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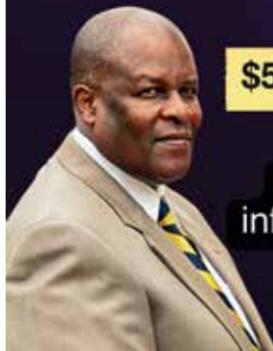
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IN THE BEGINNING

To commemorate my first seven years as publisher, and to continue the theme of “walking each other home,” we reach back to my first months to reprise stories of personal awakenings.

The first two are from my third issue. It featured then brand new author Tammy Billups, an energy healer and animal-human relationship expert, and actor Tara Ochs. I had just seen Tara perform her one-woman play about racism, *White Woman in Progress*, and distinctly remember thinking: people have to know about this. I then remembered: I own a magazine!

The third is from the incomparable Lucretia Robison, our first and longest-serving columnist for *Walking Each Other Home*. The link is to her first WEOH column.

Last is the story of Theresa Ward, who shared her story of awakening in front of an audience. To this day, one line of hers stays with me as the epitome of humility: “There’s no version of this (story) where I’m anything but the villain.”

Awakenings happen everyday. They happen to you. Embrace and evolve.



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Stephane Bidouze Canva

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We invite pitches, submissions letters to the editor, and contributions to our column *Walking Each Other Home*. Email our managing editor at diane@naAtlanta.com, or scan the QR code below.



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Instead of a headline, the very first words in my very first Letter from the Publisher consisted of these words from the late American spiritual leader Ram Dass: “When all is said and done, we’re all just walking each other home.”

I can hardly say these words without a lump forming in my throat. I’ve never come across an explanation of what Ram Dass meant by his words, and I’m sure people interpret it differently. I see two meanings coexisting simultaneously.

“When all is said and done,” of course, means “this is *the most* important thing,” but Ram Dass doesn’t say what “walking each other home” refers to. Still, it seems clear to me he’s talking about life.

The word “just” can be misleading. In this context, I believe “just” means “simple but not easy.” I also see two meanings in the phrase “walking each other home.” The first I interpret to mean that we help each other die well. I interpret the second meaning to convey that we help each other attain self-realization, if not in a close and supportive manner, then as members of the same species striving for the same thing.

In that first Letter from the Publisher, I wrote of personal awakenings, including this line: “Awakenings of the soul speak to our desire to develop greater love and compassion for all living beings equally, and an increasing understanding of, and connection with whatever it is we believe lies beyond our small, individual human selves.”

Mere Moments

I am moved and motivated by mere moments. I have had three transcendental experiences, moments in which I completely lost the sense of being a human being, including having a physical body. Indeed, language fails; to use the word “I” to describe what I felt introduces error. “I” is inherently dualistic, but what I felt was only One—there was no “other.” I was simultaneously the only thing that existed and the tiniest part of the only thing that existed, like a leaf on a tree or a drop of water in the ocean. Also, time did not exist.

Having experienced those moments decades ago for what couldn’t have been more than a total of five minutes, I knew then, as I know now, that no other moments have been more real; no other moments so directly revealed to me who we really are and the purpose of our short and precious lives.

Paramahansa Hariharananda, founder of Kriya Yoga International, said, “Conscious realization of humanity’s unity with the spirit is the goal of life and, consciously or unconsciously, every person tries to advance towards that end.” And Ryan Kurczak, founder of Kriya Yoga Online, says, “With thoughts and emotions silenced through spiritual practice, one can directly experience the truth of being pure infinite consciousness.”

Pranayama and the Eight Limbs

This magazine is all about awakening to the full potential of our bodies, minds, hearts and souls, and our three-part series on *pranayama* addresses all of these. But in particular, it addresses our capacity for self-realization.

Continued on page 14.

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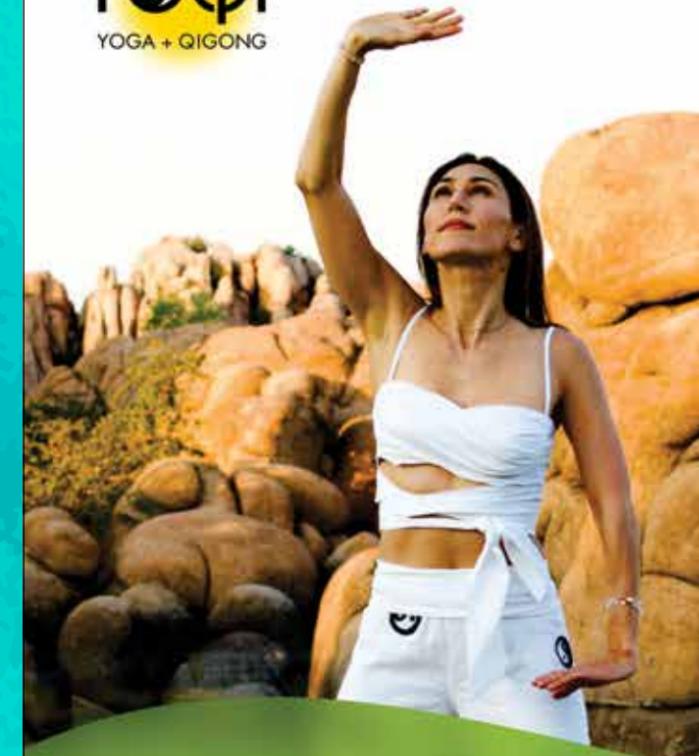
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Half-Day Women's Wellness Event

Glow Up, Girl: A Day of Wellness—a half-day workshop featuring three wellness-oriented panels—will be held March 16 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at The Lola in Atlanta. The event, sponsored by lululemon, takes place during International Women's Month. Panel topics include Self Love, Sex and Hormones, and Gut Health, and each panel will feature three panelists.

The event is hosted and moderated by Dr. Poorvi Chordia and Jess Pfeffer. Chordia is an internal medicine physician and co-founder of Herbs & Kettles, a premium tea company she founded with her husband. Pfeffer is the founder of an eponymous holistic event planning consultancy.

"I'm super excited to co-host this with a friend, Dr. Poorvi Chordia," says Pfeffer. "When she asked me to co-host and help plan this experience, I said yes right away! The conversations are going to be game-changers for women's everyday lives and will help them on their journey to optimal health. I envision this day filled with love and laughter and connections."

Additionally, local yoga teacher and kirtan artist Shonali Banerjee will provide a music and mantra session.

A portion of the event's proceeds will go to Raksha, an Atlanta nonprofit that has been serving the South Asian community with a variety of services since 1995. "The word 'raksha' means protection in Sanskrit," adds Pfeffer.

Admission is \$25. The Lola is located at 621 North Avenue, NE D-100, in Atlanta. For more information, visit EventCreate.com/e/glowupgirl.



Jess Pfeffer / Photo: Lizzy Johnston



Poorvi Chordia / Photo: Iain Bagwell

Georgia Organics CEO Steps Down After 20 Years

Alice Rolls, president and CEO of Georgia Organics for 20 years, has stepped down, and Alexis Chase became the new executive director in January. Chase previously served as executive director of Georgia Interfaith Power and Light and the Friendship Center of Atlanta.

Rolls oversaw significant growth of Georgia Organics during her time as CEO; throughout her tenure, the number of organic farms in Georgia doubled, and attendance at the organization's annual conference rose from 150 to 1,200 in 10 years. She also spearheaded the development of a regional conference for small farms, "SOWTH," which will have its inaugural gathering in February 2025 at Atlanta's Georgia World Congress Center.

"The people and partners of Georgia Organics have deeply shaped me and cemented an enduring respect for local and organic farmers who are at the root of public and environmental health," says Rolls. "No matter where I go, I will continue to champion them."

Meanwhile, Rebecca Williams, board chair of Georgia Organics, welcomes Chase. "We are thrilled to welcome Alexis Chase as our new executive director," says Williams. "Their passion for Georgia's agricultural and environmental well-being will aid a strong strategic vision that will undoubtedly contribute to the continued growth and impact of Georgia Organics."

Georgia Organics is a nonprofit that supports organic farmers and fosters a local food movement across the state. The organization was established in 1997, but its roots trace back to the 1950s when an association of growers recognized the power of collective action.

For more information, visit GeorgiaOrganics.org.



Alice Waters and Alice Rolls in 2020 by Bailey Garrot

Mary & Martha's 30th Anniversary Events Continue

Mary & Martha's Place continues to offer new events to celebrate its 30th anniversary.

Michael Begeman will lead a weekend workshop consisting of a free event titled "An Evening of Contemplation with Compline" and a workshop titled "Knowledge, Consciousness and Mystery: Evolving the Universe One Person at a Time."

The free event will take place March 8 from 7 to 8:30 p.m., and the workshop will take place March 9 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"While there are a number of models of consciousness we can draw upon, this workshop's exploration will be grounded in the work of Fr. Thomas Keating and Dr. David Hawkins," explains the workshop's promotional materials. "Both perspectives provide practical insight into understanding humanity as a whole and into ourselves as we personally engage our own transformational process."

Begeman, a self-styled "contemplative monk in the world," has studied with numerous contemplative thought leaders, has been a member of a school devoted to personal transformation, and serves as a board advisor, frequent teacher and guest minister at The Church of Conscious Harmony in Austin, Texas.



Michael Begeman



Members of Keltic Kudzu / Photo: Jaffa's Photography

Mary & Martha's Place will also offer a Celtic Celebration in the Beech Grove on April 13 from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. to salute "the interrelatedness, awakening and joy inherent in Celtic spirituality." Activities and games will fill the day, and live music will be provided by Keltic Kudzu, a Celtic/Southern fusion band. Attendees are invited to bring picnics and chairs, and admission is on a donation basis.

Cost: The March 8 event is free, and the March 9 event is priced on a sliding scale ranging from \$40 to \$65. Admission to the Celtic Celebration is on a donation basis. All events will be held at Mary & Martha's Place, located at 4393 Garmon Road NW in Atlanta. For more information, visit MaryAndMarthasPlace.com/special-events.

Alive! Expo Opens in May at New Location

Alive! Expo, Atlanta's largest natural products, green living and holistic wellness event now in its 19th year, will be held May 4 and 5. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. A portion of profits goes to Project Green, an Atlanta-based children's foundation.

After spending eight years at the Cobb Galleria Centre, the event is moving to the Gas South Convention Center located at 6400 Sugarloaf Parkway in Duluth.

Alive! Expo offers attendees the opportunity to meet and speak with company representatives, listen to live lectures, watch product demos, receive health screenings and discounts for future wellness check-ups, sample healthy food and natural products, and take home product samples.

"We want to inspire individuals to embrace a life of health, wellness and green living," says Patrycja Towns, founder and CEO of Alive! Expo. "The natural products industry is quickly changing with new products popping up daily and trusted brands being bought out by mass brand manufacturers. There is a lot of information out there, and a lot of it is opinion versus facts. We hope to curb the confusion and to pass on information that empowers people to make healthier choices moving forward."



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BeYOUtiful Skin & Health, the business entity of holistic esthetician Cher Clark, has moved 1.1 miles from 615 Colonial Park Drive, Suite 101, in Roswell, to 11111 Houze Road, Suite 108, in Roswell. *For more information, visit CherClark.com.*

Healworks, the chiropractic practice of Guy Gunter, has moved to 5180 Roswell Road, South Building, C-5 in Sandy Springs. The office didn't move far; its previous address was 4969 Roswell Road, Suite 100. *For more information, visit Healworks.net.*

Learn Your Value Everyday, the business entity of life coach and spiritual advisor Shae Anthony, has moved to 141 Magnum Street SW, Suite 105, in Atlanta. *For more information, visit LearnYourValue.com.*

Health Brief



Championing Opioid-Free Pain Management

According to the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, more than 130 Americans die each day from opioid-related drug overdoses. Recognizing that alternative pain management protocols are needed to curtail this ongoing national problem, the state of Minnesota has created a website to identify and promote evidence-based, non-opioid and non-pharmacological options that use complementary and integrative methods.



AndreyPopov from Getty Images Pro/CanvaPro

As reported in the *Journal of Integrative and Complementary Medicine*, NoPainMN.org was established to provide user-friendly information, including a description of each modality, video demonstrations of the treatments and links to published research and additional online resources. Minnesota's website covers a wide range of treatment options, such as acupuncture, chiropractic, psychology, rehabilitative therapies, movement classes like tai chi and qigong, and mind-body therapies such as biofeedback and music therapy. The website also includes a searchable list of more than 17,000 practitioners in the state.

Continued from page 9.

We have often pointed out that yoga in India is understood to be a spiritual science, not mere exercise. As expounded by the Indian sage Patanjali, pranayama is one of the eight limbs. It follows the *yamas*, *niyamas* and *asanas* and is followed by *pratyahara* (sense withdrawal), *dharana* (focused concentration), *dhyana* (meditative absorption) and *samadhi* (bliss, enlightenment). In this month's third and final article of our three-part series on pranayama, we address the meaning of the term in the context of the eight limbs.

The purpose of *kriya yoga*, as introduced to the West by Paramahansa Yogananda, the founder of Self-Realization Fellowship, "is to magnetize the spine by circulating life current lengthwise around it, and thereby withdrawing life current from the senses and involuntary organs and concentrating it in the spine." Those are the words of Yogananda himself. He adds: "The real meaning of Pranayama, according to Patanjali... is the gradual cessation of breathing, the discontinuance of inhalation and exhalation." In other words, pranayama leads to pratyahara.

In addition to kriya yoga, this month's article also highlights the pranayama techniques taught by two other Indian gurus and their organizations: Sadhguru's Isha Foundation, which teaches *Shambhavi Mahamudra*, and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living Foundation, which teaches *Sudarshan kriya*. While I have taken Art of Living's Happiness program, which imparts Sudarshan kriya, I am most familiar with kriya yoga.

And, while all the kriya organizations I am aware of teach kriya via initiation, instructions for kriya techniques can also easily be found in books and on the web. That said, for reasons I won't go into here, receiving initiation from a qualified master is highly recommended.

As this issue marks my seventh full year as publisher, we offer our single, most significant article that may help you find your way home to discover who you truly are beyond the owner of the temporary abode you call "body." I have always seen my job as walking you home. Allow me to close with the words that open Patanjali's Yoga Sutras:

Yoga is settling of the mind into silence.

When the mind has settled, we are established in our essential nature, which is unbounded consciousness.

Our essential nature is usually overshadowed by the activity of the mind. 🙏



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

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Body Awareness Studio

Celebrates 30 Years Serving Atlanta



The Body Awareness Studio in Roswell is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. The studio was founded by Leslie Clayton, who leads a team of instructors that teach Pilates and breath exercises. But 30 years ago, Clayton wasn't looking to start a Pilates studio. It happened by accident.

A Natural Evolution

At the time, Pilates was still fairly new to public consciousness, and Pilates equipment was hard to come by. "You couldn't purchase the equipment on your own," says Clayton. "For liability reasons, they did not sell the equipment to people unless they were in a Pilates teacher training program or if they were professional dancers. Dancers kind of knew how to use the equipment because it's similar to dance.

Clayton happened to be a ballet teacher, and a group of her students asked if she would be willing to get trained on the equipment and teach it to them. She said yes. "Then the studio evolved. It was a natural evolution because Pilates was becoming more popular; more and more people wanted to come and learn Pilates," says Clayton, who explains that she kept getting calls from people asking to use her reformer, a special piece of equipment used in Pilates that looks like a cross between a rowing machine and a weight bench.

The name "Body Awareness Studio" came from Clayton's first experience using a foam roller, an encounter she described as flooding her body with energy, giving her an intricate awareness of her spine and muscles. "It was a feeling I'd never felt before, and it was quite profound," she says. "And when I tried to come up with a name for the business, what I kept telling people was 'I just had more body awareness.'"

As far as she knew, Clayton was the only business in the city with access to a reformer, so the demand was high. She began by teaching out of a martial arts dojo and then bounced around from the dressing room of a fitness studio to a side room in a chiropractic office. However, in 1995, Ginger McLeod, a practitioner of Feldenkrais, an exercise therapy, invited her to work out of her building.

"I had no overhead," says Clayton as she describes how she was able to work rent-free initially. "I was invited to come to this place because she saw the value of Pilates. She almost wouldn't take no for an answer." The Body Awareness Studio has been based at that location—5549 Roswell Road NE—for the past 29 years.

Clayton asserts that a lot has changed since then. For one, her clients have become more diverse. "At first," she says, "it was mostly athletes, dancers and professionals who had to maintain a high degree of physical fitness." But over time, she noticed more people were coming to the practice out of curiosity or were there to pursue specific health benefits.

Customized Attention

Robyn Degnan is one such woman. Six years ago, Degnan had just undergone a series of four back surgeries to treat multiple herniated discs. Before the surgery, Degnan was a yoga practitioner,



Leslie Clayton

but the movements became too painful. That's when she decided to sign up for one of Clayton's classes.

"I used to be in pain a lot," says Degnan. "And since I've been doing Pilates, I haven't injured my back and I don't have that pain all the time anymore." With the help of Pilates, Degnan's back has strengthened to the point where it supports her spine and mitigates the pain she used to feel.

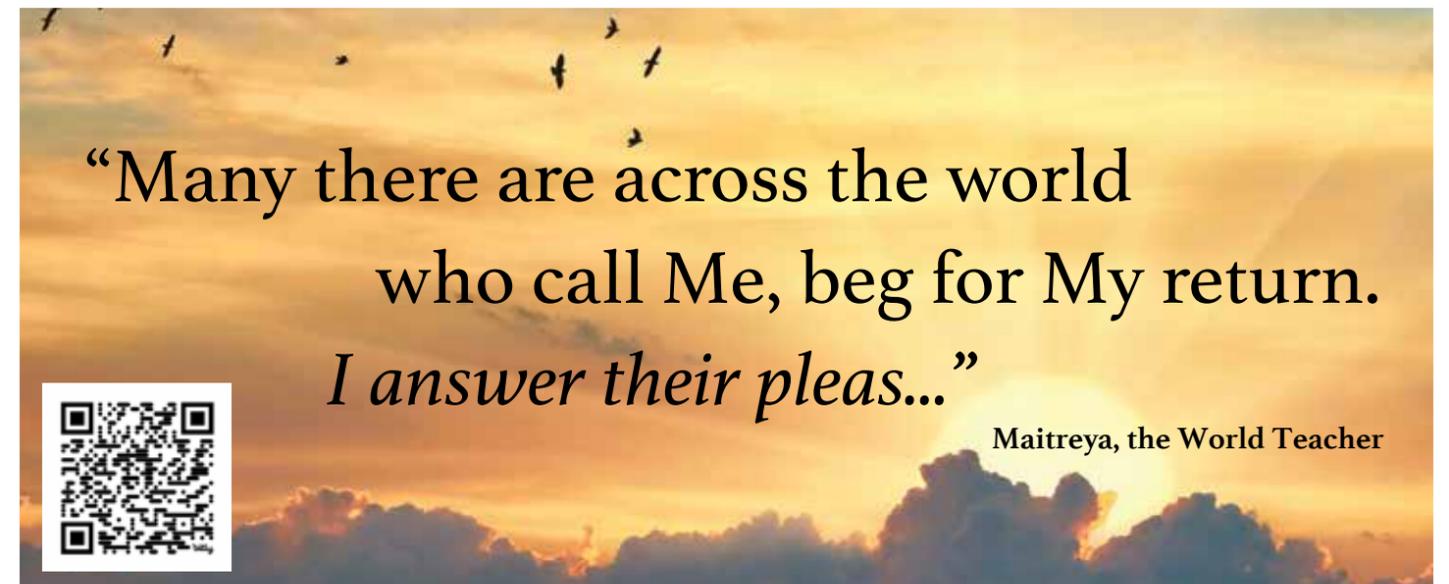
Degnan credits Clayton's ability to swiftly understand her body and customize the movements to target her problem areas. However, Degnan stresses that their sessions aren't entirely about movement. Over the past three years,

Clayton, who is also an experienced breath coach, has been guiding Degnan through holotropic breathing exercises alongside the Pilates training. "The breathing sessions bring in a more spiritual energy to our work," says Degnan. They've greatly increased my sense of connection to myself and the world around me."

Clayton takes a multidimensional approach to her teaching and is not afraid to bring in other fitness philosophies and modalities. But her approach to Pilates emphasizes "embodied movement," which she describes as a combination of movement, breath and focused intentionality. "There's a deeper layer that's beyond just the performing of the exercises," she says.

"It's the breath. It's the movement. And it's where the magic happens," says Clayton. "It almost feels like that's where the soulfulness happens, because, just like in yoga, when you become more embodied with your mind, there is an aliveness to the movements that makes you more conscious, and new things can happen."

For more information, visit BodyAwarenessStudio.com or call 404-252-7550.





Planting for the Planet

Seven Herbs to Grow, Eat and Heal

by April Thompson



Marilyna from Getty Images Pro / CanvaPro

Growing herbs at home has myriad benefits, enhancing health, boosting flavor and saving money while supporting local ecosystems. Home growing not only provides fresh herbs for cooking needs, but also offers access to easy and affordable natural remedies that can soothe common ailments.

“There is nothing like having your own fresh herbs in home-cooked meals. You can also dry and prep your own herbs for winter. Herbs retain more fragrance and vibrant color when you dry and process your own,” says Nadine Clopton, an herbalist who serves as regenerative education program manager for Rodale Institute.

Clopton likes to grow medicinal herbs like holy basil, as well as culinary herbs like rosemary, sage, thyme, oregano and basil,

which serve as both nutrition and medicine. “They have minerals, vitamins and antioxidants, and are deeply supportive of different systems in the body,” says Clopton, who maintains a small deck herb garden in her Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, apartment.

A home herb garden boasts multiple environmental benefits, reducing our carbon footprint by eliminating the miles most herbs travel to reach the local grocery store, and eliminating pesticide use, if grown organically. Herbs are also great for attracting pollinators like bees, birds and butterflies to support a balanced and healthy ecosystem.

Great Herbs to Grow, Eat and Heal

Rosemary is a multifaceted herb high in calcium,” says Linda Conroy, an herbalist, farmer and herb educator in Albion, Wisconsin. She uses it in topical lotions for pain relief, makes rosemary-infused salt for a flavor-booster and incorporates this pungent herb into her homemade feta cheese. Rosemary has been shown to enhance cognition and memory. It is also a natural mosquito repellent, making it a great addition to summer patios.

Sage is known for its anti-inflammatory properties and as a natural treatment for sore throats and coughs. “This easy-to-grow perennial also helps attract pollinators,” says Conroy.

Dandelion is an excellent detoxifier that can help cleanse the liver and promote healthy digestion. “Every part of the dandelion is edible; it’s really a powerful, supportive herb. There are so many herbs like dandelion that grow wild around us, asking for our awareness and acknowledgment,” Clopton remarks.

Thyme has powerful antimicrobial properties that can help fend off bacterial infections. “It’s also anti-spasmodic and a natural expectorant, making it an excellent addition to cough remedies, which can save money compared to over-the-counter treatments,” Conroy advises.

Lemon balm is a natural stress reducer that can help reduce anxiety and promote relaxation. “I love growing lemon balm and holy basil together,” says Clopton. “They act like a natural mosquito repellent, in addition to all their medicinal and culinary benefits.”

Chamomile is an essential herb for relaxation and digestion. Regular consumption of chamomile tea can help reduce anxiety and promote restful sleep. Conroy also uses this herb for topical applications like lotions, body washes, foot baths and even eye-washes to soothe sore, irritated eyes.

Garlic has antibacterial and antiviral properties that can help fight infections. The bulb is also known to reduce blood pressure and lower cholesterol levels. “Garlic, chives and other plants in the allium family are all important immune-system boosters,” says Conroy.

Getting Started

For first-time growers, an herb garden may sound intimidating, but with patience and care, it can flourish even in small, indoor spaces. Conroy recommends trying chives, as they are easy to sprout and thrive in a box or pot. She also suggests starting by growing just one herb at a time.

While Conroy grows her herbs from seed in her own greenhouse, it is perfectly acceptable to buy plants that already have a head start. Clopton suggests plants like lemon balm because it is easy to root from a cutting. She also recommends supplementing soil with organic compost to give plants an extra boost, and making sure growing containers have good drainage.

Adding herbs to an outdoor garden or indoor space is an easy way to shrink our carbon footprint and support pollinators for the good of the planet, all the while saving on groceries. Start small with an herb garden and enjoy the numerous health and other benefits herbs offer. 🌿

April Thompson is a Washington, D.C., freelance writer covering food, travel, sustainability and spirituality topics. Learn more at AprilWrites.com.

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Herbal Healing Recipes

Soothing Support Tea

This tea includes a class of herbs referred to in herbalism as nervines, which work to support and nourish the nervous system and relieve anxiety. While sipping this elegant infusion, visualize the herbs gently smoothing over any frayed nerves with a cleansing wave of calm.

YIELD: 1 CUP

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| <i>Lemon balm</i> | <i>Chamomile</i> |
| <i>Tulsi (holy basil)</i> | <i>Lavender</i> |
| <i>Milky oats or oatstraw (avena sativa)</i> | <i>Rose petals</i> |

Combine equal parts of the organic dried herbs in a bowl. To make a cup of soothing tea, use 1 tablespoon of the herb mixture per 8 ounces of hot water. Steep covered for 10 minutes.

Recipe courtesy of Nadine Clopton. Before consuming any herbal remedies, consult with a doctor or pharmacist for possible interactions with prescription medications or preexisting health conditions.



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Turmeric Eggs

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>1 onion, sliced thin</i> | <i>¼ tsp black pepper</i> |
| <i>3 medium tomatoes, chopped</i> | <i>¼ tsp paprika</i> |
| <i>1 Tbsp ghee</i> | <i>5-8 eggs</i> |
| <i>¼ tsp salt</i> | <i>Cilantro as garnish</i> |
| <i>¼ tsp dried, powdered turmeric</i> | |



Maya Shustov/Shutterstock.com

Sauté onions and tomatoes in ghee until soft. Add in spices and adjust to taste. Crack 5 to 8 eggs, add them to the sauté and cover. Wait until the yolk and whites are almost set and stir. Garnish with fresh cilantro.

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Food Trends for 2024

What We're Looking for at the Dinner Table

by Carrie Jackson



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Few factors are as important to overall wellness as our diet. Besides taste and nutritional value, food preferences are influenced by convenience, availability, cost and personal values. Trends are shifting away from fad diets to more balanced eating, as people across generations are focused on living healthier well into their golden years. Equally as urgent is a demand for more sustainable products and manufacturing practices as consumers become increasingly aware of the impact their food choices have on the planet.

Dr. Melinda Ring is the executive director of the Osher Center for Integrative Health at Northwestern University, in Chicago. As a leading center for integrative medicine, their team helps patients achieve optimal health through innovative, whole-person care. Ring says that personalized nutrition, plant-forward diets and longevity protocols are overtaking older trends like low-carbohydrate or high-fat fads.

“In recent years, there’s been a movement away from highly restrictive diets toward more balanced, sustainable eating patterns that emphasize whole foods over highly processed alternatives,” says Ring. “Interest in local food sources is growing, driven by concerns about sustainability and food quality. While the pandemic highlighted concerns about access to healthy food for all, busy lifestyles continue to make convenience a key factor influencing food choices.”

Ring cites nutritional psychiatry as a burgeoning field. “Emerging research suggests a link between diet and mental health, with diets rich in fruits, vegetables and omega-3 fatty acids potentially benefiting mood and cognitive function,” she explains. Ring adds that there is an increasing focus on incorporating protein for overall health, as well as personalized nutrition, in which advances in genomics and biotechnology are used to tailor dietary recommendations to individual genetic, lifestyle and health factors.

Frances Largeman-Roth, RDN, is a *New York Times* bestselling author and nationally recognized health expert. Her latest book, *Everyday Snack Tray*, outlines fun, flavorful and nutrient-dense charcuterie boards for every occasion. She asserts that members of Generation Z—those born in the late 1990s and early 2000s—are driving many of the current shifts in food and beverage choices.

“The sober movement is rapidly gaining momentum, with an influx of mocktails, non-alcoholic beer and zero-proof wines on the market,” she explains. “People in their 30s and older are realizing that alcohol interrupts their sleep and are looking for other ways to relax at night. They’re also moving away from caffeine, which has a long half-life, so while the body may feel tired at night, the brain is still triggered. Fast-casual restaurants and cafes have increased their selection of fruit-forward, caffeine-free drinks, and a new all-natural brew called figgee, made from ground figs, is emerging online.”

Zoomers tend to be more conscious of the connection between their food decisions and impacts on the planet, which explains why they are more likely to choose and demand sustainably grown and packaged products. “This generation is drawn to brands that have carbon buy-back programs or help sequester nitrogen in their manufacturing,” says Largeman-Roth. “While we’ve seen an influx of meat alternatives in the past, there’s starting to be a pushback against the ones with long ingredient lists that are highly processed. Rubi protein made from lemna, or duckweed [a free-floating, aquatic plant], is gaining popularity as a plant-based protein alternative. It contains nine essential amino acids and uses 10 times less water to grow than soybeans and 100 times less water than beef. And, people are turning to the root system of mushrooms, instead of the caps, as a higher protein source. Their versatility makes them ideal for nuggets, jerky and other substantial snacks.”

Consumers are looking for foods that can help regulate blood sugar, especially as more of the population is concerned about pre-diabetes. “People are continuing to choose nuts, beans and other high-protein boosts to refuel after a workout or in-between meals,” Largeman-Roth points out. “Products such as Good Measure bars, made of almonds, peanuts and pumpkin seeds, are emerging as nutrient-rich and satisfying snacks. Consumers also realize how important fiber is for gut optimization, skin quality and mental health. Perhaps most top-of-mind in a post-pandemic world, it’s vital for immune health, as well. Overall, people of all ages want products that make them feel better and fit into their lifestyle. A lot of boxes have to be checked for people to try a new product, and food manufacturers are stepping up.”

Perhaps taking a cue from the younger generation, members of Generation X—Americans born between 1965 and 1980—are pioneering a new approach to healthy aging to help them thrive

in their diverse lifestyles. According to the global market research company Mintel, aging concerns that were once considered taboo, such as menopause, are now being openly discussed.

“The new focus for our aging society will be an extended healthspan—the period of life spent in good health,” says Mintel Principal Analyst Jolene Ng. “This is an important shift, as population aging is a defining global trend of our time. By 2030, one in six people in the world will be aged 60 years and older, according to the World Health Organization. Brands need to consider the various nutritional, physical and mental health needs for middle-aged and older adults. Opportunities to improve healthspan include maintaining brain function with age and functional health solutions for common problems like disrupted sleep.”

Increasingly, Gen Xers aged 44 to 58 prioritize sleep as a tool for improving overall physical and emotional health. “Research has shown that total sleep time, sleep efficiency and deep sleep decrease with age,” says Ng. “Brands are focusing on innovating products with nutrients such as fiber or botanicals like lavender that can improve sleep quality. Products such as Bardo’s Calm snacks, which contain lemon balm and thyme, are emerging as a snack option for Gen Xers who are interested in trying food that supports relaxation.”

Many consumers are part of the “sandwich generation,” a term used to describe people in their 30s or 40s that are raising children while also caring for aging parents. Ng notes that brands are adjusting product lineups and marketing campaigns to address the specific requirements of these families. She expects to see more services like Magic Kitchen, which, she explains, is “a meal kit service that offers a range of healthy, dietitian-designed meals for families with different health needs, including seniors. Their objective is to bring families together during dinnertime, while respecting the specific dietary needs of individuals within the family unit. Brands also can help ease the stress and strain on these compound caregivers by offering convenience products and helpful tools for themselves and the loved ones they care for.”

Historically, food and beverages have been a source of great pleasure and social interaction, and Mintel Food & Drink Director David Faulkner envisions this as a continuing trend. “Just as we saw during COVID-19, food and drink will be the go-to source of comfort for consumers, delivering precious moments of joy,” he says. “It will be all the more relevant during the worsening climate crisis for food and drink companies to position pleasurable products as necessities, not as guilty self-indulgences.” 🌱

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



Functional Medicine Approach to Colon Health

Simplified Steps to Repair and Restore the Gut

by Madiha Saeed, M.D.



In the United States, colorectal cancer is one of the most common types of cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, the disease is expected to precipitate approximately 53,000 deaths in 2024, and incidence rates for people under 55 have been increasing by 1 to 2 percent each year. Regular screenings and lifestyle improvements, including a healthy diet and regular exercise, can decrease the risk.

“The gut is the root and the foundation of health,” says Vincent Pedre, M.D., a board-certified internist specializing in functional medicine and the bestselling author of *The GutS-MART Protocol*. In addition to dramatically improving overall health, his protocol incorporates science-backed lifestyle modifications that have been shown to optimize gut health and reduce the incidence of colorectal cancer.

Optimizing Digestive Health

Research has proven that chronic inflammation is highly correlated with the development of colorectal cancer. A functional medicine approach begins by easing inflammation and then taking steps to restore the population of healthy bacteria in the gut by replenishing nutrients, repairing the gut lining, rebalancing the body and managing stress.

Putting out the fire in the gut: The first step is to remove the possibly offending triggers of inflammation, beginning with gluten; grains; dairy; sugar; soy; nutrient-depleted foods containing artificial ingredients, preservatives and additives; processed foods; genetically modified foods; and any ingredient for which there is a sensitivity. A practitioner can also test for and address chronic illnesses that may be impacting

the gut such as hepatitis, Epstein-Barr and other viral and fungal infections.

Replenishing nutrients: To restore the vitamins, minerals, nutrients and other essential ingredients needed for proper digestion and absorption, it is important to incorporate more organic, whole foods in the diet, but that is not the full story. As Pedre explains, “There is not one right diet. If you eat foods that you cannot break down into little nutrients and absorb, then it doesn’t get broken down and tends to feed bad bugs that can grow inside of you. We really need to think about whether our gut is capable of breaking down the foods we actually eat because that is really what determines whether the diet is right for you.”

In his book, Pedre offers a quiz that helps people determine their level of gut dysfunction. Alternatively, a practitioner can evaluate stomach acid and digestive enzyme levels to ensure that food is being broken down properly. “Digestive enzyme supplements can help pick up where your body might be falling short, breaking down your foods, making them more digestible,” explains Steven Wright, co-founder of the Healthy Gut Company. To help support the gut microbiome, Pedre recommends altering the diet to increase the number and quantity of vegetables and fermented foods such as sauerkraut and kimchi.

Restoring the balance of good bacteria in the gut: Crucial for colon and overall health is a robust population in the gut of probiotics (the good bacteria) and prebiotics (the food for probiotics). Fermented foods are excellent probiotic sources, while green, leafy vegetables and other high-fiber foods, as well as asparagus, carrots, garlic, leeks, raw onions, radishes and tomatoes, are some of the best prebiotics. If levels are insufficient with just food, probiotic and prebiotic supplementation may be necessary.

Repairing the gut lining: Our intestines are lined with millions of cells that create a tight barrier—the gut lining—which in essence determines what is absorbed into the bloodstream and what stays in the gut to eventually be eliminated. When the gut

lining is not healthy, however, the barrier is not able to perform its job properly, allowing toxins and bacteria to leak into the body and preventing the system from properly absorbing nutrients. To repair the lining naturally, it is imperative to eat plenty of organic, whole foods that include zinc; vitamins A, C, D and E; omega-3 fatty acids; and selenium.

Rebalancing our lifestyle: “Slowing down when you eat and saying some prayers between bites is a real big deal,” Wright advises. “It allows your gut to make acid in your stomach and make enzymes work in your intestines.” He also recommends playing and spending time outdoors with our hands in the dirt and breathing in the smells and molecules that “tell our body that it is a normal environment.” Activities like gardening and yard work add diversity of microbes from the soil and will help to balance our microbiome.

Managing stress: “Stress is an attack on your gut, a self-induced attack,” Pedre notes. By incorporating coping techniques, exercise routines, consistent sleep patterns and time in nature, we help optimize gut healing and maintain the body’s well-being and balance.

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

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Can You Help with a Chronic Illness?

Can a health and wellness coach help improve the health of someone with a chronic illness?

A health and wellness coach can play a significant role in helping improve the health of someone with a chronic illness. While they can't replace medical professionals, coaches complement a person's healthcare journey by focusing on lifestyle factors, behavior change and overall well-being to increase their capacity to self-manage chronic conditions.

Through partnering with the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation (MSF), I have worked with MS patients who are dealing with serious chronic illnesses, helping them develop coping skills and stress reduction techniques and empowering them to better manage their health and well-being.

I call it "putting tools into their toolbox." These are tools they can pull out any time they need to destress, find peace, and invite their bodies to release, relax and heal. It is so crucial for those living with chronic illness to have ways to take back some measure of control over their health.

Monya, a participant in MSF's Multiple Sclerosis program, put it this way, "We learned to rise above our disability and learn restorative techniques to increase mobility through gentle movements and to achieve mental awareness on how to direct our own mind's ability to heal. In just three sessions, I've been able to unclamp my "claw" toes, which helps me to walk better. I look forward to continuing to participate and unlock even more healing to the damage that has been done."

Here are some of the ways that a health and wellness coach can help improve the health of those with chronic illnesses:

Lifestyle Modification

Tailored Plans: Coaches help people create personalized wellness plans that consider the unique needs and challenges associated with their chronic condition.

Nutrition and Exercise: Information and guidance on nutrition and exercise, tailored to the person's health status, are provided to help manage symptoms and improve overall health.

Behavioral Change

Identifying Barriers: Coaches help individuals identify their barriers to positive health behaviors and collaborate with them to develop strategies for overcoming those challenges.

Goal Setting: Through collaborative goal setting, coaches help individuals set realistic and achievable health goals, fostering motivation and commitment to change.

Motivation and Accountability

Motivational Support: A health coach is a person's biggest fan; they are there to provide ongoing motivation, encouragement and emotional support so their clients stay engaged in their health improvement journey.

Accountability: Regular check-ins and progress assessments create accountability, reinforcing commitment to healthy habits.

Stress Management

Stress Reduction Techniques: Coaches introduce stress management techniques, such as mindfulness and relaxation exercises, which can be particularly beneficial for individuals dealing with chronic conditions that may be exacerbated by stress.

Collaboration with the Healthcare Team

Communication with Healthcare Providers: Coaches collaborate with healthcare providers to ensure a holistic approach to health improvement. This includes sharing information about the individual's progress and aligning wellness plans with medical recommendations.

Education and Empowerment

Health Education: Coaches help educate their clients on the impact of lifestyle choices on their chronic conditions, empowering them to make informed decisions.

Self-Efficacy: Through coaching, individuals develop a sense of self-efficacy, gaining confidence in their ability to manage their health and make sustainable lifestyle changes.

Holistic Approach

Addressing Multiple Dimensions: Coaches take a holistic approach, considering various aspects of well-being, including sleep, social connections and mental health, all of which can influence the health of those with a chronic illness.

Regular Assessments and Adjustments

Monitoring Progress: Coaches regularly assess progress, adjusting the individual's wellness plan based on changes in health status, goals or circumstances.

Flexibility: Coaches adapt their approach as needed, recognizing that individuals with a chronic illness can experience fluctuations in health.

Long-Term Lifestyle Changes

Building Sustainable Habits: Coaches focus on developing long-term sustainable habits, promoting lasting lifestyle changes that contribute to ongoing health improvement.

Support for Self-Management

Empowering Self-Management: Coaches empower individuals to actively participate in their own health management and teach them self-monitoring and decision-making skills.

Crisis Planning: Coaches help individuals develop crisis plans and strategies for handling setbacks, fostering resilience, and maintaining progress.

Chronic conditions negatively impact the quality of life for those dealing with them. Health coaching is an intervention that can help those with chronic conditions adopt health-supportive behaviors to improve their quality of life and health.

The health coach's focus on behavior change and lifestyle factors complements medical interventions and provides a comprehensive approach to managing chronic conditions and enhancing one's overall quality of life. Their collaborative approach helps people manage their symptoms and supports their overall health and well-being.

Based in Atlanta, Hope Knosher is the founder of Healthy Living with Hope, which offers health coaching, yoga classes and retreats. She is a national board-certified health and wellness coach, a certified yoga therapist and a certified E-RYT 500 yoga teacher. Contact her at 770-789-7782.



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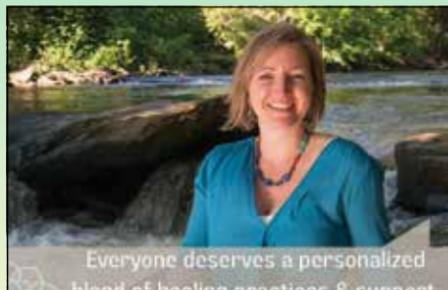
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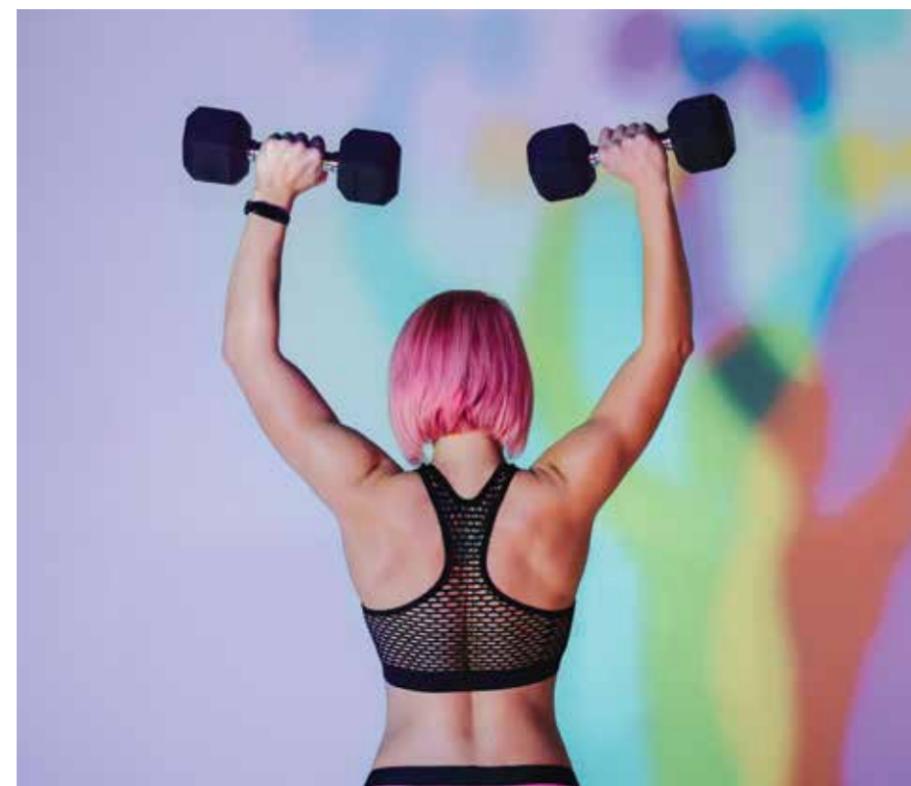
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Fit Body ———  ———

Emerging Trends in Fitness

The Latest From Workouts to Wearables

by Kimberly Whittle



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Multiple studies report that an active lifestyle offers mental and physical benefits, as well as a longer healthspan. Workout strategies and fitness equipment are continually evolving to meet changing consumer interests, incorporate scientific discoveries and take advantage of technological advancements. Here is a look at the latest emerging trends in fitness.

In-Person Versus Online Fitness Programs

Connected fitness equipment that replicates the gym experience at home with online programs led by professional trainers has experienced a downturn in sales since the end of the pandemic. Lululemon Studio Mirror went out of business and Peloton has lost 40 percent of its value. The financial struggles for connected fitness are expected to continue in 2024 as consumers seek in-person connections in the post-pandemic world. The International

Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association's annual member survey reports a rise in gym and studio memberships and revenue across low-cost, luxury and boutique facilities; this upswing is expected to continue.

Advances in Technology

Wearable devices that track workouts, steps and active minutes, and use biosensors to monitor health data like heart rate, blood pressure and sleep patterns continue to be popular as their functionality expands. Enhancements to popular devices include Apple Watch's ability to identify abnormal heart rhythms; Fitbit's improved accuracy of health and fitness monitoring and storage software; and NADIX Activewear's capability to tell if yoga moves are being performed properly.

Tech companies are expected to continue to improve the accuracy of their sensors, technology and connectivity, as wearables are part of a broader trend toward data-driven training. Real-time statistics like heart rate, velocity and speed can help individuals monitor the effort and intensity of workouts and help coaches tailor programs to each client, even in group settings. Companies like Meta and Les Mills are also expanding virtual reality for workout applications, allowing users to visit sur-real locations for real fitness results without leaving home.

Blending of Health, Wellness and Fitness

An emerging trend is the blurring of lines between health clinics and fitness centers. Some medical offices are adding personal trainers to their teams in order to complement the work of doctors and nurses, while fitness centers are acquiring or developing their own clinics to prescribe weight-loss drugs, hormone replacement protocols, integrative therapies and infrared sauna sessions. One such example is Life Time Fitness' flagship health club in Minneapolis.

Strength Training Craze

Strength, or resistance, training continues to grow in popularity, especially among Generation Z-ers that love to post photos of their fit selves on social media and appreciate the science-based benefits, including muscle building, cardiovascular improvements, increased bone density, reduced body fat and stabilized joints.

A study of more than 400,000 people published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* found that those regularly practicing strength training along with aerobic exercise had a lower risk of death than those that performed only aerobic training. Another analysis from the same journal suggested that regular strength training was associated with a 10 to 17 percent lower risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, lung cancer and overall mortality.

In response to this emerging trend, Nike has developed a new line of strength training equipment; Pure Barre launched Define, a low-impact class that incorporates heavier weights; and Orangetheory Fitness expanded its workout offerings to include strength training.

Fitness in the Workplace

Some companies recognize the benefits of offering employees access to fitness facilities and health education classes, which lower insurance costs and increase productivity and mental health. If changes advocated by an American College of Sports Medicine task force come to fruition, billings for services by fitness professionals would be covered by insurance.

Staying Active for Mental Health

In a Lyra Health survey of U.S. corporate employee benefit leaders, 95 percent of respondents said that mental health benefits are very important to prospective employees. Regular physical activity and exercise can boost mood and improve mental health, and individuals are increasingly recognizing their worth. 🦋

Kimberly Whittle is the founder and CEO of KnoWEwell, P.B.C. and the CEO of Natural Awakenings Publishing Corporation.

Pollinator Corridors

Tips to Reestablish Lost Habitats

by Kelcie Ottoes

A well-known Chinese proverb says, “The flapping of the wings of a butterfly can be felt on the other side of the world,” poetically reminding us that small actions can produce large effects. When it comes to the world’s disappearing pollinators, the modest steps we take today can generate life-saving results tomorrow.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), “Pollinators provide vital benefits to people and wildlife, keeping animals and plants that we depend on thriving while bringing us food and supporting the economy.” Almost 90 percent of flowering plants depend entirely or in part on animal pollination, and yet, the FWS reports that pollinator populations are on the decline. One way to support these important species is to create

a pollinator corridor—a pesticide-free, native-plant zone that provides food and shelter for indigenous pollinators.

The Pollinator’s Role

While the word pollinator may conjure up images of butterflies and bees, the category is much broader and includes birds, bats, lizards, moths, flies, beetles, wasps and some small mammals. “Virtually every ecosystem on Earth that contains flowering plants depends on animal pollinators,” says Kim Eierman, author of *The Pollinator Victory Garden: Win the War on Pollinator Decline with Ecological Gardening*. “Many are keystone species in the ecosystems where they occur. If a keystone species becomes extinct or vanishes, that ecosystem fundamentally changes, and not for the better.”

From apples, melons and potatoes to almonds, coffee and cocoa, the food we eat is not available without pollination. Losing

just one pollinator can have a significant impact. Without bees, fruit and nut trees produce fewer and smaller crops, if any. Of the top 100 edible flowering crops, 80 are pollinated by honeybees.

“Every ecosystem is dependent on pollinators to maintain healthy environmental balances in global food webs,” explains Jen McDonald, the founder of Garden Girls, a Houston-based company that designs and installs home landscapes. “Pollinators don’t make food just for us, but also for livestock and virtually all other living things. Many plants that require pollination are also needed for shade habitats for birds, insects and small animals.”

Challenges Facing Pollinators

The decline in pollinators is attributed to a loss of feeding and nesting habitats that occurs when native plants are replaced by non-native grasses, farmlands and urban landscapes. Pesticides, chemicals, parasites, non-native species, new diseases and climate change are also modern-day threats. Monarch butterflies are considered vulnerable to extinction. Nearly one in four bees (347 native species) are at increased risk of extinction. More than half of the 154 North American bat species are at severe risk of population decline.

Designing a Pollinator Corridor

The good news is that when native plants are re-introduced, pollinators return. “Abundant, diverse pollinators ensure fertile, resilient landscapes and secure food systems for communities, and backyard gardens can restore numbers that strengthen regional plant reproduction,” says Kiersten Rankel, a botanist for Greg, an app that helps people optimize their plant-growing efforts.

To get started, select a strip of land, rooftop, wall or yard that supports pollinators, including their migration, foraging and overwintering. Next, pick native and flowering plant species for the space.

Perennials require less maintenance, as they come back each year. Start small. Even a few potted plants or a converted curb strip can have a big impact. Avoid using pesticides and herbicides. Beyond flowers, be sure to also include shrubs, twigs, rotting logs, branches, vines, ground cover and bare gravel. Determine if it is helpful or harmful to remove leaves from the ground in the fall and reduce or eliminate mowing practices, especially on roadsides or curbs.

To make a bigger impact, talk with neighbors and community members to create a larger corridor. Consider working with local schools, colleges, nature-focused nonprofits, government officials that oversee parks and city planning, nurseries and farmers. The more people that are involved and invested in the corridor, the higher the odds of its continuing success.

Create a map to see the full footprint of the corridor; fill any gaps and remove invasive plant species. Include a wide diversity of native plants to serve pollinators at each stage of their life cycles. The Wild Seed Project suggests having at least 10 pollinator-friendly plants to support them year-round with continuous blooms and shelter.

An example of a giant pollinator corridor is Project Wingspan, located in the Midwest and Great Lakes region. The people behind this program are striving to create 18,000 acres of high-quality habitat to support local wildlife and pollinators. On a smaller scale, the town of Orleans, Massachusetts, is working to ensure their entire community is pollinator friendly.

There has never been a better time to start or join a pollinator corridor. Those efforts could be the flap of a butterfly’s wing that changes the future for these vital creatures. 🦋

Kelcie Ottoes is a content writer for sustainable businesses, specializing in blog posts, case studies and white papers.



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Yoga ————  ————

Pranayama, Kriya and the Acceleration of Awakening

by Diane Eaton



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This is the third of a three-part series featuring pranayama, a variety of specialized breathing practices that spiritual masters and yogis have practiced for millennia. Today, millions of people around the world practice them to improve mental and physical health, reduce stress, increase awareness and facilitate self-realization. Part 1 of the series explores the origins of pranayama and breathwork and how they are used in modern times. Part 2 shares insights from Atlanta-area teachers about several popular pranayama techniques and describes several of the most popular ones in use today. Read both at bit.ly/naa-yoga—Ed.

The practice of *pranayama*—yogic practices involving conscious control of the breath and movement of one's life force energy—has become more commonplace in yoga studios and in people's homes over the last couple of decades, garnering popularity for its ability

to reduce anxiety and depression, impart a sense of calm and focus, increase energy, and heighten one's sense of aliveness.

One of the earliest written references to pranayama comes from the writings of the Indian sage Patanjali more than 5,000

years ago. In his *Yoga Sutras*, he outlines the "eight limbs of yoga"—the essential attitudes and foundational practices that offer those seeking spiritual awakening a path to self-realization. Pranayama is listed as the fourth of the eight limbs; the first two describe moral and behavioral best practices, and the third refers to *asanas*, or yogic postures. Thus, the first four limbs help to establish a personal lifestyle and environment conducive to spiritual awakening. The next three limbs refer to practices that are progressively more quiet, inward-focused and present, facilitating entry to *samadhi*, the eighth limb—the realization of oneness with the divine.

Over the centuries—and again more recently—certain spiritual traditions and organizations have developed practices known as *kriya*. Kriyas are designed to purify the mind and body, accelerate spiritual progress and empower people to access those more rarified forms of meditation and higher states of consciousness. Such practices might include any com-

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bination of postures, breathing practices, meditation, chanting and, most typically, a personal, spiritual transmission.

Natural Awakenings spoke with representatives from three wellness and spiritual development organizations with a kriya practice playing a prominent role among their offerings. Note that while the term “kriya” has been used to refer generally to these practices since ancient times, some spiritual lineages and organizations also include the term as a proper name of their unique kriya practice.

Kriya Pranayama

With the help of the *Kriya Pranayama*, which is taught by many organizations in the Kriya Yoga tradition, one’s spiritual evolution can be fast-tracked and the awakening process streamlined, according to those who practice it. “One 30-second Kriya Pranayama full breath is equivalent to [what would otherwise take] one year of spiritual evolution,” says Swami Kaivalyananda, formerly Rev. Michael Gadway, the Director of Ministry and Education for the Center for Spiritual Awareness (CSA) in Lakemont, Georgia.

Kaivalyananda was ordained by Roy Eugene Davis, a direct disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda. CSA continues the living teachings of Yogananda, a revered, awakened spiritual teacher and author of



Swami Kaivalyananda

Autobiography of a Yogi, who is credited with bringing yoga to the West in the early 20th century. Yogananda was carrying on the tradition he’d been initiated into—kriya yoga.

By practicing the Kriya Pranayama technique, “the blood is de-carbonated and recharged with oxygen,” says Kaivalyananda, “and the atoms of that extra oxygen are transmuted into the Kriya Pranayama current.” As a result of doing the practice, one’s *kundalini*—the prana stored in the lower *chakras*—or energy centers, is awakened, enlivened and brought up into the higher brain centers.

Yogananda’s Kriya Yoga tradition embraces the integrated yogic lifestyle described in Patanjali’s eight limbs of yoga and holds Kriya Pranayama as its major transformation tool.

Many of those who practice kriya yoga regularly have reached higher states of consciousness. “People experience a clearness of awareness followed by a blossoming of peace,” says Kaivalyananda. “We teach what’s known as ‘the mind of the witness,’ when the left and right brain hemispheres are functioning equally. In that sweet spot, the mind gets quieter and quieter until the only thing left to perceive is the light of existence, and at that moment, you experience the truth of what you are. That ‘Aha—I Am That’ moment.”

But the tradition approaches the breath and prana in a unique way. While many interpret “pranayama” to mean “life force control,” Kaivalyananda considers it a misnomer. “Prana has an intelligence to it; it’s intelligent energy,” he says, so approaching it with force would be a mistake. “Prana is the smallest unit of energy. It doesn’t recognize being forced.” Thus, the practice creates an environment that guides the flow of prana in a certain direction—up to the higher brain centers. “When it’s allowed to, prana is always returning to the source.”

At the heart of the Kriya Yoga Pranayama method is the direct transmission of spiritual energy from teacher to student. New practitioners are first introduced to the fundamentals of yoga, and then, in a ceremony, they receive *shaktipat*, the transmission of spiritual force imbued with the vibrations and energies of their spiritual lineage. “It’s an oral tradition passed down from teacher to student,” says Kaivalyananda.



Sejal Shah

For that reason, he warns against trying to obtain the technique from sources in social media or online. “It’s a violation of our sacrament. Sincere spiritual seekers are going to want [the trans-

mission] we offer.” He also emphasizes that the Kriya Yoga lineage didn’t end with Yogananda. “It is very much alive. And that’s another reason you don’t want to try and learn it online. There’s no energy in it, no life in it there.”

CSA offers online courses as well as live programs and retreats at the CSA retreat center in Lakemont, Georgia. For more information, visit CSA-Davis.org.

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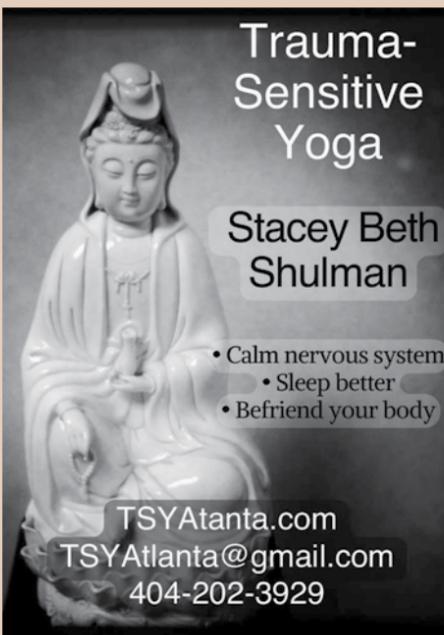
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—Osho

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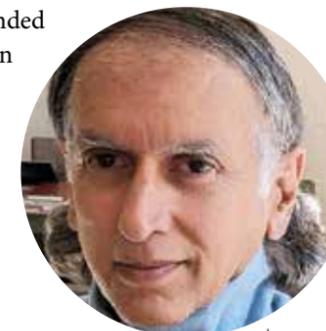
The word *sudarshan* comes from the Sanskrit *su*, meaning "clear," *darshan*, meaning "vision," and *kriya*, which refer to acts of purification. "Through the purifying act of the breath," explains Sejal Shah, E-RYT 500, who teaches the kriya and other methods at the Art of Living's Retreat Center in Boone, North Carolina, "the vision of who we really are comes clear."

Several decades ago, spiritual teacher Sri Sri Ravi Shankar felt that people were not getting the deeper experiences of meditation that are possible, so he went on a silent retreat in a remote village in India. The Sudarshan kriya came to him in meditation, and once he began teaching it, word spread briskly. Shankar founded the Art of Living Foundation in 1981, which has grown to include 40,000 teachers worldwide and has taught upwards of 500 million people to date.

The practice uses powerful primal syllables that are repeated in a variety of rhythms, with the intention of harmonizing one's internal rhythms with those of nature. By listening to a recording of Shankar, students are given direct guidance for doing the technique. So, while it's not literally a "transmission," practitioners have an opportunity to connect personally with the guru. The experience also helps the student

set the rhythms of the practice in their minds so they can practice it successfully at home.

According to Shah, the kriya practice cleanses at a cellular level, releasing deeply rooted stress, physical and energetic toxins, and emotions. Numerous studies report that the practice often brings about greater health, more joy and sustained high-energy levels. For many, a deeply spiritual state is reached. Says Shah, "Ultimately, the same consciousness runs through all of us, so we experience that infinite nature of our being—just like the sky." People experience "a great blessing and grace that flows from the master—as if a burden has been lifted."



Arvind Benegal

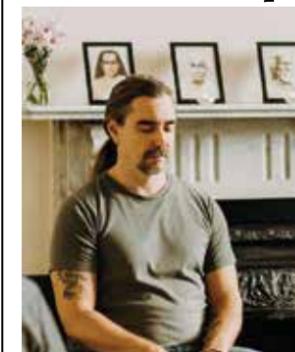
When teaching the Sudarshan kriya, Art of Living doesn't specifically reference Patanjali's eight limbs of yoga and doesn't necessarily consider Sudarshan kriya a pranayama practice; however, they do start with pranayama methods

that are mentioned in the ancient yogic texts. And many practitioners do asanas before they begin the kriya as well.

The Art of Living Retreat Center offers additional programs for students to deepen their practice in Boone, North Carolina, at local centers and online at ArtOfLivingRetreatCenter.org.

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Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya

A spiritual transmission from a teacher or guru to the student is also at the heart of the *Shambhavi Mahamudra* kriya, which is taught within the Isha Foundation's 7 Steps to Transform Your Life with Sadhguru program. And while Patanjali's "eight limbs" of yoga are woven into the teachings of the seven modules of the program, it is the kriya that catalyzes personal change.

Sadhguru founded the Isha Foundation in India in 1992 to offer a holistic approach to well-being, combining physical health, mental clarity and spiritual growth. The Foundation, along with the Isha Institute of Inner Sciences, currently has more than 200 centers around the world offering a variety of programs, including a retreat center in McMinnville, Tennessee. The 7 Steps program is the basic entry program to Sadhguru's teachings.

The first six steps of the 7 Steps program teach participants about the mechanics of the practice, that is, "what you're doing and why you're doing it," says Arvind (Benny) Benegal, an IT and cybersecurity specialist by day, who has been volunteering with the Isha Foundation for more than 15 years. "Some asanas are included as part of the preparatory steps of the kriya to allow the body to get into a state of relaxation and the mind to settle down. But they are not considered exercises; they are ways to channelize your energies, so your body, mind and emotions are aligned."

It is the Shambhavi Mahamudra kriya, the seventh step of the program, however, that takes people "beyond the physical into a dimension that exists in every one of us, but most of us have not experienced it," says Benegal. "The kriya is a technology for well-being. You will reap rewards you haven't even imagined."

While those affiliated with the Isha Foundation don't reveal the details of the 21-minute kriya practice, they do share that students receive the technique through direct transmission from the guru or teacher. "We want to make sure it's pure and undiluted. [Transmission] is the only uninterpreted way of communicating the essence of what you're doing. The moment it's interpreted or written about, it can change the context entirely," says Benegal. The practice includes some pranayama and is designed for people to bring home and make a part of their lives—"like brushing your teeth."

With committed, regular practice, the Shambhavi Mahamudra kriya can be life-changing. "It gives you a significant amount of freedom from all that causes you to doubt, fear, to have anxiety or depression," says Benegal. "And it's not by exercising mind control or willpower. You see yourself as a speck in the bigger picture. You're conscious of everything that life is."

The Isha Institute of Inner Sciences offers additional programs to further one's practice and to achieve more spiritually profound meditation experiences. For more information, visit Isha.Sadhguru.org.

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Saturday, March 2

Free First Saturday: Birds of Prey – 1-2pm. Nature's Echo, a local non-profit dedicated to environmental awareness, will be bringing a variety of birds of prey for participants to view and learn about. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

Friday, March 8

Second Friday Walk in the Park – 9-10am. Learn more about the neighborhood park from our Friends of the Park group. The park features trails and natural areas, creek bed restoration and a new playground. W.D. Thomson Park, 1760 Mason Mill Rd, Decatur. ParkPride.org.

Thursday, March 14

Intuition: A Journey Within – 6-7pm. Theme: Dreams. \$25. The Open Mind Center, 1425 Market Blvd, Ste 500, Roswell. 678-629-3630. TheOpenMindCenter.com.



Healing Sound Bath – 7-8pm. Theme: "Plant Your Seeds of Desire for Spring." In preparation for the Spring Equinox, Certified Vibrational Sound Therapist Raye Andrews presents a beautiful symphony of magical sound. Relax your mind, body and spirit. Bring yoga mat, pillow, blanket, etc, to be comfortable and cozy. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Saturday, March 16



Glow Up, Girl: A Day of Wellness – 9am-2pm. A day filled with panels, culinary delights and libations, and connections, all centered around the fabulous realm of women's well-being. \$25. The Lola, 621 North Ave NE, D-100, Atlanta. EventCreate.com/e/glowupgirl.

Wednesday, March 20

Language of Birds – 7-8:30pm. Explore some of the analogs between birdsong and human language and learn some of the incredible ways studying birdsong has helped us understand human speech and enjoy a bird song-inspired music recital by the Atlanta Contemporary Ensemble. Free; registration required. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChattNatureCenter.org.

Friday, March 22

Nutrition: What We Are Missing? – 1-1:30pm. CentreSpringMD's Nurse Practitioner, Sarah Sammons, discusses common nutritional deficiencies, the connection between food and mental health, fun food hacks, provider approved supplements and more. Free. Online. Tinyurl.com/2xj9ywep.

Saturday, March 23



Fairy Tale Forest Festival – 10am-4pm. With activities like building fairy houses, tree climbing adventures, encounters with beloved fairy tale characters, arts and crafts, and delectable food, this festival promises a whimsical escape for all. \$15. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

Tuesday, March 26

Online: Transmission Meditation – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA SE Region. Free. Via Eventbrite. Info: 770-302-2208 or Info-SE@Share-International.us. Register: Tinyurl.com/ycys2pw.

Thursday, March 28

The Nature Club Dine and Discover – 7-9pm. Mushrooms: Common, Consumable and Kooky with Rose Guerra. \$10/general, \$5/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChattNatureCenter.org.

Friday, March 29

Native Plant Sale – Mar 29-30 & Apr 5-6. 9am-5pm. A unique opportunity for you to shop from an incredible selection of plants native to Georgia. Free admission. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChattNatureCenter.org.

Classifieds

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

For Rent/Lease

OFFICE FOR RENT – Cozy, modern, industrial healing space near Mercedes-Benz Stadium for private sessions or quiet work-space. MUST SEE. 484-686-8686, LearnYourValue@gmail.com.

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

For Sale

METAPHYSICAL BUSINESS FOR SALE – Established retail metaphysical store in Douglasville with amazing growth potential. Large variety of products & services: crystals, candles, oils, sound bowls, & other products. Call Tangela 313-282-1759.



Sundays

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

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

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

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

The Quest: A Journey of Spiritual Rediscovery – 9:30-10:45am. As Unity Atlanta Church celebrates its 100th year in 2024, we embark on a yearlong adventure with other like-minded seekers to revisit and apply

the ancient Truths that are foundational to our beliefs and experiences. In-person and Zoom. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

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

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

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

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

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

Unity Atlanta Church Sunday Services – 11am. Attend in-person or watch via livestream. Youth Sunday School is also held in-person at 11am for ages 5-18. Nursery service is available, 10am-12:30pm. 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

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

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

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

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

Mondays

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

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

Tuesdays

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

Shadow Work & Inner Child Healing – Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7pm, via zoom. Dive into your shadow side in this introspective and transformative four-week course. Understand, confront and integrate your inner child, while investigating the five wounds of childhood. LearnYourValue.com/Workshops

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

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

Wednesdays

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

Decatur Farmers Market – Thru Nov. 4-7pm. Rain or shine. First Baptist Church of Decatur, 308 Clairmont Ave, Decatur. 404-373-1653. cfmatl.org/Decatur.

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

Thursdays

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

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

gram, followed by a question and answer session with the ability to meet and learn from other local beekeepers. Free. 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

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

Beyond Limits Weekly Conscious Dance – 7:45-9:45pm. With Marisa Skolky. An intentional dance activated by vocal toning and singing during an hour and a half dance through our emotions, lifecycle, archetypes

and levels of consciousness. Followed by a singing bowl meditation, a closing circle and community tea time. \$20. Beyond Limits Expressive Arts Therapy LLC, 4528 King Springs Rd SE, Smyrna. 770-235-3183. MarisaSkolky.com.

Fridays

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

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Saturdays

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

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

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

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

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

Community Directory



Discover the leaders in natural health care, sustainable living, and personal and spiritual development in our community! To list your product or service here, email us at: ads@naAtlanta.com

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—Catherine Pulsifer



Me, Too

by Rev. Jenn Sacks

I heard stories about her departure, though I never knew if any of them were true. That she eloped with her boyfriend. That she had gotten pregnant and had gone home to North Carolina. That she got fired. That she'd suddenly found another job. When I called, her phone was disconnected.

Sometimes, I answered calls from the director's wife, who had a delicate southern voice. She appeared delicate, too, at least in the photo he kept on his bookshelf, next to one of his grandchildren playing.

I often sat beside that bookshelf, perusing his collection. I can't count how many conversations we had about writing and politics and the best ways to spin a story. Sometimes, he talked about showing me off. I thought he meant my writing.

Several months later, he invited me to a reception, saying he wanted me to meet some people. I remember meeting many that night, though now I don't remember whom. I listened to lots of stories, although I can't recall them today.

But I do recall this:

At some point, we had a drink together. We talked a lot, especially about writing. Early evening became late night. I missed the last Metro home. He said he'd drive me. I sat on the leather bench seat, which was pale blue, like his eyes.

At my apartment, he stopped the car. As I prepared to step out, he told me how proud he was of me, how far I was advancing in my work, what important connections I was making.

Perhaps I was, although I remember none of them because, within moments, still slightly out of focus, he told me how beautiful I looked and reached for me with his strong arms and firm hands. I smelled scotch as his mouth crushed mine, and my leg got caught between his and the seat. Somehow, I

squirmed away. In a blur, I mumbled something, opened the car door, and ran.

I didn't know who to tell. All I could think was that it was my fault.

When I returned to work after several days off, he told me he thought I felt something for him, excusing his behavior by saying he was "contrite." It was an ironic word from someone who said he valued simple ones. I networked quickly and found another job as managing editor of a trade magazine.

After a few years, I thought I heard he retired. Then: that he died.

I got other jobs. Eventually, I became a minister and heard lots of similar stories. One day, a congregant confided that she had "messed up" with her supervisor and didn't know who to tell.

"You can tell me," I said.

I knew her story—chapter and verse.

"It's my fault," she sobbed.

"It isn't," I said.

"How do you know?" she asked.

"Because I've been there."

"You, too?"

I nodded.

"I'm so glad I could tell you," she said.

Because she had the courage to tell me, she also told her supervisor's boss. The harasser was reprimanded, and she joined another department where she could continue her career unimpeded.

These kinds of stories don't always have happy endings. But telling them provides relief, the healing that comes from solidarity, knowing we're not alone. Maybe, one day, we won't have to tell them anymore. 🌱



Senior minister of Unity Atlanta Church in Peachtree Corners, Rev. Jennifer Sacks is a preacher, writer and spiritual leader. She holds a Master of Divinity from

Unity Institute & Seminary. Learn more and connect with her at RevJenn.com.

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