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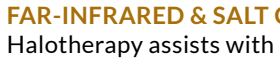
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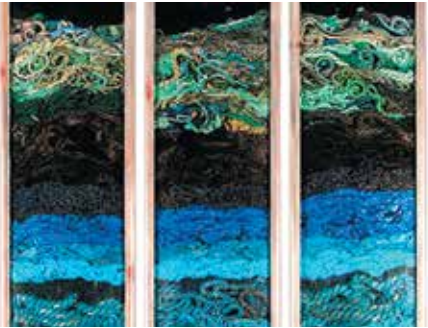
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INTERVIEWS

It's not often we have the opportunity to interview someone of Sadghuru's renown, but we sure do enjoy getting the opportunities! Here's a look back at a few of our standout interviews.

Bruce Lipton on the Role of Consciousness in Healing

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Dr. Toni Galardi: LifeQuakes—Awakening to Your True Purpose

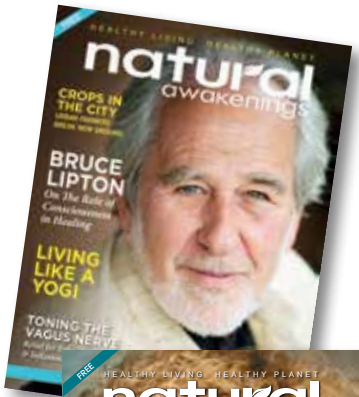
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Mark Jacobson on the Climate Change Imperative

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Dr. Shefali on Radical Awakening and Unleashing One's Authentic Self

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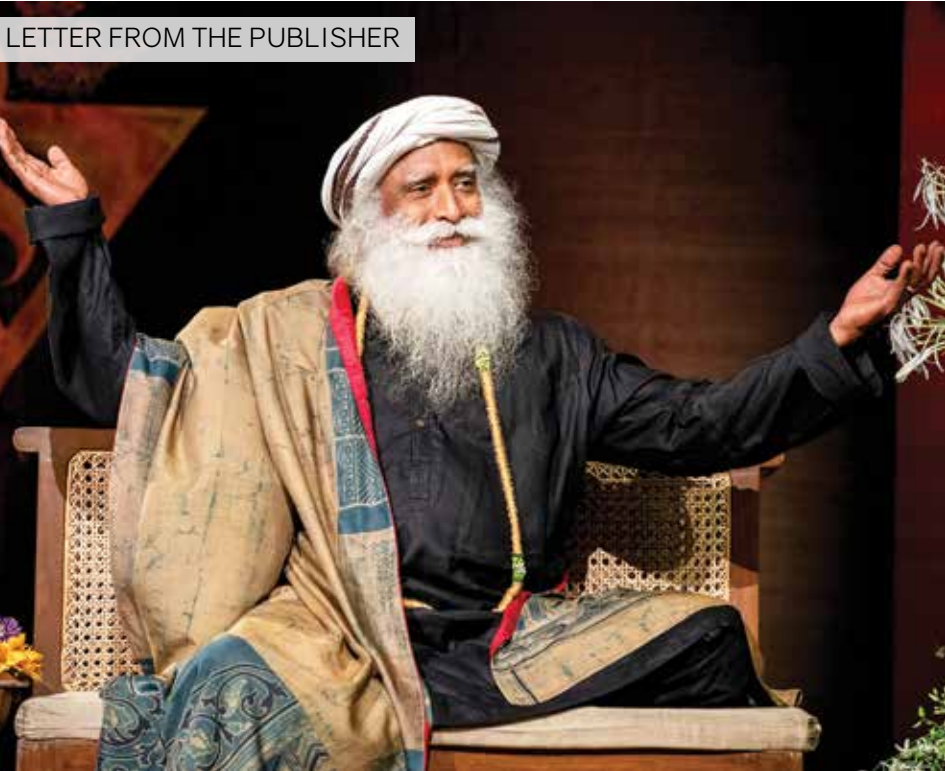
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Yogis from India and Atlanta, Welcome!

We're thrilled to share with you this month's interview with Sadhguru, the Indian spiritual teacher and founder of Isha Foundation, the organization that spreads his message and his work across the globe.

As spiritual teachers go, Sadhguru is quite modern, utilizing a host of social media platforms to great effect. As a result, he is also quite popular; I was surprised to discover that his Instagram followers vastly outnumber those of the Dalai Lama—9.9 million to the Dalai Lama's 2.1 million. He's even way ahead of the American preacher with the largest megachurch in the country, Joel Osteen, who has a mere 5.1 million followers.

What's behind his popularity aside from using social media to advance his message? If I were to guess, aside from his knowledge and wisdom, I'd say that it's because he can dispense wisdom in short

and often pithy phrases, sometimes with a sly sense of humor. Even after watching several of his YouTube videos, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of fresh ideas that emerged from this magazine's recent interview with him. Almost every one of his responses contained something I hadn't read or heard before.

Sadhguru is a leading proponent of yoga, the science of self-realization. Long-time readers of this magazine will know that our coverage spans all eight limbs of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—not just the physical discipline of yoga postures that most Americans associate with yoga.

Sadhguru is primarily concerned with helping people develop inner practices that will lead to yoga's goal, *samadhi*, the union with that which is infinite, eternal, omnipresent and omnipotent and otherwise referred to as God, Source, Infinite Intelligence and more.

I often describe this magazine as “Atlanta’s premier publication focused on holistic health and personal evolution,” and if someone were to ask what the two topics have in common, my response would be: “Everything.” And, in the years I’ve been the publisher of this magazine, I’ve never interviewed anyone else that embodies the combination of these two principles more than Sadhguru.

He offers much advice on physical health. “Being free of disease may not necessarily be well-being,” he says in one of his YouTube videos. “When you feel well, when you really feel well on all levels of who you are, that’s well-being. It’s a matter of being in tune with everything in and around you.”

He continues: “Essentially, if you’re looking just at health, once the *pranayama kosha*, or the energy body, is properly balanced and vibrant, there will be no ailment in the physical and mental body. If this one thing is done, one can clearly see whatever chronic ailments that one has, either in the physical body or in the mental state, will completely vanish. When people come with ailments, we don’t treat them for that ailment; we just help them to get their energy body vibrant and balanced.”

We hope you enjoy reading his remarkable answers to our questions.



Speaking of yoga, I am pleased to introduce our newest yoga editor, David Penn, RYT-200, founder and owner of Sun Dragon Yoga in Norcross.

Continued on page 29.

the Writing Doctor



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ATLANTA BRIEFS

CHANTLANTA Returns in September

For the first time since 2019, the ChantLanta Sacred Music Festival is returning to the Atlanta stage.

ChantLanta started in 2010 as an event featuring yoga, kirtan music, open chant and charitable fundraising. The event grew over the years into a weekend-long festival, raising money for local and international charities, including refugees and urban farmers. Thanks to the positive response by the community, the organizers expanded the festival to accommodate more people and include more presenters with a wider variety of offerings. From 2020 through 2022, however, they were unable to host the event due to the pandemic.

The festival is run entirely by volunteers, and all proceeds from admission, sponsorships and donations go directly to a charity partner the organizers choose each year.

This year, the event will take place September 8 from 6:30 to 10 p.m. and September 9 from 10:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. at Unity North Atlanta in Marietta.

Admission to the Friday and Saturday evening music events will be offered on a sliding scale, and workshops will require a donation as well. "We encourage participants to donate as much as they can, knowing that all proceeds go to help our charity partner," says Karen Dorfman, ChantLanta's director of booking and scheduling. "If anyone lacks funds to participate, we also offer a volunteer trade for admission to Friday or Saturday night's events."

ChantLanta is made possible by a small organizing committee and a wide variety of musicians, sound healers and yoga teachers volunteering their time and gifts to put it into motion.

"We're so excited to see everyone enjoying themselves and opening their hearts," says Dorfman. "It's so beautiful to see people hugging, smiling, singing and dancing together, knowing that they have come home."

For sponsorship info, contact Ian Boccio at Ian@ChantLanta.org or 404-401-0060. For volunteering info, contact Susan Clancy at SCLancy@Unity@gmail.com or 678-859-9461 or Sophia Loner at SophiaLoner@gmail.com or 678-769-9952. For vending info, contact Margo Gomes at Margo99999@gmail.com or 830-237-3053.

For more information about the festival, visit ChantLanta.org.



Photos: Perry Julien

New Yoga Studios Open in Duluth and Stone Mountain



Danielle Kuhman

Spirit House Yoga opened in Duluth in March and Sanctuary Yoga Studio in Stone Mountain opened its doors in April.

Spirit House owner Danielle Kuhman, RYT 200, with an additional 50 hours of Core-Power yoga teacher training, wanted "to create a space that was inviting, homey, and had all the features I wanted, like blankets, a quiet room and a simple practice space. We even have a small café in the back with coffee, tea and

healthy snacks for post-practice."

Spirit House offers a variety of classes and community events. "The Duluth neighborhood and surrounding communities are so excited we're here. And we have an incredible group of teachers that make us who we are. I don't know how we got so lucky!" The studio's new-student special offers one week of unlimited classes for \$14. It also offers five-class and ten-class packs as well as memberships.

Get 50 percent off your first class pack or month of membership with the code 50OFF at checkout.

**spirit house
yoga**

Spirit House Yoga is located at 2730 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, Unit 106, in Duluth. For more information, visit SpiritHouseATL.com or call 770-230-1906.



Spirit House Yoga studio



Amber Voss [Photo: Chris Mastin]

The founder of Sanctuary Yoga Studio, Amber Voss, is an E-RYT 200 and RYT 500-hour yoga instructor trained in the Pranakriya and Kripalu yoga lineages. She is a certified 200-hour Instinctive Meditation instructor through The Radiance Sutras School of Meditation.

"I am very excited to open a studio in this area so that people can come move and breathe their way to better overall health," says Voss. "We

are committed to teaching accessible, all-inclusive yoga while honoring the roots of this ancient practice."

Class sizes are limited to 14 students, and a range of rates are offered, including a sliding scale for those in need. Online pre-registration is recommended.

"Our boutique studio offers a variety of yoga classes that are accessible to all bodies of all ages, sizes, gender and health," says Voss. "Our passion is sharing the slower forms of yoga with students, including gentle, yin, restorative and chair yoga, but we also offer faster-paced classes. We also offer virtual classes for those who wish to be in community from the safety of their own home."

Sanctuary Yoga is located at 1218 Rockbridge Rd. SW in Stone Mountain. For more information, visit SanctuaryYogaStudio.com, email Info@SanctuaryYogaStudio.com or call 404-530-9166.



Sanctuary Yoga studio [Left photo: Amber Voss]

It is not how much you do, but how much love you put in the doing. ~Mother Teresa

Wisteria & Willow

OFFERS SPIRITUAL PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS



Angel Jordan and Jessica Lakos [Photo: Logan Jordan]

Co-owners Angel Jordan and Jessica Lakos opened Wisteria & Willow, offering in-person and online reiki, meditation, and tarot sessions as well as classes and workshops. The company also has an online Mindful Market, offering sustainably and ethically sourced items to enhance one's sacred space and spiritual journey.

"We offer personalized sessions and classes for those seeking to explore personal and spiritual well-being practices. Our intention is to co-create a unique experience with our clients and inspire them to listen to their own intuition and create their own path in following their bliss."

Complimentary consultations are offered to new clients. Sessions range from \$45 for a 30-minute session to \$80 for one hour. Special pricing is available for booking six or more sessions. Prices vary for personalized programs, classes and workshops.

Lakos is an intuitive tarot guide and a Chopra-certified instructor, teaching primordial sound meditation and other meditation techniques. Jordan is a Usui Reiki Master and crystal energy healer who has been clairsentient, empathic and connected to healing crystals and stones since childhood.

"Our mission is to share our experiences, knowledge and gifts with others as they explore their own unique spiritual paths," says Lakos. "We endeavor to do this in a way that protects Mother Earth and honors Universal Love."

Jordan and Lakos see clients by appointment only at their office, located at 55 Atlanta Street SE, Suite 213 in Marietta, just two blocks from Marietta Square.



For more information, visit WisteriaAndWillow.com or email Connection@WisteriaAndWillow.com.

Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work

Atlanta-based, licensed professional counselor Aprell Taylor is offering the workshop, *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, a workshop designed by the Gottman Institute and based on Dr. John Gottman's 1999 best seller of the same name. Launching on May 1, the course will be offered online once a quarter.

"I am excited to share this life-changing information with couples who are looking for tools to improve their relationship," says Taylor, who is certified to lead the Gottman workshop. "In my work with individual couples, I see sincere and earnest men and women who love their partner but just do not know how to connect and communicate effectively."

Taylor, who worked as a school counselor for 20 years prior to starting her practice Season for Change Counseling in 2020, provides individual and couples therapy as well as holistic wellness counseling.

The workshop, she says, will be of interest to couples in every stage of their relationships: dating, engaged, cohabitating and married. Gottman is the author or co-author of more than 200 published academic articles and more than 40 books, according to his website.

Taylor's May workshop runs for four Mondays from 7 to 8:30 p.m. The cost is \$375 per couple, which includes course materials shipped to attendees.

For more information, visit Season4ChangeCounseling.com/couples-therapy.



Aprell Taylor



Prune by Ima Shawat Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore



Sacrifice by Klana Melendez at Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore



Birthing a New Consciousness at The Well of Roswell



The Birth of Love at Heart Soul & Art



Umbrella Dream at The Well of Roswell

THREE METAPHYSICAL SHOPS PRESENT WORKS OF LOCAL ARTISTS

Three Atlanta metaphysical businesses are exhibiting creative works by local artists.

The Well of Roswell, a wellness center that offers classes and events for personal transformation, is currently exhibiting the works of Yuli Anun. Based in Alpharetta, Anun is a digital-based visual artist, certified art therapy life coach and sound bowl meditation facilitator. Her photo-based works have been exhibited nationally and internationally. She says her process involves "weaving healing energetic frequencies through the creation of intuitively inspired art and sound." An artist reception is scheduled for May 4 from 7 to 9 p.m., and Anun will facilitate a free sound journey during that time.

From May 7 through mid-June, Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore is exhibiting the works from Kennesaw State University's student spring art exhibit, The May Day Show. Originally referred to as Beltane, May Day is an ancient tradition that marks the midpoint between the spring equinox and summer solstice. An opening reception for the student artists will be held on May 7 from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

In Marietta, metaphysical shop Heart Soul & Art will host a juried art show in July and will be accepting artist submissions as of June 18.

The show's theme is "Dream." Owner Sharron Reagan says, "Dreams are a powerful aspect of our human experiences, encouraging reflection and interpretations, from the whimsical and fantastical to the dark and introspective. Create your imagination and dream world in your most artistic ways."

An artists' reception is scheduled for July 22, from 5 to 6 p.m., when winners' ribbons and more than \$500 in cash awards will be handed out.

Submissions must be received between June 18 and July 9. To submit artwork, visit HeartSoulAndArt.com. The submission fee is \$45 for up to three works of art.

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.

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

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

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Womyn's Wellness Retreat in Douglasville



Orisha Bowers



Jeremy Bowers

The nonprofit Orixia Healing Arts Wellness and Spiritual Center of Memphis, Tennessee, is hosting the Womyn's Wellness Retreat on June 3 and 4 in Douglasville, Georgia. The retreat centers around practicing "radical self-care and healing in community," says Orixia's founder, Orisha Bowers.

The retreat will be held at the Ambience Event Space at 2127 Fairburn Road, Suite D, Douglasville, on June 3 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and at Hunter Memorial Park at 8830 Gurley Road, Douglasville on June 4 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event is free, but donations are encouraged.

"Orisha Healing Arts promotes healing through mindfulness, movement and the expressive arts," says Bowers. "Our proven techniques increase wellness indicators for persons experiencing various forms of chronic illness, traumatic experiences, stress management issues and burnout. As a form of alternative medicine, healing is encouraged through the use of the expressive arts and movement."

Leading the movement portions of the retreat is Bowers' son Jeremy, a teaching and performing artist apprentice with the New Ballet and Ensemble School in Memphis and the assistant director at Orixia Healing Arts. He is also a certified instructor of Dancing Mindfulness.



For more information, visit OrixiaWellness.com, email OAHenry01@gmail.com or call 901-399-4565.



Rizza Islam speaking [Photos: Jimi Figz]



Artist Raury performing [Photos: Jimi Figz]

ANNUAL WONDERFUL WIZARDS OF RAW RETURNS IN JUNE

On June 2 through June 4, Tassili's Raw Reality Café presents the 10th annual Wonderful Wizards of Raw, an outdoor festival and "raw food extravaganza" in the West End featuring a raw chef cook-off, music, speakers and vendors.

The festivities begin on Friday June 2 with "The Libation"—a gathering and celebration featuring tribal music drumming and dancing held at Cascade Springs Nature Preserve, located at 2852 Cascade Road. The festivities continue on June 3 and 4 in the backyard of Tassili's Raw Reality, located at 1059 Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard.

A fundraiser is also scheduled for June 1 for the nonprofit I Am Ascension Temple of Love Foundation at UniTea & Coffee Café. As of press time, the times of all events had not been finalized.

Tassili Ma'at, founder and owner of Tassili's Raw Reality, says that The Wonderful Wizards of Raw "provides opportunities for individuals to learn, grow and connect with others who share similar goals and values." Ma'at adds, "I believe that events and organizations like this play an important role in helping individuals achieve their goals and dreams regarding healthy lifestyles."

Tassili's Raw Reality Café is a raw vegan restaurant best known for its spicy kale salad and kale wraps. It is located in Atlanta's historic Black community, the West End, an area home to many holistic health businesses including vegetarian/vegan restaurants, yoga studios, event spaces, markets, juice bars and a wellness spa.



For more info, visit TassilisRawReality.com/wonderful-wizards-of-raw-extravaganza/

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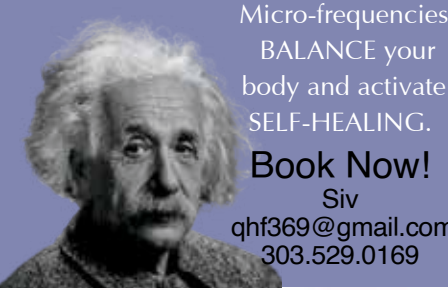


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Taking Control of Our Hormones

NUTRITIONAL TIPS TO SUPPORT THE DELICATE BALANCE

by Sheila Julson



Think of hormones as the body’s messengers, sending signals that affect a host of functions. Produced by the pancreas, thyroid and other endocrine glands and organs, hormones drive our metabolism, impact mood, regulate blood pressure, manage our sleep cycles, influence sexual function and more. Key players are insulin, cortisol, thyroid and growth hormones, adrenaline, estrogen, progesterone and testosterone.

Keeping these hormones in proper balance is critical for health, and imbalances can lead to a wide range of effects, including diabetes, thyroid disease, unintended weight fluctuations, skin problems, fatigue, mood swings and infertility. While inactivity, stress, age and genetics impact hormone production, our food choices can significantly tip the scales.

Dr. Ann Lee is a naturopathic doctor and licensed acupuncturist based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. When treating hormonal, thyroid and adrenal imbalances, she says it is important to focus on foods that provide the minerals and vitamins that support those systems. For women of all ages, she recommends blueberries, asparagus, lettuce, celery and papaya. Teens and women in their 20s can also benefit from apples, bananas, mangoes, avocados, cauliflower, broccoli, cucumbers, sweet potatoes and most lettuce varieties. The nutrients in these vegetables and fruits become even more important as women reach 30 and for those dealing with menopause, so Lee recommends more frequent consumption of these fresh, whole foods to support the adrenal and thyroid glands.

According to Lee, it is equally important to avoid foods that interfere with hormonal nutrition. She advises women over 50 to lower their caffeine intake. Dairy products contain naturally occurring hormones that can impede human hormone balance and should be eaten in moderation. “The less external hormonal exposure you have, the easier it is for your own hormones to balance,” Lee explains.

Despite the popularity of intermittent fasting, Lee believes that the trendy eating pattern can deny the body the vitamins and minerals it needs, causing it to produce more adrenalin and cortisol to make up for the loss. “People do intermittent fasting because it might feel good to have more adrenalin, and thus more energy, but it does come at a price—your hormones,” she says.

Most of the foods Lee recommends are low in calories. “In order to curb hunger, you have to eat them regularly, and that goes against intermittent fasting. People that do intermittent fasting often focus on



KALE AND TEMPEH TACOS

In this yummy, low-carb taco recipe, cabbage leaves substitute for the tortillas and are filled with a mixture of protein-packed tempeh, veggies and lots of great spices. Compounds in tempeh called isoflavones serve as a natural remedy for menopausal relief.

YIELD: 2 SERVINGS

- 1 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 4 oz tempeh, cubed
- ½ tsp sea salt or more, to taste
- ½ tsp black pepper or more, to taste
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp chili powder
- ¼ tsp paprika
- ¼ tsp cayenne
- ¼ cup vegetable broth
- 2 cups stemmed and chopped fresh kale
- 4 to 6 large, green cabbage leaves, dipped for 30 seconds into hot water to soften
- ½ avocado, sliced
- 1 radish, sliced
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ lime, cut into wedges

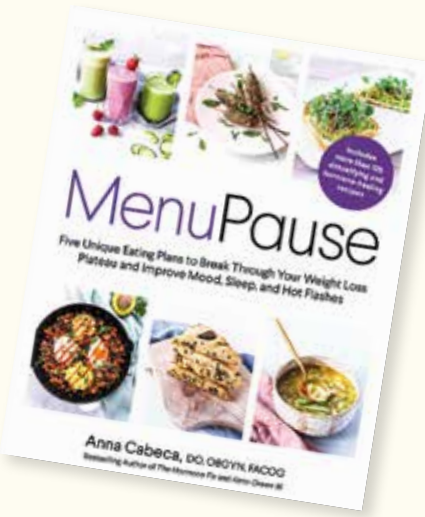
Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic and tempeh and cook for 2 to 3 minutes until the onion softens and becomes translucent. Add the salt, pepper, cumin, chili powder, paprika and cayenne, stir, then add the

broth and kale. Stir again to combine and cook until the broth thickens and reduces by at least one-half. Taste and adjust the salt and pepper as needed.

Spread the cabbage leaves open on a large plate. Spoon the kale mixture into the center of the leaves. Add some of the avocado, radish slices and cilantro, then fold in the sides like a taco.

Serve with lime wedges.

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Photo courtesy of Dr. Anna Cabeca

VANILLA AND FIG SCONES WITH PISTACHIOS

A great dessert or breakfast treat, a scone is a baked good usually made with wheat flour and butter. This recipe calls for almond flour instead to reduce the carbs and increase the nutrition. The pastry has been enjoyed in Scotland since 1513, and its name probably derives from the Dutch word for bread. Figs and pistachios sweeten the scones and give them a bit of crunch.

YIELD: 6 TO 8 SCONES

2½ cups almond flour
½ tsp sea salt
½ tsp baking soda
⅓ cup coconut oil, melted
¼ cup honey
2 large eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
½ cup chopped dried figs, plus some for garnish
½ cup pistachios, roughly chopped

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, combine the almond flour, salt and baking soda. In a medium bowl, whisk together the oil, honey, eggs and vanilla. Stir the wet ingredients into the dry until thoroughly combined. Fold in the ½ cup of figs and the pistachios.

Place the dough on the baking sheet and shape into a rectangle about 1 inch thick. Cut into squares and then cut the squares diagonally into triangular wedges. Separate the wedges so they are about 1 inch apart to allow for even cooking. Press a few pieces of fig into the top of each wedge.

Bake for 12 to 17 minutes until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in a scone comes out clean. Let cool for 30 minutes on the baking sheet, then serve.

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proteins and fats, so they don't have to eat for a long time, but that can cause adrenal burnout because the body is not getting what it needs," she explains, noting that avocados and potatoes tend to help people feel full longer.

While inactivity, stress, age and genetics impact hormone production, our food choices can significantly tip the scales.

Jaclyn Downs is a functional nutrigenomics practitioner in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and author of *Enhancing Fertility Through Functional Medicine: Using Nutrigenomics to Solve 'Unexplained' Infertility*. She notes that for hormones to be produced by the body, nutritional cofactors or "helper nutrients" are required. "Magnesium, zinc and B vitamins are a few of the spark plugs that move these processes and keep the wheels spinning," she emphasizes. "Grass-fed beef liver or capsules contain all of these."

According to Downs, menstrual problems can be an indicator of eventual fertility issues. To support female reproductive hormones, she recommends cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, broccoli sprouts, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts. These foods also support liver detoxification pathways due to their high concentrations of vitamins and sulfur. "The liver helps clear used or 'dirty' hormones," she notes.

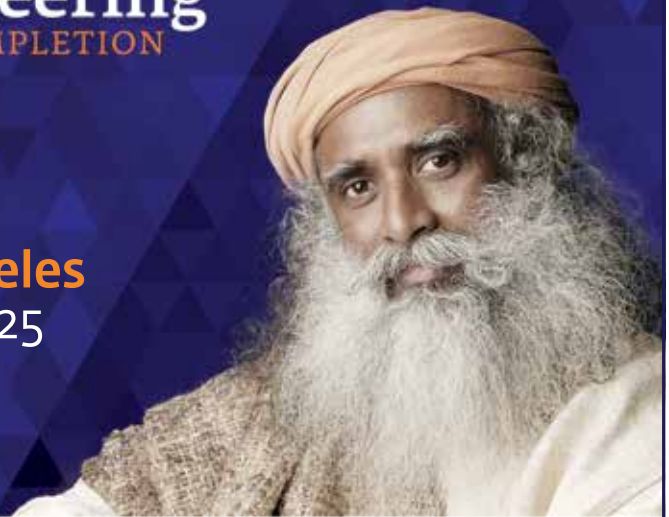
Downs also recommends pomegranates, which are rich in antioxidants and fight inflammation-producing free radicals. Healthy fats from cold-water, wild-caught fish support pregnant women and growing fetuses. "Folate is often emphasized as a nutrient for pregnant women, but choline is just as important for everybody, regardless of life stage or gender," Downs notes. Choline is found in egg yolks, sunflower lecithin and shiitake mushrooms. For 50-plus women, Downs prescribes fish or high-quality fish oil, which can benefit brain, liver and hormonal health. 🐟

Sheila Julson is a freelance writer and contributor to *Natural Awakenings*.

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SOLVING STRESS

HOLISTIC TIPS FROM LIFESTYLE DOCTORS

by Linda Sechrist

Medicine is changing as a new class of doctors endeavors to treat the whole person rather than the symptoms of disease, helping their patients achieve optimal health with lifestyle changes, medicine, herbs, supplements and modalities tailored to the individual. No longer reaching for a prescription pad as often, these functional and integrative physicians are spending an average of 45 minutes per office visit. Using their sleuthing skills and innovative skillsets, they ask probing questions about a patient's current lifestyle and history, pinpoint the root cause of a problem and craft customized solutions.

To help someone manage stress, a functional or integrative doctor may suggest a daily dose of herbal tea, nightly entries in a gratitude journal, a visualization practice, brisk walks, gardening, art therapy, mindful meditation, a nutrient-rich diet that reduces food allergies, yoga poses and regular sessions of qigong or tai chi. Armed with an extensive list of better-for-you choices than addictive, prescription sleeping pills or tranquilizers, individuals

are empowered to improve their health and eliminate stress. Studies suggest that 75 to 90 percent of illnesses are stress related. Getting to the root cause before it escalates into cardiovascular disease, depression or diabetes is what curious and compassionate doctors do.

“Because sleep is a great resolution to almost anything, it’s one of the first things I consider,” says Carrie Jones, a functional and naturopathic doctor in Portland, Oregon. “Stress can be physiological, caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria and toxins, as well as blood sugar imbalances. Not getting enough sleep, or poor sleep, is stressful to the body, which is on alert all the time.”

According to Jones, finding ways to coax the body into feeling safe can help people relieve stress and get a good night’s sleep. “People rarely realize that basic things such as joy, play, laughter and a community of supportive people have anything to do with feeling safe enough to sleep deeply. It’s why I inquire about those things,” she explains.

Tips for Sounder Slumber

- Turn the thermostat down in the bedroom. A cool temperature combats insomnia.
- Snuggle under a weighted blanket. The gentle pressure signals the autonomic nervous system to go into rest mode.
- Install blackout shades. Light decreases melatonin, the sleep hormone.
- Avoid alcohol before bed, as it can disrupt the sleep cycle.
- Stop using electronics, including social media, television and phones, two hours before getting under the covers. The blue light emitted by screens restrains the production of melatonin.

Connecting and spending quality social time with friends helps to alleviate stress. Anna Cabeca, a triple board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist, advises, “Every day, stress causes the stress hor-

mone cortisol to go up and oxytocin, the connecting hormone, to go down, lessening the desire to connect. It’s a double whammy for women in perimenopause and menopause, because hormones are declining, and stress overloads the already overtaxed endocrine system.”

Rebecca Hunton, personalized medicine doctor and founder of Radiantly Healthy MD, in Melbourne, Florida, coaches her patients to modify unhelpful habits. “I’m always looking for that one thing that patients can easily change. Sometimes it’s teaching them the difference between stress resilience and stress avoidance. A stress avoidance activity is spending two hours playing a game on your phone that leaves you beating yourself up and feeling like, ‘Why did I waste all that time?’ If, on the other hand, an activity leaves you feeling energized and wanting to tackle the other things on your to-do list, you just did a stress resilience activity,” says Hunton.

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Carol Penn is a dual board-certified physician and movement coach in New Jersey. While observing her 87-year-old father practicing qigong, a form of meditation in motion, she had an epiphany and saw a powerful life lesson occurring before her eyes. “Moving with strength and grace through his practice so close to the end of his life, it occurred to me that he was role-modeling what it would be like for me to be kind to my future self. I teach my patients from this perspective, visualizing their future selves full of health, vitality, wonder and awe,” says the author of *Meditation in a Time of Madness*.

Qigong has psychological and physical components, regulating the mind, body movement, breath and posture. “It balances and calms the autonomic, sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems so that you feel less stress upon completion of the practice. Movements are designed to build longevity on a cellular level,” Penn explains.

According to Lorraine Maita, a board-certified functional and integrative doctor in New Jersey, “The body sends out hormonal fight-or-flight signals when it’s distressed. In the initial stages, there’s a release of adrenaline, followed by cortisol, keeping your body on high alert. To most people, stress is just worry, and they’re thinking they’re handling it, but stress can be like a viral program running in the background all the time. It’s still there whether you’re reacting to it or not, whether you’re stuffing it under the surface or not. It’s why you go to therapy with mental stress, or why you need someone to talk to for processing it.”

Maita is a proponent of alternative modalities that help people modulate the stress response. “I recommend HeartMath to my patients, which is self-regulation technology based on more than 32 years of scientific research on the psychophysiology of stress, resilience and the interactions between the heart and brain,” says the author of *Vibrance for Life: How to Live Younger and Healthier*.

Jaquel Patterson, a naturopathic physician and medical director of Fairfield Family Health, in Connecticut, might determine if her patient is suffering from chronic stress by testing their saliva for cortisol levels in the morning and evening. Noting that her favorite teas for sleep and relaxation are chamomile and passionflower, she explains that passionflower is for someone that can’t fall asleep because there’s a radio playing in their head. “For dealing with stress, I like adaptogens, such as Siberian ginseng, rhodiola rosea, ashwagandha, holy basil and L-theanine. The stress response requires a lot of B vitamins, along with magnesium and vitamin C,” she says.

Citing Hal Elrod’s book *The Miracle Morning*, Patterson recommends starting every day with a set of stress-relieving rituals Elrod calls “Life S.A.V.E.R.S.” She explains, “S is for silence, like meditation. A is for affirmations. V is for visualization, so you can visualize how your day is going to be. E is for exercise. R is for reading, and S is for scribing, writing things in a journal.”


Pointing out the differences between stress and anxiety, Patterson notes that anxiety is a continual rumination of thoughts, second-guessing and overthinking. Anxiety can cause stress, but stress can occur without anxiety. People with high anxiety sometimes have heart palpitations. Some stress is good for us. Without any stressors, Patterson cautions, we are unmotivated, lethargic and lacking in enthusiasm.

Technological Solutions to Quiet the Anxious Mind

- **Reflect Orb:** This handheld biofeedback device can help an individual self-monitor their body’s physiology and learn to control the involuntary body-mind connection.
- **Meditation apps:** Insight Timer, Calm and similar apps offer guided meditations, relaxing music videos and meditation instruction for newbies and experienced practitioners.
- **YouTube videos:** Look for musical compositions with energy frequencies and binaural beats that encourage relaxation, promote positivity and decrease anxiety. 🎧

Linda Sechrist has been a contributing writer to Natural Awakenings publications for almost 20 years.

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First Signs of Menopause

HOW TO RESOLVE VAGINAL DRYNESS

by Linda Sechrist



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When *The New York Times* and *National Geographic* cover the subject of menopause in the same calendar year, perhaps it's a sign that the inevitable phase of a woman's life that ushers in vaginal dryness, irregular periods, hot flashes, brain fog, mood swings, night sweats, sleep problems, decreased sex drive and weight gain is finally getting the attention it deserves.

Solutions for women experiencing perimenopause, menopause and post-menopause are not covered in medical school. Instead, they stem from the work of pioneers like Dr. Pamela Wartian Smith, author of *What You Must Know About Women's Hormones: Your Guide to Natural Hormone Treatments for PMS, Menopause, Osteoporosis, PCOS, and More*, and Dr. Christiane Northrup, who wrote *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing*.

Today, integrative and functional doctors, researchers and continuing education instructors are leading the charge to provide innovative and customized answers for women experiencing vaginal dryness and other hormone-related symptoms.

The earliest sign of changes occurs between the ages of 40 to 44, during perimenopause, and according to Dr. Lindsey Berkson, author of *Safe Hormones, Smart Women*, vaginal dryness is the flashing red light. "A sign of insufficient hormone signaling, vaginal dryness is the body's warning that bones are beginning to thin; the brain's structure, activity and neuron connectivity are beginning to decline; and the aging process has begun," she explains.

A continuing-education instructor for doctors and pharmacists, Berkson notes, "The vagina doesn't exist alone. Treating only the vagina is minimized medicine. It's so important to find a doctor who practices functional medicine, has completed continuing-education

hours in hormone replacement therapy and nutrition, and has experience in these areas."

Dr. Meena Malhotra, a double board-certified internist practicing functional and integrative medicine for 27 years, understands that vaginal tissue is hormone-dependent, and dryness left untreated can lead to urinary tract infections that can progress to kidney infections. "Atrophic vaginitis with dryness, itching and burning doesn't happen overnight; it happens gradually. Many women who are not seeing a gynecologist regularly for checkups are unaware of the gradual decrease of their progesterone and estrogen," advises the founder of the Heal n Cure Medical Wellness Center, in Glenview, Illinois.

"Women generally self-treat sexual discomfort from dryness first with self-prescribed, over-the-counter gels, suppositories and creams, which are temporary fixes," Malhotra says. "Functional medicine, which allows for longer appointments, in-depth intake and more intimate conversations, can determine the root cause of vaginal dryness, which can be treated early with FormaV, a non-surgical, painless rejuvenation procedure which tightens loose labia, improves vaginal health and makes sexual intimacy desirable again."

Known as "the girlfriend doctor", triple board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist Anna Cabeca has been in practice for 23 years and is the author of *The Hormone Fix: Burn Fat Naturally, Boost Energy, Sleep Better, and Stop Hot Flashes, the Keto-Green Way*. Recognizing that many over-the-counter lubricants perpetuate dryness and create damage to the tissue, she formulated her own products. "Inflammation can happen because of a reaction to the ingredients in the lubricant. I tell my patients that they can make their own lubricant using organic coconut oil mixed with aloe vera gel and a few drops of an essential oil that turns their partner on. They can also strengthen the pelvic floor with Kegel exercises and eat a keto-green diet," Cabeca suggests.

Dr. Rebecca Hunton, the founder of Radiantly Healthy MD, in Melbourne, Florida, believes that treating the changes in a woman's body is a form of personalized medicine. "Every woman's journey is different, but generally before vaginal dryness comes progesterone deficiency. Symptoms include trouble falling asleep, anxiousness and moodiness," she says, adding that not all vaginal dryness is hormone-related, as an autoimmune disorder could also be a cause.


Hunton recommends, "Starting early with a transdermal progesterone cream can mitigate some dryness, but at a certain point, progesterone won't suffice. There are nonsurgical treatments such as MonaLisa Touch, a laser treatment that brings the tissue in the vagina to a more youthful state. It needs to be repeated every 18 months to two years."

These doctors all agree that women no longer have to power through the changes. There are answers. As Cabeca asserts, "This is a time that heralds a second spring of our lives and should be a beautiful journey." 🌱

Linda Sechrist is a senior writer for Natural Awakenings.

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Yoga Is for All of Us

by David Penn

In my life, yoga began as a way to deal with a sore back and tight hamstrings, and over time, it grew into so much more. Asana practice became a way to listen. I had never listened before. Yoga unearthed a path for me to dig into the deepest depths of myself—places that I liked and places that I didn't like. It gave me opportunities to turn angst and pain into wonder and compassion and became a means of slowing down my erratic tempo to a steadier pace. A pace that I could listen to.

On my mat, I had found a place where I could be in the present moment, wherever that was. There have been times of happiness and contentment as well as times of grief, fear, and loss. I feel fortunate for these experiences. It's an adventure. And, along with what I have seen in so many other yoga students, it has led me to believe that a yoga practice is a place that all of us can find refuge.

Unfortunately, because of how it's been marketed, yoga has long appeared to be for a certain group or type of people, which often promotes envy and elitism. The covers of the most widely read yoga magazine, *Yoga Journal*, almost always display the same body type, sex and race: a thin white female. Advertisements for yoga products from Reebok and Lululemon reflect a similar perspective, making it easy for people to conclude—if they're different than what they see depicted—that the practice of yoga must not be for them.

In her book, *Yoga As Resistance*, a guide to making yoga more inclusive, Stacie Graham notices that social media typically depicts yoga practitioners as “very skinny, bendy and blonde.”

I have seen for myself a few roadblocks that can prevent many from finding these places for themselves. I experienced some of them firsthand when I was growing up in the 80s and 90s. Back then, yoga was perceived as something strictly for women. Magazine covers and VHS workout tapes enforced and reinforced the concept that yoga was reserved for women—for that matter, mostly white women appearing to be models, gymnasts or dancers. Yoga wasn't something for a man—or a boy wishing he was a man—to partake in.

Even now, yoga is often thought of as a sort of club for women. When I tell people I founded a yoga studio, many people—both men and women—are surprised. They ask, “You must mean you manage it?” or “Your wife teaches the classes. Right?” Both questions reflect the same assumptions: that I don't teach the classes and I don't do yoga. They conclude that I manage the business because teaching and practicing yoga isn't for men.



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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.

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

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

Zen Sound Bath – 11:30am-1pm. 3rd Sat. With Gabriel Nelson Sears featuring crystal and Himalayan singing bowls, gongs, bells, flutes, drums and chimes. \$16. Trinity Center for Spiritual Living, 1095 Zonolite Rd, Atlanta. Registration required: TrinityCenterAtlanta.org.



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Sun, June 4, 9am - 2pm

For More Info:
Dr. Orisha Bowers
oahenry01@gmail.com

To Register:
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Happily, this assumption appears to be slowly abating. According to the 2016 Yoga in America Study produced by *Yoga Journal* and Yoga Alliance, men's participation in yoga jumped from 17.8 percent in 2012 to 28 percent in 2016. The most recent data is from 2016, so the study might be a little dated, but it still shows a promising trend.

Given the media coverage, it would also be easy for women of color to assume that yoga isn't for them, either. But nowadays, some people are speaking out about that. With nearly half a million followers on Instagram, yoga teacher, author and podcaster Jessamyn Stanley spoke to this issue in a recent interview with *Ebony* magazine. "I'd always thought yoga was just for thin, white women; I didn't think it had anything to do with me. ... I was very often one of the few fat people and one of the only Black people."

Yet another underrepresented group in media is the over-60 crowd, but this, too, is changing. The extraordinary benefits of yoga for seniors are starting to be recognized. Harvard-affiliated Brigham and Women's Hospital and other collaborators

reviewed 33 studies of 2,384 participants over the age of 65. The results demonstrated that yoga—predominantly Hatha yoga—effectively increased participants' walking speed and leg strength and improved their ability to rise from a chair as well as their balance, mobility and mental well-being. These benefits are typically associated with reduced frailty and increased longevity.

Yoga has changed my life dramatically for the better. Perhaps you have experienced something similar, or you are considering beginning your own yoga journey. I hope you will join me in this exploration into the practice of yoga, and maybe you will find something new that speaks to you, or you'll broaden your awareness of what is available in our vibrant city. Yoga is for all of us. 🙏



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.

Continued from page 9.

Like many who find themselves doing yoga full-time, David is a refugee from a corporate lifestyle that hollowed him out. Twelve-hour days in sales left him feeling like "a weak old man" with a really sore back. After finding the mat, he took yoga teacher training and was certified 10 years ago.

"Yoga has given me everything that means anything in my life," says David. "My relationship with my wife is better; I don't drink anymore..." When David isn't practicing or writing about yoga, he can often be found playing the harp for cancer patients.

Aside from inquiring into all eight limbs of yoga, our yoga department has shouldered the bulk of our editorial work devoted to personal evolution. But it's time for a change. We are now planning a series of articles outside of our yoga department, focusing on meditation, which will start in the next 12 months. It will spearhead our personal evolution editorial for some stretch of time.

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Within our yoga department, David will begin a series on several styles of yoga, highlighting local studios and teachers that offer those styles, including yin, Ashtanga and Kundalini. For the last several years, we've published a special yoga section in September, in which we highlighted Atlanta yogis. This September, however, we'll change focus and examine pranayama, the fourth limb of yoga, in detail.

Please join me in welcoming David to his new role and wishing him great fun and success. 🙏



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.

Sadhguru ON INNER ENGINEERING AND MEDITATION



Sadhguru is the founder and head of India's Isha Foundation, an organization dedicated to spreading the spiritual science of yoga since 1992. Isha operates many centers around the world, including a retreat center in McMinnville, Tennessee.

Sadhguru will bring his Inner Engineering Program, a “technology for well-being,” to Atlanta on June 3 and 4. For more information, visit InnerEngineering.Sadhguru.org/atlanta.

Natural Awakenings was able to pose questions to Sadhguru in advance of his visit, and he took time out of his busy schedule to respond. His answers are lightly edited for clarity and length.

by Paul Chen and Diane Eaton

What is involved in your Inner Engineering program?

As a whole, the Inner Engineering process involves the body, mind, emotion and energy. What we do with the body and energy is a kind of transmission; it is not a teaching. It is the vital part of Inner Engineering.

But what do we do with the mind and emotion? Transforming the way you think and feel is a kind of a teaching that you can experience by a committed focus. Most human beings will see a tremendous change in their lives if how they think and feel changes. But many will find they cannot sustain that change. Inner Engineering focuses on transforming the very chemistry within—through careful balance and powerful energy processes.

What are some of the benefits of regular practice of Inner Engineering?

There is a lot of research happening about the Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya (a pranayama practice taught in the Inner Engineering program). Some of the universities, including Rutgers, Harvard, Indiana University and Florida University, have studied it.

Scientists found that the cortisol awakening response is significantly higher for people who have practiced Shambhavi. The cortisol awakening response marks different levels of wakefulness. You are not at the same level of awakening every moment of your life. If you have been practicing Shambhavi for at least 90 days, 30 minutes after you wake up in the morning, your cortisol awakening response is several times higher than usual.

The BDNF, the brain-derived neurotrophic factor, also increases, and the inflammatory markers greatly improve, too. And your DNA shows that after 90 days of practice, you are 6.4 years younger than what you were, on the cellular level. All of this has been established by responsible scientists. And above all, the most beautiful thing is, the level of calmness multiplies manifold while the brain is still active. This is a unique dimension of Shambhavi.

Inner Engineering includes a set of practices that “activate” the joints, muscles and energy system. Why is that important?

When you sleep, there is relaxation but also a certain level of immobility and inertia. In horizontal positions, lubricating fluids in

the joints settle down and are not in circulation. So when you wake up, the body demands that you lubricate your joints first. If you suddenly start to work, exercise or walk, you could damage your joints. The joints have a concentration of energy nodules, so by activating the joints, everything in the system gets ignited for action.

Today, many people may be medically healthy, but they don't experience a sense of inner well-being. To experience wholeness, one's body, mind and energy must function at a certain level of inner intensity. This is not happening for most people because they are not taking charge of the well-being of their energy systems.

In yoga, when we speak of health, we do not look at the body or mind—but at energy. If your energy body is in proper balance and full flow, your physical and mental bodies will be in perfect health. Building a foundational yogic practice that establishes and activates your energy system is important so your body and mind are naturally fine.

We should distinguish between infectious and chronic diseases. Infections can be treated through medication, while the root cause of chronic ailments is in the energy body. If people are willing to do some *sadhana* [spiritual practice] to balance and activate their *pranamaya kosha*, or energy body, they can definitely be free of chronic ailments.

Of course, the food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink can affect us in many ways. But if the energy body is properly cultivated, they will not have much effect.

How does someone know if they're ready to take the Inner Engineering program?

Every human being is seeking a larger slice of life. Different people handle it in different ways. Someone runs after more money, someone goes on conquest, someone goes shopping, some run after knowledge, others after love. But however much you grow, there is still longing because it cannot be fulfilled by mastering physical creation. Yoga means to breach the barrier of physical creation, to dissolve the boundary into the boundless nature of existence.

Patanjali is known as the father of modern yoga. It is not that he invented yoga, but he assimilated it into a system. It was already there in various forms and he put it down into a kind of formula called *sutras*. There are over 200 different sutras. [Patanjali's] Yoga Sutras are a tremendous document about life.

Patanjali starts the Yoga Sutras in a very strange way. The first chapter is half a sentence: “And now, yoga.” In a way, he is saying, “If you still think your life will become better with a new house, a new girlfriend, a new car, more money or whatever else, it is not yet time for yoga.” If you saw all that and you realized that it does not fulfill your life in any way: “And now, yoga.”

Just as there is a science and technology for external well-being, there is an entire science and technology for inner well-being—this is what yoga means. Inner Engineering is an effort to bring this possibility of yoga to the world, to sweep humanity with a non-religious, non-denominational spiritual movement, delivered in a scientific manner.





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What motivated you to take a motorcycle trip around the U.S. and visit Native American reservations a few years ago?

Around 20 years ago, I was in a small cottage in Central Hill Lake, and I just walked into the forest and encountered something very strange. It was almost like a frozen Native American spirit. This experience was probably the most painful experience in my life. I have never seen any being in that kind of pain—shame, resentment, deceit, anger—all this put together. After that, I started inquiring about it, and I found out that that region is called the Trail of Tears. The Cherokee Nation was removed as a part of the Removal Act, and they were made to walk to Oklahoma in bad weather. Thousands of them died, so it is called the Trail of Tears. That is when I decided to set up a center there as well.

Our 4000-acre center is at the head of the Trail of Tears. It is a beautiful place on one level, but it was the pain that drew me to that place. Since then, I have been looking at their culture and at the various tribes. Most people would not know that there used to be over 500 Native American nations in the United States, and today they are all there in a nominal way.

So I have been looking at making this trip, but my schedule never allowed it. In 2020, because of the virus, I had the time. So I thought there is no better way to travel than on a motorcycle.

Today, in modern society, the environment is in the textbook, but for these people, the environment is in their hearts. They are

not living on this earth; they are the earth. They live this in every way. Unless that happens to modern societies—unless we have ecological concerns in our hearts—we will only talk about it as an abstract science that does not concern us. I think this message and this culture is very vital for this generation and the next, if we want to do something significant about addressing the ecological concerns that we have.

What, if anything, did you notice about Americans when you traveled around the country?

Only when life bothers you, when life disturbs you, when life makes you wonder, “Is this all worth it? What is this all about?” do you start looking at what could be beyond this. If you are too satisfied with a bellyful of breakfast, you will not look beyond. When everything has worked in your life but still you do not know what the hell is happening, that is when you look beyond. Poverty brings a huge hope that if this certain thing happens, everything will be okay. Affluence brings hopelessness, where everything is okay but still nothing is okay.

You cannot ask the poor man to turn spiritual when he still firmly believes, “When I win the lottery, everything is going to be okay.” You cannot turn him inward. Only when a person has the experience or the intelligence to see beyond their current experience are they willing to look for something beyond. Either they won the lottery and nothing happened, or they see people who have won the lottery but nothing happened to them. Either one of these things should have happened.

That is why it is mostly the affluent countries in the world, like America, that are turning spiritual. Because of the affluence that the nation has achieved, many Americans have reached that place now where they are looking beyond. They are ready for a spiritual process.

At the same time, many Americans are in a depressed state. Moving from poverty to affluence, either for an individual or a society, takes enormous effort. If you just look back on the history of the United States, three to four generations worked really hard to get the society to this level of affluence. And when you finally reach here, what happens? Forty percent of the people are on antidepressants. Is it not very important that, with economic well-being, human beings are in a condition to enjoy and use it as a way to make their lives even better? If there is no joy, that is a real waste of life. That need not happen if you maintain a few basic things about your life.

I have been active in the United States for over 20 years now. For whatever reason, the United States has acquired a leadership position; it has become iconic in its own way. Whatever you do, everyone else wants to do the same. Whatever you wear, eat or drink, everyone wants to do the same things. Now it is very important you behave responsibly. It is a privilege that you should exploit to transform humanity.

So if America meditates, the whole world will meditate. That is why I am revving it up in America.



How do you define meditation?

The English word “meditation” doesn’t mean anything because if you sit with closed eyes, you are “meditating.” But with eyes closed, you could do many things—*japa* [mantra], *tapa* [ascetism], *dharana* [concentration], *dhyana* [meditation], *samadhi* [oneness], *shoonya* [conscious non-doing]. Or you might have mastered the art of sleeping in vertical postures! When most people use the word “meditation,” they are referring to *dhyana*.

Dhyana means to go beyond the limitations of the physical body and the mind. When you are identified as the body, your whole life is only about survival. When you are identified as the mind, your whole perspective is enslaved to the social perspective, to the religious perspective, to the family perspective. You cannot look beyond that.

Your body and mind are things that you have accumulated over a period of time. Your body is just a heap of food you have eaten; your mind is just a heap of impressions you have gathered from the outside. These instruments of body and mind are sufficient to live in this world for survival. But life will not be fulfilled with them. Yoga and *dhyana* are scientific tools that help you to transcend the limitations of your body and mind and experience the true quality of who you are.

Along with meditation, pranayama, which many of us think of as breathing practices, make up a core portion of the Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya, which you teach in the Completion Program. Can you clarify the relationship between pranayama and meditation?

Meditation and pranayama are separate but they are supportive of each other. For a person who is practicing pranayama properly, meditation comes easily.

Meditation means a certain elevation in your energy. Unless you create that kind of energy—with the right kind of food, attitude, and practices—meditation will just be a struggle because meditation cannot be done. If you create the necessary atmosphere, it blossoms in you. You cannot make a flower bloom, but you can have a garden full of flowers if you know how to manage the conditions. So by practicing pranayama, you are creating a conducive atmosphere. With pranayama, you are maturing your energies. As the energy matures, it naturally tends to become meditative. 🌸

Messages from MAITREYA The World Teacher

Prepare all those who know not yet that I have returned.

My need is great for those who see the promise and the dangers of the time.

I trust you, my brothers and sisters, to work for me in this way, to lift from the world the peril of war, to relieve the hunger of many, and to restore the well-being to the world.

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Gardening Therapy

HEALING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT IN THE YARD

by Sheryl DeVore



Gardening outdoors adds color and texture to yards and neighborhoods and, with the right plants, attracts pollinators, whose numbers are declining. It also can improve human health. The exercise, sunshine and fresh air promote mental and physical health, and so does our contact with soil microbes and the harmonious patterns of nature.

“Being in the sunlight is a great way to get vitamin D, which is linked to mood and well-being. We spend so much time inside, where our perspective and thoughts can close around us. Getting outdoors can improve mindfulness and the sense of being in the moment, especially when we leave our phones inside,” says Pennsylvania-based psychologist Seth J. Gillihan, author of *Mindful Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: A Simple Path to Healing, Hope and Peace*.

In a study of the health and well-being benefits of allotment gardening published in the *Journal of Public Health*, researchers measured the mood, self-esteem and general health markers of people given plots for gardening versus those that didn’t garden at all. The scientists found that the gardeners displayed significantly better self-esteem and experienced less depression and fatigue. The top three reasons participants gave for enjoying their time tinkering in the soil were: being outdoors and having contact with nature (70 percent); feeling a sense of achievement (50 percent); and having the opportunity for restoration and stress relief (35 percent).

Cultivating our outdoor space also gives us a healthy perspective, helping us to accept our limitations and better understand our place in nature. “It’s easy to see in the garden how many things are outside of our control, such as rain, temperature and pests. We can do our best, but at some point, we need to let go,” Gillihan notes, adding that learning to let go is a lesson we can apply to other aspects of our lives.

When he faced a long-term illness coupled with depression, Gillihan built raised garden beds and planted herbs and vegetables. “I knew I needed to get more involved in something that would bring me a sense of reward and engagement. All of that creative effort really helped to bring me back to life,” he recalls. “In a garden, you’re exercising, but it’s not a repetitive thing like running, so that can make it more fun and seem like less of a task.”

“Digging, walking, carrying and squatting circulate our blood and release dopamine and endorphins in our brains,” says Karen Hugg, author of *Leaf Your Troubles Behind: How to Destress and Grow Happiness Through Plants*. “We feel more energetic and happier. Similarly, puttering in the garden or designing an

ornamental bed is really about playing, and playing is integral to mental health.”

By merely observing greenery we can find peace and clarity. “A tree’s subdividing branches or the whorled arrangement of leaves are patterns that can calm the nervous system. If you look at plants during even a five-minute break, either indoors or out, you’re practicing a kind of relaxation therapy,” Hugg affirms.

A little bit of earth under our fingernails is good for us. “When you get your hands dirty, there are beneficial microbes in the soil that improve your health and well-being,” says Charlie Hall, professor of horticultural studies and department chair at Texas A&M University, who has researched the physiological, psychological and social benefits of plants.

According to Hall, horticultural therapy reduces stress and anxiety, enhances memory and attention span and can improve quality of life for those with physical, mental or cognitive challenges. Citing the example of disabled adults helping to run a garden center and greenhouse at the Brookwood Community in Brookshire, Texas, he notes, “Working together in a garden builds a sense of belonging. Even those who are not physically able to participate in those activities benefit. Just being in the garden can dramatically reduce the levels of the stress hormone cortisol.”

Gardening Tips to Improve Human and Planetary Health

- Choose a modest space outdoors or purchase small containers.
- Keep it simple and start small with just a few plants.
- Read books to learn about plant needs by region.
- Talk to nurseries that sell native species.
- Think of the garden as a refuge, a place to smell flowers and watch plants thrive.
- View gardening as a fun exercise.
- Join a community garden to cultivate flowers and vegetables in a social setting.
- Grow houseplants, herbs and lettuces to bring in the outdoors.
- Volunteer at a nonprofit that propagates vegetables for food pantries. 🌱

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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Carol Penn

ON FINDING
CALM IN A CHAOTIC WORLD



by Sandra Yeyati

Dr. Carol Penn, double board-certified in family and obesity medicine, is a movement, meditation and mindset coach who teaches people to prioritize self-care to achieve their best and

highest selves. She is certified in mind-body medicine, fitness and personal training, yoga and qigong, and draws inspiration and wisdom from a previous career as a dancer and dance educator with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Penn is the author of *Meditation in a Time of Madness: A Guidebook for Talented Tweens, Teens, Their Parents and Guardians Who Need to Thrive*.

Why did you write your book?

Because I was heartbroken after speaking to an 8-year-old in Parkland, Florida. I asked him, “Are you looking forward to going back to school?” not realizing his older sibling was one of the teenagers murdered in the Stoneman Douglas school shooting. He responded, “I feel like something bad could happen, and no one will be able to help me—not my parents, not my teachers, not even the president.”

An 8-year-old shouldn’t be afraid to go to school, and if that’s what our society is be-

coming, then children need resiliency skills, a way to self-soothe, and so do their parents. The book is a response to gun violence, but it also applies to the pandemic and other unprecedented events that cause that kind of internal chaos and disorientation that leads to mood disorders, depression, anxiety and suicidality. Whether it’s meditation, yoga, journaling or something else, mind-body skills can get you back to your center so you can function at a higher level from a place of calm and relaxed awareness, versus out of fear and nervousness.

Why do you define meditation as relaxed awareness?

Many people think that you have to sit in a certain posture and have no thoughts to meditate, but that isn’t true. We have 60,000 thoughts a day, and we don’t pay attention to most of them. Meditation allows you to slow your thoughts so they’re not as overwhelming and don’t interfere as much. When thoughts slow down and there’s space between them, your body also begins to slow down. Neurotransmitters like dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin and endorphins are released in the brain, and you feel their downstream effect, which we call relaxation.

What is soft belly breathing?

Many times, you get into this rigid kind of breath where you’re holding your belly in and your shoulders are thrown back. People think they look better if they have a flat, tight belly, and that’s how they’re moving in the world, but they’re not getting the full experience of the breath. Soft belly breathing relaxes the torso, particularly that area just below your navel. This type of breathing allows the diaphragm to push down and massage everything beneath it, improving digestion and elimination processes and allowing the lungs to fill out from their bases where you pick up all the oxygen and nutrients that need to be carried throughout the body. As you inhale, say the word “soft” to remind yourself to soften and let go of any muscle tension. As you exhale, say “belly” to be reminded not to hold that part of the body in a rigid way.

Why do you say that movement is medicine?

Motion is synonymous with life. There’s always something moving, even when we’re asleep. Even gentle movement helps the body release endorphins, which elevate our mood, reduce pain and bring us pleasure. We

Continued on page 40.

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 \$20 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.

MONDAY, MAY 1

Sacred Beats Drumming – 7–8pm. Join our drumming circle led by Jen Huber, shamanic guide and healer, as we clear away blocks, release emotions and gain greater clarity. Free; donations for Native American Charity. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

TUESDAY, MAY 2

Online: Transmission Meditation – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA SE Region. Free. Via Eventbrite. Info: 770-302-2208 or Info-SE@Share-International.us. Register: [Tinyurl.com/325yn9jw](https://tinyurl.com/325yn9jw).

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3

Remote Healing – 2:30–3:15pm. Jamie will invite Dr. Usui to come in with a supportive reiki team and work on physical, mental, and emotional healing. The healing itself will take place for 33 mins and there will be a 15-min discussion and sharing afterward. Donation. Register: [JamieButlerMedium.com](https://jamiebutlermedium.com).

THURSDAY, MAY 4

Art Reception & Sound for Yuli Anun – 7–9pm. Yuli chronicles her adventures and lessons learned through original pieces from her art journal. Depicting her walk with Divine Spirit and her evolution through her spiritual journey. Exhibit runs through June 11. Free. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 6

DHA 19th Anniversary “Customer Appreciation” Open House – 10am–4pm. An opportunity to experience some of our signature healing offerings, cozy salt room, partake in a cacao ceremony and gong bath meditation, various classes, engage with our practitioners to learn more about their expertise and modalities. Free. Decatur Healing Arts, 619B E College Ave, Decatur. DecaturHealingArts.com.

Alive! Expo – May 6–7. 10am–6pm, Sat; 11am–5pm, Sun. The only Green Living Event in Atlanta and the Southeast. Interactive demos, live health lectures and kids’ activities. Learn how to integrate natural products and green living into daily life. Cobb Galleria Centre, Two Galleria Pkwy, Atlanta. AliveExpo.com.

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FRIDAY, MAY 12
Healing Circle – 5–7pm. With David Stam-ple. Join us for our healing circle, where we’ll discuss and share different healing modalities amongst like-minded people. Will also practice grounding, mediation techniques and divination tools. Free.

MONDAY, MAY 15
Life Coaching – 6–8pm. With Life Coach Shae Anthony. This class will change the narrative of self-awareness with physics, astronomy and the metaphysical to live a better life. Subsequently, having knowledge in these areas will provide helpful coping techniques. \$30.

SATURDAY, MAY 20
Goat Yoga – 12–1pm. With GGA Dwarf Goat Yoga. Perform breathing exercises and various yoga positions. While doing so, dwarf goats can hop around you, climb your back, sit on top of you, even nap on you or your yoga mats while you let go of all your stress. \$35.

SUNDAY, MAY 7

Cleanse Fest 2023 – 12–5pm. A day filled with holistic practitioners speaking on dos and don’ts of detoxifying and purifying your body. \$15. Kipp Strive, 1444 Lucile Ave Sw, Atlanta. 470-427-1960. Tickets: [Tinyurl.com/cleansefest2023](https://tinyurl.com/cleansefest2023).

FRIDAY, MAY 12

Coffee House – 7–9:30pm. All are invited to join Unity Atlanta Church in celebrating Spring and the creative accomplishments of our artists, musicians, dancers, writers and more. Also enjoy food, including vegetarian and gluten-free choices, and hot and cold beverages. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

SATURDAY, MAY 13

Habitat Restoration – 8:30am–12pm. Help to remove invasive English Ivy, Privet, and other non-natives to encourage native habitat res-

toration. No experience or tools are required, although volunteers are encouraged to bring their own gloves. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChaffNatureCenter.org.

FRIDAY, MAY 19

Life Is But a Dream – 6:30–7:45pm. In this talk, Buddhist nun, Gen Norden will include practical instruction, guided meditations and time for questions. No previous experience needed; all welcome. Following this talk is a guided meditation retreat on Emptiness on May 20. Free. Kadampa Meditation Center GA, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

THURSDAY, MAY 25

The Nature Club Dine and Discover – 7–9pm. Join Nature Club back in person for an exciting speaker on the natural world. \$10/general, \$5/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChaffNatureCenter.org.

FRIDAY, JUNE 2

Inner Strength – 6:30–7:45pm. Come hear how you will learn to: Recognize and reduce the mental habits that weaken us; Develop authentic confidence in the face of the challenges of modern life. \$15. Kadampa Meditation Center GA, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

ONGOING

Sundays

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

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

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

Online: NWUUC – 10am. Via Zoom. 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.

Unity Atlanta Sunday Services – 11am. Attend in-person or watch via live stream. 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Online: UUCA Service – 11am. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta: uuca.org/live.

SRF Atlanta Reading and Inspirational Service – 11am-12pm. An opportunity to meet with other truth-seekers to commune with God and share spiritual fellowship. 4000 King Springs Rd, Smyrna. 770-434-7200. srfatlanta.org.

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

Unity North Online & In-Person Sunday Service – 11:15am. 4255 Sandy Plains Rd, Marietta. More info: UnityNorth.org.

Meditation Classes – 4-5pm, Level I; 5-6pm, Level II. All religions, all ages and all people. Learn how to meditate for spiritual enlightenment. \$15. 5161 Brook Hollow Parkway, Ste 220/225, Norcross. Register, Andrea: 404-557-4306. MeditationWellnessClub@gmail.com. MeditationWellnessClub.com.

Mondays

Online: Monday Night Meditation – 7-8pm. A live, instructor-led meditation and discussion. Develop a meditation practice by maintaining a moment-to-moment relaxed awareness of our surrounding environment, bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions. All levels. \$10. Register: TheOpenMindCenter.com.

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.

The Paradigm Shift – 7-8pm. 1st & 3rd Tues. Join international speaker, teacher and Atlanta-based chiropractor, Dr. Wade Port for the latest in self-care strategies. Free. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

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

30-Minute Guided Meditation – 8am. Be guided through a simple yet powerful meditation that gives rise to an experience of mental peace and wellbeing. No experience necessary. Beginners welcome. \$5. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

30-Minute Guided Meditation – 12:15pm. Be guided through a simple yet powerful meditation that gives rise to an experience of mental peace and wellbeing. No experience necessary. Beginners welcome. \$5. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

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 15. 4-7pm. First Baptist Church of Decatur, 308 Clairmont Ave, Decatur. 404-373-1653. cf-matl.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.

She Recovers Foundation Atlanta Sharing Circle – 7:30-8:30pm. 2nd Wed. Come join us as we support one another on our journey to wholeness. We are all recovering from something. With Allison Stanley. Free. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

Thursdays

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

Dunwoody Beekeeping Club – 6:30-7:30pm. 1st Thurs. Meeting features a program, 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.

Meditation Fundamentals – 6:30-7:30pm. Suitable for complete beginners. Get a practical introduction to meditation and includes topics such as the benefits of meditation, mindfulness, good posture, types of meditation, and how to start a daily meditation practice. In-person & online. \$15. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

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

Fridays

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

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

Prayers for World Peace – 6:30-7:15pm. Includes a guided meditation, a short teaching and chanted prayers for world peace. No experience necessary. All welcome. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Saturdays

Free Saturday Meditations – 8-8:30am. A guided meditation to start your day with a positive state of mind and carry that inner light with you for the rest of the day. No prior meditation experience necessary; all welcome. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

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

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

Oakhurst Farmers Market – 9am-1pm. Year-round. Fresh produce, meat, baked treats, and more. Additional offerings include live music and chef demonstrations featuring seasonal recipes. Masks required. Sceptre Brewing Arts, 630 E Lake Dr, Decatur. cfmatl.org/oakhurst. Free Online Guided Meditation for All – 9:45-11am. Will go over basics and guided meditation. No prior experience is needed. Classes meant to come together and meditate and learn little by little. Via Zoom. Register: Tinyurl.com/y3x5yy2s.

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

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Continued from page 36.

want to bring that flow and fluidity into our lives so that we can tap into it on purpose. Have you ever noticed the less you move, the harder it is to move? Movement needs to be encouraged throughout the lifespan.

What movements do you recommend?

One starts in a standing position. Notice how the rib cage moves as you soft belly breathe. Soften the knees, drop the chin to the chest and as you inhale, lift the arms and feel yourself float away slightly from the body to create a gentle undulation of the spine. This stimulates the “mu” receptors that cause our brain to release pain-reducing endorphins.

Another is to shake it off, like when a dog is walking along and all of a sudden their back twitches, they shake and then continue along their merry way. If we’re bothering them, dogs will literally shake it off. They don’t let it anchor in the body, in their muscles and in their nervous system the way that humans do. Some people wake up tired. Their jaw hurts because they were clenching their teeth all night. By shaking off that tension for one to three minutes, you loosen the tight ligaments where we habitually hold tension.

What is “taking your seat on your throne,” and how can it help us?

I came up with that when teaching women how to meditate from a seated position. Women wear so many hats that life can feel weary, so asking them to sit down as if they’re taking a seat upon the throne of their own well-being gives them a way of sitting that’s different than just plopping down and collapsing because they’re exhausted. It shifts the energy and mental picture. You are more than the exhausted mother, executive, wife or caretaker. There’s a regal elegance, calm and quiet strength inside, and we’re going to meet her in our time of meditation.

Sandra Yeyati is national editor of Natural Awakenings.

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Rosemary Kimble and friend Mar

Kindred Spirits

by Rosemary Kimble

Have you ever had a connection with someone you will never forget, and then, in an instant, they are gone forever? It has happened to me a few times. Sometimes it lasts for a moment and sometimes, only a few months. Each one has made me wish for more time with that person.

The first time it happened was on a subway in Atlanta. A man sat on the train across from me. We happened to look at each other, and our eyes locked. We stared at each other, not understanding the connection or what to say. Intuitively, I felt I had known him as a dear friend or lover in some former life. I cannot explain it any other way. It was like what some call love at first sight, but I was only 14, and he was perhaps twice my age. I knew it was not an impulse I could act on, and I sensed that he knew it, too. All we could do was hold our stare and try to remember some timeless connection. Then the train came to a stop, and he was gone. It was such a vivid interaction that I've never forgotten it.

A similar situation happened in Morocco. I had just boarded a banana boat heading back across the river when I saw a girl on another boat that had just come in to dock. She had the most striking eyes, and we looked at each other, unable to look away. She was with her family, and they must have noticed our connection, too, because they smiled back at me and began gesturing toward me. Neither of us spoke the other's language, but we both knew what the other was thinking: that we were old friends, somehow connected. As my boat drifted away, there was nothing I could say. We both smiled, and the moment was gone.

Sometimes it happens as a result of some trauma. On a visit to Guatemala, I was in a small boat, crossing Lake Atitlan, when severe waves appeared out of nowhere, rocking the boat suddenly. Everyone was frightened, thinking we might capsize. Sitting beside me was a Mayan woman about my age, and she instinctively grabbed my hand for comfort. We held onto one another as if we were each other's savior, both of us practically in tears. I felt a deep closeness with her—as if we had known each other all of our lives and now feared that we might not live to see each other another moment. We held each until our boat reached the dock. Then, not knowing how to speak each other's language, we laughed and hugged goodbye.

The last time I felt some undeniable connection with a stranger, I had some time to become friends with her. I met Mar in Ecuador just before COVID hit. We were volunteering at a zoo and became instant close friends. After our volunteer time, we stayed connected on WhatsApp. I learned that Mar was having a very hard time because her elder aunt and uncle in Ecuador had died during the early days of COVID, and she could not be there to help them. She had already been going through a difficult time in her career and had gotten depressed. I did what I could to be supportive, but she lived in Berlin, and I could not be with her in person.

I tried to keep in touch with Mar, but the pandemic was taxing. Sadly I did not reach out frequently enough, and one day, I discovered she vanished from WhatsApp. I had no other way to reach her. It was an unexpected loss at a time when I had lost so much already.

I keep a picture of the two of us nearby to remember the sweet soul named Mar and our special friendship. I understand now that it is so important to hold those golden connections close when they come into my life. The next time I meet a kindred spirit who happens to be a stranger, I'm not going to let a language barrier stop me from reaching out. I don't want to miss an opportunity to have a rare and deep spiritual connection with someone ever again. 🌿



Rosemary Kimble is an animal communicator, medium, intuitive healer, ceremonialist and death doula. Visit [VisionsAndReflections.com](https://www.visionsandreflections.com) or email Info@VisionsAndReflections.com.

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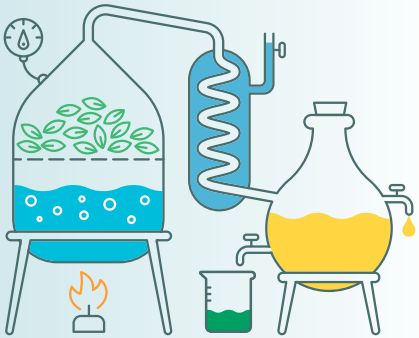
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