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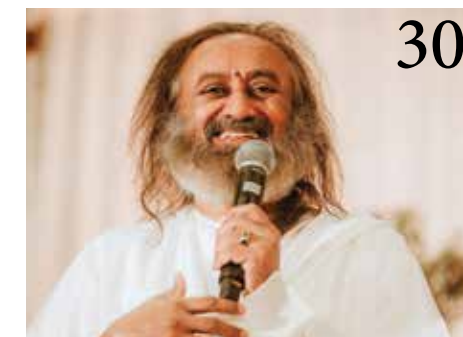
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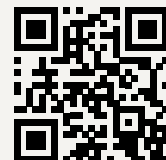
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Correction: In September's article on Unity Atlanta, it was stated that Myrtle Fillmore had multiple sclerosis. That was incorrect. She had tuberculosis.

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The Divide May Not Be As Wide As We Think

On the day I learned that we would interview Indian spiritual master Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, founder of the Art of Living Foundation, Thomas Matthew Crooks attempted to assassinate Donald Trump. Thus, the most important question I imagined asking Gurudev was what Americans can do to overcome the destructive and depressing division among family and friends.

I ended up not asking the question, and the reason was surprisingly positive: The division I assumed existed in this country is—perhaps—nowhere near as bad as many of us tend to believe. I searched for surveys on the topic and discovered some pretty interesting facts.

In a September 2021 article on the American Enterprise Institute's website, Samuel Abrams wrote about results from the American National Election Study, which asked: "In the past four years, how much have political differences hurt your relationships with family members?"

"Not even 3% of Americans responded that their familial relationship were hurt 'a great deal' by political differences, and only 3% stated they were hurt 'a lot.'" And, overall, "85% of Americans said that political differences within their families did not hurt their relationships." When it comes to friends, the number goes up. Another 2021 study from the Survey Center on American Life found that 15% of respondents have ended a friendship because of politics.

I don't know about you, but I was surprised by how low these numbers were; I expected that at least a third would say political differences have hurt familial relationships and friendships.

So it seems the American people are much better about maintaining ties than the news and social media worlds might have us believe. And, strengthening the message of this letter even further, I woke up this morning to a *Washington Post* opinion piece entitled "How the Psychology of Political Division Could Lead Us Out of It."

Continued on page 32



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Black Sustainability Summit Highlights Climate Solutions and Art Exhibit

Black Sustainability, Inc. (BSI) will present its ninth annual Black Sustainability Summit October 11 through 13. The zero-waste event continues to serve as a premier platform for African-descended sustainability practitioners, focusing on community-driven solutions to climate and social challenges. The three-day summit will feature interactive presentations, participatory impact funding and an inaugural mixed-media art exhibit for their inaugural State of Black Sustainability Report with the goal of communicating data through a somatic experience.

The art exhibit will offer an immersive experience for attendees, combining visual art, Afrofuturism, sustainable fashion, eco-housing and more. Family-friendly activities include youth programs and an electric vehicle display. Youth agriculture, home economics and upcycling programming and projects will be offered to children two years and older. There will also be an outdoor electric minicar show.

“The summit highlights solutions to climate challenges across the global South, offering participants an opportunity to engage in interactive and creative ways,” says Lauriel Stewart, communi-



Photo: Khalifa Sultan Lee, Eye of Khalifa Media

tions and marketing specialist at BSI. The event will also feature youth programming in agriculture and home economics.

Ticket prices range from \$25 to \$165. Day 1 will be held virtually, with a networking event in the evening. The second day will be held at the ArtsXchange in East Point.

For more information, email summit@blacksustainability.org or visit BlackSustainabilitySummit.com. Black Sustainability, Inc. is located at 2148 Newnan St. in East Point.

Dirty South Yoga Fest: Another Celebration of Atlanta’s Yoga Community

The 10th anniversary of the Dirty South Yoga Fest (DSYF), held in August, prompted the editor-in-chief of *Yoga Journal* to travel to Atlanta.

Asked how Atlanta’s only current home-grown festival compares to others she’s seen, Renee Schettler spoke to what festival founder Jessica Murphy always says when asked about what motivated her to create DSYF: community.

“The focus on community is what sets it apart,” says Schettler. “The emphasis is on all local teachers and presenting an array of content where there’s literally something for everyone.” She further observed that everyone seemed kind and enthusiastic and appeared to be having a good time. “I saw people laughing throughout classes and talking to strangers, which you don’t always see elsewhere.”



The three-day event drew 850 attendees. “This year was a culmination of 10 years of evolution, growth and expansion,” says Murphy. “We’ve seen past attendees grow into teachers and volunteers, and we’ve seen vendors return year after year. Each year has its own unique flavor, and this year did not disappoint.”

Similar to last year, first-time attendees made up the majority of the audience at 65 percent, and 97 percent of all attendees were women.



As in previous years, DSYF will donate 10 percent of its profits to a local nonprofit. This year’s nonprofit is TNP Foundation, which partners with schools, community groups and after-school programs to offer yoga and mental health programs to kids and the adults who work with them. Programs include weekly classes, access to social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and adult wellness sessions, workshops and trainings.

Wisteria & Willow Moves to New Location in Roswell



Jessica Lakos

Wisteria & Willow has moved to a new location in Roswell, now sharing space with Green Girl Basics. Co-owner Jessica Lakos will continue to offer her intuitive tarot sessions and primordial sound meditation classes in the new location. Lakos will also facilitate a variety of special events and workshops. Green Girl Basics, owned by Colleen Trickett, will continue to offer classes on creating safe, sustainable products for personal and household care.

The new space is now open to other healers and practitioners seeking a venue for their sessions, workshops and classes. To celebrate their collaboration,

Lakos and Trickett will host a series of free events throughout October, beginning with a meet-and-greet on October 6. A Sound Healing Workshop with Holly Levine, owner of Sublime Holistic Wellness, will take place on October 12, and Lakos will host a tarot party on October 20. All of these free events will take place from 6 to 8 p.m.

Lakos, a Chopra-certified Meditation Instructor and intuitive tarot guide with 30 years of experience with tarot and meditation, opened Wisteria & Willow in 2022. “I’m excited to be working with Colleen,” says Lakos. “This space is perfect for the work that I do, and I love collaborating with others who are passionate about serving the community.”

For more information, call 404-287-8889 or visit WisteriaAndWillow.com. Wisteria & Willow is located at 4905 Alabama Rd., Ste. 120, in Roswell.

Holistic Health & Wellness Introduces Mommy & Me Yoga Classes

Holistic Health & Wellness SE, LLC now offers Mommy & Me Yoga classes on Saturday mornings at 9 a.m. Sessions combine healthy workout routines with best practices aimed at helping children develop resilience. According to research, educating young people about physical skills like yoga or relaxation methods like mindfulness can improve their performance in the classroom and in other social settings.

The classes are age-appropriate, fitness-based and fun and are available for kids ranging in age from 6 to young teen years. Holistic Health & Wellness also offers a variety of courses throughout the week for all levels.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, 57 percent of young people have felt stressed related to fear of making mistakes, 29 percent of young people said they had self-harmed because of high stress levels and 39 percent said they had experienced suicidal feelings because of stress. While some stress is normal, some kids don’t know how best to let it go.

“So many people think yoga isn’t for them and that’s largely because of how it’s often portrayed. We want to find ways to reach the groups that don’t think yoga is for them—because it could be,” says Dawn Brunson, CEO of Holistic Health & Wellness.

New students who drop in to the studio receive 50 percent off yoga classes and those who pay online can receive one free class.

For more information, visit HolisticHealthSE.com or follow @holistic_atl on Instagram. Holistic Health & Wellness SE is located at 3372 Canton Rd, Ste. 116 in Marietta.

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Metaphysical Shops Feature Local Artists' Works

Christie Del Vesco at The Well of Roswell



Eyelashes by Christie Del Vesco

The Well of Roswell, a center for holistic healing and events, is showcasing the work of Christie Del Vesco on its walls from September 16 through December 13. Del Vesco, a writer, spoken word performer and mixed media artist, has created a unique multi-sensory experience that explores the duality of being human. After spending 18 months at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), she combines her creative energies into a holistic expression, blending art, words and voice.

"We chose Christie because of her deep connection to healing, and photography is a relatively new medium for our exhibits," says Becky Arrington, co-owner of the Well of Roswell. "Her ability to integrate various forms of expression into a powerful, cohesive experience is truly special."

Del Vesco's work has been featured on the cover of *Esalen Magazine* and in gallery exhibitions across Georgia and Missouri. Her writing has appeared in literary journals, including *Elephant Journal* and *Rebelle Society*.

For more information, call 404-973-2848 or visit TheWellOfRoswell.com. The Well of Roswell is located at 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy #300 in Roswell.

Cat Art at Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore



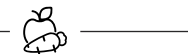
Snoozing Kitty Dreaming Sweet Dreams

Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore and metaphysical shop has offered its gallery space for a voter registration drive every Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon until election day. To support the drive and to remind everyone of the joy and enthusiasm that cats bring to the lives of humans, the drive's volunteers have been invited

to submit their own creations around the theme of "cats." Their artwork is displayed throughout the store and includes a wide selection of cat-themed paintings, photography, charcoal drawings and more.

The drive provides information to the public about voter registration status, voting locations and more.

Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore is located at 5531 Roswell Rd. NE in Atlanta.



Sweet Nostalgia

Celebrating National Dessert Month

by Deborah Bevilacqua



Scukrov/CanvaPro

Many of us have beloved memories filled with the treasures of the family kitchen—the clanging of baking pans and metal mixing bowls, flour dusted across the counter and the amazing aromas of chocolate, vanilla and cinnamon filling the entire house. That wonderful anticipation of a homemade treat coming out of the oven was pure childhood magic.

"There is nothing better than the smell of home-baked goodies," says Lynn Feder, owner of Lynn's Life Breads, an allergen-free bakery. Infused with the best ingredients and dollops of love, desserts are more than just a tasty indulgence. They celebrate long-held family recipes, cultural traditions and the transformative effect of shared pleasures. October is National Dessert Month, a perfect time to explore the history, nostalgia and nutritional gifts of these delicious delights.

From Ancient Times to Modern Bites

Desserts have evolved from simple combinations of fruits and nuts to elaborate

confections. The Egyptians, Greeks and Romans enjoyed honey-sweetened treats. By the 16th century, sugar had made its way to Europe from Southeast Asia, paving the way for decadent cakes and pastries. Today, each culture brings unique flavors and techniques to homes, bakeries and confectioneries around the globe.

American Favorites

Beloved for its chewy texture and rich flavor, the chocolate chip cookie was invented in 1938 by Ruth Wakefield, a chef, dietitian, educator and author from Walpole,

Massachusetts, who also owned a tourist lodge with her husband, Kenneth, that they named the Tollhouse Inn.

Brownies originated in Chicago in 1893 at the Palmer House Hotel, where Bertha Palmer asked her chefs to create a portable dessert that could be served at the World's Columbian Exposition. These cake-like, fudgy squares may contain nuts, chocolate chips or caramel swirls.

Apple pie is synonymous with American culture. With its flaky crust and sweet, spiced filling, it evokes a sense of nostalgia and comfort, and is often accompanied by a scoop of vanilla ice cream. In today's health-conscious households, ice cream is not made with just cow's milk. Scrumptious varieties are available featuring milks derived from cashews, oats or coconuts.

"The best ice cream is made from scratch in small batches with fresh, farm-to-table ingredients," says Chloe Bowman, manager of Tin Cup Ice Cream & Desserts, in Crested Butte, Colorado. "One of our adult favorites is Cookie Monster ice cream made with homemade chocolate chip cookies and all-natural pea flour so it doesn't make your mouth blue."

While attempting to recreate a French version, William Lawrence, a New York dairyman, invented the now-classic New York-style cheesecake. It features smooth, rich cream cheese and a graham cracker crust that can be customized with various toppings.

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The Sweet Benefits of Desserts

Aside from satisfying our sweet tooth, some desserts come with nutritious benefits. Dark chocolate contains flavanols that help lower blood pressure and fight cell damage, as well as polyphenols that, according to a 2022 study published in *The Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry*, help maintain a better mood. Fruits and nuts are packed with vitamins, minerals and fiber, which play an important role in lowering the risk of heart disease and diabetes. Indulging in a sweet treat may even lead to a sweeter disposition, according to research led by North Dakota State University.

Healthy Alternatives

Dessert time is not always kind to people that are diabetic, vegan, on restricted diets or have gluten sensitivities or allergies to ingredients like eggs, dairy and nuts. “I can adapt any recipe to make it delicious and allergy-free. Today, we have so many options,” says Feder, who began baking allergen-free products as a result of her own health issues and allergies.

Dairy substitutes are plentiful in the grocery store, including milk made from oats, almonds, soy, coconut and rice. Alternatives to butter include nut butters, sunflower oil and coconut oil. For those with nut allergies, the texture, taste and nutritional value can be supplanted with rolled oats, granola, crisp rice cereal, pumpkin or sunflower seeds, dried fruits such as raisins or cranberries, or dairy- and nut-free chocolate chips.

For those looking to reduce their consumption of sugar, there are a number of healthier natural sweeteners, including monk fruit extract, raw honey, pure maple syrup, coconut sugar, stevia and blackstrap molasses. Stevia and monk fruit extract are derived from plants and have a flavor very similar to regular sugar. A quick search online will provide guidance on measurement equivalents. Monk fruit, which does not raise blood-sugar levels, can be up to 250 times sweeter than sugar.

Celebrating National Dessert Month

To celebrate National Dessert Month, consider hosting a dessert-themed party where invitees can share their favorite recipes, and be sure to include low-sugar, vegan and gluten-free options, to accommodate everyone’s preferences and dietary restrictions. 🍪

Deborah Bevilacqua is a regular contributor to Natural Awakenings.

**Lynn's Pumpkin
Cheese-Less Cake**



Courtesy of Lynn Feder

**Apple Strawberry
Rhubarb Pie**



Courtesy of Lynn Feder

Find these recipes online at:
bit.ly/lynn-cake-1024 bit.ly/rhubarb-pie-1024

Volcano Surprise Brownie Cupcakes

YIELD: 12 CUPCAKES

STRAWBERRY LAYER

- 3 large fresh strawberries, quartered
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup or honey
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice

CARAMEL LAYER

- ¼ cup smooth cashew or almond butter
- ¼ cup maple syrup

BROWNIE MIXTURE

- 2 Hu brand chocolate bars (choice of hazelnut, cashew, almond or cashew raspberry)
- 1 cup smooth cashew butter
- 1 large egg
- ½ cup maple syrup
- ¼ cup cocoa powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp Himalayan salt
- ½ cup mini chocolate chips, plus extras to sprinkle on top

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Prepare the strawberry layer by combining the strawberries, maple syrup or honey, and lemon juice in a small saucepan. Simmer for 2 minutes. Remove from stove and pour off the liquid, retaining the strawberries. Place the strawberries in the refrigerator to cool while preparing the other layers.

To make the caramel layer, first soak the date in boiling water for 2 minutes, then cut it into small pieces and drop them in a blender along with the other ingredients, blending for 40 seconds until the mixture is smooth. Set aside.

Place the brownie mixture ingredients in a bowl, except the chocolate chips and Hu chocolate bars. Blend using an electric, hand-held mixer. Once combined into a batter, fold in the chocolate chips.

Line a 12-cupcake baking tray with unbleached paper liners. Put one heaping tablespoon of the brownie mixture in each cupcake liner to coat the bottom. Break Hu chocolate bars into squares and place one square on top of the brownie mixture. Spread one teaspoon of caramel sauce on top of the chocolate. Add strawberries to the caramel layer. Top with additional brownie mixture until the liner is three quarters full. Sprinkle with a few mini chocolate chips.

Bake cupcakes for 20 minutes. Remove and place on a cooling rack. They are delicious at room temperature, cold from the refrigerator or frozen.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Lynn Feder.



Courtesy of Lynn Feder

Healing Ways



Integrative Energetic Medicine

A Comprehensive Approach to Energy Healing

by Lisa Watson

While historically at odds with each other, conventional medicine and holistic healing approaches are increasingly intertwined in the healthcare arena. Integrative Energetic Medicine (IEM) is an energy healing practice encompassing aspects of ancient healing techniques while sustaining a basic scientific understanding of the body’s systems and processes. While it focuses primarily on the body’s energy systems that influence our spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health, IEM doesn’t ignore the science behind health.

Developed by Fernand Poulin, D.C., who founded WhiteWinds Institute of Integrative Energetic Medicine in Atlanta 40 years ago, IEM offers a transformative path to wellness that fuses a holistic understanding of human health with the healing practices of traditional energy-field-based modalities.

According to Poulin, who has graduated more than 600 people in IEM internationally, integrative energetic medicine works on both physical pain and trauma as well as mental and emotional pain and trauma. Addressing both in tandem “harnesses pathways to healing, moving beyond the spoken word into non-lingual, implicit processes,” says Poulin. IEM practitioners use “felt sensing” to work with their clients’ energy fields, chakras, organs, and body systems. And they hold space for whatever needs to unfold.



Andreas/DepositPhotos.com



Photo: Bob Vossoil
Fernand Poulin

Most energy healing practitioners assert that there is an electromagnetic sphere of energy around the physical body. Science concurs, as a study published in 2015 by the National Library of Medicine, a research arm of the National Institute of Health, pointed to evidence of a *biofield*, an energetic field that surrounds and permeates the human body, affecting the biological, emotional and mental processes of the body. IEM practitioners work with four of these energetic layers: the soul body, which is the outermost layer, followed by the mental body, the emo-

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tional body, and the etheric body, which is the innermost layer. The layers act as a communication conduit between the environment and our bodies, as they are influenced by our thoughts, emotions, traumas, joys, experiences and perceptions.

With this approach, IEM helps people with a wide variety of concerns and issues, including stress, anxiety and depression, sleeplessness, pre-and post-operative support, loss and grief, pain and physical trauma, loss of vitality, increased self-awareness and more. After a session, people often experience a feeling of deep relaxation and peace, and some clients find that their sleep quality improves. However, energy healing should never be used as a substitute for regular medical care.

Embracing Science and Energy Medicine

To receive certification in IEM, practitioners must have completed a two-year intensive course combining scientific knowledge of the body, energy psychology and body processes. In addition to learning energy healing, they receive a working knowledge of anatomy, neurology, kinesiology, physiology, body systems and processes, and disease and illness progression. They also acquire a basic knowledge of energy psychology, meditation, shamanism, Native American medicine, and other healing practices to learn to regulate a variety of imbalances.

Throughout their training, IEM students develop presence and intuition through

psycho-spiritual practices and personal healing. They also get experience in energetic coaching of others and learn hands-on energetic protocols.

“There is a universally intelligent and loving field that our biofield is always in contact with,” says Bhuvana Krishnan, an IEM practitioner in Gwinnett. “When we are open to healing, this field responds, and the results can be both subtle and drastic—always for the Highest Good.” Thus, the ability of the practitioner to respond to the client’s energy field can further the healing. “The art of IEM, while teachable, ultimately depends on the presence, awareness and focus of the practitioner—skills refined through meditation and self-work,” Krishnan continues. “It is this deep listening and intuitive abilities that facilitate shifts in the client’s energy field, leading to wholeness and healing and deep inner peace of the client.”

No IEM trainings are available at this time, and there are no plans in the works to resume them.

What To Expect in an IEM Healing Session

While most IEM sessions are done in silence, practitioners usually encourage clients to verbalize feelings, sensations or emotions that arise. Sometimes clients experience visions, colors, tingling, warmth, coolness or a general feeling that something is “moving,” too.



Bhuvana Krishnan Photo: Mahesh Ueusuiki

An emotional reaction is one of the most profound elements that can surface during a session. Laughter, crying, grief and sudden insights are demonstrations of energy moving through the body, signaling the beginning of a healing process. Since IEM practitioners are trained to hold space for clients in a loving and compassionate way, they are there to help them move through their grief or pain or whatever comes up.

As is typical of energy healing modalities, people can continue to experience the effects of the healing session for a few days afterward. Some might not feel much at first, but emotions can bubble up later, or pain can sometimes become worse before it gets better. While this is normal, practitioners recommend reaching out for additional support if it becomes bothersome.

How Many Sessions Are Needed?

The number of sessions needed to achieve the best outcomes can vary depending on the degree of support and healing the client needs. Generally, IEM practitioners recommend at least three to five sessions, although long-held trauma can require a longer healing path. Some clients feel it is helpful to have an energy session on a regular, perhaps monthly, basis.

Similarities and Differences with Other Energy Healing Modalities

REIKI
As energy healing modalities, IEM and reiki healing techniques share the goal of working with the biofield so the body is in

the best place to self-heal; however, IEM sessions typically deeply focus on specific ailments, traumas, pain, emotional or mental strife, or areas of the body and not the biofield alone.

Reiki practitioners also use specific patterns of hand placement corresponding to *chakras*, or energy centers, and *meridians*, the channels of energy that correspond to organs in the body. IEM practitioners, on the other hand, tend to be open to what arises during a session without a specific pattern of hand movements. Reiki sessions might also incorporate mantras that are designed to enhance a healing session, while IEM sessions might include soft music in the background for relaxation or a singing bowl or chime to move energy, but practitioners mostly work in silence.

Sessions with both reiki practitioners and IEM practitioners help clients with stress reduction, pain relief and recovery from injuries and can help alleviate symptoms of chronic conditions.

While both practices share the ultimate goal of overall well-being, their methods differ significantly. The reiki practitioner intentionally transfers reiki energy to the client during a session, facilitating the client’s self-healing. On the other hand, IEM healers work with intuition, focus and intention to locate an area of energetic distortion to influence the energy of that area and the areas surrounding the trauma. The healing results can be more focused than with a reiki session.

ACUPUNCTURE AND ACUPRESSURE
Both acupuncture and acupressure are part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and come from the principle that balancing the flow of *chi* through the body’s meridian system promotes health. In acupuncture, tiny needles are inserted into the skin at acupoints along the body’s meridians and manually manipulated by the practitioner. Unlike IEM, acupuncture is considered an invasive therapy, and while rare, infections or complications sometimes arise. Practitioners claim it works best for alleviating physical pain, nausea and vomiting, reproductive disorders, and respiratory and digestive issues. It can also help with anxiety, depression and sleep disorders. Some clients get quick relief in one or two sessions; others may require months of treatment.

Acupressure works under the same principle as acupuncture but uses finger or hand pressure to accomplish its goals. It is non-invasive, but some pressure on points on the body may cause bruising and tenderness and can exacerbate other conditions. For relief of tightness and referred pain,

it can be an effective choice for healing. While acupuncture requires years of study, acupressure can be learned more easily and safely practiced by anyone.

HEALING TOUCH

Healing Touch surfaced in the United States in the 1980s as a continuing education program for nurses and other health professionals. Because of its strong connection to the nursing community, it is often provided as complementary care within medical environments such as hospitals and private

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medical practices as well as alongside hospice care. Like other forms of energy healing techniques, practitioners use their hands to clear and move energetic imbalances.

Perhaps more than other energy healing forms, Healing Touch focuses more on healing physical wounds or pain than IEM. The Healing Touch organization, Healing Touch International, asserts that Healing Touch is beneficial in calming anxiety, reducing symptoms of depression, decreasing pain, strengthening the immune system, aiding in post-operative surgery recovery and creating an overall sense of well-being.

While Healing Touch typically works alongside traditional medical treatments, IEM practitioners are usually independent healers offering services in an office of holistic health. However, IEM is finding increasing interest as a complementary therapy in medical establishments.

It's important to research and get references before beginning sessions with energy healers of any kind. Some energy healers offer free or low-cost phone consultations to help people learn if the practice and practitioner are right for them. However, in all its forms, energy healing is a gentle yet powerful way to take care of your body, mind and spirit. ✨



Lisa Watson is a teacher, writer and experienced IEM practitioner in Sandy Springs. Contact Lisa at LisaHWatson.com or 770-617-3001.

The Rise of Bodywork Modalities

Integrating Innovative and Ancient Healing Arts

by Marlaina Donato



Mariah Maiven/CanvaPro

Only a few decades ago, healing modalities like chiropractic care and acupuncture received little attention in the realm of conventional medicine. Today, the wellness spectrum is much more diverse, and although additional research is needed to confirm their efficacies and treatment guidelines, many forms of bodywork once associated with only spa pampering are now considered allies in the treatment of a wide array of health conditions. With new therapies emerging annually, there are more than 180 bodywork modalities, including cold laser therapy for non-invasive pain management and ancient massage techniques

Full-Spectrum Acupuncture

According to the market research company Technavio, the global acupuncture market is predicted to expand by \$16.83 billion from

2023 to 2027, with much of the growth attributed to an aging population opting for non-invasive, drug-free solutions.

Cancer patients are increasingly accessing this 2,500-year-old therapy, as well. The National Institutes of Health reports that acupuncture is used to ease the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation at major treatment centers, including MD Anderson Cancer Center, in Houston, and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, in New York, with the latter offering the modality in their accredited continuing education programs. According to a 2023 study published by *JAMA Network Open*, both integrative acupuncture and massage applications for advanced cancer patients over the course of 26 weeks were associated with decreased pain and improvements in sleep and quality of life.

“Our patients love having one more expert on their integrative medicine team, an additional professional to help them navigate the rollercoaster stressors of cancer treatment, recovery and survivorship,” says Pauline Sok Yin Hwang, an acupuncturist, registered Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioner and the clinical director of Hillgreen Oncology Acupuncture & Herbs, in Toronto, Canada. Hwang also employs other therapeutic elements of Traditional Chinese Medicine that harmonize well with oncology acupuncture, including herbal applications; nutrition; moxibustion, the burning of dried mugwort near parts of the body; cupping; and electroacupuncture, which combines electrical pulses with needles to target specific energetic points on the body.

“Given a prompt, every tiny cell knows where it is and what it should do. The relationship between cells allows them to calibrate, but cancer cells have lost this connection, causing them to proliferate,” explains Jill Blakeway, an acupuncturist and founder of The Yinoa Center, in New York City and Long Island. Blakeway adds that acupuncture can also stimulate the nervous system to release serotonin

and other endorphins that can dial down pain and elevate mood, something that is much needed by anyone enduring a cancer diagnosis.

Feel-good neurotransmitters are major players in the complex journey of addiction recovery, as spotlighted in a clinical trial published earlier this year in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Participants given acupuncture treatments three times a week for eight weeks reduced their methadone dosage by 20 percent or more as compared to subjects that received placebo treatments.

For those that are squeamish about needles, Hwang says, “About 40 tiny acupuncture needles can fit into the hole at the end of a hypodermic needle,” adding that most of her clients do not experience pain throughout treatment, and they are able to relax and even fall asleep by the end of a session.

Moxibustion—an extension of acupuncture that utilizes an herb called *Ai Ye*—may be promising for chronic kidney disease as a complementary therapy. A 2020 meta-analysis published in the journal *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* shows the potential of moxibustion to significantly reduce serum creatinine, 24-hour urine protein excretion and blood urea nitrogen—all of which are indicators of compromised kidney function—and markedly improve quality of life of chronic kidney disease patients.

Chiropractic Goes High-Tech

With 150 techniques in its toolbox, today's chiropractic medicine incorporates more sophisticated and gentler methods than ever before, especially for individuals with osteoporosis, a medical condition in which the bones become brittle and fragile from loss of tissue. Fueled by advanced software, modern diagnostic tools give doctors an edge over standard evaluation methods to provide personalized treatment plans.

The chiropractic use of electric current-based muscle stimulation encourages circulation in muscles along the spine

to minimize pain, a technique that is safe for patients with fragile bones or spinal stenosis. Another method—cold laser therapy—springboards from traditional ultrasound using specific wavelengths of light. Also known as low-level laser therapy, cold laser aids injured tissues by amping up the production of adenosine triphosphate, a molecule crucial for energy production within cells, to reduce inflammation and pain and promote healing. A 2021 systematic review published in the *Journal of Medicine and Life* reports that cold lasers can be effective for decreasing pain and may also improve coexisting emotional factors associated with temporomandibular joint disorders in the jaw.

As with traditional chiropractic care, the objective of modern styles is to address the root cause of neuromusculoskeletal dysfunction, which, if not treated, can lead to health issues and pain. “When the body is unable to adapt to chemical, physical or emotional stressors, tension within the nervous system is a common result. This often shows up as misaligned vertebrae [bones in the spine], but it can manifest in many ways,” says Brian Stenzler, a chiropractor and author in Sarasota, Florida, and vice president of operations at KnoWEwell, P.B.C. “Every organ, muscle,



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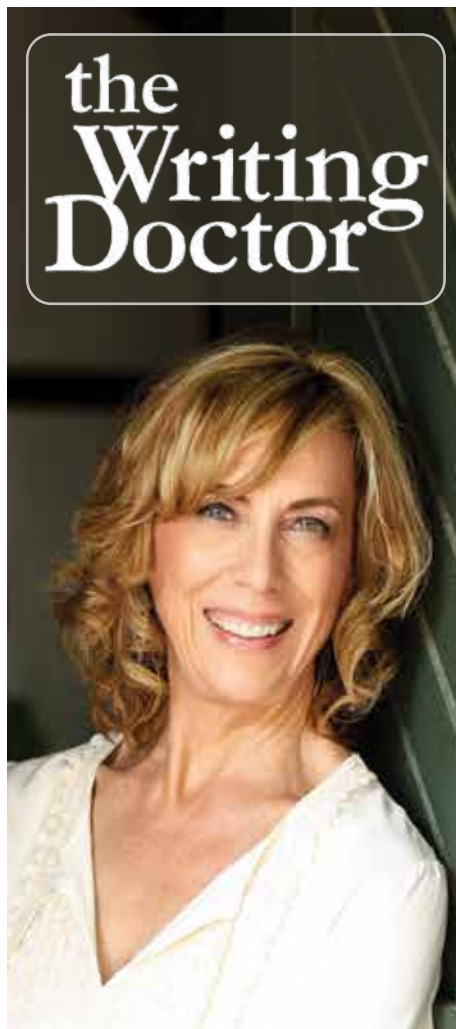


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gland, tissue and cell of the body knows exactly what to do, when to do it and how to do it, as long as the 'communication lines' are clear between those body parts and the brain."

Stenzler notes that because only a small percentage of nerves transmit information about pain, it is unreliable for determining if a chiropractic adjustment is needed. Instead, chiropractors use a combination of objective measures to identify misalignments causing nerve interference, such as posture, x-rays, motion and static palpation, range of motion, heart rate variability, thermography and surface electromyography, which assesses muscle function using electrodes placed on muscle groups.

New Horizons

Swedish and deep tissue massage have long given sore muscles and overextended nervous systems balm, but massage modalities are expanding their scope. Ancient massage systems making their way out of the shadows include Egyptian (Pharaonic), Balinese and *gua sha*, among others. More traditional approaches are being used to release trauma held in the body and to aid challenging conditions like Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy and cancer. "After a mastectomy, for example, a patient may experience swelling in the arm due to obstructed lymph flow. Specialized massage practitioners can offer lymphatic drainage massage to treat lymphedema, a common side effect of cancer treatment," says Blakeway.

Tuina, one of the four branches of Traditional Chinese Medicine, is believed to be the oldest form of bodywork and, like acupuncture, targets acupoints, but without the use of needles. In research from 2018, this modality—when combined with other aspects of Chinese medicine—shows promise for early-stage diabetic foot disease, a condition resulting from peripheral artery disease or sensory neuropathy.

Guided by overhead bars for balance and support, practitioners of the Japanese modality *ashiatsu* primarily use their feet to ease their clients' tight muscles. "The foot's broad surface allows for comprehensive

muscle manipulation, targeting larger groups while maintaining precision for specific areas. While we may combine foot and hand techniques for certain areas such as the neck, the primary focus is on harnessing the foot's unique capabilities for a truly transformative experience," explains Mariah Maven, a licensed massage therapist, *ashiatsu* educator and owner of THE SPACE, in Spokane, Washington.

Maven points out that *ashiatsu* can help stabilize the shoulder while gently stretching the neck, creating an unparalleled sense of traction and release, as well as promote better posture, flexibility and quicker recovery from sports injuries, but cautions that "it is contraindicated for individuals with osteoporosis or osteopenia [reduced bone mass]."

Ortho-Bionomy, pioneered by British osteopath Arthur Lincoln Pauls, has gained attention for its positive effect on pain and postural problems by working with the body's natural capacity to find balance and reset the nervous system. "Pauls took the osteopathic principle of positional release, gently placing the body in a position of optimal comfort and adding gentle compression into a joint from its position of greatest ease. He found that this stimulated proprioceptor nerve endings [sensors in muscles, tendons and ligaments] and produced a release response," explains Donna Racik, a certified Ortho-Bionomy practitioner in Leonia, New Jersey, adding that she has found this modality to be effective in relieving pain, restoring alignment and improving the flow of blood and lymph.

Stenzler, who believes that tomorrow looks brighter with the education and guidance of integrative health providers that encourage people to lead healthier lifestyles, says, "While helping people overcome health challenges is very noble and an extremely important aspect of health care, I strongly believe that the future should lie in a salutogenic model," which focuses on the origins of health and well-being rather than the causes of disease. 📌

Marlaina Donato is an author, artist and composer. Connect at BluefireStudio.art.

Beyond Classical

Exploring the Diverse Styles of Pilates

by Camille Lueder



photology 2000 via Canva Pro

In the world of Pilates, what may seem like a single, unified practice is actually quite diverse, as it encompasses a variety of styles and lineages. At the heart of the Pilates world is Classical Pilates, the method originally developed by Joseph Pilates himself. Rooted in precision, control and a specific sequence of exercises, Classical Pilates serves as the baseline for many practitioners. However, as Pilates has evolved, several styles and subsets have emerged, such as Contemporary Pilates, Physical Therapy Pilates and Romana's Pilates—each with its own methods and goals.

Emily Bradley, owner of The Pilates Powerhouse in Roswell, describes her studio as a Romana's Pilates Classical studio. As such, it preserves Joseph Pilates' legacy while following the teaching lineage of Romana Kryzanowska, one of Pilates' protégés. Bradley was trained directly by Kryzanowska in 1998.

"Joseph Pilates handed the torch to Romana and said, 'I want you to carry on my work,'" Bradley says. "She kept his work pure while making it more approachable."



Leslie Clayton

While Romana's Pilates closely follows Joseph Pilates' original teachings, Kryzanowska makes Pilates more accessible by adapting exercises to suit individual needs. Her version of Pilates retains the structure of the original but emphasizes warmth and flexibility, making it more user-friendly than the intense approach Joseph Pilates was known for. Romana's Pilates, like all Classical Pilates, also incorporates specialized equipment like the Reformer, Cadillac and Wunda Chair.

"We focus on the details of the people we work with," Bradley says. "When I look at a body, I tailor the session to fit their needs."

Body Awareness Studio in Atlanta, founded by Leslie Clayton, offers Contemporary Pilates. This modernized version of Pilates introduces new exercises, variations and equipment to fit contemporary knowledge of biomechanics and physiology. This style of Pilates adapts to individual needs, offering versatility while maintaining the essence of Pilates.

"Our teachers have a lot of choice in their approach, but it's still Pilates,"

Clayton says. "We just have more flexibility in how we achieve results."

Body Awareness Studio incorporates innovative tools like the CoreAlign, Connector and Yoga Wall—equipment not used in Classical Pilates. According to Clayton, these innovations reflect advancements in science and biomechanics that build on Joseph Pilates' original concepts. For example, the CoreAlign helps develop core strength and the Connector enhances the Reformer experience with multi-dimensional movement.

"The new equipment is evolving with science, and it helps address issues like fascia and the nervous system," Clayton says.

Clayton's studio uses the Balanced Body curriculum to train teachers, which honors the history of Pilates while embracing a flexible and adaptive approach to teaching. Balanced Body also produces Pilates equipment and emphasizes modifying exercises to accommodate different bodies and abilities.



Karyn Staples

Physical Therapy Pilates is a subset of Contemporary Pilates. Karyn Staples, owner of ProHealth Physical Therapy and Pilates Studio, uses Pilates as a rehabilitation tool for clients recovering from injuries or surgeries. The style focuses on healing and strengthening the body through modified Pilates exercises. It uses the equipment and exercises in a less rigorous way, helping clients regain strength and mobility before returning to their regular workouts.

"Joseph Pilates originally designed the equipment as a rehabilitation tool for people who were bedridden or had limited mobility," Staples says.

When working with clients, Staples assesses their strength and mobility to customize exercises. The goal is to restore the body to a healthy state by gradually increasing intensity as the client heals. This approach is ideal for those recovering from injury or surgery, as it bridges the gap between rehabilitation and regular exercise.

“They can use the equipment in a familiar way, but with less intensity, until they’re ready for more,” Staples says.

For new Pilates practitioners, choosing a style depends on personal goals and preferences. Whether opting for the structured approach of Classical Pilates, the versatility of Contemporary Pilates, or the rehabilitation focus of Physical Therapy Pilates, it’s essential to explore different options.

“Like yoga, there are many styles, teachers and classes to choose from,” Staples says. “If one style doesn’t work for you, try another.”

While Classical Pilates adheres to a strict sequence and uses traditional equipment, Contemporary Pilates incorporates new exercises and tools to enhance flexibility and adapt to modern needs. Both styles aim to improve movement and overall well-being.

“It’s all about helping people move better and live better,” Bradley says. “Practitioners gain flexibility, reduce pain and even improve their memory by focusing on the exercises.”

Like yoga, Pilates is a mind-body practice that promotes balance, strength and flexibility. The integration of mindful movement helps practitioners connect with their bodies and improve their range of motion. Clayton emphasizes that Pilates offers profound benefits for anyone, regardless of their fitness level or physical condition.

“Pilates can meet the needs of a 90-year-old after hip replacement, a young gymnast or someone with neurological issues,” Clayton says. “It meets you where you are, offering benefits for anyone.”

Ultimately, Pilates is a versatile practice that adapts to the needs of the individual. Whether it’s practiced for rehabilitation, fitness or to improve mindfulness, Pilates offers a path to improved health and well-being for everyone. 🌱

Atlanta native Camille Lueder recently graduated from Berry College with a B.A. in journalism. With a passion for travel, she has been working seasonal jobs, including on a trail crew in Colorado and a farm in Hawaii.



The Language of Peace

Exploring Nonviolent Communication

by Clarice L. Belcher

In the April 2022 issue of *Air Force Times*, famed novelist Margaret Atwood wrote, “War is what happens when language fails.”

Wars are not just between nations; they can be between family members, colleagues, friends and even within individuals.

How, then, can these wars be prevented?

For many, it may be by the conscious use of language—by the words people say to themselves and to others. For many, the words that lead to war are words that lead to hurt and pain—and hurt and pain are life-alienating. Such a language is violent and alienates people from the best in themselves.

For psychologist Marshall Rosenberg, author of the seminal work, *Nonviolent Communication*, words are crucial. They can either increase or decrease connection. Rosenberg felt that each individual is a compassionate being at heart and that those who hit, scream, yell and curse are disconnected from their essential compassion. They are disconnected because of the way they think and express themselves. In other words, they use words that separate rather than connect.

Many have been carefully trained, educated and enculturated to do so. They were taught at an early age to deny their feelings



Julia M. Cameron/pxels.com

and needs. In *Nonviolent Communication*, Rosenberg shares his experience from elementary school when, distraught and in tears over a school incident, the teacher told him, “Big boys don’t get frightened.”

From this early enculturation, supported by family systems, schools and work, people move further and further away from what is real in them—their feelings and needs—until they no longer have the vocabulary for expressing their feelings or needs. Instead, they express strategies—but strategies are not the same as feelings and needs.

A Language of Compassion

In fact, many consider strategies to be the most important part of communicating with others, so they focus their attention on *actions* without first acknowledging their feelings and needs or the feelings and needs of others. Often, others hear strategies as demands. Unfortunately, though, when people hear a demand, they can perceive it as an attack. Then, defenses appear, and an opening for war begins.

According to Rosenberg, the most important components of communication are feelings and needs—not strategies. Building on the work of the eminent 20th-century psychologist Carl Rogers, Rosenberg developed a new structure for language—a language of compassion. It is based on four components: observation, feelings, needs and requests, sometimes referred to as strategies.

These four components invite connection—not just into what one thinks but into what one feels and experiences. To move from a life-alienating language to a language of compassion, then, calls for clarity about what one observes, feels, needs and requests for meeting their needs.

Without the crucial data offered by our feelings and needs, individuals just exist as talking heads. They might seem to have a lot to say, but very little is actually said. They focus their attention on what to do without considering the feelings and needs of others or themselves. As a result, they often miss the mark, and the deeper connection they often yearn for is lost. But it doesn’t have to be that way.

Needs vs. Strategies

Individuals can choose peace by acknowledging their feelings and needs. Rosenberg’s website, cnvc.org, provides lists of feelings and needs that can be used to help differentiate between the two.

That’s helpful because there is a distinct difference. For example, someone might say “I need,” but they don’t name the need, as in:

- I need you to go to the store.*
- I need a new car.*
- I need more money.*
- I need to get a better job.*

In the examples above, what follows the “I need” is not a need but a *strategy for meeting needs*. What’s the difference? Take a look at the table below:

STRATEGIES

- I need you to go to the store.
- I need a new car.
- I need more money.
- I need to get a better job.

NEEDS

- I need support.
- I need ease.
- I need security.
- I need stimulation.

More specifically, *needs* answer the question “What?” and are often defined as qualities that sustain a life of well-being. *Strategies*, on the other hand, usually answer the question “How?”

Rosenberg lists 84 needs on his website. Some of them are socially oriented, and they include connection, affection, belonging, communication, companionship, empathy, intimacy, mutuality and respect.

Some are physical, such as physical well-being, air, food, rest/sleep, safety, shelter and touch.

And some are spiritual, such as honesty, authenticity, integrity, presence, meaning, celebration of life, purpose, to matter, autonomy and choice.



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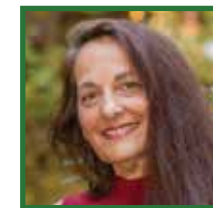
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For years, many have been taught that there are only three needs: food, air and shelter. With such a limited set of needs, they are stuck with a very narrow vocabulary to express what is alive in them. The language of compassion not only broadens their vocabulary of needs, it also broadens lives and widens the band of experience. When individuals express their needs, they show up in their lives and the lives of others. They make clear what is truly meaningful to them. When needs are met, people are happy.

Unmet Needs

Many are familiar with the phrase: “Hurt people hurt people.” Why do they hurt people? Because their needs are not met. Rosenberg called the resulting behavior—whether it’s screaming, yelling, cursing, hitting or kicking—“a tragic expression of unmet needs.” He felt it was tragic because it is so difficult to see the need behind the behavior. Choosing to see the pain and unmet needs beyond angry words or actions can make a dramatic difference in helping people stay connected to the best in themselves and others.

The word “need” is a bit frightening to some since some people often confuse *need* with *neediness*. They fear that they will be seen as weak if they state their needs explicitly. But it’s simply a matter of confusion about the wording. To clearly express a need—whether it’s a need for support, to be understood, to matter or to be heard—is a show of strength.

Those who want their needs met express those needs out loud. They’ll say, “I need support” or “I need cooperation,” for example. They are clear and specific. No one is hurt by expressing their needs. But, those who are reluctant to state their needs often want others to meet their needs. In this way, they are needy.

When someone becomes interested in meeting everyone’s needs—*everyone’s*—then trust and connection are enhanced. It is not about “power over” but about “power with.” In this way, language succeeds, and there is no war. Instead, there’s curiosity: “How do we meet our needs?” When individuals are genuinely and sincerely interested in meeting needs, lives are enriched.

There are far more strategies for meeting needs than there are needs themselves. As Rosenberg saw it, there is no competition between needs, nor is there conflict in needs. Suppose one individual is tired and needs rest and another individual is excited and needs play. In that case, there is the opportunity for mutual creativity as individuals explore how to meet their needs together. For example, the first person might take a 20-minute power nap and later join the second person in a 20-minute walk.

Implied and Explicit Feelings

As needs get expressed explicitly, strategies often arise organically. To put strategies first and needs second places the cart before the horse, making it difficult for the horse to move. It is better to acknowledge needs first, then strategies.

Not only is it important to make needs explicit, it is important to make feelings explicit as well. Rosenberg reported that feelings make up 10% of one’s connection to oneself, while needs make up 90%. Feelings, simply put, tell us how well we are meeting our needs. Being precise and specific when naming feelings is also important.

Unfortunately, many of us are trained, educated and enculturated to express our feelings in this way:

I feel that you were unfair.
I feel like everything is hard.
I feel I was wrong to say what I did.
I feel rejected.

Even though the phrase “I feel” appears, none of these examples state a feeling explicitly. What follows “I feel” is a judgment or an interpretation—and that’s not a feeling.

A feeling is the body’s reaction to needs; the information comes from our bodies, not our brains. If a person thinks that someone is being unfair, that individual may well have strong feelings about the unfairness. They might *feel* enraged, afraid, discouraged or shocked, for example. Then they could say, “I feel enraged” or “I feel shocked.”

The table below shows the difference between implied and explicit feelings:

IMPLIED FEELINGS	EXPLICIT FEELINGS
I feel that you never listen to me.	I feel frustrated.
I feel like everything is hard.	I feel overwhelmed.
I feel I was wrong to say what I did.	I feel regret.
I feel rejected.	I feel hurt.

If an individual feels happy in the moment, the chances are good that their needs are being met. If someone feels anguish, alarm or resentful, then chances are good that their needs are not being met. When someone realizes their needs are not being met, they can choose curiosity over condemnation, blame or shame and ask, “What is the need?” By stating their feelings explicitly, people connect to what is alive in them in the moment.

Observation without Judgment

When observing without evaluating, simply leave judgments and interpretations aside and do not let them bias what shows up. When making a judgment—for example, “they are an idiot and a moron”—unpack the judgment and focus on what was seen or heard the moment *before* the judgment appeared. This can empower people to move beyond judgment into reflecting on feelings and needs, asking: “How do I feel about what I observed?” and “What are my needs around my feelings?”

With clarity around observations, feelings, and needs, strategies are offered last and speak to specific behaviors or actions that would meet a need. Rosenberg recommended that strategies be preceded with the words, “Would you be willing to — ?” These words suggest choice rather than demand. Thus, the speaker increases their chance of being heard in the way they want to be heard.

With the perspective that all behavior comes in the service of needs, when we see people’s behaviors through the lenses of feelings and needs, their behaviors are not only less confusing, they invite compassion in the hearts of those around them. War can end, and peace can prevail. ☸



Clarice L. Belcher first learned of Marshall Rosenberg’s seminal work, Nonviolent Communication, in 2001. She currently offers workshops and practice groups on the topic. Contact her at belclar33@gmail.com or visit AtlantaCompassion.com.

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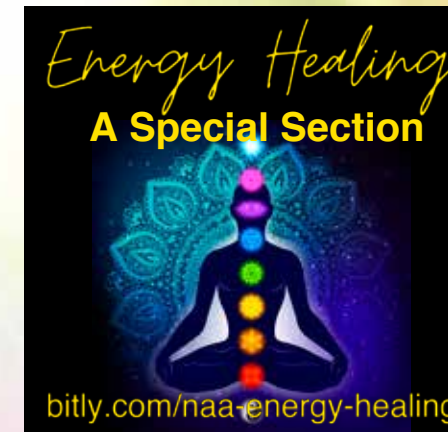
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Health Benefits of Yoga

Resolving Trauma and Other Mind-Body Challenges

by Carrie Gauthier



immagini di Michelangelo Oprandi/CanvaPro

The first known reference to yoga is in the *Upanishads* Sanskrit texts, written 2,500 years ago. The practice originally comprised breath work, and the physical postures developed over time. According to the global data platform Statista, nearly 34 million Americans practice numerous types of yoga, while science continues to provide evidence of its healing potential.

Calming Effects

With the frenetic pace of life today, many people live in a permanent state of anxiety. Yoga can ease the panic and malaise by activating the parasympathetic nervous

system to decrease stress hormones, blood pressure and heart rate.

“Yoga therapy differs from traditional psychotherapy in scope and aim. Rather than delving into traumas, yoga empowers individuals to be present, moving away from personal narratives,” says Adam Flores, a certified yoga therapist from Port St. Lucie, Florida, specializing in addiction and mental health. “Trained yoga therapists offer grounding techniques and skillful check-ins, especially for trauma cases, improving heart rate variability, vagal tone and overall nervous system health.”

Mental Health Benefits

A 2011 meta-analysis study published in *Primary Care Companion for CNS Disorders* indicates that yoga may be an effective treatment option for severe mental illness, with the added advantage of being less toxic than pharmaceutical treatments.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a significant issue facing the U.S. military and a growing problem for teens that have experienced violent or traumatizing events. Conventional treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing have shown limited effectiveness due to high dropout and nonresponse rates. On the other hand, studies have found that engaging in yoga and other mind-body practices can reduce intrusive memories, avoidance and emotional arousal symptoms, as well as anxiety, depression and anger associated with PTSD.

Yoga therapy improves critical factors in addiction recovery, including emotional balance, mental clarity and stress reduction. In a 2021 study published in the *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*, yoga for the treatment of substance abuse disorder was determined to be an effective option.

Popular Yoga Disciplines

Yoga has developed into a variety of styles that can meet the goals and objectives of their practitioners. Some of the more popular formats include:

- **Vinyasa:** An up-tempo class of postures or poses (asanas), often accompanied by high-energy music that typically results in a consistently elevated heart rate. A 2017 study published in *The FASEB Journal* found that eight weeks of vinyasa yoga improved physical fitness, relieved stress and improved mental well-being.
- **Yin:** This form of yoga focuses on gentle, passive stretches held for one to three minutes, offering ample opportunity to release stress and tension. Poses are often supported by props such as bolsters, straps, blocks, pillows and blankets.

Long, slow, deep breathing promotes relaxation to help the practitioner hold each pose for extended periods of time. Yin yoga stimulates and stretches fascia, the thin connective tissue throughout the body, as well as ligaments and joints, resulting in increased flexibility.

- **Hatha:** This is a classic yoga style involving breathing exercises and poses that are held for longer periods of time than other formats. Although the slower, more meditative pace may seem easier, holding a proper pose for extended periods of time can be challenging for the body and mind. According to a 2018 study in the *International Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 12 sessions of hatha yoga significantly reduced stress, anxiety and depression in women.
- **Kundalini:** This yoga style prioritizes spiritual growth and awareness, with a focus on energy and chakras. Kundalini awakenings are common via movement sequences, breath work, mantras and chanting. Different studies in 2021 found that kundalini yoga is an effective short-term therapy for generalized anxiety disorder and can be helpful in reducing the severity of insomnia.

Maintaining Self-Esteem

One of the core tenets of a yogic practice is self-compassion, and it is important to resist the inclination for negative self-talk. To adopt the yogic way is to choose happiness over suffering.

“In my experience, the best healing experiences happened by tapping into the body and unlocking the energies we hold onto,” says Paty Renda, a certified Ananda hatha yoga instructor and co-owner of Premah Wellness, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. “I believe in serious work done through fun exercises such as breath, dance, laughter and movement. A simple, slow and deep hatha yoga practice can create profound changes. Gratitude is another very easy, and yet immensely powerful, practice I infuse into everything I do.”

Carrie Gauthier is a writer in the healing arts with interests in clinical and transpersonal hypnotherapy.

Move, Create, Integrate

Exploring the Seven Chakras Through Aum’s Women’s Retreats

by Camille Lueder



Imagine a weekend spent immersed in the spirit of sisterhood, hiking through lush forests, swimming beneath waterfalls, dancing with abandon, creating art and realigning your chakras. Aum Studio for Wellness in Alpharetta offers just that through its seven, two-day, chakra-based women’s retreats.



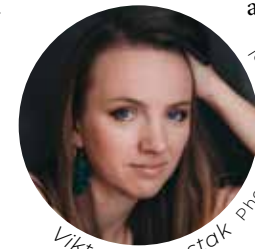
Yuliya Stepanov

Founder and retreat guide, Yuliya Stepanov, aims to provide participants with a deeper experience of their chakras, offering uninterrupted time for growth and healing. Thus, each retreat focuses on one of the seven chakras—from root chakra to crown chakra. The upcoming November retreat, *Awakening of Inner Fire*, focuses on the third, or “solar plexus,” chakra. The experiences are designed to teach participants about the chakra and its function while activating the chakra’s energy through

focused awareness, attention and specific practices. The retreats provide an extension of the women’s groups already offered by the studio.

“It’s important for people to understand that each chakra has specific responsibilities and energy qualities,” Stepanov says. “The idea of the retreat is to explore a specific area through movement, creativity and integration so we can better understand ourselves.”

Retreat participant Viktoria Shostak attended the *Sensual Awakening* retreat, which focuses on the sacral chakra and emphasizes self-discovery, pleasure and creativity. She felt an inner calling to explore herself further and saw the retreat as an ideal opportunity.



Viktoria Shostak Photo: Nadya

“Whatever you get out of the retreat depends on your intentions ... I stepped into vulnerability, opened up and allowed myself to grow,” Shostak says.

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calendar

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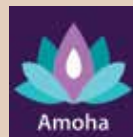
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Community Vinyasa Flow – 6pm. Pre-registration required. Donations welcome. Lift Dunwoody, 1705 Mt Vernon Rd, Ste E, Dunwoody. Also at Lift Alpharetta, 501 S Main St, Ste 101, Alpharetta. LiftYogaStudio.com.

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Participants might find themselves engaged in yoga and dance, exploring nature through hiking and swimming, and expressing their creativity through painting and drawing. Meditation is also a key practice, allowing guests to connect deeply with themselves and explore their subconscious minds.

"When we go hiking to the waterfalls, I ask everyone to walk in silence, paying attention to their feelings and surroundings," Stepanov says. "We don't focus on others; we focus inward. Then, when we dive into the waterfall, it's a very intentional act."



Retreat guest Kelly Pitman describes the Sensual Awakening retreat as the most incredible experience she has had in women's retreats. "Yuliya and her team have an amazing gift for creating a beautiful environment where women can let go of the outside world and truly sink into the present," Pitman says.

Beyond providing peace and personal growth, Shostak emphasizes that the retreats are simply fun. Participants stay in a beautifully decorated house, enjoy healthy meals and spend time in nature, all while being creative and authentic. Shostak notes that the women-only approach offers unique opportunities for healing and self-discovery.

"I built so many great connections with the women after the retreat, and I've made some amazing friends," Shostak says. "I highly recommend these retreats for any-

one seeking self-discovery, connection and personal growth."

The retreats not only provide the potential for transformation but also equip participants with tools to continue their journey at home. Pitman left the retreat with life-changing experiences and a renewed appreciation for life.

"I left feeling so full, with an incredible experience that fueled me and excited me about the things I'm working on," she says. "I left with new friendships and inspiration... I needed that even more than I realized."

The goal of each retreat is simple: to leave participants feeling fulfilled.

"That's my focus—to help them fully relax and be taken care of. I create a welcoming, warm and beautiful atmosphere," Stepanov says. "And when they leave, they feel fulfilled and energized."

Chakra-based women's retreats are held in Clayton, Georgia, from 9 a.m. Saturday to 7 p.m. Sunday. The next retreat, Awakening of Inner Fire, is scheduled for November 9-10. There is space for 16 participants, supported by a team of four, including a cook, photographer and videographer, organizer and Stepanov herself. 🌸

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Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

on the Journey Within Part 2

by Paul Chen



Photo courtesy Art of Living Foundation

I first learned about Art of Living when someone told me how the Happiness Program changed their life. What are the most common ways a person's life changes once they learn Sudarshan Kriya and practice it regularly?

The Art of Living Program impacts a person on many levels. It's a holistic program that corrects imbalances in body as well as mind and uplifts the spirit. [The] Sudarshan Kriya [aka, "SKY breath"] that is shared in the program brings more positivity into the system and helps one handle negative feelings and emotions. One learns about seven layers of our existence—body, breath, mind, intellect, memory, ego and the self. In short, it's a program that educates and empowers one to be a more conscious and happy individual.

There are many reasons that people who have not been spiritually active start looking for a path, including life crises, the influence of friends or role models, and transcendent experiences. In your experience, what are the initial motivating factors that correlate with sustained learning and practice on the spiritual path?

There are four types of people who come to the spiritual path. The first type are those who come when they feel all the doors are closed and there is no hope in life. There

is sadness and desperation. The second type come seeking progress and success in life, feeling they need inner strength, an important ingredient for success. The third type are inquisitive and want to know more about life. They have a philosophical bent of mind and sharp intellect. The fourth type are conscious and aware of the impermanent nature of the world. They seek something higher and have had a glimpse of a higher purpose in life.

Meditation became popular in America in the 2010s. The primary reason Americans try meditation is to reduce stress and anxiety and increase relaxation. There are, of course, spiritual reasons to meditate, and the practices are different as well. How do you define meditation in terms of purpose and practice? And how is the meditation you practice different from what Americans call mindfulness meditation, the components of which include attention on the moment, non-judgment and focused attention on an object—often the breath?

Mindfulness is just the beginning—a driveway to the home that is meditation. One has to put in a lot of effort in achieving mindfulness, whereas meditation is effortless. Mindfulness demands energy. Meditation on the other hand provides you energy. If I start talking about the benefits, there are more than a hundred scientifically proven benefits of meditation and mindfulness is simply one of the byproducts of meditation.

For those readers who may be experiencing significant stress and anxiety but aren't ready to embrace and practice pranayama or meditation, what is your best advice on very simple and easy things they can do to reduce stress and anxiety?

It's like saying, "I'm thirsty, but I don't want to drink water!" Just try it once. You'll see that it's effortless, it's doable and you'll also enjoy it. That's why Art of Living programs

are appreciated by people of all ages—because they are easy, fun and effective.

In a YouTube video of yours, you say that two questions constitute the vehicle for one's spiritual journey: "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" On the surface, some might find the first question silly, thinking, "I'm so-and-so, and I think these things, value these things and do these things," and the second question baffling. Please expand on your comment and explain why these questions lie at the heart of one's spiritual journey.

The very fact that these questions arise in one's mind shows the sign of intellectual maturity and growth. Be with this question and use it as a tool for inner exploration. The process of asking this question helps clear mental cobwebs and paves the way for deeper self-understanding. Do not be in a hurry to find the answer. This journey itself is valuable and transformative. We usually identify ourselves with what we have and what roles we play, but if one keeps digging deeper with this spirit of inquiry, they will explore more secrets about themselves. And so, it's very pertinent to ask these questions. Often, people find their lives meaningless and lacking purpose. Questions like "Why am I here?" offer one a bigger context to life.

The next few questions were inspired from reading your book, Notes for the Journey Within. You write that "true love is always one-sided." Please explain.

A love that is unconditional, where you expect nothing from others and only care for their well-being, is what I would call true love. For example, the love of a grandmother or mother for a child, that of a teacher for a student, or that of a doctor for their patient.

An often-heard directive is "Don't judge." But it seems that judgment is necessary if we are to evolve in a positive manner. For example, if we didn't judge that lying, stealing and killing are "bad" and/or "wrong," then there wouldn't seem to be an incentive against not doing those things. If we didn't judge that one person is more ethical/moral and worthy of imitation, we could just as easily imitate someone who lacks ethics and morals. Please share with us your thoughts regarding judgment.

Until you judge something as good or bad, you cannot really commit to an action. Judgment is unavoidable in daily life. However, you must put yourself in the other person's shoes. Suppose you've made

a mistake and someone always holds it against you or sees you only through that lens. Would you like it? Of course, you cannot entirely move without judgment, but holding on to a judgment also colors your vision and limits your perception, which could be erroneous.

See the possibility that people and things change all the time, and don't hold on to judgments. Let your judgments be light and passing—like a breeze. Not hard and heavy like a rock. Only in the state of being, when you are full of love and compassion, can you ever be free from all judgments.


You also write that "from a state of elevated consciousness, you don't see the flaws in others." \ How does an elevated state of consciousness make one not see flaws in others? And why is that a "good thing?"

You cannot read these statements out of context. In an elevated state of consciousness, you'll notice even the smallest flaws; however, you'll also see the possibility of transformation. In this sense, you don't hold on to the flaws; instead, you move toward perfection. When you see the possibility of transformation and perfection, you would naturally not hold on to the flaws. 🙏

**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





The Eye-Opening Truth About Fertility

by Dr. Susan Fox



Global declines in birth rates have made headlines, but the rise of male and female infertility has largely been overlooked. Infertility is defined as the inability to get pregnant after trying for one year. In 2021, *Scientific American* reported that the world-wide fertility rate dropped by almost 1 percent per year from 1960 to 2018.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that about 1 in 5 American married women in their reproductive years have difficulty in either getting pregnant or carrying to a live birth, and 11.4 percent of men ages 15-49 have some form of infertility.

For women, a study found a 1 percent per year increase in reported miscarriage rates in the US over a two-decade period. The increase in infertility among women has manifested itself in the increased use of assisted reproductive technologies, including egg freezing and in vitro fertilization among younger women, not just those that waited to start families until after age 35. There also has been an increasing trend in the use of gestational surrogacy as family has taken on a wider definition than traditionally, and as corporations have begun to include fertility benefits in their employee compensation packages.

Numerous studies have identified an increase in male fertility issues, including:

- Declines in sperm concentration (52 percent) and total sperm count (nearly 60 percent) between 1973 and 2011. At this rate, average sperm count could be zero by the middle of this century.
- Decreases in testosterone levels of almost 1 percent per year during recent decades in excess of natural, age-related declines.
- Declines in total testosterone levels among adolescent and young adult males from 1999 to 2016.
- Increases in testicular cancer rates.
- Increases in the prevalence of erectile dysfunction among younger men.

Susan Fox is Doctor of Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine in Marin County, California, and has specialized in working with women and couples navigating fertility challenge for more than 20 years. Connect at healthyuniversity.co and drsusanfox.com.

There is hope! Watch in November for our next article in this series. Also, learn more, access valuable resources today, and get your **COMPLIMENTARY ACCESS PASS** for the very special **January 20-24** fertility immersive event. Scan the QR Code.



Continued from page 8

Jami Zaki, a professor of psychology at Stanford, and Luiza Santos, a psychology PhD graduate from Stanford, conducted a study with “more than 160 Americans who spoke about their opposing political views ... Over and over, we observed as participants with rival opinions came to these conversations ready for combat—and left feeling changed. Afterward, they reported feeling less hostile toward the other party and more humble in their own views. When asked to rate the pleasantness of these dialogues, the most common response was 100 on a 100-point scale.”

The authors talked about how the project's participants were, like me, surprised. “The Americans we surveyed believed that conversations like the one between Ben and Emily (two of the participants) would be a waste of time, or even counterproductive ... Ben and Emily were similarly pessimistic—and thus shocked by how much they enjoyed one another and learned from their time together. The sad irony is that even when our pessimism is misplaced, it creates cycles of silence and misunderstanding that worsen division.”

I have always believed that “we have so much more in common than what separates us,” as one of the current presidential candidates has said. I also believe that most Americans are tired of being divided and angry all the time. The authors found that to be true in a separate study. In *Belief in the Utility of Cross-Partisan Empathy Reduces Partisan Animosity and Facilitates Political Persuasion*, they write: “80% of Americans regret the country's division and wish for greater cooperation.” And they found the first to be true in their experiment. “Americans of each party hold breathtakingly warped impressions of the other side. In our study, we asked Republican and Democratic voters how much they supported antidemocratic practices ... Most people on each side support fair and free democracy but don't realize their rivals do as well: Participants estimated that the other side was nearly twice as antidemocratic as they really are.”

They close on a note of hope. “Research offers hints about how to make these conversations productive. Good disagreeers don't hide their own perspective, but they also express genuine curiosity about others' views and point out common ground when they see it. They share personal stories and ask about each other's experiences. This type of exchange isn't just nice—it's powerful.”

For the last several weeks, I've contemplated reaching out to an old friend to talk about our diametrically opposed views. I've been very hesitant to do so out of the fear that it would be counterproductive. Reading the article this morning—and writing this letter—have been encouraging. Above and beyond my sense of responsibility to walk the talk, I feel I need to do my share of righting this ship.

America's healing cannot come soon enough.

How To Make a Difference

The perfect companion to this letter is Clarice Belcher's contribution in this issue on nonviolent communications.

I took Clarice's free workshop on Marshall Rosenberg's groundbreaking work years ago. I was impressed by the material, feeling that everyone needs to be exposed to it; sadly, in America, we're far more concerned about IQ than EQ. I participated in one of her practice groups and we all experienced the effectiveness of the practice. Hardly a session went by when one or more participants were moved to tears by their own realization, or by sharing in the realization of another.

If you wish for more intimate relationships, or want a more caring society, consider taking the course offered by his diminutive elder whose one-woman campaign to make the world a better place is a true light shining in these seemingly dark times. 🌟



Publisher of Natural Awakenings Atlanta since 2017, Paul Chen's professional background includes strategic planning, marketing management and qualitative research.

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 and paid listings to ads@naAtlanta.com.

Wednesday, October 2

Blood Mountain Day Hike – 10am-3:30pm. 5-mile out-and-back hike along the Byron Reece Trail and Appalachian Trail to the summit of Blood Mountain. Free with a suggested \$15 donation. Mountain Crossing at Neels Gap, 12471 Gainesville Hwy, Blairsville. GeorgiaConservancy.org.

Thursday, October 3

Sacred Beats Drumming – 7-8pm. Join 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.

Saturday, October 5

Free First Saturday: Creepy Crawlies – 1-2pm. Dive into the heart of nature with an interactivity, embark on a guided nature hike through the beautiful park, and unleash your creativity with arts and crafts surrounded by the serene beauty of the forest. Free. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

Tuesday, October 8

Gardening for Bats – 6:30-7:30pm. While some Georgia bat species are being decimated by an introduced fungus that causes “white nose syndrome,” the Georgia DNR is fighting to prevent our bats from extinction. Find out how you can help. \$20. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

Friday, October 11

Trivia in the Park: After Dark – 7-9pm. Join us as we celebrate all things spooky with questions for horror enthusiasts and history buffs alike. \$5/member, \$10/nonmember. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

Thursday, October 17

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. Register: tinyurl.com/3sz5452z.

Saturday, October 19

Greener Good Volunteer Day – 9am-12pm. Help clear underbrush, paint benches and pick up litter. Empire Park, 245 Oak Dr SE, Atlanta. ParkPride.org.

Sunday, October 20

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.

Thursday, October 24

Tarot Essentials Series – 6-7pm. Delve into mastering the meaning of yes/no readings and work on building our intuition and confidence in tarot readings. \$25. The Open Mind Center, 1425 Market Blvd, Ste 500, Roswell. 678-629-3630. TheOpenMindCenter.com.

Healing Sound Bath: Season of Change – 7-8pm. Join Raye Andrews, Vibrational Sound Therapist, as she creates a beautiful healing sound experience that will assist us in exploring and embracing change, while allowing it to settle into our awareness with ease and joy. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Friday, October 25

39th Annual Halloween Hikes – Oct 25-27. 6-10pm, Fri & Sat; 5-9pm, Sun. Explore the colorful forest to meet woodland creatures and hear about how they live. Take part in world music, crafts, campfire and festival fun. It's the perfect non-scary alternative to traditional Halloween events for all ages. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. ChattNatureCenter.org.

Saturday, October 26

Fall 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.



Sundays

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

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

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

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

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

Zoom. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

Tuesday

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

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

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

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

Wednesday

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

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

Weekly Grief Group with The Purple Priestess – Sept 18-Dec 31. 6-7:30pm. Let's work through grief together, while exploring a range of topics and activities aimed at transforming grief, healing and connection. \$25. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. UnityAtl.org.

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

Thursday

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

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

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

ryn. \$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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Asking for Help

by Tara Ochs



pxhidalgo/DepositPhotos.com

I'm the oldest child of a Navy pilot and an elementary school teacher. I grew up in the South, loved church, made straight A's, and *never* got in trouble. Yes, it was an idyllic childhood—let's get that out of the way first. Because what's not as obvious, at least it wasn't to me, is that this is also a recipe for the makings of a fiercely independent and resourceful adult—who is destined for a complete burnout.

This summer, I was just one lit match away from something dramatic. I can't really tell you what, because luckily enough, smart people intervened right before life could have gotten really messy. But I thought I'd share a little bit of this "aha" moment, which, given my stubborn nature (see recipe above), means the pace of my revelations are more on par with crockpots than microwaves.

I got a cool new job about two years ago. I love my job. But up until two years ago, I had worked freelance all my life. (Independent! Resourceful! See how this is tracking?) And here's what I started to do once I realized I wasn't going anywhere: I reverted to an

old role that I was very familiar with—The Oldest Daughter. The Helper. Or as my mom (still) calls me: The Rock. Sorry, Dwayne Johnson, I earned my title well before your wrestling days.

Anyway, I wanted to be The Rock that everyone at the office relied on. Can it get done? Sure! No problem! I got this... and this... and this. I kept taking on more—and guess what? It got to be too much. I was getting irritable, I was crying, I was planning my escape. From a job I loved! But I couldn't figure out a way to keep going, and I knew I wasn't going to be able to sustain the pace much longer. It showed on my face and in my work. That was when a colleague, noticing my stress levels, casually advised: "You should ask for help."

Why does this kind of advice make me want to crawl up a wall? The number of excuses that welled up inside me were frankly impressive: "It's quicker if I do it myself!" "I couldn't tell you what I needed anyway!" But deep down inside, I think there is a bigger block, born of the little girl who always made

sure mom was OK while dad was away on duty. I've tied up a whole lot of my worth in being helpful to others. And sometimes *too* helpful. I've been known to intervene in many a situation in which my help was not even needed. Or welcomed. I am the Best Lil' Helper *ever*. So what happens to me if I hand over that role for a moment?

In a moment of sheer desperation, I decided to test the waters of this bizarre ritual of asking for help. Apparently, it's a thing that people do all the time, and no one hates them for it. From what I've been told, people actually feel amazing when you let them help you. Which, I suppose, connects back to why I like "helping others" so much.

So I handed off a few small jobs to co-workers. Nothing big, but I did it. But here's the novelty: I resisted the urge to go buy them a gift basket in appreciation for their service. And you know what? Their assistance *did* make my life a little easier. And weirdly, I have not yet received an invoice for the eternal debt I owe them.

And when I got ill, I did the craziest thing: I said *yes* to someone who asked if they could bring me anything. The absolutely beautiful basket of goodies that showed up immediately on my front doorstep was tear-inducing.

I guess I'm not the only one who's good at helping. And luckily enough, folks at my office got the hint that I even needed help *asking for help*—and they came through. Even now, they are helping me find balance, and it feels pretty great.

I think I'll keep testing the waters of this "Ask for Help" theory. So far, I'm finding a lot of very good little rocks to help pave this path called life. 🌱



Tara Ochs is a writer, producer and performer in Atlanta's entertainment community. She produces content with Dagger, a creative agency, and can be seen on stage at Dad's Garage Theater in the Old Fourth Ward performing live comedy.

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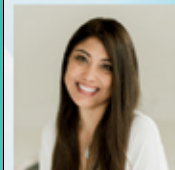
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