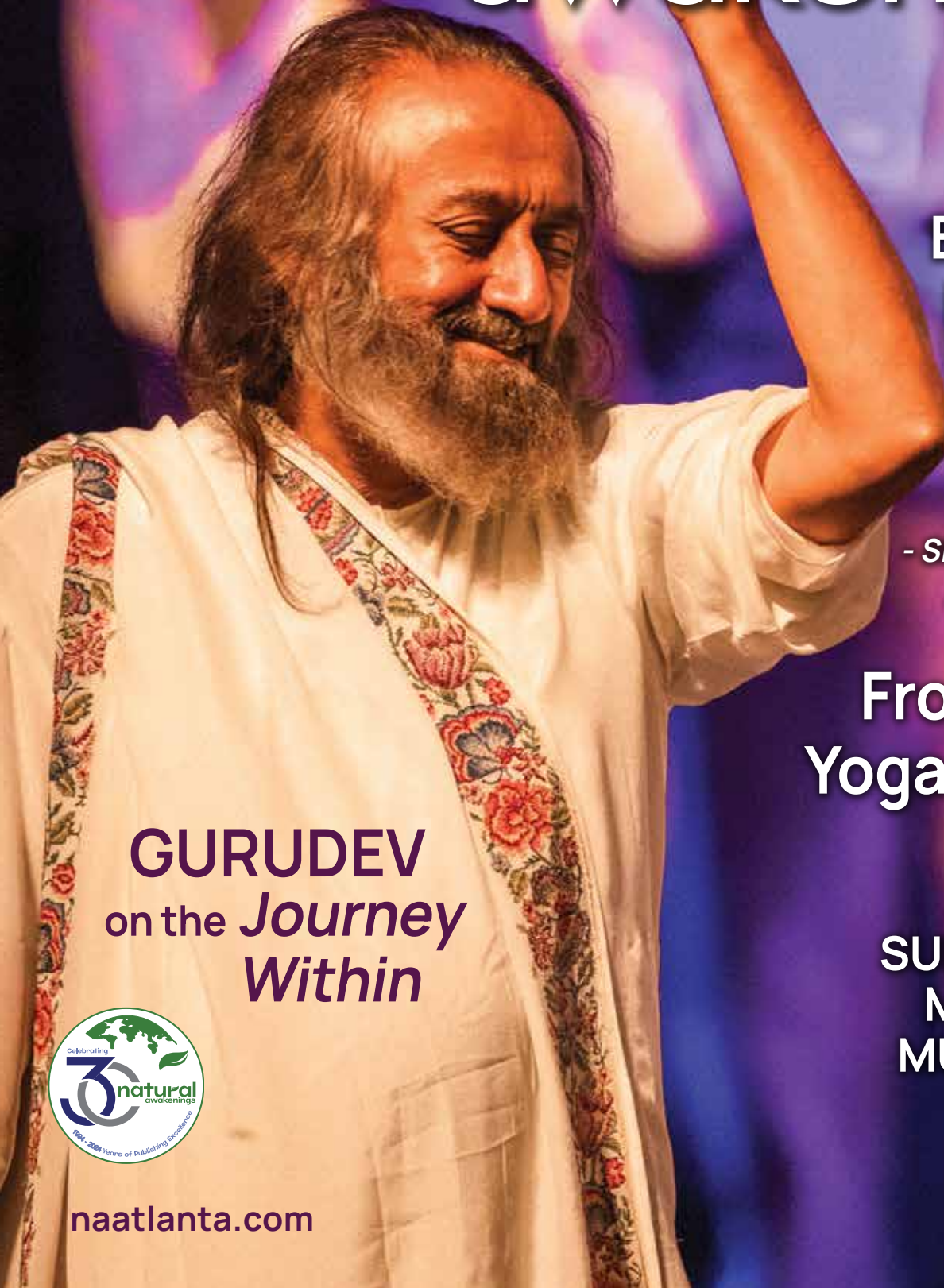




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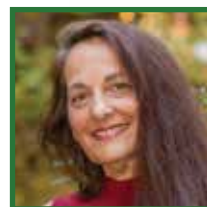
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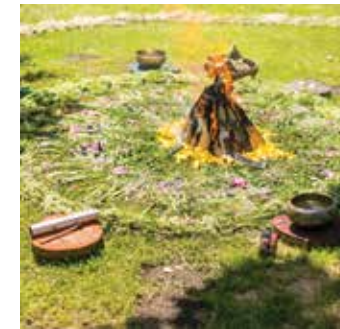
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## YEARS OF YOGA SPECIAL SECTIONS

This month's package of three articles on yoga therapy is, remarkably, our eighth such package. Here's a selection of articles from previous special sections.



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### Early Roots of Atlanta's Passion for Yoga (2021)

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It was a privilege and an honor to be able to interview an internationally recognized spiritual leader, and I want to thank Sriram Iyer, former president of Atlanta's Art of Living, for that opportunity. He proactively requested the interview on our behalf without a prompt from us! How incredible is that?

Whenever we conduct interviews, we like to ask questions on behalf of our readers. For this interview, our questions assumed that a significant portion of our readers are in the early stages of their spiritual paths—having been on it for just a handful of years—or they're considering exploring a path for themselves. We didn't ask "deep" philosophical questions. We sincerely hope that our questions prove themselves to be relevant to many of you.

As fate would have it, this issue is packed with articles of a spiritual bent. As it happens, two of Atlanta's spiritual organizations are celebrating decennial anniversaries: Unity Atlanta is celebrating its 100th year, and Mary and Martha's Place is celebrating its 30th.

While they are quite distinct organizations, Art of Living, Unity, and the Celtic spirituality that lies at the heart of Mary and Martha's Place's offerings share a common ground: nondualism. Wikipedia states that nondualism "emphasizes the absence of fundamental duality or separation in existence. This viewpoint questions the boundaries conventionally imposed between self and other, mind and body, observer and observed, and other dichotomies that shape our perception of reality."

Rick Busby, a Unity teacher in Austin, Texas, wrote: "Charles Fillmore taught that the 'Christ in you' is the 'true light which guides,' and that this 'true light' is and has forever been within you, within me. The 'true light' of the Christ is the creative principle through which everything was 'formed and came into existence.'" And Celtic mystic and poet John O'Donohue wrote: "The eternal world and the mortal world are not parallel; rather, they are fused. The eternal world suffuses what, to the human eye, is our mortal world. This fusion makes all experience, thoughts, feelings, events and happenings, live and dead, holy."

Some readers might pick up on the clear connection between natural health—the primary focus of this magazine—and nondual spiritual paths. That is *holism*, often defined as "the theory that parts of a whole are in intimate interconnection, such that they cannot exist independently of the whole." For example, consider that Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine, two of humanity's oldest health enhancement and maintenance systems—both still in practice today—recognize a deep connection

*Continued on page 40*

# From Gurus to Holistic Health to Nondualism

**I**t is with immense pleasure and satisfaction that we present our interview with Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar in this issue. Gurudev provided so much for us to share that we'll publish Part 2 in an upcoming issue!

Gurudev is an Indian spiritual master and founder of the Art of Living Foundation, whose mission is "to create a happier, stress-free world by providing tools for personal transformation," and its vision is "to foster a global community that seeks positive change and well-being for all individuals."

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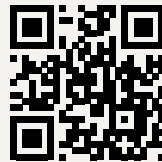
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We invite pitches, submissions, letters to the editor, and contributions to our column *Walking Each Other Home*. Email our managing editor at [diane@naAtlanta.com](mailto:diane@naAtlanta.com), or scan the QR code below.



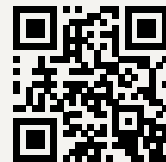
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## The Wellness Emporium Opens in Woodstock

The Wellness Emporium recently opened in Woodstock and offers a number of holistic health services that support physical, mental and spiritual well-being, including massage therapy, reflexology, hypnotherapy and personal success coaching. In addition, licensed practitioners offer facials, art therapy, yoga classes and more.

Founder and owner of The Wellness Emporium, Valerie Hudgins, a certified hypnotherapist and coach, combines her skills to guide clients through personal success coaching and specialized treatments such as the Virtual Gastric Band for weight loss. She is also a reiki master and yoga instructor.

The Emporium is also home to four other practitioners. Elizabeth Kraus is a master certified hypnotherapist and reiki practitioner who draws upon her extensive background in psychology. Senya Ivanko is a licensed esthetician with over 15 years of experience. Paula Dukes, a licensed massage therapist with over three decades of experience, creates custom massages that integrate her knowledge of essential oils and various healing modalities. And Evie Fleming, a board-certified reflexologist and certified yoga instructor,



Valerie Hudgins



tor, brings a passion for the human body and holistic wellness to her clients.

The Wellness Emporium also serves as a community hub, hosting social gatherings, craft classes and guest speakers to foster a sense of connection and shared learning among its visitors. Each service is available by appointment only. Pricing varies depending on the service.

For more information, visit [TheWellnessEmporium.net](http://TheWellnessEmporium.net) or call 770-200-4223. The Wellness Emporium is located at 1501 Regency Way, Ste. 203 in Woodstock.

## Pilates on Tour Comes to Atlanta in October

Pilates enthusiasts and instructors will gather for Pilates on Tour (POT), a continuing education event taking place from October 4 through 6 at the Omni Atlanta Hotel at Centennial Park. Organized by Balanced Body, POT features keynotes and workshops led by internationally recognized presenters.

Events include keynote presentations by Ken Endelman, founder of Balanced Body, Vicki Clark, a consultant based in Memphis, Tennessee, with extensive experience in nonprofit governance and community initiatives, and Joy Puleo, Balanced Body's director of education.



tion. Endelman will provide a history of Pilates, Clark will speak to inclusive leadership and how to cultivate the leader in all and Puleo will speak about Pilates' place in the context of mind-body fitness.

Workshops are three hours long, offered in the mornings and afternoons of all three days, with five or six workshops offered in each time slot. Attendees can engage in workouts, movement opportunities and demos lasting from 30 to 45 minutes between keynotes and workshops. Social events highlight both Friday and Saturday evenings. Atlanta Pilates studio owner Leslie Clayton will teach the Friday 7:30 a.m. and 5:15 p.m. movement offerings.

Pricing is \$575 for one day, \$750 for two days and \$975 for all three days.

Balanced Body, the company behind POT, is a leader in the Pilates industry. Founded over 40 years ago, Balanced Body offers Pilates equipment and educational programs for instructors and practitioners worldwide.

For more information, visit [Pilates.com/Pilates-On-Tour-Atlanta](http://Pilates.com/Pilates-On-Tour-Atlanta). Omni Atlanta Hotel at Centennial Park is located at 190 Marietta St. NW in Atlanta.

## Saltville Grotto & Spa Celebrates Anniversary with a Carnival

Saltville Grotto & Spa in Snellville will celebrate its second year in business with a fun-filled carnival on Saturday, September 14, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event, which is free to the public, will be held at their facility at 2447 Main Street East, in Snellville. Attendees get free access to the salt cave throughout the day, along with giveaways, games, snacks, featured vendors and a gem and mineral show.

Saltville Grotto & Spa opened in September 2022, taking over the business previously known as Serenity Salt Cave & Healing Center. The spa boasts one of the largest man-made salt caves in Georgia and is the only facility in Gwinnett County offering float therapy tanks. Their services also include massage therapy, ionic foot detoxes, zero gravity recliners and an infrared sauna. The spa regularly hosts events focused on spiritual, emotional and holistic well-being.

"Since the pandemic, times aren't the easiest for small businesses, and we are proud to be able to celebrate our second anniversary," says owner Krista Wright. "We want the carnival to be fun, silly and full of joy. We'll be giving away lots of goodies and will have a raffle drawing for a salt-sational spa day giveaway!"



For more information, contact Becky Kiper at 678-585-1153 or email [Relax@SaltvilleGrotto.com](mailto:Relax@SaltvilleGrotto.com) (Attention: Becky). Visit [SaltvilleGrotto.com/events](http://SaltvilleGrotto.com/events) for additional details. Saltville Grotto & Spa is located at 2447 Main St. East in Snellville.

## Chamblee's Hands On Wellness Celebrates 10 Years



Dr. Miriam Croft

Hands On Wellness in Chamblee marks its 10th anniversary, celebrating a decade of providing chiropractic and holistic wellness services to the community. The practice focuses on a personalized approach, offering services such as family chiropractic care, hyperbaric oxygen therapy and tissue regeneration. It also offers subluxation-based chiropractic techniques that enhance nervous system function, aiming to pave the way for optimal health and well-being.

The practice's founder and owner, Dr. Miriam Croft, specializes in family chiropractic care, including prenatal and pediatric services. She earned her doctorate in chiropractic from Life University and is certified in the Webster and Thompson techniques as well as in Nutrition Response Testing. Dr. Croft's passion for holistic health is rooted in her personal experience and commitment to proactive wellness.

"We want to express our gratitude to all of our patients, community and supporters from the start. We look forward to being the go-to chiropractic and holistic wellness center for Atlantans for many years to come. As our name suggests, we take a hands on approach and tailor individual care plans for each of our patients," says Croft.

For more information, call 770-452-2955 or visit [HowChiropractic.com](http://HowChiropractic.com). Hands On Wellness is located at 3652 Chamblee Dunwoody Rd., Ste. 1, in Chamblee.





## New Chiropractic Office Opens in Roswell

Nova Vitae Chiropractic, led by Dr. Keishla Roman and Dr. Ashley Roman, recently opened its doors in Roswell, offering specialized care focused on ergonomic health, postural rehabilitation and wellness. The clinic is dedicated to enhancing the daily and long-term well-being of the local community, with a focus on helping clients recover from car accidents and improve their overall health.

Hailing from Puerto Rico, the Roman sisters earned their Doctor of Chiropractic degrees at Life University. With more than 10 years of combined experience and certifications in ergonomics, they have devoted their careers to providing personalized care and edu-



Dr. Ashley Roman



Dr. Keishla Roman

Nova Vitae Chiropractic is currently accepting new clients and offers a variety of services tailored to individual needs. The office is open for appointments on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Fridays from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information, visit [NovaVitaeChiro.com](http://NovaVitaeChiro.com), or call 678-357-6659. Nova Vitae Chiropractic is located at 600 Houze Way, Ste. D9, in Roswell.



Fluent in both Spanish and English, they are passionate about bringing their expertise to the Roswell community. “We believe in the incredible health potential that each and every one of us possesses,” says Keishla. “With the right tools, conditions, mindset and willpower, great progress can be achieved.”

## Reflexology Workshop Offers Healing for Trauma and Addiction

Heal Center Atlanta is hosting a specialized workshop, Level I Reflexology for Trauma and Addiction from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. November 9 and 10. The two-day event is designed for reflexologists, massage therapists and other bodywork professionals interested in learning how to support individuals affected by trauma and addiction.

The workshop will be led by Chantel C. Lucier, NBCR, RMT, CMT, a national board-certified reflexology educator and practitioner with extensive expertise in trauma-informed care. Lucier, a resident of Petaluma, California, is also a reiki master teacher and will guide participants through a deep exploration of reflexology techniques specifically tailored to address the needs of clients struggling with trauma and addiction.

The workshop’s three segments include:

- The no-mind approach to wellness, a philosophy and methodology that helps release the diagnosis with clients and loved ones
- A compassionate intake process that holds space for another’s healing
- Reflexology protocols for trauma and addiction

“I am so excited to take [Lucier’s] program since so many of my clients, indeed, so many people have past or present trauma or addiction,” says Heal Center founder and reflexolo-



Chantel C. Lucier

gy teacher, Roz Zollinger. “When reflexologists spend time broadening and advancing their knowledge, our clients achieve more success in their healing journeys.”

For more information, call 404-303-0007 or visit [bit.ly/trauma-reflexology-1124](http://bit.ly/trauma-reflexology-1124). Heal Center Atlanta is located at 270 Carpenter Dr. in Sandy Springs.

## Natural Mystic Fair, A Conscious Awareness Camping Experience



Tassili Ma'at

The 11th annual Natural Mystic Fair, produced by the I Am Ascension Temple of Love and Tassili’s Raw Reality Café, both founded by Tassili Ma’at, looks completely different this year—its revamped format centers around a camping experience. Previously, the event featured speakers, entertainers and food as well as holistic wellness and metaphysical products and services, and it took place in the backyard of the West End home of the temple and cafe.

Taking place September 6 through 8, the event this year is called the Natural Mystic Fair Camping Experience Retreat, and it is billed as “a three-day, three-night, family-friendly retreat that explores what it is to be a consciously aware family village living the 42 Laws of Ma’at.” All speakers, artists, volunteers, staff and guests who attend agree to follow the 42 Laws of Ma’at—a set of moral principles laid out in the Egyptian Book of the Dead—while attending and participating in the festival. Tassili Ma’at describes the 42 laws as “just basic codes of good behavior and good character: I will not lie, I will not steal, I will not cheat anyone.”

Participants don’t need to camp to attend; a single-day pass is \$15. However, tickets must be purchased in advance; one can’t just walk in off the street. The location of the gathering will not be disclosed until 48 hours before the event and after tickets are purchased, but Ma’at says that the event will be held within 10 minutes of her café on five acres of land “tucked away and nestled in southwest Atlanta.”

The overall theme of the event is “conscious awareness,” and the first day’s topic is “Time Travel and Honoring the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.” The remaining days’ topics are: “Woke Don’t Mean Broke—Sacred Commerce, Financial Literacy and Manifesting Abundance” and “The Planetary Prayer for Peace Party—Manifesting and Cultivating Peace Within and Without.”

For more information, visit [TassilisRawReality.com/natural-mystic-fair/](http://TassilisRawReality.com/natural-mystic-fair/) or call Sunday Jones at 678-471-2963.

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# A Century of Unity

## Unity Church Celebrates its 100th Anniversary

by Noah Chen



The Unity Atlanta Church is in the midst of celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The church, located in Peachtree Corners, belongs to the Unity Worldwide Ministries spiritual organization, which, though based on Christianity, is one of several organizations that has its roots in the New Thought movement, including Science of Mind and the Agape International Spiritual Center. While the New Thought movement does center around the Bible, it is also influenced by many of the world's religions and emphasizes the power of the mind and the spirituality of the individual over more dogmatic practices.

Perhaps in part due to this eclectic DNA, the modern Unity church welcomes people of all types into its churches and boasts a diverse range of followers. Rev. Jennifer Sacks, fondly known as “Rev. Jenn,” the senior minister of the Unity Atlanta church for the past seven years, describes this openness as the church “honoring all paths to God.” This willingness

to see a collective spirituality in humanity has given the church a reputation for being open-minded, which, in turn, is reflected in its demographics. Sacks estimates membership to be 40 percent non-white or LGBTQ-identifying.

“No matter who you are, who you love, or how you identify, you belong here,” says Sacks.

Unity Atlanta also encourages a diverse range of practices, from a healing room in the church that offers reiki massages on Sunday mornings to the occasional sound healing sessions. This interest in healing modalities actually connects to the founding of the church, explains Pam Johnson, senior director for Unity Atlanta.

“The whole Unity religion was founded on a healing principle,” says Johnson. The church was founded by a couple, Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, and Myrtle had multiple sclerosis. “She had this whole story about how she invited Jesus to come sit with her and help her heal her body. And she was cured and lived to be 90-something years old. And so the sound bath—anything that we do—you could say there’s a Unity aspect.”

That said, Sacks says that prayer and meditation are two of the primary ways the spirituality of Unity Atlanta is expressed. For Sacks, the church excels at teaching its followers how to spiritually flourish in everyday life. “We offer you all kinds of tools for practical spiritual living,” says Sacks. This philosophy is rooted in one of the church’s basic teachings, which states that spiritual knowledge should be applied to our thoughts and actions.

While this tenet of the church has remained the same, Sacks says there have been changes even during her tenure. For one, the pandemic forced her and her team to adapt to a world that was suddenly virtual. However, they were able to maintain a



Rev. Jennifer Sacks



Pam Johnson

strong sense of community through Zoom calls and weekly discussions and classes.

### Growing with the Community

That sense of community is a large part of why Johnson first joined the church. She had moved to Atlanta from Oklahoma in 1988 and had been told by a friend to visit the church. “The people were just so welcoming and so wonderful, really. And warm,” Johnson says. She was also a fan of Unity’s children’s program, as she wanted her kids to grow up in a church.

That community extends outside of the walls of the church as well. “The people who get together really enjoy each other, and they don’t want to just be together on Sunday,” says Sacks. “There’s a run-walk group that meets, there’s the women’s circle that meets, there’s the men’s group.” Outside of its groups, Unity members can often be found helping each other with everyday tasks like painting a house. The church also has supported community service initiatives supporting schools, community centers, food banks and animal shelters.

Established in 1924, Unity Atlanta began as a small ministry housed in the old Chamber of Commerce Building in downtown Atlanta and offered one of the first Unity study groups. Over the decades, as the church grew, it moved across the city—from its 1950s location on Ponce de Leon Avenue to the historic Fischer Mansion in the 1970s. In the ‘80s, a new chapel was constructed on the same property as the Fischer mansion, which the church had purchased.

When the church changed locations in the early 2000s, it impacted their attendance. “In 2006, our church moved to Peachtree

Corners. And anytime a church moves, or you have ministers move, no matter what the denomination, some people drop off,” says Johnson. Something similar happened when Sacks stepped in as the new minister. However, the church quickly rebounded both times, finding a new audience and growing its diverse community. “There’s been tons of growth,” Johnson says about the overall change she’s witnessed through her time at Unity Atlanta.

Across her time as both minister and attendee of various Unity churches, Sacks says the demographics of the church haven’t fluctuated much. She did notice a drop-off in some of the children’s programs, but Johnson attributed that to the pandemic and the accelerated trend of youth interacting with the world—and religion—on an increasingly digital basis.

### An Exciting Future

While there have been changes over the years, both Johnson and Sacks are excited for the future and for the upcoming celebrations.

Unity Atlanta has planned a full weekend of festivities at its location at 3597 Parkway Lane in Peachtree Corners, beginning with a reception on September 20. “We’ve invited some past ministers to come and say a few words, and our band’s going to play some music,” says Johnson. That will be followed by a full gala on Saturday night, held at the Crowne Plaza in Norcross, complete with a wine bar and live music.

And for the Sunday service, Sacks says everyone present will cross over the Bridge of Faith—a bridge on the Unity premises—that marks their crossing over from the 100th year to the 101st. “And you know what that means for the church and what that means personally for each one of us. It’s saying we’re all on our own individual journey together.” 🙌

Noah Chen is an Atlanta writer and journalist who writes for a wide variety of large companies and publications.

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# Mary and Martha's Place

## Will Close After 30 Years, But the Teachings Will Continue

by Noah Chen

**M**ary and Martha's Place (MMP), an Atlanta spiritual organization focused on Celtic Christian traditions and female perspectives on spirituality, celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. A luncheon is planned for September 26, but it will cease operations at the end of the year.

Founded by Maggie Harney in 1994, the organization was inspired by her time at the Candler School of Theology at Emory.

"I wanted to share these ideas with women who did not want to go to seminary but were interested in these shifting perspectives," Harney recalls. The organization quickly attracted women from a variety of Christian denominations, in part because, while it has a spiritual focus, it contrasts with traditional church settings. "Mary and Martha's Place is not a church," clarifies Harney. "It is a center for education and learning about the theology of many of the world's religions. It is also a place to learn contemplative practices."

### Going Deep with Celtic Traditions

The ancient Celtic traditions are of particular importance to the center. Harney describes the appeal of these traditions, saying, "The Celtic Christian tradition has appealed to many women because of the strong women who have been part of its history—St. Brigid of Kildare is respected equally with St. Columba and St. Patrick."



Rebecca Parker

Gatherings at Mary and Martha's Place frequently feature lessons or discussions based on a set of books selected and taught by Harney and executive director, Rebecca Parker. Parker jokes that, from the outside, Mary and Martha's Place "could be mistaken for a book club," but she explains that their lessons go deeper into the material and are similar to what could be found in universities or seminaries.

Their Contemporary Spiritual Issues group, for example, is "interested in the many different ways our spirituality is



Maggie Harney

lived out in the world," says Harney. One of the books they've covered, *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, inspired eight discussion sessions on Native American spirituality and ecology.

Of particular interest to Harney are the works of John Phillip Newell, who writes about the history of Celtic traditions and the people who have been influenced by them throughout history.

The Celtic traditions sometimes influence the choice of gatherings at Mary and

Martha's Place. "Because of our interest in the Celtic tradition, we have held summer solstice celebrations," says Harney. "Our winter solstice celebration is a service of poetry, hauntingly beautiful music and long periods of silent meditation."

Over the years, the organization's focus expanded to encompass a broader spiritual transformation. But Parker explains that, about 10 years ago, they "became aware and began talking about the three centers of intelligence—the body, the mind and the spirit. And we started doing programming that reflected all three." That included classes centered around yoga, the Enneagram and a range of other spiritual tools and practices.

### Two Branches of the Tree

Another shift in focus occurred when Mary and Martha's Place was introduced to Cynthia Bourgeault's teachings on Christian mysticism. Parker had been familiar with Bourgeault's writings and secured her as a guest speaker in 2012, which led to a closer association between Bourgeault and Mary and Martha's Place.

Cynthia's writing was the "body of work that I needed that incorporated praxis, theology and ancient wisdom traditions," says Parker.

For Parker, Bourgeault's writings represent the first of the two branches of the tree at Mary and Martha's Place—Christian mysticism—while the second branch is made up of MMP's "Celtic roots, feminist theology and liberal tradition," says Parker.

The organization's teachings and discussions can also shift further, depending on the issues of the time. For example, Johnson recalls how their focus shifted while Donald Trump was president. "We were recognizing, during the Trump era, that the 'other' was being demonized. So we started a speaker series and read books that helped name the way we understood the 'other,' which is that there isn't an 'other.' We are all interconnected."

As Harney and Parker considered the future, they wanted to simplify operations and reduce expenses. On the one hand, both will continue teaching. Says Parker: "[Harney] will continue teaching the group that she's been teaching," while Parker will create a spiritual curriculum around Bourgeault's work. On the other hand, they will do so without the MMP organization, which will close at the end of the year. Between now and then, MMP will still offer several fall class series, including Wisdom Way, Thresholds and Contemporary Spiritual Issues. It will also hold its annual Advent Meditation on December 5 and its Winter Solstice Celebration on December 14.

Parker remains quite fond of MMP. "I feel very inarticulate about trying to name the life-giving heart that this organization has. There's just such a life force about the place and the women and their capacity to open and invite other people in," she says.

"Over these 30 years at MMP, I am most proud of the many ways we have explored our own spiritual lives and the lives of other people who lived long ago or far away," says Harney. "It has expanded my own spiritual experiences, and I am grateful to all the women and men who joined in the conversations." 🌿

Mary and Martha's Place is located at 4393 Garmon Rd. NW in Atlanta. For more information, visit [MaryAndMarthasPlace.com](http://MaryAndMarthasPlace.com) or call 404-239-9382.

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# Marvelous Mushrooms

## Celebrating a Culinary Powerhouse

by Marlaina Donato

September is National Mushroom Month, and with it comes bountiful inspiration to plate up some earthy goodness. Whether we follow the nearest woodland path to forage or visit the local market to stock up on our favorite fungi, autumn is the perfect time to appreciate the delicious world of edible mushrooms. From creamy vegan risotto to golden soups, or from daring sautés punctuated with chiles to savory broths, consuming more mushrooms benefits our palate and well-being.

### Health Benefits

The Mayo Clinic reports that mushrooms help curb high blood pressure and protect us from neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Most

mushrooms available at the market are a good source of B vitamins and minerals, especially selenium-rich creminis and vitamin D-rich maitakes.

A 2021 Penn State study published in *Advances in Nutrition* involving data of more than 19,500 cancer patients over several decades reveals that individuals consuming one-eighth to one-quarter cup of mushrooms daily had a 45 percent lower risk of total cancer compared to those that did not. It is believed that the antioxidants ergothioneine and glutathione—present in all mushrooms—contribute to beneficial metabolic processes in the body. Other research is focused on a correlation between white button mushroom consumption and a lower risk of prostate and breast cancer.

### Off the Trail and Into the Kitchen

Mushrooms have been used as both nourishment and medicine for ages, but their versatility in the kitchen is what delights Sharon Palmer, a plant-based dietician and author of *California Vegan* and *The Plant-Powered Diet*. “You can sauté or grill them as a side dish, stir them into soups and stews, add them to grain and pasta dishes, chop them into salads or bowls and include them in casseroles,” she advises. “Use finely chopped mushrooms in lentil patties, veggie burgers, veggie ‘meat’ balls and veggie loaves. You really can’t detect their texture, but you get that rich, savory flavor in the recipe.”

Palmer favors certain commonly available varieties: shiitake and trumpet mushrooms for their reliable, firm texture; oyster mushrooms for their delicate softness suited for stir fries; and petite enoki mushrooms for a crisp addition to salads. To obtain memorable flavor, gourmet varieties such as porcinis can be purchased dried and easily rehydrated for soups and sauces.

On the wilder side, foraged mushrooms such as golden chanterelles are an annual favorite among connoisseurs. “The mossy, old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest are some of my favorite fall destinations,” says Langdon Cook, a Seattle-based forager and author of *The Mushroom Hunters*, who recommends taking a foraging class or joining a mycological society for hands-on safety tips and in-the-field learning.

Cook notes that mushrooms are ideal for vegetarians and vegans because many varieties are firm in texture and pair well with vegetables. “Black trumpet or yellowfoot mushrooms take a basic dish of creamy polenta to the next level, and most grains and pastas will benefit from the addition of fungi,” he asserts. “Try a dry sauté method: heating the mushrooms in a bare pan until they release their water, cooking off that liquid and then adding butter or oil near the end of the cooking process to brown them.”

While mushrooms can dress up gourmet dishes, they are surprisingly quick and easy for everyday eating, too. “You don’t need to fuss over mushrooms too much,” Palmer points out. “Just rinse in water and pat dry; then you’re ready to cook with them. My favorite way to cook mushrooms is to slice and sauté them in a small amount of olive oil with garlic and lemon as a side dish.”

Cook advises, “Don’t try to cook mushrooms too fast or over high heat. Medium heat is fine. Take your time. Mushrooms are mostly water, and you need to cook off that liquid content to give them a nice sear.” He underscores the importance of cooking wild mushrooms fully to prevent digestive upset, especially morels, which “absolutely cannot be served raw or undercooked.”

Palmer concurs, saying, “Eating raw mushrooms may cause mild GI [gastrointestinal] issues in some people; cooking the mushrooms typically eliminates this issue.” She also suggests covering the pot or pan when cooking them in soups or stews to lock in flavor and nutrition.

For Cook, the magical lure of mushrooms goes beyond the tastebuds. “To me, morels mean springtime trips to woodlands reawakening from winter slumbers with birdsong and snowmelt, and porcinis mean long summer hikes to subalpine meadows in the Rockies and North Cascades,” he says.

Marlaina Donato is an author, painter and recording artist. Connect at [BluefireStudio.art](http://BluefireStudio.art).

### Mushroom Bomb Lentil Pasta

**YIELD: 6 SERVINGS**

- 1 8-oz package lentil pasta
- 3 Tbsp truffle oil or extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 lb mixed mushrooms (enoki, shiitake, cremini, hen of the woods, maitake, oyster), coarsely sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp chopped fresh or dried thyme
- 1 cup dry white wine
- Sea salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Cook lentil pasta in boiling water according to package directions. Rinse and drain.

While pasta is cooking, heat truffle oil in a large sauté pan and add mushrooms, garlic and thyme. Sauté for 3 minutes. Add white wine and continue sautéing for an additional 5 minutes to reduce liquid and make a more concentrated sauce. Add cooked pasta to mushroom mixture and toss together. Season as desired with salt and black pepper. Serve immediately.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Sharon Palmer.



Courtesy of Sharon Palmer

Continued on page 25

### Vegan Pot Pie With Sage, Lentils and Mushrooms



Courtesy of Sharon Palmer

### Stir-Fried Oyster Mushrooms With Chicken



Courtesy of Langdon Cook



Find these recipes online at:  
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# Why Hire a Health and Wellness Coach If I'm Healthy?

Seeking the services of a health and wellness coach can be a transformative and enriching experience, regardless of the status of one's health. Many people can benefit from the accountability, extra motivation and support for their health goals that wellness coaches provide. In fact, sometimes a health coach provides the missing piece to the client's optimal health and wellness journey.

Ideally, the medical field would incorporate more holistic skills, more time to support people in making healthy personal choices and more understanding of what motivates someone to change than what it currently provides. That's where a health coach comes

in—to fill in these missing pieces and guide clients through successful change.

A health and wellness coach works with clients to find out what motivates them and identifies the factors that will be most effective to help them maintain their health and wellness. They also help them develop techniques that can support them in changing their lifestyles and then harness that knowledge to help improve their physical health and well-being further.

John, a client of mine, was seeking a health coach to help him counter his family's long-term generational battle with cancer. Even though he was healthy overall, his family

history of colorectal cancer worried him, and he wanted to do what he could to prevent ending up with the diagnosis himself.

I guided John to explore his "intrinsic thinking," which is a way of thinking that values uniqueness and individuality. He told me he wanted to be around for his family and kids, be healthy and live life unencumbered with health issues. He scored high on tests that rated his likelihood of following through with changes to achieve his goals. He was, in essence, ready for change.

While I worked with him, John began to adopt and maintain several healthy habits known to reduce risk factors for colorectal

cancer. I provided educational resources and information on colorectal cancer prevention and worked with him, supporting him in adopting positive changes.

John and I discussed the importance of regular medical check-ups and screenings, explored the role of diet in cancer prevention and devised a plan of action. With support and education, John was able to adopt a high-fiber diet, which can reduce the risk of colorectal cancer. He began incorporating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes into his meals, and after learning that alcohol can increase the risk of colorectal cancer, he began limiting his alcohol intake.

John was encouraged to incorporate more physical activity into his daily routine, such as walking or cycling to work and taking regular breaks to move around. We devised an exercise program that included aerobic exercises, strength training and a flexibility workout.

John was in a high-pressure career. Since chronic stress can negatively impact overall health and immune function, I introduced him to mindfulness and relaxation techniques, such as meditation and yoga, to help manage stress. We also discussed addressing work-life balance to reduce stress and improve his overall well-being.

John began to involve family members in his healthy lifestyle changes, creating a supportive environment for everyone.

Throughout the process, we set SMART goals—specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-sensitive—and sched-

uled regular check-ins to gauge progress, celebrate wins and re-examine as needed to keep him on track.

John's motivation was strong, and even though he struggled to adapt to certain changes at times, with a coach's support, guidance and help, he persevered and gained a sense of control over his well-being that he had not previously enjoyed.

He felt more empowered and proactive in managing his health, knowing that he was taking concrete steps to counter his family's generational battle with the disease.

John's story highlights the significant impact a health coach can have in helping individuals take steps to prevent potential future health issues and mitigate risk factors for diseases, even when they are currently healthy.

Health coaches provide personalized guidance and support. They help individuals make targeted changes that significantly improve their quality of life, even when they are already in good health. With their expertise and guidance, one can embark on a journey towards optimal health.

## Putting It Into Practice

Here's how some people who consider themselves "healthy" might take steps to improve their mental and physical well-being with a health and wellness coach.

## Optimizing Health and Performance

A freelance graphic designer, Alex works with a health and wellness coach to increase his daily energy and productivity. With his

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coach's help, he personalized his nutrition, physical activity and lifestyle plans to optimize his physical and mental well-being, which resulted in more energy and better productivity.

**Behavioral Change Support**  
Emily is a healthy young woman who wants to improve her diet to have more energy and to support her long-term health. She sought out a health coach because they specialize in helping clients make enduring behavioral changes. Her coach helps her focus on integrating healthy habits into her daily routines, ensuring the changes she makes are sustainable and long-lasting. She also receives check-ins and ongoing support from her coach to help her maintain her motivation and accountability.

**Better Work-Life Balance**  
Mark is a busy executive who feels overwhelmed by work stress and wants to improve his work-life balance. His health coach assists him with his meal planning and finding and creating time-effective exercise routines. The coach helps him op-

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timize his daily habits to support a lifestyle that's balanced and that prioritizes personal and professional well-being.

**Support During Transitions**  
Lisa wants to feel her best for her upcoming wedding, and weddings, like other significant life changes, can affect one's well-being. Her health coach gives Lisa vital support and guidance during such a transitional time and helps her manage the challenges that come with it.

**Personal Development**  
James is a young professional who feels mentally fatigued and wants to improve his mental clarity and resilience. His health and wellness coach is helping him integrate mindfulness techniques, meditation and other mental health practices into his routines and is helping him develop a positive mindset to cope with life's stresses and challenges. Through the process of exploring his values, strengths and areas for growth with his coach, James is increasing his self-awareness and enjoying the results of his own personal development.

Health coaches can be crucial to build proactive health management and reduce health risks. They can fill the healthcare gap and be pivotal in helping people enhance and maintain their well-being now and in the future. 🌱

*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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# Emotional Healing as a Family

## How Parents Can Model Mental Health Skills

by Christina Connors

The mental health of our children is in crisis. According to the U.S. Surgeon General's 2021 advisory on the youth mental health crisis, one in five children aged 3 to 17 has a mental, emotional, behavioral or developmental disorder.

To turn the tide on mental health, kids need emotional regulation skills, including the ability to identify emotions, self-soothe, obtain perspective, walk in another's shoes, think flexibly and solve problems. By developing these emotive sensitivities,

children can then improve their self-confidence, sense of self-worth and empathy, as well as begin to develop lasting and meaningful relationships.

"Kids will learn to regulate in the face of challenge. The only question is whether they learn healthy or unhealthy ways to do it," says Brad Chapin, a licensed clinical psychologist in Topeka, Kansas, and author of self-regulation resources for children. "Removing challenges from children isn't the answer. The focus should be on building self-regulation skills, and then those challenges become opportunities for strengthening those skills."

### What Adults Can Do

In the words of lyricist Stephen Sondheim, "Careful the things you say / Children will listen." Janet Philbin, LDSW, a certified, conscious-parenting coach and author, says, "When people become parents, they will tell you they want to parent differently than how they were parented because of the emotional childhood pain they endured. However, generational patterns will more than likely repeat unless the parent has done the emotional work to deconstruct their own childhood pain through coaching or counseling. As a result of doing the necessary inner work, a parent's ability to connect with their children will improve because they are able to be more connected with themselves."

### Practicing Emotional Regulation Together

"When we choose to look at behavior issues as a lack of skill-development, it changes the story from one of shame and negativity to one of hope," says Chapin, whose recent book *Self-Regulation Skill Set* supports adults in their journey to self-regulation.

As with learning any new skill, practice is key. Here are a few fun activities for parents and children to do together

to strengthen connections and build emotional regulation skills. Teaching kids when they are young is ideal, but it is never too late to start.

**I Spy:** While in a store, on a walk or at a park, challenge each other to notice the body language and facial expressions of people (or themselves) and identify the emotion they might be feeling. This game is a way to practice the skill set of recognizing warning signs when we start to feel upset. Parents should encourage their kids to take notice of the different expressions their peers make while at school to develop empathy and compassion.

**The Paws (Pause) Game:** To play, the first person who sees a dog says, "paws", takes a calming breath and puts their hands out like paws. The person with the most points at the end of the excursion wins. This game develops the skill of slowing down the alarm system within our bodies. Parents and caregivers can remind kids that throughout the day when they start to feel their own warning signs of anger or frustration, they can take a breath and "paws" to help prevent acting in a destructive way.

**Balloon Party:** In this game, parents invite their kids to sit comfortably with them and imagine that they are all preparing for a big party and need to blow up lots of balloons. While blowing up pretend balloons, remind each child to blow them up slowly so they don't pop. After blowing up several balloons, enjoy a pretend party. This is a fun way to connect with children through imaginative play while practicing peaceful breathing, which helps calm the nervous system.

*Christina Connors is a writer, singer and creator of Christina's Cottage, a YouTube series to strengthen kids' resilience, connection and joy through music, mindful play and the power of the heart. Learn more at [ChristinasCottage444.com](http://ChristinasCottage444.com).*

Continued from page 19

### Creamy Polenta With Wild Mushrooms

YIELD: 2 SERVINGS AS A SIDE DISH

#### FOR POLENTA:

1 cup water, plus more as it cooks  
 ½ cup milk  
 ½ cup polenta  
 ½ tsp salt  
 1 Tbsp butter  
 Parmesan cheese, grated, to taste

#### FOR MUSHROOMS:

¼ lb (or more) wild mushrooms, roughly cut into pieces  
 2 Tbsp butter, divided  
 2 cloves garlic, minced  
 2 Tbsp porcini powder\*, rehydrated with ½ cup warm water  
 1 Tbsp soy sauce  
 1 Tbsp heavy cream  
 1 tsp olive oil  
 Salt and pepper



Courtesy of Langdon Cook

\* To make porcini powder, pulverize a store-bought package of dried porcini into powder with a spice grinder. Chicken or vegetable stock may be substituted for porcini powder.

Over medium-high heat, bring water and milk to simmer in a medium-sized sauce pan or pot. Slowly add polenta while whisking to prevent clumping. Season with salt and continue to whisk for a minute or two. Turn heat to low and cook for about 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add more water as necessary to maintain creaminess.

While the polenta cooks, in a small pan sauté garlic and mushrooms in a tablespoon of butter over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cook mushrooms until they release their water and then cook off liquid, allowing mushrooms to brown slightly; this might take several minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Add ½ cup rehydrated porcini stock (or chicken or vegetable stock) to mushrooms. Continue to cook on medium heat until the liquid is reduced by half and then turn heat to low. Add soy sauce, cream and a drizzle of olive oil. Stir together and allow to thicken. Keep warm in pan over low heat while waiting for polenta to cook. If sauce becomes too thick, add another splash of water, cream or stock. Just before plating, melt one more tablespoon of butter into mushroom sauce and stir.

When polenta is thoroughly cooked and creamy, add butter and cheese (and more liquid if necessary). Adjust seasoning. Serve in a bowl and spoon mushrooms and sauce on top.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Langdon Cook.



TryMyBest/CanvaPro



# Taking Yoga Beyond Asana and Meditation

by Patricia Schmidt



Yolya/istockphoto.com

For the thousands of years that yoga has been around, practitioners and teachers have noted its therapeutic qualities. Baked within yoga’s “eight limbs” and referenced in its ancient texts are references to its benefits and its help in the relief from suffering.

Far more recently, and especially here in the United States, yoga therapy has crystallized as a professional field. It is now established as a type of therapeutic care overseen by a governing body called the International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT). There are professional designations for its members, related to given levels of training, experience and expertise, the most advanced of which is C-IAYT, denoting full certification through one of a number of rigorous processes and/or education pathways. There is also a searchable database of registered certified yoga therapists for prospective clients and a verified list of registered yoga therapy schools where prospective yoga therapy students can find pathways for their education.

For this three-part special section on yoga therapy, *Natural Awakenings* spoke with several of Atlanta’s certified yoga therapists and mental health professionals, as well as professionals in related modalities such as sound and energy medicine and traditional Chinese medicine practices such as tai chi.

## So, What Is Yoga Therapy?

The IAYT defines yoga therapy as “the process of empowering individuals to progress toward improved health and well-being through the application of the teachings and practices of yoga.”

Although not the only governing body for yoga therapists—there are local organizations, such as the British Council for Yoga Therapy, for example—IAYT has emerged as the dominant professional collective. It hosts annual research and professional conferences, publishes written policy papers and research journals and maintains an accreditation process for individuals, training schools and continuing education providers. Its efforts toward creating a working definition of the field and delineation of its scope of practice and ethics have been notable in the last 15 years, and they have made significant headway in the crystallization of the field.

Despite these efforts, IAYT acknowledges the challenges of defining yoga therapy as a care modality and professional practice as well as the complexity of its creation as a “field.” One challenge it confronts is that yoga is a living practice and exists with great diversity all over the world.

Yoga is constantly changing because it is in conversation with cultures and people who are also constantly changing. At the same time, yoga is an ancient path with longstanding traditions and practices, many of which are indigenous, local and ingrained. Together, its changing nature and its “established-ness,” require a flexibility of definition that challenges any fixity an organization might want to impose or welcome.

Tra Kirkpatrick, an established C-IAYT who works both in private practice and in Western medical environments, explains that yoga therapy, on the other hand, is not necessarily a newly crystallized field. Rather, she explains, “what’s new is that the Western world more deeply understands that there is a therapeutic benefit to yoga. It’s being shown more now through scientific research, and that research is becoming more prevalent and widespread. *Knowledge* about the modality is what’s crystallized—and not necessarily the modality itself.”

## Three Aspects Set It Apart

Three aspects of yoga therapy help to define the field by what is practiced. First, yoga therapy embraces an individualized approach to yoga. Usually working with a yoga therapist, the student crafts an approach to their health and well-being that is directly tailored to them. Ideally, this approach will also be regularly re-evaluated for its efficacy and continued relevance.

The founder of Southern Yoga Therapy Association, Tzipporah Gerson-Miller, LCSW, C-IAYT, notes: “My teachers always said, ‘You’re teaching to the person who’s in front of you.’ A part of entering into a *therapeutic* relationship is going to involve assessment, diagnostics, treatment planning and identifying some potential outcome there—and then noting progress along the way.” She adds, “As a yoga therapist, I am working with the individual or the therapeutic group to assess, to guide, to re-assess, to offer—always accounting for the person in front of us.”

Second, the underpinnings of yoga therapy should be the yoga philosophy. This is the



Courtney Lindberg Photography

Tzipporah Gerson-Miller

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## calendar

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6**  
**Goddess Yoga** - 7:30-9pm. Goddess yoga is hula and belly dance inspired. It is a combination of yoga and fluid dance movements. Goddess yoga was made by a woman for women's bodies. All levels. \$35. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Ste B2, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7**  
**Breath And Sound: You are the Medicine** - 3-5pm. Rebirthing Breathwork is a transformative practice that transcends the physical realm to reach the spiritual and holistic dimensions of healing. 55/advance, \$65/day of. Vista Yoga, 2836 Lavista Rd, Ste D, Decatur. 404-929-9642. VistaYoga.com.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14**  
**Awakening Love: Cacao Ceremony with Heart-Opening Breathwork and Meditation** - 1-3pm. Together, let's awaken our hearts and honor our ancestors through the healing power of ceremonial cacao, guided meditation, gentle breathwork and medicine song bath. \$60. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Ste B2, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21**  
**Sound Healing** - 4-5:30pm. With Michael Murphy Burke. Through a blend of instrumentation and vocalization, immerse yourself in an elongated shavasana, tuning every string, cell and fiber of your being. \$40. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Webb Bridge Way, Ste B2, Alpharetta. 404-726-2525. AumStudioForWellness.com.

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22**  
**Soulful Seasonal Self-Care Half-Day Retreat** - 1-5pm. With Marti Yura & Marnie Mommolo. Transition into Autumn with a half-day retreat filled with seasonal self-care rituals for autumn, restorative yoga with Thai bodywork assists, meditation, self-reflection, journaling, sharing and group cooking of an ayurvedic seasonal meal. \$108; \$95 by Sept 28. Vista Yoga,

2836 Lavista Rd, Ste D, Decatur. 404-929-9642. VistaYoga.com.

**Intro to Enneagram**

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22**  
3-5pm

Discover the power of the Enneagram, a tool that helps you find your true self and grow spiritually. No prior knowledge of the Enneagram necessary. \$45.

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[Ilona@PeachTreeYoga.com](mailto:Ilona@PeachTreeYoga.com).  
[bit.ly/pyc-events](http://bit.ly/pyc-events).

**FRIDAY, MARCH 28**  
**200-Hour Yoga Teacher Training Begins** - Vista Yoga, 2836 Lavista Rd, Ste D, Decatur. 404-929-9642. VistaYoga.com.


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

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

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

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


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yoga part of yoga therapy, a distinction that can sometimes get lost. Yoga therapists believe that there are two things that need to provide the foundation of their therapeutic work. The first is an adherence to yogic principles—the yamas and niyamas, for example, the guidelines for living an ethical and moral life. The second are the principles laid out in yoga's foundational texts, such as the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Of those, the yoga therapists I spoke to agree that a vibrant personal practice and an in-depth education in yogic texts and principles is paramount to being a good yoga therapist. They help yoga therapists stay within their scope of practice and not veer into other fields, such as mental health therapy.

The third aspect of yoga therapy that helps define it is that yoga therapists are committed to their duty of care and emphasize their high levels of professionalism and training. In practice, yoga therapy serves those who are seeking relief from suffering and an improvement in their daily condition, which often includes significant health challenges. Thus, C-IAYT yoga therapists are required to have over 1,000 hours of professional training with additional teaching and internship hours on top of that. They are also asked to continually update their education. They are typically highly trained across a range of subjects, including anatomy and physiology, and spend long periods apprenticing more experienced colleagues before practicing on their own.

Kirkpatrick recounts her feelings of inexperience and a lack of training as a newly qualified yoga teacher and personal trainer, feelings that led her to more in-depth yoga therapy training. "That's how I came into yoga therapy," she says. "Because I knew



Tra Kirkpatrick

what I didn't know—which was a lot." She continues: "My job as a yoga therapist is to be discerning and always seeking knowledge."

### What Yoga Therapy Isn't

We can also get more insight about what yoga therapy is by clarifying what it isn't. It is not generalized postural instruction delivered in a group setting. It's not repeated sun salutations, some backbends or an option to stand on your hands or even to lie down in corpse pose for 10 minutes. While there are often therapeutic benefits to standard yoga classes, any of these might not be appropriate for a given student at a particular time.

Still, the prescriptive nature of standard yoga classes precludes it from being yoga therapy. They might be taught by teachers who've had less training or are less experienced. Indeed, some Western yoga studios see standardization as a part of their brand identity and quality control measures and use scripts to help teachers with their cueing and choreographed class sequences.

"At the yoga therapy level," says Kirkpatrick, "you are teaching yoga techniques, tools and practices that are integrated within the bio-medical model as a way to create a path that alleviates physical, mental, psychological and energetic suffering. That, to me, is the delineation." 🙏

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, Roll Model method teacher and somatic movement specialist. To learn more, visit [PLSYoga.com](http://PLSYoga.com).



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# Yoga Therapy and Other Healing Arts

by Patricia Schmidt

## Who Owns Yoga Therapy?

Yoga therapy often weaves together with other healing arts partly because they are often programmed alongside one another in yoga studios. They also share common roots, such as ancient texts, practices and models of transmission. For example, it's common for yoga therapy to be provided along with sound healing, energy medicine, and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practices such as tai chi. But while these practices might have once been called “therapeutic,” that description and the specific word “therapy” are now restricted in a yoga context to only apply to instruction from certified yoga therapists. Studio owners and healing arts practitioners now struggle to describe the therapeutic qualities of their classes that don't fall under a yoga therapy umbrella despite shared attitudes and end goals for their work and their clients.

Thus, the use of the word “therapy” to refer to a type of care or class offering has become highly restricted among yoga professionals. The International Association of Yoga Therapy (IAYT) has placed restrictions upon its use and other professional organizations limit how it can be used as well. The Yoga Alliance, another dominant governing body for yoga teachers and yoga schools, bans the use of the words “therapist” and “therapy” in its online directories, for example, unless a teacher has specific yoga therapy training through a registered school. Tzipporah Gerson-Miller, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, and the founder of Southern Yoga Therapy Association, says that because yoga therapy is not a regulated profession, “anybody could call themselves a yoga therapist with very little accountability.” She notes, “I think we [still] have some work to do in terms of further refining that term.”

Because of these restrictions, studio owners and other healing arts providers who might want to use the word “therapy” for what they do feel challenged by what they can program and provide. These limitations affect everything from marketing to hiring choices to what classes and workshops are offered.

Kim MacPherson, RYT 200, the founder of Crossroads Yoga Studio in Milton, says



Kim MacPherson



Colles DETOT/Pexels.com

she's very selective about who she hires and careful with the marketing language she uses. At Crossroads, “we don't actually use the word ‘medicine’ or ‘therapy,’ but we use ‘healing,’” she says.

Marti Yura, E-RYT 500 and co-founder of Vista Yoga, explains that in lieu of “therapy,” she uses descriptors such as “accessible,” “energetically balancing,” “healing,” “relaxing and releasing” and so on. For her, these words help describe the effects of the practice, helping her to get around the restrictions on saying “therapy.”

MacPherson takes a similar approach. “As a studio owner,” she explains, “the distinction between therapy or medicine, it doesn't matter; to me, if the people *feel* [the therapeutic benefit], that is what's most important.” Yoga teachers who aren't certified but have similar levels of training as certified yoga therapists, along with sound- and energy-healing providers, also feel the pinch as they can't call themselves “therapists” or their work “therapy.”

## Shared Approaches

Despite not being able to use certain titles and qualifiers any longer, sound and energy healers working beside yoga therapists in Atlanta share common attitudes and approaches with roots in ancient yogic lessons.

First, yoga therapists and others working in the healing arts want to serve as many people as possible. Regardless of their training or background, serving the whole community is their primary concern. Those with whom *Natural Awakenings* spoke with also expressed the need for the greatest level of inclusivity possible and a fervent desire to meet the diversity of needs in front of them.

Studio owners are also increasingly leaning toward programming with as wide a variety of healing arts offerings as possible. “It keeps things fresh,” says Yura, “and very often helps to bring in individuals that may have not been to your space.”

For example, Vista Yoga's studio programming includes regular sound baths and immersions because of the similar healing effects to something like yoga therapy. Yura explains that “for anything to be therapeutic, it must address the nervous system, facilitating a calming vagal response to reduce stress and anxiety.” She welcomes a diversity of practices that elicit calming responses. “Mindfulness. Pranayama. Meditation. Studies now show that sound and appropriate hands-on work can have a similar effect. Many of the programs we offer are a combination of these modalities with the intent of lowering cortisol levels and supporting the nervous system.”

Like Vista Yoga, Crossroads' programming is also wide open, offering sound baths and immersions. “Between classes incorporating energetic work, energetic-focused workshops, a regular qigong offering and sound baths—people can come and get that kind of energetic re-boot.”

Biofield tuner Rebecca Carner notes the therapeutic importance of resonance and sound for moving energy, and Shane Orfas, an energy medicine healer, includes *kirtan*, a singing devotional practice, in his work. At the core of Carner's work is the therapeutic benefit of resonant energy. “The science behind its efficacy relates to central nervous system regulation, somatic experiencing and tissue stimulation and manipulation,” she says.

According to Carner, biofield tuning facilitates a state of inner awareness, a practice yogis call *svadhyaya*.

## Shared Attitudes

Those I interviewed also demonstrated a shared attitude of openness and detachment that is fundamentally grounded in the therapeutic yogic principles of equanimity and compassion. They stressed the importance of meeting each client with deep empathy and being present for whatever arises. They feel strongly that their methodologies are not so much prescriptive techniques or tools as they are pathways leading students home to themselves.

Carner says her biofield work is fundamentally rooted in empathy. “Regardless of individual or group application, biofield tuning demonstrates the power and efficacy of people being with people as medicine.”



Marti Yura



Rebecca Carner

Robin Davis Photography

Gerson-Miller refers to a “kinesthetic empathy,” a skill she honed in dance movement therapy, while Orfas describes this empathy as a kind of modeling a relationship to the Self. “If someone is being authentic with whatever is coming up—physical, mental, emotional—we are trained to be present with that, without any judgment of good or bad,” says Orfas. “Through being present with those conditions, you can shift into compassion through holding a space of tremendous empathy.”

## A Shared Goal

Finally, the therapeutic goal shared by healing arts practitioners is a yogic one: to rest in one's true Self. This is the fundamental lesson of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, delivered right at the beginning of the first of its four books.

Carner emphasizes the capacity for energy healing and biofield tuning to lead a client into a state of attunement with their true Self, whatever that may be. “Biofield tuning has the potential to mitigate and heal any number of physical and/or emotional maladies. The body's innate wisdom can be activated, and when coupled with self-awareness, beneficial belief and behavioral changes, the sky is the limit in terms of healing potential.”

Orfas reports a similar openness of approach and beneficial effect from his energy medicine.

“I began to see people shift in significant ways,” says Orfas. “They're back on their own personal path. Whatever path they're on, I am the advocate of their soul. It's not about a direction I think they should or shouldn't go [in]; I listen, and I become present with what I think their soul is trying to tell me.”

Patanjali taught that yoga quiets the turning of the mind, at which point the student is able to rest in their true Self. This is the ultimate therapy of yoga, comprising its shared roots with other healing arts. 🌿



benzoiu/DepositPhotos.com



# Yoga Therapy in a Western Context

by Patricia Schmidt

**A**s yoga therapy continues to establish itself as a credible part of healthcare in the United States, it is important to examine how it interfaces with Western medical environments. Ultimately, the profession primarily aims to relieve suffering and create greater and more lasting ease for those it serves. Certainly, these goals are shared by Western medical doctors and other caregivers. But, the interface with the healthcare and health education systems in the United States brings its own challenges to traditional ways of practicing and disseminating yoga, and the integration of yoga therapy into Western

medical contexts only heightens divisions between “regular” yoga and dedicated *yoga therapy*.

Two established certified yoga therapists in the Atlanta metro area, Tzipporah Gerson-Miller, LCSW, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, and Tra Kirkpatrick, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, work regularly with Western medical providers and often within healthcare environments such as hospitals. As a licensed clinical social worker, Gerson-Miller straddles both healthcare contexts. Like Gerson-Miller, Dominique Harmon, LCSW, holds numerous yoga certifications and works within traditional healthcare environments.

## Licensure and Insurance

Unlike Western medical practices, yoga

therapy remains an unlicensed field. There are regulatory guidelines and ethical standards put forth by governing bodies, but there are no licensure requirements, and that raises legitimate questions. Licensing “holds you to a certain standard, with a strong ethical code for the safety and protection of the people you serve,” says Gerson-Miller. Without licensure, she says, it can be like the wild, wild West: “People feel free to do what they want!”

Yet the work environments of many therapists favor licensed care, which lends greater legitimacy to the field. “Licensing can be beneficial because of where yoga therapists often find their practice placed, such as medical complexes, healthcare homes and the Veterans Administration.

Licensing gives a different perception about what a yoga therapist is,” says Kirkpatrick. Gerson-Miller notes that licensure allows a therapist to accept insurance, which can increase the accessibility of yoga therapy more generally.

But those interviewed also note significant drawbacks to licensing and other supervisory protocols, chief of which is a kind of gatekeeping that might entrench certain types of care delivery over others. Because yoga therapy originated in non-Western practices, they’re concerned that some of those practices will be lost as it gets adopted within a Western model of licensure. And, if and when yoga therapy gets covered by insurance, they’re also concerned that its delivery model will be prescribed in

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a way palatable to large insurance companies rather than with its current characteristic flexibility and responsiveness.

### Yoga Therapy in a Western Education System

And just as there are both advantages and disadvantages to incorporating yoga therapy into Western healthcare, there is also complexity that comes with yoga therapy's move into Western university settings.

On the one hand, university degrees in yoga therapy—now available from multiple institutions—lend further credibility to the field and its taxing training. When incorporated into university curricular structures, the visibility afforded yoga therapy training helps demystify yoga, too. That means greater acceptance of its efficacy as treatment for anything from common complaints of lower back pain to oncology care. The research structures of the university contribute to that acceptance, too: the more that good quality research is conducted for yoga therapeutic protocols, the more yoga therapy will be adopted by Western healthcare professionals.

On the other hand, universities are not the only systems of education available. Yoga therapeutic practices have their roots in indigenous knowledge and have a complicated relationship with colonialism and commercialism. Incorporating yoga therapy into a Western curricular structure risks privileging certain types of knowledge and certain modes of education and puts training in the field behind a paywall that's inaccessible for many. "Once those Eastern practices make their way to the West—through several iterations—what's left?" asks Gerson-Miller.

The yogic practices of teacher/student relationship, oral transmission of knowledge,

the privileging of elder knowledge and long periods of mentorship are all challenged by Western universities' structures and institutional framework.

### Doing Healing Work in a Mixed-Method Environment

Thus, a holistic health environment is—and will continue to become—more and more of a mixed-method environment. Aware of that context, the healing arts



Shane Orfas

practitioners interviewed here stressed their high level of training and commitment to their continuous pursuit of further education. Energy medicine healer Shane Orfas, who trained at WhiteWinds Institute of Integrative Energy Medicine in Atlanta, says his training included a long period of supervision and clinical practical hours.

"The levels of professionalism [have] allowed me to work side-by-side with allopathic medicine, training my language [for] a Western medical environment," he says.

Yoga therapy practitioners also express a need to clearly define their scope of practice and to be bound by an abiding sense of responsibility to their clients through strong ethical standards. They are willing and able to work as part of a team of experts while remaining within their own areas of knowledge and expertise.

Biofield tuner Rebecca Carner *prefers* to work as part of a team of care providers to serve her clients. "I've had the delight of joining forces with many traditionally trained practitioners," she says. "I have collaborated directly with doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, chiropractors,

massage therapists and others in order to serve my clients." Harmon notes a similar practice: In addition to Western medical doctors such as cardiologists and psychiatrists, she also enlists expert nutritionists, acupuncturists and chefs for her most recent stress-reduction retreat. Clients benefit the most when experts in each field deliver their care.

### A Holistic Approach to Relieve Suffering

Fundamentally, the healing arts, which include yoga therapy, emphasize a somatic experience as the path to relieving suffering. Thus, yoga therapy is an embodiment practice: Yoga therapists ask their clients to *feel*, to be present with what is and to allow their body to be—as Gerson-Miller describes it—"part of the scaffolding" of their path toward greater ease. Harmon wants that scaffolding to include considerations of sleep, nutrition, environmental stressors and relationships. "We can do all the talk therapy around anxiety, depression and mood instability," she shares, "but we have to consider that clients are not going to significantly improve optimal mental health without holistic assessment."



Dominique Harmon

Although it relies on the profundity and accessibility of ancient, tested wisdom and practices to serve those living with dysfunction and disease, yoga therapy has become one more type of care available in the large array of healthcare choices available to Westerners. Kirkpatrick notes that we need this yoga-based care more than ever: "Yoga is a science: the old yogis knew this. We have distilled it and diluted it, and, in some ways, it's necessary. *And...* there is a place and a need for these ancient teachings to re-emerge and to show themselves as the greater path." 🧘

# Mysore Yoga Atlanta

## to Celebrate New Studio Opening in Buckhead

by Paul Chen

Mysore Yoga Atlanta (MYA) will celebrate the opening of its new studio in Buckhead on September 8. The event—which includes a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a one-hour Ashtanga class followed by tea and refreshments—is free and will take place from 10 a.m. to noon.

The 3,300-square-foot facility, which boasts one of the largest, if not the largest, studio spaces in Atlanta, can accommodate up to 100 students in the main Mysore room. The studio features wood finishes imported from Morocco, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere, says studio owner Giorgi Savaneli. The new space includes the Mysore room, a studio for private instruction and a meditation room; together they enable MYA to offer a broader range of classes and accommodate different levels of experience and need.

MYA's signature offering is the Ashtanga Yoga program, a unique and intense practice known for its fixed sequences of poses, synchronized with breath in a flowing, dynamic style. Ashtanga Yoga is divided into six increasingly challenging series, beginning with the Primary Series. It's often practiced in a "Mysore style," a personalized experience in which students receive individualized instruction and then practice on their own. This method emphasizes discipline, strength and flexibility rooted in the ancient *Yoga Sutras*, and traditionally follows a rigorous schedule of six days a week. This consistent practice promotes steady progression and deepening of the practice over time.

Savaneli, who founded MYA in 2017 in a space directly adjacent to Atlanta's old-



MYA teachers – top, left to right: Cristina Farina, Giorgi Savaneli, Lauren Roe; bottom: Maggie Fike, Dasia Taylor Hill, Will Farina.

est yoga studio, Peachtree Yoga Center, is expanding MYA's offerings as it moves to its much bigger space. New classes include meditation and pranayama sessions, providing students with tools to deepen their breathwork and mindfulness practices. Additionally, MYA is introducing hatha yoga classes designed for beginners who may find Ashtanga challenging, making yoga more accessible to everyone in the community.

The opening of the new studio also marks a significant expansion in MYA's staff, growing from two to five experienced teachers, each bringing a wealth of knowledge and passion for yoga. This expansion enables MYA to offer more classes and provide more personalized attention.

"We are thrilled to open our new studio in Buckhead and bring the profound practice of Ashtanga Yoga to more people," says Savaneli, a K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute authorized teacher with over 15 years of experience. "This expansion represents a significant step forward for MYA, and we look forward to welcoming new and existing students to our state-of-the-art facility. Our new space will not only enhance the community's well-being but also deepen the yoga practice for all our students." 🧘

For more information, visit [MysoreYogaAtlanta.com](https://MysoreYogaAtlanta.com). Mysore Yoga Atlanta is located at Piedmont Center North Building 15, 3575 Piedmont Rd NE, STE T100, in Atlanta.



# Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

## on the Journey Within

by Paul Chen



Photo courtesy Art of Living Foundation

**G**urudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is a globally renowned spiritual leader and humanitarian, recognized for his profound contributions to personal and societal transformation. Born in 1956 in Tamil Nadu, India, he founded The Art of Living, an educational and humanitarian nonprofit organization, in 1981. It has since expanded to 180 countries, impacting millions of lives through stress relief and self-development programs. Central to his teachings is the Sudarshan Kriya, a pranayama practice that harmonizes the body, mind and spirit, reduces stress and enhances overall well-being.

Gurudev's influence extends beyond spiritual teachings. He has been instrumental in peace-building efforts in conflict zones such as Iraq, Colombia and Sri Lanka, advocating for non-violence and dialogue. His leadership in trauma relief has brought comfort to disaster-stricken areas, and his initiatives in education, environmental sustainability and social service have empowered communities worldwide.

A recipient of numerous awards, including the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian award, Gurudev is celebrated for his vision of a violence-free,

stress-free society. His work emphasizes universal human values, fostering a sense of global responsibility and unity. He has authored several books, offering insights into spirituality, relationships and leadership, further spreading his message of peace and well-being.

Gurudev makes two trips to The Art of Living Retreat Center in Boone, North Carolina, each year. One is during the summer, and Natural Awakenings was invited to interview the spiritual leader when he was there in July. Questions for this article were drawn from our reading of his most recent book, *Notes for the Journey Within*. We also asked him questions that weren't drawn from his book, and we'll publish his responses to those in Part 2 in an upcoming issue.

**You've written: "The first step on the spiritual path is to stop blaming yourself." Why is that? And why is it a prerequisite to whatever the second step is?**

You see, the spiritual journey is going towards yourself, realizing who you are. That is the spiritual journey. It's not going out; it's going within you. When you blame yourself, you will not go to yourself; you will be repelled from yourself. You will only go to something that you praise, something you're attracted to. You never go towards something to which you're adverse. You try to run away from that. So, if you're blaming yourself, you can never go within. You can never go close to yourself.

**What might be the first thing a person does to stop blaming themselves?**

To stop blaming, one should see life from a bigger, wide-angle lens. I would say see life from a bigger context. You know, a mistake happens through unawareness and through ignorance. Say you don't know how to make an apple pie; you tried and it didn't turn out right. So, out of ignorance, you did it. Right? So, one is ignorance. Second is

[being] unaware. You put apple pie to bake, and then you forgot. Later on, it burned. So, lack of awareness or ignorance are the two causes of all of our mistakes in life. We don't know the whole picture. Our understanding is very limited. We are bound to make wrong judgments and make mistakes. [But] with every wrong thing you did, you have learned something, yes? You learn by it. You say no, this is wrong; you don't want to do it again. If you do it, it's out of habit, compulsion without awareness. So, one needs to forgive oneself for past things. See, all your mistakes have happened through unawareness and through ignorance; you have to move away from that. Then, you will stop blaming yourself.

**A passage in your book says it takes courage to say "I am," and you write, "All your spiritual doings are to help you become silent." Someone taking early steps in their spiritual path might find that statement surprising. Please explain what becoming more silent has to do with becoming more spiritually evolved.**

Silence is mother of all inventions. And silence is also the way to go to one's source of energy. That's why it's important [that] the mind becomes quiet.

**In your book, you write about the five steps in meditation, and you list them as relaxation, energy,**

**creativity, enthusiasm and joy. You write that joy is indescribable, that "you're one with the whole of universe." My guess is that in the U.S., the vast majority of people practicing meditation are doing so for stress relief and relaxation. So, would you say there are different meditation practices that can help you attain more energy and creativity? Or is it that one does the same meditation practice—just longer at each sitting and for a longer period—meaning months, years, and so forth?**

In fact, a little bit of both. As you progress, first, you do stress release, and then you learn more techniques. Advanced programs help you go deeper. Sustained practice also helps.

**When people have more energy all of a sudden, are they surprised about it?**

Oh, yeah. The wow factor is always there in the spiritual path. Miracles in life are a normal thing. Here at the Art of Living, we say we depend on miracles. It's normal. If it doesn't happen, then one is surprised.

**In your book, you write, "There are two steps to enlightenment. From being somebody to being nobody is the first step. And then the second step is from being nobody to being**

**everybody." People just starting on their spiritual paths might find this profound but not easy to understand. Would you explain what you mean by these "two steps"?**

You know, higher wisdom does not require much explanation. You explain too much; then you get more confusion. It is experiential. You know you're somebody. Okay. Now, the first step is you try to get out of that somebody-ness and become a nobody. Realize you were a nobody before you became somebody.

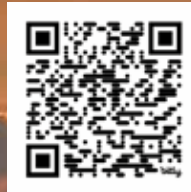
**You also write, "Peace is your nature, yet you remain restless. Freedom is your nature, yet you remain in bondage. Happiness is your nature, yet you become miserable for some reason or another. Contentment is your nature, yet you've continued to reel in desires. And benevolence is your nature, yet you do not reach out." One could say that people see restlessness, bondage, misery, and the rest when they look at humanity. And one might conclude that it's just as likely that those things are our nature. How are you sure that peace, freedom, happiness, contentment and benevolence are truly our nature?**

That follows whenever one realizes oneself; this is what comes out of it. When you real-

**Prepare all those who know not yet that I have returned.  
My need is great for those who see the promise and the dangers of the time.**

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

MAITREYA, THE WORLD TEACHER





ize who you really are, and you realize yourself, self-realization brings this truth in life.

### ***So we must go down the path, and then we will understand that it's the truth?***

Yeah. This is what you will get to know. That is the reality. Like, you have a coconut. It's all husk outside. Only when you peel it, when you remove the husk of the coconut, do you find the kernel inside. The kernel is the real thing. You go for the kernel, right? You don't hold on to the husk. So that's what it means.

### ***I think in mainstream America, "passion" is seen in a positive light, whereas "dispassion" can be seen negatively. In your book, you write, "Even though dispassion and enthusiasm appear to be opposite, they're actually complimentary. When they coexist, there's perennial enthusiasm and profound dispassion." So, how do you define dispassion? And how can dispassion and enthusiasm be complimentary and not opposites?***

See, breathing in is passion. Your in breath is passion; your out breath is dispassion. If you like passion, you can't have a good night's sleep. See, when you want to go to bed, when you want to sleep, you let go of all that has happened in the day; you let go of everything around you. Only then can you go into deep sleep, right? That letting go is dispassion. Passion is holding on. Correct? Letting go is something very common in America. It's considered very positive: 'Oh, you let it go.' You know, if you're not—if you're holding on to all the past things and every little thing and all the grudges—then you have no dispassion. Dispassion helps you let go of the past. It helps you to let go of anxiety about the future. It helps you to let go of everything and relax. Relaxation can never happen if one doesn't know how to let go. And letting go is what I call dispassion.

### ***In that case, how would you define passion?***

Passion is what motivates you to do anything in life. Passion connects you with everything. Passion brings enthusiasm in life. If you don't have passion, you will get into depression. Depression is not dispassion. You have to make that distinction. You know, people who have no passion in life get depressed, and depressed people are not detached. So, there is a sea of difference between depression and dispassion. Dispassion brings a lot of joy. Depression is immersing in sadness; it can become suicidal. Passion can bring a sort of distorted passion, which leads you to depression. So passion needs to be balanced with dispassion. If you have only passion, you will become a nervous wreck. You will become a patient of insomnia, and you will get depressed because you have so much passion about things that didn't happen. That leads to depression. But if it is balanced with dispassion... It's like having a shoe. When you want to go out, you put on a shoe. When you come back home, you remove the shoe. You don't go to bed or shower with shoes on. So, the ability to detach oneself from unsown passion makes you stronger. 🌱



Courtesy of Dr. Aimie Apigian

## **Aimie Apigian** **on Releasing Stored Trauma**

by Sandra Yeyati

**A**imie Apigian is a double board-certified physician in preventative and addiction medicine with master's degrees in biochemistry and public health. As the founder of Trauma Healing Accelerated, she instructs individuals and practitioners on how trauma gets stored in the body and what to do once it creates a chronic health condition. Her signature methodology looks at the effects of trauma on cell biology, a missing piece in trauma therapy approaches. Patients begin with a six-week foundational journey before digging into deeper trauma work and the biology piece.

### ***How do you define trauma and the trauma response?***

Dr. Bessel van der Kolk uses three words to define trauma: overwhelming, unbelievable and unbearable. A trauma is something that overwhelms us in our ability to respond. We can't believe it's happening, and it's so unbearable we disconnect from our body

to not feel it—it's things like loneliness, shame or abandonment. That's why we numb, suppress, repress, distract or avoid. The body shifts from using energy to conserving it, so we only do the bare minimum to get through the day—and that includes thinking; many people will have decision fatigue. Also, the diaphragm loses its tone in the trauma response because our body goes into, "I'm going to breathe only enough to keep me alive."

### ***Why does trauma get stored in the body?***

If there isn't a completion of the trauma response, then the body will hold onto that trauma. The nervous system never gets that completion that says, "That was awful, but it's over now." The brain never stores it as a memory of the past, which means that it's always in our present moment. When our whole biology continues to operate in fear, this can affect our hormones, immune system, digestion and cardiovascular system. Without a reset back to safety, we stay in danger mode and the body will close down at the cellular level.

### ***How can we achieve a sense of safety?***

During the first week of my foundational journey, I have people learn seven somatic exercises intended to help them create an immediate felt sense of feeling safer in their body. So no matter where they are—at the grocery store, at home—if they lose their sense of safety, they have tools in the moment to get it back.

### ***Can you give an example of a tool?***

Bring your hands up as close to your shoulder as possible and imagine there's this huge boulder in front of you. Start pushing it away, going as slow as you can. It's not easy; you're going to feel your arm muscles because you're pushing hard. When you get to full extension, pause and wait for a few seconds. There are changes happening in our body, and it takes time for that message to travel up our vagus nerve to our brain stem to register. Take notice of any changes in your body. You might feel a sense of release. You might have this deep breath come that you didn't plan for.

### ***What comes next in the sequence?***

Once we create that felt sense of safety, the body is opening up, and now it needs to feel support or it's going to go back into trauma response. I lead people through the process of creating a felt sense of support. Here's an example: Put your hands over your heart, one on top of the other, and push in quite a bit. A really deep breath comes for me; that's how my body gives me the message that this is nice for me. Experiment and move your hands around—sometimes we can do it higher, more centered, over to the side—and find the spot that feels the nicest for your heart.

### ***What is titrated expansion?***

We each have a current capacity for how much we can hold at the moment without being overwhelmed, and I want to build my capacity so that a year from now I'm able to hold more. For many people in my courses, when they feel a lot of joy, then tears, sadness and grief seem to come, so it has been safer for them to

just not feel much joy. To expand into your capacity to experience joy, you can't go all the way immediately. You've got to find a safe amount of joy that you can have today that feels manageable, and then use a tool so that tomorrow you can feel a little more joy and still feel safe. We do this titrated or paced expansion, staying safe enough as we grow.

### ***Can you explain your parts-work approach?***

If we don't complete a trauma response, there's going to be a part that is still stuck there in that moment of danger, kind of not knowing that we survived. In parts work, I teach people how to know their major parts in order to stabilize their system. Your inner critic, for example, is a major part that we've got to work with pretty soon, because otherwise your critic will continue to shame you and get you into trauma response. I guide people to notice how these parts show up in the body. Next time you feel something familiar in your body, you know, "That's my inner critic," and it doesn't scare or frustrate you anymore. You're like, "Oh, hello." That is a true mind-body connection. 🌱

Sandra Yeyati is national editor of Natural Awakenings.



To read a longer version of this conversation, visit [Tinyurl.com/ApigianNA](https://tinyurl.com/ApigianNA) or scan the QR code.





Continued from page 9

between spiritual practice and optimal health. Both define health in emotional and spiritual terms as well as physical terms, the logical conclusion of which is that unresolved emotional and spiritual issues can result in physical disease. This also explains why meditation, pranayama, tai chi and qigong are all practices that offer physical, emotional and spiritual benefits.

And that brings us back to Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

While our interview with Gurudev—and last year’s interview with Sadghuru, another world-renowned Indian spiritual master [see [bit.ly/sadghuru-0523](https://bit.ly/sadghuru-0523)—addressed spiritual topics, if you check out either of their YouTube channels, you’ll find dozens of videos on health issues.

Again, holism recognizes that everything is connected.

And *Natural Awakenings* magazine isn’t just about holistic health; it’s about non-dual perspectives, too, as interconnectedness and recognition of the whole is a key theme to both. In his book *Notes for the Journey Within*, Gurudev writes: “It was thought that to say, ‘I am God,’ is blasphemy. I tell you, to say, ‘I am not God’ is blasphemy. When you say, ‘I am not God,’ you deny God’s omnipresence. He also expressed it this way: “Meditation is seeing God in yourself. Love is seeing God in the person next to you. Wisdom is seeing God everywhere.” 🙏



*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.*

Publicize your event! This section hosts free and paid listings. Each month, we select a limited number of events — they must have broad appeal and cost no more than \$25 to attend — to list for free. Otherwise, basic listings are \$40 and enhanced listings are \$75. Submit free listings to [calendar@naAtlanta.com](mailto:calendar@naAtlanta.com) and paid listings to [ads@naAtlanta.com](mailto:ads@naAtlanta.com).

### Wednesday, September 4

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

### Thursday, September 5

**Hope on the Edge: The Noosphere and Transformation** - 11am-1pm. Drawing from the fields of science, literature, and theology, Dr. DeMoor will help us uncover how the “noosphere,” or planetary mind, is an integral part of our everyday lives. \$15-\$25. Zoom. [MaryAndMarthasPlace.com](https://www.MaryAndMarthasPlace.com).

### Saturday, September 7

**Butterfly Experience** - Sept 7-8. 9am-5pm. Experience the magic of being surrounded by hundreds of beautiful, native butterflies. Also features live music and entertainment; animal shows; arts, crafts and education stations; food, drinks and sweet treats, and more. \$15/member, \$18/nonmember, free/Age 3 & under. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [Dunwoody Nature.org](https://www.DunwoodyNature.org).

### Friday, September 13

**The Atlanta International Night Market** - Sept 13-14. 5-10pm, Fri; 2-10pm, Sat. 2-day celebration of diversity, community, culture and creativity. Includes live performances plus food and retail vendors representing communities from around the world. Free admission. Lawrenceville Lawn, 210 Luckie St, Lawrenceville. [AtlNightMarket.org](https://www.AtlNightMarket.org).

**Rest, Relax, Rejuvenate: A Weekend of Self-Care** - Sept 13-14. 7:30-9:30pm, Fri; 9am-4pm & 4:30-6pm, Sat. Give yourself the gift that starts with a Kirtan and ends with a Five Rhythms dance experience. In between will be sacred sound, meditations, massage, reflexology, artistic expressions and breath work. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. [bit.ly/UnitySelfCareRetreat](https://bit.ly/UnitySelfCareRetreat).

### Saturday, September 14

**Saltville Grotto 2nd Birthday Carnival** - 10am-4pm. Celebrate our 2nd anniversary with a day filled with games, laughter, vendors, a Gemstone & Crystal show, tasty treats and saltsational shenanigans. Free. Saltville Grotto & Spa, 2447 Main St E, Ste 3, Snellville. 678-585-1153. [Saltville Grotto.com](https://www.SaltvilleGrotto.com).

### Sunday, September 15

**Back to your Roots Farm Fair** - 12-4pm. Meet live farm animals, bring a picnic, and get down in the dirt. Continue enjoying the fall season with partners, games, crafts, and the opening of Naturally Artistic which explores connecting art and nature. Included with General Admission; free/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. [ChattNatureCenter.org](https://www.ChattNatureCenter.org).

**Atlanta Streets Alive: West End to Grant Park** - 1-5pm. Transforming our streets into living public spaces and connecting 7 Southwest. Ralph David Abernathy Blvd & Georgia Ave, Atlanta. [AtlantaStreetsAlive.org](https://www.AtlantaStreetsAlive.org).

### Tuesday, September 17

**Reiki Share** - 6-7:30pm. Take turns both giving and receiving reiki. Open to all level reiki practitioners as well as anyone who is interested in learning more about reiki in a hands-on environment. \$20. The Open Mind Center, 1425 Market Blvd, Ste 500, Roswell. 678-629-3630. [TheOpenMindCenter.com](https://www.TheOpenMindCenter.com).

**Dance Improv: Restore, Refresh, Re-Energize** - 7-8:15pm. Explore creative ways to express, release, and restore feelings and emotions through movement. All levels; no experience necessary. With Naomi Morad, Body Psychotherapist practitioner. \$20. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. [TheWellOfRoswell.com](https://www.TheWellOfRoswell.com).

**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/ykcctu25](https://www.Tinyurl.com/ykcctu25).

### Wednesday, September 18

**Nourishing Young Minds: A Guide to Holistic Nutrition** - 12-12:30pm. An informative webinar with Isabel Castro Sucre, PNP, a dedicated Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at CentreSpring MD, as she delves into the holistic and functional medicine approach for supporting children’s health. Free. Register: [Tinyurl.com/6kcnspvv](https://www.Tinyurl.com/6kcnspvv).

### Friday, September 20

**Friday Night Hike** - 7:30-9pm. An experienced educator will teach you about nocturnal animals, nighttime adaptations and more. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [DunwoodyNature.org](https://www.DunwoodyNature.org).

### Saturday, September 21

**The Veggie Taste** - 12-6pm. Vegan, raw, plant-based and vegetarian tasting event where chefs will be sampling some of their delicious mouthwatering cuisine. Includes nutritional speakers, artisan marketplace, music, product samples and much more. Morris Brown College, 1 Walnut St SW, Atlanta. [TheVeggieTaste.com](https://www.TheVeggieTaste.com).

### Sunday, September 22

**Centennial Celebration Service** - 11am-12pm The community is invited to this special service celebrating the church’s 100th anniversary. Features a ribbon-cutting, Bridge of Faith Ceremony and special music by the church’s Soulful Harmonics Band and choir. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. [UnityAtl.org](https://www.UnityAtl.org).

### Monday, September 23

**Understanding PCOS: Integrative Strategies for Wellness and Balance** - 12-12:30pm. An insightful webinar with Christina Connors Grace, MSN, FNP-C, a compassionate Family Nurse Practitioner at CentreSpring MD. Free. Register: [Tinyurl.com/bdj9d87a](https://www.Tinyurl.com/bdj9d87a).

### 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](https://www.NQA.org/Annual-Conference).

### Thursday, September 26

**Healing Sound Bath** - 7-8pm. Join Raye Andrews, Vibrational Sound Therapist, as she creates a beautiful symphony of sound that will help you ease into balance with the flow of the fall season. Bring

yoga mat, pillow, blanket or whatever will assist you in being comfortable. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. [UnityAtl.org](https://www.UnityAtl.org).

### Friday, September 27

**Native Plant Sale** - Sept 27-28. 9am-5pm. Discover over 100 varieties of plants that will help your garden attract butterflies, pollinators, birds and more. Free admission. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. [ChattNatureCenter.org](https://www.ChattNatureCenter.org).

**Owl Prowl** - 8-9pm. Come along on a night hike as we prowl for owls around the nature center. Also includes a presentation on the owls of Atlanta. \$20. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [Dunwoody Nature.org](https://www.DunwoodyNature.org).


### Saturday, September 28

**Gardening Workshop: Fall Gardening** - 9-11am. Explore seasonal gardening techniques, plant care tips and more. \$25/nonmember, \$20/member. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [Dunwoody Nature.org](https://www.DunwoodyNature.org).

### Plan Ahead

#### Thursday, October 3

**Sacred Beats Drumming** - 7-8pm. Join in our drumming circle led by Jen Huber as we clear away blocks, release emotions and gain greater clarity. Free; donations accepted. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. [TheWellOfRoswell.com](https://www.TheWellOfRoswell.com).



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### For Rent/Lease

**SPACE FOR RENT** - For private sessions, classes, meetings, receptions, performances, ceremonies, conferences. AV and kitchen options. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners, 770-441-0585, Pam@unityatl.org

### For Sale

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

### Natural Supplements

**ORGANIC PANCREAS DETOX TEA** - Cleanse & Support Your Pancreas With This Targeted Blend. Samples Available. Visit EarthSanaStore.com/tea

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### Sundays

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Art of Breath Class** - 12-1:30pm. 1st Sun. With Noel Plaughter. Learn breathing techniques used in many disciplines to provide relaxation, focus and better health. Free. Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore, 5531 Roswell Rd NE, Atlanta. 404-255-5207. PhoenixAndDragon.com.

**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: xiomara735@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. Carol Osborne.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 Pranich Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: AtIPranichHealing.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/y3x5yy2s.

**Tea & Tarot** - 11am-2pm. 1st Sat. A tea party and tarot mixer for people of all ages and experience levels. Hosted by Amy Cathryn. \$25. Forever And A Day, 7830 Hwy 92, Woodstock. 770-516-6969. ForeverAndADay.as.me/TeaandTarot.

**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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# On the Wings of My Larger Life

by Rev. Jenn Sacks

Daniel Trapani/Pexels.com

Midway into my sophomore year at American University, I felt at loose ends. I was uncertain about majoring in communications or loving my boyfriend.

I wavered in changing anything. I just wanted to get through the semester. Then, the boyfriend came to see me, telling me he had “an incredible longing for freedom.” When he left, I felt devastated and numb in a way I’d never been before. I didn’t know what to do with myself and cried in my dorm room for hours. Then, all of a sudden, I knew I couldn’t waste one more moment weeping over a boy when the rest of my life awaited.

I realized, as I emotionally lifted myself up, that I had an incredible longing for freedom, too. Everything in my intuition told me to fulfill that longing to fly into the world and experience as much as I could. A close friend was going to London on the university’s study abroad program, and I decided to go, too. I had always wanted to explore the British Isles.

My parents approved of my decision. They hadn’t liked my choice of boyfriend anyway.

When I visited the study abroad program director, he said, “We have one spot left.” I didn’t hesitate and said, “I’ll take it.”

Immediately afterward, I carried my pile of paperwork to my advisor. She reviewed my plans and said, “You can’t do this program. You’ll be off-course, and you won’t be able to complete a communications degree in time for graduation.”

I contemplated her words for less than a day and returned to her to say I was still going to go to London. I changed my major to sociology, went home at the end of the semester, packed my suitcases, and met my study abroad group at Newark Airport to board a flight to London Gatwick.

I’d never been on a plane or traveled overseas before, and I hadn’t yet heard of Dramamine. The turbulent descent into Gatwick rocked me so hard I’m sure I turned green. I was sick, both emotionally and physically; I was doubting myself and my intuition. By the time we landed, I realized what I’d done. My intuition had said, “Be courageous and fly with faith.” But I worried I’d gone too far.

Unity Church co-founder Myrtle Fillmore describes the uncertainty we may feel when we trust our intuition. “Sometimes, when we reach this point in our soul’s progress, we do not at first know just what is taking place,” she says. But she also assures us that “as we leave old circumstances, beliefs, habits and desires behind,” we experience blessings in the “larger life, which is ever opening to us.”

And thousands of miles from home, I knew I needed to fly on the wings of my own larger life.

When I arrived at the Highgate home of Audrey, whom I’ll always call my English mum, she welcomed me—a weepy, frightened American—with open arms. I became one of the family, gardening and cooking with her and sharing in sing-alongs at her piano. I took long meditative walks in local parks with Audrey’s two King Charles Cavalier spaniels and marveled at the greenery around me, even in winter.

I attended classes at Birkbeck, University of London and interned at the Museum of London. While traveling through Oxford, I gathered with a crowd to see Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mother. I learned to sit patiently in the dark on the Tube during several IRA bomb scares. I toured numerous areas of Great Britain, going as far north as the Isle of Skye, which, after all these years, still feels like a slice of heaven.

In England, I learned a lot about the world, but more importantly, I learned a lot about myself—especially how strong my faith and intuition are. To this day, I can close my eyes and revisit many of those glorious experiences. And although I’ve had doubts on other occasions, I remember to take a dose of spiritual Dramamine, trusting the larger life that continually awaits. 🌸

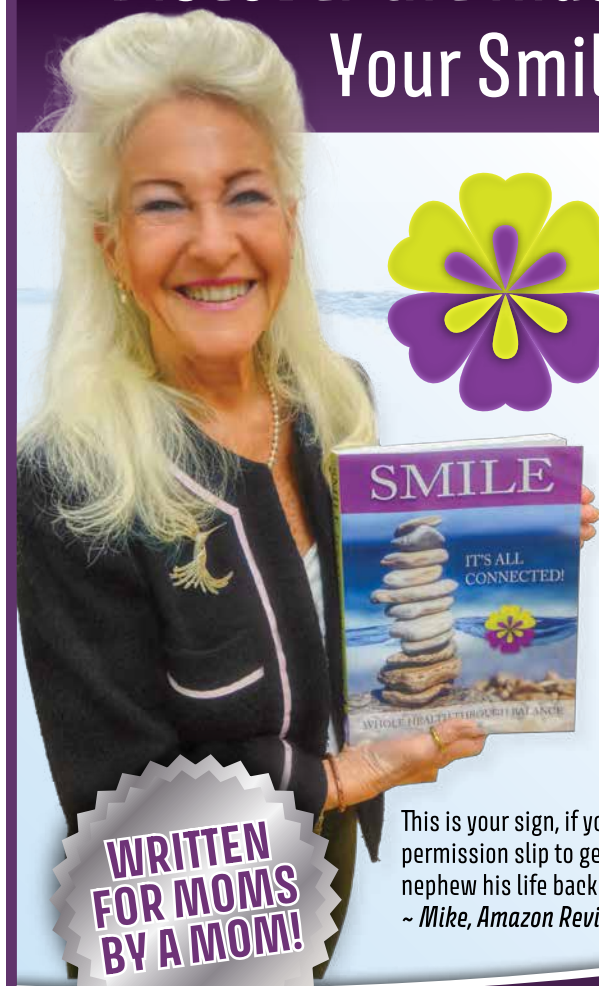
Senior minister of Unity Atlanta Church in Peachtree Corners, Rev. Jennifer Sacks is a preacher, writer and spiritual leader.

Photo: Photo Nicole Tyler/Photography



She holds a Master of Divinity from Unity Institute & Seminary. Learn more and connect with her at RevJenn.com.

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