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11:30A	ANTI-AGING, STEM CELLS & TISSUE REGENERATION Dr. Miriam Croft D.C. - Hands On Wellness
12:30P	SHUNGITE- MOTHER NATURES ANSWER TO THE TIMES Timothy - Odds & Ends Corner
<i>Keynote Speaker</i>	
1:00P	HOLISTIC WELLNESS- Connection between Body Mind & Spirit LaDeidra Wooten "Nurse De" BSN, RN, CCM, LMT
2:00P	CULTIVATING SELF-LOVE THROUGH REIKI & WRITING Dr. Makeba Morgan Hill - Dr. Makeba 4 Love
2:30P	MASTERING MANIFESTATION LaLa Inuti Aharin- The Conjure
3:30P	ENHANCING & HEALING OUR INNER CHILD Christopher Akpobiyeri- Champ Jewis
4:30P	RESTORING BALANCE TO YOUR CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM Jessie Henry - Counseling Reimagined.
5:00P	HEALTH & MENTAL WELLNESS- THE CORRELATION WITH FOOD + NUTRITION Georgette- Juiced Up

SUN LECTURES

11:00A	UNDERSTANDING THE DIVINITY WITHIN YOU Peter Abundant
11:30A	MESSAGES FROM THE WILD KINGDOM-Animal Communication Robin Eatman- Psychic Medium
12:00P	LET YOUR EYES BE YOUR GUIDE Birgit Lueders- Center for Iridology
12:30P	YOUR TRUE NATURE FOR EFFECTIVE HEALING Rev William Meyer-Your Divinity
<i>Keynote Speaker</i>	
1:00P	WAVES OF LIFE: BELLY BUGS, OUR REAL GOD-BRAIN Dr. Tami Apple MD, Functional Neurologist, Integrative Medicine
2:00P	ACHIEVING 'PEACE OF MIND' AND BODY WITH CBD Craig & Glenn- Nativeceuticals
2:30P	YIN YANG CODE- Harmonizing Masculine & Feminine Energy Nasahrhette Gbawa
3:30P	THE SCIENCE BEHIND SOUND THERAPY & AMI 850 Joanne- CYMA Technologies
4:00P	FUNCTIONAL DENTISTRY & HOW YOUR ORAL HEALTH RELATES TO OVERALL HEALTH Dr. Shannon Thorsteinson- Wellspring Dental



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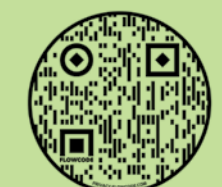
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WOMEN'S HEALTH

May is Women's Health Month. Here's a few articles from our archives on that topic.



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CEO **Kimberly B. Whittle**
National Editor **Sandra Yeyati**
Editor **Brooke Goode**
Copy Editor/Proofing **Melanie Rankin**
Layout **Flip180 Media**
Natural Awakenings Publishing Corporation
350 Main Street, Suite 9B
Bedminster, NJ 07921
239-206-2000
NaturalAwakenings@KnoWEwell.com
Own Your Own Franchise
Amy Ryan
Corp.NaturalAwakenings.com

Publisher's Letter



Two Years On

2024 will be the third Mother's Day without Mom. I knew when she transitioned that I would be processing stuff for some time to come.

Last week, I had a healing session and Mom appeared. She came to say, "It's okay." The "it" had to do with my belief that I could have been a better, more loving son. Protesting to my therapist, I told her it was unlikely that Mom would have said "okay" because she was usually quite critical. Indeed, as I observed the encounter in my mind's eye, the manner in which Mom said "It's okay" was more matter-of-fact, with little sense of comfort. It felt more like: "It is what it is."

I wonder how many of us struggle with our feelings for our mothers, whether she's alive or dead. There's probably no stronger or more compelling archetype within human relationships to me than that of mother and child. Ideally, it is caring, nurturing, unconditionally loving and intensely bonded and devoted until death. I suspect it's why it's harder for me to process mom stuff than pop stuff.

For all intents and purposes, I didn't have a relationship with my father—despite the fact that my parents were married and lived in the same house. But I grew up not only in a time but within a culture that didn't expect much from fathers beyond being a provider. When I first learned of his passing, I broke into tears—not because I was going to miss him but because I wanted to miss him more than I knew I would. A year or two later, in a spasm of recollection and reflection, I spontaneously forgave him for not being more of a father, recognizing that, in all likelihood, he did the best he knew how to do.

But our expectations of our mothers are different. The writer Mark Wollacott wrote, "Psychologist Carl Jung ... believed that the mother archetype exists within the child from infancy. According to his theories, babies project their own motherly ideals onto the person they feel is their primary nurturer."

That resonates with me. I definitely feel something deep-seated about what moms should be like. In my December 2019 Letter from the Publisher, I wrote about a session I had with the magazine's first yoga editor, Graham Fowler, in which we explored the possibility of trapped emotions within my body. I wrote: "Toward the end of the session, something happened. Shortly after he placed one hand on my chest and the other on my back, I burst out in tears. For a few moments, I didn't know why it had

happened. But then a scene from childhood started playing in my mind, and all of a sudden, I understood."

At the time, I didn't share what I had seen; it was too new and raw. The scene was of me looking up toward Mom, arms extended, eyes pleading, "Hold me."

I've always felt I could have used much more cuddling and holding as a child, and in that brief moment on the yoga mat, that feeling exploded, and miraculously, healing occurred. But it's taken this long—much longer than with my father—to conclude that Mom, too, did the best she knew how to do.

Two years on, and yet, I feel there's more to come.

As of this issue, we bid farewell to David Penn, our yoga editor for the past year, and welcome Patty Schmidt, C-IAYT, E-RYT500, YACER, in that position.

A former academician, Patty taught music at the University of Surrey in the U.K. "In 2009, I began working at a charity in London serving women and children living with HIV," she says on her website. "It was immediately apparent to me what yoga offered in terms of a therapeutic and spiritual practice, and this was the first time I began to consider yoga as therapy, as something other than an athletic endeavor."

Patty's special expertise is pelvic health and wellness; she also works with those living with trauma. Her list of trainings and certifications is far too long to cite here. Yet, impressive as they are, the ideas, energy and creativity she's bringing to our publication are even more impressive. We'll be generating more yoga content than ever, and we'll soon be providing web exclusives, too!

Welcome, Patty! We are honored that you've chosen to share your knowledge and wisdom with the Atlanta community, and we look forward to all that you will bring to us! And thank you, David, for sharing your knowledge, passion and talents over the past year. We wish you good fortune in all that you pursue in the near and far future. 🙏



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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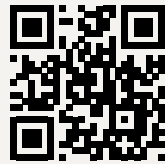
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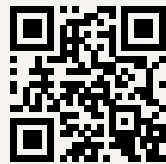
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Correction: In our Kundalini article in the April issue, we wrote: "While Sadhguru's teachings encompass a wide range of yogic practices, kundalini yoga remains an integral part of his teachings and offerings." This statement is incorrect in two ways. First, Kundalini Yoga is trademarked by the Kundalini Research Institute, and Isha, Sadhguru's organization, does not teach it. Second, to the extent that any kundalini yoga is taught by Isha, it is not accurate to characterize it as "integral"; says a senior teacher in the tradition.

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Letter to the Editor

On Safely Unlocking Kundalini

In the realm of personal health and heightened consciousness, many voices, including that of Sadhguru, express caution regarding the awakening of kundalini energy without proper preparation. Kundalini, often described as the ultimate creative potential residing within us, is a force that, when properly harnessed, can elevate our spiritual state to one of enlightenment.

This transformative energy is believed to be initially dormant at the base of our spine, in the muladhara chakra, awaiting release to flow through our being. Yogi Bhajan's teachings on Kundalini Yoga provide a systematic approach to awaken this potent force. Through a curated blend of exercises, breathwork, and chanting, practitioners are guided to safely unlock and channel their kundalini energy.

The process of awakening kundalini is akin to unlocking our full creative and spiritual potential. However, embarking on this journey without a guiding tradition or experienced teacher is risky, comparable to navigating a vehicle with no prior driving instruction. It's essential that our nervous and glandular systems are adequately prepared for such a profound transformation, ensuring the journey is led by the soul's wisdom rather than the whims of the ego.

Kundalini Yoga emphasizes the importance of a disciplined practice under the mentorship of a knowledgeable teacher licensed

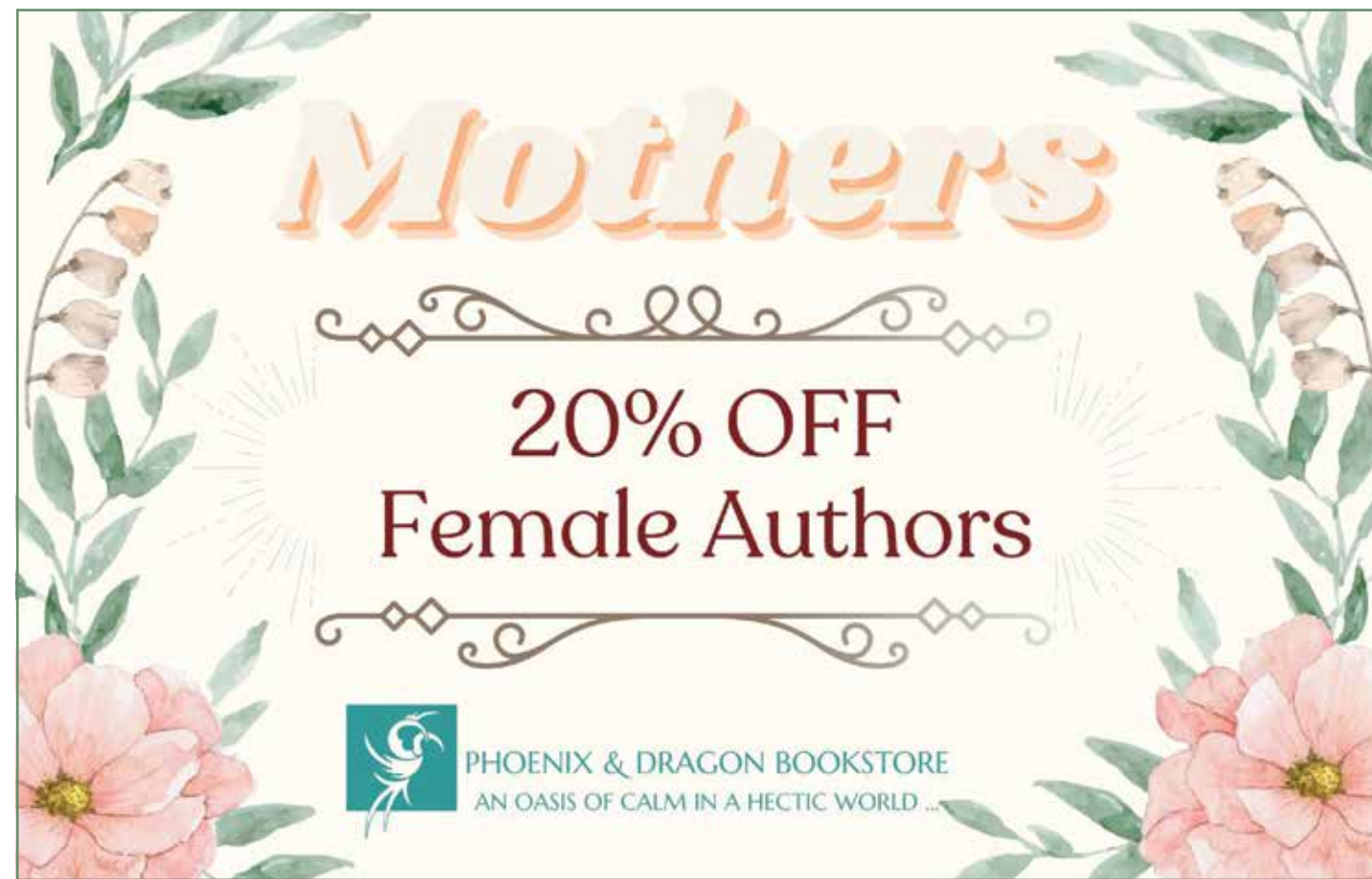
by the Kundalini Research Institute. This ensures that the teacher has a commitment to the highest ethical standards. The practices, discipline, science and research regarding Kundalini Yoga and the spiritual philosophy that underlies it are the focus of KRI. This path mitigates the risks associated with spontaneous kundalini awakenings, which may occur if our physical and energetic systems are imbalanced. By adhering to the practices of Kundalini Yoga, which notably exclude the use of substances that could cloud our energetic clarity, we nurture a safe environment for our spiritual growth.

Thus, while the warnings about unprepared kundalini awakenings highlight valid concerns, the structured and conscious approach of Kundalini Yoga offers a safe and enriching path to harnessing this profound energy. It invites us on a journey of self-discovery and spiritual enlightenment, grounded in centuries of wisdom and the guidance of experienced teachers.

—Mukta Kaur Khalsa, RYT-500, certified lead trainer for KRI

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Peace of Mind Expo, The Wonderful Wizards of Raw Announce Headliners

The Peace of Mind Expo, a holistic wellness and gem expo that premieres in Atlanta June 1 and 2 at the Gwinnett County Fairgrounds, has announced its speaker lineup.

The Expo features 17 speakers including four keynotes to be given by LaDeidra Wooten of Listening Hands, Lala Inuti Ahari of The Conjure, Dr. Tom Acklin, and Nasa Gbawa. The titles of their talks, respectively, are “Holistic Wellness: The Connection Between Body, Mind and Spirit;” “Mastering Manifestation,” “Waves of Life: Belly Bugs, Our Real God-Brain,” and “The Ying-Yang Code: Harmonizing Masculine and Feminine Energy.” Wooten and Ahari will speak on Saturday June 1, and Acklin and Gbawa will speak on June 2.

Other special features of the Peace of Mind Expo include a Cacao Ceremony on Sunday morning for VIP attendees, a portable labyrinth, a kids space to color a mandala and a free swag bag for the first 150 attendees each day.

Also being held on June 1 and 2, the Wonderful Wizards of Raw, now in its 11th year, will take place in the backyard of Tassili’s



LaDeidra Wooten



Dr. Tom Acklin



Dr. Makeba Moore



Makeda Dread

Raw Reality Café in the West End. Speakers include Drs. Makeba Moore and William Richardson, both of Atlanta. Moore’s talk is titled *Healing You Or Killing You*; Richardson’s is *Warrior Healing*. Both speak on Saturday.

On Sunday, Makeda “Dread” Cheatom, founder and executive director of Worldbeat Cultural Center in San Diego, the rapper Solé, and Abiodun Henderson, executive director of Atlanta’s Gangstas To Growers will speak. Also, Professor Griff, formerly of Public Enemy, will perform.

For more information about the Peace of Mind Expo, visit PeaceOfMindExpo.com. For *The Wonderful Wizards of Raw*, visit TassilisRawReality.com.

Center for Brain Training Opens in Sandy Springs



Malkie Citrin

Malkie Citrin, owner of Center for Brain Training, is now offering NeurOptimal, a neurofeedback-based brain-training system that is helping people of all ages improve the function of their brains.

“My son had a complicated medical history that left him struggling in school,” says Citrin. “Watching his reading and cognition skills take a huge leap has been incredible. Having that happen through a therapy that is so pleasant to use and doesn’t involve a power struggle has been even more incredible! Our brains are incredible machines. And I’m so grateful for this technology that allows us to tap into that potential. This program has been a real gift to us, and I want to share it with others.”

NeurOptimal is safe, effective and easy to use for all ages, and no evaluations or exercises are required. Sensors are attached to the head and ears, and the client listens to music. The system processes the brain signals very rapidly, and when it detects an “instability,” it pauses the audio, giving the brain feedback.

“The brain is the Grand Central Station of our bodies; it controls everything, so getting it functioning properly can potentially help everything,” says Citrin. She has seen a variety of meaningful improvements in herself and others, including better executive functioning, calming of a busy mind, reduction of heart palpitations and clearing up of lifelong symptoms of eczema.

Price: Individual sessions are \$45 for children and \$55 for adults. A package of 10 sessions costs \$400 for kids and \$500 for adults. Center for Brain Training is located in Sandy Springs, just inside the Perimeter. Call 404-435-2222 or email Malkie at mcitrin@bellsouth.net to make an appointment.

Wellspring Dental Offers 3D Printed Restorations



Dr. Shannon Thorsteinson

Wellspring Dental, a holistic dental practice, has expanded its services to include 3D printing of dental products. This is particularly useful for patients who are having mercury fillings removed.

Wellspring founder and owner Dr. Shannon Thorsteinson says that mercury fillings are usually pretty big, and that the underlying tooth is sometimes compromised to a significant degree. “You can do a filling, which is way too big and is really not the right choice for the tooth because the tooth would be at even a higher risk of breaking,” says Thorsteinson, “but it’s the less expensive option. To do a full crown is the more expensive option.

“Using the 3D printing technology, we can custom design the shape of what the tooth needs the same day,” she continues. While patients need to wait while the design and fabrication work is completed, they don’t have to make a return trip to the office.

Thorsteinson pointed out another advantage. While CAD/CAM technology has been used to fabricate porcelain dental restorations since the 1980s, the limitation is that, usually, only one restoration can be made at a time. With 3D printing, smaller restorations, such as fillings, can be made more accurately, and multiple restorations can print at one time.

“We like to give our patients options, and there are situations where certain techniques may be appropriate. In general, we now offer three levels of dental restorations—direct composite, which is the traditional style done by hand, 3D-printed restorations, and, of course, porcelain inlays/outlays and crowns as the third option,” says Thorsteinson.

To learn more, visit WellspringDentalATL.com. Wellspring Dental is located at 2635 Century Parkway, Suite 130, in Atlanta.



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Decatur Healing Arts

20 Years Fostering Holistic Well-Being

by Diane Eaton



Sol Room / Photo: John Wachs

In spite of the fact that it has gone through three owners in its 20 years and managed to remain open through a devastating pandemic that gutted many of the yoga studios and wellness centers in the Atlanta area, Decatur Healing Arts (DHA) shows no signs of wear and tear. Its following in the community remains energized and loyal, its membership continues to grow and the vision of its founders has blossomed into a unique and thriving wellness center.

In 2001, shortly after 9/11, Corinne Chaves left the corporate world, deciding that whatever she did next, it would be for people's benefit, not corporate profit. She'd been a longtime yoga practitioner, but once she started massage school, "the idea of starting a healing center planted itself in my head," she says. At the time, she was married to Jude Hasken, who'd been studying tai chi for more than two decades, and he was aligned with it. Having

lived in Decatur for 10 years, they were drawn to look for a location at East Decatur Station, which, today, is a flourishing commercial and residential area, but in 2001, just one establishment was open for business there.

The pair sat down with the three owners of the building for a long meeting and worked out the details. "This could be amazing," they agreed. It was an auspiciously smooth transition.

They opened Decatur Healing Arts in May 2004 with 10 yoga classes a week, massage sessions, body work, and tai chi—Hasken's specialty—twice a week. They brought in a few practitioners from the area and added to their programming. "I wanted to provide a place where people could find options and take back control over their own health and healing journey," says Chaves. She says that our current medical model is often disempowering. "The doctor tells you what to do and doesn't tell you [that] you have different options"—like herbal treatments or establishing a qigong practice, for example. "All healing is self-healing," she says. "When we disempower people by telling them we have all the answers, we separate them from their knowledge of what's best for them."

Although today's medical system is still far from holistic, attitudes and practices have evolved over the last 20 years. Chaves points out that Harvard Medical School has published its *Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi*, and Emory University has a pain management center that's all about acupuncture. Just in the last two to three years, she says, traditional medicine has begun showing signs of understanding that the



Corinne Chaves / Photo: Rob Sarabia



Jude Hasken / Photo: Maryann Luttrell

energy body is aligned very precisely with the physical body. Yet, appreciation for the role of energy in health and wellness is at the foundation of DHA's approach.

Change, of Course

In 2007, the acclaimed Daoist Master, Wu Dang Chen, personally invited Chaves to come to China to study with him, and it was an offer she couldn't refuse. Having studied with him for five years already, she felt a call to dive more deeply into the philosophy and practice of Daoism. She made her travel plans and knew she'd have to sell the business in the interim. But she couldn't find a buyer.

Susan Johnson had been a yoga student of hers, and during one of their sessions, Chaves described her predicament. Chaves remembers, "I told Susan that it might be the end of DHA. I told her I haven't been able to find a buyer—and if I don't get a buyer, I'll have to close the doors!" Without hesitation, Johnson said, "Well, I'll buy it!" All the financial paperwork was completed and signed within a week, and Chaves flew to China the next day. Another smooth transition.

Johnson ran DHA for 12 years, bringing it to profitability for the first time. "Susan has a way of being open to everybody, and she opened it up to the community in ways that hadn't been done before. Her entrepreneurial spirit kept DHA alive and thriving and growing. That came from her experience and belief in the power of what DHA was offering."

When Johnson decided it was time to retire in early 2021, Chaves, who had returned to Atlanta by that time, mentioned it to Nataly Baiz, a loyal DHA customer who had been practicing yoga since she was 12 years old. Baiz had been getting massage and other services from DHA for years—many of them with Chaves—and had established an emotional connection with the center. In a massage session one day, Chaves mentioned that Johnson wanted to hand off the business to a new owner, but if she couldn't find the right person, she'd have to close the business.

"I just closed my eyes and said, 'I will do it. Let's do it!'" says Baiz, who had completed her 200-hour Hot Power Yoga certification by then and has since completed a 200-hour Kundalini yoga teacher training, along with her reiki master and cacao ceremonialist certification.

While Johnson had done well to keep the business open during the pandemic, Baiz, eager to dive into her new entrepreneurial



Nataly Baiz / Photo: Rodney Gardie



Salt Therapy Room / Photo: John Wachs

venture, felt that it needed "a little more intention to get it updated." So she went to work. The much larger office next door happened to become available, so she moved the business into it, essentially doubling its footprint, and then did "massive renovations." The increased space provided enough room for a new meditation room, a new salt room, and more therapy rooms. Baiz quickly filled the void by adding new therapy services—including reiki, reflexology and shamanic energy healing—plus acupuncture and a wider variety of yoga classes. DHA had become an all-in-one wellness center.

Moving Energy

Twenty years since opening DHA, Hasken's tai chi and qigong classes are still offered once or twice weekly and continue to be well-attended. Since 1976, Hasken has studied with several Chinese masters of tai chi and qigong and is now certified to teach 24 and 108 forms of tai chi and five forms of qigong as well as Daoist meditation. During the pandemic, he kept classes going by wisely moving them outdoors so people could continue to attend with minimal risk.

"Being a spiritual person, I was looking for a community of like folks that understood that, at our core, we are all energy," says Tracy Brown, a life coach who arrived in Atlanta from Los Angeles 18 months ago. She's taken Kundalini yoga classes, received numerous massages, and participated in the cacao ceremony and sound baths—repeatedly—at DHA. "They're all just incredible."



Tracy Brown / Photo: Jenny Levine

“I think Decatur Healing Arts has been a really good thing in the community,” says Hasken. “The quality has been consistent through the years,” he says, “in part because we have the best teachers on the planet. And I am not exaggerating! It makes people want to keep doing [the practices] for themselves.”

“Everything we do at the center is about moving energy in the body,” says Baiz. Its yoga classes, expert tai chi and qigong instruction, acupuncture sessions and several energy healing modalities are expressions of that intention. Beyond that, the staff is happy to help customers develop a personalized treatment plan that combines therapies and practices holistically to get optimal results. “People are hungry to learn more about how they can feel better,” says Baiz.

Maintaining the Vision

Decatur Healing Arts must be doing something right. Countless customers have continued to come back year after year, and many practitioners have been practicing there for years as well. “I feel like I’m maintaining Corinne and Jude’s vision for Decatur Healing Arts,” says Baiz. Her vision for the future? “As a business, we need to continue growing, too,” she says, mentioning that she’s considering some new services to add to the lineup, including an infra-red sauna and nutritional IV therapies.

“I think one of [DHA’s] biggest invitations is for you to come back to yourself,” says Brown. “To help you release the energy that doesn’t serve you any longer and to make room for your inner light to shine more brightly.” 🌸

Decatur Healing Arts will celebrate its 20th anniversary with an Open House on May 4 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Further, special discounts, programs and activities will be offered throughout the entire month of May for the public to learn more about it. DHA is located at 619-A E College Ave. in Decatur. For more information, visit DecaturHealingArts.com, Facebook and IG.



Decatur Healing Arts team / Photo: John Wachs



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Balancing Gluten

Making Peace With an Oft-Maligned Ingredient

by Deborah Bevilacqua



Olga Larionova from Getty Images/CanvaPro

The rise in prevalence of celiac disease and related conditions, and shifts toward paleo, keto and other gluten-free diets, have driven the gluten-free products market from \$973 million in 2014 to \$6.5 billion in 2022. The market for these products is expected to reach \$15.1 billion by 2032 according to The Brainsy Insights, a market research company. However, switching to gluten-free products is not a one-size-fits-all decision.

Celiac disease affects an estimated 1 percent or approximately 3 million Americans, although approximately 60 to 70 percent of those have not been diagnosed, according to the Celiac Disease Foundation. The illness is an autoimmune condition that results in tissue damage in the small intestine, which may be accompanied by abdominal pain, gas and bloating, cognitive impairment, constipation, diarrhea, anxiety, fatigue, anemia, skin rashes and joint pain. It is diagnosed with blood tests and confirmed by taking pictures inside of the small intestine.

The National Institutes of Health report an additional 6 percent of Americans may have a related condition known as non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS). While

some symptoms of intolerance or sensitivity to gluten are similar to those with celiac disease, NCGS does not come with intestinal damage. Symptoms of NCGS also may occur outside the intestines such as heartburn, feelings of fullness, vomiting, headaches, anxiety, depression, a foggy mind and fibromyalgia-like symptoms.

For those allergic to wheat or other grains containing gluten or that have gluten-related disorders, permanently eliminating gluten is a must. This includes inhaling it, eating it and encountering it through skin or hair.

Gluten and the Gut

Gluten is a protein found in grains such as wheat, spelt, semolina, farro, barley and rye. These grains are a source of fiber, B vitamins, trace minerals and other nutrients. Many studies have associated whole-grain consumption with improved health outcomes. For instance, as part of a healthy diet, wheat has been found to reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease and weight gain.

Gluten interplays with the bacteria in the gut. The journal *Nutrients* published a review in 2021 of various studies that evaluated the effects of a gluten-free diet on

the microbiome of healthy, celiac disease and NCGS patients. The researchers found that a gluten-free diet reduced the bacterial richness and affected gut microbiota composition of patients in all three groups. In patients with celiac disease or NCGS, the gluten-free diet created a positive effect on gastrointestinal symptoms and helped restore microbiota population by reducing the population of pro-inflammatory species. However, in healthy patients, a gluten-free diet had a negative effect on the gut by decreasing the number of beneficial species and increasing the number of bad microorganisms.

According to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, changes in the amount or activity of good bacteria have been associated with gastrointestinal diseases such as inflammatory bowel disease, colorectal cancer and irritable bowel syndrome.

“Changes in your diet can alter your microbiome within one to two days,” says Dr. Tom O’Bryan, an expert on wheat-related disorders, NCGS, celiac disease and their link to autoimmune diseases. “When you go on a gluten-free diet, you remove prebiotics that feed the good bacteria in your gut. This then causes the bad bacteria to flourish and reproduce, resulting in increased inflammation in your gut, a contributor to disease.” This makes sense as 70 to 80 percent of immune cells are present in the gut.

Effective Gluten-Free Dieting

Whether a gluten-free diet is required because of a gluten-related disorder or by choice, it is essential to add prebiotic foods to replace the beneficial impacts lost when eliminating wheat and other grains. Prebiotic and probiotic supplements are a start, but consumption of vegetables is the key.

“Probiotics are most effective when they are combined with a high-fiber diet featuring a variety of vegetables,” says O’Bryan. He recommends at least one daily serving of root vegetables, such as rutabaga, turnip, parsnip, radish, carrot and sweet potato, and two daily servings of prebiotic foods like bananas, garlic, onion, asparagus,

leafy green vegetables, legumes, artichoke, apples and cocoa. “I also recommend a forkful or more of fermented foods each day. Vary it up with some sauerkraut, kimchi, miso or fermented beets, or drink some kefir or kombucha.”

“If you’re experiencing digestive discomfort, give a healthy, gluten-free diet a try for at least 30 days and assess how you feel,” recommends Michelle Ross, a board-certified nutrition specialist, licensed dietician and functional medicine practitioner. “My recommendation is to stay away from the gluten-free aisle. The truth is many people that switch to a gluten-free diet often turn to processed gluten-free foods. The focus should be on consuming whole, real, unprocessed foods.”

Finding Balance

Even for those without gluten-related conditions, too much gluten can create its own health complications. In a 2015 study published in *Nutrients*, gliadin, a component of gluten, was administered to biopsies taken from the small intestines of healthy, celiac disease and NCGS patients. The researchers found each group experienced increases in inflammatory markers and in markers of leaky gut, with the healthy group having the greatest increase in interleukin 10, a rapidly activated pro-inflammatory cytokine that defends the body against microbial invasion.

For otherwise healthy people, finding a balance between enough gluten to feed gut probiotics but not so much that it results in gut permeability issues is important. “If

you decide to continue consuming gluten, opt for whole or minimally processed einkorn wheat, rye, barley, spelt and Kamut wheat,” says Ross. “These grains have not undergone hybridization and are not typically sprayed with glyphosate before harvesting. Additionally, consider consuming sprouted or fermented forms of these grains, as they can be more digestible.”

Deborah Bevilacqua is a journalist and contributor to *Natural Awakenings Publishing Corporation*.

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Gluten-Free Recipes

Purple Cauliflower Salad

This salad is full of cruciferous vegetables, including cauliflower, broccoli and Brussels sprouts, which have a nutrient called diindolylmethane (DIM) that helps process estrogen in a healthier way. Pumpkin seeds are a great source of zinc, which supports progesterone production, and magnesium, which can help with period cramps. Avocado and olive oil are rich in hormone-supportive omega-3s.



Sewcream from Getty Images/CanvaPro

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- 1 head purple cauliflower
- ¼ head white cauliflower
- ¼ head broccoli or 1 cup Brussels sprouts
- 2 Tbsp canned red kidney beans (optional)
- ½ avocado, sliced

- 1-2 Tbsp pumpkin seeds
- 1 Tbsp olive oil or avocado oil
- Pinch of salt
- Dash of black pepper

Preheat oven to 320° F. Cut cauliflower and broccoli into florets (or slice Brussels sprouts in half) and add them to a baking tray. Drizzle the veggies with olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and place into preheated oven to roast for about 15 minutes. Stir the vegetables and roast for another five to 10 minutes until fork-tender and golden brown. Remove from oven and set aside to cool. Combine with other ingredients.

Recipe courtesy of Deborah Matthew.

Easy Fertility Kitchari (Quinoa and Bean Stew)

YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

- 2 cups dried mung beans, soaked in water for 8-12 hours
- 1 Tbsp coconut oil, ghee or olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 14 oz spinach, kale, collards or any other greens
- 2 tsp Celtic sea salt
- 1 13.5-oz can full-fat coconut milk
- 2 cups quinoa



joshuarainey photography from Getty Images/CanvaPro

- 7½ cups water
- Optional: cilantro, avocado

Heat oil in a pressure cooker (such as an Instant Pot); add onion, garlic and cumin. Sauté until fragrant; stir occasionally. Add greens, soaked mung beans, quinoa and water. Put the lid on, and pressure cook for 12 minutes. Once pressure has fully released, open the lid and stir in coconut milk. Top it off with fresh avocado and cilantro before serving.

Recipe courtesy of Aumatma Simmons

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Identifying and Treating Lyme Disease

An Integrative and Functional Medicine Approach

by Jill Valerius, M.D., ABoIM, IFMCP, ATC

Lyme disease, a complex and often misdiagnosed illness, affects approximately 476,000 people annually in the United States. Found in all 50 states and every continent but Antarctica, it is transmitted primarily by the Ixodes tick, more commonly known as the deer tick or black-legged tick. If not promptly addressed, the ailment can lead to long-term health complications. Thanks to advancements in medicine, the identification and treatment of Lyme disease continues to evolve and improve.

Historical Context

The story of Lyme disease began in the 1970s with a community outbreak of facial palsy and arthritis in Lyme, Connecticut. An explanation for this mysterious illness did not surface until the early 1980s, when Willy Burgdorfer, an investigator for the National Institutes of Health, discovered a bacterium in ticks from the area (*Borrelia burgdorferi*), laying the foundation for modern testing and diagnostic methods.

Diagnosing a Complex Disease

There are several complicating factors that make a Lyme disease diagnosis difficult. The characteristic bullseye-shaped rash is present in less than half of cases and may disappear quickly. Early signs and symptoms such as fever, chills, muscle pain, headache, joint pain, fatigue and swollen lymph nodes are easily mistaken for other illnesses.

The utility of early lab testing is limited because the process takes several weeks and can lead to false negatives. This leaves physicians to rely on observable symptoms and rule out other possible causes. A doctor will also ask if a patient has been out in the woods or grassy areas where they might have been exposed to black-legged ticks.

Tom Moorcroft, DO, the founder of Origins of Health and an investigator of medical mysteries, refers to Lyme disease



Erik Karits from pixabay/CanvaPro

as “the new great imitator and instigator,” describing its ability to mimic various other diseases, often at the same time. For people experiencing persistent symptoms, comprehensive lab testing may be needed to distinguish between Lyme and other tick-borne and non-tick-borne diseases.

Treatment Options

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), untreated Lyme disease can produce a wide range of symptoms, including fever, rash, facial paralysis and arthritis. While conventional antibiotics remain a cornerstone for early-stage treatment, emerging research increasingly recognizes and supports the role of natural and botanical medicine.

In a 2020 study published in *Frontiers in Medicine*, seven botanical agents were identified as promising treatments for Lyme disease, including black walnut, Japanese knotweed, sweet wormwood, cat’s claw and Chinese skullcap. *Cryptolepis sanguinolenta* extract caused a complete eradication of the *B. burgdorferi* bacterium in their study. The scientists recommended additional research to determine dosages and extract combinations that might offer hope for those suffering long-term symptoms.

The integrative and functional medicine approach to treating Lyme disease is multifaceted and customized, taking into account an individual’s health history,

environmental factors and unique physiological responses. The overarching goals are to target the infection, bolster the immune system, manage symptoms and promote overall well-being. According to Dr. Darin Ingels, a licensed doctor of naturopathic medicine and author of *The Lyme Solution*, “All other therapies, no matter what they are, probably aren’t going to be as effective until you’ve really taken care of your gut health and your mental and emotional being.”

Lifestyle interventions are critical in this holistic treatment. A diet rich in whole foods, clean proteins and minimal grains, dairy, sugar and processed foods can mitigate inflammation and aid recovery. Complementary practices such as regular exercise, sauna sessions, Epsom salt baths, sufficient sleep and stress management techniques play vital roles in healing and preventing long-term complications.

Prevention Tips

Prevention is integral in combating Lyme

disease. Tick repellents and protective clothing can significantly reduce bites. After spending time in wooded or grassy areas, thoroughly check the skin for early tick detection and removal. Upon discovering a tick, remove it promptly and monitor the bite area for signs of a rash or infection. If symptoms appear, quickly seek guidance from a healthcare professional with expertise in Lyme disease.

A healthy diet, regular exercise and sufficient sleep are essential for maintaining a robust immune system and can bolster the body’s defenses, potentially reducing the risk of developing chronic Lyme disease.

Staying Informed

- **International Lyme and Associated Disease Society** (ilads.org) is a global nonprofit that promotes research, education and policy associated with Lyme and associated diseases.
- **LymeDisease.org** offers support and information curated by patients.

- **TickSpotters** from the University of Rhode Island (Tinyurl.com/tickspot) provides tick identification information and science-based risk assessments.
- **Local health departments** can provide updated information and recommendations for specific areas.

Meeting Future Challenges

Lyme disease presents a significant global health challenge, necessitating a multifaceted and individualized approach to its management. Integrative and functional medicine offer an effective strategy, combining conventional medical treatments with lifestyle and natural therapies. This holistic approach empowers individuals to take an active role in their health journey, ensuring not just the treatment of Lyme disease, but also the promotion of long-term wellness and quality of life. 🌱

Jill Valerius is a dual-board-certified physician in family and integrative medicine with an additional certification in functional medicine. Learn more at NowHealthPalmer.com.

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Breast Cancer and Your Career

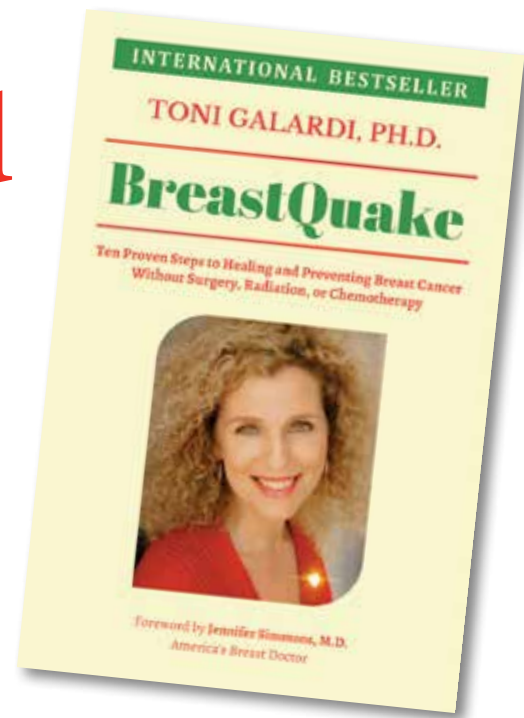
by Toni Galardi, PhD

[Excerpted from *BreastQuake: Ten Proven Steps to Healing and Preventing Breast Cancer Without Surgery, Radiation, or Chemotherapy* by Toni Galardi, PhD. Reprinted with permission. Lightly edited for placement.]

A woman reached out to me for coaching whom we'll call Ginger. Ginger is a petite redhead, age 49, who was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. In the initial session, she made it clear that she only wanted information on what herbs and supplements she should take to augment her scheduled lumpectomy and radiation treatments. When I inquired about her work, she disclosed in exasperation that she was burned out with her job as an executive administrator at the major software company where she worked. I became curious and pressed her to share more. She burst into tears and revealed that she didn't know how long she could keep pace with younger peers and the responsibilities she had at the company and juggle her home life with two teenagers. Although I did give her a protocol for detoxification of her liver, underneath the tears, she was holding a lot of anger, so we needed to work with her body and the old trauma that both the job and her recent diagnosis were bringing to the surface.

In Chinese medicine, the liver is key in healing cancer because it is believed that it is the organ that holds our anger. When we took a deep dive into her emotional body, eventually, it became evident that she needed to address her angst about her job and look at either moving into another department, taking a leave of absence, or beginning a discovery process for what else outside the company might provide more meaning and purpose for her.

She did take a leave for her surgery and recuperation and then decided, through our work, to move completely out of the traditional corporate environment. She then started



her own business making legacy videos for the families of people who were in the final stage of life. What I found unfortunate about Ginger was that she waited so long to address her unhappiness and lack of fulfillment. Like so many women, she believed that she had to work in a job with benefits until her kids were out of college, no matter how she felt about going to the job every day.

When many people receive a cancer diagnosis, they do not connect career satisfaction with their health challenge. Their approach is to follow their doctors' orders and get back to the life they had as quickly as possible.

Women and Their Career Choices

I'm going to throw some stats at you on who is most at risk occupationally before we get into the possible solutions because the data is fascinating. Women in professional and managerial occupations have a 1.4-2.0 times greater risk of breast cancer diagnosis than women in lower-status occupations. Moreover, the effect of higher-status occupations on breast cancer risk is only partly explained by reproductive histories, a toxic environment, health behaviors, and socioeconomic differences in screening mammography.

Furthermore, there is an elevated risk for teachers, a three-fold risk for orthopedic surgeons, double the risk among physicians in general, and a 40% increased risk among medical and health personnel. According to Dr. Kristen Fuller in *Psychology Today*, dated June 17, 2022, "Physician burnout is an epidemic in the United States, and it has a drastic negative effect on all aspects of medical care, including career satisfaction." Breast cancer risk appears to be elevated among women with workplace exposures to night-shift work, ionizing radiation, solvents, pesticides, and other chemicals. Job strain and sedentary work are also linked to elevated breast cancer risk, while workplace physical activity reduces risk. Perhaps this is why the data shows no link between farming and/or agriculture and breast cancer. In fact, all jobs studied that involved being outside appeared to be protective against developing breast cancer. Given that studies have shown a prevalence of women with breast cancer being vitamin D3 deficient and we manufacture D3 naturally through exposure to the sun, this makes sense.

Individual studies suggest breast cancer risk is associated with a longer duration of night-shift work, working into the night, shift timing and patterns, and occupation. Women who worked night shifts before their first pregnancy had a higher risk for breast cancer. Studies have also found differential risks for different tumor receptor subtypes of breast cancer: one study found a twofold higher risk of ER+/PR+ (estrogen-positive and progesterone-positive) breast cancer among women who worked frequent night shifts for five or more years. We also know that night shift work puts both men and women at risk for other kinds of cancer.

Studies that defined job stress based upon job authority and the capacity to hire and fire found 57 to 82 percent increased risk of breast cancer among women with professional jobs adjusted for job authority. A second study by the same author found similar elevations in breast cancer risk among women with the ability to hire, fire, and influence pay in 1993. And from what I hear from my clients, the corporate stressors are even greater now. What puts women at a disadvantage to men in the workplace that no one talks about is the fact that women have about 6% of the testosterone that men have, so working long hours puts them at greater risk of adrenal burnout. The adrenal glands are where sex hormones are made. When you overstimulate the adrenals,

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over time, the immune system is affected, and this depletion can increase the risk of hormone-driven cancers.

Another study found that working long hours (more than fifty-five hours/week compared to thirty-five to forty hours/week) increased breast cancer risk by 60 percent. A study of African-American women found that the risk of ER-/PR-breast cancer was 70 percent higher among women with the highest total sitting. The results of this study were consistent with another study that found the risk was elevated by 20 to 30 percent among women with more sedentary jobs, and that sedentary jobs before menopause or the age of 55 increased the risk by 54 percent.

If jobs involving farming and agriculture do not correlate with breast cancer risk, I would extrapolate that jobs that take you outside, like forestry and forest therapy, would also lower your risk, given the pure oxygen you receive from trees. Further, if you are in a sedentary job that you happen to love, do what you can to take breaks and get outside for 20 minutes. Your body will love you for it!

The Hazards of Suppressed Emotions in the Workplace

Workplace exposure to passive smoke and occupational exposure to non-ionizing

radiation does not appear to affect breast cancer risk, but being in a workplace where a woman must suppress her emotions actually does. “Pettingale, Greer, & Tee followed 160 women over two years before a diagnosis of cancer and subsequently after the diagnosis was made. They found that those with breast cancer (even before the diagnosis was made) who ‘habitually suppressed anger’ had longitudinal patterns of increased serum Immunoglobulin A levels (implicated in some autoimmune diseases) compared to those who did not suppress their anger.” What is telling about this study is that both women physicians and those in managerial positions of authority who have the responsibility for hiring and firing are at greater risk for breast cancer than those who do not.

I extrapolate from this that the responsibility for the lives of their patients and employees and working long hours may contribute to overall stress. The studies on stress as an etiology for breast cancer have become numerous. As a career and soul purpose coach for the past 15 years and a psychotherapist for 30, what I have witnessed in women who develop breast cancer, other immune system diseases, and heart disease is the prevalence of not just having a stressful job, but a stressful job that they are in for financial reasons. The term “golden handcuffs” was created in 1976 to describe people who work in Corporate America and have great financial incentives to stay with the company while not having their heart in what they are doing.

Women and men often come to me when they are beginning to develop physical symptoms or a BreastQuake™ has hit them full-on. Outside of exposure to extreme environmental pollution like a mold-infested building, I honestly think that not doing work that gives meaning and purpose to your life over many years is the single biggest toxin one exposes oneself to after the age of 40, even above marital discord.

The bottom line is that women spend more time at work than they do at home if they are in positions of authority. A colleague of mine, Stanford professor Jeffrey Pfeffer, published a very telling book in 2017 on the state of wellness, or lack thereof, in the workplace called *Dying for a Paycheck*. Where you work, how many hours, and with whom produce a kind of chronic stress that is contributing to the escalation of cancer in the Western world. What we need to do is to create workplace environments that support human sustainability.

Here is an exercise I give to my coaching clients to begin the process of discovering their new soul purpose.

Connecting the Dots Exercise

Whether you are in recovery from cancer or you wish to prevent an onset, or if you have outgrown your current line of work and are experiencing burnout, begin your quest for finding greater meaning by first doing this exercise. Do you remember, as a kid, using a crayon in a coloring book that had dots that, when connected, formed a picture of some animal? This process is like that. Allow three weeks for this discovery process. Write down every time you are aware of something that brings your energy up. It could be a particular topic, certain clothes, or certain environments that do that for you. Just collect data for a few weeks. At the end of three weeks, either work with a coach or share the information with a friend for perspective and see if a pattern emerges that could “connect the dots” of your next vocation of destiny. 📌



Dr. Toni Galardi is a best-selling author, career coach, psychotherapist, breast cancer thriver and a self-described “soul purpose activator.” Learn more at

DrToniGalardi.com or contact her at DrToni@DrToniGalardi.com or 310-890-6832.



Ask a Health Coach with Hope Knosher

How can I be more connected to my body and its cues?

When was the last time you took the time to listen to your body? Not just when you're feeling pain from a headache or an injury but also when you notice how your body is feeling?

Have you noticed how your body feels during an extended rush hour drive, before a tough conversation, after spending time with someone you love or playing with your kids?

In our hectic world, living disconnected from our bodies is easy. We inhabit, feed, hydrate and even attempt to rest them. They continue to function, yet often at a suboptimal level.

“Your body is sending you messages whether you notice them or not. These physiological signals are unique for each individual. For example, some people experience a racing heart because they're nervous about having a tough conversation. Others feel low energy for the same reason. Stress may cause one person's stomach to churn and another to start sweating excessively,” says Neha Sangwan, M.D. and CEO of Intuitive Intelligence and Internal Medicine Physician.

We tend to ignore the information our bodies send and the effects of stress until health issues arise. Now is an excellent time to take a few small steps toward reconnecting to your body.

Can you listen to your body for a few minutes a day? To do so, don't judge, worry about or try to find out how to push it even harder. Just be *in* your body. Connecting more deeply with your body and its cues involves cultivating mindfulness and developing a greater awareness of your physical sensations, emotions and overall well-being through sensory awareness practices.

Here are some sensory awareness strategies that can help.

Mindful Breathing: Incorporating mindful breathing exercises into your daily routine can be incredibly beneficial for your mental and physical health. These exercises involve paying close attention to the breath entering and leaving your body and noticing the physical sensations accompanying each inhale and exhale. For example, you might focus on the rise and fall of your chest or the subtle feeling of air passing through your nostrils.

Directing your attention to your breath can help you anchor into the present moment. This can be especially helpful if you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed, as it allows you to step back from your thoughts and emotions and observe them—without judgment. Mindful breathing can also help you cultivate a deeper connection with your body, which can be incredibly grounding and centering.

To get started with mindful breathing exercises, find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, sit comfortably, and begin to focus on your breath. With each inhale and exhale, you can count your breaths or say a mantra to yourself. If your mind starts to wander—as it inevitably will—bring your attention back to your breath and continue the exercise. With practice, you'll find that you're able to stay focused on your breath for more extended periods and that you're able to carry a sense of calm awareness with you throughout your day.

Yoga or Tai Chi: Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned practitioner, incorporating yoga or tai chi into your routine can be a great way to support your overall health and wellness. These practices are designed to promote mind-body awareness and can help you develop greater flexibility, strength and balance.

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Focusing on intentional breathing paired with gentle movement can help you cultivate a deeper connection with your body so you can better understand its needs.

Physical Activity: It's important to make regular physical activity a part of your daily routine. Depending on your preference, you could choose from various activities like walking, running, dancing, or swimming. Pay attention to how your body feels while engaging in physical activity. Notice the rhythm of your movements, how your body moves, your breathing, and any sensations of exertion or relaxation. Being mindful of these sensations can help you stay present in the moment and make the most of your physical activity. Always listen to your body and take breaks or stop if you experience pain or discomfort.

Nutrition and Hydration: Paying attention to your body's signals regarding hunger, thirst and satiety is crucial. Eating mindfully and savoring each bite can help you tune into these cues. Notice how different foods make you feel physically and emotionally and use this information to guide your choices. Staying hydrated is also essential, so drink water regularly throughout the day and be mindful of your body's thirst signals. By listening to your body this way, you can better understand your needs and improve your overall health and well-being.

Journaling: One effective way to monitor your physical and emotional health is to keep a journal. This allows you to record any changes or patterns you notice in your body, including bodily sensations, diet, sleep and stress levels. Reflecting regularly on your experiences can help you interpret your body's cues and how they relate to your overall well-being.

Journaling can also help you identify triggers that affect your physical and emotional health and develop strategies to manage and mitigate their impact. Keeping a journal can be a valuable tool for improving your self-awareness and taking a proactive approach to your health.

Self-compassion: It's important to practice self-compassion and kindness toward yourself—especially when facing physical discomfort or challenges. Instead of criticizing your body for being unable to perform certain tasks, treat it with care and respect. Be mindful of your body's capabilities and limitations without any judgment.

Remember that your body is unique and has strengths and weaknesses like everyone else's. So, be kind to yourself and have compassion for your body when it needs rest or recovery. This will help you deal with physical discomfort and challenges more effectively and improve your mental well-being.

Body Awareness Practices: There are a variety of sensory-focused, body awareness practices that can help you better understand your body and build a stronger connection with your physical self. Progressive muscle relaxation, for example, involves tensing and then systematically releasing different muscle groups. This exercise helps you become more aware of sensations in your body and releases any physical tension you might be holding.

Another practice is body-focused mindfulness, which involves bringing awareness to different parts of your body and noticing the sensations or feelings that arise and—without judgment or analysis. This, too, can help you cultivate a greater awareness of the present moment and a deeper connection with your body.

The body scan is an example of a body-focused practice that can facilitate sensory awareness. It can help you tune into your body, ground you where you are, heighten your senses and help you relax on a deeper level. You can do a body scan anywhere, sitting, standing, or lying down.

Here are eight simple steps to bring you a deeper sense of connection with your body and senses.

- 1 Find a comfortable position and settle in, feeling supported and relaxed.
- 2 Either close your eyes or find a soft gaze with no particular focus.

3 Take a few deep breaths as you bring awareness to your breath.

4 Once settled, bring your awareness to your whole body. Feel your body being supported.

5 Scan your body, starting at the crown of your head and working your way down to your feet.

6 As you focus on the areas of your body, be as detailed as you want to be.

7 Rest briefly before moving your focus to another area of your body.

8 When your mind wanders and you become aware, bring your focus back to the last area of focus and continue.

If you fall asleep, no worries. Once you awaken, take a few deep breaths and continue from wherever you remember being last. Once you have scanned your whole body, take a few mindful breaths and notice how you feel after the practice. Then feel free to move gently back into your day.

Sensory awareness also involves paying attention to the variety of sensory experiences throughout the day, such as the feel of the sun on your skin, the sound of the wind in the trees and the textures and tastes of food. By tuning in to your senses and becoming more aware of the sensations in your body, you can develop a greater understanding of embodiment and connection with your physical self.

By incorporating sensory awareness practices like these into your daily routine, you can develop a deeper connection with your body and cultivate a greater awareness of its cues, ultimately supporting your overall health and well-being.

Based in Atlanta, Hope Knosher is the founder of Healthy Living with Hope, offering 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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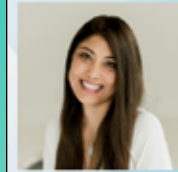
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The Road to Hormonal Harmony

Finding Balance and Thriving

by Marlaina Donato



Jilco Amaral from Getty Images/CanvaPro

Like a well-built home, the human body's quality of life depends upon a sturdy foundation. A complex, hormonal matrix determines our vitality and impacts major areas of health, including growth and development, stamina, sleep cycles, bone health, blood sugar levels, fertility, weight and mood. Fifty hormones take turns keeping us alive, as well as impacting lesser concerns such as hair and skin quality.

Excessive stress, certain pharmaceutical medications, hormonal contraception, auto-immune diseases and, in rare instances, tumors can throw the body into metabolic chaos. Supporting these fundamental allies through lifestyle changes that include a

nutrient-packed diet, improved gut health, supplementation and medication, when needed, can help us get back on track. Most importantly, prevention is possible with the same approach.

"Hormones are the behind-the-scenes influencers, ensuring your body operates smoothly and adjusting to the ever-changing demands of your environment and internal states. When this delicate balance is thrown off, the consequences can be widespread, affecting virtually every aspect of your health," affirms North Carolina-based hormone specialist Deborah Matthew, M.D., author of *This Is Not Normal: A Busy Woman's Guide to Symptoms of Hormone Imbalance*.

Even a slight imbalance of certain hormones—whether a deficiency or an excess—can compromise digestion, raise low-density lipoprotein ("bad" cholesterol), downgrade sex drive, foster cognitive issues, amp up anxiety and even affect heart rhythm. Lifestyle factors like smoking, poor diet and lack of exercise also play a role in disturbing equilibrium. Matthew explains, "Hormones are chemical messengers that coordinate many functions well beyond the realm of reproductive health. They are produced by your endocrine glands and circulate through your bloodstream, delivering critical instructions to every tissue and organ."

Oxytocin and Other Key Players

Like orchestra players, hormones work together, but the hormone oxytocin is the conductor. Hormones such as estrogen and testosterone, as well as the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin, cannot be produced or used properly without oxytocin. Good gut health also depends on it. "The most powerful hormone in our body, hands down, is oxytocin. It also happens to be an alkalizing hormone and helps oppose the negative, chronic effects of cortisol, our stress hormone," says Anna Cabeca, a triple-board-certified OB-GYN and author of *The Hormone Fix*, *Keto-Green 16* and *MenuPause*. "Oxytocin is what we refer to as the love and bonding hormone. It's also a longevity hormone—muscle-regenerating, mood-elevating, pain-relieving and immune-boosting. It is vital to have a high level of it if we want to boost and support the other hormones."

Cabeca recommends boosting oxytocin naturally. "It can be as simple as thinking of something that puts a smile on your face, brings you joy and happiness, makes you laugh or gives you that warm fuzzy feeling inside," she explains, adding that cultivating a sense of gratitude "will help boost your oxytocin level and reduce your stress hormone cortisol, which, when too

high, leads to inflammation and acidity." Her other go-to oxytocin allies are funny movies, being in nature, hugs, intimacy, therapeutic massage and activities with others like yoga classes, hiking or team sports.

The symbiotic relationship between the thyroid and our stress-fighting adrenal glands is also fundamental in systemic harmony. A 2015 study published in *European Thyroid Journal* revealed that 5 percent of patients with autoimmune thyroid disease also had an underlying primary adrenal insufficiency. An older study published in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* in 2009 showed that 41 percent of patients with compromised adrenal function also suffered from hypothyroidism.

"In today's high-stress environment, our cortisol production can become dysregulated. This is often called 'adrenal fatigue,' although that term is not recognized by the conventional medicine world," says Matthew. "This cortisol dysregulation often results in profound tiredness, cravings for salt or sugar, reliance on caffeine for energy and difficulty handling stress." She notes that despite its widespread occurrence, adrenal compromise slips between the cracks of conventional diagnosis. Recognizing the interconnectedness of bodily systems is vital.

"A holistic approach to thyroid and adrenal health considers the entire spectrum of an individual's health, lifestyle and emotional well-being," Matthew says. "Holistic practitioners often employ comprehensive testing to uncover subtle imbalances, utilize natural supplements like adaptogenic herbs to support function and recommend dietary and lifestyle changes that address underlying causes of thyroid and adrenal symptoms."

Fertility Factors

For many, planning a family is one of life's high points, but according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 13 percent of married women under the age of 30 struggle to conceive; about 22

percent of married women between ages 30 and 39 are hit the hardest. The frustration can be agonizing. "I often say that infertility is not a diagnosis; it's a symptom," attests Aumatma Simmons, a double-board-certified naturopathic doctor, endocrinologist and fertility specialist at the Holistic Fertility Institute, in Berkeley, California. "When we consider infertility as a symptom, we start understanding that it is the check-engine light that our body is giving off, trying to tell us something is out of whack. Maybe it's the hormones or something somewhere else in the body. The root causes must be discovered and addressed."

Common contributors to infertility include amenorrhea (absent periods) caused by physical or emotional stress, weight extremes (obesity or underweight) and age. Simmons underscores the role of diet and lifestyle in both women and men. "It is well-researched that lifestyle habits like smoking, alcohol and marijuana can contribute to fertility and pregnancy outcomes. Additionally, there is ongoing research about the role of sedentary lifestyles and body mass index as potential indicators of pregnancy outcomes. Even blood sugar and inflammation in the male partner can impact fertility, as well as a woman's ability to carry a pregnancy to term."

Simmons directly attributes food habits to egg and sperm quality, asserting, "Diet is vital in the role of implantation. There are studies that have shown that gut inflammation contributes to uterine inflammation, which directly affects implantation and pregnancy outcomes." She also connects the dots between the mental and emotional health of both parents and baby success. Negative talk, poor self-esteem, responsibility overload and an inability to let go or ask for help can also foster infertility.

What We Can Do

Taking a few steps toward a more balanced body can go a long way. Cabeca emphasizes, "Deep, restorative sleep is essential to regenerate and rebalance. Physical activity

is absolutely necessary for hormone circulation throughout the blood and lymphatic system, so doing things that make you huff and puff and sweat daily is critical." She also recommends alkalizing the diet by amping up hydration and fortifying meals with low-carbohydrate food sources, low-glycemic fruits like berries, leafy greens, cruciferous vegetables and sprouts. Adding intermittent fasting to the mix also packs a positive punch, especially as progesterone and estrogen levels decrease with age and we have a higher risk for developing insulin resistance.

Everyday foods for hormonal happiness include healthy, high-fat foods like avocados, raw butter, ghee, egg yolks (rich in choline and iodine for healthy thyroid function), soaked nuts and seeds, flaxseed, hemp and olive oil; clean proteins like quinoa, organic pasture-raised poultry and beef, wild-caught fish, lentils and beans; and spices like turmeric, cinnamon, cumin, garlic and fresh cilantro. Avoid trans fats, sugar and refined carbs, which trigger inflammation and disrupt hormonal balance.

Matthew recommends cortisol-lowering activities like meditation, yoga and breathwork, which help balance cortisol levels, improve our resilience to daily stressors and support overall hormonal health. She also stresses the importance of seven to nine hours of restful sleep by "establishing a consistent bedtime routine, minimizing exposure to blue light from screens before bedtime and creating a sleep-conducive environment in your bedroom. Many of your hormones are produced at night while you are in a deep sleep." More shut-eye also regulates stress hormones and helps to repair the body's cells and tissues.

Life is better when our bodies are happy, and change begins with small, inspired steps. Cabeca reminds us, "Create a life rhythm that works for you." 🌱

Marlaina Donato is a visionary artist, composer, author of several books and long-time journalist for Natural Awakenings. Connect at BluefireStudio.art.

Natural Births

A Look at Modern Midwifery

by Maya Whitman



Maridav/CanvaPro

Life’s most wondrous gifts are the babies that come into the world every day, but the clinical birth environment is not always an ideal choice for everyone. Modern midwifery, a safe alternative, honors its ancient roots by aiming to provide a comfortable and beautiful passage for both mommas and little ones. In countries like France, Sweden and Japan, midwives are involved in almost 75 percent of deliveries at birth centers, homes and hospitals. The practice is less popular in the U.S., with only 12 percent involving midwives in 2020.

“The birth experience became very medicalized at the turn of the last century out of necessity. However, midwives have been delivering babies for centuries in all types of settings. Birth is a natural process that does not necessarily need to take place within the confines of the hospital setting,” says Paul Quinn, a certified nurse-midwife in Ridgewood, New Jersey, and author of several books, including *Prenatal Possibilities: Recipes for a Healthy Pregnancy...and Beyond*.

Prenatal and perinatal psychologist Susan Highsmith, in Tucson, Arizona, notes, “Care in birth centers and at home can be far more personal. For women who experience low-risk pregnancies, a natural, home birth or birth-center birth can be a satisfying and safe alternative to a hospital birth. There are a host of benefits for the baby that are not possible in hospital settings where protocols take precedence.”

One of the advantages of a natural birth is the mother-child bonding encouraged in a non-clinical setting. “Babies should not be placed in nurseries, but should be immediately placed on the mother’s body and allowed to seek and find the breast,” Highsmith explains. “Being taken away from the mother, as is frequently done in hospitals, is anathema.”

Midwives and Doulas

Aside from facilitating the birth process, midwives can provide medical care, prescribe medications and order blood tests and imaging. Many are nurses and well-versed in any situation that might arise before, during and after labor.

Doulas focus on nonclinical care by providing physical and emotional comfort, keeping expectant mothers informed and facilitating communication with the midwives and obstetricians on the team. For Brooke Stenzler, a relationship coach in Bradenton, Florida, bringing a doula onto her birth team was an unexpected blessing. “It freed up my husband to be present in a different way, and the doula provided the tender, maternal care that I needed,” she says. “Prior to the birth, I met with my midwife for regular prenatal checkups. She came to my house a month or so prior to the expected birth date to make sure everything was set up properly for a home birth. I also had a couple of meetings with my doula prior to the birth, so she could get clear on my goals and needs. She also provided a prenatal massage.”

Stenzler and her brothers were all home-birth babies, so when it came time to plan her own pregnancy, choosing to have a midwife and a doula was an effortless decision. Her own midwife was seasoned, thus earning her confidence. “She knew what signs to look for if there were a serious situation that might require transferring to a hospital,” she says. “I trusted that she would let me know if she felt that was necessary.”

Taking the Helm

Choosing to partner with a midwife and/or doula can be the first big step in a happy, healthy birth, but there are some things to consider. State laws differ as to what a midwife can and cannot do, and insurance coverage varies from company to company. Thorough research is recommended to avoid any last-minute surprises.

Quinn recommends beginning a search for the right person as early as possible. “Not all midwives or doulas practice the same. There needs to be a sense of trust, and a woman needs to choose someone who makes her feel safe, heard, respected and valued,” he advises. “It’s okay to ask focused questions and inquire about a midwife or doula’s education. Ask for references. Check the internet for reviews, both good and bad, and verify if licensure is applicable. It’s also a good idea to check for any disciplinary action from the state.”

Bringing the next generation into the world is a hard job, one that demands support for body, mind and spirit. “Ask any questions that relieve fears, doubt or uncertainty beforehand. This is a mutually loving and, literally, life-enhancing relationship,” says Highsmith. “Birth is a sacred event, which deserves reverence.”

Maya Whitman is a regular writer for *Natural Awakenings*.



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Prenatal and Postpartum Yoga

by Patricia Schmidt, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, YACEP



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What is Prenatal Yoga?

The Mayo Clinic defines prenatal yoga as an exercise approach that encompasses stretching, mental centering and focused breathing. Prenatal yoga teachers describe their classes in a much simpler fashion: putting the pregnant woman front and center. In practice, it includes any yoga practice that welcomes the pregnant body; the specific yogic techniques vary widely. Essentially, a prenatal yoga class is defined by *who* attends more than anything else.



Vanya Francis Ayla Harrison

Ayla Harrison, an experienced Atlanta-area yoga teacher, doula and childbirth educator, teaches a highly individualized approach to *asana*, or postures, meeting the mama right where she is at any moment. Harrison stresses the importance of other yogic practices such as meditation, mindfulness and *pranayama*—intentional breathing practices designed to move energy.

Vanya Francis, a teacher, doula and founder of Cherished Life Wellness in Atlanta, also takes this approach, emphasizing that each pregnancy is different—even for the same woman.

Where and How to Find Prenatal Classes

Atlantans can access prenatal yoga in many different ways. At one end of the spectrum are classes taught by specially certified yoga instructors. Meraki Mama Collective, an Atlanta collective of women serving only the pregnant and postpartum populations, epitomizes this approach. Jasmine Bradfield, the Women’s Wellness Coordinator at Yoga Hive in Atlanta and founder of Atlanta Birth Work, has also dedicated herself to creating this kind of woman-centered community.



Jasmine Bradfield (right) giving doula support

However, prenatal yoga instruction can be found in more general environments, as well, since local studios sometimes note that some of their classes are well-suited for pregnant people. In practice, that typically means a non-heated class with an instructor who has a basic understanding of pregnancy. These studios might also take a “private first” approach, asking the student to receive individual guidance before joining a general class. From weekly drop-in yoga classes to workshops and series, many classes are out there that can fit almost any schedule.

What to Look for in a Prenatal Yoga Class

Safety

Women know a safe environment: It’s a place to fully rest, release and connect. In a safe space, women can practice being peaceful, making it more likely they can experience birthing and parenting peacefully, too. For that to happen, those providing prenatal yoga classes should have appropriate training. The Yoga Alliance certifies Registered Prenatal Yoga Teachers (RPYT) for those who’ve completed a general 200-hour yoga teacher training program and an 85-hour prenatal program with a registered RPYT school. Teachers should also have special training to understand pregnancy and the postpartum period. A prenatal yoga class should meet individual needs, too. After all, a woman’s pregnant self is not her only self.

Alternatively, Francis offers a 45-hour Holistic Prenatal Yoga Teacher Training course at Cherished Life Wellness. Through her years of experience supporting women giving birth, Francis discovered that many birth workers want to include aspects of yoga in their skillsets. While the course is not certified by the Yoga Alliance, it is open to non-yoga teachers.

Ideally, a class offers a balance between attending to the physical concerns common for many pregnant women and the other ways a yoga practice can serve them. The physical practice matters, of course.

Harrison says, “When I teach prenatal yoga classes, it really is about keeping the body mobile and strong and for feeling good during pregnancy. And then as a physical preparation for the birth, I focus on poses that are really helpful to create the natural extension and expansion that the body is going through anyway but also use stabilizing movements so that women feel steady, balanced.”

Francis echoes Harrison’s sentiment, noting, “at the end of the day, labor positions are yoga poses. Cat/cow. Child’s pose. Hopefully, we minimize pregnancy discomforts, and this becomes a way to help prepare for their birth experience.” And Bradfield agrees: “You’re learning how to go into these postures that you are likely to take throughout your pregnancy and labor anyway.”

But all three teachers raise the importance of incorporating the other “limbs” of yoga, too, as well as the pitfalls of over-focusing on the physical. The breath, mindfulness, drawing inward, clarification of the mindstate—these are equally important elements. Bradfield notes: “[It’s] the muscle memory of doing movements that are helping your body, *physically* for sure, [and] the muscle memory of the things that we’re talking about and able to express. You’re able to release and rest and digest some of those thoughts you’ve had.”

Community

All three teachers also emphasize the value of the community of the prenatal and postpartum yoga space. Especially given the stressors of American family life, the classes can be a refuge. Bradfield notes that this year has felt particularly challenging in Atlanta as several medical centers’ birthing spaces have been closed. For those reasons, the yoga teacher takes on an advisory role around options and support.

Francis shares that the check-ins at the beginning of class—a time when participants often bring up their stressors—are a vital

part of each session. “Over the years, when I’ve asked folks what is the most meaningful part of this experience, everyone says it’s the check-ins. ‘The check-ins!’” Harrison includes time for questions and reads a birth story from a graduate.

Jane Austin, who owns the nationally recognized Mama Tree Yoga in San Francisco, emphasizes that check-ins have a direct and positive impact on birth outcomes and mental health. When it comes to everything practiced in prenatal yoga, Francis says, “You’re practicing it in *community*.”

Resource List

Atlanta Birth Center
Sarah Gormley
AtlantaBirthCenter.org

Atlanta Birthwork
Jasmine Bradfield
TheYogaHiveAtlanta.com/atlanta-birthwork

Breathe Yoga
BreatheYogaStudioAtlanta.com/general-8

Cherished Life
Vanya Francis
MyCherishedLife.com

Doulas of Atlanta
DoulasOfAtl.com

Highland Yoga
stream.highlandyogaonline.com/product/11658/about

Mama Tree Prenatal Yoga Teacher Training
JaneAustinYoga.com/mama-tree-prenatal-yoga-teacher-training/

Meraki Mama Collective
MerakiMamaCollective.com

Peachtree Yoga Center
PeachtreeYogaCenter.com

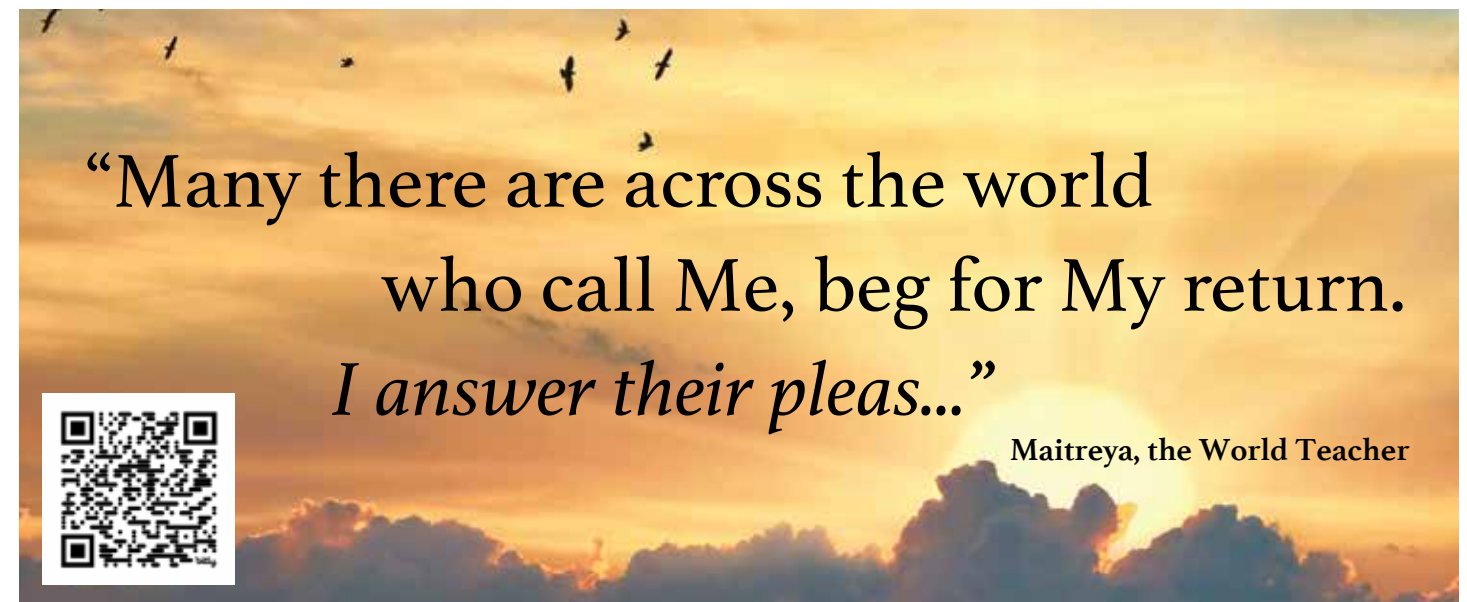
PLS Yoga
Patricia Schmidt
PLSYoga.com

Sweet Tea Yoga
SweetTeaYoga.com

Yoga Babies Atlanta
Ayla Harrison
YogaBabiesAtlanta.com



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Sound Healing – 4:30-6pm. With Michael Murphy Burke. Embark on a transformative journey with “Sound Journey with Spoken Word,” a sonic massage harnessing the profound power of sound. \$40. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Ste B2, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 18

The Tranquil Trio – 3-4:30pm. Embark on a journey of deep relaxation and holistic healing at this yin, reiki, sound experience. Join us for this harmonious blend of stillness, subtle energy work and sound, designed to nourish your soul and enhance overall well-being. \$83. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Ste B2, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

Breath And Sound: “You are the Medicine” – 3-5pm. Rebirthing breathwork and sound with Ananda & Gretchen. A transformative practice that transcends the physical realm to reach the spiritual and holistic dimensions of healing. \$55/advance, \$65/at door. Vista Yoga, 2836 Lavista Rd, Ste D, Decatur. 404-929-9642. VistaYoga.com.

WEDNESDAYS

Community Yoga – 11am-12pm. Aynil guides a series of poses and movements that are suitable for all levels of experience and ability. Free. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Ste B2, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

FRIDAYS

Community Vinyasa Flow – 6pm. Pre-registration required. Donations welcome. Lift Dunwoody, 1705 Mt Vernon Rd, Ste E, Dunwoody. Also at Lift Alpharetta, 501 S Main St, Ste 101, Alpharetta. LiftYogaStudio.com.

SATURDAYS


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

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

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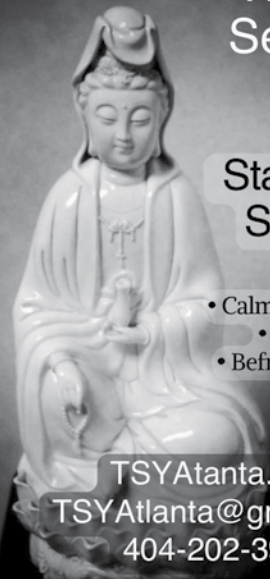
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“It’s an amazing, amazing community when you get this group of three... five... 10... 20 pregnant women. There is nothing like it,” says Harrison. At Yoga Hive, Bradfield extends her work throughout women’s life stages and larger family units. She feels that community is key, and she finds it often begins in prenatal yoga.

Empowerment

A good prenatal yoga class can also be very empowering. The National Institute of Health research studies of both online and in-person support groups for pregnant and new mothers show that women have better health outcomes when they feel a higher degree of empowerment throughout pregnancy and delivery. Their babies do better, too. Prenatal yoga is fertile soil for this empowerment.

Bradfield shares that women become more acquainted with all parts of themselves when they practice prenatal yoga and can take that familiarity with them into the birth experience. “It gives you a different confidence about your body when you’ve been moving it that way,” she says. “The self-advocacy that comes from that leaves you with fewer regrets. You feel like you made the decision, and you’re confident because you practiced it with your body.”

Francis’ mission is simple. “We’re really helping women become the experts on

their own bodies,” she says, often asking her mamas, “What is that inner voice saying to you? That inner voice is your superpower. Recognize that you’re already the expert of your body.”

Cautions and Considerations

Most care providers caution that starting any new activity in pregnancy carries some risk. If you are new to yoga, seek expert advice first. If you are experiencing pregnancy after loss, other trauma, LGBTQI considerations, accessibility preferences or any other specific concerns, see the list of resources below.

Finally, practicing yoga after giving birth can be extremely beneficial and an excellent complement to pelvic physical therapy, postpartum support, lactation help and other care. However, postpartum yoga needs to be done with discernment. Be sure to research your choices and get your questions answered. 🙌



Patricia Schmidt, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, YACEP, is a certified yoga therapist specializing in pelvic health, accessible yoga and yoga for cancer support. She is a

Franklin Method trainer and somatic movement specialist. To learn more, visit PLSYoga.com.

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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.

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.



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Walking Each Other Home

by Linda Minnick

Walking Each Other Home: Conversations on Loving and Dying, a book by Ram Dass and Mirabai Bush, was published in 2018. It's a conversation between two friends and luminaires on love, death and the spiritual path, and it includes guidance for the end-of-life journey. In their book, they say that we come into this life from Source, live our lives, and then transition back to Source. They provide us with insights into how we might address the inevitable end.

Through my own spiritual growth, this is a concept I have come to believe and accept. I believe we come from Love, experience life in this dimension, and return to Love. It was easy for me to accept when I was first introduced to it because that's all it was—a concept. Death was not a frequent visitor in my life. However, that was many years ago.

As we know, life and time march on. I now find myself in the stage of life when, along with everything else that comes with aging, death is becoming more familiar. Over the last several years, I have experienced the passing of people I love and have known for decades. It is becoming more and more evident to me that death, like birth, is truly a part of living in this reality.

The question I ask myself is: How will I deal with transition when the time comes? Will I stand by what I claim are my beliefs? Or will I exist in fear?

Gloria

I have recently been blessed to be a bystander as I watched someone celebrate



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their inevitable transition. Gloria Parker, the original owner of *The Aquarius Magazine*, had been dealing with health issues for many, many months. In the last week of January, her condition apexed. While she managed to rally enough strength and energy to be released from the hospital, Gloria was sent home after being told that her time was near.

When given this kind of information, many people I've known switched from living life to giving up. It's that moment in time, a pivotal point in our lives, that is the focus of Ram Dass and Bush's book. It is a moment of realization. It's a time when we are forced to acknowledge what we truly believe. Do we believe this dimension we are living in is all there is? Or do we feel it's just a stopping point to a greater good? Gloria appeared to believe in the greater good.

From all accounts, Gloria spent the entire month of February enjoying every day, every breath. While she did many things to extend her life, she also spent quality time with people she loved and cared for. They laughed. They cried. They talked about the

past. They talked about the future—theirs and hers. She looked forward to seeing her beloved daughter who preceded her in death. People she had not seen in years came to visit her. She mended bridges. She strengthened ties. She let people know what they meant to her, all the while recognizing that life was not over, just in transition.

Her Next Address

Instead of preparing to die, it appeared to me that Gloria was just preparing to move to her next address, which, unfortunately, would be out of reach for most of us. It felt to me that she was preparing for a great adventure, and her friends were there to walk her home.

Gloria Parker's life has left great lessons for many of us. She lived her life as only she could. Her strong personality left an impression wherever she went. She was steadfast in her beliefs, including helping as many people as she possibly could, smiling at life and being open for the next adventure. I truly believe she thought life was meant to be enjoyed because during the decades I had known her, she seemed to be enjoying every bit of it.

Through *The Aquarius*, Gloria touched the lives of thousands, including me. She gave us readers the opportunity to recognize there might be more to life than what seems obvious and to look at life through different lenses. She helped me look at death through a different lens, too, as I now recognize it is not a punishment to be but as an opportunity to return to a state of bliss and a new adventure to be welcomed with a sense of wonder.

Much like the gift to see life differently, Gloria has left me with the opportunity to see death through different eyes as well. Thank you, Gloria. You will be missed. 🙏



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.com.

ADVERTORIAL



We Have a Choice

In times like today, when every aspect of society seems to be in chaos, one easy response is to escape—through drugs, alcohol, comfort food, non-stop entertainment or any other convenient mind-numbing practice. Many are defaulting to this “cure” for their discomfort. Others, feeling insecure, angry, and demanding change, agitate to take society back to what they remember as the “good old days.” They may not be clear about what exactly made the past better, but are more than willing to listen to people who place the blame for current troubles anywhere but where it actually belongs: on economic inequality and injustice.

A Major Transition

Most of us forget that another choice is possible. We can create a future completely different from the present or the past—one that expresses our most deeply felt desires to live together in peace, happiness, and prosperity. In fact, this choice is being reinforced, or perhaps stimulated, by the planetary energies now at play. We are currently in the midst of a major transition between two ages — moving from the Age of Pisces into the Age of Aquarius, and such transitions tend to create chaos as the energies of the two constellations involved compete with each other. The energies of Pisces support individuality and devotion to separate religions or causes, while Aquarian energies promote cooperation, group efforts, synthesis, and brotherhood. As our planet moves closer to Aquarius, the

polarization and divisions among people and ideas will diminish, and we will find more common ground.

So, now is the time to take advantage of the energies and to put forth visions of a world that would benefit all people—not just a few. In mundane terms, we need to expand the “Overton window”—the range of ideas that voters find acceptable—to include ideas that are not currently in the public eye—ideas that might at first be considered idealistic or even impossible to attain. For politicians to support policies outside of the window would be political suicide, as they would not be seen as legitimate options by society. Therefore, since it's politicians who will be deciding the policies that will determine our future, we need to voice our desires for the kind of world we want, to make sure they are among the available options in the public discourse.

The Key: A Unified Vision of Sharing and Justice

How do we bring our ideas forward? The key is to have a unified vision, to voice it in large numbers, and to do so powerfully. Fortunately, we don't have to do this alone. We have help in the form of the great spiritual teacher—Maitreya by name—who is here to accompany our transition into the Aquarian age, and we will see him soon. He has said that peace can be established and our societal ills transformed by simply sharing planetary resources more equitably, creating justice in every societal institution, and restoring and

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