Atlanta-based. Below are the Atlanta-based winners in the category of Yoga & Pilates Studios.

Best of Georgia
Winners:

- Evolution Yoga
- Johns Creek Yoga
- Lift Yoga Studio
- Stillness Yoga & Meditation Center

Best of Georgia
Regional Winners:

- atl kula
- Healthy Living with Hope - Johns Creek Yoga Classes
- Korsi Hot Yoga
- Peach Out Power Yoga
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To see the complete list of winners across all categories, see *Directory*.
GBJ.com/Best-of-Winners/



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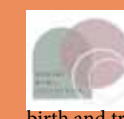
Both Johns Creek and Duluth Yoga offer a safe environment for transformation and discovery using the tools of traditional yoga to build deeper community and consciousness.

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Healthy Home

How to Detoxify a Living Space

by Yvette Hammett



As the world moves into its second year of a viral pandemic, many of us are still spending most of our time at home—working, exercising, hanging out with family and as with any other year, cooking and cleaning. There's no better time to take stock of these surroundings and purge them of any toxins—gases, inhalants or fumes—that may be contributing to a harmful environment.

Start with the air. Research shows that indoor air is two to five times more toxic than the air outside, due to inadequate ventilation. This condition, coupled with fumes from synthetic fibers, makeup, paints, cleansers or even a baby's plastic toys, can contribute to health issues and a less environmentally beneficial abode. A straightforward solution—in addition to getting rid of the pollution-causing objects—is to open the windows and use fans to recirculate the air. A high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter can safely remove many contaminants, but don't spritz a commercial air freshener: A University of Washington study found that eight widely used air fresheners released an average of 18 chemicals into the air, some of them hazardous, including the likely human carcinogen acetaldehyde.

Purge plastics. Perfluorinated compounds PFAS and PFOS, known as “forever chemicals,” are found in nonstick cookware, water-repellent clothing, stain-resistant fabrics and carpets, some cosmetics, and products that resist grease, water and oil. They have been found to cause a wide range of health problems from kidney and testicular cancers to endocrine disruptions. Consider doing a clean sweep of the house to determine which of these can be replaced, paying special attention to plastics. “If you really limit plastics to a few things, you are fine,” says Heather Patisaul, Ph.D., a neuroscience and toxicology expert at North Carolina State University.

Reconsider kitchenware. Eliminate all nonstick cookware, Patisaul advises. “Use ceramic and other materials that do not have perfluorinated chemicals.”

Debbie Steinbock, a nutrition counselor at Mindful Family Medical, in Boulder, Colorado, suggests replacing plastic storage containers, which can leach chemicals when heated. “Use a cast iron skillet and use glass jars and mason jars for food storage.”

Chuck out toxic cleaners. Many commercial kitchen, bathroom and other cleaning products are loaded with chemicals linked to asthma, cancer, reproductive disorders, hormone disruption

and neurotoxicity. They can be particularly toxic for children: A recent Canadian study found that repeated use of a disinfectant reduced beneficial gut bacteria in toddlers, probably contributing to obesity. A good place to start in cleaning out the cleaners is at the Environmental Working Group (EWG) website ewg.org; its *Healthy Living Home Guide* evaluates the health risks of 2,500 cleaning products. It also advises a simple strategy of using vinegar and water or baking soda.


Get the lead out. Andrew Rooney, deputy director at the National Toxicology Program of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, sees lead, which causes brain damage and other serious defects, as a major risk present in water supplies and the paint of older homes. “The thing I want to emphasize is there is no safe level of lead exposure, so eliminating exposure sources is the best protection for your health,” he says.

Drinking water contamination comes from the distribution lines and plumbing fixtures, with lead leaching out from repairs or adjustments. “Having your household water tested by a certified lab is the best option to determine if you have water issues,” he says. Consult state and local health agencies for guidance on lead paint or lead in the water lines and how to remove it. Also consider a water filter: *ConsumerReports.com* has a comprehensive rating of models from pitchers to under-sink setups.

Take it a step further. The new EWG downloadable Healthy Living app makes it easy to use a smartphone to check out 120,000 products for toxic ingredients, including cosmetics and foods. “It has a barcode scanner to scan your favorite lipstick or shampoo, and it will pop up an ingredient list and give it a score,” says Patisaul. The database includes ingredients not found on packaging and scores products on a zero to 10 scale. “It pretty much has to be water to get a zero,” she says.

Yvette Hammett is an environmental writer based in Valrico, Florida. She can be contacted at YvetteHammettHull49@gmail.com.


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bit.ly/na-survey-0321



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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 \$10 to attend — to list for free. Otherwise, basic listings are \$35 and enhanced listings are \$75.

Submit free listings to calendar@naAtlanta.com and paid listings to ads@naAtlanta.com.



Earth Day is April 22. Look for the green leaf for events that celebrate Earth Day.

FRIDAY, APRIL 2

Spring Native Plant Sale – Apr 2-3. 10am-5pm. Over 100 species of plants available, and horticulturists and knowledgeable volunteers on site to help you plant the garden of your dreams. Herbs and veggies for the edible garden also available. Free admission. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Registration required: 770-992-2055 or ChattNatureCenter.org.

Virtual 852 Hertz Healing: Return to Spiritual Order – 11-11:30am. Part of a series of energy-centric classes with Jamie that you can take in any order. All virtual classes are recorded so no need to be disappointed if you missed class. \$10. More info & register: JamieButlerMedium.com.

SATURDAY, APRIL 3

Free First Saturday: Embrace Earth Day – 1-2pm. Learn about sustainable swaps everyone can make in their daily lives, composting and worms, and an educational hike around the Nature Center's grounds. Free. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. Registration required: 770-394-3322 or DunwoodyNature.org.

MONDAY, APRIL 5

Spring Break Family Fun – Apr 5-9. 10am-12pm. Every morning enjoy a family led scavenger hunt and document experiences in a complimentary nature journal. Also offering special activities each day. Atlanta Botanical Garden, 1345 Piedmont Ave NE, Atlanta. Space limited; register: AtlantaBG.org.

FRIDAY, APRIL 9

Online: Intro to Tai Chi – Fridays, Apr 9-30. 11am-12pm. Tai chi will be explained by describing and performing the most basic movements of Yang Style Tai Chi, which is the most practiced style of Tai Chi in the world. \$50/series. Via Zoom. More info & to register: DecaturHealingArts.com.

SATURDAY, APRIL 10

Honeybee Hive Inspection – 11am-1pm. Cindy Hodges will teach the important things to look for in a hive and what you can do to make sure that your hive is thriving. \$15. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

Mala Making Workshop – 1-5pm. Join Jeweler and Reiki Master Alana Saporiti. Includes all materials and instruction in gemstone meanings, guidance in stringing and hand-tying your Mala, and a closing ceremony to charge your sacred creation. Masks required. Santosha Studio, 896 Davis Dr, Atlanta. More info & to register: Santosha-Studio.com.

MONDAY, APRIL 12

Online Wild Woman Moon Meditation – 7-8:30pm. Guided by our Priestess in Residence, Alana Saporiti, explore archetypal, cosmic energy, meditate, journal and craft intentions for the month ahead. \$15. To register: Santosha-Studio.com.

Online: The Secrets of Health and Longevity – Mondays, Apr 12-June 14. 7-30-8:30pm. 10-series course to learn simple steps and exercises to promote cleansing, regeneration and

rejuvenation. Design your own personal program for promoting vibrant health. More info: 404-303-0007 or HealCenterAtlanta.com.

TUESDAY, APRIL 13

Reflexology Practitioner Course – Tuesdays, Apr 13-July 13. 6:30-9:30pm. A 42+ hr, in-class certificate course with Roz Zollinger, Certified Reflexologist and Instructor. Heal Center, 270 Carpenter Dr NE, Ste 505, Sandy Springs. 404-303-0007. HealCenterAtlanta.com.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14

Online: Understanding and Taking Control of Your Energy Levels Part I – 2:30-3pm. With Tiana Franklin. Learn how to identify the different levels of energy that dictate your thoughts, emotions and behavior. \$15. More info & to register: WithLoveAndLight.com.

SATURDAY, APRIL 17

Earth Day Clean Up on the Flint River – 9am-12pm. A rare opportunity to explore and clean up the headwaters of the Flint River near the world's busiest airport. Flint River @ Atlanta South Pkwy, 485 Oak Pl, Atlanta. More info & register: Tinyurl.com/yrt94zke.

Poolside Kirtan + Cacao – 6-8pm. With Flavia Krishna & Gershone. Nourish your spirit with cacao and the healing sound vibrations of kirtan, mantra and chanting in a poolside environment. Masked required. Santosha Studio, 896 Davis Dr, Atlanta. More info & to register: Santosha-Studio.com.

MONDAY, APRIL 19

Earth Day Leadership Event – Keynote Speaker: Chandra Farley, Just Energy Director. Partnership for Southern Equity. More info & to register: EarthShareGA.org.

TUESDAY, APRIL 20

Georgia Tech Earth Day Festival – Apr 20-22. Celebrating Earth Day throughout the week with Tour of the EcoCommons Natural Features (virtual); Campus Tree Planting; activities, outdoor fun, DIY projects and much more. More info: EarthDay.GATech.edu.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21

Online: How to Talk to Your Body – 7-8pm. Join Licensed Unity Teacher, Larry Bergmann, for this powerful healing service. Learn techniques for connecting your mind and body together for healing, empowerment and more. Love offering requested. Visit the calendar listing for Zoom link: UnityAtl.org.

THURSDAY, APRIL 22

Earth Day at Atlanta Botanic Garden – 10am-12pm. Make a garden-inspired creation out of natural materials, watch special performances on the Great Lawn at 10:30 or 11:15am, and hunt for beautiful art made out of recycled materials by our talented volunteers. Atlanta Botanical Garden, 1345 Piedmont Ave NE, Atlanta. Space limited; register: AtlantaBG.org.

Virtual Nature Club – 7-9pm. State of the Chattahoochee River with Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, Jason Ulseth. \$10/general, \$5/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Registration required by Apr 21: 770-992-2055 or ChattNatureCenter.org.

The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.
~Robert Swann

ONGOING EVENTS

sundays

Online Sunday Experience – 9am, Adult Study; 9:30am, Meditation; 10am, Music; 10:30am, Service. With Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta. slc-atlanta.org. To watch: Facebook. spirituallivingcenteratlanta.com.

Red Clay Sangha Sunday Morning Service – 9am, meditation; 10:30-11:30am, dharma discussion. Via Zoom. To watch: RedClaySangha.org.

Online Meditation Open House – 10am. A 30-min meditation and a 30-min discussion via Zoom. To watch: Atlanta.Shambhala.org.

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

Shamanic Journey – 11am. 1st Sun. A virtual healing experience brought to you by Heron House via Zoom. Free; donations accepted. To register: Tinyurl.com/yctpr49j.

Unity Atlanta Sunday Services – 11am. Watch live stream or register to attend in person. 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Sunday Morning Talks and Discussion – 11am-12pm. With Vedanta Center of Atlanta via Zoom. To watch: VedantaAtlanta.org.

Unity North Online Sunday Service – 11:15am. To watch: UnityNorth.org.

Last Sunday Social – 12:12-3:33pm, last Sunday of each month. Join our community of vendors as we share a healing space, engage in meaningful dialogues and create lasting memories. Gallery 992, 992 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd, Atlanta. More info: Hi@KosmicBrew.com or Linktr.ee/KosmicBrew.

MONDAY, APRIL 26

Online Transmission Meditation – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA SE Region. Free. Via Zoom. Info: 404-680-7423, Info-SE@Share-International.us. Share-International.us/se. Register: Tinyurl.com/3d2a8t39.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28

Online: Evening Prayer – 7-8pm. Join Rev. Jennifer L. Sacks and Unity Atlanta for a monthly time of prayer and guided meditation, as we rest from our daily activities and find renewal for a new day. Love offering requested. Visit the calendar listing for Zoom link: UnityAtl.org.

mondays

The {SAMA} Class: Virtual – 9am. Also held Thurs & Fri. Incorporates 25 mins of yoga, 10 mins of breathwork, finishing off with 10 mins of meditation. Each teacher will bring their own spin to the class based on their particular lineage of training. More info: SamaFoodForBalance.com.

tuesday

Heart Jewel Chanted Prayers and Meditation – Mon-Fri, 8-9am. Chanted Buddhist prayers and meditation. Free. To register for livestream: MeditationInGeorgia.org.

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

wednesdays

Zoom Check In: Wellness Wednesdays – 10am. Check in with your community during COVID-19 crisis. slc-atlanta.org.

Decatur Farmers' Market – Thru Nov 17. 4-7pm. Local farmers, artisanal food makers and crafts. Masks required. First Baptist Church Decatur, 308 Clairmont Ave, Decatur. cfmatl.org/decatur.

Unity North Online Wednesday Evening Experience – 7pm. To watch: UnityNorth.org.

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

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.

CLASSIFIEDS

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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Twin Hearts Meditation – 7pm. This meditation is an act of service. We use divine energy to bless the planet, our loved ones and every part of our life. With Atlanta Pranich Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: AtlPranichHealing.com.

fridays

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

Prayers for World Peace – 6:30-7:15pm. An opportunity both to simply pray for world peace and to be a part of the solution. Includes a guided meditation, a short teaching and chanted prayers for world peace. To register for livestream: MeditationInGeorgia.org.

saturdays

Free Saturday Meditations – 8-8:30am. To register for livestream: MeditationInGeorgia.org.

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 – Thru Dec 2021. 9am-1pm. Closed Dec 25. Fresh produce, meat, baked treats, and more. Additional offerings include live music and chef demonstrations featuring seasonal recipes. Masks required. Sceptre Brewing Arts, 630 E Lake Dr, Decatur. cfmatl.org/oakhurst.

Free Online Guided Meditation for All – 9:45-11am. Will go over basics and guided meditation. No prior experience is needed. Classes meant to come together and meditate and learn little by little. Via Zoom. Register: Tinyurl.com/y3x5y2s.

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FRIDAY, APRIL 9
Poetry Open Mic Night – 7-9pm. With Michael Burke. An evening of splendor with enchanting and thought-provoking spoken word performances from some of Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore's flourishing community of poets. Poets of all ages. Free. On Zoom & in person.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14
Astral Travel 5-Week Course – Wednesdays, Apr 14-May 12. 7-8:30pm. Rachel Ramsey will share a little history and teach you how to entrain your brain on the astral plane using her method of astral travel meditation. \$75.

THURSDAY, APRIL 22
Wisdom and Healing Through Shamanic Journeys – 7-8:30pm. With Vicki Evans. An opportunity to connect with Spirit and your guides for healing and direction. You can use the journeys to ask about all areas of your life, not just the spiritual side. \$20 via PayPal. To register: PayPal.me/vickievanshealing.

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ZEN AND DIRT BIKES

by Cassie Gaub

I used to be way cooler than I am now. When I was in my 20s, I started riding dirt bikes. If you met me today, that might shock you. My husband at the time, now ex, had been riding motorcycles since he was four years old. We lived in Southern California, which has some of the best weather and best tracks, and we'd spend nearly every weekend there.

One day, probably out of boredom, I declared that I needed my own dirt bike, and that's how my journey to Zen started.

Riding dirt bikes isn't as hard as it might seem. The truth is, if you can ride a bicycle, you can ride a dirt bike. There are some minor tweaks to make, and regular maintenance is needed, but riding a dirt bike itself is actually pretty simple. Anyone can do it.

As a natural over-thinker with an always-busy brain, riding dirt bikes on a track was perfect for me. You can't be an over-thinker on a dirt bike; you have to be 100% present. Decisions have to be made in the "right now." It is the art, practice

and experience of living in the present moment. You have to be connected, aware and unattached.

Each and every second, you have to take account of and constantly stay focused on what is happening. Right now. Not on the last lap or the next lap—but in the now.

Each lap around a dirt bike track is a completely different, new experience and an opportunity to improve. The grooves get deeper. The lanes can change. A rock or clump of mud can be in a spot it wasn't the last time around, and you have to adjust—quickly. Someone might have crashed, and you need to navigate around them or stop to help them. Or—often, in my case—you are the one who crashed, hoping someone stops to help. Someone always does.

The first time I ever experienced what good meditators call "a quieting of the mind" happened on a dirt bike. For the first time in my life, my brain chatter went radio silent. My mind stopped wandering.

It was quiet, only noticing and reacting in the now. There is power there—in not worrying about the past or tripping over the future because the now is what is real.

For me, being on a dirt bike is a spiritual experience. Despite the inherent risk of injury and the constant chaos and noise around me, there are also moments of pure bliss. For me, riding dirt bikes is Zen.

It's been a while since I've been on a dirt bike—or even owned one—but I often daydream about getting back on a track. I don't even know for sure if I like the bike-riding as much as I love the experience it creates of being so aware of the now. Distraction is not an option. 🙏



Cassie Gaub is an empowerment and mindset coach, energy worker, podcast host and speaker. Her work is rooted in the mind, body and spirit connection.

Connect on social media @coachwithcassie and @bestuinstitute.

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