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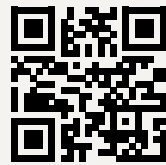
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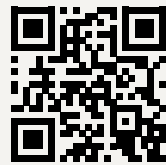
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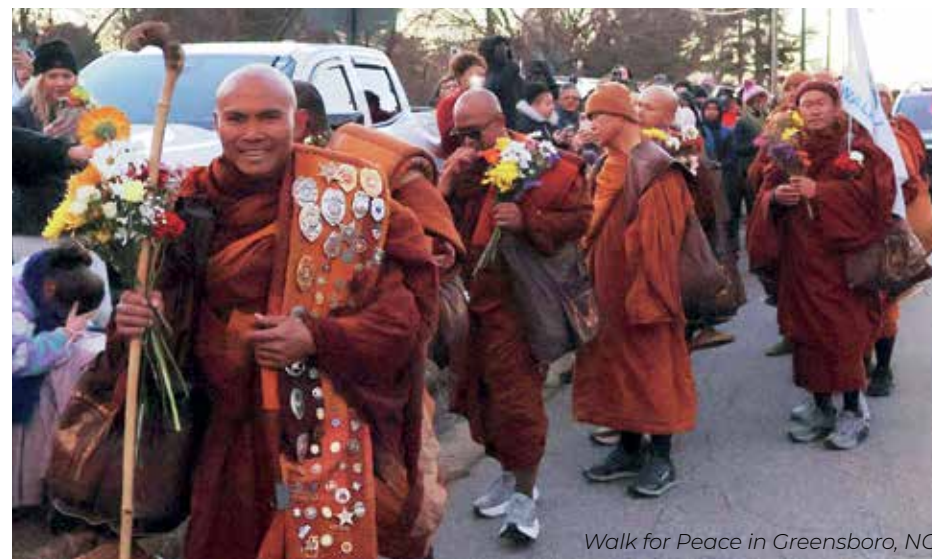
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Today Will Be My Peaceful Day

by Kathy Bochonko

Last month I wrote about the peace-walking monks and the quandary I find myself in believing that love and compassion are the only way forward—yet, needing to fight fire with fire. It is an extremely uncomfortable position for me, and I have yet to find clarity. Atlantan Kathy Bochonko is confronting the same dilemma with more grace and success, and since many Atlantans find themselves in the same boat, I felt it would be beneficial to amplify her words. This is an edited version. Her full blog can be found here: bit.ly/bochonko-0326. —Paul Chen, Publisher



Walk for Peace in Greensboro, NC

Photo: Anonymous via Wikimedia Commons

Today will be my peaceful day.

I have been repeating this line like a mantra ever since I first heard Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara, one of the Buddhist monks on the Walk for Peace, invite people to write it down each morning and look at it throughout the day. At the time I wrote this, their pilgrimage was still underway, moving across the country toward Washington, D.C.

I'm not telling anyone how to feel or what to do. I'm writing from my own lived experience.

I have watched myself catch fire emotionally. Reactive, tight, combustible. Then I come back to this statement. Not by bypassing what I feel, but by returning to my center.

This practice has become a pathway back to what I so often call radical self-trust, the inner knowing that I can be with what is true in the moment without abandoning myself.

And I need that right now. I wrote this the day after Alex Pretti was pepper-sprayed, tackled, and shot and killed in Minneapolis by federal immigration agents.

As I write this, I feel conflicted between what could sound like minimizing the tragedy and what could feel like fueling the emotional flames. I am committed to maintaining my internal peace, and I need to say this plainly. That commitment does not mean I am not angry. It does not mean I am numb. It does not mean I am condoning what is happening. It means I am choosing how I show up. Because when I shine my light into the world, I want it to come from peace and calm, not fear. I want to be more like a candle or a lantern, steady enough to help people see, instead of a pulsing searchlight that makes everyone feel more afraid and on edge.

So I have tried to wait for clarity the way I often do when I am emotional or overwhelmed. But what if clarity does not come in the form I want? What if there is no neat answer that makes this make sense?

Here is what I am realizing: There may not be a clear answer for how to fix any of this. There may not be a perfect sentence that lands on the exact right side of history and also preserves our humanity. And we do not need more people firing off knee-jerk solutions just to discharge emotion.

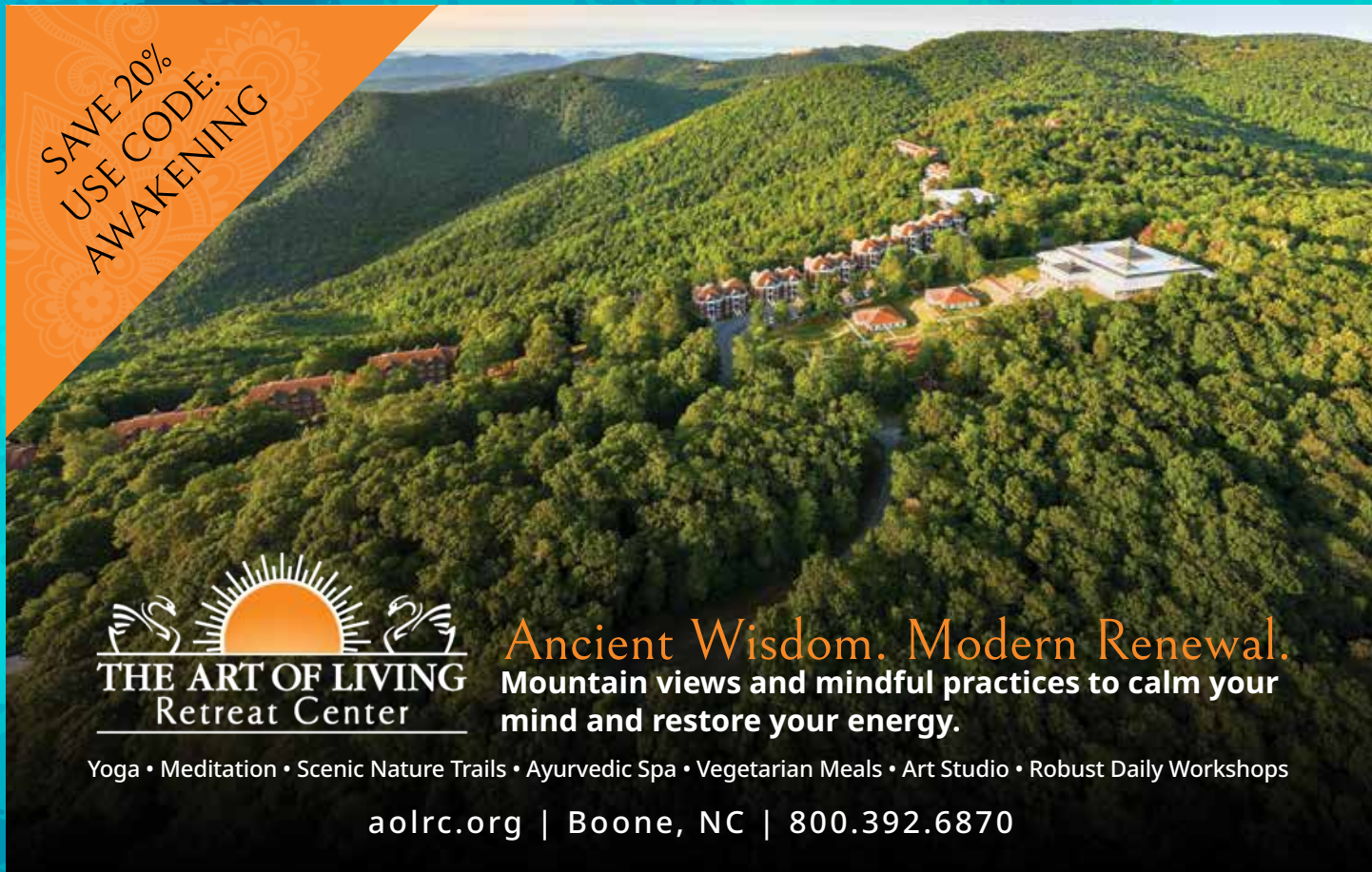
We need more people learning how to be with emotion without becoming emotionally reactive.

Emotions matter. I am not interested in burying them. But I am also seeing how quickly emotional reactivity turns into a kind of mass nervous-system injury. We watch the footage. We absorb the fear. We echo the rage. We repost the grief. We argue with strangers. We sever relationships. And somehow we call that "doing something," even when it is not actually moving anything toward change.

So right now, I am sitting in my anger, my sadness, my frustration, and my helplessness. And today that is enough.

It feels like we are on the Titanic while the band continues to play. They are not in denial. They are not pretending everything is fine. They are doing something else that matters. They are helping the people

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around them stay calm enough to keep moving, to make decisions, to reach for lifeboats. That is what this practice feels like to me.

The systems we know are going down, and the anger at not enough lifeboats is real. Anger at injustice is real. Anger at the systems that created this is real. But anger alone is not going to save us from drowning. Panic does not build lifeboats, and outrage does not calm the nervous system. And if we are not careful, the emotional storm becomes its own kind of sinking.

Everywhere you look, anger is multiplying. I am not here to tell anyone not to be angry. But I am watching what happens when anger consumes someone, when it becomes identity, when it becomes adrenaline, when it becomes the only language they speak without meaningful action underneath it. That kind of constant activation attacks our nervous systems.

Another thing I've learned is that the questions I ask are my superpower. So when I feel the urge to post, react, argue, or "do something" immediately, I first remind myself: Today will be my peaceful day. Then I ask myself questions that help me stay honest and clean:

What am I feeling, specifically? Not "What do I think?" but "What do I feel in my body?"

Can I give myself time to actually feel it before adding to the reactivity already happening in those around me and online?

Do I even know what I want to say? If I do not, would it be more honest to say that?

Is what I am about to share moving us toward the change I want? Or is it adding to the noise and deepening the divide?

In a time when things have become life or death for so many, I understand why people draw hard lines. But where can we find peace inside that kind of thinking? Are we ready to perpetuate war inside our own communities?

We are living in a time with more ability to communicate than any generation before us. Do we really want to use this ability to shout at each other?

I do not have the answers. But I know I won't find answers that are true for me if I abandon myself to the collective emotional storm.

So I am returning to what I can hold. Not as a way to escape what is happening. As a way to stay human inside it. Peace has to begin somewhere. Today, I am choosing to let it begin with me.

Today will be my peaceful day. 🙏



Kathy Bochonko is an Intuitive Human Design Mentor and Guide to Radical Self-Trust. She helps you trust yourself, speak up, set boundaries, and create a life and style that fits. Hosts Real Human Design Stories. KathyBochonko.com

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The Veggie Taste Introduces Vegan Soul Sunday

The Veggie Taste has launched Vegan Soul Sunday, a free monthly event that brings together plant-based cuisine, holistic education and connection opportunities every first Sunday in Atlanta. It takes place from noon to 4 p.m. at New Life Presbyterian Church, 6600 Old National Hwy, and features an all-vegan marketplace, as well as holistically-oriented speakers focusing on wellness, nutrition and mindful living.



photo: Nyemay Aya

The Veggie Taste is a long-standing leader in Atlanta's plant-based community and celebrates 16 years of producing vegan festivals and markets. Founder Nyemay Aya says, "I'm really excited for this event because hosting it in a church banquet hall allows church attendees to connect with vegan chefs and health and wellness companies they wouldn't normally encounter. It creates a welcoming space for people who are curious about changing their eating habits."

The Veggie Taste also collaborates with Plant Based Drippin and the Black Vegetarian Society of Georgia to host Vegan and Friends, a free weekly meetup every Wednesday from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Atlantucky Brewing, located at 170 Northside Drive SW in Atlanta. The website describes Vegan and Friends as "bringing together the city's best plant-based food, creative makers, live vibes and unforgettable energy." Admission is free.

For more information, call 470-222-7220 or visit TheVeggieTaste.com.

Reiki Holistic Wellness Expands to Marietta

Reiki Holistic Wellness has opened a new location at 1290 Kennestone Circle, Suite A-101, Marietta. Owner Heather Mcgee provides one-on-one sessions to support stress reduction, emotional clarity and energetic alignment. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree as a healthologist and brings more than 25 years of experience in holistic wellness and energy-based practices including sound therapy, light therapy, color therapy, aromatherapy and vibrational healing.



Heather Mcgee

"We invite you to step into a sacred healing space where energy meets wellness," says Mcgee. "Experience profound relaxation and restored vitality with our energy services tailored to you."

Mcgee also offers Saturday hours at The Well of Roswell, located at 900 Old Roswell Lakes Parkway, Suite 300. She's offering a day of introductory sessions on March 14, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. A half-hour session that includes aura cleansing, chakra balancing and an intuitive energetic assessment is priced at \$50. For more information and to register, go to bit.ly/heather-031426.

For more information, call 407-730-1082 or visit ReikiHolisticWellness.com.

Forever And A Day Closes After 16 Years

Forever and a Day, a metaphysical retail shop in Woodstock, Georgia, announces it is closing permanently as of Sunday, March 22, after 16 years serving the community.

"It's time for me to retire," says owner Sherry Dean. "I've had the store for sale for several months, and four different parties expressed interest in taking it over." She also called other businesses that might have an interest in purchasing it, but did not find anyone to continue to offer the same products and services. However, she did find a buyer for the property. "I tried my best," she says. "It is just time."

Dean has worked virtually non-stop since she opened Forever And A Day in 2010.

"The truth is, I've never taken a whole week's vacation—just trips to shows, but no vacations or time to relax. It's time now for me to have some time for my life." She also looks forward to moving to Tennessee to spend more time with her mother, now 85 years old.



Sherry Dean

"These days have been so emotional," says Dean. "People are coming in crying and sharing their appreciation. These last 16 years have been the most awesome, incredible experience of my life. The customers have made us what we are. I really appreciate everyone who's been a patron of the store."

Dean plans to help her customers and the numerous independent practitioners who've worked with the store over the years stay connected with each other. In an upcoming newsletter, she'll include updated practitioner contact information and referrals to other metaphysical shops so customers can be supported.

The property's sales contract requires the store to be completely emptied by closing day, so until then, "Everything's gotta go," she says, including store fixtures.

For more information, visit ForeverAndADay.com or bit.ly/faad-fb, or stop in at the store at 7830 GA-92 in Woodstock.

Art of Living Retreat Center Voted #2 Nationally

The Art of Living Retreat Center (AOLRC), located in Boone, North Carolina, was voted the #2 Best U.S. Spiritual Retreat Center in 2026 by readers of *The Zoe Report*. The only center to receive more votes was the Dharmakaya Center for Wellbeing in Cragsmoor, New York.



Photo courtesy of AOLRC

of retreats each year, a full program of their own offerings, as well as retreats offered by guest facilitators including Marianne Williamson, Don Miguel Ruiz, Jr. and Harville Hendrix. Its own offerings include Rest and Relaxation Retreats, which let guests create personalized stays with yoga, meditation, nature walks, Ayurvedic treatments, nourishing meals and scenic mountain views.

"We are deeply honored to be recognized," says Venkat Srinivasan, Vice President of Operations of AOLRC. "This acknowledgment reflects the intention, care and sense of community that define the Art of Living Retreat Center. Every day we strive to create a space where guests can slow down, reconnect, and experience greater clarity and wellbeing."

Yoga retreats, such as the Sacred Mountain Yoga Retreat, deepen practice through postures, breathwork, meditation and yogic teachings. And the Happiness Retreat introduces a pranayama technique to help cultivate joy, balance and a sense of inner peace.

AOLRC is part of the Art of Living Foundation, founded by Indian spiritual leader Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. It hosts scores

AOLRC is located at 639 Whispering Hills Rd in Boone, North Carolina. For more information, visit ArtOfLivingRetreatCenter.org. Full disclosure: AOLRC is an advertiser in this publication.



SCUHS Offers Online Ayurveda Courses

Southern California University of Health Sciences (SCUHS) has launched fully online, self-paced Ayurveda “Short Courses” that introduce learners to foundational principles and applications of Ayurvedic Medicine. They are designed for anyone seeking flexible, accessible education in holistic health without a formal admissions process. The non-credit offerings are open to the public with no prior experience required.

Students can complete the courses on their own schedules within a defined course period. Enrollment follows a simple e-commerce model, allowing participants to begin learning immediately after purchase. A free Introduction to Ayurveda course provides an entry point for beginners, followed by additional offerings that explore nutrition, daily living practices, yoga for pain management and Ayurveda’s approach to mental health.

“Ayurvedic Medicine is one of the oldest traditional health care systems that views a human being as an interconnected unity of body, mind, senses and spirit,” says Dr. Anupama Kizhakkeveetil, program director of the Academy of Ayurvedic Medicine. “Its principles remain highly relevant today because they emphasize individualized, preventive and lifestyle-based care.”

Course topics include Ayurvedic nutrition and meal planning, seasonal and daily routines, mind-body wellness and introductory Sanskrit. Learners study concepts such as the five elements, the three doshas and constitution-based approaches to diet and lifestyle.

For more information, visit bit.ly/scuhs-ayurveda-0326.



SrdjanPav, from Getty Images via Canva Pro



A Pivot To Wellness Moves to Buford



Dr. Stephanie Willis

A Pivot To Wellness has relocated its natural health and wellness center from Lawrenceville to 78 East Main Street Northeast, Suite C, in downtown Buford. The new location offers intuitive mediumship and holistic health services and serves clients both locally and virtually. To celebrate the opening and highlight services from local wellness professionals, a variety of events will be held from March 19 through 22 including sound baths, chiropractic care, nutrition services and mini wellness classes.

The founder of A Pivot To Wellness, Dr. Stephanie Willis, is a lifelong intuitive medium and board-certified holistic doctor. Her work integrates holistic health principles with intuitive insight to offer individualized and compassionate care.

The relocation helps make the wellness center more accessible to the local community while creating a dedicated space for connection, support and growth. In addition to individual services, the center will host multiple in-person group events each month in collaboration with other wellness professionals to help people feel more aligned, supported and joyful in all areas of life while building a sense of community that supports long-term well-being.

“I created A Pivot To Wellness to provide a space where individuals feel supported not only by professional care but by a community of like-minded people who value growth, compassion and connection,” says Willis. “It is a joy to offer a space that encourages people to obtain or maintain their health and feel more aligned and supported.”

For more information, visit APivotToWellness.com.

Atlanta Shaman Launches Book 1 of Trilogy

Dwight Harriman announces the launch of *Becoming Shaman: Volume One Beginnings*, the first book in a planned trilogy that documents his path into shamanic practice.

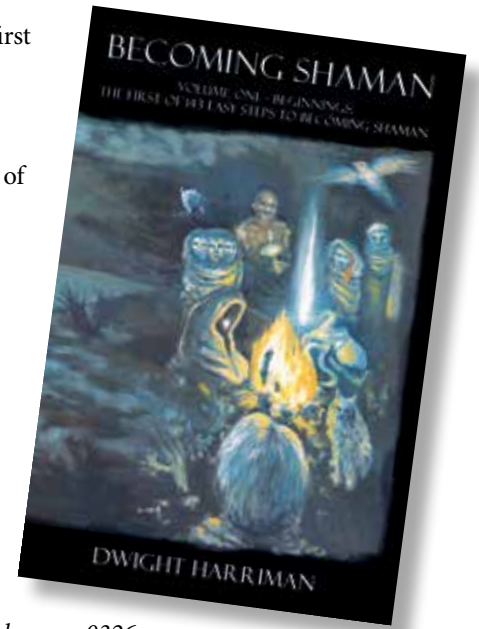
Harriman, known professionally as the Atlanta Shaman, has more than 25 years’ experience working in contemporary shamanism. The book presents the first of 143 steps in the process of becoming a shaman and combines storytelling, spiritual teachings and original photography drawn from Harriman’s personal journey and his work with guides, deities and spirit animals.



Heather Mcgee

The narrative blends humor and insight as Harriman recounts lessons learned through direct spiritual experience. As one passage notes, “If you’ve ever wondered if Spirit Guides have a sense of humor, this book will answer that question in the affirmative.” The book also features award-winning photographs of the natural world, ranging from large wildlife to close-up images of water, plants and light.

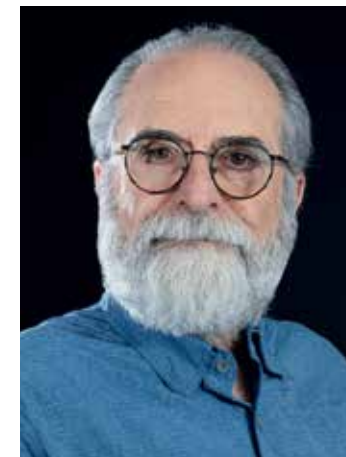
Becoming Shaman is available at Amazon at bit.ly/becoming-shaman-0326.



New Book Looks Inside Healing the Trauma of the Holocaust

Released in late 2025, *Sons of Survivors: Making Peace with Inherited Trauma* is a dual memoir of Aron Hirt-Manheimer, a longtime Jewish editor and author, and Marty Yura, an Israel Defense Forces veteran who later co-founded Vista Yoga in Atlanta and teaches yoga to veterans with PTSD.

Told in alternating voices, the book follows their parallel journeys across six decades, including their childhood in postwar America, service in Israel, their development professionally and a deep emotional reckoning. Each confronts inherited trauma later in life through different paths, including rediscovered family writings and a Zen Peacemakers retreat at Auschwitz-Birkenau.



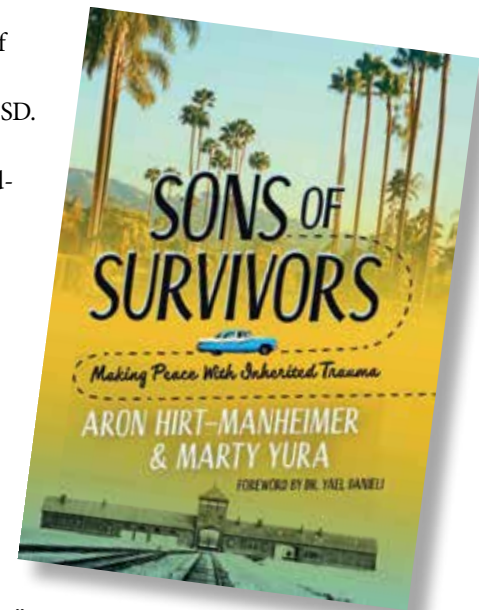
Aron Hirt-Manheimer



Marty Yura

Together they came to understand a profound truth: Trauma cannot be outrun—but it can be transformed. “*Sons of Survivors* is more than a memoir,” says their press release. “It’s a shared vehicle of healing and a testament to resilience, friendship and the enduring power of love and compassion passed down from generation to generation.”

Sons of Survivors: Making Peace with Inherited Trauma is available at many booksellers, including: bit.ly/naa-sons-of-survivors.





Using Food To Heal

A Look at Anti-Inflammatory and Elimination Diets

by Hannah Tytus



minahus/AdobeStock

There is a growing movement to use food as a primary means for preventing and managing disease. Before reaching for pharmaceuticals or even supplements, people are seeking healing on the plate. According to a 2024 academic article in the *Nature Partner Journal Science of Food*, scientific advances in our understanding of nutrition at the cellular level are driving a food-first strategy. Key micronutrients have been identified to reduce inflammation and promote cellular regeneration and repair, prompting practitioners to champion dietary modifications that soothe chronic symptoms, repair gut integrity, rewire immune signaling and reach metabolic balance.

“Healing the gut is the backbone of my practice,” says Lorraine Maita, M.D., a triple board-certified internal, integrative and functional medicine specialist who helps patients harmonize their hormones and detoxify their bodies through her Restore & Rejuvenate program at The Feel Good Institute. Whether a patient needs to lose weight, have more energy, regain their focus or sleep better, Maita’s approach centers on eliminating foods that trigger

inflammation and replacing them with deeply nourishing ingredients.

Dianne Moore, a functional nutrition coach, restorative health practitioner and founder of MooreBetterFood, asks her clients to keep a food and symptom journal to diagnose the underlying causes of their health challenges. Writing down a detailed description of each meal, as well as the time and how the body responds 30 minutes after eating—including energy levels and any digestion issues or discomfort—helps make patterns more visible without requiring testing.

Anti-Inflammatory Food Protocols

Inflammation is the body’s first line of defense against dangerous pathogens, damaged cells and irritants, as well as a crucial biological process for healing and recovery from injuries and infections. However, problems arise when the immune system remains activated all the time. Chronic inflammation is linked to many health issues, including cancer, cardiovascular disorders and autoimmune conditions, according to a 2024 article in *Cells*.

A 2023 article published by the medical education platform StatPearls notes that an anti-inflammatory diet is one of many interventions that help calm an overactive immune response. Two of the most popular such diets are the Mediterranean Diet and the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Diet, which prioritize fruits and vegetables, whole grains, unsaturated fats and proteins sourced from legumes and lean meats. Inflammatory foods including highly processed products, high-fat dairy, refined grains and sugars, artificial sweeteners and industrial seed oils are significantly reduced or eliminated.

Staying well-hydrated and pairing carbohydrates with protein, fiber or fat help keep blood sugar steady—further reducing inflammatory stress, according to the Joslin Diabetes Center. An anti-inflammatory food protocol is best viewed as a long-term foundation, rather than a strict diet.

Elimination Diets

According to Maita, “People that have experienced trauma, infections or general inflammation may become more sensitive to food. Some individuals may even be sensitive to healthy whole foods. Identifying which foods are contributing to common symptoms can be challenging. This is where elimination diets can be helpful.”

An elimination diet is a short-term process that removes specific foods from the diet and then slowly adds them back in while observing changes in symptoms, according to a 2024 educational article published by StatPearls. These diets are commonly used to identify food intolerances or sensitivities and to manage conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome, migraines, allergic skin reactions and other inflammatory or digestive issues.

Most elimination diets focus on common food allergens including wheat, tree nuts, peanuts, animal milk, eggs, soy, fish and shellfish. “A functional medicine elimination diet may also include eliminating corn, all dairy and any artificial ingredients,” says Maita. The process typically begins with an elimination phase, during which these

foods are fully removed. This can range from a few days to several weeks in more structured protocols. Even short eliminations can help people notice connections between what they eat and how they feel.

After the elimination period, foods are reintroduced one at a time. If symptoms return after adding a specific food back in, it may be contributing to the problem. Maita notes that the goal is not long-term restriction, but awareness—identifying which foods support health and which may need to be limited or avoided.

Elimination diets work best when they are time-limited and intentional. Staying on restrictive diets too long can lead to nutrient gaps or stress around food, which is why reintroduction and practitioner guidance are important. If symptoms do not improve, the information gained can help determine whether further testing is needed.

Used thoughtfully, elimination diets are a practical and accessible tool within a food-first framework.

When To Seek Practitioner Support

According to Maita, an elimination diet can be both therapeutic and diagnostic. The response—or lack thereof—to dietary changes can help clarify whether food is playing a meaningful role in a person’s symptoms, while also informing next steps in care. Additional testing may be necessary to provide more individualized guidance. Maita points out that the interpretation of results is most effective when ordered and reviewed by a trained practitioner that can analyze the data within the context of the patient’s symptom history, diet, lifestyle and stress patterns.

Some of her patients experience a Herxheimer reaction involving a flu-like worsening of symptoms, constipation or extreme cravings. These changes are most often temporary and do not pose a serious risk to health, and she has strategies to prevent or eliminate these reactions. It is helpful to have a roadmap, along with tips for getting through the discomfort. When detox

reactions hit, Maita recommends that patients slow down, rest, hydrate with lemon water and spend some time at the sauna or in an Epsom salt bath.

Healing Our Relationship to Food

A key goal of food-first approaches is maintaining a healthy relationship with food. Practitioners encourage their patients to celebrate the foods they can add to their diet, rather than mourn what has been taken away. This includes the rainbow of delicious produce options they can have on every plate, a rotating selection of proteins and even new ingredients such as venison or bison.

For some patients, elimination diets can open doors to unexpected favorite foods. Moore shares how one patient that discovered she had a sensitivity to salmon, which she loved, found cod—a new fish to enjoy. These experiences help broaden perspectives and reduce feelings of deprivation. Keeping food enjoyable means finding creative alternatives. For example, someone that cannot tolerate garlic bulbs may be able to infuse garlic into oil to capture flavor and nutrients without any associated symptoms.

Food is at the center of all sorts of celebrations and rituals, whether shared with friends and family, or enjoyed alone as an act of self-care. Moore coaches clients that are following an elimination diet to plan

ahead for social settings. This may include reviewing a menu online for an upcoming restaurant outing; bringing a diet-compliant dish to a potluck dinner to be enjoyed and shared with others; or politely letting a party host know of any dietary restrictions well in advance of the event. “Most people want to cheer you on if you’re doing something for your health,” she says.

Maita also cautions against setting unrealistic goals. “We are looking for progress, not perfection. You will never reach perfection—relax. Experiment with it,” she says, adding that she has seen patients succumb to orthorexia, a disordered obsession with healthy eating. She also notes that eating the same foods every day can induce or worsen sensitivities. Joyful variety, supportive relationships and flexibility are essential parts of healing.

Food-first approaches are ultimately about discovering what helps the body thrive. Elimination diets and anti-inflammatory protocols offer powerful tools for uncovering sensitivities, reducing inflammation and restoring balance. By focusing on small, sustainable changes, individuals can build a foundation for long-term wellness, vitality and resilience. 🌱

Hannah Tytus is an integrative health coach, former writer at the National Institutes of Health and host of the Root Shock podcast, exploring our understanding of health.

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Fiber's Fun Side

Delicious Ways To Boost Daily Intake

by Maya Whitman



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Studies consistently show that the vast majority of Americans fail to consume enough fiber in their diet, even though it has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity and colorectal cancer. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends that adults aim for 14 grams of fiber per 1,000 calories consumed, which is about 25 grams for women and 38 grams for men daily. Adequate fiber is indispensable for lowering inflammation and maintaining digestive, cardiovascular and metabolic health.

Many of us believe that fiber-rich foods are unappetizing and difficult to digest, when in fact, they can be versatile and enjoyable components of a well-rounded diet. “Across cultures, some of the most comforting and flavorful dishes are naturally high in fiber. These meals rely on legumes, vegetables and whole foods as their foundation, and have done so long before

fiber became a nutrition buzzword,” says Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Nichole Dandrea-Russert, author of *The Fiber Effect* and co-author of *Powered by Plants: Nutrient-Loaded 30-Minute Meals to Help You Thrive*.

Soluble and Insoluble Fibers

According to the Mayo Clinic, soluble fiber—which dissolves in water and forms a gel-like material in the stomach—slows digestion and increases feelings of fullness, helping us to control our weight and lower cholesterol and blood sugar levels. It is found in beans, oats, apples, bananas, avocados, citrus fruits and carrots. Insoluble fiber, which does not dissolve in water, helps to move material through the digestive system and adds bulk to stool, helping to prevent constipation and promote regularity. It is found in nuts, beans and vegetables such as cauliflower and potatoes. Most plants have a combination of soluble and insoluble fiber.

Boosting Our Daily Intake

Given all the wonderful fruits, vegetables, grains, seeds, nuts, beans and legumes available, adding fiber is easy, as well as an opportunity to play with flavors, colors and textures. For crunch, color and a refreshing taste, nothing beats a good slaw with shredded purple cabbage, carrots, green apples, turnip greens and spicy radishes. Sushi roll-ups served with wild rice, avocado and baked sweet potato is a filling, complete meal. To satisfy our sweet tooth, fiber-rich Medjool dates filled with raw pistachios, creamy nut and seed butters or tangy goat cheese hit the spot.

“Fiber comes in a few different forms, and most plant foods contain a mix of them, so you don’t need to overthink it,” explains Sandra Turnbull, a registered dietician and owner of Midlife Nutrition and Coaching, in British Columbia, Canada. “You don’t need to track fiber types. Eating a variety of plant foods naturally gives you the mix your body needs.”

Turnbull points out the variety of textures associated with fiber, including the crunch of vegetables, the creaminess of beans and the chewiness of whole grains. For fiber-rich snacking, her favorite options include popcorn, edamame pods and yogurt with berries. She also highlights the significance of prebiotic fiber, a dietary ally that nourishes beneficial gut bacteria and is found in onions, garlic, leeks, asparagus, bananas, oats and beans.

Dandrea-Russert recommends adding at least three plant-based colors into each meal, such as blueberries, banana and chia seeds into oatmeal; arugula, tomato and red onion in a sandwich; or sprouts, greens and shredded carrots into a wrap. To start the day, her “avocado toast salad” consists of mashed avocado on whole-grain sourdough, topped with arugula, matchstick radish, red onion, shaved ginger, fresh herbs, sprouts and microgreens, all drizzled with a squeeze of lemon. She favors a handful of nuts or toasted chickpeas as a healthier alternative to chips.

With fruits, Dandrea-Russert stresses the importance of consuming the skins, particularly those of organic apples, kiwis and grapes, as they offer the benefits of insoluble fiber. In general, she prioritizes whole-food, minimally processed sources of fiber-rich foods, noting, “We’re not just consuming fiber in isolation; we’re benefiting from the full spectrum of compounds that work synergistically in the body.”

General Tips

According to Dandrea-Russert, mild bloating or gas is a normal initial response to consuming fiber and often indicates that beneficial gut bacteria are waking up and thriving. With consistency and patience, digestion typically becomes more comfortable and resilient.

Turnbull advocates for a gradual approach to increasing fiber intake, emphasizing the importance of chewing foods thoroughly and introducing one higher-fiber food at a time to allow the gut to adjust. “Fiber and fluids work best as a team,” she adds. “When people increase fiber without drinking enough, they’re more likely to run into trouble with bloating or constipation. Sip water regularly throughout the day, rather than chugging it all at once.” Incorporating foods with natural fluid content like soups, stews, smoothies or juicy fruits can also help.

Soaking dried beans for 12 to 24 hours and discarding the soaking water before cooking in fresh water can enhance digestibility. Adding a piece of kombu seaweed or spices like ginger, cumin, fennel, coriander seeds or bay leaf to the beans’ cooking water can help reduce gas-producing compounds while subtly enhancing the flavor. Drinking peppermint tea or chewing fresh rosemary leaves after meals can relax digestive muscles and alleviate discomfort.

Adding fiber to our diet is an opportunity to discover new culinary experiences and marvel at the amazing variety of nourishing options. Dandrea-Russert says, “Pausing to feel gratitude for the thousands of edible plants available to us with fiber as their foundation can shift how we relate to food.” 🌱

Maya Whitman is a frequent writer for Natural Awakenings.

NOURISH AND THRIVE IMMUNE SUPPORT SOUP

Loaded with fiber, protein, iron, selenium and magnesium, this soup harnesses the natural power of plants in a deliciously wholesome way to help support the immune system through seasonal transitions. Fiber supports the health of the gut, where 70 to 80 percent of immune cells live; selenium has been shown to lower the risk of infections; and phytonutrient-rich veggies and spices fight inflammation.

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

¾ cup thinly sliced leeks (white and light green parts only)
2 tsp mustard seeds
2 cloves garlic, minced
1-inch piece of ginger, peeled and minced
1 small head cauliflower, leaves removed, cut into 1-inch florets

2 tsp ground turmeric
1 Tbsp ground cumin
½ tsp salt (optional)
Ground black pepper to taste (optional)
3 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
1 cup canned light coconut milk

½ cups home-cooked or 1 15-oz can chickpeas, drained
2 cups destemmed and chopped kale
¼ cup chopped cilantro (optional)
1-2 dashes cayenne pepper (optional)
1-2 dashes smoked paprika (optional)



Angela MacNeil Photography

In a large stockpot over high heat, add the leeks and mustard seeds. Stir for 2 to 3 minutes, until the leeks are translucent.

Reduce the heat to medium and add the garlic, ginger, cauliflower, turmeric, cumin, salt and pepper. Sauté for 1 to 2 minutes, or until the spices are lightly toasted. Deglaze the pan with 2 to 3 tablespoons of water or vegetable broth as needed.

Add the 3 cups of vegetable broth. Raise the heat to bring the soup to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook until the cauliflower is tender, about 10 minutes.

Stir in the coconut milk, chickpeas and kale. Heat through until the kale is slightly wilted.

Add more salt and pepper to taste.

Divide among four bowls and serve with the cilantro, cayenne pepper and smoked paprika.

This soup can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to five days or kept in the freezer for up to one month.

Substitutions: In place of leek, use onion or shallot. Use white beans or another legume of choice instead of chickpeas. Use a favorite leafy green in place of kale, such as spinach, mustard greens or bok choy. Instead of cilantro, use parsley or chives.

Recipe from the cookbook Powered by Plants: Nutrient-Loaded 30-Minute Meals to Help You Thrive by Food Revolution Network CEO Ocean Robbins and Nichole Dandrea-Russert, MS, RD, published by Hay House.

FIND MORE RECIPES ONLINE:

Creamy Sweet Potato and Bean Soup With Kale | bit.ly/sweet-potato-and-bean-0326
Creamy and Cozy Veggie Ramen | bit.ly/creamy-ramen-0326
Lime Coconut Chia Pudding With Crushed Almonds | bit.ly/lime-coconut-chia-0326



Data-Driven Wellness

Functional Lab Testing To Personalize a Healthy Lifestyle

by Hannah Tytus

Functional lab testing extends beyond conventional tests to assess body systems such as gut function, hormone balance, nutrient absorption and detoxification. By analyzing a broader range of biomarkers and using wider reference ranges, practitioners can design personalized nutrition, lifestyle and supplement strategies that address the underlying drivers of health.

When applied judiciously, functional testing empowers patients with actionable insights, guiding them toward improved digestion, nutrient utilization, hormonal balance and overall well-being. Dr. Aumatma Simmons, a double board-certified naturopathic doctor and endocrinologist, underscores the importance of collaborating with a professional before undertaking functional lab testing to save time, money and confusion. Not all tests are equally reliable, and an experienced practitioner can help separate the fluff from the facts.



PeopleImages/Shutterstock

“I do not like to over-test because of the expense. If an elimination diet brings symptom relief, for example, then less testing and fewer supplements are needed,” states Lorraine Maita, M.D., an internal, integrative and functional medicine specialist at The Feel Good Institute.

Limits of Conventional Lab Work

“Conventional lab testing is designed based on averages, and those averages are not always what’s optimal,” explains Simmons, noting that many conventional reference ranges are broad, encompassing a diverse population without specifying what truly constitutes ideal health. From a functional perspective, she says, lab tests are

interpreted with a focus on optimizing health, rather than merely adhering to the normal range.

According to Maita, another limitation of conventional lab tests is that they solely indicate the presence of nutrients in the bloodstream without providing insight into the body’s actual absorption or utilization of those nutrients. “Just because you’re eating healthy does not mean that food is being digested, absorbed and assimilated. A lot of blocks can happen along the way,” she explains, adding that functional lab testing adds more detail to help clarify what is really going on in the body.

Common Functional Testing

Stool Test for Gut and Immune Function:

A stool test examines the presence and absence of microorganisms to gain a better understanding of the gut microbiome within the body. In addition to taking a census of the various beneficial bacteria, this test also assesses the presence or absence of specific digestive enzymes, parasites, worms, yeast or inflammation markers. In Maita’s practice, this test allows her team to provide personalized, precision medical care to address microbiome imbalances and immunological stressors.

Food Sensitivity Testing: These tests are designed to assess the immune system’s reaction to specific foods or food additives. The Mediator Release Test (MRT), used by Simmons, “looks at all of the specific white blood cells in the body and how they respond to a specific food,” she explains. Unlike allergy tests that detect immediate reactions, the MRT identifies delayed immune responses that may cause bloating, fatigue, headaches, joint pain, skin issues or other chronic symptoms. According to Simmons, the results guide personalized dietary modifications to reduce inflammation and enhance overall wellness.

Maita notes, “Food sensitivity testing is sometimes helpful for people who can’t

tell what their trigger foods are by just doing an elimination diet. I like to use the Vibrant Wellness test. It will show them if they’ve made antibodies to food, which suggests how well they might do when they remove those foods.”

Functional Nutrient Test: While conventional testing measures the presence of nutrients in the bloodstream, an intracellular blood test—also known as micronutrient testing or functional nutrient testing—measures nutrient levels within red and white blood cells, thus determining whether nutrients are being properly absorbed and utilized by the body.

“A lot of people are taking supplements, but their GI [gastrointestinal system] isn’t absorbing any of it,” Simmons points out, highlighting how functional testing can uncover hidden inefficiencies that standard blood tests and supplementation alone might miss. Citing the trending supplement CoQ10 as an example, she notes that a functional nutrient test may suggest that a patient should take a different form of the supplement for better absorption.

Dried Urine Test for Comprehensive Hormones (DUTCH): This test provides a comprehensive analysis of adrenal and sex

hormone function. Unlike conventional cortisol tests, the DUTCH measures levels four times throughout the day and evaluates cortisol metabolites to explain how the body produces, converts and eliminates cortisol each day.

The DUTCH is also invaluable as a way of mapping the body’s ability to process estrogen. “This is critical because symptoms often attributed to estrogen dominance—such as breast tenderness, irritability, premenstrual syndrome and sub-fertility—are frequently caused, not by excess estrogen itself, but by metabolite buildup or impaired clearance pathways, in which case specialized diindolylmethane (DIM) supplements would be prescribed to support estrogen metabolism,” Simmons explains. “This illustrates why the professional interpretation of DUTCH testing is essential: because it shows whether a hormone imbalance is truly about excess, impaired metabolism or faulty elimination, allowing interventions to be tailored accurately, rather than relying on generalized supplement advice.”

Hannah Tytus is an integrative health coach, former writer at the National Institutes of Health and host of the Root Shock podcast, exploring our understanding of health.

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Aromatherapy for Spring Allergies

by Roz Zollinger

Spring arrives as a beautiful turning point in the natural world. Here in Atlanta, the season often arrives early—trees awaken, blossoms open and life begins to stir once again after winter's cold and quiet hibernation. The air carries a sense of renewal, growth and new possibilities. Yet for many, spring also brings a familiar discomfort of seasonal allergies.

From a holistic perspective, allergies are not necessarily an enemy, but rather a message from the body—an invitation to slow down, listen, restore balance and build the immune system. As pollen fills the air and nature expands outward, our bodies are asked to adapt quickly to change. The immune system, sensitive and protective by nature, may respond with symptoms such as sneezing, congestion, watery eyes or fatigue.

In spiritual and natural healing traditions, spring is associated with cleansing, release and new beginnings. It marks the end of the cold season and signals a time when the body naturally wants to detoxify, clear

stagnation and renew vitality. In some of those traditions, spring is also the season of the liver—a hardworking organ that greatly benefits from cleansing and gentle support. Allergy symptoms can be the body's way of expressing this need for detoxification and balance. Rather than suppressing these signals, holistic care encourages us to honor the body's innate wisdom.

Simple practices—conscious breathing, proper hydration, healthy meals, time spent in nature and plant-based remedies—can help restore harmony during this seasonal transition.

Aromatherapy offers a helpful bridge between the physical and the subtle. Essential oils, distilled from plants at the height of their vitality, carry both therapeutic properties and energetic wisdom. When used mindfully, they can support respiratory ease, soothe irritated tissues, strengthen the immune and lymphatic systems and bring a sense of calm and clarity—helping us move through spring with greater grace.



Elina Fairyale/Pexels.com

Essential Oils for Respiratory Issues

Essential oils can help alleviate allergy symptoms while supporting the immune and lymphatic systems, offering a gentle and natural way for the body to cope with environmental allergens.

Eucalyptus: A powerful decongestive and mucolytic, eucalyptus helps the sinuses and lungs expel mucus while opening the nasal passages. It is helpful for lung congestion and acts as an immune tonic, strengthening the immune system. Eucalyptus is also known to inhibit the proliferation of viruses.

Ravensara: Used for both acute and chronic respiratory conditions affecting the sinuses and bronchial system. Ravensara is an excellent immune tonic and supports lymphatic movement, enhancing lymph drainage. It is also helpful in combating viruses and infections.

Rosemary: Stimulating and circulatory, rosemary supports immune function and lymphatic drainage. It enhances mental focus and clarity and is also known for stimulating hair growth.

Blue: Rich in chamazulene—formed during the distillation process and responsible for its deep blue color—Blue Tansy is highly anti-inflammatory. It relieves pain, calms

the nervous system, soothes itchy or irritated skin, and acts as a natural antihistamine, making it especially helpful for allergy relief.

Manuka: A relative of tea tree from New Zealand, Manuka is analgesic, anti-allergic, antiviral, antifungal, antibacterial and antihistamine. It is also decongestive and particularly supportive during allergy season.

Thyme: A gentle yet effective variety of thyme, Thymus linalool is excellent for fighting infections. It stimulates the immune system, supports the lungs and helps ease coughing. It is antiseptic and useful against a wide range of infections.

Allergy Relief Synergy Blend

To create a supportive blend for seasonal allergies, combine the following in a 1/3-ounce roller bottle:

4 drops eucalyptus (radiata or globulus)	4 drops blue tansy
4 drops ravensara	4 drops manuka
3 drops rosemary	3 drops thyme (linalool)

Optional: Add a few drops of lavender for additional calming and skin-soothing support.



AI generated image in Photoshop

Fill the remainder of the bottle with a carrier oil, such as fractionated coconut oil, jojoba or apricot kernel oil, and mix well. Apply to pulse points or gently under the nostrils.


This blend may also be used as a spray. In a one-ounce spray bottle, add a small amount of vodka or a natural emulsifier, followed by the essential oils and filtered water. Shake well before use and spray lightly, keeping eyes closed.

Nature has so much to offer if we take the time to listen, learn and grow. 🌿




Roz Zollinger is the director and co-owner of Atlanta's Heal Center and is recognized internationally for her contributions in the fields of reflexology, aromatherapy and energy healing. She pioneered Aromatic Reflexology and developed the Zollinger BodySystems Method of Reflexology/Aromatherapy.



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Finding Peace in Trying Times

by Linda Minnick

Our world is filled with contrasts. Clients often ask me how to find happiness when the world seems to be in such turmoil these days. It's a good question—and an important one.

Here's a big part of the answer: whether turmoil and conflict are playing out on the world stage or right in our own little circus, it's how we *respond* that makes the difference. Our response is shaped by how we interpret the situation, and our interpretation is influenced by our experiences, belief systems and conditioning.

Here are a few suggestions to help move from *dis-ease* to *ease* during challenging times.

First: breathe. Everything starts with a breath. Breathing not only gives you a moment to pause and reflect, it also helps relax your nervous system. As your body relaxes, it steps down from an anxious state and allows your brain—and many other vital systems—to re-engage.

Second: Be a positive force in the world. We are all energetic beings, and everyone operates from their own personal vision and energy. If you imagine positive and negative energy engaged in a tug-of-war, which side wins? The one with more power.

While you are not the center of *the* world, you are the center of *your* world.

Picture yourself as a single light bulb standing in the center of a circle, surrounded by many rings of other light bulbs. As your light shines brightly, it begins to illuminate the bulbs in the first ring. As they glow, their energy lights the next ring, and then the next. Soon, all the rings are shining.

Now imagine your light beginning to dim. As it fades, the first ring dims, then the second, then the third—until darkness settles in.

These lights represent your circle of influence and the power you have to do exactly that: influence. As an energetic being, through your thoughts and actions, you attract into existence what you believe to be true.

During disruptive times, if your focus is constantly on what's going wrong, that negative energy is what you put out into the universe—and into your circle of influence. It's also what you're likely to attract back.

On the other hand, if you hold a clear vision of a world filled with peace and harmony—and truly believe that peace and harmony are possible—that is the energy you project. And that is the energy you invite into your life.

When you're grounded in the knowledge of your own inner power and guided by a belief in goodness, your actions and outlook inspire others within your circle of influence. As that conscious collective grows, you begin to see the very changes you wish to see in the world.

Peace doesn't require a perfect world; it begins with a conscious choice made moment by moment. In uncertain times, returning to the simple practices of breathing, awareness and intentional kindness can anchor you when everything else feels unsteady. As you

tend your own inner light, you quietly strengthen the world around you. And while you might not be able to control the headlines, you *can* choose the energy you bring into each day—an energy that, little by little, helps transform turmoil into understanding and fear into hope. 🌱



Linda Minnick is a speaker, author, life coach and Preferred PSYCH-K facilitator. Her most recent book, *New Day, New Life*, is available here: bit.ly/naa-new-day-new-life.



Pakete, via Canva Pro

Why Doctors are Prescribing Yoga

by Patricia Schmidt



Yan Krukat/Pexels.com

“My doctor said yoga would be good for me. She told me to take a yoga class!”

Now more than ever, yoga teachers report a surprising rising trend: students are telling them that their medical physician encouraged them to practice yoga to help reduce their suffering with a variety of conditions.

How is this happening? According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the top health challenges that Americans face today are heart disease, diabetes, cancers, respiratory conditions, mental health concerns and cognitive change. At the same time, the use of complementary and alternative health approaches—including yoga—to mitigate chronic and other health conditions has increased significantly over

the past two decades, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

With its relatively low cost and ease of access, more clinicians are advising those struggling with specific health concerns, such as heart disease or cancer, as well as those who simply feel “stiff” and “achy” and want to improve their mobility and longevity, to attend a yoga class.

Research has helped to open that door. Over the past few decades, numerous studies have provided insight into the ways that yoga practice can improve the lives of people living with certain medical concerns. Most of the research is designed to study specific populations of people living with specific diseases and diagnoses, doing

specific yoga practices. While that specificity is important, the breadth of the research also provides reliable insights about yoga’s benefits to health in general.

Just for starters, research shows that yoga:

- Reduces and helps to manage stress
- Improves the quality and duration of sleep, which can also lead to better cognition
- Mitigates the risk of falling by improving balance and spatial awareness
- Enhances the ability to cope with a fall when and if it happens
- Helps improve heart and respiratory health
- Strengthens respiratory muscles over time
- Increases an understanding of how to breathe
- Encourages deeper breathing
- Improves mobility and flexibility, which are foundational to strong physical health

A closer look at the research reveals how yoga helps improve health in many key areas.

HEART HEALTH

Heart health is the one most carefully studied in the yoga therapy research. Dr. Dean Ornish’s landmark study, published in *The Lancet* in 1990, showed clear links between his health protocol—which includes yoga among other interventions—and improved cardiovascular conditions. Often referred to as the “Ornish Program,” the protocol has since been codified into a standardized program for participants after research showed its effects could be maintained over time in people with cardiovascular disease.

Postural yoga and breathwork practices consistently show promising outcomes for heart health across a wide range of parameters. Research studies published within the last 15 years in *The International Journal of Cardiology*, *The Journal of Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation and Prevention*, *Psychoneuroendocrinology* and *The Western Journal of Nursing Research*, to name a few, have repeatedly shown that yoga practices have a beneficial effect on the risk factors of cardiovascular disease, including lipid and blood glucose levels, blood pressure,

the cardiac autonomic nervous system and stress across a variety of populations. In addition, across all studied populations, yoga benefits those who already have established cardiovascular disease, especially by lowering blood pressure.

DIABETES

When it comes to established Type 2 diabetes and the risk factors that lead to the onset of Type 2 diabetes, yoga can have a meaningful impact. Studies published within the last ten years across a number of peer-reviewed Western medical journals show improved health outcomes for people with diabetes. In addition, several standardized trials show that certain yoga protocols addressing diabetic issues even help prevent the onset of Type 2 diabetes in those who’ve been diagnosed pre-diabetic. Yoga has also been shown to help mitigate symptoms of diabetes, such as neuropathy of the feet or swelling and other circulatory issues, when it is included in a set of complementary care practices.

RESPIRATORY HEALTH

According to the National Institutes of Health, nearly 10 percent of Americans suffer from respiratory conditions—including asthma, lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Luckily, there’s yoga.

Recent larger-scale research demonstrates that yoga interventions—including postural practice, breath work, meditation and mindfulness practices—improve lung function. Studies show yoga delivers improvements in how well the lungs take in and use oxygen and results in better control of symptoms such as shortness of breath. Many participants also report an improved quality of life while living with lung disease or other respiratory conditions.

CANCER CARE RECOVERY

In clinical research, yoga is used alongside conventional care for people living with and recovering from cancer and has been shown to benefit diverse populations across a range of cancer types, particularly in helping to manage side effects related to both the disease and its treatment.

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- A Focused Advertising Section -

CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

Zen Flow Yoga – 10-11am. Gentle mid-week class blending mindful movement and breathwork to reduce stress and restore balance. First class free. All levels welcome. Beulah Community Family Life Center, 2340 Clifton Springs Rd, Decatur. bit.ly/Zen-Flow-Yoga-030426.

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

Feldenkrais – Healthy Joints Series – 11:30am-1pm. Explore gentle movement to improve joint comfort, balance, and mobility in this 8-week in-person series with Aruna. \$240 series; \$30 drop-in. Vista Yoga, Atlanta. bit.ly/Vista-Yoga.

Slow Flow & Deep Rest – 7-8:15pm. Gentle vinyasa followed by yoga nidra to soothe the body and mind. Led by Ali and Mallory. From \$19.44. Neutral Moon Studio, 141 Mangum St SW, Ste 300, Atlanta. bit.ly/Slow-Deep-Rest-031326.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

Reiki Infused Yoga & Meditation – 3:30-5pm. Free Vinyasa yoga and meditation with distant Reiki for chakra alignment and inner calm. Bring mat, blanket, and journal. Healing Hands Reiki, 27 Waddell St NE, Ste A, Atlanta. bit.ly/Reiki-Yoga-Free-031426.

MONDAY, MARCH 16

Almost Free Yoga – 6:30-7:30pm. All-levels yoga class focused on recovery, balance, and stress relief. Bring mat, towel, and water. \$10.78. Medical & Sports Massage, 6000 Lake Forrest Dr NW, Ste 375, Sandy Springs. bit.ly/Free-Yoga-Run-GA-031626.

TUESDAY, MARCH 17

Breathe by Shanice – 6:30-7:30pm. Complimentary yoga flow led by Shanice Richards at Hyatt Centric Midtown Atlanta. All levels welcome. Bring mat and water. Registration required. 125 10th St NE, Atlanta. Free. bit.ly/Shanice-Yoga-031726.

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

Healing Flow: Gospel Yoga Experience – 6-8pm. Uplifting yoga session blending soulful movement with gospel music for mind-body renewal. \$17.85. 177 Peters St SW, Ste C, Atlanta. bit.ly/Healing-Gospel-Yoga-032026.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

The Transformative Power of Mantra – 5-7pm. Explore mantra as a path to inner

freedom with chanting, wisdom teachings, and sound practices. \$25 pre-registration; \$35 at door. Vista Yoga, Atlanta. bit.ly/Vista-Yoga.

MONDAY, MARCH 23

Monday Magic Yoga Club – 7-8:15pm. Slow-flow hatha, deep yin stretches, and sound bowls to reset your week. All levels welcome. \$20. The Abbey Studio, 638 Glenwood Ave SE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Magic-Yoga-Club-032326.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

Chill Yoga with The Regulated Room – 7-8pm. Stress-management yoga blending movement, breathwork, and mindfulness in a calm, curated space. \$19.44 or 2-for-1 deal. Kindred Healing Center, 1800 Jonesboro Rd SE, 4th Fl, Atlanta. bit.ly/Calm-Yoga-Session-032526.

FRIDAY, APRIL 3

Trauma Informed Yoga – 10-11:30am. Free class for veterans and trauma survivors to reconnect, release, and restore through mindful movement and breath. No experience needed. 27 Waddell St NE, Ste A, Atlanta. 15 spots. bit.ly/Free-Trauma-Yoga-040326.

Ladies' Night Yoga Sculpt – 6:30-7:30pm. Women-only yoga with optional weights, upbeat music, and full-body burn. Tickets \$12.51-\$23.18. Yoga.ATL, 141 Mangum St SW, Ste 300, Atlanta. bit.ly/Ladies-Night-Yoga-040326.

SUNDAY, APRIL 5

Hops & Flow Beer Yoga – 10-11am. All-levels yoga class with a beer or coffee included. Held upstairs at The Grove, Monday Night Brewing. \$25.24. 670 Traber Ave NW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Hops-Flow-Yoga-040526.

Align + Wine Yoga – 11am-1:30pm. Blend energizing yoga flows with wine tasting in a fun, relaxed setting led by Shavonna Warthen. \$28.52. Vinoteca, 299 N Highland Ave NE, Ste T, Atlanta. bit.ly/Align-Wine-Yoga-040526.

Flex and Flow: Mindful Stretching – 12-1pm. Gentle, intentional movement to stretch, restore, and reconnect in a peaceful space. All levels welcome. \$10. 4760 Austell Rd, Ste 5, Austell. bit.ly/Flex-and-Flow-040526.

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While cancers and their treatments vary widely, many patients and those in recovery from cancer report similar symptoms related to their quality of life, including sleep disturbances, disruption to regular cognition (i.e., chemo brain fog), stress, anxiety and depression. Additionally, there are a range of physical conditions that are commonly reported, including peripheral neuropathy and imbalance, fatigue and muscle and joint aches, to name a few. Study after study now demonstrates that both within a clinical environment, such as a cancer-yoga class at a hospital or treatment center, and also in a general yoga studio setting with a properly-trained teacher, yoga can serve those living with cancer.

In addition, a large-scale, multi-centered study published in *Integrative Cancer Therapies* in 2019 suggested that doctors should prescribe yoga for cancer-related fatigue (CRF) because of its widespread efficacy in treating the condition. And, according to *Supportive Care in Cancer*, a 2018 study of working with people undergoing treatment while practicing a prescribed yoga protocol showed improvements relating to depression and anxiety as well as improvements to biomarkers related to immunity.

MENTAL HEALTH AND BRAIN FUNCTION

Finally, according to national surveys from the American Psychological Association and CDC data, Americans are reporting elevated stress levels and increasing symptoms of anxiety and depression, and clinicians note a growing demand for mental health care. According to numerous studies, all varieties of yoga

decrease stress markers such as cortisol levels, help to regulate cytokines, which are related to inflammation levels, and help ease the symptoms of mental health conditions in high-risk populations, including first responders, veterans and healthcare workers.

Americans are also aging, and they worry about the cognitive decline associated with it. A 2019 study published in *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychology* showed improvements in attention and verbal memory, in particular, while a study of parts of the brain associated with age-related decline showed promising results for yoga's intervention in a number of areas.

Yoga does not necessarily offer a state change for disease; it has not been proven to cure cancers, for example. It does not necessarily resolve pain or stave off death, either. However, yoga's promise is that our relationship to suffering changes; our relationship to pain, death and the challenges of disease or treatment can change. We live better with what we're living with, and we learn to rest in our true self, on our own path. This is yoga's promise, and its greatest benefit to all. 🙏



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 \$40 to attend — to list for free. Otherwise, basic listings are \$1/word, \$40 minimum, and enhanced listings are \$75. Submit free listings to matsakis99@gmail.com and paid listings to paul@naatlanta.com.

Tuesday, March 3

Introduction to Transmission Meditation – 7:30pm. Learn a dynamic, group meditative practice for the modern world during this free online event. Sponsored by Share International USA. Info: 770-302-2208, info@share-international.us. Register: <https://tinyurl.com/v3m6umw4>.

Friday, March 6

Guided Forest Ecology Hike – 12-1pm. Explore native plants, wetlands, and wildlife on a 1.5-mile loop. Part of Ageless Adventures for adult wellness and connection. Free. Autrey Mill Nature Preserve, 9770 Autrey Mill Rd, Johns Creek. bit.ly/Ecology-Trek-030626.

Saturday, March 7

Be Kind To Your Mind – 11am-2pm. Free wellness event with breathwork, movement, and self-care practices focused on reflection and progress. Hosted by Junior League of DeKalb. 716 West, 716 W Trinity Pl, Decatur. bit.ly/Junior-Dekalb-Kind-Mind-030726.

Sunday, March 8

With Ease: Nervous System Reset – 6-7:15pm. Guided breathwork and movement session led by Dr. Vanessa Gale to reduce stress and reconnect body and mind. \$24. Sol Yoga Studio, 3931 Mary Eliza Trace NW #210, Marietta. bit.ly/A-Nervous-System-Reset-030826.

Saturday, March 7 & March 19

Healing Sound Bath with Raye Andrews – 11am-12 pm. Join Certified Vibrational Sound Therapist, Raye Andrews, for a beautiful symphony of sound. This immersive, full-body listening experience can bring relaxation to your mind, body and spirit. No registration required. Suggested love offering \$20-\$40. Held in the Chapel. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Wednesday, March 11

Midweek Abs Class – 7-7:45pm. Free core workout with Jamie The Motivator. Strengthen abs, improve balance, and boost energy. All levels welcome. 3365 West Hospital Ave, Ste G, Chamblee. bit.ly/Midweek-Abs-031126.

Mocha Mom Wellness Walk Wednesdays – 8:30-9:30am. Weekly wellness stroll for moms to connect, recharge, and enjoy fresh air with community. Free. Cauley Creek Park, 7255 Bell Rd, Johns Creek. bit.ly/Mocha-Mom-Walk-031126.

Tuesday, March 10

2nd Tuesday Mental Health Tune-Up – 6:15-8pm. Monthly gathering offering Black men a safe space for healing, reflection, and peer support. Free. Nichols Center, 6534 Spring St, Douglasville. bit.ly/Mental-Health-Tune-up-031026.

Thursday, March 12

From Confusion to Clarity Workshop – 5:30-7:30pm. Free health education session with Dr. Larona Gore to help adults better understand lab results and health info. 1000 Parkwood Cir SE, Conference Room, Atlanta. bit.ly/From-Confusion-To-Clarity-031226.

Saturday, March 14

Feel the Beat, Move Your Feet – 10am-12pm. Free community wellness event with fitness, screenings, nutrition tips, mini workout, and line dancing. Redan Recreation Center, 1839 Phillips Rd, Lithonia. bit.ly/Community-Beat-031426.

Monday, March 16

Mindful Walks with Julie Lane – 9-10:30am. Join a meditative group walk with guided mindfulness led by therapist Julie Lane. Gentle movement in nature. Free. South Peachtree Creek Trailhead, 2079 Mason Mill Rd, Decatur. bit.ly/Mindful-Walks-Julie-031626.

Monday, March 17

Balance In Motion: Waves of Sound – 11:30am-1pm. Community wellness series with Sioux Greaux focused on nervous system restoration, realignment, and self-care tools. Free. Ages 18+. 900 Dill Ave SW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Balance-In-Motion-031726.

Wednesday, March 18

The Big Idea – 6:30-7:30pm. Join Dr. Kris Peterson for an anchor talk exploring health-care myths and upper cervical truths. Open to all. Free. Kindspine Chiropractic Center, 1830 Piedmont Ave NE, Ste C, Atlanta. bit.ly/Big-Idea-Atl-031826.

Ancestral Healing Masterclass (Virtual) – 7:30-8:30pm. Explore ancestral themes through wisdom teachings, breathwork, journaling, and meditation in this restorative online session. Led by Trish Ahjel Roberts. Free. Register: MasterclassWithTrish.com.

Friday, March 20

Give Me This Mountain – 7pm. Empowering evening focused on perseverance and

overcoming life's challenges. Connect with others and get inspired. Free. H.F. Shepherd Multiplex, 4650 Flat Shoals Pkwy, Decatur. bit.ly/Give-Me-This-Mountain-032026.

Saturday, March 21

Fostering Your Child's Independence – 10:30am-12pm. Interactive parent-child workshop with Montessori educators offering confidence-building activities and practical tips. Free. Srim Academy, 5511 Williams Rd, Norcross. bit.ly/Fostering-Childs-Independence-032126.

Core Four Fest – 12-4pm. A free family-friendly event with panels, wellness activities, line dancing, and fun for all ages. Hosted by NCNW Greater Atlanta. Rosel Fann Recreation Center, 365 Cleveland Ave SE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Atl-Core-Four-Fest-032126.

Unlocking the Secrets to Mind-Blowing Happiness® – 2-5pm. Experience wisdom teachings, restorative yoga, journaling, and meditation to release stress and restore joy. \$55 includes signed book. Trish Ahjel Roberts. Phoenix and Dragon Bookstore, Sandy Springs. 404-255-5207. PhoenixAndDragonBookstore.com.

Rise & Renew – 1pm-4pm. A refreshing afternoon experience designed to uplift and energize your mind, body, and spirit. Free. 3800 Wendell Dr SW, Ste 307-308, Atlanta. iamTaraConey.com. Register: bit.ly/Rise-Renew-Atl-032126.

Tuesday, March 24

Breathe by Shanice Yoga – 6:30-7:30pm. Free Vinyasa yoga class led by Shanice Richards to reset midweek with mindful movement. All levels welcome. Hyatt Centric Midtown, 125 10th St NE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Shanice-Yoga-Atl-032426.

Saturday, March 28

Women's Day Retreat – 11am-3pm. Replenish your spirit with yoga, crafts, and spa-inspired self-care at this free retreat for women. Hosted by AiméeNelia. Ages 18+. Abernathy Arts Center, 254 Johnson Ferry Rd, Sandy Springs. bit.ly/Aim-Womens-Retreat-032826.

"This Is Me" Wellness Tour – 12pm-4pm. A transformative experience for girls 10-18 and their caregivers with workshops in self-expression, confidence, and wellness. Free. Sewell Mill Cultural Center, Marietta. IRaiseGirls.org. Register: bit.ly/Wellness-Tour-02-28-26.

Sunday, March 29

Spiritual Keys to Aging Well – 12:30-1:30 pm. This monthly discussion group meets the last Sunday of the month to focus on topics of interest to aging adults. All are welcome. No registration required. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Sunday, April 5

Sunrise Healing Circle & Easter Celebration Service – 8:30 am & 11 am. Easter at Unity Atlanta Church features an in-person Healing Circle Service at 8:30am and the Easter Celebration Service at 11 am. All are invited for a time of prayer, reflection, and special music as we rejoice in our own healing and God's amazing grace. The 11 am service is also available via livestream. Youth Sunday School is held in-person 11am-12pm for ages 5-18. Nursery service is available 10:30am-12:30pm. 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Friday, April 3

Girl on the Go Walking Club – 6-8pm. Free monthly women's walk through scenic Atlanta to inspire movement and connection. Led by Nicole of Bold Fitness. Free. Beltline Shed at Ponce City Market, Atlanta. bit.ly/Girl-on-The-go-Atl-040326.

Saturday, April 11

NFMG 25th Annual Garden Faire – 9am-3pm. Massive plant sale, garden vendors, children's activities, MG talks, and food trucks. Free admission. The Grove at Wills Park, 175 Roswell St, Alpharetta. 404-245-1520. bit.ly/Annual-Garden-Fire-041126.

ONGOING

SUNDAYS

Practicing the Presence - A Course in Miracles – 8:45-10:30am. 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.

Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta Sunday Experience. Starting at 3 pm music and Science of Mind message; 4 pm Food and fellowship; 5 pm New Thought workshops. 2650 N. Druid Hills Rd. N.E., Atlanta, GA 30329. 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, Closse 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.

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

Meditation Healing & Wellness Course – 10:30am-12:30pm. Six-week course meets once weekly, Sundays or Wednesdays. Deepen your meditation or explore heal-

ing paths. Transform your life and connect spiritually. Andrea, 404-557-4306. Norcross.org.

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

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

Unity Atlanta Church Sunday Services – 11am-12pm. Lenten Season Message Series: Mastering Your Spiritual Energy. Rev. Jennifer L. Sacks invites you on a journey that helps you embrace your spiritual energy for healing, harmony, peace, and prosperity. Attend in-person or watch via livestream. Youth Sunday School is held in-person 11am-12pm for ages 5-18. Nursery service is available 10:30am-12:30pm. 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

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.

WEDNESDAYS

Meditation & Modern Buddhism – 7-8:30pm. 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.

Inside Flow Yoga - 10-11am, Lift Yoga Dunwoody, \$20. Vinyasa style yoga that merges breath, movement and music. With Inside Flow, awareness draws inward, expression comes outward, and the practice becomes a shared experience. www.emilyflows.com to register and for more info

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.

Balance In Motion: Waves of Sound – 11:30am-1pm. Weekly wellness series offering nervous system restoration, body realignment, and practical self-care tools. Through March 17. Free. 900 Dill Ave SW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Balance-In-Motion-0228-0317-26.

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

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

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40 Years 'til Springtime

by Trish Ahjel Roberts

When I was in my early 40s, I told many of my friends and acquaintances that I was having a midlife crisis. They all assured me that I was too young, but I knew something was shifting. I just didn't have the language for it. I was in the process of examining my life: Motherhood. Work. Divorce. Relocation. The things I had chosen for myself.

Then the other things: Aging parents. Racism. Sexism. Capitalism. The things that were chosen for me.

I felt like I was in a pressure cooker with all those elements pressing against me. Motherhood was a job I could never have truly prepared for. The hours were long and the pay was counterintuitive—I had to spend my own money to do the job well.

It was spicy. Working at big brokerage houses felt misaligned like sugar in a roux; it just didn't quite work. Divorce was empowering but lonely, like a jalapeno pepper that everyone loves to have around but nobody wants to bite into. Relocation made me question what I thought I knew—like one of those exotic vegetables no one is quite sure of. Is it a purple yam or a lotus root?

Then sprinkle in the aging parents I read about in magazines but never thought would break me into so many pieces when it was my turn to grieve. The racism I always knew was there but thought I could handle unscathed. The sexism I didn't want to see, even though it clearly saw me. The capitalism I pledged allegiance to that turned out to be a terrible friend.

Combined, they were the cup of salt dumped into the pot with neither finesse nor caution. As I sat with a curious, oversalted life, I got still. Really still. And there were answers in the stillness.

I grew up with Molly Ringwald coming-of-age romances, Cinderella fantasies and Barbie dreams. I was taught that springtime happened in youth when innocence, idealism and passions ran high. I thought I would have Ken, the dreamhouse and the convertible. And, at times, I did.

What I didn't know was that there was another spring that takes place in the *now*. It's in the rosebuds and tree sprouts. The way grass turns from wheat-beige to lime green. Spring happened

when I came fully into myself with all my gifts and imperfections. And it renews its contract every year if I allow it to.

Now spring for me looks like leading a yoga retreat that warms my heart, delivering a keynote that inspires me or learning to belly dance in a way that feels like sheer freedom. It shows up as a new haircut, hot pink pants or purple nail polish. It's the pressure cooker when the steam is released and all that's left is a delicious stew.

Years ago, I asked my best friend what her favorite age was. She didn't miss a beat. "It's the age I am now." That's what my "springtime awakening" taught me. Much like when Winnie the Pooh asked Piglet, "What day is it?" and Piglet squeaked, "It's today." To which Pooh replied, "My favorite day."



Each day, I wake up with the realization that today is my favorite day.

With more than a decade between me and the first time an acquaintance assured me I was "too young for a midlife crisis," I have grown deep roots—in wisdom, honesty and authenticity. As a mother, writer, life-long student and sacred storyteller.

I've graduated from being uncertain, to speaking from my belly. From feeling misaligned to a gentle knowing from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet. From being heavily guarded to leading with an open heart.

I'm not the only one. I've seen it with my friends, too. The ones who changed careers to follow their passions. The ones who left long-term relationships to *Eat. Pray. Love*. their way back to themselves. Who spent their first few decades circumventing their souls' desires before finally making their way back home.

It took me 40 years to find my way to springtime. A place where spring is forever in season, and today is always my favorite day. 🌸



Trish Ahjel Roberts is a transformational coach, wellbeing strategist, retreat leader, and author of four books, including her latest, *The Anger Myth: Understanding and Overcoming the Mental Habits That Steal Your Joy*. Learn more at TrishAhjelRoberts.com.

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- Feet



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Full Video Here



Brian, a 3x world champion rodeo rider, struggled with back pain for years from competing. After trying various treatments, he found real relief with NuvoCell. Hear his story and why he is continuing to use NuvoCell on his back and other areas.



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Brad, a retired contractor, lived with severe shoulder pain for over 50 years after a car accident left him with a separated shoulder, broken collarbone, and torn rotator cuff. A recent fall made things worse, forcing him to give up golf and basketball. Recently, his wife introduced him to NuvoCell. After applying it twice daily for two months, his pain dropped by over 90%. Today, Brad is back to playing golf, shooting hoops, and enjoying life again - pain-free.



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