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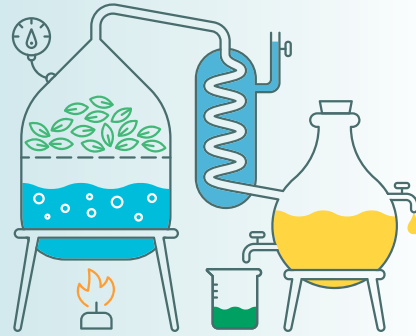
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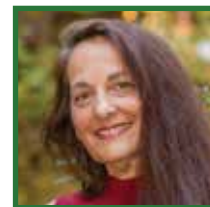
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Corrections: In the April news brief, “Free Yoga in Woodruff Park Begins April 5,” the weekly class day was misstated. It takes place on Saturdays at 10 a.m. • In the April news brief, “Dr. Bhatia Launches Medical Podcast,” the doctor’s name was misspelled in the second paragraph. It is “Bhatia.” • In the March news brief, “Dr. Garud Joins The Art of Living Retreat Center,” the frequency of the Panchakarma retreat was reported incorrectly. It is offered twice a month.

Online

WEB EXCLUSIVES



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This Issue: Packed with Local Articles!

This month's issue is packed with more local content than usual—and we're very pleased about it!

First, our feature on Atlanta healing centers includes a directory of 15 locations. Directories have always been popular with readers. We've published directories for Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), farmers' markets, retreat facilities and wellness spas. Like our wellness spa directory, we've crafted a definition of "healing centers" for a Goldilocks effect: Not too many and not too few centers need to be listed. In other words, many other Atlanta businesses might meet readers' definitions of "healing centers," so this list is only definitive within our own narrow definition!

Since taking over as publisher of this magazine, one of the more confusing aspects of pursuing holistic health is the plethora of modalities that present themselves to the general public. A longstanding marketing "commandment" is to talk about benefits instead of features. For example, energy healing can reduce stress and induce peace of mind vs. reiki practitioners channel energy through their hands without touching. The thing is, the list of modalities that claim similar benefits is quite long; readers and the general public are left to consider which of many modalities might best help relieve their stress, reduce brain fog, increase energy or improve sleep.

Well, healing centers don't necessarily provide an answer, but they do offer multiple practitioners and modalities at the same location. So, at a minimum, convenience is a factor, and we all welcome more convenience in our lives.

Second, we shine a light on Alive! Expo, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary at the end of this month. *Natural Awakenings* shares a couple of major characteristics with Alive! Expo. For one, a primary motivation is to share knowledge about health and wellness with readers/consumers. Alive! Expo founder Patrycja Towns used to work for Better Nutrition magazine! Another thing we share is that we focus on smaller, local businesses. While that is a worthy focus—promoting small, local businesses not only enhances the uniqueness and diversity of the Atlanta economy, it does the opposite of concentrating wealth into fewer and fewer hands—it also presents the challenge of having customers with small marketing budgets and practically no marketing staff. And yet, we've persisted to this point. *[Disclosure: This magazine is and has been a media sponsor of Alive! Expo for many years.]*

Third, we're highlighting three outstanding yoga teachers this month. Since I've been publisher, we've assiduously avoided "best of" lists that are decided by popular vote since we believe such lists are only popularity contests and do not honestly speak to "best." Instead, our yoga editor, Patricia Schmidt, defined "outstanding" as the ability to teach to anyone and everyone who shows up for a class, regardless of what was planned for a class. We then asked for nominations among those who know many yoga instructors and know a lot about teaching yoga, such as local studio owners and a few universally recognized excellent Atlanta teachers.

The result is hardly a list, just a sample. We'll likely conduct this exploration again



The Well of Rosewell

in the future as we're certain there are many more outstanding yoga teachers in Atlanta who deserve wider recognition.

Finally, this is the second consecutive month in which we've published eight or more News Briefs. I love that! As a franchise, our first and most important contribution to editorial is reporting on local organizations and events that can have a positive impact on you, our readers. Inexplicably, some months we've only been able to publish two briefs. I definitely believe that Atlanta is large enough that we should never have that problem.

So my last word this month is: if you're an Atlanta business or organization that is brand new and opening... or relocating... or offering significantly new products or services... or adding a significant service-providing staff member... or just obtained significant new certifications or equipment—reach out to us to see if a news brief is in order! Our managing editor's email address is diane@naatlanta.com. The one obvious caveat: What you're offering does need to be within our editorial scope, which includes holistic health and personal evolution. Here's to your success! 🙌



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

Alive! Expo Announces Speakers



Carlee Hutchinson Diane Spiva Dr. Gez Agolli

Agolli, cofounder of Progressive Medical Centers, Progressive Medical Management and Progressive Nutracare. Progressive Medical Center's professional staff includes MDs, NPs, PA-Cs, DCs, NDs, RDs, nutritionists and more, working together for their patients.

Three other professionals from Progressive will speak at Alive! Expo, as well. Certified nurse practitioner Carlee Hutchinson, MSN, will present "Functional Medicine and The Future of Healthcare." Hutchinson fell in love with holistic healthcare after healing from several chronic conditions through gratitude, diet, exercise and a positive mindset.

Diane Spiva, NP-C, will speak on "Bioidentical Hormone Replacement Therapy (BHRT) and Weight Loss." At Progressive, Spiva leads men's health, BHRT and weight loss programs. A certified nurse practitioner, Spiva is APRN-licensed in Georgia and is proficient in a wide range of clinical procedures. Also, Melanie Wardle, NP, FMAPS, will speak on "Functional Pediatrics" and "Managing Chronic Illness in our Children." Additional speaking topics were not available at press time. See AliveExpo.com for more information on speakers and schedules as they become available.

Alive! Expo 2025 will be held May 31 and June 1 at Gas South Convention Center, 6400 Sugarloaf Parkway in Duluth.

Wellhaus Club Opens Boutique Wellness Studio

Wellhaus Club is a new wellness studio in Buckhead offering multiple holistic therapies, amenities and personalized services for well-being. Wellhaus is for those seeking to recharge, recover and rejuvenate in a spa-like environment. "We are about giving our customers their space and time to truly enjoy whatever modalities they wish to indulge in," says Club Director, Tracy Powell.

The studio offers cold plunge therapy, infrared sauna, red light therapy, IV therapy, NAD+ therapy, float sessions and more. Services are available à la carte or through flexible packages and memberships, with pricing starting at \$40 for single sessions, \$150 for packages and \$99 for monthly memberships.

The Wellhaus team brings more than 50 years of combined experience in health and wellness, shaping a space that balances high-end design with clinical-grade offerings.

For more information, call 470-312-2141 or visit WellhausClub.com. Wellhaus Club is located at 371 E. Paces Ferry Rd, Ste. 125, Atlanta.



Photo: Mood & Theory

Sublime Holistic Wellness Opens in Decatur

Sublime Holistic Wellness announces the grand opening of its new healing studio in Decatur. Located within the Decatur Healing Collective, the studio offers a variety of therapies designed to support mind, body and spirit.



Founder Holly Levine brings her personal journey and extensive training to the space. After overcoming food addiction and losing 140 pounds, Levine pursued certifications in The Work of Byron Katie, hypnotherapy and sound and vibrational therapy and became a certified food addiction recovery advocate. "This space is more than just a studio—it's a sanctuary where individuals can come to heal, grow and transform," says Levine. Sound healing "played a significant role in my own recovery," she says.

Sublime Holistic Wellness offers group and private sound baths using Himalayan bowls, tuning forks and other instruments as well as compassionate listening circles tailored for specific communities such as those in grief, cancer patients, LGBTQ+ individuals and people overcoming addiction. The center also offers one-on-one hypnotherapy, red light therapy, frequency meditation and limiting belief release sessions.

Group sound baths are \$25 a ticket, and monthly access to weekly sharing circles is \$50. Private session costs vary.

For more information, call 770-309-8830 or visit Heal.me/Sublime_Holly. Sublime Holistic Wellness is located at 165 Dekalb Industrial Way, Suite F1, in Decatur.

Atlanta School of Wellness Launches Monthly Wellness Workshops



Mayuri Sobti

Ranesa House of Wellness recently introduced the Atlanta School of Wellness, which began hosting monthly wellness workshops in April. Located in Buckhead, the school offers a variety of experiences including new moon sound baths, full moon cacao ceremonies and candlelight restorative yoga sessions. Each event concludes with tea and snacks to foster community connection and reflection.

Under the direction of Ranesa’s founder, Mayuri Sobti, the school is designed to offer more than one-on-one healing. Its group sessions teach attendees tools they can use to continue their healing journeys. Workshops such as Reflexology for Self-Care empower participants to establish practices they can share with friends and family. Sessions are held on select Thursdays and Saturdays and range from 90 minutes to three hours in duration.

“We are very excited to extend our healing knowledge with the community and create a healing space where people can gather, heal, learn and grow,” says Sobti. “Our hope is to become a place that the community gathers to share in healing.”

Workshop fees range from \$65 to \$95 depending on the event.

For more information, call 404-941-9544 or visit www.ATLSchoolOfWellness.com. The Atlanta School of Wellness is located at 3091 E Shadowlawn Ave NE in Atlanta. Free parking is available.

New White Willow Sitting Center Offers Sunday Zazen Meditation



The Wellness Emporium has launched the White Willow Meditation and Sitting Center, offering free silent sitting meditation—aka “zazen”—every Sunday morning from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. A second session starts at 10:45 a.m. with either an online Buddhist talk or a secular guided meditation session.

Online sessions are led by the Atlanta Soto Zen Center; local Zen teachers facilitate interviews exploring lay and spiritual perspectives. When online sessions are not scheduled, Wellness Emporium practitioners will facilitate a secular guided meditation. Tea and cookies are served between sessions.

Val (Myojo) Hudgins, founder of White Willow and proprietress of The Wellness Emporium, says, “This is good news for the Zen community in the northwest metro Atlanta area because of the recent closure of a sitting center in a strip mall near Woodstock. I’m very excited to start White Willow Sitting Center and watch a harmonious community develop here.”

Participants are encouraged to bring their own sitting cushions.

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



New Six-Week Meditation and Wellness Course

Spiritual Generation Ministries has announced a new, six-week Meditation Healing and Wellness course. The course can be taken on either Sundays, starting on May 4, or Wednesdays, starting on May 7. The times on both days are from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. It is offered at the Global Mall in Norcross at 5675 Jimmy Carter Boulevard, Suite 728.

Andrea El-Fatin, an ordained Christian minister, ordained meditation minister, and the founder of Spiritual Generation Ministries, says meditation can lead individuals to discover their true spiritual selves and to healing. “The world is not in need of a new religion, nor is the world in need of a new philosophy,” says El-Fatin. “What the world needs is healing and regeneration. The world needs people who, through devotion to God, are so filled with the spirit that they can be instruments through which healing takes place.”

In addition to meditation instruction, the course’s classes include discussions around health topics such as exercise, detoxification, colon cleansing, supplements and more. El-Fatin is a holistic health practitioner and has more than 30 years’ experience as a colon hydrotherapist.

The price for the six-session course is \$420, with a registration fee of \$45. For more information, contact El-Fatin at MeditationWellnessClub@gmail.com or 404-557-4306.

Mending Hearts Wellness Opens in Marietta

Iridologist Roxanne Padmore, ND, and colon hydrotherapist Tasha Roberts have teamed up to open Mending Hearts Wellness in Marietta. They offer multiple modalities including iridology, colon hydrotherapy, ZYTO bio-survey, ionic foot bath, ear candling and sound therapy on a vibroacoustic sound bed.

Iridology can help “reveal information that may help you prevent conditions and internal enemies from attacking your health,” says Padmore.

Colon hydrotherapy can help with digestive issues and promote overall health. ZYTO bio-survey measures the body’s energetic responses to help people discover their bodies’ wellness preferences. And ionic foot baths can cleanse the liver of heavy metals and reduce uric acid build-up, according to Roberts.

Besides providing wellness services, Mending Hearts Wellness is committed to educating clients about the tools they need to prevent disease and cultivate a happier and healthier lifestyle. “We want to educate and grow people’s awareness of how to feel better,” says Roberts. “So, we like to inspire lasting positive change for physical, mental and emotional well-being through education and compassionate care.”

Mending Hearts Wellness is located at 134 Powers Ferry Rd. # 136 in Marietta. For more info, visit MendingHeartsWellnessCenter.com.



Roxanne Padmore



Tasha Roberts

ChantLanta Makes Record Donation to Nonprofit

The ChantLanta Sacred Music Festival concluded its run of 13 festivals in March and raised a record amount of money for its charity partner, Kaleidoscope Child Foundation. ChantLanta delivered \$18,000 to Kaleidoscope, 33 percent more than its previous largest donation.

The festival was held at Unity North and featured eight bands and 11 workshops. “It’s a bittersweet feeling knowing this was the last ChantLanta, but we are so proud of all we accomplished over the past 15 years and grateful for all the folks who contributed their time and talents,” says Boccio. “The organizing committee, the musicians and workshop presenters, the sponsors and vendors and all of the volunteers combined as vital parts in making this project such a success.”

Along with co-founder Karen Dorfman, Boccio started and maintained the festival as a completely volunteer effort so as to maximize donations to their chosen nonprofits. This year’s recipient is “focused on increasing access to education, clean water, medical and hygiene assistance and agricultural and technology training for children” in Cambodia, India, Guatemala and the United States.

“We’re overjoyed with the generosity of the kirtan community, particularly ChantLanta and its longstanding dedication to causes,” says David Ault, founder of Kaleidoscope. “We love to tell people just how far a U.S. dollar goes in developing countries.”



David Ault and Jai Ram Lentine of Kaleidoscope

Many Paths Wellness Expands into Full-Time Yoga Studio

Many Paths Wellness has expanded to a full-time yoga studio in Roswell. After sharing space with LiveURYoga since last November, the business assumed full-time operations at 27 Oak Street on March 1. The expansion enabled the doubling of yoga class offerings and broadened the number of holistic healing services offered.

Founded by Jessica Otieno, Many Paths Wellness now offers 19 weekly yoga classes and a growing lineup of workshops. Moreover, it offers healing services such as reiki, aura photography with live chakra imaging, Bio-Well energy scans, infrared Bio-Mat therapy and holistic coaching.

“I never imagined I’d own a yoga studio,” says Otieno. “But the alignment has been undeniable. Everything I’ve been working toward over the last few years now has a place and purpose in this space.”

An open house will be held on May 10. Drop-in classes are \$25, with a free first class available with the code “FIRST.” A two-week trial is \$40 and includes a consultation. Unlimited monthly memberships are available at a founder’s rate of \$108.

For more information, call 404-913-2793 or visit ManyPathsWellness.com. Many Paths Wellness is located at 27 Oak Street in Roswell.



Alive! Expo at 20

Still Nurturing Wellness and Wisdom in Atlanta

by Diane Eaton

Disclosure: Natural Awakenings is and has been a sponsor of Alive! Expo for several years.

In 2005, Patrycja Towns felt that the Atlanta community was being kept in the dark.

The founder of Alive! Expo, a weekend-long consumer health and wellness show now in its 20th year, had seven years' experience in the natural products industry, working for natural supplements and body care shops and serving as director of retail sales for *Better Nutrition* magazine. She had been absorbing a lot of valuable information about health and wellness at trade shows, symposiums and educational lectures—information that most consumers weren't exposed to. Those insights had transformed her thinking about what she was consuming every day.

At the time, Whole Foods was not a household name, Sprouts Market had yet to open its first brick-and-mortar shop, and big chain grocery stores wouldn't even think of labeling dedicated sections of their stores "Organic." There were only a few independent health food stores throughout metro Atlanta. "There wasn't even the Vitamin Shoppe," says Towns. The only people buying natural products were, in her words, "the hippies and the crunchy people ... the people that had already been living the lifestyle for years."

She saw a valuable need and decided to fill it. "That is why I launched the show. I was so passionate about the industry, and I was learning so much, and I wanted to help pass



Patrycja Towns

that education to consumers" so they could make more informed choices, says Towns.

Towns launched Alive! Expo that year with the help of a business partner, who she bought out a year later. The first event drew an impressive attendance of 1,500 people. Still, it seemed to Towns that Atlanta wasn't quite ready for it at the time. The industry was so new to the general public. "They didn't know what it was. There was no awareness ... They didn't [recognize] the value of healthy living yet."

But, thanks to Town's marketing savvy and tireless efforts, the public soon caught on. She steadily built the event, year after year, eventually attracting more than 20,000 at-

tendees during the show's peak in 2015 and 2016. Its growth was bolstered significantly by partnerships with major TV outlets, including NBC, CBS, Publix and Spectrum Organics, which Towns had forged.

But then, corporate sponsors started backing out. The reason? According to Towns, corporate restructuring pressured stations to prioritize pharmaceutical advertising dollars instead of local partnerships with the wellness industry or health-and-wellness events. As a result, attendance dropped by nearly 50 percent the following year and fell further in subsequent years. Attendance in 2025's Alive! Expo is expected to be similar to last year's—around 3,000.

The Industry Evolves

In two decades, the natural products industry has changed a lot—and mostly in ways that don't support independent wellness entrepreneurs. "The majority of the companies in the natural products industry that have always participated with us ... are no longer owned independently." They've been bought out by multinationals like Procter and Gamble, Colgate and Clorox. As a rule, corporations that size simply don't participate in small health and wellness events; they only sponsor events that draw huge crowds, like marathons, sporting events and music concerts.

Still, the wellness market has grown significantly. These days, almost 20 percent of Americans buy natural food products, whether from dedicated health food stores or from big box stores and national grocery

store chains. That's up from 9 percent 15 years ago. Towns says the biggest growth in the industry has been in the food segment "because everybody has to eat." The highest percentage of converts were made up of new moms, according to *Natural Foods Merchandiser* magazine. More people are getting diagnosed with celiac disease or are gluten-intolerant, so they often

pivot to a healthier lifestyle. Another large group choosing natural foods and wellness products are people who discover they have cancer and they're willing to do more to improve their chances of beating the disease. Millennials and Gen Zers are more likely to prioritize health and wellness than previous generations as well, according to studies by the Food Information Council.

Then COVID Happened

Towns acknowledges that Alive! Expo is facing headwinds—not just from shifting industry alliances but from economic pressures and changes in consumer behavior post-COVID. The COVID pandemic "almost put a nail in the coffin" of consumer attendance, says Towns. Ever since then, the entire industry of indoor events has shriveled, she says, since more people are hesitant to attend public events held indoors.

And the threat of fallout from today's volatile global economy hurts the industry as well since countless ingredients of natural products are imported from overseas, and tariffs could impede or prevent access to them. Towns also points out that, typically, when companies are feeling the financial squeeze of a down economy, marketing and events are the first expenses to be cut. And that can further shrink the pond of companies that can bring their wellness products and services to events.



Matthew Hill

enthusiasts who want to learn about natural, functional and integrative medicine," says Dr. Gez Agolli, the company's co-founder and managing director. "It's always rewarding to have a conversation with someone who's suffering ... to give them some hope and to help them," he says.

"I think people need some kind of community to come together to share and inspire each other and hopefully galvanize a movement into natural health," says Agolli. "We're helping Atlantans rethink their health."

"It's now so commonplace to feel unheard and be frustrated trying to navigate the world of inquiries as opposed to having somebody that you can just talk to," says Matthew Hill, a marketing and services consultant with Virtual Imaging, Inc., which provides early detection services through non-invasive, low dose CT scans at two locations in the Atlanta area.

"Alive! gives people a way to grab the reins themselves and really drill deep into the reality of how easy it is to control their own health ... A lot of the processed foods in grocery stores that are marketed as healthy are just terrible," he says, "and people just watch a commercial and go, 'Well, it must be healthy.' ... We need shows like this to remove the blinders."

Hill says Virtual Imaging gets to talk to 30 to 40 percent of Alive Expo's attend-

Vendors Thrive

Still, vendors and participants alike continue to thrive at the Alive! Expo. Progressive Medical Center, an integrative functional medicine wellness center in Dunwoody, has been an avid sponsor of Alive! Expo almost every year since its launch in 2005. "We like it because it gives us an opportunity to educate up-and-coming health

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ees. “It gives people who haven’t pulled the trigger yet an opportunity to talk one-on-one and get in-depth information.” Many of them ultimately schedule a screening with the company, he says.

Expanding the Mission

These days, it seems that when the going gets tough, the tough *adapt*. For the previ-

ous 19 years Alive! Expo was strictly aimed at bringing information, products and services pertaining to natural and “green” products and eco-friendly services. But for the 2025 event, Towns has expanded the mission to embrace all things related to health, wellness and wholesome lifestyle in order to broaden its reach and impact. As a result, a wider circle of health and wellness

professionals—from functional doctors to holistic lifestyle brands—will be on hand to teach and inform.

The changes extend to ticketing. For the first time, the show is offering free general admission with a downloaded advance ticket. At the door, tickets cost \$10 per adult per day.

The Future Has Yet to Be Written

Towns is uncertain about the future of Alive! Expo. “I would love to continue this event for the next 20 years,” she says. “But I honestly truly have no idea what our survival rate is with the change in the economy and industry.” The expo has focused on “mom and pop” vendors, she says, but they, too, face uncertainty these days.

Still, the need is clear, and Towns is dedicated to getting information out to the public. She worries about a future where natural products only come from a few conglomerates—and most buyers aren’t aware of the changes made to products behind the scenes. “I would never ever buy a [popular lip balm brand] now,” she said. “Even though... it still lists the same ingredients... They are just not the same quality ingredients.”

“Do your due diligence,” she says. “Read the labels. Do your research,” she implores.

For participants, the Alive! Expo isn’t just a shopping trip—it’s a rare opportunity to learn, connect and expand your options in a space designed for exploration and empowerment. “It’s a fantastic community of like-minded, positive, proactive, healthy people, with just a myriad of products and opportunities to really take control of your health and be the person that your future self would be proud of,” says Hill. 🙏

Alive! Expo 2025 will take place May 31 and June 1 at Gas South Convention Center, located at 6400 Sugarloaf Parkway in Duluth. To acquire free tickets prior to day of show, please see the Alive! Expo ad on the inside cover.

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AFOCUSED ADVERTISING SECTION

Healthy Cravings

Snacking for Hormonal Harmony

by Maya Whitman



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We have all experienced that irresistible craving for a crunchy, salty or sweet snack, propelling us to grab a bag of chips or dip into the cookie jar. While these treats might temporarily lift our mood and energy, they can wreak havoc on our hormones. Ultra-processed food (UPF) has gained significant attention for hormonal disruptions, especially in women. A study published last year in *Frontiers in Nutrition* noted that adolescent girls were also particularly susceptible to hormonal imbalances when their diet was high in UPF.

Snack favorites such as potato chips or cupcakes are not the only culprits. A 2021 French study published in the *Journal of Nutrition* reported that UPF accounted for 37 percent or more of the energy intake for vegetarians and vegans, mainly due to

meat and dairy substitutes. Individuals transitioning to a non-meat diet tended to consume more ultra-processed meat substitutes and packaged foods compared to those that had long been vegetarian or vegan. Interestingly, the study also determined that non-meat eaters tended to consume more unprocessed foods and fewer fatty and sweet foods.

It is never too early or too late to make small, daily changes that can positively impact our well-being. “The real magic happens when we choose nourishment over numbness, when we eat in a way that sustains us, not just in the moment, but in the long run,” says Laura Peischl, a menopause health coach and hormone specialist with certifications in functional medicine and integrative nutrition.

Decoding Cravings

Understanding the reasons behind our cravings can empower us to make healthier choices for our bodies. “Cravings for salty foods can signal cortisol imbalances, adrenal fatigue or mineral deficiencies,” explains Holly DeLong, a registered dietitian nutritionist specializing in functional medicine and founder of Food & Mood. “Cravings for sweets can stem from blood sugar imbalances, high cortisol levels and even low serotonin, our feel-good neurotransmitter. Cravings for crunchy foods can be associated with repressed anger, iron deficiency or insufficient fiber in the diet.”

Hormonal imbalances can have far-reaching effects beyond estrogen and progesterone. Mindy Pelz, a women’s health specialist and the author of *Eat Like a Girl*, sheds light on the bigger picture. “If your adrenals become burned out from constantly making cortisol, your body will also have trouble regulating estrogen and progesterone. That affects your sleep cycle and messes with melatonin, which changes your hunger levels through ghrelin and leptin. Basically, a single hormone imbalance can start a chain reaction that ends up sabotaging your overall well-being.”

Peischl, the author of *Feel Good Menopause: The Essential Guide to Nutrition and Wellness*, as well as the facilitator of a menopause support group on Facebook, reminds us that eating carb-heavy snacks without protein or fat can cause blood sugar spikes leading to a surge in insulin and cortisol, followed by a crash that leaves us feeling tired, irritable and craving more sugar. In times of stress, the synergy of protein, fiber and healthy fat is important for maintaining systemic balance. Opt for an unsweetened yogurt parfait topped with cacao nibs and berries, or an easy-to-make almond butter energy ball as mindful and delicious choices.

For women challenged by infertility, irregular periods, premenstrual syndrome and post birth control syndrome, seed cycling is a growing trend that involves consuming flax and pumpkin seeds during the first half of the menstrual cycle and sunflower and sesame seeds during the second half to promote a healthy balance of estrogen and

progesterone levels. These seeds are rich in essential fatty acids and dietary zinc. Additional research is needed to substantiate the efficacy of this practice.

Picking Proteins, Ditching Sugar

Healthy proteins found in lean meats, organic soy, whey, unsalted nuts, nut butters, quinoa and nutritional yeast support a healthy gut microbiome, which plays a vital role in balanced hormones, insulin regulation and satiety. “Having protein alongside carbs also slows your absorption of carbohydrates, preventing craving-inducing blood sugar spikes,” explains Pelz. She also notes that protein contains the raw materials to build essential hormones, including tryptophan and tyrosine, the latter being a direct precursor to thyroid hormones. Pelz recommends grass-fed beef, wild salmon, tofu and quinoa as her preferred protein sources.

The sugar habit can incite higher insulin levels, causing insulin resistance, which increases the risk of polycystic ovary syndrome, Type 2 diabetes and fatty liver disease. To overcome a sweet tooth, Pelz suggests taking a two-week sugar sabbatical (including maple syrup and honey) and replacing it with monk fruit, stevia or erythritol. For sweet treats, she prefers fiber-rich apples, kiwis and oranges.

According to Peischl, nuts, seeds, Greek yogurt and avocados can stabilize blood sugar and support neurotransmitter production. Sweet potatoes and lentils offer high-quality, complex carbohydrates and fiber. Noting that the liver plays a crucial role in processing and detoxifying excess hormones, she recommends a small smoothie with berries, flaxseeds and a teaspoon of spirulina for liver support.

DeLong proposes snacking on blood sugar-friendly chia seed pudding with berries, apples with yogurt and peanut butter dip, veggies and hummus, or whole grain crackers with guacamole. She also advises controlling portions. “Taking your time when eating anything and staying present and mindful can help prevent snacks from turning into meals,” she counsels. 🍏

Maya Whitman is a regular contributor to Natural Awakenings.

CHIA PROTEIN BARS

YIELD: 12 BARS

1½ cup pitted dates, packed
½ cup almond butter
1 tsp vanilla extract
¼ tsp kosher salt
1 cup raw walnut pieces
½ cup chia seeds
½ cup hemp seeds
½ cup unsweetened, shredded coconut
½ cup non-dairy dark chocolate, chopped
⅓ cup raw cacao powder

Line a 9-by-9-inch baking pan with parchment paper.

In a food processor, pulse the dates until a thick paste forms. Add the almond butter, vanilla and salt and pulse again until thoroughly combined. Add the walnuts, chia seeds, hemp seeds, coconut, chocolate and cacao powder and pulse until thoroughly incorporated.



nata_vkusidey from Getty Images/CanvaPro

Using a spatula, press the mixture evenly into the prepared baking pan and freeze overnight.

Remove the pan from the freezer and cut the mixture into 12 bars. Place the bars in an airtight container and refrigerate for up to a week or freeze for up to three months.

Recipe from *Eat Like a Girl* courtesy of Dr. Mindy Pelz.

PUMPKIN CHIA PUDDING

YIELD: 1 SERVING

1 cup low-fat Greek yogurt
2 Tbsp chia seeds
1 tsp vanilla extract
¼ cup pumpkin puree
1 Tbsp chopped pecans

In a bowl, combine the Greek yogurt, chia seeds and vanilla extract. Cover with a lid and refrigerate for at least two hours or overnight.

In a glass, layer the ingredients, starting with ½ cup of chia pudding, followed by ¼ cup of pumpkin puree, ¼ cup chia pudding, ¼ cup of pumpkin puree and ¼ cup of chia pudding. Top with chopped pecans.

Recipe courtesy of Holly DeLong.



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Women in Bloom

Balancing Hormones for Optimal Well-Being

by Carrie Jackson



Imágenes de Hector Pertuz/CanvaPro

Hormone fluctuations are a natural part of every woman’s life. When balanced, hormones help regulate body functions, transmit vital messages through the bloodstream and provide essential tools during childbearing stages. However, a disruption in this balance can lead to a range of physical, mental and emotional symptoms, causing women to feel overwhelmed and uncentered. Fortunately, lifestyle changes, professional guidance and emotional support can help women achieve hormonal balance, manage their symptoms and embrace each stage of life with confidence and self-assurance.

Understanding the Hormonal Stages

Lorraine Maita, a New Jersey-based functional and integrative doctor specializing in bioidentical hormone replacement therapy and founder of The Feel Good Again Institute, categorizes a woman’s hormonal stages as puberty, postpartum, perimenopause and

postmenopause. “Each stage has its own unique characteristics and symptoms that women should be aware of,” she declares. “Because hormones affect mood, weight and energy, women must be prepared to balance their hormones as they ride these waves.”

Hormones surge during puberty and decline during perimenopause, and both phases have similar symptoms. “During these stages, it’s easy to make estrogen, but not easy to ovulate,” Maita says. “Your body is experiencing estrogen dominance, which can cause a number of symptoms including anxiety, irritability, impatience, insomnia, growth of the breasts, tender breasts, growth of the uterine lining, mood swings, spotting, and heavy, skipped or irregular periods.”

She explains that progesterone is needed to balance the symptoms of estrogen dominance. “Estrogen is the hormone of energy and growth, and progesterone is the hormone of peace and calm. Whether estrogen is high, normal or low, if you don’t have

enough progesterone to balance it, you may have some or all of these symptoms.”

In the postpartum stage, hormone levels that were high during pregnancy decrease significantly after giving birth. “A lot of women get postpartum depression after they have a baby,” Maita points out. “Prolactin levels increase while they’re breastfeeding and shift hormone balance, which can leave women feeling drained and anxious. Maternal demands, social isolation and general stress on the body can also contribute to depression.”

In menopause, both estrogen and progesterone levels drop, leading to a permanent cessation of the menstrual cycle and infertility. “Menopause can trigger a number of physical and emotional changes,” Maita remarks. “Women typically feel tired and irritable, gain weight, have trouble sleeping, struggle with poor memory and experience vaginal dryness. Some people can get neurological symptoms such as creepy crawly feelings. The microbiome changes, which can cause gas and bloating. A number of women experience depression and anxiety.”

Regaining Balance

Although hormonal changes can feel overwhelming, Maita believes that women can regain control by adopting a combination of lifestyle modifications and seeking medical guidance.

“Eating a fiber-rich diet keeps your bowels moving, flushes out toxins and helps to remove excess estrogen,” she explains. “If you’re not moving your bowels, you’re sitting on toxic waste that will get reabsorbed into the system. I recommend loading up on cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, kale, radishes and Brussels sprouts.”

Maita advises against exposure to pesticides, plastics and other chemicals in personal care and cleaning products, noting that these toxic substances mimic estrogen and exacerbate hormone swings. Cleaner alternatives can be found by visiting the Environmental Working Group’s Skin Deep database at EWG.org/skindeep.

Supplements can also help to minimize symptoms of hormone imbalance. Maita emphasizes that while lifestyle modifications should be prioritized, she will incorporate herbs into a patient’s treatment plan. “Chaste berry aids with ovulation in younger people, and black cohosh can help with hot flashes and mood. Magnesium is beneficial at any stage. It’s relaxing, can relieve muscle tension and headaches, and calms the nervous system. Melatonin is a very good antioxidant that can help with sleep, which is extremely important. Setting a soothing bedtime routine with lower light, while avoiding food and vigorous exercise, will help the body’s natural circadian rhythm,” she says.

Addressing symptoms before they become troublesome can significantly enhance women’s overall well-being. As explained by Anna Cabeca, a Dallas-based, triple-board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist, “Hormone imbalance can happen at any point, and we don’t want to wait for symptoms to cause unnecessary discomfort. Decreasing inflammation, improving insulin sensitivity and supporting healthy detoxification on a regular basis can set us up to better manage changes when they do occur.”

Stress, environmental factors and ovarian decline can contribute to hormone imbalances. Cabeca advises that managing cortisol levels by increasing oxytocin is a crucial starting point. “If you’re just addressing the reproductive hormones and not looking higher up, you have a problem,” she says. “In the hierarchy of hormones, oxytocin is the most powerful. It’s a regenerative hormone that alkalizes the body, where cortisol is acidifying. Oxytocin is the hormone of longevity and has been shown to improve the immune system and increase muscle cell regeneration.”

Increasing oxytocin is more potent and effective than decreasing cortisol. Cabeca recommends a shift in perspective toward positivity rather than negativity, saying, “I encourage patients to do things that give them a spiritual lift and reflect on what playtime looks like for them. Getting



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out in nature, laughing, kissing, positive touch, playing with pets and spending time with good company and community can all boost oxytocin and produce those feel-good chemicals.”

Alleviating Emotional Effects

While physical fluctuations may be the most noticeable, hormonal changes can also impact a woman’s mental and emotional well-being. According to Amy Wasserman, a psychiatric advanced practice nurse at Flourish Counseling & Wellness, in Chicago, “Variability in hormones plays a role in the synthesis of neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine and GABA [gamma-aminobutyric acid]. So, when there are hormonal fluctuations, we are more likely to experience cognitive effects, which can manifest with various symptoms, including increased anxiety, sleep disturbances, panic attacks, irritability, sensitivity, depressed mood, low self-esteem, intrusive thinking and even suicidal ideation.”

Observing symptoms is a crucial first step to reducing their impact. Wasserman suggests journaling about patterns of physical and cognitive effects to enhance awareness of specific triggers. “Ask yourself, ‘What are the lifestyle or behavioral things I can modify to improve how I am feeling? What are techniques that have worked in the past?’” she proposes. “Physical movement, stretching and weight-bearing exercises are all essential for managing symptoms, particularly during the midlife transition when estrogen levels decline. Self-care is not just an option, but a necessity to ensure balanced mental health.”

Women can also find support and a sense of community by reaching out to others, which can often be free or low-cost. The Menopause Society recommends that employers provide support to perimenopausal women by providing more flexible work hours and forming affinity groups to foster more open communication among colleagues. “Support groups can provide a sense of normalcy and validation,” says Wasserman. “Participants often feel more hopeful about the future as they hear stories of resilience, receive positive feedback and learn first-hand about various treatment options. The International Association for Premenstrual Disorders offers free support groups, and Postpartum Support International offers more than 50 free virtual support groups throughout the month.”

There is no shame in asking for professional help to manage disruptive mental health symptoms. “Therapy has been

Continued on page 38



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Healing Ways



Ask a Health Coach with Hope Knosher



What Wellness Practices Are Best for Aging Gracefully?

Aging gracefully is a multi-faceted journey that encompasses physical health, mental well-being and social engagement. For those aged 50 and over, adopting certain wellness practices can significantly enhance quality of life and promote longevity. Below are evidence-based strategies, real-life examples and insights into how a health and wellness coach can facilitate these goals.

Embrace a Nutrient-Rich Diet

Transitioning to a diet abundant in organic proteins, fruits and vegetables can profoundly impact health. A balanced diet is a cornerstone of good health, but the quality of protein sources matters just as much as the quantity. Organic grass-fed animal proteins and organic plant proteins offer numerous health benefits, supporting everything from muscle maintenance to heart health.

Protein is essential for muscle repair, immune function and hormone production. However, not all proteins are created equal. Conventionally raised animal products may contain hormones, antibiotics and pesticide residues from feed, while non-organic plant proteins can be exposed to harmful chemicals. Choosing organic,

clean protein sources ensures better nutrition and fewer toxins in your diet.

According to registered dietitian Heidi Moretti, MS, RD, "This is because grass-fed beef contains more nutrients, antioxidants and healthy fatty acids, may decrease inflammation, and is much better for the environment and ecosystem than conventionally raised cows. Additionally, 100% grass-fed beef contains compounds that help maintain and build muscles more so than any other kind of food."

Research indicates that incorporating these proteins can decrease the risk of chronic diseases and support healthy aging, according to EatingWell.

Example: Margaret, 62, began integrating more grass-fed meats and organic plant proteins in her meals. Over time, she noticed increased energy levels and improved digestion.

Engage in Regular Physical Activity

As we age, consistent physical activity is crucial for maintaining mobility, muscle mass and mental health. According to NORC at the University of Chicago, "The majority of older adults are staying active.

Around half (54%) report getting moderate to vigorous physical activity at least weekly. Only a third (34%) work out less than once a week, and just 12% never get moderate to vigorous physical activity."

Activities such as walking, dancing, yoga and strength training are particularly beneficial for older adults. These exercises help retain independence and contribute to longevity. Engaging in activities like yoga and dancing, which provide a social connection, increases the benefit even more!

Example: Robert, 70, incorporated daily walks and light weightlifting into his routine. He experienced improved balance and strength, allowing him to continue participating in his favorite hobbies.

Prioritize Quality Sleep

Adequate sleep is essential for cognitive function, mood regulation and overall health. Focusing on sleep quality can significantly impact well-being.

Example: Linda, 58, established a calming bedtime routine, including reading and limiting screen time. This practice led to more restful nights and increased daytime alertness.

Cultivate Lifelong Learning
Engaging in continuous learning keeps the mind sharp and enhances cognitive reserve. Activities such as learning new skills or hobbies can promote brain health and provide a sense of accomplishment.

Example: James, 65, took up learning the guitar, a lifelong dream. This new skill not only brought him joy but also challenged his brain, contributing to cognitive vitality.

Foster Social Connections
Maintaining strong social ties is linked to better mental health and longevity. Participating in community events, joining clubs or volunteering can provide meaningful interactions and a sense of purpose.

Example: Eleanor, 68, joined a local book club, which expanded her social circle and provided stimulating discussions, enriching her social and intellectual life.

Practice Mindfulness and Stress Management
Incorporating mindfulness practices, such as meditation and yoga, can reduce stress and enhance emotional well-being. These practices promote inner peace and are recognized as important tools for healthy aging.

Example: George, 72, began attending mindfulness meditation sessions, which helped him manage anxiety and improved his overall sense of well-being.

Work With a Health and Wellness Coach
A health and wellness coach can be instrumental in guiding aging adults toward these wellness practices by offering personalized support and accountability. They assist in setting realistic goals, developing tailored action plans and providing motivation to maintain healthy behaviors. Coaches address various aspects of well-being, including physical health, mental wellness and social connections, empowering individuals to navigate the challenges of aging with confidence and vitality.

Example: After working with a health coach, Susan, 66, developed a balanced exercise regimen and adopted healthier eating habits. The personalized guidance she received helped her stay committed to her goals, leading to improved health markers and increased energy.

By embracing these strategies, many find that they're not just adding years to their life; they're adding life to their years. 🌱

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

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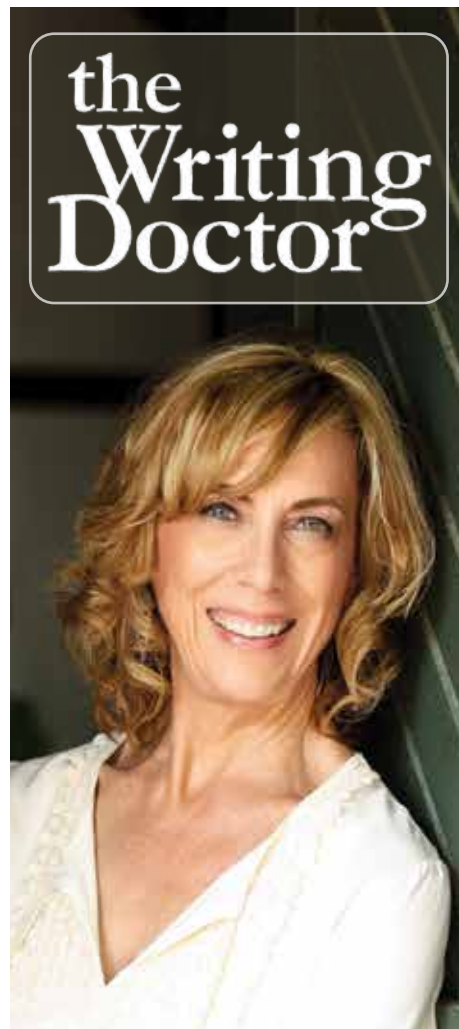
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Healing Ways —————  —————

Inside Atlanta Healing Centers

One Approach to Integrated Wellness

by Noah Chen



Ranesa House of Wellness in Buckhead

Across Atlanta, more and more businesses are offering healing services under one roof. While standardized industry terminology doesn't exist, "wellness centers" and "healing centers" are terms that have been applied to them. It's common to find acupuncturists, energy workers, coaches, yoga teachers and more at such places. And while each one offers something different, all of them aim to support mind, body and spirit.

What is a Healing Center?

For the purposes of this article, we're calling "healing centers" those businesses that offer at least five different services. Specifically, they offer at least two services that focus on emotional or spiritual health, and the rest focus on physical care. Their focus is on addressing the full spectrum of health. People go to healing centers

for grief support, clarity, and emotional grounding, as well as treatments targeting the physical body, such as chiropractic, acupuncture or reflexology. Of course, the lines between physical and emotional care can often blur, and that's one of the advantages of going somewhere that offers a variety of modalities. In healing centers, emotional and spiritual wellness can take center stage, along with physical health.

To support a variety of modalities, many healing centers adopt a similar business structure; the business owner typically leases space to a group of independent practitioners. Depending on the center, the practitioners might co-lease spaces with others in their field; for example, two massage therapists might co-lease a massage room. Most healing center owners carefully choose who they lease

to, cultivating a group of practitioners who complement each other's services.

However, not every center rents out its rooms. Mayuri Sobti, owner of Ranesa House of Wellness, pays the rent on the space herself. She does so out of the philosophy that "true wellness care is offered in a space that puts the client's needs first."

Sobti says she puts a lot of time into carefully sourcing and vetting the practitioners at Ranesa. Her goal is to create a collaborative team that puts forth a "coordinated effort to help the individual get to wholeness. This cannot be achieved when you rent the rooms to individual practitioners because then the focus is on paying the rent, maximizing income, and not collaborating."

While the practitioners on her team are not employees, the center offers patients and clients centralized appointment and payment services. With lease-oriented healing centers, on the other hand, clients deal directly with each individual practitioner.

What Brings People In?

Clients visit healing centers for all kinds of reasons. Many arrive with a specific goal in mind, like stress reduction, trauma recovery or support for a chronic illness. Sometimes, people come to healing centers because they have a certain problem, but they don't know the solution. Sobti recalls a client "who was diagnosed with



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oral cancer, and she said, 'Okay, I'm getting all the medical treatments. But is there anything else I can do?'"

In another case, a family brought in a child who had been diagnosed with Epstein-Barr virus and wanted to explore all possible forms of care. Overall, Sobti estimated that 25 percent of her new clients require some sort of consultation to find the best modality to suit their situation. The rest, she says, book directly with practitioners through Ranesa House's website.

Valerie Hudgins, owner of The Wellness Emporium in Woodstock, says clients often know what modality they're looking for when they reach out. On the other hand, folks with a more general curiosity show up at the center's frequent open houses and learn more about what's offered there. These social events also serve as a great way to introduce clients to new forms of healthcare.

Clients' ability to work with different practitioners and the ability of the practitioners to coordinate wellness efforts are two of the primary benefits of the center model, according to Sobti. "Because, if I went one place for massage, and then I drove to the other end of town for acupuncture, and then I saw a functional nutritionist somewhere else, nobody would know what the other person is doing," she says.

"From the healing point of view, it's very cohesive. It's very effective."

However, many come to Ranesa House and other healing centers like it because they started with one specific practitioner. Clients might end up trying other practitioners as well, either because they're drawn by curiosity fostered by the shared center space or by a referral.

Cultivating Community

Healing centers often nurture a sense of community. On the practitioner side, it comes naturally from sharing a space and working alongside other practitioners. For the clients, it manifests in their relationship with the practitioners, the welcoming atmosphere and the group classes and events that many centers offer.

Hudgins describes the Wellness Emporium as a place where practitioners and clients alike can feel connected. "We're all kind of a community here," she says. She also hosts community events, including meditation circles and art classes, and is currently developing a community garden.

While practitioners at the center operate independently, Hudgins explains that they actively support one another's work. "We all refer [clients] to each other, and we ... use each other's services." She says that a hypnotherapy client coming to her for weight loss, for example, might also be recommended to the center's nutritionist.

Becky Arrington, co-owner of The Well of Roswell with Donna Futrell, says her business is similarly focused. Alongside the

hypnotherapists, relationship counselors and polarity therapists, The Well also offers classes on topics such as reiki and astrology. Arrington makes sure to keep these accessible to newcomers, saying she and Futrell are "bringing the metaphysical to the mainstream." By emphasizing accessibility, variety and personal wellness, Arrington explains that one of the "things we're trying to do is really establish a community here, where people feel comfortable, they feel welcome and it's all about their well-being."

This desire to create communal and social experiences has led Arrington to host an "ancestral awakening tour" of Egypt, a place where she says many people have spiritual initiations or awakenings. For Arrington, this aligns with The Well's philosophy on holistic health.

Supporting the Whole Person

Crystal Joy first came to The Well of Roswell for hypnotherapy sessions with Arrington; she had been her private customer before the center opened. In 2023, Joy was diagnosed with breast cancer and decided to integrate conventional treatment with natural approaches. Over time, she explored other services at the center, including sound healing, breathwork and akashic record readings.

"Number one, I'm going to go to the doctor, and I'm going to do what they say. But I'm also going to go to everyone that I know that has an alternative healing method, and I'm going to do that too . . . And I'm happy to say that's worked out well for me." Joy participated in a cancer recovery group at The Well, saying she was "also doing the emotional work. Because, as we all know, there are emotional aspects to getting sick." Her story isn't unique. Many clients don't just visit healing centers for support with health conditions; they seek out career guidance or spiritual insight or simply want to relax and recharge. Tracy Rud found The Wellness Emporium through a friend and stayed for the atmosphere. "And for me personally, I'm kind of on my own spiritual journey. So this is a perfect place

for me to learn and experience new things," says Rud.

Healing centers are not one-size-fits-all outfits. Some focus more on physical support; others lean spiritual. Their visual design can vary as well. Ranesa House of Wellness, for instance, has a minimalist, modern feel, while Hudgins designed The Wellness Emporium to embody a cozy, vintage aesthetic. But what they tend to have in common is a mix of services, a culture of collaboration and a desire to support the whole person, mind, body and spirit.

"Wellness centers with authentic wellness care—traditional forms of wellness care—are very, very important because that is where people heal," says Sobti. "I believe that wellness centers are really the medical care of the future." 🌿

For more information:
Ranesa House of Wellness, RanesaWellness.com, 404-941-9544.

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770-778-2051.



Noah Chen is a writer and journalist who covers health, culture and media. He splits his time between New York City and Atlanta. He's probably working out of a coffee shop right now.

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Healing Center Directory

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1549 Clairmont Rd. #105| Decatur
AdvancedWellnessAtl.com
Info@AdvancedWellnessAtl.com
404-320-0204
- 2

Alpharetta Wellness Collective
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Decatur Healing Arts
Practitioners: acupuncturist, holistic esthetician, massage therapists, qi-gong/tai chi teacher, reiki master, yoga instructor
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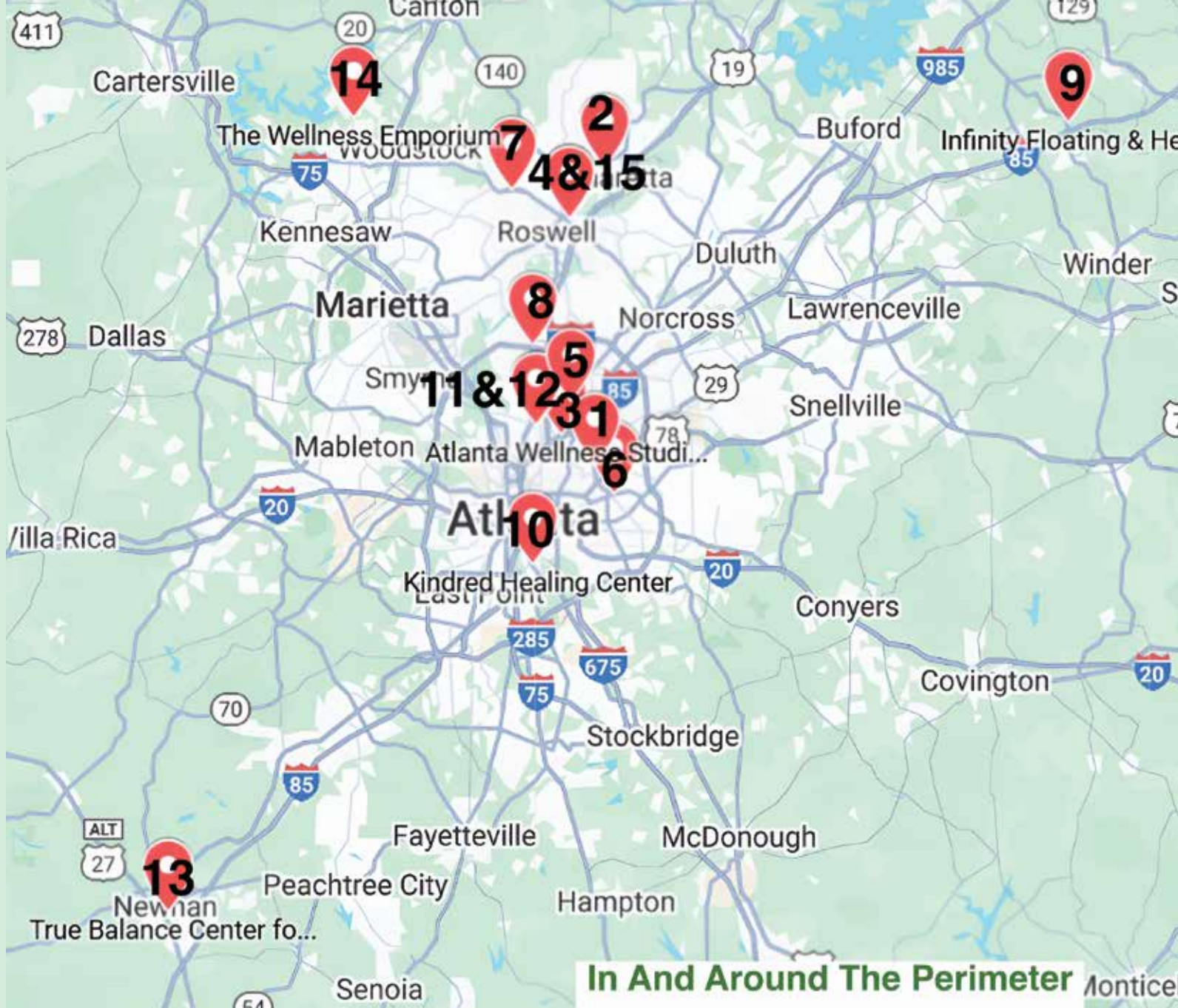
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HealCenterAtlanta.com
Help@HealCenterAtlanta.com
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Info@InfinityFloating.com
706-654-7118
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Kindred Healing Center
Practitioners: astrologist, chiropractor, crystal therapist, herbalist, hypnotherapist, life coach, massage therapist, psychic, rain drop therapist, reiki master, sound healer, spiritual reader
1800 Jonesboro Road SE | Atlanta
KindredHealingCenter.com
KindredHealingCenter@gmail.com
470-771-0563
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Ranesa House
Practitioners: acupuncturist, ayurveda, holistic aesthetician, massage therapist, reflexologist, reiki master, wellness practitioner, yoga instructor
3091 E, Shadowlawn Ave | Atlanta
RanesaWellness.com
Care@RanesaHouse.com
404-941-9544
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Sunny DayZ Wellness Center
Practitioners: acupuncturist, chiropractor, herbalist, kinesiologist, massage therapist, nutritionist, yoga instructor
455 East Paces Ferry Rd NE Suite 313 | Atlanta
SunnyDayz.org
FrontDesk@SunnyDayz.org
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True Balance Center for Breath & Bodywork
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678-857-3484
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TheWellnessEmporium.net
ValerieHudgins@gmail.com
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The Well of Roswell
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900 Old Roswell Lakes Parkway Suite 300| Roswell
TheWellOfRoswell.com
TheWellOfRoswell@gmail.com
770-778-2051

Three of Atlanta’s Outstanding Yoga Teachers

by Patricia Schmidt




Mikhail Nilov/Pexels.com

Natural Awakenings recently asked local studio owners and teachers to nominate individuals to be recognized as “outstanding yoga teachers.” We chose to sidestep the “Best Of” polls that are open to anyone and don’t prevent people from voting multiple times since those are essentially popularity contests. Instead, we hope to recognize those who demonstrate that they adapt to the unique mix of students in their classes, that their students feel they learn something in class, and that they honor the tradition and complexity of yoga itself.

After evaluating the responses, we are recognizing Cynthia Pedraza, Dannie Lynch and Amanda Seaman as three of Atlanta’s outstanding yoga teachers. All are dedicated to the student experience above all else, seeking to create safe and spacious studio classes that cultivate deep peace. Driven by their experiences as students, they are in touch with the healing capacity of yoga and have a fervent desire to pass it on to others. Finally, all of them exhibit a deep connection to their communities through the studio life they’ve fostered and through community work with vulnerable and/or underserved populations.

My need for disciples who realise the dangers of the time is great.
I need, also, those who sense My Presence to make known this Promise to their brothers.
All who share the hope that mankind should live in peace together work for Me.
Peace, Sharing and Justice are central to My Teaching.
Wherever the Light of these Truths shines I turn My eye, and through the channel of that
Light do I send My Love.
Thus do I work.
Thus through you do I change the world.

Maitreya, the World Teacher



A Student-Centered Approach
Although our honorees teach different styles of yoga and come from very different training environments, they share a very similar approach to their teaching: it’s not about them. Their students’ experience is paramount. In order to create a healing space for whatever is arising for their students in a given yoga session, they minimize the role of their own egos and concerns.

Cynthia Pedraza teaches hatha yoga at gruvnYoga and PeakZen in Marietta and Naked Mind Yoga and Pilates in Roswell. Originally from Mexico, she’s been teaching in Spanish and English for over 10 years and recently returned to Atlanta after some time in the Pacific Northwest. Pedraza describes herself as a facilitator of the yoga tradition. She feels that by aligning her passion—what inspires *her*—and her purpose—how she inspires *others*—she can facilitate yoga for her students, and the teachings of yoga “come through” her. Pedraza’s three-pronged approach encompasses postures with a purpose and



Cynthia Pedraza



Amanda Seaman

intention, contact with the breath and an underpinning of yoga philosophy.

At the same time, she is flexible. She wants the teaching to feel organic, personal and applicable to daily life. “One of my missions as a teacher is to project these ancestral teachings in a very tangible and easy way,” says Pedraza, “—to understand how we can apply the philosophical concepts of ancestral yoga as moms, as wives, as workers, in any aspect of our life.”

Amanda Seaman is a Montessori teacher turned yoga instructor in North Atlanta; her own yoga service to others is deeply informed by a healing journey and a return to yoga after many years away from it. Seaman’s client-centered focus and her adaptability to her students’ needs show up slightly differently from Pedraza’s.

“I just teach from here,” says Seaman as she points to her chest. “That’s what I think my students enjoy about my classes. I’m really authentic. I tell stories about leaving deli

meat in my purse! I’m just really human—a real person with real stuff going on. Instagram and other social media have skewed what yoga looks like. It’s given people an idea that it’s for people who are very bendy and stretchy and beautiful. The truth of the matter is that this practice is meant for humans, meant for humility, meant for healing.”

Seaman plans what she’s going to teach, but she always checks in with her students, senses the needs arising in the room—both spoken and unspoken—and has the flexibility to teach to those concerns.

Dannie Lynch is a hot yoga teacher at Red Hot Yoga Smyrna and has been teaching yoga for more than 10 years. As a lawyer, she works with vulnerable populations as well, and her life’s work is to bring space and respite to others. Lynch prays for guidance and wisdom before each class she teaches. “It’s just as simple as that,” she says. “I ask God to please give me whatever I need, to help them find whatever they need... The prayer’s not necessarily for them; it’s a reminder for me that it’s not about me. Because ego is real, and it’s gonna sneak up. I tell myself, ‘This is their space. Create the space.’”

The Teacher is Also Always a Student
Pedraza, Seaman and Lynch suggest that their own experiences as students have shaped how they teach; remembering their student-self helps them serve others now, they say. After years away from it, Seaman came back to yoga, seeking healing. She arrived back to the practice with a lot of



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SATURDAY, MAY 10

“Art Therapy” Yoga Class – 6–7:30pm. Beginner-friendly yoga in a gallery setting. Free parking. \$20. Buckhead Art & Company, 286 Buckhead Ave NE. bit.ly/Art-Therapy-Yoga-051025.

Yoga After Dark – 7–8:15pm. Beginner-friendly evening flow with sensual movement, R&B vibes, and wine. Ages 21+. Free parking. \$25. CORE, 133 Sycamore St, Decatur, GA 30030. bit.ly/Yoga-After-Dark-051025.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

Women's Yoga Session – 8:50–10am. Unwind and connect in this supportive weekly yoga class for women. Led by Marquett Burton. Ages 18+. \$1. Free parking. Brookhaven, Atlanta, GA 30319. bit.ly/Womens-Yoga-Session-051425.

THURSDAY, MAY 15

Yoga in the Park – 6–7pm. Outdoor all-levels yoga with Dancing Dogs Yoga, powered by lululemon. Ages 18+. Free. Active Oval, Piedmont Park, Piedmont Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30309. bit.ly/Yoga-In-The-Park-051525.

SATURDAY, MAY 17

Up Early on Main – 9:30–11am. Morning yoga with Infinitum Yoga, coffee, and community vibes. Leashed dogs welcome. Bring a mat. Free. The Fountain on Main, 886 Main St, Forest Park, GA 30297. bit.ly/Up-Early-051725.

The Spark of the Soul: Breath & Sound – 3–5:30pm. Rebirthing breathwork and gongs awaken inner fire and release fear. With Ananda and Gretchen. Vista Yoga, 2836 Lavista Rd, Decatur. \$55 preregistered, \$65 at door. <https://bit.ly/406nWYo>.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21

Meditative Art Class – 11am–2pm. You will embark on a creative journey that combines mindfulness, artistic expression, and the power of sacred geometry. Led by Yuliya Stepanov. \$55. Aum Studio for Wellness, 11550 Web Bridge Way, Alpharetta. bit.ly/aum-studio-events

EARTHSTRONG Vol 3 – 6:30–7:30pm. Community yoga, meditation, and sound healing led by Shelby Adina. Free drink after class. Bring a mat. Free. Ponce City Market, 675 Ponce De Leon Ave NE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Khona-Yoga-EarthStrong-052125.

Align & Unwind: Namaste 2K – 6:30pm. Yoga with 2000s music, best-dressed prize, and free cocktails. BYO mat. \$15. The Works, 1295 Chattahoochee Ave NW, Atlanta, GA 30318. bit.ly/Align-Unwind-Namaste-052125.

THURSDAY, MAY 22

Sacred Mantra Soundbath Atlanta – 7–8:30pm. Heart-opening Sanskrit chanting with classic Indian instruments. Includes vegan dinner. Donation-based. Self Discovery Center, 1315 S Ponce De Leon Ave NE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Sacred-Mantra-Soundbath-052225.

SUNDAY, MAY 25

Gentle Stretching & Breath-Work – 10–11:15am. Korean-style class combining yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, and meditation for mind-body balance. Ages 16+. Free. Body & Brain Yoga, 308 W Ponce de Leon Ave, Decatur. bit.ly/Gentle-Stretching-And-Breath-Work-052525.

MONDAY, MAY 26

Hops & Flow Beer Yoga – 12–2pm. All-levels yoga under the patio, includes one beverage. Held every fourth Sunday. \$16. Free 2-hr parking with validation. Three Taverns Imaginarium, 777 Memorial Dr SE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Hops-And-Beer-Yoga-052625.

TUESDAYS, STARTING MAY 13

Radiant Yoga with Raquel – 7:30–8:30pm. A nurturing practice inviting you to embrace rest, loving kindness and grace; designed to bring balance, peace and radiant energy into your life. \$20. Holistic Health & Wellness, 3372 Canton Rd, Suite 116, Marietta. HolisticHealthse.square.site/events

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worry and stress as well as a new body and perspective after becoming a mom to three boys. “I ended up going to [Korsi Yoga in Roswell] and just kind of surrendered to that space and the teachers, surrendered to the person that I was, to the worry that I was carrying. Surrendered to the practice, really.” She has remained in that community and continues to teach at Korsi partly because of her experience as a student. “I healed in that room and in that community and was embraced there,” she says.



Dannie Lynch

For Lynch, teaching outside of yoga studios has allowed her to bring experiences of peace and rest to people who don't “do yoga.” In her initial experiences of yoga as a middle-aged woman of color, Lynch was able to observe first-hand many of the ways in which Western studio environments excluded bodies and backgrounds like hers. As a result, she wants to provide an inclusive and affirming yoga experience for *all* populations. “I like gym-people finding their peace and rest. I like when they snore; I *love* it. They're used to lifting and grunting and all that, and with yoga, they're finding another space to be able to still get some movement in, but also find some peace.”

By nourishing the student aspect of herself, Pedraza feels she can better connect—“human to human”—with her students. “I think I'm really at the point now of seeing my students through the eyes of humanity. I teach yoga with a [capital] ‘Y.’ [After all,] yoga invites any practice that helps us remember our true essence, which is pure loving awareness. There's no one way. There's many ways to explore that. That, for me, is yoga.”

Serving the Community and Those in Need

All three of our outstanding yoga teachers integrate yogic values and principles into their daily lives and allow the practice to guide them outside of the studio. Specifically, they are deeply involved in community and volunteer work. Seaman, for example, teaches at and does fundraising work with TLC Yoga, a service provider to the unhoused population of Atlanta. “We provide a safe space for the unhoused to rest. We offer a meal, a mobile shower,

medical care and a very gentle yoga practice,” she says. “Connecting on a level of just pure human connection is a really beautiful thing [since] people come in so stressed and broken and worried.”

Similarly, in yoga studio settings and on retreats, Pedraza works to provide safe spaces for women to share their stories and come into community—to feel less stressed, more heard, more seen and less worried. She will also be a key contributor to the first Atlanta Hispanic Yoga Festival, which will be held in September. The Festival is intended to nurture “a community that celebrates identity, fosters connection and empowers each person to thrive.” Its inaugural weekend heralds a new season of inclusivity and accessibility for the Spanish-speaking community in Atlanta.

Lynch, too, volunteers in a meaningful way in the community, serving those coming in and out of City of Refuge, a faith-based crisis center for families in Atlanta. “*That's* why I'm teaching,” says Lynch. “If I can create one hour of space or help someone find what they need internally, then I feel like I might be doing a little bit of what God put me here for.” 🙏



Patricia Schmidt, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, YACEP, is a certified yoga therapist specializing in pelvic health, accessible yoga and yoga for cancer support. She is a Franklin Method trainer, Roll Model method teacher and somatic movement specialist. To learn more, visit PLSYoga.com.





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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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 \$35 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.

Tuesday, May 6

Walk With Us Atlanta – 6-7:30pm. A low-impact fitness walk through Atlanta welcoming all ages and fitness levels. Meet new people and enjoy the city. Free. 2166 Peachtree Rd, Atlanta. bit.ly/Walk-With-Us-Atlanta-050625.

Thursday, May 8

Atlanta Resource Foundation E-Bike Excursion – 9:30am-2pm. A 22-mile e-bike ride through 22 Atlanta neighborhoods for local leaders. Includes lunch and refreshments. Free. Star Metals Office, 1055 Howell Mill Rd, Atlanta. bit.ly/Atlanta-Resource-Foundation-050825.

Friday, May 9

Sound Bath Meditation – 7-8pm. Relax and rejuvenate with a deeply immersive sound experience. Reduce stress, improve sleep, and boost energy. Ages 16+. \$30. Ben Robertson Community Center, 2753 Watts Dr, Kennesaw. 678-385-0165. bit.ly/3XPxWmC.

Introduction to Transmission Meditation – 7:30-9pm. Learn how this group meditation aids personal spiritual growth and serves the world during a time of transformation. Free. Online event. Share International USA. bit.ly/Transmission-Meditation-050825.

Saturday, May 10

ZUM'FIT... – 9:30-10:30am. Dance to hip-hop, Latin, and global beats in this energizing Zumba-style workout at Starr Park. All ages welcome. \$10. 5031 Park Ave, Forest Park. bit.ly/ZumFit-051025.

Mindful Strides: A Community Wellness Walk – 10am-12pm. Kick off Mental Health Awareness Month with a rejuvenating wellness walk on the Silver Comet Trail. Free. Concord Road Trailhead, Smyrna. bit.ly/Mindful-Strides-Community-Wellness-Walk-051025.

MH10 Mental Health Community Gathering – 10am-1pm. Join a morning of connection, movement, games, and smoothies in Piedmont Park to support Mental Health Awareness Month. Free. 1320 Monroe Dr NE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Mental-Health-Community-Gathering-051025.

Food, Fitness & Faith: Community Day of Wellness – 12-5pm. Celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month with fitness, workshops, and healing activities in the park. Bring a yoga mat and dress comfortably. Free. Piedmont Park Oak Hill, Atlanta. bit.ly/Food-Fitness-Health-051025.

Mother's Day Wellness Retreat – 4-7pm. Reconnect through yoga, meditation, and creative reflection in celebration of motherhood. In-person and virtual options available. \$30. Ballethnic Dance Co, 2587 Cheney St, East Point. bit.ly/Mothers-Day-Wellness-Retreat-051025.

Sunday, May 11

Unity Atlanta Church "12 Powers Workshop" – 12:30-2pm. You're invited to explore how you can use your twelve God-given powers to improve your life. Licensed Unity Teacher, Freda Steward, will present the power of UNDERSTANDING in this month's workshop. Feel free to bring a bag lunch. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Sound Bath & Restorative Yoga – 1-3pm. A calming class blending restorative yoga, Reiki, and sound healing for mind-body balance. \$25. Healing Hands Reiki, 27 Waddell St NE, Ste A, Atlanta. bit.ly/Sound-Bath-Restorative-Yoga-051125.

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Thursday, May 8

Full Moon Cacao Ceremony – 7pm-9pm. Mothers and daughters will be especially honored at this sacred full moon cacao ceremony. Receive healing from the energy of the Full Moon and the heart-opening properties of ceremonial cacao. \$75.

Saturday, May 10

Reflexology for Self-Healing – 10am-1pm. In this interactive workshop you will learn the wonderful healing benefits of reflexology, how to map the feet, and techniques to stimulate specific reflex points. Self-care for common health conditions will be taught. \$95.

Thursday, May 15

Mindful Movement & Sound Bath – 6-7:30pm. Experience deep relaxation and healing through mindful breathing and movement while immersing yourself in the healing vibrations of a Sound Bath. Release low vibration feelings and patterns, while settling into a receptive and creative state. \$65.

Saturday, May 17

Red Light Running Society: Run or Walk – 10am-1pm. Weekly meetup for all fitness levels to walk, jog, or run, followed by cooldown and conversation. Free. Red Light Cafe, 553 Amsterdam Ave NE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Red-Light-Running-Society-051725.

2025 Women's Wellness Expo – 12-3pm. Enjoy health screenings, wellness activities, vendors, and raffles hosted by Zeta Alpha Sigma Chapter at Greenbriar Mall. Free. 2841 Greenbriar Pkwy SW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Womens-Wellness-Expo-051725.

Sunday, May 18

Love & Hiking Date For Couples – 1-5pm. A self-guided hike with digital activities to deepen connection and have fun. Donation-based. Elwyn John Wildlife Sanctuary or trail of choice. bit.ly/Hiking-Date-For-Couples-051825.

Thursday, May 22

Mindfulness & Meditation with MilaTheMagician – 6:30-8:30pm. A healing evening of meditation, readings, and connection in nature. Ages under 14 with adult. \$22.22. Shoal Creek Park II, 3643 Glenwood Rd, Decatur. bit.ly/Mindfulness-Meditation-052225.

Healing Sound Bath with Raye Andrews – 7-8 pm. Join Certified Vibrational Sound Therapist, Raye Andrews, for a beautiful symphony of sound. This immersive, full-body listening experience can bring relaxation and a sense of calm to your mind, body and spirit. Suggested love offering \$20-\$40. Held in the Chapel. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Saturday, May 24

Weekly Wellness Walk Club – 9-11am. Celebrate National Self-Care Day with a morning walk on the Atlanta Beltline. Meet inside Krog Street Market near Little Tart. All ages welcome. Free. Atlanta. bit.ly/Weekly-Wellness-Walk-052425.

Coffee & Conversation Women's Edition – 10-11:30am. A monthly social for career-driven women and entrepreneurs to connect, heal, and grow through empowering conversation. Free. C'est La Vie Cafe, 3727 Main St, Atlanta. bit.ly/Coffee-Conversations-052425.

Sunday, May 25

"Spiritual Keys to Aging Well" – 12:30-1:30pm. This monthly discussion group is based on articles from the Unity Village booklet, "Spiritual Keys to Aging Well." Copies of the booklet are available at the event. Facilitated by Elisha Fields. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Monday, May 26

Hot Push Pilates – 7-8:30pm. A fiery fusion of Pilates and strength training designed to energize, empower, and build total-body strength. All ages welcome. \$15. Creatives Rental Space, 1483 Chattahoochee Ave NW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Hot-Push-Pilates-052625.

Wednesday, May 28

Walk & Talk Decatur – 6-7pm. Enjoy a social stroll around Downtown Decatur Square, promoting fitness and connection. All levels welcome. Free. Clarity Fitness, 1 West Court Sq, Ste 100, Decatur. bit.ly/Walk-Talk-Decatur-052825.

Saturday, May 31

Faithful Flow: Graceful Movements with God's Guidance – 10-11:30am. Connect body and spirit through scripture, gentle movement, and meditation in Piedmont Park's North Meadow. All ages welcome. Free. Atlanta. bit.ly/Graceful-Movements-With-Gods-Guidance-053125.

Sunday, June 1

Functional Chiropractic – 8am-4pm. Explore chiropractic techniques and adjustments at Life University with seminars led by experienced doctors. For ages under 18, parent or guardian required. Free. 1269 Barclay Circle, Marietta. bit.ly/Functional-Chiropractic-060125.

Sundays

Practicing the Presence-A Course in Miracles – 8:45-10:30 am. This weekly Zoom study group aims at removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence. Facilitator: Michael Wilkinson. An open and ongoing class. All are welcome. For more info and to receive the zoom link, email: MWilkinson@leadstrat.com. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Online & In-Person Sunday Experience – 9-10:30 am Adult Study; 3pm, Music and Message; 4pm, Food and Fellowship; 5pm, New Thought Education Workshop. Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta, 3107 Clairmont Rd, Ste A, Atlanta. More info: slc-atlanta.org.

Red Clay Sangha Sunday Morning Service – 9am, Sitting/Walking Meditation; 10:30, Morning Service; 10:45am, Dharma Discussion; 11:30am, Closes and Brunch. 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.

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.

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.

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

Unity Atlanta Church Sunday Services – 11am-12pm. May 4 - June 15 Message Series - "Spring into Wholeness." Rev. Jennifer L. Sacks shares messages of Freedom and Renewal to help you model the great wisdom, strength, and love already imprinted within you. Attend in-person or watch via livestream. Youth Sunday School is in-person at 11am for ages 5-18. Nursery service is available 10:30am-12:30pm. 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

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Twin Hearts Meditation – 11am – 12.30 pm. 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 Pranik Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: AtlPranicHealing.com.

Tarot and Mocktails – 1-2.30 pm. 1st Sunday. Designed for experienced and beginner tarot readers. Bring a deck of cards or buy onsite. Enjoy mid-day snack and drink. Learn about tarot and oracle cards. With Holistic Health & Wellness - 3372 Canton Rd Suite 116, Marietta, GA, 30066. 678-471-6587. Holistichealthse.square.site/events

Tuesdays

The Art of Preserving Balance and Vitality Through Movement – 6-7pm. Discover the ancient art of cultivating Chi to enhance well-being. Learn to manage stress, channel emotions, and deepen your connection with life. \$18/class; packages available. Zoom. Efraín Brady, 470-281-8645. PathsToIntegration.com.

Online Meditation Open House – 7-8pm meditation, 8-8:30pm discussion, followed by tea and cookies. 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/Twin-Hearts-Meditation.

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.

Wednesdays

Meditation & Modern Buddhism – 7:00-8:30pm. With Resident Teacher, Gen Kelsang Dechok. Talks, guided meditation, discussion and Q&A. All welcome. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.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.

Thursdays

Beyond Limits Weekly Conscious Dance – Between 8pm in Smyrna and 7pm in Roswell, GA at Awareness Studios. 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.

Saturdays

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

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.

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

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

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

proven to be as effective as medication for treating many mental health conditions. Cognitive behavioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, and acceptance and commitment therapy can all help manage symptoms during reproductive changes. Depending on the individual's history and the nature of their symptoms, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, dialectical behavioral therapy, and exposure and response prevention may also be beneficial," Wasserman says.

Incorporating New Lifestyle Choices
Prioritizing sleep and embracing acceptance can also help ease hormonal transitions. "Restful sleep can significantly enhance mood and allow a woman to cope with changes she may feel she has little control over," says Wasserman. "I encourage patients to practice mindfulness to acknowledge and accept the physical and cognitive changes, surrender to things out of their control and try to welcome peace and self-kindness with messages such as, 'I meet this moment with grace' or 'I choose peace over perfection.'"

Maita notes that mindfulness and gratitude can help shift our overall well-being. "Gratitude has very powerful effects on calming the nervous system, which can help your immune and hormone systems. I love a technique called HeartMath, which is deep belly breathing while focusing on your heart and on someone, a place or something that you are deeply grateful for. We want to be in a calm state to weather these storms," she advises.

Cabeca proposes that these life transitions are natural and serve as catalysts for spiritual growth and renewed purpose. "Instead of menopause, the Japanese use the term *konenki*, which translates to 'second spring.' It's a rebirth, not a disease," she says. "We are energetic bodies, and that energy is best celebrated with grace and humor." 🌱

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

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The Bully In My Brain

by Tommy Housworth



I confess. I am the world’s biggest bully, but only toward one person. That person is, unfortunately, myself. It’s often said that we would never talk to others the way we talk to ourselves, and that is certainly the case for me. Too often, in moments of frustration, phrases like “I’m an idiot!” cascade through my brain. Those little mental monologues add up, and over time, I start to buy into the narrative.

But it’s not just self-deprecation. I often define myself by my negative emotions: “I am anxious,” “I am depressed,” “I am terrified.” The words we use matter (as my wife often reminds me), and these little mental imprints take their toll. It has often been said that we become who we believe we are. Given that, it’s a wonder I have any self-esteem left at all. As The National—my favorite sad dad group—sings, my mind is not my friend.

A few years ago, I was given a transformative tool that has helped me—on good days, at least—learn to reframe my negative thinking. While it hasn’t completely kept the bully at bay, the technique has

helped me become, as Dan Harris would say, “10 percent happier.”

In early 2021, I was midway through a 300-hour mindfulness teacher training program, and one of my instructors—a delightfully grounded gentleman named Jim—shared an approach often used in cognitive therapy, which was a true game changer. The technique is most often called “cognitive defusion.”

The essence of the practice is to first notice when a thought that’s entwined in identity arises: “I am depressed,” “I am anxious,” “I am a failure.” Then, quickly reframe it so the thought isn’t “me.” So, it becomes, “I am *having the thought* that I am anxious.” Ah... Now, it’s just a thought; it’s not “me.” The final step reframes the thinking as: “I am *noticing* I am having the thought that I am anxious,” bringing awareness into the picture.

Awareness. The gift that keeps on giving, if I would just allow it to do so. The night Jim shared that technique, I was buried in stress and grief. COVID was still wreaking havoc on America, and my sister and I had become full-time caregivers for my aging parents. Mom had passed just a few months earlier, and Dad was in his final months. It was... a lot. I spent a lot of time in my head, and, for the most part, my mind was ensnared in negativity bias. This practice began to give me a new perspective of my thoughts, offering an almost aerial-like view of how I was getting stuck.

By no longer *embodying* my worst tendencies, I was able to simply observe the process:

“I am a failure.”
“I am *having the thought* that I am a failure.”
“I am *aware that I am having the thought* that I am a failure.”

Did this technique cure the pain? Not for me, no. But it did reshape the way I view my more difficult thoughts and emotions, and that lessened the pain greatly. I began to see that my thoughts are not “me;” they’re just a passing train. Now, they had permission to come in the front door and exit through the back. The trick, as Shunryu Suzuki wrote, is not to invite the thoughts to stay for tea.

Life would continue to deliver challenges, as it is wont to do. Dad’s passing that spring. My own cancer diagnosis. Helping our kids navigate young adulthood. But now I had something in my back pocket that helped me see my negativity bias for what it was. I could see that whatever I was feeling wasn’t “me.”

These days, when I get mired in life’s hardest moments, I try to bring the gift that Jim shared with me that evening. When I fall short, I try not to beat myself up. After all, I am not a failure. I am simply aware that I am having the thought that I am a failure. That’s how I’m turning my bully into a companion—one thought at a time. 🐼



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

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