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DEPARTMENTS

- 10 atlanta briefs
- 12 community spotlight
- 14 conscious eating
- 18 healing ways
- 30 fit body
- 32 yoga
- 36 wise words
- 38 calendar
- 40 community directory
- 42 walking each other home

Contents

12  
TEN YEARS  
OF THE  
WONDERFUL  
WIZARDS  
OF RAW




18  
WHAT EVERY  
MAN WANTS



23  
THREE BLACK  
HOLISTIC  
HEALING  
SUPERSTARS



32  
YOGA  
FOREVER



36  
DR. MARK HYMAN  
ON LIVING  
HEALTHY TO 100  
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### OUR BLACK COVERAGE ARCHIVES

This month's feature on Black holistic healers is the fourth "annual" spotlight we've shined on an African American issue. Below you'll find our three previous special sections. And here's the URL to our collection of articles on African American issues:

[bit.ly/aaa-black](https://bit.ly/aaa-black)

#### BLACK & NATURAL

Is natural hair about more than activism, cultural pride or fashion? Does it make a difference to one's health? Here's our 2022, three-article deep dive into the topic.

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#### HEALING THE TRAUMA OF SLAVERY

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#### BLACK & VEGAN IN ATLANTA

A two-article, three-recipe offering from August 2019. Why does veganism seem to be a trend among African Americans? How is Black veganism different from white veganism? And, who are some of the pioneers in the area?

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INDEX OF DISPLAY ADVERTISERS

Ahimki Center for Wholeness .....	25	Peachtree Yoga .....	34
Art of Living Retreat Center .....	27	Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore .....	43
Atlanta Dental Wellness .....	44	Quantum Health Frequencies .....	17
Atlanta Ortho Stem .....	21	Ram Dass Love Serve Remember Foundation	27
Balancing to Peace .....	37	Sacred Waters / Tranquil Escape .....	06
Dr. Anna Cabeca .....	31	Saltville Grotto & Spa .....	20
Elohee .....	26	Sanctuary Yoga Studio .....	35
Essentials Health and Wellness .....	28	Seeds of Wellness .....	25
Forever And A Day .....	04	Share International .....	35
Golden Moringa USA .....	28	Shine Energy Healing .....	17
Hands On Wellness .....	20	Soma Deeksha .....	13
Heal Center .....	43	Tassili's Raw Reality .....	22
Heart Soul & Art .....	10	The Divine Path .....	26
Holistic Health & Wellness .....	35	The Feel Good Again Institute .....	33
Inga's Skin & Body Care .....	11	The Well of Roswell .....	11
Gapin Institute .....	33	The Writing Doctor .....	16
KnoWEwell/Natural Awakenings .....	29	Theological Institute of Transpersonal	
Linda Minnick Consulting .....	17	Psychology .....	13
Lisa Watson .....	17	Tori McGee .....	10
Manifest Wellness Spa .....	06	Trish Ahjel Roberts .....	24
Marcelle Pick .....	31	Wel-Liv .....	24
Mindy Roberts .....	02	Wellspring Dental .....	19
MOON Organics .....	21	Wisteria & Willow .....	04
Naturally Healthy .....	19	Wonderful Wizards of Raw .....	03
Nina Ross Hair .....	21		

COVER PHOTO CREDIT

The three Black holistic practitioners featured on our cover are, from left to right, Mark Armstrong, Dr. Serena Satcher and Stephen Tates.

Photo credits go to Jason Dennard; this is his seventh cover shoot for us. The location is the Chattahoochee Nature Center on Willeo Road in Roswell.

Jason's website: [jasondennardphotography.pixieset.com](http://jasondennardphotography.pixieset.com)  
Email: [jasondennardphoto@gmail.com](mailto:jasondennardphoto@gmail.com).



Jason Dennard Photography

**CORRECTIONS:** Last month's news brief about ChantLanta incorrectly printed the phone number to find out about volunteer opportunities. The correct number is 770-337-9486. It also failed to mention that access to music in the sanctuary in the afternoon on September 9 is free.

*Natural Awakenings* is a network of natural lifestyle magazine publishers empowering local communities with knowledge, resources and connections to lead healthier lives on a healthy planet.

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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Celebrating

Atlanta's Black Holistic Healers and the 10th Wonderful Wizards of Raw



Stephen Tates, Mark Armstrong and Dr. Serena Satcher [Photos in this article: Jason Dennard]

Welcome to our second annual Juneteenth issue and our fourth annual issue that focuses on a holistic health concern within the African American community.

As we prepared this edition, the biggest question had to do with selecting the healers to highlight, for Atlanta has no shortage of Black holistic healers. The process started with us sending out an email to some 70 Black holistic business owners asking for their nominations. But truth be told, the first person we chose had been selected in September 2019 when we held a focus group of our Black customers at the time. One of the questions I asked was, "Who are the Black holistic healers in Atlanta that *Natural Awakenings* should know about?" We had nine or 10 customers that night, and the large majority—six or seven of them—immediately brought up Mark Armstrong, an energy healer who established his business nearly a quarter of a century earlier. Not surprisingly, he garnered the highest number of nominations from the responses we received from Black business owners.

The process of selecting Stephen Tates and Dr. Serena Satcher was not quite as straightforward as Mark Armstrong's nomination was; the process entailed many phone calls to consult about the background and reputation of the 20 or so

nominees we received. In the end, I feel we arrived at an excellent collection of healers!

One thing that is particularly striking about this group and the group of nominees as a whole is the diversity in their areas of expertise. I expected most nominees would be functional/integrative medicine practitioners, acupuncturists, chiropractors or naturopaths. I kind of missed herbalists—and Stephen Tates is an herbalist—Ayurvedic practitioners and medical doctors who also lean heavily toward the holistic. We even received nominations for a cardiologist and heart surgeon!

In any case, I hope y'all enjoy this fourth offering of focused editorial on Black holistic health in Atlanta. We introduce this with only one small regret, which is that we are not able to offer the traditional full-cover photo treatment. Damn Mercury retrograde! The storage card in photographer Jason Dennard's camera got corrupted and all of the large, high-resolution photo files were lost.

Somewhat coincidentally, we offer an additional article appropriate to Juneteenth: coverage of the 10th anniversary of The Wonderful Wizards of Raw. This celebration of raw food is produced by Tassili's Raw Reality Café in the West End and is always held during the first weekend of June. It's "some-what" coincidentally only because this is the 10th year, not because Tassili Maat, founder

and owner of the cafe and the festival, chose the month of June because of Juneteenth—well before Juneteenth celebrations became as popular as they are now.

But that's not too surprising because Maat has repeatedly demonstrated her respect for her ancestors through the inclusion of the Libation ceremony that now kicks off The Wonderful Wizards of Raw weekend. What is less well known is her direct family link to the event that started it all.

One of Maat's female ancestors seven generations ago was a slave on a plantation outside of Houston in what is now Dayton, Texas. When she learned of the Emancipation Proclamation, the woman was overjoyed, packed up her belongings, and prepared to depart with her four half-white sons whose father was the plantation master. When the day came to leave, the master asked her not to leave, but she declined his request. Enraged, he grabbed a tree branch and killed her with a blow to the head.

I cringed when Tassili told me this story. To think of this woman being set free and yet not able to enjoy even a moment of freedom—I find myself without words. And for the attitude and mentality behind that murder to persist to this day—even encouraged and promoted by prominent politicians—it's easy to be full of despair, hopelessness and rage.

That people like Tassili exist—people who preach love, promote informed independence and embody positivity and hope in the face of hate—is a miracle and a blessing. So let us all celebrate 10 years of The Wonderful Wizards of Raw, a festival that not only builds community but speaks to MLK's beloved community, where there is justice for all people. May that day come soon. 🙏

*Disclosure: Natural Awakenings is and has been a sponsor of The Wonderful Wizards of Raw since 2019.*



*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.*



# Taylor Wilshire in Atlanta for SOMA Experience

Taylor Wilshire of La Jolla, California, will present The Kalki Soma Deeksha Experience on June 17 to share what she describes as a “shortcut to living more permanently in higher consciousness.” Wilshire is CEO of Wilshire Foundation and works closely with the U.N.’s 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, a blueprint for addressing poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation and more.

Wilshire presents a process called SOMA, in which “mystical substances are infused into water and made available for anyone seeking heightened states of living,” according to event producer Bhimi Cayce. It is “experienced as a ‘shortcut’ to living more permanently in higher consciousness. Beyond the mind’s comprehension, this upgrade is coming to support people shifting and transforming their consciousness as we are moving into the Golden Age.”



The results are instantaneous, says Cayce. “One feels the upliftment and expansion right after drinking this blessed water. Worldly and spiritual changes happen, as well as physical healing, resolution of problems, insights into one’s life and an extraordinary connection with the Divine.”

Everyone is welcome. “What is so incredibly magical about The Soma Deeksha Experience is that it has never been done before. It’s open to everyone. No matter what belief, faith or religion one has, their relationship with the Divine is heightened and more strongly experienced.”

The cost to attend is \$78. The event will take place from 1:30 to 3 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, located at 2650 N. Druid Hills Rd. in Atlanta.

For more information, visit [SomaExperience.com](http://SomaExperience.com) and to register go to [TicketTailor.com/Events/WilshireFoundation/899691](http://TicketTailor.com/Events/WilshireFoundation/899691).

# Dirty South Yoga Fest RETURNS IN AUGUST

The Dirty South Yoga Fest, Atlanta’s only locally-produced yoga festival, will be held from August 25 to 27. This publication had previously reported that the festival would occur in March, but plans were changed.

As in recent years, the Saturday and Sunday—August 26 and 27—sessions will take place at the Loudermilk Center in downtown Atlanta. The location of Friday night’s opening session and celebration has yet to be announced.

Tickets will go on sale May 25, and early-bird pricing will be available until mid-July. The cost of tickets to Friday night’s opening party is \$35. A one-day pass is \$99, a two-day pass is \$179, and access to all three days of the festival costs \$199. Festival founder and director Jessica Murphy is planning to post the schedule of classes on the festival’s website—[DirtySouthYogaFest.com](http://DirtySouthYogaFest.com)—in the first half of June.

Murphy says putting on this year’s festival, the first since 2019,



Photo: Kelly Marie Truitt



feels “almost like starting from scratch; a lot of momentum has been lost.” But she’s excited to be back, saying that the timing feels right. “From what I can tell, people are excited about getting back together. I’ve been periodically asked about when the festival will be coming back.”

Motivated by the idea of building community, Murphy believes that “community is the intangible element behind Dirty South Yoga Fest. For instance, someone messaged me to tell me that her best friend met her husband there.”

The festival is seeking yoga studios and other companies who want to sponsor the event and partner with them as well as vendors to offer their products and services there. For more information, visit [DirtySouthYogaFest.com](http://DirtySouthYogaFest.com).

Disclosure: *Natural Awakenings* is a sponsor of the Dirty South Yoga Fest.

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# Wonderful Wizards of Raw

## TEN YEARS CELEBRATING RAW FOOD

by Noah Chen

Live music and dancing. Entertaining and educational speakers. Vendors selling intriguing wares. And some of the tastiest and healthiest raw food in the city. These ingredients make up the Wonderful Wizards of Raw, a raw food extravaganza held the first weekend of June, now in its 10th year.

Hosted by Tassili's Raw Reality Café, a raw food restaurant in the West End, the celebratory festival has educated and satiated curious minds and hungry stomachs with 100 percent raw and vegan foods. A top priority for Tassili Ma'at, the event's creator and founder/owner of the café, was to spotlight raw food chefs and educate the public on the health benefits of their cuisine.

"The festival came about from my desire to create a fun and safe place for raw food and aspiring raw food chefs to show their talents, their gifts for food," says Ma'at. Attendees can sample foods from the chefs and learn about their techniques. Ma'at also invites herbalists and health care providers to come as attendees, vendors or speakers.

Over the years, the event has grown from a single day to a sprawling four-day festival. For the past seven years, Ma'at has kicked off the festivities with a gathering called "The Libation" on the first Friday of June. Held at the Cascade Nature Preserve waterfall, it features singing, dancing and a special focus on what is meaningful.

### The Libation

"The Libation is about giving thanks," says Ma'at, clarifying that it has nothing to do with the connotation of consuming alcohol.



Artist Raury performing



Tassili [Photo: Hakim Wilson]

"We're choosing the spirits we want to work with. We don't want to work with random energy. We want to call forth those who honor Earth, those who have honored us, those who've gone before us, those who have left a legacy of health and well-being on the planet," says Ma'at. The goal, she says, is to have that energy carry over into the festival itself.

Those who have attended the Libation in the past say that it has been overwhelmingly successful at doing just that. "I felt like I was floating," says Nayeme Aya, a Wonderful Wizards of Raw vendor and Libation attendee. "I felt a real spiritual connection with nature and the ancestors," says Aya. "It was tranquil."

People from all walks of life are welcomed to and attend the festival. Surya Peterson, who has driven in from Tuskegee, Alabama, to attend the festival for the past two years, noticed something unique right from the beginning. "There are not only the food vendors, but the complete community is in attendance. The children and the adults, as well as the craftsmen, artists, booksellers and other vendors," says Peterson.

What keeps Peterson coming back, traveling all the way from Alabama? "To see the people and see how it's growing and to interact with people on the same path that I'm on, if you will," he says. "And to see the children and just to see how great the growth is," he adds.

### Raw Food Competition

The festival hosts a friendly raw food competition every year, with chefs pitting their top recipes against each other.

Larese Dockery, the owner of IAMOH Herbal, won the competition two years ago with an aphrodisiac—the theme for that year—sea moss gel seasoned with damiana, horny goat weed and cacao mix.

Dockery brings her herbal business to a variety of festivals and events but describes Wonderful Wizards of Raw as having a particularly strong cultural flavor. "This festival is more African American-centered and focuses on education, heritage and food," says Dockery. "Many of the other events are more mixed, where there really wasn't the education, there really wasn't the knowledge or the educational speakers they have."

This year, Ma'at is doubling down on the educational side of the festival. The fourth day of the festival, which Ma'at calls the "Indaba," a southern African term meaning "discussion," is dedicated to a sit-down conversation with event speakers Queen Afua and Makeda Dread, two African American icons of today's holistic health movement. Attendees can purchase tickets to the Indaba and sit down in conversation with the speakers. Ma'at's goal is to drive personal, intimate conversation around personal health and wellness.

Ma'at says she is proud of how the event has grown over the years. Not only has the number of days increased, but attendance has risen from a few hundred the first year to an estimated 1,500 last year. The number of chef stalls has increased from a small handful through the first few years to 12 booths. Ma'at explains they have limited space, but she has chosen to keep the festival in the backyard of Tassili's Raw Reality to maintain the close-knit, communal feeling of the experience. 🌱

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# Converting Food to Energy

## LEARNING HOW METABOLISM WORKS

by Linda Sechrist

**M**etabolism is the process by which the foods and drinks we consume are converted into energy. We may not notice the cellular mechanisms that transform fat and glucose into the oomph in our step, but when they start to wane, we definitely know something is wrong. We may feel lethargic and weak, our brains may get foggy or we may start putting on weight around the belly, with blood pressure, blood glucose and triglyceride levels on the rise. In most cases, modifying our diet is the most powerful way to regain vitality and get those biomarkers back on track.

“Metabolic imbalance occurs when the body stores fat but can’t access it or burn it as efficiently,” says Alan Christianson, a naturopathic physician and author of *The Metabolism Reset Diet: Repair Your Liver, Stop Storing Fat and Lose Weight Naturally*. “In one year, our bodies manage about 1 million calories in and out. We never get exactly what we need on any day, so we must be able to store and release energy in a healthy fashion. However, people get better at storing and poorer at releasing. This is a big part of gradual weight gain and accompanying fatigue.”

Christianson describes good metabolic health as having steady energy levels and maintaining a good body weight. “When there’s too little energy available and the body can’t make energy that well, I see symptoms of metabolic imbalance as mental fatigue and poor memory, less muscular endurance, less recovery from exercise, weight gain and resistance to weight loss,” he explains. “If not addressed, metabolic imbalance can develop into obesity, cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, insulin resistance, diabetes and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.”

According to Christianson, certain lifestyle choices can throw our metabolism out of balance, including the overconsumption of carbohydrates, processed foods and caffeine; frequent snacking and late-night meals; and poor sleep routines. Too much stress creates a hormonal cascade that promotes storing fat instead of using it.

James Forleo, a doctor of chiropractic and author of *Health Is Simple, Disease Is Complicated*, recommends the elimination of certain foods that wreak havoc on our

metabolism: “The inflammatory agents in much of the food consumed in the Standard American Diet—high-glycemic refined carbohydrates, high-fructose corn syrup and other sugars, and hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated fats—are the biggest offenders of metabolic health.”

### Correcting Liver Function

“The key mechanism to correct and maintain metabolic health is helping the liver to function well. Once corrected, it is not difficult to maintain metabolic health if people eat reasonably healthy,” Christianson advises. “The liver is the main site for storing the body’s fuel. It does this in the forms of glycogen and triglycerides. When things go wrong, there’s too much of one relative to the other. We need some glycogen, which comes from carbohydrates, to burn triglycerides—kind of like how you need kindling to burn a log. The problem is triglyceride buildup in the liver.”

Fixing the liver is the central focus of Christianson’s 28-day metabolism reset. “To correct a fatty liver, you need adequate protein and adequate nutrients, but a low enough amount of total carbohydrates and healthy fats,” he says. “You also need adequate levels of glucose, a simple carbohydrate that we get from the food we eat. My metabolism reset guides you in eating less refined and processed foods, and more real, nutritious food; pairing carbohydrates with protein; exercising; managing stress levels; and avoiding sugar.”

### Personalized Diet Plan and Nutritional Coaching

Metabolic Balance, a German-based company with certified nutrition coaches around the globe, helps people optimize their health with personalized diet plans and follow-up coaching sessions. “The program was created by Dr. Wolf Funck, a specialist in internal and nutritional medicine, whose research revealed that every human body can produce all the hormones and enzymes it needs for healthy metabolism. We need to give it the necessary nutrients with the right food, which is precisely what Metabolic Balance

## NEM LUI HUE (LEMONGRASS SKEWERS WITH PORK OR CHICKEN)

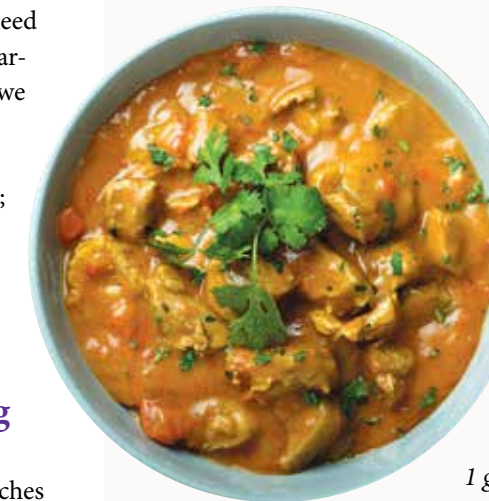
YIELD: 2 SERVINGS

1 lb ground pork or chicken  
1 Tbsp finely minced garlic  
1 Tbsp finely minced shallot  
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper  
12-15 stalks of lemongrass  
Salt to taste



Combine all ingredients, except the lemongrass stalks, in a bowl and mix with hands or a fork. Cover and place the mixture in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour (or overnight), allowing the flavors to develop.

Peel the outer layer of the lemongrass stalks. Rinse in water and dry. Take one handful of the ground mixture and wrap it around the end of a lemongrass stalk, gently pressing and molding the meat around the stalk. Repeat with the remaining meat and place on a baking sheet. Grill skewers over coals or on a gas grill for about 6 to 10 minutes until cooked through. Make sure to rub the grill with a paper towel soaked in vegetable oil to ensure the skewers don’t stick to the grate.



## CHICKEN CURRY

YIELD: 1 SERVING

1 cup vegetables (mushrooms, leeks, onion or cauliflower), chopped  
1 chicken breast, diced  
1 tsp turmeric  
1 tsp mild or medium curry powder  
1 tsp garam masala  
½ tsp ground cumin  
½ tsp ground ginger  
1 garlic clove  
Vegetable stock

If using cauliflower, parboil the florets and keep the water they were boiled in. Heat the spices in a dry pan until fragrant. Add garlic and vegetables and coat with spices. Add some oil and pour in some vegetable stock (or the cauliflower water) to deglaze the pan. Cook covered for a few minutes until spices and liquid are well combined and the vegetables are coated evenly. Add the diced chicken. Simmer until the chicken is cooked, stirring regularly. Add more vegetable stock or water for a thinner sauce. Serve with some toasted rye bread to soak up the juices.

Recipes and photos courtesy of Metabolic Balance



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does,” says Sylvia Egel, CEO and director of coaching and education.

“Based on an individual’s personal medical history and blood levels, we determine what substances the body lacks to produce all the enzymes and hormones necessary for their bodily functions,” she explains. “The personal roadmap recommends the right combination of foods to keep the various bodily functions in balance. The foods aren’t based on their caloric content, but rather on their essential components such as vitamins, minerals and trace elements, and the relationship between



Photo courtesy of Metabolic Balance

## ARUGULA SALAD WITH MANGO DRESSING

YIELD: 1 SERVING

- 1½ cup arugula
- ¼ cup olives, pitted
- 1 Tbsp chopped shallots
- 1 mango
- Balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

carbohydrates, fats and proteins.”

According to a 2010 study published in the *Journal of Nutrition and Metabolism*, participation in the Metabolic Balance program led to long-term health improvements due to a high degree of adherence by the participants. According to the researchers, “The emphasis of any dietary program should be set on both the aspect of nutrition as well as the aspect of motivation.”

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

Peel the mango, remove the flesh from the core and cut into small cubes. Purée the olives with balsamic vinegar, salt and pepper. Purée some of the mango cubes with the dressing and set aside the remainder. Add the shallots to the dressing. Wash, clean and dry the arugula. Mix in the dressing and sprinkle the remaining mango cubes on top. Pair this salad with any protein, such as a fish filet.

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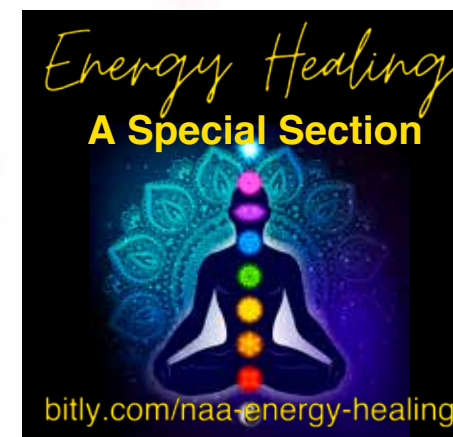
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# WHAT EVERY MAN WANTS

## SEXUAL VITALITY AT EVERY AGE

by Carrie Jackson

For men, sexual health is a key, but often overlooked, component of overall wellness. A man in optimal physical shape is able to fully enjoy and participate in sexual activity with an active libido and the ability to sustain an erection. Poor sexual health can lead to depression, prostate cancer, erectile dysfunction and other troublesome symptoms and conditions.

Fortunately, male sexual function is better understood medically than ever before, and it is more common for men to talk

with their doctors and other professionals about topics that seemed taboo not that long ago. New technology is making it easier to diagnose and treat common problems, and it is widely understood that physical, neurological, hormonal, interpersonal and mental factors all play into sexual wellness. By taking a proactive and holistic approach to their overall wellness, men can enjoy a robust sex drive and performance long into their later years.

### Maintaining Libido and Energy

Eric Plasker, a licensed chiropractor and author of *The 100 Year Lifestyle*, attests that sexual health does not have to decline with age, and men can proactively counter that myth with mindful lifestyle choices. “If you’re aging in a healthy manner, your libido does not have to decline. By taking part in activities you find fulfilling and nurturing your mind, body and spirit, your sexual energy can stay naturally high,” Plasker explains.

He recommends that people take an energy inventory to assess which activities and lifestyle choices are serving them. “Make a list of all the things you do that help you gain energy and those that drain your energy. This includes the food you eat, hobbies, habits, even people you spend time with. Then see how you can turn the drainers into gainers. For example, if driving in traffic makes you angry, put on relaxing music and do deep breathing exercises to shift yourself into a more positive state. These shifts will make you more energetic, stronger, more passionate and present with your partners, and you’ll have more energy to be sexual and loving,” he says.

Sexual health depends on a healthy nervous system, and maintaining a balanced flow of hormones and neurotransmitters is essential for proper neurological function. According to Plasker, disease, inactivity and inflammation—especially in the lumbar spine and sacroiliac joints—can cause a communication breakdown.

“Blockages in the nervous system flow can cause disruption to the sexual organs and lead to a compromised libido,” he explains. “Chiropractic adjustments, combined with regular exercise, will help raise cortisol, reduce stress and open up these pathways in the body. I recommend that patients find an activity they enjoy, such as swimming or tennis, so it becomes an enjoyable part of their routine,” Plasker says.

### Optimizing Hormones

According to Tracy Gapin, a board-certified urologist in Sarasota, Florida, strong sexual health and desire is a window to overall health. He helps patients reach their sexual potential with a combination of science-based medicine and holistic practices. “The body is one connected system, and great sexual function is an indication that your body is optimized,” he advises.

While testosterone is widely known to affect sex drive, Gapin looks at the interplay of a variety of other hormones, too. Hormone optimization, testosterone therapy and peptide therapy, which utilizes the body’s own amino acids to increase hormone levels, are non-invasive outpatient tools that men can use to analyze and optimize their sex drive.

“The body produces over 50 hormones, which all contribute to regulating biological processes,” he explains. “Low testosterone can lead to weight gain, anxiety, erectile dysfunction and other serious health issues, including diabetes, obesity, metabolic syndrome, osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease. Men want to optimize their thyroid and DHT [dihydrotestosterone] levels, both of which can lower the sex drive when compromised. Vitamin D

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helps regulate the gut, which controls the health of the entire body. Neurotransmitters, which help release feel-good endorphins such as serotonin and dopamine, are made in the gut and can affect depression, anxiety and other issues that lower libido.”

Gapin stresses that it is more important to think about “optimal” levels of hormones instead of “normal” ranges and encourages patients to move beyond the basic blood tests to assess their health. “Besides sex drive, testosterone also affects cardiovascular health, muscle and bone strength, fat mass, cognitive health and even longevity, so it’s important to be aware of your own levels,” he says. “Every man is different, and the range in which you feel and perform your best is what’s right for you. With medical advice constantly changing, it can be a challenge to keep track of all the recommended tests. DNA testing, epigenetic age assessments, advanced lipid panels, inflammation markers and thyroid testing can all give insight to how the body is functioning as a whole.”

### Treating Prostate Cancer

According to the American Cancer Society, one in eight men in the United States will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetime. It is, in fact, the most common cancer among American men. Prostate cancer is more likely to develop in older men and in non-Hispanic Black men. About six cases in 10 are diagnosed in men that are 65 or older, and it is rare in men under 40.

Gapin asserts that preventative and proactive lifestyle choices can drastically reduce the risk. “New, non-invasive MRI treatments are making it easier to detect and diagnose cancer earlier by highlighting suspicious areas in the prostate and targeting them for biopsy,” he explains, adding that men diagnosed with prostate cancer have a number of treatment options.

“Traditionally, patients would have the prostate removed and undergo radiation. However, these procedures come with a list of disturbing side effects. A newer, FDA-approved treatment called high-

intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) is a non-invasive procedure that eradicates prostate cancer,” Gapin notes. “HIFU is an outpatient procedure with excellent oncologic outcomes, minimal side effects and quick recovery times.”

### Incorporating Lifestyle Solutions

As an osteopathic doctor and integrative medicine practitioner at the Masley Optimal Health Center, in St. Petersburg, Florida, Tarin Forbes looks at the root causes of disease and dysfunction. She, too, considers sexual health an integral component of overall wellness and gives patients the tools to achieve their desired sexual potential. “While every person is different, optimal sexual health usually means that men wake up with a morning erection, desire intercourse on a daily basis and can reach an erection without stimulation or genital contact,” she remarks.

Making mindful choices that prioritize nutrition will naturally improve sexual health. “Nourish yourself with a whole food, plant-based diet rich in nutrients, including nitrate-rich foods and foods rich in vitamin C and folate, which boost nitric oxide, the main compound that increases blood flow,” Forbes says. “Beans, citrus fruits, beets, celery, cruciferous vegetables and leafy greens boost nitric oxide or its bioavailability to improve blood flow. While getting nutrition from food is ideal, supplements such as zinc, magnesium, vitamin D and boron can help regulate sex hormones. Avoid certain medications, including over-the-counter medicine such as NSAIDs [non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs] like Advil, acid blockers and even mouthwash, which blocks nitric oxide.”

Forbes also recommends engaging in high-intensity exercises and weight resistance that help increase testosterone and blood flow to the penis. Reducing environmental toxins is another important step, she notes, as plastics, pesticides and other chemicals can rob men of their testosterone, which not only affects blood flow but also libido.

Forbes cautions that while erectile dysfunction drugs work in the short-term,

they can produce unwanted consequences. “Viagra does work to help men achieve an erection by stimulating blood flow to the penis. However, it can cause troublesome side effects including headaches, vision problems and nasal congestion. Non-pharmaceutical alternatives can provide good results without undesirable repercussions. Low-intensity shock wave therapy, a non-invasive outpatient procedure, uses targeted sound waves to improve blood flow to the penis and can be done once or in a series of treatments. Platelet-rich plasma injections use the patient’s own plasma to stimulate new tissue growth in the penis, which can lead to larger and more frequent erections,” she explains.

Forbes says that by having an open dialogue with their medical professionals and exploring holistic treatments, men at any age can feel sexier and more energetic than ever. “Talk about your concerns with your doctor, who may offer referrals to other specialists until the issue is solved. A physical therapist can teach men to strengthen their pelvic floor with Kegels and other exercises. Sexual therapists help men work through mental and psychological issues, which can be as debilitating as physical ones. A psychologist can offer tools for managing depression and anxiety, both of which can contribute to sexual dysfunction, including low libido and performance anxiety,” she says, noting that if a man does not feel comfortable talking with their doctor, it may be time to find a new one.

Many factors contribute to sexual health, and every man’s needs and desires are different. By addressing physical, hormonal, neurological and mental wellness with a combination of conventional and holistic treatments, men can experience sexual performance and enjoyment at any age. “There’s more awareness than ever before about sexual health, and men don’t have to compromise this integral part of their overall wellness,” says Forbes.

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

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# Three Black Holistic Healing Superstars Make the Rounds

by Trish Ahjel Roberts

Every year since 2019, we have written a cover story that highlights a holistic health concern specific to the African American community. This year, we wanted to spotlight a few of Atlanta's most popular and esteemed Black holistic health practitioners. After asking for nominations from more than 70 Black business owners in the Atlanta area, we narrowed the field to Mark Armstrong, Dr. Selena Satcher and Stephen Tates. Learn about their unique and multi-faceted approaches to helping people get and stay healthy.

**H**ave you ever visited a holistic doctor? Unlike traditional Western medicine, which seems to the body as a collection of parts, holistic medicine practitioners seek to heal the body, mind and spirit. In other words, they treat the whole person. There are many kinds of holistic doctors with a variety of credentials, techniques and modalities. Holistic doctors often reach back to ancient lessons. According to Britannica's *History of Medicine*, "Primitive physicians showed their wisdom by treating the whole person, soul as well as body." Holistic doctors are coming full circle to the wisdom of history. There are many types of practitioners; here are a few common classifications.

## Types of Holistic Doctors

**NATUROPATHIC DOCTORS.** According to the Natural Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, naturopathic medicine, also known as naturopathy, is practiced in the United States by medical doctors, naturopathic doctors (NDs), traditional naturopaths, and other healthcare providers. Naturopathic practitioners use many different treatment approaches, which might include stress management, lifestyle changes, herbs and supplements, homeopathy, exercise, psychotherapy and more. Education and licensing for NDs can differ, but they traditionally complete a four-year graduate program and pass a licensing exam.

**INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE DOCTORS.** According to the Mayo Clinic, integrative medicine offers services that are not



Stephen Tates, Dr. Serena Satcher and Mark Armstrong  
[Photos in this article: Jason Dennard]

part of conventional approaches, including massage, yoga, acupuncture, dietary supplements, meditation and wellness coaching. As with NDs, there's no single path to becoming an integrated medicine doctor; it is often an added credential to a traditional medical doctor (MD), doctor of osteopathy (DO), doctor of chiropractic (DC), or ND. DOs are licensed medical doctors with special training in manually manipulating the musculoskeletal system. DCs are trained to care for the neuromusculoskeletal system, including bones, nerves, tendons, muscles and ligaments.

**FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE DOCTORS.** According to the Institute for Functional Medicine, functional medicine is a biology-based approach that seeks to address the root cause of diseases. It takes an individualized approach incorporat-

ing research in genomics, epigenetics and nutrition science. It is often an additional credential for an MD or DO. According to the Cleveland Clinic, functional medicine providers look for the root cause of illness, including triggers such as stress, poor nutrition, allergens, genetics, toxins and the microbiome—the bacteria living in our guts and on our bodies. Once these triggers are identified, a treatment plan might include nutrition, exercise and sleep changes, as well as plans to address stress in one's life.

In addition to these types of doctors, acupuncturists, practitioners of Traditional Chinese Medicine and many others can be considered holistic doctors. In general, holistic medicine isn't used instead of traditional medical care but as a complement to it.





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## The Healers

Atlanta is home to many holistic doctors. The following are three preeminent local practitioners who are on a mission to improve the health of mind, body and spirit.



**MARK ARMSTRONG, NATUROPATHIC PRACTITIONER**, is a naturopathic doctor and energy medicine practitioner and the founder of the Ahimki Center for Wholeness in Roswell. He grew up in California and began his health journey as a child suffering from asthma. His grandfather was his first holistic health teacher. “[He] took me off all those inhalers and just put me on some basic [diet to] get rid of the yeast, get rid of the fungus in my body, get rid of the dairy, get rid of the corn and gluten. And I got well.”

Armstrong went further to clear his own psoriasis and acne. When he was introduced to the popular herb and holistic health book, *Back to Eden* by Jethro Kloss, it became his “Bible.” He entered the University of California at Santa Barbara as a pre-med student and quickly realized he wanted to do holistic medicine. He continued his studies at the California Acupuncture Institute, the Polarity Institute, and the Institute of Holistic Studies and obtained a degree in naturopathic medicine from Clayton College of Natural Health. Armstrong has studied a wide range of paths and modalities, including epigenetics and iridology. In the 1980s, he opened his first herb store in the Atlanta area.

Armstrong says his ideal patients are those that want to expand their consciousness. “I want to educate you and empower you so that you can change your life. So that you can heal your life. I am the facilitator. I’m the helper. When people want help or support or to be empowered, it’s a match. It’s a perfect match.” He begins by assessing their situation and identifying their preferred condition and provides recommended treatment and action steps to make the transition to improved health.

Through his work in epigenetics, which is the study of gene expression, Armstrong says, “I do something called the ‘soul constellation,’ which is the journey to heal the epigenetics nine generations in the past and nine generations in the future.” The top conditions that people visit him for are physical pain, hormonal imbalances and fibroids. He also treats many patients suffering from autoimmune disorders such as lupus and fibromyalgia, which are often related to food allergies. He can offer assessments virtually using birth information, height, weight and a passport-type photo. For in-person visits, he conducts a case study and uses neurological testing for bacteria, fungus, parasites and hormonal and emotional imbalances.

Armstrong shared about a patient that had been challenged by alcohol and drugs. “For many, many years, they were indulging in that reckless lifestyle. And after being treated and doing the soul constellation, they completely quit. They haven’t done drugs or

alcohol ever since. And now that person is an intern in my clinic, they got certified in NAADAC [National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors], which I have as well, and they assist others.”

That patient is Teresa Jackson. “I’ve been a client of [Armstrong] for 15 years,” says Jackson. “All he did was acupuncture, and he fixed my sciatica problem—in just one session.” Armstrong used acupuncture and mayo fascial release (MFR) to rid Jackson of her back pain, and he did the soul constellation, which resolved her alcoholism. He also used specialized equipment to treat her. Says Jackson, “When you find a good body mechanic, you want to keep them, just like a car mechanic.”

When asked for his tips for optimal health, Armstrong said, “Have a spiritual connection. So, spiritual first. Then, cultivate the physical. We have to build the energy with qigong, tai chi, yoga. We don’t have to tear our bodies down. We have to cultivate and build energy through exercise, diet, food, good thoughts, prayer.” He also recommends a plant-based diet, plenty of water and a life of balance.



**SERENA SATCHER, MD**, is an integrative and functional medicine doctor in Roswell. She was born in Montgomery, Alabama, and grew up in one of just two Black families in Corvallis, Oregon. Satcher earned her medical degree from Meharry Medical College, a historically Black college in Nashville, Tennessee. She is certified in functional medicine by the Institute for Functional Medicine, the American Board of Integrative and Holistic Medicine, and the

Anti-Aging and Regenerative Medicine Board. She is also boarded in sports medicine as a subspecialty.

Satcher’s journey to holistic medicine began when she discovered she had fibroids. “I had a really big one. At that time, I was doing a triathlon, I was doing a marathon, and I had to stop in the middle of a race to go to the bathroom,” she says. She needed surgery. “I had to have it taken out because it was pressing on the bladder, which coincided with me learning more functional medicine and nutrition. I already had an interest in nutrition, but then I actually went and got formal training.”

With a few changes to her diet, she was able to shrink the tumors that couldn’t be removed surgically and resume her race training. It was the beginning of her path of sharing holistic wellness with her patients.

Many of Satcher’s patients are perimenopausal and postmenopausal women experiencing fibroids, hormonal and autoimmune issues, she says. They may come to her with eczema, allergies, thyroid or adrenal issues. Satcher begins with a virtual assessment and then invites patients into her office for laboratory tests, looking for deficiencies, food sensitivities, toxins and more. She treats patients with a wide variety of modalities, including nutritional biochemistry, hormonal balance, exercise, homeopathy, essential

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oils and thought field therapy. She can also write prescriptions for traditional medications and hormone therapy.

Satcher describes a patient whose thyroid gland was out of control and who was developing insulin resistance. She taught the patient to tune into her own body, use essential oils and learn meditation to take control of her thyroid. "I want people to be independent with their health."

Jane, an 80-year-old patient, says she had been seeing Satcher for 13 years. "She saved my life ... I had the best physical [exam] of my life ... I had 12 vials of blood taken, urine and stool and saliva—the whole nine yards—and the results were stunning." She learned she had high levels of inflammation and was advised to remove gluten from her diet. "My joints suddenly didn't hurt." Jane says she was prescribed a "natural thyroid pill" and high-quality supplements. "How many doctors—when you finish your visit—give you a hug? [Satcher] treats the whole person, and she doesn't just treat the body. And that to me is so powerful."

Satcher's tips for health include: "Work with a holistic doctor, primary care physician, and a body care person—like a chiropractor, massage therapist or energy person. Work with a 'mind person,' like a psychologist or a tapping practitioner, and take care of your nutrition."



**STEPHEN TATES, NATURALIST/HERBALIST**, based in Sandy Springs, is a naturopathic doctor with a degree in integrative medicine. He is an herbalist, nutritionist and lifestyle consultant with more than 40 years of experience. He has also studied raw food, reflexology and Traditional Chinese Medicine.

As a child, Bates' parents thought something was wrong because he had chosen a plant-based diet. "Literally, they said I had a chemical imbalance because how can I not eat meat?" He has observed a vegan diet since the early 1970s and was mentored by the well-known vegetarian activist, civil rights leader and comedian Dick Gregory.

His relationship with Dick Gregory went "from mentor to student to colleague to friend to family over the decades." He studied at Boston University, Harvard University School of Nutrition and was mentored by herbalist Dr. John Moore and esteemed natural healer Ann Wigmore.

While many of his patients come to him as their main doctor, local physicians often refer patients to him to make sure their supplements don't interfere with their prescribed medicines. According to Bates, many patients show up with what he calls "the three blood disorders"—high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. "They might be overweight, they might have stress issues, sleep deprivation—all those types of things when they come."

About two-thirds of Bates' patients are severely constipated, and about 20 percent want support for a cancer diagnosis. He works with patients with HIV, lupus, multiple sclerosis, eczema, acne and just about any condition you can imagine. About one-third



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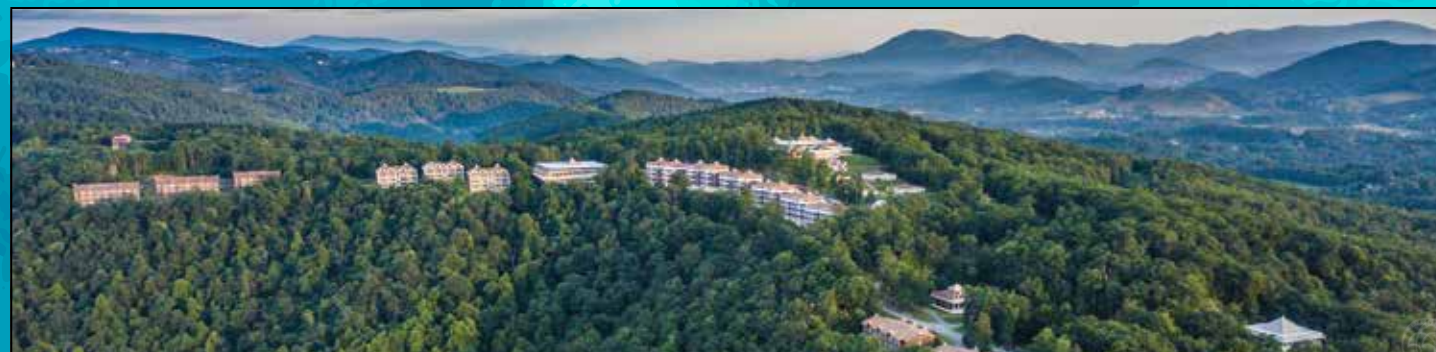
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of his patients deal with a high level of emotional issues. “Every thought you think affects every cell in your body.”

Tates shares the story of working with an elderly woman beset with anger. His advice was, “Get a life!” He says he gets people to write a list of things they used to like to do and things they want to do. “A bucket list means you plan to die,” he says, so instead, “make an empowering list.” By encouraging the woman to pursue her interest in horseback riding and to ride a horse for the first time—at the age of 81—her blood pressure soon dropped to within a healthy

range from what had been far outside healthy limits.

Retired psychologist Dr. R.V. Rogers has been a client and student of Tates since the 1980s. “Dr. Tates will first talk to me. He would examine [me], looking at my eyes, my tongue, my skin. I didn’t have to start off by telling him what was going on; he could tell me some of the things that he could see just from my appearance.” Tates taught Rogers how to change her diet and routine and how to use herbs to optimize her health. “I don’t call him a healer,” says Rogers, “I call him a person who has all the tools to help us to learn how to heal ourselves.”

Tates’ tips for staying healthy include, “Drink water, learn to breathe properly, get good sleep and exercise.” Tates is a big proponent of hydrotherapy, including swimming and ice water foot and body

baths to decrease inflammation. He recommends supplements and offers his own line of herbal tinctures and tonics.

### The Takeaway

In conjunction with traditional doctors, holistic health practitioners are valuable resources for healing chronic ailments of the mind, body and spirit. Black holistic doctors are making rounds in Atlanta, offering education and treatments to heal and empower the communities they serve.



*Trish Ahjel Roberts is a transformational coach, bestselling author, inspirational speaker and founder of Mind-Blowing Happiness coaching and Black Vegan Life events. Learn more at TrishAhjelRoberts.com.*

## Black Holistic Health Practitioners in Atlanta

### Clare Babino, MD, FCOG, ABIHM

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ClareBabinoMD.com

### Dee Doanes Davis

Ayurvedic practitioner  
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### Dominique Smith, MD, FCOG

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### Katherine Igah-Phillips, MD, MHA

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### Kemi Oluwakoya, ND, AADP, CNC

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### Mark Armstrong

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Ahimki Center for Wholeness  
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### Naveen Thomas, Holistic Psychiatrist

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### Nicole Peoples DO, ABIM, ABIHM, IFMCP

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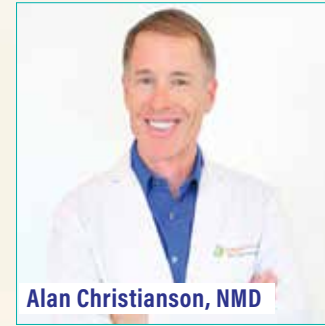
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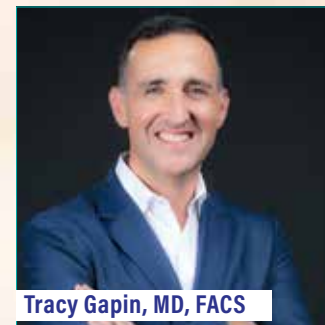
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# Straighten Up and Feel Right

## TIPS FOR GOOD POSTURE AND A HEALTHY SPINE

by Cristina Parker, PT, DPT



Standing up straight is not just something our parents remind us to do, it also happens to be good for our health. Posture describes the position of the body in space, but the realities of how we stand and move in day-to-day life are much more complex. Healthy postures encourage proper alignment of body structures, while unhealthy postures can lead to a host of issues, including muscle and joint pain, balance impairment and decreased mobility. Awareness of the body's proper static and dynamic position is essential to maintaining a healthy spine.

### The Spine and Its Role in Posture

The body's main support system is the spine, which consists of three sections. The cervical spine supports the weight of the head and connects it to the shoulders, enabling us to turn our heads from side to side as well as up and down. The thoracic spine stabilizes the rib cage, which protects the vital organs. The lumbar spine consists of thicker, more robust vertebrae, as they are the main load bearers and enable us to rotate our bodies and bend forward and to the side.

Muscle tightness or joint immobility can shift the spine out of its ideal positioning, causing postural dysfunction. A recent study published in the journal *Physical Therapy Rehabilitation Science* estimates that 66 percent of the population is living with forward head posture (FHP), a cervical spine dysfunction that occurs when the head moves forward in front of the body. FHP can lead to headaches, migraines and jaw pain. Thoracic kyphosis, a rounded upper back, reportedly impacts 20 to 50 percent of the population and impairs numerous functions, including digestion and breathing. The lumbar spine is at particularly high risk for joint disease as both lumbar muscle strength and pelvic mobility decrease in sedentary individuals. Low back and pelvic immobility are contributing factors for the estimated 103 million individuals worldwide that live with lumbar spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spinal canal that may cause pain or numbness in the legs.

### Three-Step Process to Take Control of Our Posture

#### STEP ONE: IDENTIFICATION

In her book *Rethink Your Position*, biomechanist Katy Bowman recommends that we pay attention to a few common signals the body sends out to alert us to an imbalanced weight distribution, including aches in the feet or low back and tension of the shoulders or neck. "Good alignment isn't about any one fixed position, but a healthy range of positions," she says. "By focusing less on memorizing postures and more on learning about load on parts of the body, you can optimize your positioning for many different activities."

Bowman recommends a quick and easy way to self-assess if a postural imbalance is present and, if so, to identify where the

imbalance begins: "The body's joints stack in a vertical line. You can use a plumb line to indicate where your parts are supposed to be. If you take a string with a weight at the end and drop it down from your shoulder, it should line up with the hip, knee and ankle on the way down."

#### STEP TWO: CORRECTION

Dr. Krista Burns, co-author of *The Posture Principles* and founder of the American Posture Institute, recommends a two-minute exercise routine, performed while standing against a wall, that addresses each segment of the spine. Repeat each exercise five times.

- 1. Neck retraction:** Push the head forward away from the wall as far as possible, then pull it back so the base of the skull contacts the wall. Keep the eyes parallel to the horizon, rather than looking up toward the sky.
- 2. Posture angel:** Stand with the back against the wall, elbows bent and tucked in close to the waist. Keeping the back of the hands against the wall, reach up as far as possible then slowly lower back to starting position. This movement, which is like making a snow angel while standing, should be felt between the shoulder blades when performed correctly.
- 3. Pelvic tilt:** Arch the back so there is a small space between the wall and the lower spine, then tuck in the tail, flattening the spine against the wall and closing that space. This exercise helps initiate movement into the lower joints.

#### STEP THREE: MAINTENANCE

The key to maintaining a healthy posture is frequent movement, which can include an hourly stretch break or a bi-hourly range-of-motion routine to move muscles and joints throughout the day. To make postural exercises a habit, physical therapist and integrative health coach Margie Bissinger recommends pairing an exercise routine with something that is already done multiple times a day—for example, mealtime. "People are busy, so it is hard to always dedicate that mental space to awareness of their head or back position," she states. "When they pair it with something they're routinely doing, it becomes a habit, and that is when the mental load of the task starts to go away."

*Cristina Parker holds a doctorate in physical therapy. She is a researcher, health content writer, educator and clinician specializing in neurologic disorders, limb-loss rehabilitation and adaptive sports techniques.*



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# Yoga Forever

## STARTING A PRACTICE AFTER 60 CAN BE JUST THE BEGINNING

by David Penn



Today's media gives the strong impression that yoga is meant for a particular person, one who is young, thin, vibrant and already flexible. Ads for big brands such as Lululemon and Under Armour showcase this concept. In promotions and commercials, it's rare to find a yoga practitioner that doesn't look like a 20-something athlete or model.

Fortunately, more people are recognizing how beneficial yoga can be for those well beyond their 20s. In an article published in *AARP Magazine*, Amy Wheeler, yoga professor at California State University at San Bernardino, writes, "It's important to start caring for your joints, to help maintain your independence and preserve your ability to perform daily activities as you get older—things like brushing your teeth, combing your hair, getting dressed."

Judi Bar, yoga program director at the Cleveland Clinic, a world-renowned multispecialty academic and medical center, explains, "Yoga can be accessible and attainable for anyone. Just remember to always listen to your body and find a class and an instructor that support you. I teach people who are 90 years old."

But where should golden-ager yogis start, and how can they start safely?

Many people find that a restorative yoga class fits the bill. Restorative yoga consists of a gentler practice with more time spent in each pose. It tends to be easier on the joints, and it allows passive stretching in poses for extended periods of time. Students find they can relax deeply into the poses, with more time on the ground in seated or lying positions than in other styles of yoga.

If restorative yoga doesn't resonate with the practitioner, many styles of yoga are taught throughout the metro Atlanta area. It's best to find a studio with a welcoming atmosphere and instructors that take the time to speak with students and address their concerns. Seniors can find a teacher who recognizes that the body is different at 60 than it is at 26. While it's not necessary to find a teacher who is a senior themselves, it's helpful to find one that

respects the concept that the body ages. Speak with the yoga teacher before committing to a class. Let the instructor know if there are issues with arthritis, knee or back pain or any other ailment. Ask the instructor if there are other seniors in the class and if there are any modifications or precautions to avoid aggravating any existing injury. Doing so can help set the stage for guidance in the class.

The extra equipment found at yoga studios is there to help. Yoga blocks, straps, blankets and more—referred to as yoga props—are there for the benefit of the student. Keep in mind that props are not training wheels; they are there to help the practitioner get the most out of their yoga practice. The yoga instructor should be able to demonstrate how to use props. For example, if a practitioner is not comfortable reaching the floor, they might use blocks for more support.

### Clarity, Inner Power and Freedom

Joanna Elkhoury, owner of Truth in Motion Yoga in Roswell, teaches classes daily at the studio. "They say yoga has a way of sneaking up on you, and becoming a yoga teacher has helped me commit to my daily practice while revealing a sense of clarity, inner power and freedom that I had never before experienced," she says. "Once I realized the profound impact that yoga has had on my life and the power that postures, breathing and meditation can have on our health, it was only natural that I wanted to share this knowledge with others and spread the benefits of yoga to the community and beyond."

Elkhoury has noticed an increase in the general public's awareness of the boon yoga can provide seniors. "In the past few years, there have been more adults over 60 walking into my yoga studio to try yoga for the first time. This is due to the growing interest and focus on self-care and healthy aging in the general population. It's also due to the increased recommendation of yoga by the medical community as part of preventative healthcare practices."

### Being Mindful and Staying Present

Sunisa Kim is a California transplant who has taught yoga in metro Atlanta since 2015. Teaching classes ranging from the relaxed yin and restorative classes to the often vigorous vinyasa flow, she sees heightened interest across all classes from the over-60 crowd. "I've been working with yoga practitioners that are around 60 and over on a daily basis. Often, they are so much more into yoga than the yoga students I see in their 30s and 40s. Some are so much stronger and have been practicing yoga for many years."

When it comes to older populations dealing with arthritis and injuries, Kim says it's important for the student to be aware of their limitations, and for the teacher to be able to assist the student when necessary. "Allow your yoga practice to be an inquiry of your body and with compassionate eyes. Be mindful, and stay present with your body. Go at your own pace, modify postures and use props like blocks, blankets and straps as much as each body needs."

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## Starting a Practice at 62

Sciatic nerve pain, or sciatica, is a common condition among seniors. According to Carefect Home Care Services, a Toronto-based company specializing in care for aged populations, people over the age of 50 have an increased risk due to their bones, nerves and muscles degenerating. The Mayo Clinic has stated that sciatica is caused by age-related changes in the spine. Six years ago, metro Atlanta yogi Donita

Crockett, 68, began her yoga journey to combat the constant pain of the ailment.

"I was suffering badly from sciatic nerve pain. It was unbearable—from my long commute and sitting at a desk for eight to 10 hours per day. Two weeks into yoga classes, and I stopped taking ibuprofen for sciatic pain. I could not believe it," says Crockett.

"Yoga has so many positives for me, posture, balance, breathing, stretching, centering your thoughts, lowering your blood pressure, helping sleep and calming your mind and body."

Beginning a yoga practice is an excellent way to pursue strength, balance, stability, flexibility and an improved sense of well-being. We can all be better for it, including those of us over 60. 🙏



David Penn, E-RYT 200, founded Sun Dragon Yoga studio in 2015. He offers private instruction at homes and businesses throughout metro Atlanta and offers classes online. Contact him at 313-303-0096.

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# Dr. Mark Hyman

## ON LIVING HEALTHY TO 100 AND BEYOND

by Sandra Yeyati



Photo by Masha Maltsava



Mark Hyman is a practicing family physician and an internationally recognized leader, bestselling author, speaker, educator and advocate in the field of functional medicine. He is the founder and director of The UltraWellness Center, founder and senior advisor for the Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine and board president for clinical affairs for The Institute for Functional Medicine. He is also the founder and chairman of the Food Fix Campaign, dedicated to transforming our food and agriculture system through policy change, and hosts The Doctor's Farmacy, a podcast with more than 150 million downloads. Hyman is a regular contributor to *CBS This Morning*, *Today*, *Good Morning America*, *The View*, *Fox* and *CNN*. His latest book, *Young Forever: The Secrets to Living Your Longest, Healthiest Life*, champions the latest science on healthy aging.

### How is the emerging science on longevity changing the way we view aging?

Many things we've come to accept as a normal part of getting older are not. Decrepitude, frailty, disease, diabetes, cancers, dementia—these are optional. We can't change chronological aging, but we can slow and reverse biological aging by influencing the hallmarks of aging, which are these underlying processes that go awry as we get older.

### What are the hallmarks of aging?

In my book I wrote about 10 hallmarks of aging, which are all part of one ecosystem of problems. They're not separate; they influence each other; and they're dynamic. It's things like inflammation, mitochondrial dysfunction, DNA damage, zombie cells, shortened telomeres, microbiome changes and epigenetic changes, which are changes in how our genes are expressed. They're all important, but the most important hallmark of aging is called deregulated nutrient sensing, which means how our body interacts with food and how that influences us for good or bad. Problems with nutrient sensing affect almost all the other hallmarks and make them worse.

### How can we address deregulated nutrient sensing?

We have built-in longevity pathways and over 3,000 survival genes, and we can activate this innate healing intelligence at any time. A major way to influence four of these pathways is through food. I call them longevity switches, which we need to learn how to regulate to make our health span equal our lifespan.

The first one is activated by too much sugar and starch, which drives too much insulin signaling, causing diabetes, pre-diabetes, cancer, dementia, heart disease or obesity. When insulin is over-expressed, it causes weight gain, fat storage, inflammation and lots of other problems.

The next one is mTOR [mammalian target of rapamycin], a pathway that makes new proteins and builds muscle, but gets overstimulated because of our constant

eating and snacking and eating before bed. mTOR needs to be inhibited periodically by intermittent fasting or time-restricted eating to allow autophagy to happen, which is like a recycling and repair crew that comes in at night and cleans up all the damaged proteins.

The other two pathways, sirtuins and AMPK [adenosine monophosphate-activated protein kinase], sense a lack of nutrients and switch on survival pathways. If we're constantly eating sugar and starch, then AMPK and sirtuins are overstimulated, and they're not given a break to activate these pathways.

### What is the role of exercise in longevity?

If it were a pill, exercise would basically fix everything. It's probably the most potent intervention there is, other than calorie restriction or fasting, and it works on many of the longevity pathways. The most important type of exercise is resistance training as you get older, because you need to build muscle. Without muscle, you become frail and dysfunctional.

Exercise influences our DNA stability; lengthens telomeres; preserves the genome; affects the proteins; regulates mTOR, AMPK and sirtuins; preserves mitochondrial function; prevents zombie cells; helps with stem cells; reduces inflammation, cardiovascular risk and diabetes; and it's also really important for becoming insulin sensitive.

### What is hormesis and how can it help with healthy aging?

Hormesis is the idea that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. The concept is not new. We know that exercise, for example, is a stress on the body, but it actually makes you rebound stronger. When you lift weights or you run, it's a stress, but you're getting thinner and stronger. There are other forms of hormesis that activate longevity pathways. Hot sauna therapy reduces your risk of cardiovascular mortality by 50 percent. Cold immersion therapy has many benefits, like increasing dopamine, activating brown fat and regulating metabolism. Fasting is a kind of hormesis,

and longer fasts—for a day, three days, a week—are very powerful.

### What role does finding community have in this quest for longevity?

The science is pretty clear that the body has innate systems that can be regulated by our thoughts. We now understand the mechanisms by which our social relationships and connections can influence our gene expression and everything from inflammation to insulin resistance to everything else, so building connection with others and building relationships and community is very important.

### What longevity strategies do you implement on a typical day?

A lot of this is just habit development and routine. This morning I worked out with my resistance bands for half an hour, took a steam shower and an ice bath, then had a longevity shake with goat whey, creatine, urolithin A and adaptogenic mushrooms. Then I took a walking meeting for an hour-and-a-half outside while I was on a call. Tonight, I plan to spend time with friends. I eat pretty simply most of the time. Last night, I had lamb chops, sweet potatoes, shiitake mushrooms, artichokes (which are a great prebiotic food) and some broccoli with lemon, garlic and olive oil. I take my supplements as well. So it's very simple, very easy. 🌱

Sandra Yeyati is the national editor of *Natural Awakenings*.



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

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

## SATURDAY, JUNE 3

**Flying Colors Butterfly Festival** – June 3-4. 9am-3pm, Sat; 12-5pm, Sun. Visit with live butterflies at the Butterfly Encounter. Meet with pollinator experts and educators. Take part in the Migration Game throughout the festival and learn about monarch migration. Enjoy tasty food and live entertainment. \$15/general, \$12/members, free/children 2 and under. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Registration required: [ChattNatureCenter.org](http://ChattNatureCenter.org).

**Free First Saturday** – 11am-12pm. Space limited; registration required. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

## SUNDAY, JUNE 4

**South Utoy Creek Invasive Plant Removal** – 9am-12pm. Volunteers help remove invasive plants such as English Ivy and Kudzu using their hands along with small hand tools like loppers and hand saws. For location & registration: [HandsOnAtlanta.org](http://HandsOnAtlanta.org).

**Tai Chi Workshop** – 10-11am. Taught with relatively slow movements, tai chi provides a safe, gradual way of improving flexibility and range of motion. \$20. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. Registration required: [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

## SATURDAY, JUNE 10

**Georgia Audubon Society Bird Walk** – 8-10am. All welcome. Free. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

## SUNDAY, JUNE 11

**Camp Confidence: Believe in You** – June 11-July 2 & July 9-30. 10:30am-12pm. For youth ages 5-13. The summer spiritual enrichment program offers 2, 4-wk sessions. Designed to build self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-confidence and character. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree

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## FRIDAY, JUNE 9

**Healing Circle** – 5-7pm. With David Stample. 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.

## SUNDAY, JUNE 11

**Change Your Interiors, Change Your Life with Feng Shui** – 2-3:30pm. With Roberta Grant. Join this informative, interactive and fun workshop to learn about the history, principles, Bagua map, The Five Elements, Ch'i Enhancers, clutter clearing and much more. Free.

## THURSDAY, JUNE 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/vickievenshealing](http://PayPal.me/vickievenshealing).

Corners. 770-441-0585. For more info & to pre-register, Leshey Williams: [Leshey@UnityAtl.org](mailto:Leshey@UnityAtl.org).

## FRIDAY, JUNE 16

**Trash Pick-Up in Grant Park** – 9-11am. For this workday, we will be focused solely on picking up trash. You'll use a trash grabber and bucket (provided) to pick up litter in the park. For location & registration: [HandsOnAtlanta.org](http://HandsOnAtlanta.org).

## MONDAY, JUNE 19

**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](http://TheWellOfRoswell.com).

## THURSDAY, JUNE 22

**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. [ChattNatureCenter.org](http://ChattNatureCenter.org).

## SATURDAY, JUNE 24

**Free Community Reiki & Wellness Event** – 10am-3pm. Offerings include reiki, acupressure, massage, yoga and other healing modalities. Includes guest speakers, a meditation room, meditation labyrinth, snacks and tea. Register for healing modalities; first come, first serve. Emory Presbyterian Church, 1886 N Decatur Rd NE, Atlanta. [Tinyurl.com/3u5285yz](http://Tinyurl.com/3u5285yz).

**Meditation 101: Learn to Meditate** – 1-3:30pm. Enjoy guided meditation and practical advice on how to meditate. Learn to induce physical and mental relaxation, develop peaceful and positive states of mind, and experience inner peace. Great for beginners, or those wishing to refresh their meditation practice. All welcome. \$15. Kadampa Meditation Center GA, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. [MeditationInGeorgia.org](http://MeditationInGeorgia.org).

## PLAN AHEAD

## SATURDAY, JULY 1

**Energy & Art Festival** – 11am-6pm. 1st & 3rd Sat/Sun thru Aug. Community gathering to enjoy the local talent on The Honey Pot Stage and connect with metaphysical practitioners in reiki, tarot and psychic mediumship. Can also purchase art from some of the most talented local artists in the Atlanta area and get all your summer crystals, charms, candles and jewelry from various local artisans. Free. Findley Plaza, Little Five Points, 1083 Euclid Ave, Atlanta. 678-327-9447. [EnergyAndArtFestival.com](http://EnergyAndArtFestival.com).

**Online: Transmission Meditation** – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA SE Region. Free. Via Eventbrite. Info: 770-302-2208 or [Info-SE@Share-International.us](mailto:Info-SE@Share-International.us). Register: [Tinyurl.com/mwhhh6rt](http://Tinyurl.com/mwhhh6rt).

## SUNDAY, JULY 9

**Camp Confidence: Believe in You** – July 9-30. 10:30am-12pm. For youth ages 5-13. Designed to build self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-confidence and character. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. For more info & to pre-register, Leshey Williams: [Leshey@UnityAtl.org](mailto:Leshey@UnityAtl.org).

The quality, not the longevity,  
of one's life is what is  
important.

~Martin Luther King, Jr.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Second Sunday Sober Bike Ride** – 10:30am. 2nd Sun. Brings together people from all walks of sober living who are seeking fun and active ways to connect with likeminded people. BTA Bicycle Tours of Atlanta will provide a bike at no charge if needed. Bicycle Tours of Atlanta, 659 Auburn Ave NE, Atlanta. Register: [Tinyurl.com/yjzutj4](http://Tinyurl.com/yjzutj4).

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

**Unity Atlanta Church Sunday Services** – 11am. Attend in-person or watch via live stream. Nursery service available 10am-12:30pm. 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. [UnityAtl.org](http://UnityAtl.org).

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

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

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

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

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

## Mondays

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

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

## Tuesdays

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

**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](http://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](http://Meetup.com/Twin-Hearts-Meditation).

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

## Wednesdays

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

**Zoom Check-In: Wellness Wednesdays** – 10am. Check in with your community during COVID-19 crisis. [slc-atlanta.org](http://slc-atlanta.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](http://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](http://Tinyurl.com/muwwanm9).

**Decatur Farmers Market** – Thru Nov 15. 4-7pm. First Baptist Church of Decatur, 308 Clairmont Ave, Decatur. 404-373-1653. [cfmatl.org/Decatur](http://cfmatl.org/Decatur).

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

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

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



Create your event listing at  
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Basic online listings are free.



## 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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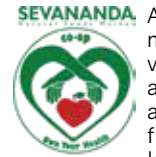


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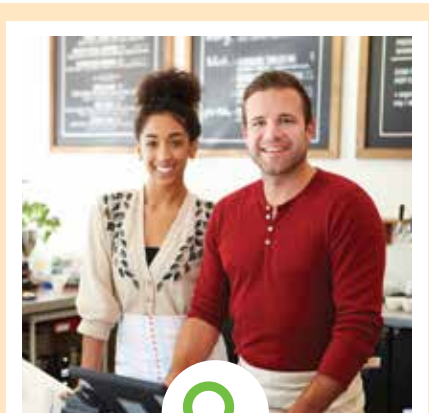


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# My Circle of Influence

by Linda Minnick

I found myself being snippy with my husband for no apparent reason recently. I don't experience it very often anymore, but it was lingering from one day to the next. After a day or two, even I wondered what the cause of my discontent was.

It was not like my poor husband—or anyone else—had committed any egregious offense. Life had been running smoothly up until then. However, I noticed that the longer I stayed in an agitated state, the bumpier my life was getting. All around me, little things began to go awry. It was an annoying mystery to me, and it was causing my entire energetic state to feel off-kilter. I was uncomfortable in my own skin.

A few days in, I felt I needed to get out of the house all day. I didn't notice a difference in my mood until early afternoon when I realized I was feeling good. I was enjoying the sunshine and the wind on my face. I was loving life again. What made the difference?

Then it occurred to me. Over those few days, my husband and I had been spending several hours a day in the car together, and he had the news running the entire time. Our dinners with friends had been peppered with discussions of world events and

the current state of the union. Talk of disaster, inflation, dishonesty and other negative news had been filling my airwaves and my home—and I had allowed myself to wallow in it instead of doing what I usually did: turn it off.

During every level of my self-realization studies, I've given great attention to recognizing the power of my words, the words I think, the words I say to myself and the words I say to others. As I work on my personal evolution, I constantly remind myself to be cognizant of what comes out of my mouth, and I believe my efforts over the years have helped me reframe many comments. But during these particular few days, I had unfortunately forgotten that I also have to be aware of what I listen to and what I allow to be said around me.

## The Power of Words

It was a perfect example of the power of words—ours and others'. I had allowed myself to absorb the negative energy accompanying the dialogues. It affected every part of me—my being, mood, thoughts, body and energy. It affected my reality and the reality of others.

When things are bright and sunny, and the world seems to be rotating perfectly on its axis, it's easy for me to think the best thoughts and live a happy life. But when I allow myself to put on the yoke of the broadcasted reality that appears to be void of peace or brotherhood, I forget there is more to me than just this 3D existence.

Luckily, like a hiccup in my thoughts, I am reminded by Spirit of who I truly am and who we truly are. I am reminded that the only person I can control is me, and the only thoughts I can have are mine. I am also reminded that I can live as I see fit, and buying into other people's reality is a choice.

This is important to me, reminding me I have a circle of influence that encompasses everyone I touch, directly or indirectly. Becoming aware of this helped me recognize that my thoughts, words and actions affect myself and others. In this circle of influence, I can change my world, the only world I am living in. In this circle of influence, I can see the beauty of life, the good of others and the love that flows between us.

My son called me the other day. He had just been notified that his work contract was being canceled unexpectedly. He was nervous and a bit fearful of how the turn of events would affect him. We talked for a little while, and I reminded him of who he truly is and the power he has within himself to create new opportunities. He said, "Thanks, Mom. I needed to hear that."

My world was better that day. It is conversations like these that remind me to turn off the radio. 🎧



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

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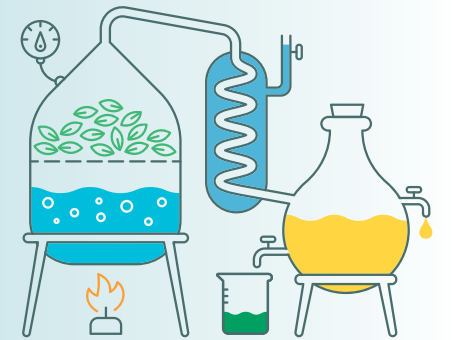
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