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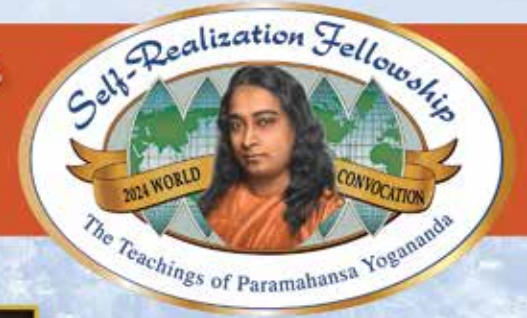
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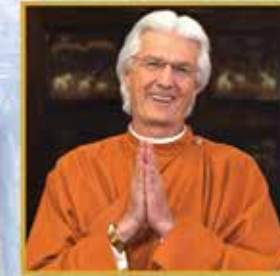
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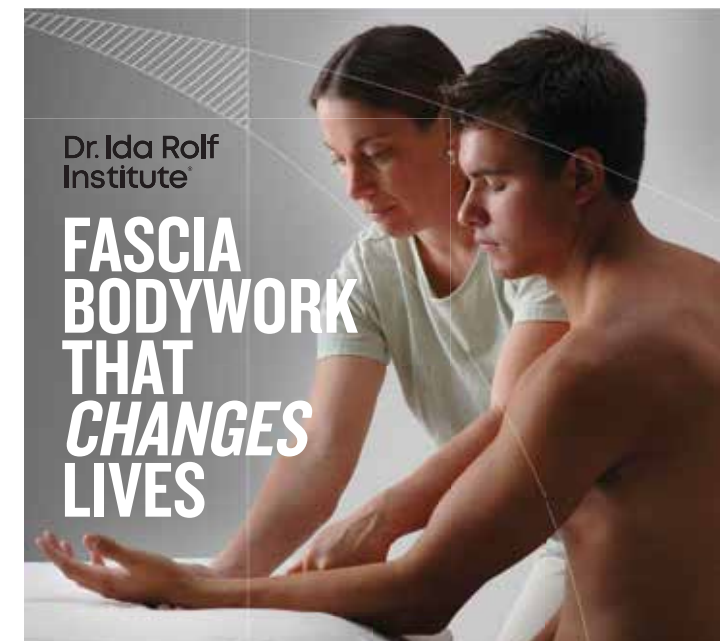
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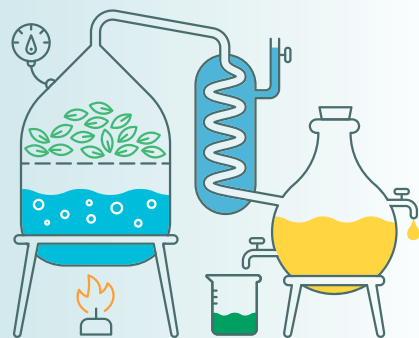


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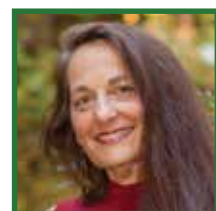
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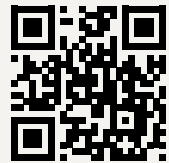
We invite pitches, submissions, letters to the editor, and contributions to our column Walking Each Other Home.

Email our managing editor at diane@naAtlanta.com, or scan the QR code below.



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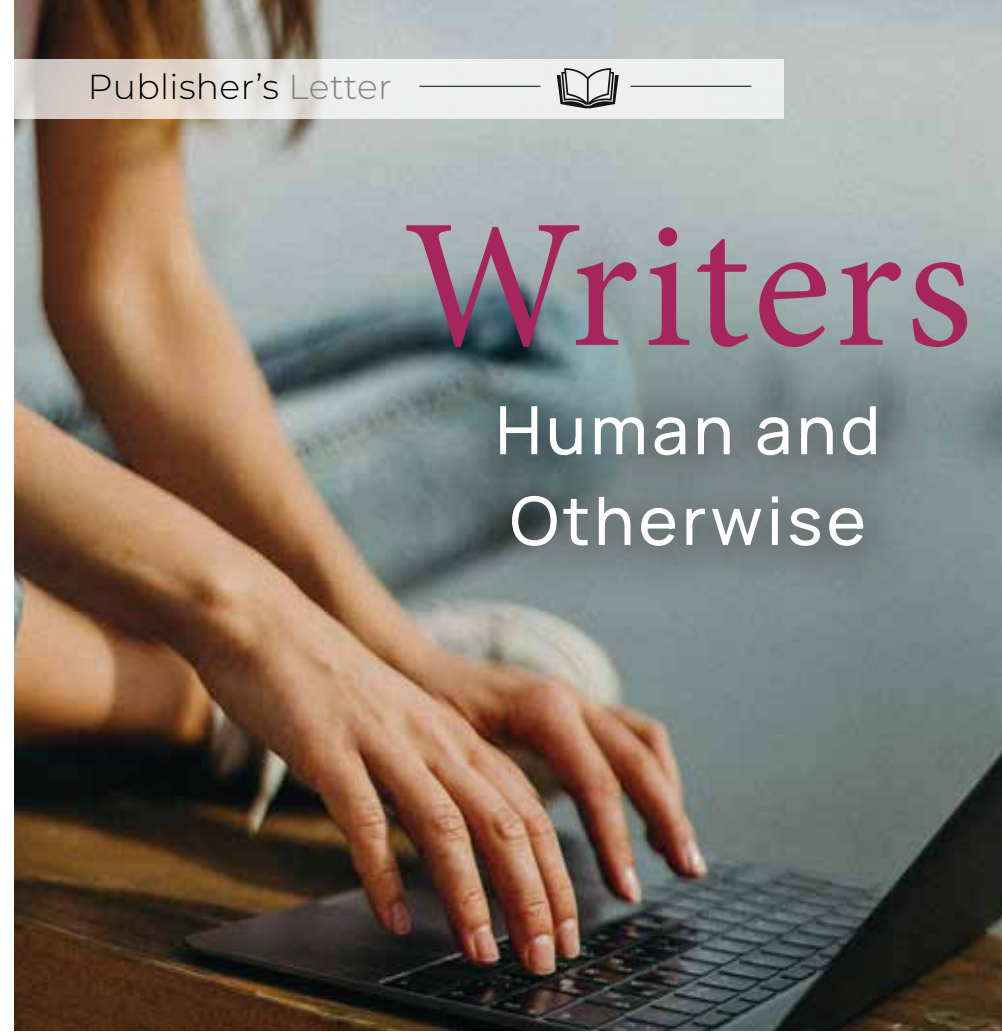
On the cover

The cover photo is of Tianna Neal, the owner and farmer of Starlit Roots, an organic farm located in Keysville, Georgia. She was photographed by Addison Hill, a professional photographer in Atlanta.

Publisher's Letter



Writers
Human and
Otherwise



cottonbro studio/Pexels.com

We humans get accustomed to what we have, and our appreciation and gratitude decrease over time. Therefore, I'd like to express gratitude for the constant stream of wonderful contributors to this magazine's single column, "Walking Each Other Home" (WEOH).

WEOH's purpose, as I wrote in 2017, "is to share stories of personal awakenings." We all experience so much in life—and it is easy to believe that we're the only ones working through our particular dilemmas—that solutions, redemptions, or even just a moment of relief are nowhere to be found.

There were times when we had no idea where the next column would come from; we have gone without from time to time. But now, our WEOH calendar is the most shored up it's been in years. We're scheduled more than a year out!

I'm particularly pleased with our two newest signees: actor, writer and producer Tara Ochs, who premiered last month, and someone she introduced us to, Tommy Housworth, who premieres this month.

So, I am super grateful to have WEOH nailed down for the coming year and to be able to offer you readers an incredible team of writers, which also includes Rev. Jenn Sacks and Trish Ahjel Roberts.

AI Redux

Only on occasion do readers send us comments about one of my Letters from the Publisher, which makes the fact that we received two emails in response to my June letter—all about our first steps into the land of AI—a unique occasion indeed.

While Regine Francois didn't intend her email to be a Letter to the Editor, she gave us permission to publish it as such. She comments about AI writing in general: "It all sort of reads as bland and unoriginal."

We couldn't agree more, which is why we will never publish anything that hasn't been rigorously reviewed by our editing team. It's also why we began using ChatGPT on our Atlanta Briefs; they are bite-sized, straight news items that are, by nature, "bland and unoriginal."

Our second letter writer asks: "What does a program know about the true human experience? Why should I care what it 'thinks' humans find interesting?" I had

Continued on page 42.

Letter to the Editor

I'll start by saying I'm not here to dissuade you from using AI if that is something you wish to pursue. But it is disappointing.

I enjoy your publication because of the content, and I like to support writers who try their best to produce original work. I get burned out by online publications that use AI just to push out more content, but the quality of it suffers.

At the end of the day, do what you feel is right for your business, work flow, and health. I'll still enjoy Natural Awakenings.

—Regine Francois, Atlanta



## Whole Body Detox Med Spa Opens in Alpharetta

Miller Functional Medicine Consulting has announced the opening of the Whole Body Detox Med Spa, a new venture offering an array of services focused on detoxification and overall wellness. Founder and owner Dr. Karen Miller, a traditionally trained gynecologist certified in functional medicine by the Institute for Functional Medicine, describes the spa's approach: "Basically, the focus is on detoxifying to reduce the toxins in the body that can cause illness, and that can drive cancer and other health issues."

The medical spa introduces a variety of treatments, including IV nutrition, ionic foot baths, a full-spectrum infrared sauna, a vibration plate, reiki facials and therapeutic massages tailored to individual patient needs. "All of that, to me, supports detoxification," says Miller.

The spa's grand opening will take place on August 17 from noon to 4 p.m., offering light refreshments, special discounts, spa service raffles, door prizes and guided tours.

Miller emphasizes the business' commitment to personal wellness. "We also offer packages. If people buy a series of IV treatments,



they get a discount if they want a detox sauna package with a vibration plate. It's bundled." That flexibility of choices allows clients to customize their experience based on their health needs and goals.

For more information, call 770-674-2426 or visit [WholeBodyDetox-MedSpa.com](http://WholeBodyDetox-MedSpa.com). Whole Body Detox Med Spa is located at 2410 Old Milton Pkwy, Ste. E, in Alpharetta.

## Dr. Singh Opens Alpha Wellness in Alpharetta

Alpha Wellness recently opened its doors in Alpharetta, offering a unique approach to primary care. The practice is currently accepting a limited number of new patients.

"I am so excited to welcome new patients to our practice and enable them to invest in their own health through an exceptional doctor-patient relationship rooted in functional, integrative and lifestyle medicine," says Isaac Emmanuel, practice manager and patient liaison. "This is how your doctor's office should feel! Please reach out to me to learn more. I look forward to speaking with you!"

Alpha Wellness says it provides patients with prompt attention and unrushed, 30-to-60-minute appointments with Dr. Rajender Singh, M.D., FACP, ABOIM. Singh's holistic approach is rooted in functional and integrative medicine, prescribing drugs only when necessary. His focus is on helping reduce heart attacks and strokes, addressing and improving insulin resistance and blood



Photo: Isaac Emanuel

sugar issues naturally, finding and treating the root cause of chronic issues, helping people maintain sharpness of mind as they age and managing and reducing stress and chronic inflammation.

Dr. Singh has practiced internal medicine for over 36 years. He is board-certified in integrative medicine through the Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine, has received fellowship training through the Institute of Functional Medicine, and has also received training in the BaleDoneen Method for the prevention of heart attack, stroke, dementia and diabetes.

Alpha Wellness accepts most insurance, including Medicare. Patients also pay a monthly or yearly wellness plan fee to cover additional services and to allow the practice to serve its patients optimally.

For more information, visit [AlphaWellnessAtl.com](http://AlphaWellnessAtl.com) or contact Isaac Emmanuel at 404-777-0577 or [Isaac@AlphaWellnessAtl.com](mailto:Isaac@AlphaWellnessAtl.com). Alpha Wellness is located at 3235 North Point Pkwy, Ste. 104, in Alpharetta.

## Art of Living Retreat Center Introduces Menopause Program

The Art of Living Retreat Center has launched a new online wellness program, Ayurveda's Natural Approach to Menopause, designed to support women through their menopausal transition. This four-week program runs multiple sessions starting July 6, August 3 and August 31. It includes a comprehensive blend of live weekly sessions, pre-recorded educational content and personalized Ayurvedic consultations.

Led by Kimberly Rossi, the center's director of wellness and business development, the program focuses on holistic well-being. Participants will benefit from 10 hours of educational materials, interactive community sessions, a private online community for continuous support and a digital workbook featuring recipes, wellness therapies and more. The program also offers monthly follow-up sessions and a 20-percent discount for future in-person retreats. The cost of the program is \$749, with an early bird price of \$499.

"As the oldest natural healing system on the planet, Ayurveda is customizable and sustainable, promoting lasting positive changes," says Rossi. "Menopause is a beautiful time of change, and our program empowers women to embrace this stage of life with confidence and grace."



Pixelshot / Canva Pro

Rossi brings more than two decades of Ayurvedic practice to the program, specializing in natural weight balancing and aging gracefully through menopause. She has studied with renowned Ayurvedic doctors and co-led women's health workshops globally.

For more information, call 828-355-6100 or visit [bit.ly/aolrc-menopause](http://bit.ly/aolrc-menopause). The Art of Living Retreat Center is located at 639 Whispering Hills Road in Boone, North Carolina.

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## Nation's First Holistic Care for Sickle Cell Disease Opens in Atlanta

The Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia (SCFG) opened the Sickle Cell Sanctuary, the nation's first holistic care center for patients with sickle cell disease (SCD) in June in Atlanta.

The Sanctuary intends to redefine wellness for SCD patients through a comprehensive approach that complements traditional treatments. Within a spa-like setting, the center provides nutritional counseling, stress management techniques, physical therapy, massage therapy, support groups and educational workshops. Additionally, patients have access to acupuncture, herbal treatments, hematology and oncology services, IV hydration and infusions, psychotherapy, reflexology, traditional medical care and yoga.

"This is a dream come true," says SCFG Executive Director Tabatha McGee, and she means it literally. After getting holistic help for her own medical setback several years ago, McGee experienced a reoccurring dream, and her vision for the Sanctuary was born. "We have always wanted to do more for our clients. Too often, those with sickle cell disease, while in the midst of a pain crisis, have to wait hours to receive something as basic as IV hydration and infusion. We offer those services and much more."

Dr. Shalomim Halahawi, the Sanctuary's medical director, emphasizes the importance of holistic care, stating, "The holistic medicine approach should be considered primary care,



L to R: Yolanda Banks, Sanctuary director; Tabatha McGee, Sanctuary founder and SCFG executive director; Dr. Shalomim Halahawi, Sanctuary medical director.

especially concerning preventative care. Compared to Western medicine, modern medicine is the child. Holistic medicine is the mother and the father."

*The Sickle Cell Sanctuary is located at 2391 Benjamin E. Mays Dr., S.W. in Atlanta. For more information, call 404-755-1641 or visit GaWellness.com.*

## Women-Centered Soha Fitness Opens in East Point

Soha Fitness, a 1,300-square-foot boutique fitness studio in East Point, Georgia, recently opened its doors, offering an exclusive space for women to focus on their health and wellness. Founded by Atlanta native Ms. Nelson, a Spelman College graduate and yoga and Pilates enthusiast, the studio aims to make fitness accessible and enjoyable for women in the community.

The studio began operations in June and provides a variety of group fitness classes, including yoga, classical mat Pilates and dance cardio. Nelson, who holds a law degree from the University of Georgia, designed the studio to cater to women, creating an environment where they can thrive. "I wanted to create a space where women feel comfortable and empowered to focus on their well-being," says Nelson.

Located in a historic brick building, Soha Fitness features spacious interiors with large windows, potted plants and original mahogany floors that add to the studio's ambiance. Introductory classes are priced at \$20, making it accessible for newcomers to start their fitness journey, says Nelson.



Soha Fitness operates on a class and appointment basis only. More details and bookings can be made online at SohaFitness.com, and updates can be followed on Instagram @SohaFitness.

*For more information, email Contact@SohaFitness.com or call 404-689-8988. Soha Fitness is located at 123 Fitness Ln. in East Point.*

## Local Artists' Works Featured at The Well, Phoenix & Dragon

The Well of Roswell is featuring the intuitive paintings of Marion Bodner from June 10 to September 13. Known for her vibrant use of acrylics and mixed media, Bodner creates abstract art that expresses her emotions rather than specific ideas.

Bodner, who also teaches Intuitive Painting at The Well of Roswell, draws inspiration from her background as a preschool teacher. "Teaching young children taught me to embrace creativity and let my imagination guide my art," Bodner says. Her works are renowned for their vivid colors and powerful strokes, reflecting the spontaneity and freedom of her creative process.

*The exhibit is free and open to the public. For more information, call 770-552-8980 or visit TheWellOfRoswell.com. The Well of Roswell is located at 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy #300 in Roswell.*



*The Garden by Marion Bodner*



*Forget me not by Abigail Carawan*

Through July 28, the Phoenix and Dragon Bookstore is presenting the May Day Show. Curator Rachel Mara has collaborated with Professor Robert Sherer and Art Career Mentor Services (ACMS) to feature artists from Kennesaw State University, including Abigail Carawan and Amber Barnes. Carawan's works are known for their curves and tiny details that delight the eye. "The subtle imageries of Abigail's vibrant watercolor flower studies invite the viewer to ponder one's own interconnectedness with the life cycle," says Mara.

Barnes, a printmaker, explores themes of deep feminine connection through her works. "Her aquatint and digital prints of goddesses reveal her understanding of things both hidden and revealed," explains Mara.

*For more information, call 555-123-4567 or visit PhoenixAndDragon.com. The Phoenix and Dragon Bookstore is located at 5531 Roswell Rd. in Atlanta.*

## New Book by Therapist F. Francis Jones Explores Empowerment



Frank Jones  
Photo: Bonnie J Heath Photography

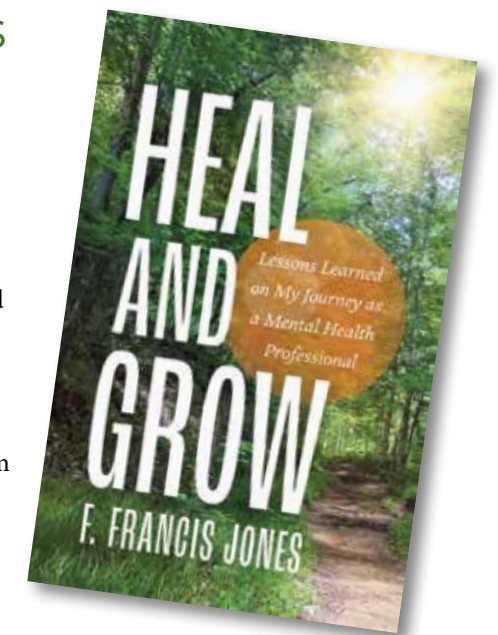
Atlanta-based marriage and family therapist F. Francis Jones has released a new book titled *Heal and Grow*. The work aims to provide readers with practical tools and insights to achieve their personal and professional goals. It focuses on self-empowerment and offers strategies to build confidence, overcome obstacles and cultivate a mindset geared toward success.

With more than 20 years of experience, Jones has worked with children, adolescents, adults and families to help them overcome various personal challenges. In *Heal and Grow*, he shares his experiences from clinical practice; each chapter focuses on lessons learned while assisting clients.

The book addresses working with couples and children, self-care and the benefits of therapy. The book features a special section on understanding the challenges men face and the importance of addressing their emotional needs.

"Writing this book has been a journey of reflection and growth," says Jones. "I hope it serves as a guide for readers to discover their potential and make meaningful changes in their lives."

Jones's background includes being an on-air radio personality, hosting a music video show and working on TV programs. He holds a Master of Arts in Psychology from



Phillips Graduate Institute and a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Columbia College in Chicago.

*Heal and Grow is available for purchase on Jones' website, FFrancisJones.com, and on Amazon. Visit the website for more information on the author and his projects.*



## Atlanta's Spring Wellness Events Get Healthy Turnout

Atlantans flocked to three wellness events in the Atlanta area in May and June.

The 19th annual Alive! Expo, held at the Gas South Convention Center on May 4 and 5, drew 3,056 attendees. Sixty-eight companies, from onsite vendors to sponsors, participated in the event, intending to promote total health and wellness, green living and organic products.

The mission of the event is to promote and inform people about total health and wellness, green living and organic products. "We're looking forward to our 20th annual event in 2025 as we evolve into a broader wellness event with more educational series, hands-on classes, wellness screenings and new vendors and sponsors!" says Patrycja Towns, president and founder of Alive! Expo.

On May 31 through June 2, The Wonderful Wizards of Raw Extravaganza drew approximately 1,000 people to enjoy gourmet raw, vegan food, speakers, music, poetry and hip-hop artists. Held at the Cascade Nature Preserve on the first day and then at the backyard of Tassili's Raw Reality Café in Atlanta's historic West End for the next two days, the event was "a very intense, high vibrational event, and everybody had an amazing time!"



Dancer Arata Ma'at and speaker Adio Akil at the Wonderful Wizards of Raw



Vendors at the Peace of Mind Expo

says Festival Coordinator Sunday Jones. "The vendors did an amazing job bringing raw food to life. And we had a super dope turnout!" Raw Soulicious won first place, and Back2Live by Chef India was the second place winner of the raw food competition.

The first annual Atlanta Peace of Mind Expo, a holistic wellness and gem event, was held June 1 and 2 at the Gwinnett County Fairgrounds. Event producers Sara and Nancy Hartman, a mother and daughter duo, have hosted a similar event in Pennsylvania for the last 10 years and wanted to bring something similar to Georgia.

Nearly 800 people attended each day to enjoy free lectures, delicious food and access to 80 local vendors offering a wide array of natural and metaphysical products, crystals and wellness and metaphysical services.

"Our vision is to bring awareness and education in a safe space with loving, positive energy. Our hope is that each visitor is able to take away a sense of inner peace from what they receive here," says Nancy Hartman.

For more information: [AliveExpo.com](http://AliveExpo.com), [PeaceOfMindExpo.com](http://PeaceOfMindExpo.com), [TassilisRawReality.com/Wonderful-Wizards-of-Raw-Extravaganza/](http://TassilisRawReality.com/Wonderful-Wizards-of-Raw-Extravaganza/)

## National Qigong Association Holds Annual Conference in Savannah

The National Qigong Association is hosting its annual conference September 24 to 26 in Savannah, Georgia, highlighting the distinctive advantages of qigong, a gentle, flowing exercise suitable for individuals of all ages and fitness levels, including those with physical limitations. Often referred to as a "moving meditation," qigong offers a unique approach to fitness through non-strenuous movements and deep, slow breathing techniques. It can enhance oxygen intake, massage internal organs and significantly reduce stress, and it has been shown to boost immune function, improve organ health and promote overall well-being.

Qigong is ideal for improving flexibility, balance and coordination while fostering inner peace. As an accessible fitness option, it provides a gentle yet powerful way to enhance both physical and mental health.

Newcomers, beginners and experienced practitioners alike are encouraged to attend the conference, which offers an excellent opportunity for attendees to delve into and learn more about the ancient practice.



For more information, visit [NQA.org/annual-conference](http://NQA.org/annual-conference), email [Info@NQA.org](mailto:Info@NQA.org) or call Lauren Thomas, 888-815-1893.

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# Ayurvedic Seasonal Eating

## How to Balance Doshas With the Right Foods

by Carrie Jackson

Each season brings a unique bounty of fresh food to sustain and nourish us. A ripe tomato off the vine in the summer or a hearty winter squash stew highlights what the Earth naturally offers. Seasonal eating is a rhythmic approach that is more sustainable than relying on grocery-store staples and connects us to the world around us. Combining seasonal eating with the Ayurvedic concept of balancing our doshas helps to maintain harmony with nature. It also helps support local farmers, reduce carbon emissions, maximize the food's nutritional value and nourish holistically.

### The Fresher the Better

Seasonal eating is intuitive, but modern technology and busy lifestyles get in the way. "For thousands of years, people ate

seasonally all the time, as there was no other option," says Erin Casperson, director at Kripalu School of Ayurveda, a global leader in mindfulness education. "They trusted that each harvest gave us exactly what we needed to survive and thrive. It is only recently, with the development of refrigeration and modern transport, that we are able to access food from other areas of the world and store it for long periods of time."

Eating local food when it is fresh not only helps to maximize the food's nutritional value, it strengthens our connection to its origin. "From an Ayurvedic perspective, we look at the prana, or life force, in food," explains Casperson. "Generally, the shorter it's been off the plant, the more life, or nourishment, it will supply. When it's treated with pesticides and sits in storage or refrigeration for days or weeks, it starts

to lose that life force. Looking at a freshly picked strawberry, you can see the value it has. If I pick up a plastic box of spinach at the grocery store, there's no connection. I have no idea how long it's been traveling or what it's been exposed to."

Kadiatou Sibi, a board-certified Ayurvedic and reiki practitioner and founder of Los Angeles-based A Web of Wellness, recommends frequenting farmers markets, co-ops and grocery stores that offer locally grown food to maximize freshness. "Consuming foods during their harvest honors the natural cycle of the Earth. The crops are brighter, tastier and more nutritionally dense. By purchasing food from a [farmers] market, you are supporting marginalized communities, which historically are often women and families working in the fields. Cultivating locally grown foods also helps to maintain the biodiversity of crops and prevents big corporations from taking over the land."

Cutting out long-distance transportation doesn't just increase the food's freshness, it is better for the environment, too. "When we eat locally, we lower the carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions it takes to access the food. It also eliminates the need for pesticides and other harmful agents that make the food last longer," Sibi explains.

Eating seasonally is a cornerstone of Ayurvedic practices, which Sibi says are rooted in a deep connection with nature. "The idea of seasons is based around the cycles of the moon and sun," she asserts. "Food is one important way we can balance ourselves holistically. Seasonal eating teaches us to wait for the right time and not rush nature. We can look forward to watermelon in the summer and Brussels sprouts in the winter. We learn to cultivate deep gratitude and respect for the land and all it provides for us. It fosters deep stewardship for the Earth."

### Balancing Our Doshas

Incorporating the Ayurvedic understanding of doshas into our diet further supports our connection to nature and intuitive eating. "According to Ayurveda, everything and

everyone is comprised of five elements: space, air, fire, water and earth," says Veena Haasl-Blilie, founder of Minnesota-based Saumya Ayurveda. "These elements combine to form three basic energy properties called the doshas. These foundational energies, known as vata, pitta and kapha, are the building blocks of our universe. While all three doshas are present in every one of us, they manifest to varying degrees. Our distinct physical, mental and spiritual traits are the result of our unique dosha constitution."

Disruptions in our daily routines, stress and diet changes can cause doshas to get out of balance. By mindfully incorporating dosha-balancing foods and herbs into our day, our bodies and minds can reset. "In Ayurveda, food is medicine. When we eat to balance the doshas, we are eating in the most supportive and nourishing way possible," explains Haasl-Blilie. "Instead of a one-size-fits-all diet, we are eating what is balancing to us specifically in that season."

Understanding an individual's own dosha type is a key starting point. Haasl-Blilie recommends, "Fiery pitta is best balanced through naturally sweet foods like fruit, most grains, squash, root vegetables, milk and ghee. The best tastes for balancing pitta are sweet, bitter and astringent, while sour, salty and pungent tastes should be minimized. Airy vata has a cold, dry, light nature that can be countered with foods that are warm, moist and grounding, such as hearty soups and healthy fats. Sweet, sour and salty foods help to balance it. For kapha's cool, dense, oily nature, we should favor food that is light, dry and easy to digest, ideally served warm or hot with invigorating herbs or spices. Sweet, sour and salty tastes should be minimized."

Cooking with seasonal food that supports dosha balance helps to further nourish holistically. Chef Divya Alter is a cookbook author and the co-founder of Divya's, which combines culinary education, good-for-you packaged foods and a plant-based restaurant in New York City. Aiming to offer practical ways to bridge the ancient wisdom of food with modern living beyond the boundaries of India, she notes, "Part of my mission is to show people how

to apply the universal Ayurveda principles to every part of the world, incorporating the ancient principles of food compatibility and digestion into local cuisines."

### The Joy of Summer Foods

Alter says that in warmer months, choosing balancing foods helps to naturally regulate our bodies and our doshas. "Summer is the season of outdoor activities, travel, vacationing and more. The heat and exertion tend to deplete our systems, but nature's peak harvest season provides us with abundant produce to help us replenish. Ayurveda is all about balancing with nature, so in the hot summer, when we tend to sweat more and feel dehydrated, we need to incorporate cooling and hydrating foods. We feel extra pleasure eating the juicy seasonal fruits like peaches, apricots, berries and watermelon because they quickly cool and nourish us. Zucchini, fennel, leafy greens, okra, carrots and green beans are all great vegetables to give us minerals, vitamins and fiber, plus keep our bodies cool. Coconut in every form is our best friend in summer because it is very cooling and nourishing. Fresh coconut water is the best natural electrolyte drink, and you can add fresh coconut milk to your curry or smoothie. For plant-based protein, mung beans and red or green lentils are all great choices."

For a simple complement to any dish, Alter recommends using fresh herbs, most of which can be grown locally. "Cilantro, basil, parsley, dill, rosemary, thyme, curry leaves and tarragon, and the cooling spices such as coriander, fennel, cumin and cardamom, add flavor without overheating

the body. I use very little or no chili, and if my digestion needs a bit more heat, then I'd use warming spices like black pepper, turmeric, cinnamon and ginger in small amounts," she says.

Sibi points out that using fresh herbs and spices while cooking also helps to preserve cultural traditions. "While they may not have originated here, locally grown and ethically sourced herbs honor global cooking and customs," she says. "Incorporating fresh cilantro into a Mexican dish, turmeric into an Indian recipe, or parsley into a Mediterranean meal reminds us of their origins. Besides the medicinal benefits, the flavors are more palatable, and it's a valuable way to teach these traditions to a younger generation. They learn that what you put in your mouth doesn't just affect you, but has a larger global impact."

While this may seem like a lot to consider when making daily food choices, Casperson recommends starting with seasonal eating and balancing our doshas using ingredients that are readily available. "Seasonal eating is more accessible, because you can literally choose what to eat by what is in the market. From there, have some fun with it," she suggests. "Look up recipes and menus that you can easily digest to support your dosha balance, and add in herbs grown in your own garden. Sit down and eat in a relaxed setting without distractions and really connect with how you're nourishing yourself." 🌱

Carrie Jackson is a Chicago-based freelance writer and frequent contributor to Natural Awakenings. Connect at [CarrieJacksonWrites.com](http://CarrieJacksonWrites.com).



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# A Dose of Life Force

## Understanding Intravenous Therapies

by Zak Logan



**T**he human body can thrive when it receives and absorbs a full spectrum of vitamins and minerals, but due to an inadequate diet and compromised digestive system, the nutrients in food and oral supplements do not always hit their mark. The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health recommends 13 organic vitamins and 16 inorganic minerals for optimum health, but many of the water-soluble, vital substances such as vitamin C and the B-complex vitamins may not get absorbed by the body and wash out in urine.

This is where intravenous nutrient therapies (IVNT) can fill in the metabolic gaps. Pioneered by the late Dr. John Myers in the

1970s, IVNT puts nutrition directly into the body, bypassing the digestive process to replenish vital elements. "As individuals age or take medications, absorption rates can decrease to as low as 3 to 5 percent," says Dr. Mitchell Ghen, a clinician, researcher and author specializing in intravenous (IV) nutrition and psychoneuroimmunology in Boca Raton, Florida. "Intravenous nutrition offers a solution by ensuring 100 percent absorption of essential nutrients."

### IV Treatments

Beyond celebrity hype, claims of hangover cures and availability at trendy gyms, IV therapy is on the rise at health facilities. A study published in *Frontiers in Oncology* in 2014 showed that intravenous vitamin C

treatments minimize chemotherapy-related fatigue and other symptoms in cancer patients and improve quality of life.

IV vitamin therapy might offer improvement for individuals with nutrient deficiencies. "Anyone who has malabsorption issues will greatly benefit from IV nutrient therapy. Those issues may be caused by bariatric surgery, gut resections with reattachment or diverting colostomy, chronic pancreatitis,

infections such as tropical sprue, parasites, tapeworm, or genetic diseases like celiac," states Jeffrey Weiss, an internal medicine doctor, naturopath and medical director of the Infusion Center of New Jersey.

According to Weiss, cardiac chelation shows promise for cardiovascular disease. "Intravenous di-sodium EDTA [ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid] acts as a magnet for plaque, grabbing onto it and flushing it out

## A Closer Look at IV Therapy

Intravenous (IV) therapy, a method of delivering vitamins and minerals directly into the bloodstream, has been gaining popularity as a potential remedy for a number of health issues.

Dr. Karen F. Miller, owner of Miller Functional Medicine in Alpharetta, says that many Americans are not getting sufficient amounts of the nutrients their bodies require. "When considering IV therapy, we must understand that we don't get adequate nutrients from our current food sources in the United States," says Miller. IV therapies can deliver nutrients directly into the bloodstream effectively, she notes, and more of the nutrients can get absorbed via IV than by other methods.

"There is no substitute for IV delivery," says Miller. "When I was in residency at Emory [in the OBGYN program], we had people come into the emergency department having pre-term contractions, and we gave them huge doses of magnesium to stop the contractions. It is not possible to absorb that much magnesium in the gut."

Miller observes, "Currently, everyone I am treating with IV nutrients is receiving their IVs for a particular reason." During the COVID-19 pandemic, she says, patients sought IV therapy for extra vitamin C; the focus has now shifted to managing chronic issues with improved micronutrient intake. The IV formula Miller and other practitioners around the country use is based on the popular Myers' cocktail, whose ingredients include magnesium, calcium, B vitamins, and vitamin C1. "This formula was found to be beneficial for many common ailments, such as asthma, migraine, hypertension, fatigue and fibromyalgia," says Miller.

The formula is also highly customizable. So, patients who usually have a reaction to certain vitamins, for example, can be accommodated.

Miller says the recommended number of visits varies depending on what is being treated. "When providing IV therapy for an acute issue, some people benefit from getting an IV twice a week, but once they have improved, they may only need an infusion every week or every other week. As they progressively get better, I have seen them benefit from getting an infusion once a month or every six weeks," she says.

IV therapy is becoming more popular both as a response to certain health conditions and as part of a general wellness routine, and celebrities like Rhianna, Adele and John Legend have undergone the treatment.

Still, the scientific community remains cautious. According to a 2023 article by AARP, evidence supporting IV vitamin therapy is limited and often anecdotal.

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via the urine. I see incredible results from cardiac chelation for heavy metal detox, atherosclerosis and even critical valvular (mitral and aortic) stenosis," he explains.

For allergy sufferers, IVNT can be an alternative to over-the-counter fixes. "Seasonal allergies manifest with elevated histamine levels. Intravenous nutritional intervention, including combining high-dose vitamin C, zinc and B vitamins with oral nutrients such as quercetin, vitamin D3 and curcumin, can effectively alleviate these symptoms," explains Ghen. For asthmatic patients experiencing broncho-spasms triggered by allergies, he adds, "Intravenous doses of magnesium sulfate can provide relief by relaxing the smooth muscle, therefore improving respiratory symptoms."

### Key Nutrients and Safety

For Ghen, optimal management of serious chronic diseases necessitates a broad approach. "Many of the disorders we encounter stem from underlying processes such as metabolic disturbances, infections, inflammation and oxidative stress," he emphasizes. "While a multitude of nutrients can contribute to mitigating these disease processes, several components often stand out: vitamin C, valued for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties; B vitamins; magnesium; and the number one intracellular antioxidant, glutathione."

Weiss also spotlights glutathione as a powerful antioxidant and chelator that binds to heavy metals, mold, organic pollutants and environmental toxins, noting,

"Fibromyalgia has a strong environmental etiology, with all my patients testing for some form of heavy metal or other toxicity."

Ghen suggests pacing IV doses, tailoring treatments and conducting follow-up analysis. "As an educator who has trained over 3,800 physicians in the use of intravenous nutrition, I always emphasize safety. A well-trained intravenous healthcare practitioner adheres to a maximum infusion rate of 4 milliliters per minute," elaborates Ghen. Before initiating IV therapy, he demands a comprehensive blood workup, and before each IV vitamin session, he requires an assessment of vital signs and urinalysis.

Caution should be exercised, especially with conditions like kidney disease, when high-dose vitamin C administration may exacerbate kidney failure. As for individuals with certain needs or that are on certain medications, Ghen clarifies, "Contraindications related to intravenous nutrition are primarily dosage-dependent rather than inherent to the natural components." Vitamin C, commonly used as a base in intravenous mixtures, can pose challenges due to its high salt content. For patients with salt sensitivity or heart failure, Ghen points out that the typical doses may be contraindicated, but smaller doses remain an option. 📌

To find a reputable IV treatment facility, visit [IVTherapyDirectory.com](http://IVTherapyDirectory.com).

Zak Logan is a freelance health writer dedicated to holistic living.

# Care of Melanated Skin

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# Holistic Care for Black Skin

by Trish Ahjel Roberts



Black skin comes in many tones, from the light caramels of Halle Berry and Jasmine Guy to the deep ebony of Oprah Winfrey, Samuel L. Jackson and Viola Davis. But what all shades of “skin of color” have in common is the higher presence of melanin. Melanin is a substance in the body that produces skin pigmentation as well as the color of hair and eyes. Because melanin-rich skin has unique attributes, it’s helpful to be knowledgeable when caring for these richly pigmented complexions. And since the skin is the largest organ of the body, understanding overall skin health can contribute significantly to whole-body health and wellness.

While African Americans make up just three percent of board-certified dermatologists in the U.S., Atlanta is home to Black dermatologists, naturopathic doctors and aestheticians who specialize in skincare for melanated skin. Four outstanding specialists share their knowledge here.

## Summertime Can Age Skin of Color

Perhaps nothing feels more like summer than DJ Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince in the classic 1991 track “Summertime.” But summer is more than just fun at the cookout; it’s the time for special skin protection. According to Dr. Sumayah Taliaferro of Atlanta Dermatology and Aesthetics, “spring and summer are peak seasons” for skincare concerns as people head outdoors with less clothing and more skin on display.

While people with darker skin tones have a lower incidence of skin cancers, the importance of sunscreen is still there, not only to lower the possibility of cancer but to reduce one of the biggest complaints among people of color: hyperpigmentation or “dark spots.” According to Taliaferro, “Hyperpigmentation is intensified and stays longer if you continue to get a lot of sun exposure without protection.” While Black skin doesn’t wrinkle in the same way as lighter skin tones, Taliaferro warns that “one of the signs of aging [for skin of color] is a certain degree of hyperpigmentation.”

For that reason, sun protection, such as that provided in Black Girl Sunscreen products, is a good idea. Instead of using zinc oxide, which creates an ashy effect, the brand is specially made for Black skin and contains alternative ingredients.



Dr. Sumayah Taliaferro

Taliaferro also likes Neutrogena’s Ultra Sheer, Sheer Zinc and baby sunscreen products. “Sunscreen only lasts two to three hours,” she cautions, so when a day at the beach is in the plans, be sure to reapply sun protection throughout the day. Or, if sunscreen is applied in the morning before going to work, she recommends that it be reapplied if the workday ends at 3 or 4 p.m. and the drive home occurs when the sun’s rays are still strong.

## What’s Hot in Sun Protection

### TOPICAL SUNSCREENS

Topical sunscreens fall into three main types: mineral, chemical and hybrid.

**Mineral sunscreens.** These contain either titanium dioxide or zinc oxide, which act like a thin wall of protection against ultraviolet radiation. It’s this thin wall that

tends to look like a white shadow or ashy film on darker skin tones.

**Chemical sunscreens.** These have active ingredients that absorb and neutralize harmful UV rays without leaving the white cast that many people of color want to avoid. Typical ingredients include avobenzone, homosalate, octisalate and octocrylene.

**Hybrid sunscreens.** These offer both mineral and chemical sunscreens, offering “the best of both worlds,” providing some of each type of protection and less of a white cast.

**Natural sunscreens.** This is a misnomer because there are no true “natural” substitutes for sunblock. However, carrot seed essential oil can sometimes be used as a topical ingredient. In addition to being a powerful antioxidant, carrot seed oil contains a compound that absorbs UVB light. However, there’s no evidence that carrot seed oil is safe

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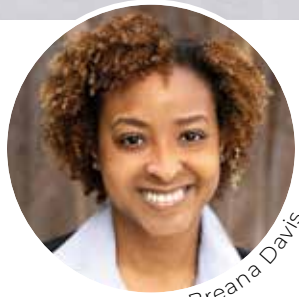
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to use alone as a sunscreen. While it has some ability to block UVB light, it doesn't protect against skin cancer or damage from the sun, according to Dan Brennan, M.D. of WebMD.



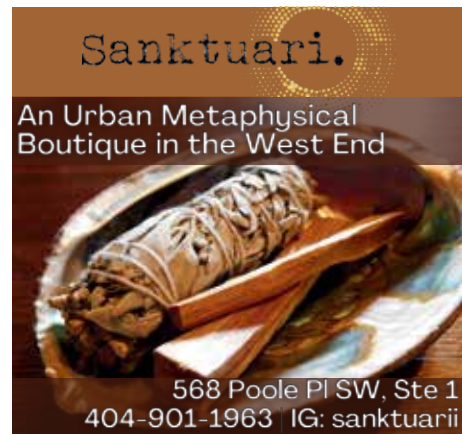
Dr. Breana Davis

### INTERNAL SUNSCREENS

Dr. Breana Davis is a naturopathic doctor at Progressive Medical Center, an integrative functional medicine and health and wellness center in Dunwoody. While she recommends traditional topical products, when asked about natural products, she says, "Honestly, it's [about] antioxidant support." Some supplements act like an internal sunscreen, she says, "because you take it and ... the antioxidants help to neutralize any of the free radical damage that may come from being out in the sun. So, things like glutathione and ALA, or alpha lipoic acid, are always really helpful—they're going to help skin-wise. ... But good antioxidant support is going to help any and everywhere in the body." She suggested Heliocare products as a popular option. It is widely available from drug stores and online retailers nationwide.

### SUN-PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

While topical lotions are assigned a sun protection factor (SPF), clothing is assigned an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF), measuring the amount of UV radiation that can penetrate fabric and reach the skin. According to *Oprah Daily*, for example, wide-brimmed summer hats



offer 50+ SPF along with their seasonal style. The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) also recommends lightweight and long-sleeved pants and shirts, sunglasses with UV protection, and shoes that cover your feet. While dark colors can be less desirable because they hold heat in warmer weather, they are more protective than lighter colors. For example, a long-sleeved blue denim shirt can provide a UPF of about 1700, while a white T-shirt only offers a UPF of 7. It's important to note that dry clothing offers more sun protection than wet.

### Sun Exposure, Dark Spots, Acne and Scarring

Acne is a common concern for African Americans. Blackheads, whiteheads and pimples can take away from the skin's natural beauty. With darker skin tones, acne scarring is more prone to leaving dark spots, which can be exacerbated by sun exposure.

Dr. Dione Marcus Super, founder and CEO of Super Dermatology, says about half of her patients are people of color. "I trained at Henry Ford Hospital in Michigan in their dermatology residency, where we had a Skin of Color Clinic. I'm very fortunate that I was trained by the leaders in ethnic skin." Her specialized training helps her to understand and treat Black and ethnic skin tones. "[For] people who are battling hyperpigmentation, I usually have them go up to SPF 50, whereas the typical person, I would say SPF 30." She recommends oil-free products "because obviously, you don't want to be trying to help your hyperpigmentation and develop acne because you're not thinking about that part." Along with Neutrogena and Black Girl Sunscreen, Super approves of sun care products from global superstar Rihanna's Fenty Beauty brand, which offers protective moisturizers, tinted moisturizers and sunscreens.

Super says a lot of the acne she sees in new patients is self-induced. "They may be using a tea tree oil blend or, more commonly, cocoa butter or Vaseline. Or [they tell me,] 'I'm using Jergens on my face because I use it on my body.'" Instead, Super says, "CeraVe is a ceramide-based moisturizer that is inexpensive. It's very good, light, and our skin tends to do really well with it." Ceramides are fats found in the skin cells that make up about 35 percent of the outer skin, or epidermis. She also offers Cetaphil as a good oil-free moisturizer option.

For more complex acne, a wide range of treatments are available, including topical creams, oral medications and chemical skin peels. Laser treatments can also be used to minimize scarring and dark spots and remove unwanted hair, which can become ingrown and cause bumps. Because thick, raised scars known as "keloids" are more prevalent in the Black community, practitioners familiar with them can be more helpful.

The use of lasers on Black skin also requires special knowledge. Super says, "I definitely tell people don't always go for the Groupon unless you really know what you're getting. Because it's two things: you want a laser that's safe with skin of color. And then you also need a well-trained and experienced laser technician that's familiar with skin color and [knows] how to adjust the settings so that it's effective—but not going to give you a lot of unwanted damaging side effects."

Sun exposure can cause dark spots. Acne can cause scarring. Scarring can cause more dark spots. Without being informed about holistic skin health and without the motivation and resources to put that knowledge into practice, it can become a vicious cycle.

### The Health of the Skin Reflects the Health of the Body

Dr. Sonza Curtis is a naturopathic doctor and founder of Three D Wellness in

Roswell. She explains that many skin issues begin in the gut. "When you look at the skin and you look at the gut, they both have what we call a microbiome," says Curtis. "We have over 38 trillion bacteria in our body [yet] ... for every cell, we have ten bacteria."

According to Curtis, skin issues can often be a sign of an underlying issue such as food allergies or sensitivity, thyroid disease, nutrient deficiencies, autoimmune disorders, hormonal imbalances or uncontrolled stress. "But the number one cause of a lot of discomfort for people with skin issues is a vitamin D deficiency because vitamin D is very imperative for anybody with skin issues. I always have to check their vitamin D levels." Because higher melanin levels reduce the body's ability to synthesize vitamin D, deficiencies among African Americans are common; approximately 75 percent of the population tests at below-recommended levels. Diagnosis involves comprehensive testing.

Other common concerns for skin of color are eczema and psoriasis. Curtis explains, "I treat it from the inside out." Her treatment options include homeopathic remedies, topical vitamin D sunscreens and topical B12. While giving the patient guidelines on what to do to heal the gut, Curtis works on the skin. "One lady in particular, she called it the 'miracle cream.' When she came in, she really looked like a fish scale. We treated her from the inside, and then we put the cream on. And I would say, within a matter of four weeks, her skin was back to normal."

Because care by a naturopathic doctor isn't typically covered by health insurance, Curtis will be launching a new membership program in August. "It'll be where people can actually be a part of the community," she says. "Because it takes more than just one person to heal; it takes a village to heal." Her program will offer savings through referrals with the dermatologists, aestheticians and other practitioners within her "Wellness Circle of Influence."

Holistic treatment of skin health is rare. According to Curtis, "If you think about three percent of dermatologists are Black, then it's probably one percent of people of color that are treating other people of color in this way."

### Holistic Skincare Tips

According to Davis, good skincare management can be simple. "I know a lot of people will have these 12-step skincare routines. I have a 3-step [routine]." She recommends a gentle cleanser, a spritz-like rosewater, a gentle moisturizer and SPF throughout the day for sun exposure. Rosewater offers both antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. "Exfoliation should happen maybe once a week. You definitely don't want to be doing that every day." While exfoliation is important to uncover new skin, too much exfoliation can be irritating to the skin. Dr. Davis likes the products offered by two Black-owned businesses, Herb'N Eden and Urban Skin Rx.

In addition to caring for the physical skin itself, any holistic skincare routine includes a healthy sleep routine, proper hydration, solid nutrition and stress management. The latter might express itself in spiritual activities such as prayer or meditation, journaling, practicing gratitude, physical exercise or time spent in nature gardening or hiking.

The human body is a complex organism that is uniquely interconnected within itself and with other living beings. Connection to healing resources and community is paramount to maintaining overall health. 🌱



Trish Ahjel Roberts is our consulting editor for African American issues. She is also a transformational coach, professional speaker, book coach and author of the new book, *The Anger Myth: Understanding and Overcoming the Mental Habits That Steal Your Joy*. Learn more at [TrishAhjelRoberts.com](http://TrishAhjelRoberts.com).

## Types of Skincare Professionals

There are many types of specialists who work to improve the condition of the skin and create a desired healthful glow.

### • Dermatologists

Commonly thought of as "skin doctors," dermatologists are medical doctors or doctors of osteopathic medicine specializing in treating skin, hair, nails and mucous membrane diseases and disorders. They can address issues ranging from acne and eczema to more serious and life-threatening conditions like skin cancer. Some dermatologists also offer cosmetic procedures to enhance the appearance of skin.

### • Naturopathic Doctors

Unlike dermatologists, naturopathic doctors (NDs) take a holistic approach, considering the body as a whole and trying to identify how symptoms of the skin can be addressed as indicators of overall health. Education and licensing for NDs typically include a four-year graduate degree program and a licensing exam.

### • Estheticians

Often found in spa environments, estheticians focus on bringing out the beauty of the skin. They can help with topical treatments like facials and even chemical peels. Esthetician typically attend cosmetology school or a college program and pass a written exam; however, they cannot diagnose or treat medical conditions.



# Natural and Do-It-Yourself Skincare for Healthy Melanated Skin

by Trish Ahjel Roberts

With a long history of toxicity in products marketed to the Black community, it may be beneficial for people of color to learn about natural skincare. But what is the definition of “natural?” Like many terms used in the beauty industry, “natural” can have ambiguous or misleading definitions since there is no formal or legal definition of the term. However, one way to ensure quality is to commit to food-grade ingredients.

Why food-grade? When food-grade products are used, there is no question that the product is safe. When a product is applied to the skin topically, it can potentially be absorbed through the skin's surface and enter the bloodstream. Since food-grade products are generally considered nontoxic and safe for human consumption, there is virtually no health risk. However, even when products are edible, it's possible to consume too much of a good thing, so moderation may be necessary. For example, when using essential oils, more isn't always better. Many essential oils have a limit on daily consumption for internal use and come with a recommendation that they be blended with a carrier oil to prevent skin irritation when used topically. Always check the label when using essential oils.

Also, while most products on the market won't be able to meet the strict guidelines of being food-grade, products made at home offer transparency around ingredients and can be a fun and educational way to meet the special needs of richly pigmented skin.

Why DIY? There are seven widely accepted learning styles: visual, auditory, written, kinesthetic, verbal, interpersonal, and solitary. When people engage in DIY projects, they have the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways but mostly kinesthetic, that is, through *doing*. This can also be a way to interact with family, build community, or enjoy time for individual self-care. No matter the number of people involved, learning to create and understand the ingredients in skincare products can be an empowering experience.



*When it comes down to certain products, I feel like the simpler, the better.*

— Dr. Breana Davis

## Getting Down to Basics

The basics of skincare come down to five major activities:

**Cleansing**—Removing makeup, dirt and excess oils from the skin. Gentle cleansing is recommended so that the skin is not irritated by harsh treatment.

**Toning**—Using a liquid product for additional skin benefits. These might include deeper cleansing, hydration, priming, balancing pH, reducing the appearance of pores, calming the skin, providing skin nutrients like antioxidants and reducing the propensity to acne.

**Moisturizing**—Using a lotion, salve, oil or balm to lock in skin hydration.

**Sun protection**—Blocking or minimizing the damaging effects of the sun. Moisturizers sometimes contain sun protection, but an extra product is often needed to get the job done. It's important to note that quality sun protection isn't food-grade, but it can still be made available for DIY enthusiasts.

**Exfoliation**—Removing the skin's top layer of dead cells to allow new skin cells to emerge. This process enhances skin brightness and helps to unclog pores. Because of Black skin's vulnerability to hyperpigmentation, exfoliants used on skin of color should be gentle. There are two main types of exfoliants: physical and chemical.

- *Physical exfoliants* use gently textured substances like brown sugar or oatmeal to physically remove dead skin cells. Coarser substances like white sugar or ground seeds can be too abrasive for facial skin.
- *Chemical exfoliants* use enzymes or acids like those found in papaya and pineapple to dissolve dead skin cells.

## The Recipes

While there are countless recipes to treat a variety of skin issues, these simple recipes are vegan, cruelty-free and appropriate for gentle care for skin of color. For skin that is acne-prone, coconut or avocado oil can be replaced with noncomedogenic oils such as grapeseed, sweet almond, hempseed or sunflower seed oils.

Dr. Breana Davis, a naturopathic doctor at Progressive Medical Center in Dunwoody, shares DIY skincare recipes on Instagram. “When it comes down to certain products, I feel like the simpler, the better,” she explains.

While these recipes were created with melanated skin tones in mind, they can be used by anyone who wants to take care of their skin. Also, ingredients can be mixed and matched for an unlimited number of options tailored to a particular skin type.

### Cleansing: Coconut and Lemon Facewash

This is an easy, coconut-based facewash that provides gentle cleansing for most skin types. It can be mixed fresh daily or stored in advance. Widely available at supermarkets and health food stores, organic coconut oil is antibacterial, antifungal and

anti-inflammatory and can help clear acne and blemishes. Surprisingly, the fatty acids in coconut oil can dissolve excess oil that clogs pores.

Coconut oil can also assist in healing troublesome dark spots and scars. Lemon essential oil is antibacterial, antifungal, astringent, conditioning and improves hyperpigmentation. Its fragrance is uplifting and rejuvenating. If lemon essential oil is not available, organic lemon juice can be substituted. Optional tea tree essential oil and apple cider vinegar enhance acne-fighting ability. Be sure to look for high-quality essential oils and apple cider vinegar.

*1 Tbsp organic coconut oil*  
*1 drop lemon essential oil*  
*¼ tsp apple cider vinegar (optional)*  
*1 drop tea tree essential oil (optional)*

To use fresh daily, mix a tablespoon of coconut oil with a few drops of apple cider vinegar and essential oils. Apply it to your face and massage gently. Let it set on the skin for a few minutes, and then rinse with warm water. Cleanse the face in the morning and before bed.

### Toning: Green Tea Toner

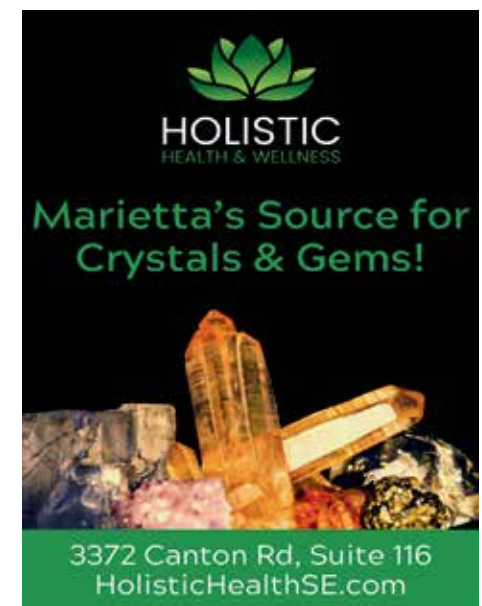
Green tea is calming, anti-inflammatory and rich in antioxidants. Tea tree essential oil is antifungal, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and can help heal itchy or oily skin. It is widely regarded for its healing properties, particularly for acne-prone skin.

*½ cup organic green tea (cooled)*  
*4 drops tea tree essential oil*

Brew and steep green tea. Once it has completely cooled, add high-quality tea tree essential oil. Store in a glass bottle. Apply with cotton balls or spritz on.

### Moisturizing: Avocado and Lavender Moisturizer

This is a simple moisturizer that works well for most skin of color. Avocado oil can be easily purchased at your local supermarket. Organic is best if it is accessible. Avocado oil is an excellent source of antioxidants, minerals, vitamins and fatty acids that promote healthy, balanced skin. It also helps to even out skin tone, soften wrinkles



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and treat psoriasis. Lavender essential oil is antifungal and anti-inflammatory. It can reduce acne, even skin tone and reduce wrinkles. Its aroma also has a pleasant, calming effect.

*½ cup organic avocado oil*  
*2 drops of lavender essential oil*

Combine ingredients and store in a glass bottle, spray bottle or roll-on. Massage sparingly into skin.

### Sun Protection: Shea Butter and Zinc Oxide Sunscreen

While carrot and myrrh essential oils have some sunscreen abilities, they have not been determined to provide sufficient protection against the sun. For that reason, this homemade sunscreen includes a non-edible ingredient, zinc oxide powder. Because it is difficult to determine the SPF of homemade products, use this with caution and in addition to a traditional SPF product.

*½ cup shea butter*  
*½ cup coconut oil*  
*2 Tbsp zinc oxide powder*  
*Up to 15 drops carrot seed essential oil (optional)*  
*Up to 10 drops myrrh essential oil (optional)*

Blend coconut oil and shea butter over low heat. Add zinc oxide and optional essential oils. Pour mixture into a glass container and allow to cool before using.

### Lavender & Rosemary Body Scrub

This scrub recipe is courtesy of iwi fresh, an Atlanta-based holistic skincare products and services company located in Lakewood Heights. It can be made and stored in a glass container. Brown sugar and oatmeal are used as a gentle scrub; the brown sugar shouldn't be substituted with any other kind of sugar. Other types of sugar—and salt—are too harsh for use on the face. Grapeseed oil is a noncomedogenic oil that is an excellent source of



antioxidants, vitamin E and linoleic acid, an essential fatty acid.

*¼ cup brown sugar*  
*3 Tbsp grapeseed oil*  
*1 tsp lime zest*  
*2 sprigs rosemary*  
*1 tsp oatmeal*  
*1 tsp lavender*  
*Optional: 1 pinch turmeric, 1 tsp rose petals, 2 drops essential oil*

Add brown sugar to a 4-oz mason jar. Slowly add the grapeseed oil while stirring. Sprinkle in all dry ingredients. Add essential oil. Massage gently into skin. Rinse off.

### Non-DIY Options

Not everyone has the time or available ingredients to make do-it-yourself skincare products. Following are a few popular options for simple skincare:

#### African Black Soap

Black soap has been shown to have both antibacterial and antifungal properties. It's known to improve acne, clear razor bumps and rashes and slow down the signs of aging. Traditionally from West Africa, the ingredients of this product can vary, but it typically includes palm kernel oil and ash from either burnt cocoa pods or roasted plantain skins. It may also include

honey, aloe vera and other skin-nourishing ingredients, including camwood, a tree native to West Africa. RA Cosmetics is a local Atlanta-based company that offers black soap.

#### Natural Castile Soap

Made only from plant ingredients, castile soap is considered more environmentally friendly and natural than many other soap products. Named after the Mediterranean region of Castile, Spain, castile soap was originally made with olive oil. Nowadays, it can be made with a variety of plant-based oils combined with lye (potassium hydroxide), a high-alkaline, plant-based substance used in the soap-making process and traditionally made from the combination of wood ash and water. Essential oils or other ingredients are often added. Dr. Bronner's is one of the most popular brands, and local Atlanta black-owned retailer Herb'N Eden offers a variety of natural soaps as well.

### Small-Batch Skincare Retailers

If you can't or don't want to make homemade products yourself, there are a few retailers that offer the next best thing—small-batch products. Atlanta is home to many black-owned retailers. Glo Melanin focuses on using turmeric in many of its products for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. IWI Fresh offers a variety of natural skincare products as well as spa services. Herb'N Eden offers facial products in addition to their extensive line of soaps. UK-based retailer Lush offers a small-batch feel with shops located in Lenox Square, Perimeter Mall and Mall of Georgia.

In addition to gathering for Sunday dinners, carving out time for do-it-yourself recipes with family and friends is a great way to connect and build community. Learning the benefits of natural ingredients can save time and money and improve your mental and physical health. 🌿

# Black Skincare Resources



RF...studio/Pexels.com

#### SUNSCREEN FOR BLACK SKIN

Black Girl Sunscreen  
Fenty Beauty  
Heliocare  
Neutrogena

#### BLACK ESTHETICIANS

The Brow Girl

#### LOCAL BLACK-OWNED SKINCARE RETAILERS

Glo Melanin  
Herb'N Eden  
iwi fresh  
RA Cosmetics

#### OTHER SPECIALIZED RETAILERS

Brown Kind  
Lush  
Urban Skin Rx

#### RECOMMENDED DRUGSTORE BRANDS

CeraVe  
Cetaphil

#### RECOMMENDED HEALTH STORE BRANDS

Andalou  
Dr. Bronner's  
Pacifica

#### RECOMMENDED ESSENTIAL OIL BRANDS

DoTerra  
Zongle Therapeutics

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Black Derm Directory  
Vegan Avenue's 10 Best Vegan Skincare for Black Skin

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Dr. Dione Marcus Super  
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## Ask a Health Coach with Hope Knosher

# What is the connection between trauma, stress and illness? Can a health coach help?

It's widely understood that while trauma may not be the only cause of chronic illnesses, it does play a big role in contributing to various physical and mental health conditions. Understanding the connection between trauma, stress and illness is quite complex, as they each have an impact on each other.

It's important to remember that different people may respond to traumatic events differently, and not everyone who experiences trauma will develop trauma-related symptoms or a diagnosable mental health disorder such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Traumatic experiences can have significant and lasting effects on people's lives, relationships, and overall well-being, and reaching out for support from qualified health professionals is important for healing and recovery.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines PTSD as a mental health condition triggered by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. These

events can be physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening, such as physical or sexual assault, natural disasters, serious accidents, or combat. PTSD is an abnormal response to triggers that can last for days and even years after the incident.

Studies on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have revealed that traumatic events during childhood can lead to a range of serious health problems later in life. ACEs include various forms of maltreatment, such as physical or emotional abuse, neglect, household dysfunction and parental substance abuse. These adverse experiences can have a profound and lasting impact on an individual's physical, mental, and overall well-being. The evidence shows that the effects of ACEs can persist into adulthood, leading to increased risk of chronic diseases, mental health disorders and even premature death.

### The Effects of Trauma

Here are some of the physiological, psychological and behavioral changes that can occur due to trauma and contribute to chronic illnesses:

**Altered stress response.** When someone goes through a really tough experience, it can negatively affect how their body deals with stress, throwing off the body's stress response systems. If the trauma is serious or happens over a long period, these systems can remain in overdrive, leading to long-lasting feelings of being on edge, hyper-alert and physically stressed out.

**Health issues.** Being under a lot of stress for a long time—whether you've been through something really tough or you're dealing with stress ongoingly—can take a huge toll on one's physical health. Stress that doesn't let up can cause all sorts of health issues, such as heart problems, immune system trouble, stomach issues, metabolic problems and long-lasting pain.

**Psychological effects.** Dealing with trauma and chronic stress can have a big impact on mental health, possibly leading to PTSD, depression, anxiety or substance use disorders. Symptoms like intrusive memories, avoidance, hypervigilance and emotional ups and downs can make things

even more challenging. It's important to take care of yourself and seek support when dealing with these kinds of difficulties.

**Weakened immune system.** Dealing with trauma and chronic stress—and stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline—can really throw off the immune system, making us more vulnerable to infections, inflammation and autoimmune issues. Inflammation caused by ongoing stress can also play a role in the development and worsening of different illnesses.

**Unhealthy coping mechanisms.** When people experience trauma or chronic stress, they may turn to unhealthy coping methods like drinking, overeating, being inactive, or withdrawing from social activities. These behaviors can harm their physical health and raise the chances of developing long-term illnesses.

Ineffectively trying to deal with trauma and chronic stress can affect our physical and mental well-being, our relationships and our overall quality of life. The experiences are significant risk factors for health problems and can worsen existing illnesses, so it's important to recognize and address the connections between trauma, stress and health to nurture well-being.

### Healing from Trauma

Healing from unprocessed trauma and PTSD is a multifaceted process that is unique to each individual and requires personalized care. Peter A. Levine, Ph.D., is a psychologist and somatic experiencing practitioner who has made significant contributions to the understanding and treatment of trauma. His view of trauma emphasizes the interconnectedness of mind and body and the importance of integrating both in the healing process. He believes that trauma therapy should address both the psychological and physiological aspects of trauma, help individuals reconnect with their bodies and restore a sense of safety and well-being.

While the journey toward healing may vary for each person, several strategies and interventions can support the healing process.

**Seek professional help.** It's important to reach out to health professionals who are knowledgeable about trauma and who use helpful techniques to help with trauma symptoms and encourage healing.

**Practice self-care.** Don't forget to take care of yourself! Remember to engage in activities that support your physical, emotional and mental well-being. This can include things like getting regular exercise, eating healthily, getting enough sleep, practicing mindfulness, using relaxation techniques and doing things that bring you joy and fulfillment.

**Explore somatic therapies.** Don't forget to consider including somatic therapies, trauma-informed yoga and trauma-informed health coaching into your healing process. These approaches aim to work with your body to help release tension, regulate your nervous system and effectively process any trauma stored in your body.

**Build a support network.** Surround yourself with supportive friends, family members or support groups who can offer understanding, empathy and validation. Connecting with others who have experienced similar challenges can provide a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation.

### Engage in creative expression.

Explore creative outlets such as art therapy, journaling, music, dance or poetry to express and process your emotions, memories and experiences nonverbally. Creative expression can facilitate healing, insight and self-discovery.

### Practice grounding techniques.

Incorporate grounding techniques into your daily routine to help anchor yourself in the present moment and regulate overwhelming emotions. Grounding techniques may include deep breathing exercises, mindfulness practices, sensory grounding exercises or visualization techniques.

### Set boundaries and prioritize self-care.

Establish healthy boundaries

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to protect your physical, emotional and psychological well-being. Learn to recognize and honor your needs and limitations and prioritize self-care practices that nourish and replenish your energy.

**Educate yourself.** Educate yourself about trauma, PTSD and the healing process. Understanding the physiological and psychological effects of trauma can help you make sense of your experiences and empower you to take an active role in your recovery journey.

**Practice patience and compassion.** Healing from trauma takes time, patience and self-compassion. Be gentle with yourself and allow yourself to progress at your own pace. Recognize that healing is a nonlinear process with ups and downs and celebrate your achievements and milestones.

**Cultivate resilience.** Focus on building resilience and cultivating strengths to help you navigate life's challenges and setbacks. Embrace your inner resources, resilience, and capacity for growth and transformation.

### How a Health Coach Can Help

A trauma-informed health and wellness coach takes into account the impact of trauma on their clients and creates a safe and supportive coaching environment. A trauma-informed health and wellness coach prioritizes the following:

**Safety.** A trauma-informed health and wellness coach wants to make sure their clients feel safe both physically and emotionally. They also promise to keep everything that is discussed confidential and to treat their clients with the utmost respect throughout their coaching relationship.

**Trustworthiness and transparency.** These coaches work to build trust by being reliable, consistent and clear in their communication. They make sure to explain the coaching process and set clear expectations.

**Peer support.** Trauma-informed health and wellness coaches encourage their



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clients to nurture connections and support from those who have undergone similar experiences. They might facilitate group discussions or support networks when appropriate.

### Collaboration and mutuality.

Health and wellness coaches see coaching as a partnership and encourage their clients to play an active role in their healing and wellness journey.

**Empowerment, voice and choice.** Coaches encourage clients to focus on their strengths and empower them to take control of their lives. They seek to support clients in expressing their needs and preferences and include them in their decision-making process.

**Collaboration with other professionals.** Trauma-informed health and wellness coaches recognize when their clients might benefit from extra support from mental health professionals, such as therapists or counselors. They help connect clients to the optimal resources and are willing to collaborate with other practitioners.

### Benefits of Trauma-Informed Coaching

There are significant benefits to trauma-informed coaching. Dealing with trauma can make a big difference in one's overall well-being and help improve one's mental health, lower stress levels and enhance one's quality of life. Trauma-informed coaches seek to help their clients feel heard, valued and encouraged, which serves to create a more impactful coaching partnership. Clients become more self-aware,

develop better coping skills and build resilience, which helps them to handle challenges more effectively. Finally, by recognizing and dealing with the root causes of trauma, individuals are better able to make lasting changes in their behavior.

### If You Need Additional Support

Although a health coach can be very helpful, there can be times when dealing with unresolved trauma when specialized treatment is called for to go beyond what health coaching can offer. For example, if you're going through tough times, such as intense anxiety, depression, PTSD, flashbacks or having suicidal thoughts, reach out for help as soon as possible to a licensed mental health professional.

Healing from trauma can involve deep emotional work that is best handled by therapists who are trained in trauma-focused therapies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) or Somatic Experiencing.

Mental health professionals are here to help. They can offer a diagnosis and create a personalized treatment plan just for you that might involve therapy, medication or a combination of methods.

Dealing with trauma and PTSD is a personal journey, and it's okay to take it slowly. Remember that everyone's healing process is unique, so be kind to yourself. Embrace therapeutic approaches, trust your inner strength and don't hesitate to seek professional help. It's perfectly okay to reach out for support from caring professionals and understanding loved ones. You're not alone; it's important to prioritize your well-being as you navigate through this journey. 🌱

*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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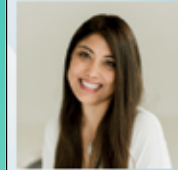
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# Exploring Sun Salutations

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

As the summer solstice comes and goes each year—falling on June 21 in the northern hemisphere—practicing sun salutations can be a meaningful and engaging way to mark the longest day of the year. Social media and pop culture get vocal about encouraging others to do repeated sun salutations throughout the day to honor the solstice. “How many can you do?” they ask. “Do it with a partner or relay team!” they suggest. And while they might be fodder for popular culture, they can also serve as a cornerstone of one’s practice.

Last month’s yoga article looked at ways to cool down the body during the hot summer months, including trying alternatives to the traditional sun salutations. This month’s article explores several forms and effects of sun salutations so beginners can better navigate the variety of salutation practices and parse some of its components. Deeper insights are provided for experienced practitioners as well.

## The Roots of Sun Salutations

Sun salutations, or *surya namaskara* in Sanskrit, are often presented as an ancient yogic practice, but their historical origins are less clear. While there are references to rituals devoted to Surya, the sun deity, dating back thousands of years, these practices varied widely across South Asia and appeared in the religious practices of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and even in non-religious rituals.

Thanks to dedicated historians and yoga scholars, we know that an increasingly physical devotional practice—one that begins to look like modern-day sun salutations—developed as recently as the early 20th century. They were initially linked with exercise and austerity routines for young men.

Here in the West, dynamic sun salutations became a fundamental part of studio practice as yoga was popularized in the mid-20th century. After that, the diversity of their shapes and forms, as well as the devotional nature of the practice, started to wane as they became more fixed and influenced by popular exercise culture and influential teachers.



Elina Fairytale / Pexels.com

Today, sun salutations are a fundamental part of the physical, postural yoga practice known as *asana*, and many introductions to yoga begin with sun salutations. In fact, skill with a salutation practice and exhibiting proficiency with the breath and movement associated with them are widely considered to be a mark of growing mastery of yoga.

## The Three Elements of a Salutation Practice

There can be an overwhelming number of terms and instructions “out there” defining what sun salutations are—many of them even conflict with each other. Thus, it’s helpful to take a look at the core set of components that define a sun salutation. Doing so can help the beginner navigate the plethora of choices and options before them and can help the well-practiced yoga student deepen their understanding and practice.

Yet, even as the range of types of sun salutations is quite wide, most of them have three basic elements in common: aligned breath and movement, moving the spine in many directions and increased activation. Let’s look at these more closely.

### 1. Aligned breath and movement

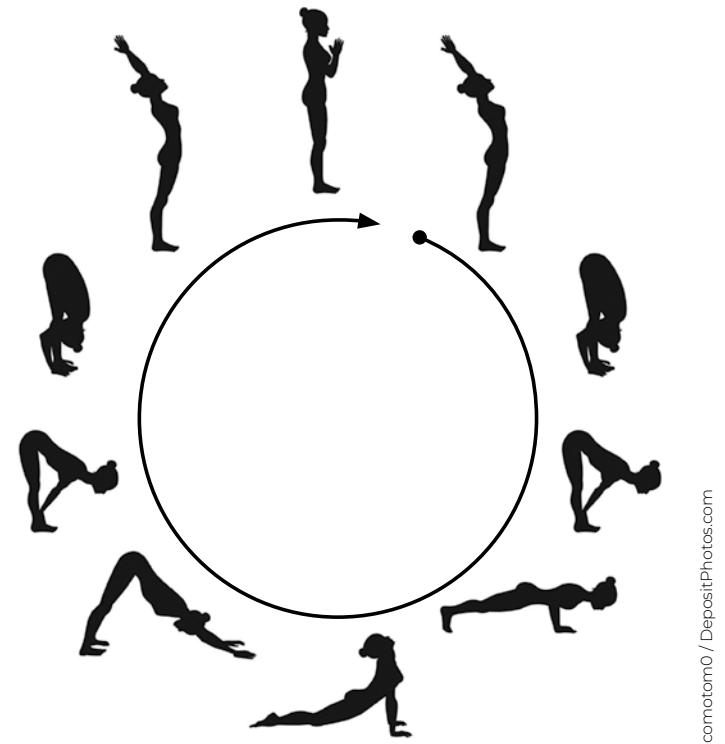
One element that is common among sun salutations is that they serve to align breath and movement. For example, as arms are raised upward, the student is taught to inhale. As the body folds forward in prostration, the student learns to exhale. With explicit instruction, the student is guided to align each movement with a phase of the breath. In some traditions, the bottom or “pause” at the base of the exhalation is also included.

### 2. Moving the spine in many directions

A second element shared by most sun salutations is that the spine moves in many directions. This action signals to the body the intention to awaken and greet the day. It often serves to acknowledge one’s stiff “morning body” and helps to shake off the night’s sleep and the previous day’s work. It also helps to stir the energy centers, the *chakras*, of the body. In some traditions, each station of the flow is associated with one of these energy centers, and practitioners will try to focus their awareness on a color, quality or energetic sense associated with that chakra.

### 3. Increased activation, inspiration and respiration

Thirdly, most salutations are designed to increase energy levels in the body. Certainly, the up and down and back and forth along the mat increase one’s circulation rate and respiration rate. Sun salutations can be tiring and are considered vigorous. Also, if the student brings a devotional quality to their practice, their engagement with feelings of gratitude and supplication can also increase energy. Additionally, in some traditions, short mantras or phrases—often a recitation of blessings to all things—are added to each “station” of the salutation, and they can warm, illuminate and energize.



cometom0 / DepositPhotos.com

## Sun Salutation Forms

### Sun Salutation A

The linked breaths and movements that characterize the first common element of sun salutations are typically considered the basic kind of sun salutation, and they are sometimes referred to as Sun Salutation A, which can be practiced as follows:

1. While standing at the top of your mat, exhale.
2. While moving your arms overhead, inhale.
3. Exhale as you fold forward.
4. Inhale and raise your torso halfway into a flat-back position.
5. As you step back to a plank position, exhale.
6. As you do a belly-down backbend of your choice, inhale.
7. Push back into downward-facing dog while exhaling.
8. Step to the top of the mat and return to the flat-back position, inhaling.
9. Exhale, folding forward toward the earth again.
10. Inhale to standing up with arms stretched upward.
11. With arms at rest, standing upright, close the salutation cycle with an exhale.

### Sun Salutations B and C

Two other sun salutations are commonplace enough that students learn them as relatively fixed-form. Sun Salutation B builds upon Sun Salutation A, adding a squatting pose that looks like sitting in a chair, called *utkatasana* in Sanskrit, and the Warrior 1 standing pose. There are also more movements from the top to the back of

“Many there are across the world  
who call Me, beg for My return.  
I answer their pleas...”

Maitreya, the World Teacher



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the practice space and back again. Ashtanga yoga has codified both Sun Salutations A and B within its primary series; students begin their practice with five repetitions of Sun Salutation A, followed by five repetitions of Sun Salutation B as a way to warm the body for the rest of their postural work.

In Sun Salutation C, the student adds a lunge shape with the back knee down—the low lunge— similar to Warrior 1. This pose has many Sanskrit names, giving us a glimpse into the variations and diversity that used to be more commonplace in Western yoga practice. One of the names for this pose is *Anjaneyasana*, which is named for a mother figure associated with

devotion but also refers to the elements of water and wind. Practicing Sun Salutation C might indicate a desire for a greater devotional feel to a given practice.

## Designing Your Own Sun Salutation

Sun salutations practices are designed to move one's energy and to elevate it in preparation for the day to come. Now that you are aware of the three core aspects of sun salutations, you might choose to evolve a version of your own that addresses your unique needs. For example, you might want to include a chant or short devotional with each phase of the breath. Or, you might choose a twist or alternate posture to help

make your spine feel more prepared for your day's upcoming activities. Consider what else might inspire you and leave you lighter as you leave your mat.

May your yoga nourish you. 🌸



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. Reach Patricia on IG @ PLSYoga. To learn more, visit PLSYoga.com.

## calendar

### WEDNESDAY, JULY 3

**Wednesday Flow: Yoga in the Salt Cave** – 6:30-7:30pm. Vinyasa yoga is a creative form of yoga where poses are linked together with the breath in a flowing sequence. No yoga experience necessary. All yoga props provided. \$25. Saltville Grotto & Spa, 2447 Main St E, Ste 3, Snellville. 678-585-1153. Saltville Grotto.com.

### SATURDAY, JULY 6

**Saturday Morning Restore Yoga in the Salt Cave** – 10:30-11:30am. Class is slow-paced, gentle and emphasizes conscious breathing and mindfulness. With Nadine Daniel. \$25. Saltville Grotto & Spa, 2447 Main St E, Ste 3, Snellville. 678-585-1153. SaltvilleGrotto.com.

**Universal Yoga Flow** – 1-2:30pm. experience a very unique way of practicing yoga asana that traps your senses and allows you to sink into a much deeper state of peace. \$30. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Ste B2, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

### SATURDAY, JULY 13

**Yoga Nidra** – 3-4:30pm. With Susan Mittleman. Yoga Nidra (Yoga Sleep) is a guided meditation that brings you into a state of conscious, deep relaxation. In-person & online. \$35/advance, \$40/day of. Vista Yoga, 2836 Lavista Rd, Ste D, Decatur. 404-929-9642. VistaYoga.com.

### SATURDAY, JULY 27

**Breath and Sound: You are the Medicine** – 3-5pm. Join us for a special afternoon of rebirthing breathwork and sound with Ananda & Gretchen. Rebirthing Breathwork is 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.

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 17

**Restorative Reiki Circle** – 3-5:15pm. With Dan Ellis. Infused with the combination of Restorative Yoga and Usui Reiki, we prime our nervous systems to receive deep rest. With support of yoga props in specific positions, we aim to soften systemic tension in key body parts. \$40. 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 Dun-

woody, 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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Healthy Kids

# Planting Seeds of Knowledge

Teaching Kids About the Origin of Foods

by *Thais Harris, BCHN*



FangXiaNuo from Getty Images Signature/CanvaPro

There is a growing disconnect between children and the origins of their food. It stems from the urbanization of communities and the prevalence of processed foods. As a result, many children don't know how their food is grown, processed and brought to them, contributing to a lack of understanding about the nutritional value and environmental impact of their choices.

## Why Knowing Food Origins Matters

A 2012 study by Stanford University showed that teaching young children that food is a source of diverse nutrients and explaining the importance of eating a variety of healthy ingredients significantly improved their understanding of nutrition, and even prompted them to voluntarily eat more vegetables at snack time.

“Gardens are a crucial part of how we change eating patterns and teach about health,” shares Sara McCamant, program director at Ceres Community Project (CCP), a nonprofit that provides meals to people facing health crises. “We put youth at the center of our program with the goal of having them understand where food comes from, as well as learning how to cook it, so it can create health. It is crucial that they understand the bigger picture of how food is grown and how the food system impacts access to healthy food. Many youth are also very concerned about the environment and climate change, and learning about growing food in a sustainable way gives them a way to make an impact on the environment.”

CCP reports that teens participating in their programs are more motivated to consume vegetables and fruits than other kids their age: 54 percent are eating six or more servings of produce a day. By contrast, only 22 percent of California teenagers that have not experienced CCP activities eat five or more servings a day.

Pilot studies by Harvest for Healthy Kids and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture both found that hands-on experiences with different fruits and vegetables in the classroom, garden and kitchen caused children to be more likely to taste and enjoy a wider variety of foods.

## Cultural Heritage

“Children’s limited recognition of food mirrors a deeper loss of cultural identity and heritage,” laments Sebastian White, founder, president and executive director of The Evolved Network. The limited understanding of food through commercial packaging not only deprives children of the rich stories and meanings embedded in their cultural diets, but also reflects broader implications for how they perceive and interact with the world.

“The Evolved Network addresses these issues by integrating the tangible aspects of food preparation, such as cooking skills and community building, with intangible

values like cooking with love and the significance of meals as communal gifts,” White explains. “This holistic approach fosters a sense of purpose and inclusivity, treating food education as both therapeutic and educational, with the goal of restoring a deep connection to food that transcends mere nutrition and taps into cultural identity and self-expression.”

Empowering children with knowledge about their food sources is a vital step toward fostering a healthier and more sustainable future. By engaging in hands-on experiences and understanding the journey of food from seed to plate, children can develop a deeper appreciation for nature, make informed dietary choices and support the environment.

## What We Can Do

- **Visit local farms or farmers markets.** Encourage children to ask farmers about how food is grown and the significance of seasonal produce. This direct connection can spark curiosity and appreciation for the hard work behind each item on their plate.
- **Start a family garden.** Create a small bed or planter box so children can grow some of their own vegetables, herbs and fruits. This active participation not only teaches them about the growth process, but also

instills a sense of responsibility and pride in nurturing and harvesting their own food.

- **Cook together using fresh, whole ingredients.** Teach children how to read labels and choose organic and minimally processed options. Preparing meals together provides an opportunity for practical learning about nutrition and the importance of making healthy choices. Plus, it’s a fun way to bond and instill lifelong skills.
- **Eat as a family.** Sit-down meals with kids can leave a lasting and positive impression, fostering a lifelong appreciation of dietary quality and communal dining. A 2007 five-year study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found that more frequent family meals during adolescence predicted a higher consumption of fruits, vegetables and key nutrients, and a lower consumption of soft drinks. The young people also placed a higher priority on meal structure and social eating. 🍴

*Thais Harris is a holistic nutritionist and author. Her children’s book, Little Red, told from the point of view of an apple, teaches children about the benefits of consuming fresh fruit. Find recipes and resources at [NourishTogether.com](http://NourishTogether.com).*

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**Monday, July 8**

**Nature Lover's Book Club** – 9:30am. On *Time and Turtles: Mending the World, Shell* by Shattered Shell by Sy Montgomery. All welcome. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

**Thursday, July 11**

**Intuition: A Journey Within** – 6-7pm. Crissy Hester will guide us to explore the transformative power of creative activities in quieting the mind and sparking intuition. Guided meditations, interactive discussions and practical exercises tailored to ignite your intuitive journey. \$25. The Open Mind Center, 1425 Market Blvd, Ste 500, Roswell. 678-629-3630. [TheOpenMindCenter.com](http://TheOpenMindCenter.com).

**Friday, July 12**

**Second Friday Walk in the Park** – 9-10am. The 22-acre woodland features several walking trails that wind through remnants of old growth forest and near stream corridors. Deepdene Park, 2199 N Ponce De Leon Ave NE, Atlanta. [ParkPride.org](http://ParkPride.org).

**Sunday, July 14**

**Self-Realization Fellowship 2024 World Convocation** – July 14-20. Explore the Yoga Meditation Teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda. Daily talks led by monks and nuns of Self-Realization Fellowship aim to make India's timeless wisdom practical for navigating the challenges of daily life. Free, online and in-person. Details: [Convocation.Yogananda.org](http://Convocation.Yogananda.org).

**Breakfast with Butterflies** – 10am-12pm. A family-friendly morning with exclusive access to CNC's Butterfly Encounter, where you can enjoy a light breakfast, experience several species of butterflies, and explore the grounds prior to opening. Ages 4+. \$25/general, \$15/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Registration required: [ChattNatureCenter.org](http://ChattNatureCenter.org).

**Wednesday, July 17**

**Remote Reiki Healing** – 3:15-4pm. Jamie will invite Dr. Usui to come in with a supportive reiki team and work on physical, mental and emotional healing. The healing itself will take place for 33 mins

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**Saturday, July 6**

**Mystic Moon Circle** – 5:30-7pm. With Imber Tyler. Explore unique esoteric topics and empower your own magical intentions in this monthly gathering. Connect with the energies of the moon cycles to achieve clarity, abundance and empowerment. \$33. Registration required.

**Saturday, July 20**

**Full Moon Ceremony** – 6:30-7:30pm. With renowned Atlanta Astrologer, Maxine Taylor. Evenings of a full moon are action-forward times that prompt "release." Free.

**Sunday, July 28**

**Soundbath Meditation** – 4-5pm. With Sonia Thames. This is a deeply immersive full-body listening experience that uses sound to invite powerful therapeutic restorative processes to the entire body. \$20.

and there will be a 15-min discussion and sharing afterward. Donation. Register: [JamieButlerMedium.com](http://JamieButlerMedium.com).

**Thursday, July 18**

**Tarot Essentials Series** – 6-7pm. Introduction to Minor Arcana Cards and Tarot Numerology. With Crissy Hester. \$ 25. The Open Mind Center, 1425 Market Blvd, Ste 500, Roswell. 678-629-3630. [TheOpenMindCenter.com](http://TheOpenMindCenter.com).

**Healing Sound Bath** – 7-8pm. Join Raye Andrews, Vibrational Sound Therapist, as she creates a beautiful symphony of sound that will help you embrace the passion of summer. This experience can bring relaxation and a sense of calm to your mind, body and spirit. Bring yoga mat, pillow, blanket or whatever will assist in being comfortable. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. [UnityAtl.org](http://UnityAtl.org).

**Saturday, July 20**

**Healing Psychic Fair**

**Saturday, July 20 • 10am - 7pm**

Burning questions about your destiny? Seeking guidance for your spiritual development? Do you want to connect to the spirit world? Come and participate in your own healing! \$20 at the door. \$60 for table vendors.

27 Waddell Street, Suite A (upstairs), Atlanta, 30307.

**Transmission Meditation Online** – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA. Free. Via Eventbrite. Info: 770-302-2208 or [Info-SE@Share-International.us](mailto:Info-SE@Share-International.us). Register: [Tinyurl.com/3twpudfj](http://Tinyurl.com/3twpudfj).



**Family Night Hike** – 8-10pm. Explore the sounds and sights of the forest. Includes an animal encounter and a relaxing campfire where you can roast a marshmallow. Limited space available. All ages. \$15/general public, \$12/members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Register: [ChattNatureCenter.org](http://ChattNatureCenter.org).

**Thursday, July 25**

**The Nature Club Dine and Discover** – 7-9pm. \$10/general, \$5/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. [ChattNatureCenter.org](http://ChattNatureCenter.org).

**Saturday, July 27**

**Summer Birding** – 8-10am. Join Master Birder Rose Guerra as she guides you through the Nature Center trails and helps you to identify the birds present at this time of year. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

**Sunday, July 28**



**Atlanta Streets Alive** – 1-5pm. Spaces for people to walk, bike, skate, dance and play. Join us to turn streets into park-like spaces that connect our city. Peachtree St, 99 10th St NE, Atlanta. [AtlantaStreetsAlive.org](http://AtlantaStreetsAlive.org).

**Plan Ahead**

**Tuesday, September 24**

**National Qigong Association Annual Conference 2024** – Sept 24-26. Experience 15+ expert-led qigong sessions, discover new techniques and connect with enthusiasts. Perfect for newcomers, beginners and experienced qigong practitioners, including those familiar with yoga and other health modalities. Savannah. Details: [NQA.org/Annual-Conference](http://NQA.org/Annual-Conference).

to laugh at this a little because, while we haven't used AI to inform us as to what humans find interesting, as the principal generator of editorial ideas, I often go with what I'm interested in. I usually don't care how big an audience there is for a topic. Take energy healing, for example. That first special section consisted of seven articles spread over 12 pages, an enormous investment in time and effort. I was motivated by three considerations: 1) I had wonderful success with energy healing, 2) I didn't believe that there was much awareness around energy healing, and 3) I wanted others to experience the same benefits I enjoy.

Both of those who wrote to me about AI expressed, directly and indirectly, a concern for writers being displaced by AI—but we don't see that happening. As I've pointed out, we don't see AI having the ability to be as creative as we'd need for the majority of our articles. Also, we have always been minimally staffed; there's no one to let go!

Thank you both! We love hearing from readers, and we invite more of you to write to us! 🙌



*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.*



Create your event listing at [NAATLANTA.COM/CALENDAR](https://naatlanta.com/calendar)  
Basic online listings are free.

## Community Calendar

### Sundays

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

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

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

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

**The Quest: A Journey of Spiritual Rediscovery** – 9:30-10:45am. As Unity Atlanta Church celebrates its 100th year in 2024, we embark on a yearlong adventure with other like-minded seekers to revisit and apply the ancient Truths that are foundational to our beliefs and experiences. In-person and Zoom. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Monday

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

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

### Tuesday

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

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

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

**Divine Connection Spanish Language Online Prayer & Study Group** – 8-9pm. Unity Atlanta Church invites the Spanish-speaking community to "Conexión Divina," led by Rev. Xiomara Malagon. This weekly Zoom class features various topics for personal and spiritual development. Drop-in any time. New people are welcome to join. Register: xioma735@gmail.com. Unity Atlanta Church: 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

### Wednesday

**Online: Joy of Breathing Class** – 1-1:30pm. Learn the Joy of Breathing technique, practice a deep Pranayama session and enjoy

the benefits. Free. Register: Tinyurl.com/muwwanm9.

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

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

### Thursday

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

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

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

**Beyond Limits Weekly Conscious Dance** – 7:45-9:45pm. With Marisa Skolky. An intentional dance activated by vocal toning

and singing during an hour and a half dance through our emotions, lifecycle, archetypes and levels of consciousness. Followed by a singing bowl meditation, a closing circle and community tea time. \$20. Beyond Limits Expressive Arts Therapy LLC, 4528 King Springs Rd SE, Smyrna. 770-235-3183. MarisaSkolky.com.

### Friday

**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.

### Saturday

**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/y3x5y2s.

**Free Reiki-Infused Yoga & Meditation** – 3:30-5:30pm. 1st & 2nd Sat. Vinyasa flow classes enable you to move slowly, while focusing on strength, flexibility, concentration, breath work and meditation. Free. Healing Hands Reiki & Spiritual Development Inc, 27 Waddell St NE, Atlanta. Registration required: 313-671-5804 or Tinyurl.com/4mnww3t4.

**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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# My Year of Haiku

by Tommy Housworth

In December 2022, I stumbled across a tiny book small enough to fit into my back pocket, yet it opened my eyes to something bigger than I'd imagined. Little did I know that a collection of three-line poems would help me appreciate so many layers of my life.

Wedged between larger anthologies on the bottom row of a used bookstore's lone poetry shelf, it was easy to overlook. But fortunately, my eye was drawn to a slim volume of verse titled *The Haiku Year*. While not a novel, it was certainly a novel idea.

In the 1990s, seven friends from the Athens area—musicians, filmmakers, writers and an actor—decided to use haikus to stay in touch. Each day, for a full year, they mailed a haiku via postcard to one another. Though publishing a book was the last notion in their minds, the experiment eventually found its way to a local Georgia press, and *The Haiku Year* was released a few years later.

The book went largely unnoticed, though other artistic contributions of some of those ramshackle poets—REM's Michael Stipe, Grant Lee Buffalo's Grant Lee Phillips, Girls Town's Tom Gilroy, and Anna Grace—made ripples and waves in the cultural tides of the era. I imagined the poems were their morse code to one another, helping them stay grounded as their stars began their ascent.

Honestly, the book had me at "Michael Stipe," though I likely would've bought it even if I hadn't heard of any of the authors. The concept was just too appealing, the spirit of creation for the sake of connection too irresistible. I devoured the book in one sitting the next day.

Well, *almost*.

Two-thirds of the way through the book, I realized my hurried consumption of those pint-sized poems flew in the face of the form's intention. A *haiku* is a non-rhyming poem consisting of 17 syllables—give or take—arranged in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables, respectively. Good haiku packs a mighty punch in its syllables. Traditional wisdom invites the reader to sit with the poems, to ponder, to wonder. Haiku might be a distant cousin to the Zen *koan*, a sort of unsolvable riddle designed to disrupt linear thought. So, I went back, and I let the poems simmer and steep.

While nothing these Athens-based artists wrote reached the heights of the ancient haiku masters, I found myself inspired to play with the form myself, mostly to rejuvenate some weary creative muscles. I reached out to a good friend who shared many of my artistic interests and asked if he'd be game to take part in our own "haiku year" and text original poems to each other

first thing each morning. He said, "Sure." So, on January 1, 2023, we began our syllabic sojourn. Both of us strove to make our daily creations as organic and spontaneous as possible, crafting poems that were responses to things we saw, heard, tasted or felt—not preplanned ideations.

A few weeks in, I noticed something I hadn't expected. Namely, I was noticing more. My world—which I'd spent buried in screens, thanks to my work and my reaction to an anxiety-fueled need for distraction—was gently unfolding. Quarreling birds and shapeshifting clouds began competing with podcasts and doomscrolling for my attention. My earbuds, those constant companions for morning walks, started winding up in my pocket and, eventually, were left home altogether.

While I've been a meditator for more than 25 years, I continue to struggle to stay on the cushion and bring my attention back to the ever-present *Now*. My haiku challenge took my restless practice off the cushion and into the world. My efforts to awaken my inner poet nudged me to set aside pop culture and politics for at least a few minutes each morning and pay attention to something outside my own overthinking head.

My daily haiku, though unremarkable, came easily as the year went on. Some days, I wrote four or five short verses. Creatively, I felt renewed, but more importantly, I felt a bit more mindful. And given how often I struggle to maintain present-moment awareness as an adult, "a bit more mindful" is true poetic progress.



Tommy Housworth is a professional writer and creative director for corporate projects. He's a certified mindfulness instructor, the author of two collections of short stories, and he has a column on *Substack*.

*A simple haiku  
like birdsong above the trees  
invites me back home*

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