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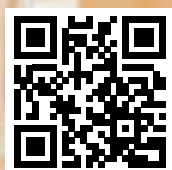


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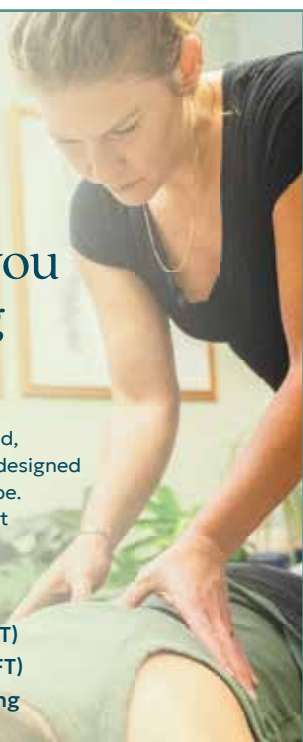
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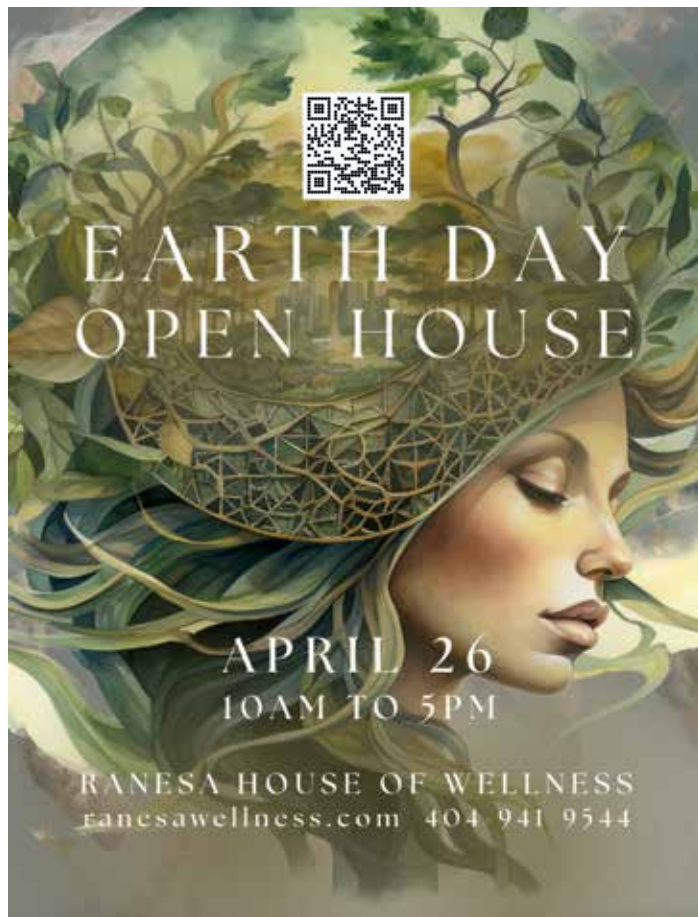
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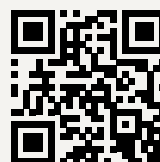
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Corrections: In the article "Family Constellations" in the February issue, the following sentence was placed in error: "There, he observed Zulu healing rituals that emphasized the importance of community and healing through group processes and shared witnessing—and these influenced his ideas." Due to an oversight, the preferred title of the March issue's Letter from the Publisher, "Choosing Peace Without Looking Away," was not used.

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# Take Another Look at Our Sponsors

In December, I asked you to support us—to consider a one-time or monthly contribution. Magazines face a difficult business environment these days, and while I am proud and satisfied with our editorial work, our operations consume significant resources to write, edit, print and distribute.

This letter is Part 2 in our ask for support, and it's focused on our customers. While it's likely that you, our readers, see these folks as mere advertisers, I encourage you to think of them differently—as *sponsors* of the articles and information that you love so much! I don't interact with readers as much as I'd like, but I do consistently hear from you that you love the topics we write about as well as the quality of our coverage.

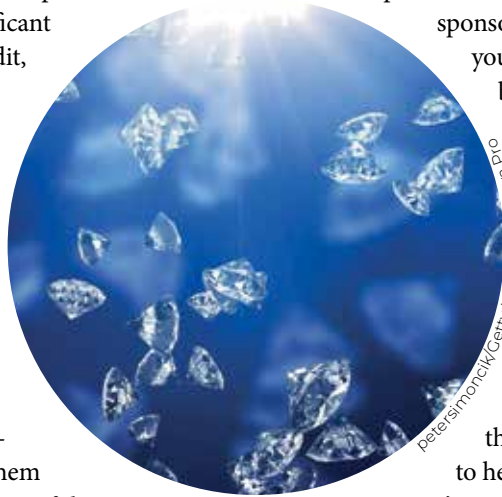
I want you to know that nearly every one of our advertisers—most of whom are small local businesses and often solo practitioners—is very kind, competent and well-meaning. Since this publication is a small business, I've met all our sponsors in person or virtually, and I've been impressed by the fact that practically all of them are sincerely dedicated to your welfare and satisfaction.

For those reasons, I strongly encourage you to take a fresh look at those advertisers that offer you something of interest—whether

you're thinking you might buy something or you're looking out of mere curiosity. You might, in fact, discover a valuable resource that will be useful to you now or later. Because our focus is on holistic health and personal evolution, many of our sponsors can literally save your life or enhance it beyond imagination.

The *one* word I frequently use to describe what we try to do for you, our readers, with our content, and what sponsors try to do for you with their offerings, too, is to help you “transform.” We're not concerned with fleeting pleasures, temporary entertainment or status symbols; we're about change for the better. And for good.

Another reason to keep our sponsors top of mind is that buying local benefits our community. In economics, the multiplier effect “is the process by which an initial round of spending generates additional rounds of income and spending, producing a total economic impact larger than the original expenditure.” An analysis by the American Independent Business Alliance found that 48 percent of money spent at local independent businesses recirculates locally compared to less than 14 percent for chain stores. That's a 343 percent difference! I have nothing against national and global corporations in general, but why send money away when you can enrich your neighbors and community?



petasimonick/Getty Images via Canva Pro

Let me just say this:

**Every energy healer** that's worked with me has delivered. Some are more effective than others, but for each one I've worked with, I've experienced a noticeable, albeit subtle change.

**Every retreat** I've been on has been meaningful—and some have been truly transformational. Retreat leaders spend significant time crafting and refining activities, sequencing agendas, considering food selections and lording over scores of details that result in deeply satisfied attendees. While finding time away from the everyday grind has always been necessary to accelerate personal growth, these days I think it's necessary just to remain sane.

**Every non-allopathic practitioner** I've used has demonstrated true concern and spent significant time with me. The first appointment I had with a functional/integrative practitioner lasted over three hours. TCM and Ayurveda practitioners have always listened to me and answered my questions.

**And more.** Massages should be mandatory. Yoga, too. Hypnotherapy broke me of my cookie addiction. While I haven't used a life or health coach, my spiritual teachers have made all the difference in my life. Avail yourself of those who “know better” and want to help. And finally, LOL, moisturizers are not all the same!

So, as you enjoy this month's articles, please take a few minutes to look more deeply into a few of the advertisers within these pages that intrigue you. They're likely to be exceptionally kind and compassionate—and well above average in whatever product or service they offer. 🙌



*Publisher, Natural Awakenings Atlanta. Paul's professional background includes strategic planning, marketing management and qualitative research. His spiritual orientation is nondual, drawing from Buddhism, yoga and Advaita Vedanta.*



## Hands On Wellness Adds Peptide Therapy Offering



Dr. Miriam Croft

Hands On Wellness Chiropractic is expanding its integrative health services with the addition of peptide therapy, a personalized approach to support the body's natural healing and regulatory processes. The new offering is available at offices in Chamblee and Clayton, as well as the newest location in Asheville.

Peptides are short chains of amino acids that act as signaling molecules in the body, helping cells communicate and regulate important biological functions. In therapeutic settings, certain peptides may support processes such as tissue repair, metabolism, immune function and overall wellness.

At Hands On Wellness, the process begins with a bioenergetic scan based on the center's homeostasis model of health. The scan evaluates potential imbalances across three areas—physical, chemical and emotional—and identifies the body's top priorities for support. Practitioners then determine whether peptide therapy or other supportive treatments may be beneficial.

From there, a personalized wellness plan is developed that may include peptides along with supplements, infoceuticals or other adjunct therapies. The goal is to create an individualized approach that supports the body's natural ability to restore balance and maintain well-being.

The initial bioenergetic scan and consultation cost \$145, with additional fees for peptides and other recommended therapies or products.

Dr. Miriam Croft, owner of Hands On Wellness, says the new service aligns with the center's mission to support people in taking an active role in their health. “We are excited to add this new offering and continue to empower people on their health journey,” says Croft.

For more information, visit [HOWChiropractic.com](http://HOWChiropractic.com) or call 770-452-2955.

## Atlanta Veg Week Returns

Atlanta Veg Week returns for its second year April 14 through April 20, inviting Atlantans to explore plant-based eating through community events, restaurant partnerships and educational activities during Earth Month.

Founded by Nichole Dandrea-Russert, MS, RDN, a registered dietitian and founder of Purely Planted, the initiative encourages people to try more plant-based foods while supporting local restaurants and farmers. Atlanta Veg Week was inspired by the national Veg Week movement led by Animal Outlook, which encourages cities to designate a week to promote plant-based eating and greater awareness of the connections between food choices, health and sustainability.



Nichole Dandrea-Russert

The week includes restaurant participation across metro Atlanta, online cooking demonstrations and a community passport program that rewards participants for engaging in plant-based food experiences. Activities include dining at any of the 13 participating restaurants, watching/recreating cooking demonstrations, visiting farmers' markets and signing the Veg Week pledge.

A kickoff celebration takes place April 14 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Patagonia Atlanta, 99 Krog Street NE, Atlanta. Participation is free and open to the public.

Participants may purchase an optional \$12 community passport that provides raffle entries when they complete activities. Many prizes are available, including a Patagonia shopping spree.

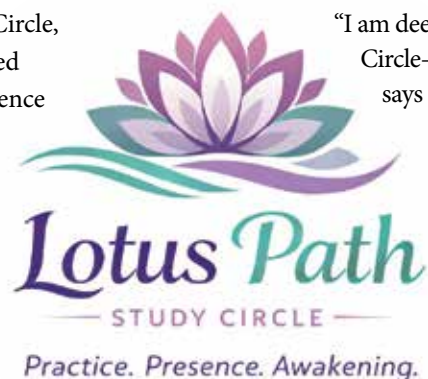
“Atlanta Veg Week is about making climate-friendly eating feel approachable and celebratory,” says Dandrea-Russert. “My hope is that people discover new flavors, support local restaurants and farmers and realize that small shifts toward more plants can positively impact their health and the planet.”

For more information, visit [AtlantaVegWeek.com](http://AtlantaVegWeek.com) or email [nichole@purelyplanted.com](mailto:nichole@purelyplanted.com).

## Lotus Path Launches Weekly Online Mindfulness Gathering

Lotus Path is launching the Lotus Path Study Circle, a free weekly online gathering that offers guided mindfulness practice, reflection and shared silence in a supportive community setting. Sessions begin April 16 and meet on Google Meet each Thursday from 7-8 p.m.

The program presents mindfulness as a gentle return to present-moment awareness rather than a structured performance-based practice. Each session includes guided meditation, a short contemplative reflection and optional group dialogue. Participation is flexible: Cameras and microphones are optional, and participants may engage through quiet presence.



“I am deeply excited to finally offer the Lotus Path Study Circle—a vision I have carried quietly for a long time,” says Lotus Path founder, Lynn Borenus Brown, EdD, LPC. “My hope is that this space becomes a place of refuge and renewal, where participants feel safe to slow down, reconnect with themselves and explore mindfulness with gentleness and honesty.”

Brown is an IPHM-accredited holistic practitioner with more than 40 years of experience supporting individuals seeking healing and personal growth. She is also a certified life coach and spiritual coach, integrating mindfulness, contemplative wisdom, emotional intelligence and holistic well-being principles into her work.

For more information, visit [LotusPath.cloud](http://LotusPath.cloud).

## Wellness Corrective Hosts Grand Re-Opening



Shalan Hill

The Wellness Corrective, a holistic wellness studio in Woodstock that offers a range of classes and services supporting physical alignment, relaxation and overall well-being, celebrated its re-opening in late February. Formerly The Posture Project, the Wellness Corrective has undergone a studio “refresh” as it celebrates more than two decades of service in the community.

The Wellness Corrective provides supportive yoga classes, therapeutic massage, craniosacral therapy, lymphatic drainage, private yoga instruction and wellness coaching.

Owner Shalan Hill is a licensed and certified massage therapist and certified yoga teacher.

She has taught yoga in the Woodstock area since 2001 and completed a 200-hour Yoga Alliance certification with study in the Iyengar tradition. Her certifications include neuromuscular therapy, sports therapy and Swedish massage. She specializes in working with the body’s subtle energies through craniosacral therapy and reiki and offers myofascial release and postural balancing.

“I have a deep desire to assist others in their healing, and my own healing has been my priority as well,” says Hill. “The sacred yoga and massage community I’ve built over the last 23 years keeps me inspired.”

For more information, call 678-494-3450, email [shalan@thewellnesscorrective.com](mailto:shalan@thewellnesscorrective.com) or visit [TheWellnessCorrective.com](http://TheWellnessCorrective.com). The Wellness Corrective is located at 303 Hickory Ridge Trail, Ste. 170, in Woodstock.



*The more fluent you are in the language of your body,  
the more easily you will hear its whispers before they turn to shouts.*

—Dr. Nicole Cain

## Artists Stover and Tate at Two Metaphysical Stores

Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore is featuring the works of Atlanta artist Hoyt Stover from April 4 through April 30 in its gallery space in Atlanta. The opening reception takes place April 5 from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Admission is free.

“Hoyt’s paintings capture the eye like the glow of the city from the hills,” says Rachel Mara, curator at the metaphysical shop. “Paint is applied in an architectural way, mapped upon the canvas like a cityscape. Caught in a liminal space, the viewer finds a moment of peace in the observation of ritual.”

Stover, a recent graduate of Kennesaw State University, works in realism while exploring the imagery of fire within narratives of metal-smithing and industrial work. His paintings overlay compositions of classical artworks with contemporary techniques such as impasto, loose brushwork and dramatic lighting. Stover was most recently featured in the Georgia Lawyers for the Arts auction at King’s Plow Art Center.



Iron Pour 1

Phoenix & Dragon selected Stover after he participated in several of the store’s group exhibitions. His work is presented when the sun is in the sign of Aries, a period associated with the fire element.

For more information, call 404-255-5207 or visit [PhoenixAndDragon.com](http://PhoenixAndDragon.com). Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore is located at 5531 Roswell Road in Atlanta.



Blue Vase in Window

The Well of Roswell is featuring oil paintings by Gail Ruth Tate now through June 13. An art reception will take place April 12 from 2 to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

Tate is an impressionist artist specializing in “ART in Motion.” She works primarily in oils on board or canvas and occasionally uses handmade brushes created from natural materials. Her work focuses on capturing

the movement of light, memory and atmosphere within realistic subjects. Tate has participated in juried shows for the Portrait Society of Atlanta and several local art exhibitions.

Organizers chose to feature Tate due to the expressive quality of her work and her interpretation of familiar subjects. “Art in Motion encapsulates Gail’s ability to capture form and light,” says Becky Arrington, co-owner of The Well of Roswell. “Harkening back to an impressionistic era, she has modernized her style through inventive brushstrokes.”

For more information, call 770-778-2051 or visit [TheWellOfRoswell.com](http://TheWellOfRoswell.com). The Well of Roswell is located at 900 Old Roswell Lakes Parkway Suite 300 in Roswell.



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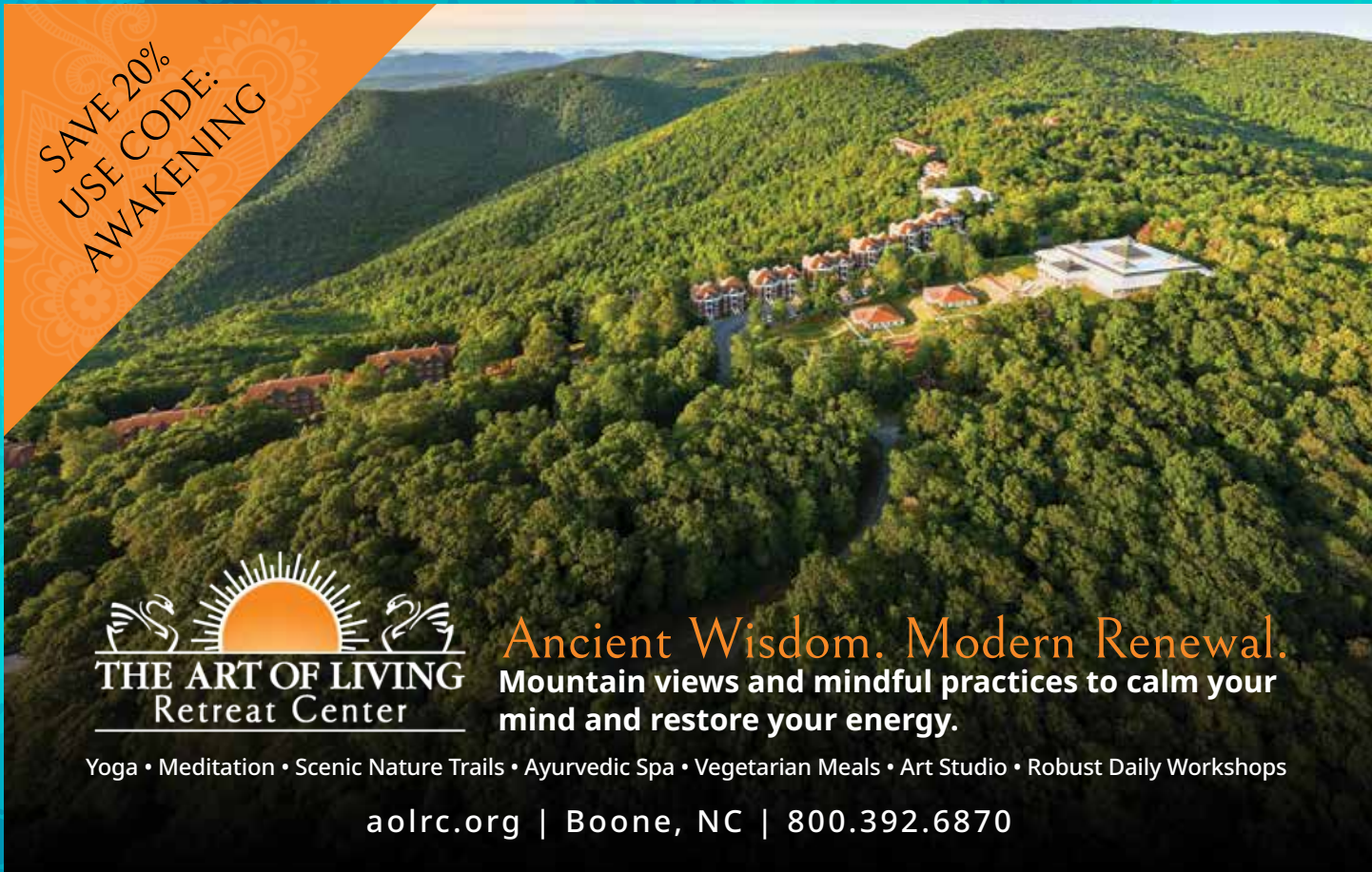
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# Spring Bowl Inspirations

Sustainable, Delicious and Flexible

by Maya Whitman

Food bowls are popular because of their vibrant versatility, inventive flavor combinations and health-conscious appeal. Served warm or cold, they begin with a base of grains, salad greens or broths, followed by layers of veggies, fresh herbs and protein sources, then finished with a drizzle of flavorful sauce. Assembling these well-balanced, nourishing meals offers an opportunity to practice mindfulness, creativity and even joy, making it a truly multi-layered experience for the mind, body and soul.

## Sustainable Eats

Spring enables us to add another enriching layer to the experience with sustainable, plant-forward bowls that celebrate local, in-season produce—reducing shipping and supporting the local economy. Fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds, beans and lentils require less land, water and energy to produce than meat and dairy. Weekend trips to farmers markets become extra special with the arrival of annual delicacies like garlic scapes, ramps (wild leeks) and earthy mushrooms such as morels and porcinis.

Making spring bowls throughout the week is also a great way to minimize food waste by incorporating peels to make broth, repurposing leftovers and buying grains and other pantry staples in bulk with minimal plastic packaging. To save time, grains and beans can be cooked once a week and used, as needed, in a variety of bowl combinations.

## The Basics

“Thoughtful choices—both in what we eat and how we shop—help nourish our bodies and our communities,” says Gwen Eberly, a chef and instructor at Zest Cooking School, in Lititz, Pennsylvania. Her favorite bowls feature a foundational layer of leafy greens like spinach or arugula, followed by crunchy textures such as radishes, carrots, sprouts and microgreens, and a layer of crispy tofu for the protein. Additional flavors may include roasted vegetables (asparagus) and fresh notes (snap peas or green onions).



“After winter, many people naturally want meals that feel energizing, colorful and lighter, which is why plant-based meals are so great,” says Annemarie Ranallo, the owner of Forest Greens Juice Bar, in Lake Bluff, Illinois. Some of her favorite ingredients for spring bowls are leafy greens, roasted or fresh vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, cucumbers and tomatoes, as well as plant-based proteins like chickpeas and lentils. She underscores the importance of including different textures in a bowl by combining something crunchy, something creamy and something fresh.

Part of the fun of creating a spring bowl is discovering which flavors and textures pair well. Gluten-free options like quinoa, kasha (buckwheat), wild rice and amaranth make any bowl satisfying without being heavy, and they are especially delicious with sautéed mushrooms, roasted eggplant or white beans. Lentils serve to accentuate the earthy depth of oven-roasted root vegetables like rainbow carrots and beets.

Savory bowls embellished with creamy dressings are wonderful for lunch and dinner, but the introduction of sweetness with layers of yogurt, fruit, nut butters and crunchy seeds opens up possibilities for dessert and breakfast.

## Sauce Magic

Eberly notes that a good, homemade sauce can tie a bowl together. Her favorites include sesame-ginger, lemon tahini,

parsley-mint, chive yogurt and zesty lime-cilantro. “A well-chosen dressing can redefine familiar plant-based ingredients, steering flavors toward whatever you’re craving that day—bright and citrusy, earthy and rich, or fresh and herby,” she explains.

Homemade dressings can be whipped up in minutes, offering wonderful flavor without excessive sodium or packaging waste. Spring bowls become memorable experiences with citrus vinaigrettes or creamy sauces featuring vegan mayo or plain yogurt and spicy wasabi, Dijon mustard or horseradish. Conjuring exotic sauces is easy with ingredients like tahini, miso paste, ground peanuts, coconut milk and spices. Bowls also wake up in the presence of robust herbs like cilantro, parsley, mint and basil.

## Finishing Touches

Championing the element of surprise, Eberly recommends textural finishes like sesame or pumpkin seeds, peanuts, sprouts or kale chips. These garnishes add a final burst of flavor, taking a meal over the top. Ranallo, on the other hand, cautions against adding too many competing flavors. For her, simplicity is the key. Whether embellished or straightforward, the answer lies in personal preference and experimentation. Spring is the time to embrace our creative side and build a balanced, one-bowl meal that mixes textures and flavors to our heart’s (and tastebuds’) content. 🌱

Maya Whitman is a frequent writer for Natural Awakenings.

## FALAFEL SPRING BOWLS

YIELD: 3 TO 4 SERVINGS

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1 garlic clove                            | 1 egg                        |
| ¼ cup red onion, roughly chopped          | ¼ cup breadcrumbs (divided)  |
| ½ cup fresh cilantro leaves               | ½ tsp cumin seeds            |
| ½ cup fresh parsley leaves                | ½ tsp ground coriander seeds |
| 1 15-oz can chickpeas, drained and rinsed | ½ tsp salt                   |

Preheat the oven to 400° F. Line a baking sheet with parchment.

In a food processor, finely chop the garlic by pulsing. Add the onion, cilantro and parsley and process until minced. Add the chickpeas and process to form a coarse dough. Add the egg, ¼ cup breadcrumbs, cumin, coriander and salt. Pulse until combined.



Shape the mixture into small patties using about 1 tablespoon each. Coat the patties with the remaining breadcrumbs, pressing each side into the crumbs so they stick.

Place the falafel patties on the baking sheet and bake until golden brown, approximately 30 minutes, flipping once halfway through the baking time.

Layer a bowl with any cooked grain of choice and/or various spring greens, followed by a few falafels. Top with Sesame Ginger Dressing, Lemon-Tahini Dressing or a favorite homemade dressing.

## SESAME GINGER DRESSING FOR FALAFEL SPRING BOWLS

- |                     |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 4 Tbsp rice vinegar | 1 Tbsp freshly grated ginger |
| 1 Tbsp soy sauce    | 2 Tbsp sesame oil            |
| 1 tsp chili sauce   | ½ cup olive oil              |
| 1 tsp maple syrup   |                              |

Place all ingredients in a jar and shake well before each use. Keep any remaining dressing in the refrigerator.

## LEMON-TAHINI DRESSING FOR SPRING BOWL FALAFELS

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 garlic clove           | 2 Tbsp olive oil        |
| ¼ cup tahini             | 2 Tbsp water            |
| 2 Tbsp lemon juice       | 1 Tbsp pure maple syrup |
| 3 Tbsp nutritional yeast | ½ tsp salt              |

In a food processor, pulse the garlic to mince. Add the tahini, lemon juice, nutritional yeast, oil, water, maple syrup and salt and process until smooth. Place any remaining dressing in a jar and refrigerate.

Recipe courtesy of chef Gwen Eberly.



# Allergies and the Nervous System

## Calming Herbs for Yearlong Resilience

by Hannah Tytus



Seasonal allergies are often framed as a localized immune problem—something that happens in the nose, sinuses or lungs. But holistic practitioners see them as a whole-body experience shaped by stress, nourishment and environment. Linda Conroy, a bioregional herbalist with more than three decades of experience, uses native medicinal plants in a three-tiered approach that focuses on prevention, tonification and support. Tonification aims to nourish, strengthen and restore balance to the body’s vital energy.

“You’re not going to take one herb and have it fix everything,” explains the founder of Moonwise Herbs. “You have to work on diet, lifestyle, relationships and stress reduction. It has to be multilayered.” Rather than suppressing symptoms, Conroy works to strengthen the body’s baseline resilience so that when pollen counts rise or seasons shift, it is equipped to respond.

### The Role of Stress

All parts of the body are interconnected. When the nervous system is stressed, other systems are affected. We see this with asthma, says Conroy, citing research that links prenatal and early-life stress to respiratory vulnerability later in childhood. “When someone’s respiratory system is in distress, we have to work with all the systems of the body to address it,” she explains.

A major player in immune system robustness is the endocrine system—a network of glands and organs that produce and release hormones into the bloodstream to regulate various bodily functions, including the stress response and mood. According to Conroy, hormonal imbalances can increase vulnerability. “Many people live their lives as if they are in danger all the time and this chronic alertness can make immune responses overactive,” she observes. “We also see a significant number of people with

thyroid problems. When the pituitary or thyroid glands are weakened, people tend to be more reactive overall.”

To calm the nervous system, Conroy recommends a calcium-rich diet with ample leafy greens and dairy, as well as a long-steeped tea made with oatstraw—the dried green stalks and leaves of the oat plant, which is rich in calcium, magnesium and B vitamins. She also champions small rituals for stress relief such as always turning off the phone before bedtime or regularly enjoying a rosemary facial steam to rejuvenate the skin and feel restored. “Stay committed to something consistently,” she advises, recommending that people find their rhythm with their modalities of choice. Together, these practices reflect a holistic approach, relieving stress and improving allergy symptoms simultaneously, while building resilience year-round.

“Sleep, digestion and stress regulation form a feedback loop,” says Joanna Helms, founder of Mama Jo’s Sunshine Herbs. With more than 30 years of experience in Chinese, Western, Native American, Scottish, Unani-Tibb and Japanese herbalism, she defines her practice as a way to support the body in being the healer.

Helms recommends year-round herbal support to strengthen the body and reduce allergy vulnerability with calming herbs like oatstraw, lemon balm and holy basil. She also suggests regular exercise, adequate

sleep, meditation, journaling and even talking with a friend. Evening rituals like massaging herbal salves into the feet before bed can calm the heart and settle the body.

### Herbal Allies for Allergy Season

Conroy recommends nettle infusions, which she says have an antihistamine effect. Stronger than tea, infusions are made by steeping one ounce of nettle in boiling water for four to eight hours, then straining. This savory medicine keeps for up to three days in the refrigerator and can be enjoyed warm or cold, sometimes added to soups or paired with miso. Nettle can be overly drying for individuals in arid climates. In such cases, Conroy suggests marshmallow root to soothe dry, irritated mucous membranes.

Mullein is traditionally used to prevent or alleviate respiratory distress caused by colds and flu, and Conroy recommends

it to strengthen the lungs. Mullein’s flavor profile pairs well with a sweetener of choice. Her favorite recipe combines warm mullein tea with steamed milk and maple syrup for a delicious herbal latte.

Both experts celebrate the antimicrobial and antibacterial properties of goldenrod, which has garnered a bad reputation when it is mistakenly associated with the allergy-inducing ragweed. In fact, goldenrod relieves allergies. Conroy calls it a tonifier that supports the whole system, “helping dampen the body’s overreaction, easing symptoms and reducing the intensity of the allergic response.”

“Goldenrod is one of my favorites for drying things up, especially in the eyes,” says Helms, adding that people in arid climates may find it too drying. In such cases, she recommends mixing goldenrod with chrysanthemum or licorice for a harmonizing blend.

### Locally Sourced Herbs

According to Conroy, “We will get way more benefit from plants that grow around us. Try to source herbs as close to home as possible. It’s a relationship. I don’t think of herbs as a drug or pill. These are my allies; they’re going to support me. We need to care about the plants, and they will care about us.”

Helms encourages her clients to grow their own herbs, observe them as they grow from season to season or even draw them in a field journal. Such practices that foster listening, meditation and relationship remind us that plants can be healing even when we do not ingest them. 🌿

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

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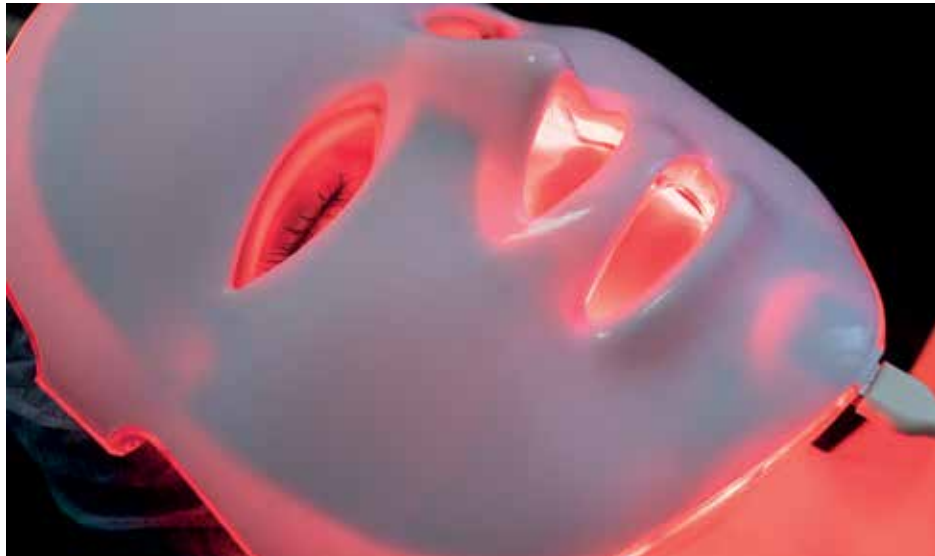
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Juliana Nahas, MD, FAAP



# Are LED Red Light Masks Worth It?

by Susan Gonzalez



CrashAlex/Stock

Regardless of the social media platform, ads for LED red light “hockey-type” masks populate feeds day and night. Promises of plump, collagen-rich skin, smooth texture, a more even skin tone and reduced discoloration make it hard to resist their claims. Especially when the treatment is as simple as wearing a mask for 10 minutes several times a week. Is it all too good to be true? Here’s a guide to find out.

## The Basic Science

In 1903, Danish physician Niels Ryberg Finsen won the Nobel Prize for successfully using light spectrums to treat skin infections. Light and its rainbow-colored components continued to be studied for disease treatment, mood disorders and hair growth. The term “photo biomodulation,” or using light as a tool to alter biology, was coined in the 1960s when a Hungarian scientist accidentally discovered that low-

powered red light accelerated hair growth on mice.

Then, in 1990, when NASA was testing LED lights for plant growth in space, it noticed that when people who’d been working with the plants got injuries to their hands, they healed faster.

Studies of the different effects of various colors on skin cells led to the discovery that red LED light, with a wavelength of between 630-700nm, stimulated the mitochondria—the energy-producing part of the cell—of the epidermis cells, causing the cells to produce more energy. This increased energy resulted in more collagen formation and more elasticity. The first LED light devices were expensive and only used by dermatologists and skin professionals, but with the gain in popularity, more affordable devices have since flooded the market.

## A Quick Note About Light

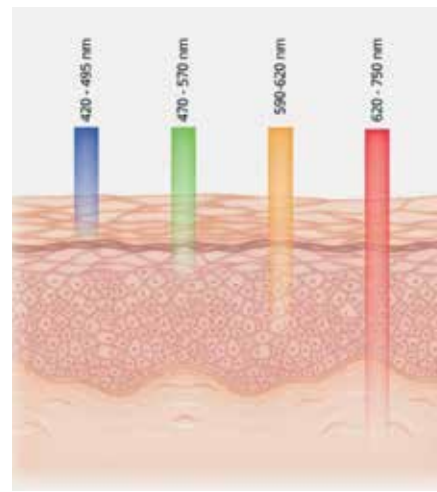
Light travels in waves. The distance between one wave and the next is its wavelength, which determines characteristics such as color and how deeply the light can penetrate tissue. The height of the wave is its amplitude. Greater amplitude means greater intensity—essentially, more energy delivered to the skin. Intensity is typically measured in milliwatts per square centimeter (mW/cm<sup>2</sup>).

This matters because only certain wavelengths, delivered at the right intensity, can reach the appropriate depth in the skin and stimulate cells to produce collagen.

Light therapy devices emit specific wavelengths of light, measured in nanometers (nm), and each wavelength interacts with the body differently. Shorter wavelengths, like blue light, work mainly at the skin’s surface. Longer wavelengths—such as red and near-infrared—penetrate more deeply, reaching the dermis where collagen is produced. Research suggests that in the right doses, red and near-infrared light might support cellular energy production and help stimulate processes involved in tissue repair and collagen formation.

Near-infrared light has wavelengths in the range of 800-1000 nm and can be very useful when it comes to healing deep-tissue injuries such as those in muscles, joints and tendons.

Far-infrared devices are often found in full-body saunas. A regular sauna uses heat to warm the air, which in turn warms the body. An infrared sauna heats the body directly without warming the air. Far-infrared light has whole-body beneficial effects, such as controlling inflammation, increasing circulation, supporting nervous system healing and serving as a supportive treatment for certain types of cancer, among others. Sometimes, as with near-infrared, the red LED is paired with far-infrared for additional benefits.



Source: Solaris Laboratories

## The Color Spectrum

Each LED color corresponds to a different wavelength and can accomplish different things.

**Red light** (600-800 nm) has the most research showing it works. It is used for facial rejuvenation, wrinkles, fine lines and some dark spots. Red LED also treats hair loss and can stimulate follicles to produce hair in areas that are thinning; however, it can’t treat an area that is bald. There is limited data about treatment for eczema.

**Yellow light** (570-590 nm) can calm rosacea and irritation and treat melasma, a stubborn area of pigment on the surface of the skin. Some studies exist, but it needs more research.

**Green light** (500-570 nm) is used to treat pigment, brown spots and inflammation. However, there is not enough high-quality research to confirm how well it works or to define clear treatment guidelines.

**Blue light** (415-455 nm) is used to treat acne and oil production. An analysis of 50 research studies conducted by the National Institute of Health concluded that the use of blue LED light demonstrated a “significant improvement in the overall picture of acne.” A study of 216 participants published in *JAMA Dermatology* showed blue LED therapy to be “considered a safe and effective option for treating mild-to-moderate acne.”

Some brands offer several spectrums of light in the same device and offer the option of two or three lights to be used at the same time, making treating several skin issues easier.

## Questions To Ask

When purchasing an LED device to address skin issues, consider the following questions:

### What am I planning to use the LED device for?

If the intention is to increase collagen production on the face and neck, optimal results can be achieved with a mask that only covers the face and emits red LED light with a wavelength of 600-800 nm and a power output of 20-200 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>. Note that many masks don’t publish the power output. However, the mask will be most effective when both the wavelength and power output metrics are met.

Also, a device that treats hair loss may not treat skin issues, as the wavelength and power will differ between devices. Only use the device for what it is intended.

### Has the device received FDA clearance?

The packaging of the device should say “FDA cleared.” If it doesn’t, or if it says, “FDA approved,” that is a misleading claim, and you should not purchase the product.

### Does the device come with a warranty?

Make sure you can return it if it stops working or doesn’t meet the promises made by the manufacturer.

### What part of the body are you treating?

If you think you might want a combination of red light LED to treat skin wrinkles and near infrared to treat back pain, be sure the surface area of the device is big enough to cover both areas.

### Will you use the light as directed?

Manufacturers’ instructions will vary as one might advise to use the device daily while another says to use it several times a week. Consistency is key to getting the best results.

## Precautions

- Research shows that people with darker skin tones are more sensitive to visible light, such as red light, than people with lighter skin tones. This can lead to hyperpigmentation, and the resulting dark spots can be more intense and longer-lasting than dark spots caused by sunlight. Because of this, those with black or brown skin should use red and blue LED lights with caution.
- If you have light sensitivity conditions, such as lupus, LED lights might worsen

Continued on page 33

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# It Takes a Circle

## Building Greener Lives Together

by Hannah Tytus

In nature, nothing stands alone. Permaculture design—the art of creating sustainable landscapes—mirrors this by building resilience through integration rather than separation. It organizes life into “zones” that circle outward from the home to the wider community.

Conservation efforts are likewise woven together when Earth-conscious individuals form circles of community that grow and reach, stretching their tendrils to interweave with other circles, strengthening the protective, nourishing roots of homegrown actions.

### Cultivating a Better Future

Working directly with permaculture, Brandi Mack strives to spark collective change and build lasting legacies of justice and well-being. Influenced by her grandfather, who farmed the fertile soils of Oakland, California, she is a holistic health educator, permaculture designer and co-founder of The Butterfly Movement. Describing the work of this nonprofit, she explains, “We focus on cultivating sovereignty, healing and personal development through land, food and art for Black women and girls.”

“My grandfather said, ‘If you build the soil, you can grow anything,’” Mack recalls. “We facilitate spaces for Black youth and their mothers to reconnect with the land through gardening, learning about food as medicine and reclaiming a relationship with the natural world. Our focus is on our beloved sisterhood—the feminine—as Black women and girls. If we can elevate that, the world will elevate. That is justice.”

Mack envisions the collective potential of the next generation, knowing that they have gifts to share. She has raised her daughters by example, teaching them that it is okay to experiment and grow, and she also encourages older generations to let go of antiquated narratives and let the youth lead.



### Regenerating What Is Good

Marvin Hayes is a spoken word artist and executive director of the Baltimore Compost Collective. When he founded this youth-led initiative 11 years ago, he wanted to address what is known as the “sacrifice zone” of waste incineration that blew pollutants all over South Baltimore, threatening the health of his community.

Research published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* suggests that living near waste incineration facilities is associated with higher risks of

certain cancers, birth defects and other negative health outcomes. In the United States, such health burdens are not evenly distributed because 80 percent of municipal solid waste incinerators are located in communities where more than a quarter of residents identify as people of color, live below the federal poverty line, or both.

“The wind doesn’t segregate or discriminate,” says Hayes, noting that air pollution from sacrifice zones blows equally to all neighborhoods, becoming a collective public health concern. Today, he serves 400 households and diverts 2,000 pounds of weekly waste from the incinerator. He uses his business to improve public health, educate local youth about entrepreneurship and advocate for environmental justice in the community.

Instead of going to a trash incinerator, household waste can become an agent of regeneration. According to Hayes, composting nourishes nutrient-depleted soil, making it excellent “black gold” for growing food. It also remediates soil that may be contaminated with lead or other metals and diverts waste from air-polluting incinerators, while providing an opportunity for the community to come together, he explains.

### Traveling Lightly

“Composting is critical, because when food ends up in a landfill, it chemically degrades differently than it would in a compost pile, producing methane gas that is 28 times worse than CO<sub>2</sub>,” says Samuel McMullen, co-founder of *ZeroWaste.org* alongside his sister, Lydia McMullen-Laird. “The hardest thing to do in living a zero-waste lifestyle is addressing food and food packaging,” he shares, adding that one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions are linked to the making, transport and refrigeration of food.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, food waste is the number one component in landfills, accounting for one-quarter of their mass. The average

American sends approximately 350 pounds of food waste to the landfill each year, with a family of four losing \$1,500 annually to uneaten food, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

To address this issue through prevention, McMullen runs the Zero Waste Challenge—an invitation to produce as little waste as possible for a week, while reflecting on the garbage created. On Earth Day, a similar challenge can be accessed virtually from anywhere in the world at *ZeroWaste.org*.

“Learning follows action. Take action first,” advises McMullen, who sees zero-waste habit-building as a practical entry point for broader change. Holding corporations accountable for climate change and focusing only on institutions to make a difference can make people feel powerless, he observes. By tracking their trash, choosing reusables and making small sustainable swaps, individuals can begin to build tangible skills for activism efforts in systems change.

“The beauty of the [Zero Waste] Challenge is that you confront your own waste footprint,” McMullen says, adding that participants are invited to examine their trash from a place of curiosity, rather than criticism. “It’s easy to cut your waste in half. The last 10 percent is very challenging, but that’s okay. The goal is progress, not perfection.”

McMullen relates that even eating at a restaurant can be an opportunity to practice zero-waste principles by bringing a reusable container and bag for leftovers to reduce single-use packaging and opening playful dialogue with restaurant staff to make a game of reducing waste throughout the meal. “Don’t be annoying about it,” he quips, noting that reducing our personal waste footprint is secondary to

building a social culture of sustainability and teamwork. “The main function is to build awareness with other people—to create common ground and to show that there is another way.”



### Sharing Stewardship

For three years, Jen Myers, Ph.D., has called the EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI) home. This upstate New York community is designed to be socially, culturally, economically and ecologically sustainable, integrating human life harmoniously with nature. Members

rely on renewable energy, shared spaces, local food production and pooled resources to make sustainable living feasible.

According to Myers, EVI shares 175 acres of land—far more than a single homeowner could handle—including farms, forests and scenic natural spaces that are diligently stewarded by community members. Since its modest 30-household beginnings in the 1990s, it has grown into a lively community of 100 households. Living in community promotes sustainability by reducing individual environmental footprints and encouraging collaborative eco-friendly practices.

“I live in a net zero home, and it’s really rewarding having the infrastructure to make sustainable living easy,” says Myers, project director of the Thrive Ithaca EcoVillage Education Center. “I don’t have to do as much consuming as I would as an individual running a household in a typical suburban neighborhood.” Lawnmowers, playground equipment, compost bins and more are all shared and enjoyed together.

Myers likes to highlight the recreational opportunities available at EVI, including hiking trails and ponds for swimming and ice skating, as well as EVI’s communal dining spaces that make togetherness easy. The community also models multi-generational

sustainability. “It is such a joy to know I am modeling conservation behaviors in my household with my daughter,” she says.

Everyone at EVI shares leadership responsibilities, meeting monthly to make decisions on critical issues. Residents commit two to four hours a week to facilitate the community, contributing based on their strengths in areas like administration, cooking, gardening, compost management and recycling. Myers appreciates this skill sharing, saying, “I’ve been so pleasantly surprised with how much value living in community brings to my life.”

### Building a Resilient Culture

Sustainability is not a checklist but a culture shaped by what we normalize and celebrate. McMullen urges joyful modeling of alternatives, reminding us that “your actions are not really about you.” Visible practices—solar panels, reusable mugs, composting—ripple outward and shift norms over time. Myers calls this “ground-up design,” a liminal space where communities create the world they want by sharing resources and celebrating seasonal food, redistributing power and reducing isolation. Hayes centers youth leadership, cultivating agency and business skills in food systems so that youth are equipped to shape their own futures.

### Embracing Life’s Reciprocity

Drawing from permaculture’s lessons, Mack says, “The soil is loyal. When you study permaculture, you are reminded that we are all connected. The only way we’re going to fix the planet is by remembering we are connected. When you know you’re doing something that affects someone else, you’ll stay committed. The reality is we are one species on a planet in the middle of the universe. We learn everything from nature. We are nature. It’s important for us to understand right now that we go fast alone and far together.” 🌱

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



# Yoga and the Vagus Nerve

by Patricia Schmidt

The benefits of yoga are now common knowledge. As explored in last month's issue [[See bit.ly/prescribing-yoga-0326](http://bit.ly/prescribing-yoga-0326)], recent research confirms that practicing yoga frequently helps to improve sleep, lower markers of inflammation, improve digestion, and enhance mental clarity and sense of well-being.

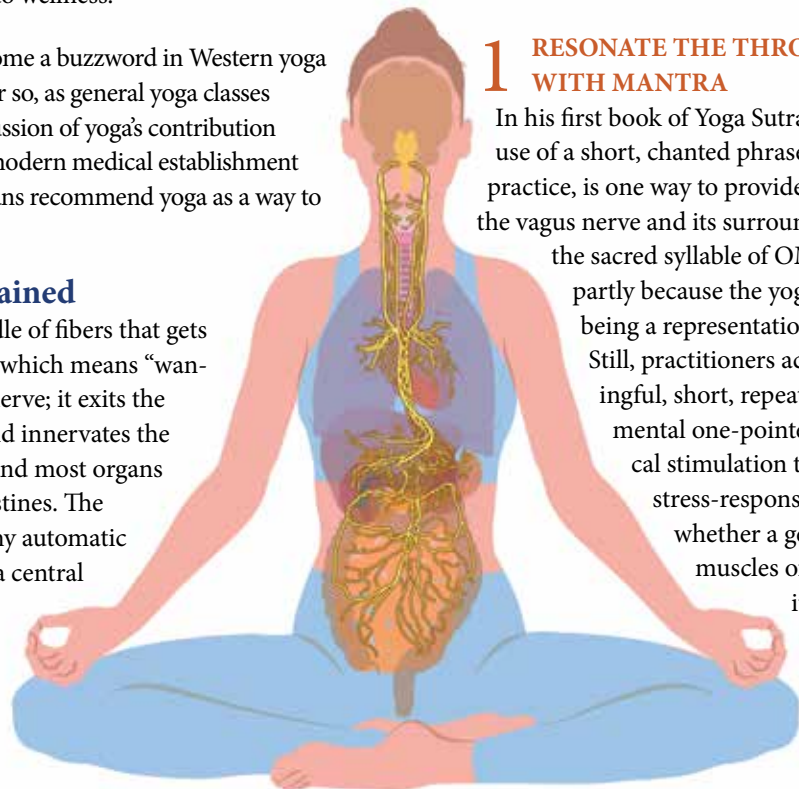
What these benefits have in common is that they are related to the nervous system, helping people achieve what Western medical doctors describe as a “well-functioning” nervous system—one that can adapt to stressors and can fluidly move between the sympathetic branch to deal with stress and the parasympathetic branch, its “rest-and-digest” mode.

Which brings us to the vagus nerve. This bundle of nerves is a kind of information super-highway between the brain and the body, and although researchers continue to debate the details of its role in regulating the health of body, gut and mind, they agree on its significant contribution to wellness.

In fact, the vagus nerve has become a buzzword in Western yoga classrooms in the last 20 years or so, as general yoga classes now consistently include a discussion of yoga's contribution to healthy vagal response. The modern medical establishment seems to agree, as more physicians recommend yoga as a way to improve vagal tone.

## The Vagus Nerve, Explained

The vagus nerve is a large bundle of fibers that gets its name from the Latin *vagus*, which means “wandering.” It is the tenth cranial nerve; it exits the brain at the base of the skull and innervates the jaw, neck, throat, heart, lungs and most organs of the torso, including the intestines. The vagus nerve helps regulate many automatic functions of the body, playing a central role in the parasympathetic “rest-and-digest” response and influencing digestion, heart rate, breathing and certain functions of immune activity.



Unfortunately, there is no single agreed-upon way to measure the health of the vagus nerve. Researchers across multiple fields debate both the methods used to assess vagal function and the metrics used to interpret it. There's also some debate over the degree to which it's involved in the parasympathetic and sympathetic aspects of the nervous system.

One way scientists estimate how well the vagus nerve is functioning is by measuring heart rate variability (HRV), the small variations in time between heartbeats. The higher the HRV, the better the physical and mental health outcome. Low HRV can be an indicator of a range of poor health conditions. However, there is consensus that there can be poor—and often severe—health outcomes as a result of low vagal tone, or to the total loss of the communications pathway, such as might happen in a car accident.

Since testing to measure vagal tone and HRV requires expensive, specialized equipment that isn't readily available to the general public, how can one evaluate the health of their nervous system? What steps can one take to improve nervous system response? As yoga has integrated vagal health into its practices since its inception, and the medical establishment has “blessed” it as a purveyor of vagal health, let's look at what yogic wisdom shares.

## Four Yogic Practices for a Well-Functioning Nervous System

Although a number of ancient texts offer postural, breath and mindfulness techniques related to regulating the nervous system, the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* both provide specific practices, many of which align with modern techniques to stimulate the vagus nerve.

### 1 RESONATE THE THROAT SPACE WITH MANTRA

In his first book of *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali advises that the use of a short, chanted phrase, referred to as *mantram* practice, is one way to provide prolonged stimulation to the vagus nerve and its surrounding areas. For Patanjali, the sacred syllable of OM is the mantram of choice, partly because the yoga lesson is tied to this sound being a representation of the Divine in all things. Still, practitioners acknowledge that any meaningful, short, repeated phrase provides both the mental one-pointedness and the physiological stimulation that produces a reduction in stress-response. While opinions vary as to whether a gentle engagement around the muscles of the mouth is beneficial or if it ultimately creates more tension in the body-mind, the consensus is that singing or chanting will resonate the vagus nerve.

### 2 RESONATE THE THROAT SPACE WITH BREATH AND SOUND

Two types of yogic breathing practices are being studied across a range of research fields for their resonating qualities and their ability to stimulate and tone the vagus nerve. Both methods are known for helping to calm the nervous system and quiet the mind, and they happen to help resonate the organs of the head, neck and chest—areas affected by the vagus nerve.

In *bhramari*, or “bumble-bee breath,” the practitioner begins with the lowest frequency they're comfortable with. After inhaling slowly through the nose, they exhale through the nose, making a soft, continuous humming sound. Lips are softly closed to vibrate, and teeth remain slightly apart. As the “buzzing” sound is made, many surrounding nerves in this region of the body are resonating, including those innervating the eyes, inner ear, endocrine glands and facial muscles.

The second breathing practice, *ujjayi*, often translated as “victorious breath,” produces a soft, steady sound on both the inhale and the exhale. The practitioner gently narrows the throat and closes the mouth, creating a quiet “ha” or ocean-like sound as the breath moves in and out through the nose.

### 3 PRANAYAMA WITH A LENGTHENED EXHALATION

Numerous studies across several scientific fields suggest that lengthening the exhale can help reduce stress by activating calming responses in the heart and lungs. Researchers found that extended exhalation might trigger responses similar to the body's natural sigh reflex, helping regulate the nervous system and improve HRV. It might also engage the *baroreceptor reflex*—quick actions the body automatically takes to keep blood pressure in a normal range in response to an abrupt change of physical position. This slows the heart rate, quiets the stress response and supports lung function.

Many yogic breathing practices involve lengthening the exhalation, and sometimes the suspension of the breath at the bottom

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of the exhalation as well. Exploration of these techniques should be done with the guidance of a qualified teacher because of their potent effects on the body-mind.

#### 4 THE YOGIC GAZE

Certain reflex pathways involving the eyes can activate the vagus nerve, affecting heart rate and the autonomic nervous system. Not surprisingly, teachings in *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* suggest that the act of simple gazing might help to calm the nervous system. Later teachings in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* suggest that gentle pressure around the eyes, such as that provided by light cupping or an eye wrap, or eye movement paired with physical postures, may help to calm the mind further. Several recent Western medical studies look at the link between the trigeminal nerve—related to the eye and surrounding areas—and the vagus nerve, and have shown that non-invasive stimulation of the vagus nerve helps to reduce inflammation markers, reduce headache, lower heart rate and increase heart rate variability, to cite key findings. As with lengthened exhalation work, practices with the eyes and the yogic gaze should be undertaken with a qualified teacher.

In Yoga Sutra 1.31, Patanjali notes: "Sorrow, despair, unsteadiness of the body and irregular breathing further distract the student." And in BKS Iyengar's commentary on the Sutra, he notes that these four conditions align with modern medical diagnoses, both psychosomatic and somatopsychic. It's noteworthy that the above techniques to calm the nervous system come immediately after the Sutra. It's tempting to say that modern medical science is providing the research to prove how valuable yogic practices can be for our health. And while suffering is present in our lives, yoga is there to help our nervous system respond. 🧘



*Patricia Schmidt, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, YACEP, is a certified yoga therapist specializing in pelvic health, accessible yoga and yoga for cancer support. She is a*

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



- A Focused Advertising Section -

## CALENDAR

### SATURDAY, APRIL 11

**Spring Fling Sound Bath at Woodlands Garden** – 10-11am. Restorative outdoor sound bath using crystal singing bowls and soothing instruments to promote relaxation and balance while surrounded by nature. \$20. Woodlands Garden, 932 Scott Blvd, Decatur. [bit.ly/Spring-Fling-Sound-Bath-041126](http://bit.ly/Spring-Fling-Sound-Bath-041126).

**Tend the Fire: Vinyasa to Yin Yoga Practice** – 11:30am-12:45pm. A 75-minute yoga session blending energizing vinyasa flow with restorative yin poses and meditation to awaken inner energy while relaxing the body and mind. \$15. Neutral Moon Studio, 141 Mangum St SW, Ste 300, Atlanta. [bit.ly/Vinyasa-to-Yin-Yoga-041126](http://bit.ly/Vinyasa-to-Yin-Yoga-041126).

**FREE Reiki Infused Yoga & Meditation** – 3:30-5pm. Vinyasa yoga and meditation session incorporating distant Reiki energy to support relaxation, chakra balance and mind-body awareness. Bring a mat, blanket or pillow for comfort. Free. Healing Hands Reiki & Spiritual Development Inc., 27 Waddell St NE, Ste A, Atlanta. [bit.ly/Reiki-Infused-Yoga-Meditation-042126](http://bit.ly/Reiki-Infused-Yoga-Meditation-042126).

### SUNDAY, APRIL 12

**Reynoldstown Community Yoga** – 10-11am. All-levels vinyasa flow designed to help participants move, reset and connect with community before the week ahead. Bring a mat and water. Donation-based. Lang Carson Recreation Center, 100 Flat Shoals Ave SE, Atlanta. [bit.ly/Reynoldstown-Community-Yoga-041226](http://bit.ly/Reynoldstown-Community-Yoga-041226).

**Neck Relief with Ravi Prabhakar** – 1:30-3pm. Feldenkrais® series using gentle, mindful movement to reduce neck tension and improve coordination of head, shoulders and spine. Beginner friendly. \$240/6-week series; \$40 drop-in. Vista Yoga, 2836 Lavista Rd, Decatur. [bit.ly/Neck-Relief-051226](http://bit.ly/Neck-Relief-051226).

### TUESDAY, APRIL 14

**Beginners Yoga Class** – 6-6:45pm. Beginner-friendly yoga session focused on slow, gentle movement to build flexibility, steady breathing and relaxation while supporting overall mind-body wellness. \$20. Kindred Healing Center, 1800 Jonesboro Rd SE, 4th Floor, Atlanta. [bit.ly/Beginners-Yoga-041426](http://bit.ly/Beginners-Yoga-041426).

### THURSDAY, APRIL 16

**Restorative Yoga** – 7-7:45pm. Gentle restorative yoga session focused on grounding, deep rest and calming the nervous system through slow movement and breath. Mats provided; bring a pillow and blanket. \$20. Kindred Healing Center, 1800 Jonesboro Rd SE, 4th Floor, Atlanta. [bit.ly/Restorative-Yoga-041626](http://bit.ly/Restorative-Yoga-041626).

**Healing Sound Bath with Raye Andrews** – 7-8pm. Immersive sound healing experience using vibrational tones to promote relaxation, balance and calm for mind, body and spirit. Bring a mat, blanket or pillow for comfort. Love offering suggested. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. [bit.ly/Healing-Sound-Bath-with-Raye-Andrews-041626](http://bit.ly/Healing-Sound-Bath-with-Raye-Andrews-041626).

### SUNDAY, APRIL 19

**Yoga & Sound Bath Experience** – 4-5pm. Beginner-friendly yoga flow paired with live singing bowl sound healing to support relaxation, nervous system balance and emotional release, ending with guided meditation. \$15. 1800 Old Jonesboro Rd SW, Atlanta. [bit.ly/Yoga-and-Sound-Bath-Experience-041926](http://bit.ly/Yoga-and-Sound-Bath-Experience-041926).

### MONDAY, APRIL 20

**"Almost Free" Yoga & Run Club in Sandy Springs** – 6:30-7:30pm. Community yoga class focused on stretching, recovery and stress relief. All levels welcome; bring a mat, towel and water. \$10. Medical & Sports Massage, 6000 Lake Forrest Dr NW, Ste 375, Sandy Springs. [bit.ly/Yoga-Run-Club-042026](http://bit.ly/Yoga-Run-Club-042026).

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

**Weekly Wed Meditation Class** – 7-8:30pm. Guided meditation session with stretching, seated meditation and a wisdom talk led by certified meditation coaches and Buddhist monks. Learn techniques to reduce stress and cultivate inner peace. Free; donations welcome. Georgia Meditation Center, 4522 Tilly Mill Rd, Atlanta. [bit.ly/Meditation-Class-042226](http://bit.ly/Meditation-Class-042226).

### THURSDAY, APRIL 23

**Candlelight & Cords Yoga Experience** – 7:30-8:30pm. Evening yoga flow practiced by candlelight and accompanied by live guitar, blending gentle movement and breathwork to support relaxation and nervous system restoration. \$15. 1800 Old

## CALENDAR

Jonesboro Rd SW, Atlanta. [bit.ly/Candlelight-Cords-Yoga-042326](http://bit.ly/Candlelight-Cords-Yoga-042326).

### SATURDAY, APRIL 25

**Reach and Release w/ Coach Angie Be** – 10-11:30am. Community wellness session featuring yoga, mindful movement and stress release practices. Optional Reiki and assisted stretching available with donation. All fitness levels welcome. Free. Wade Walker Park, 5585 Rockbridge Rd SW, Stone Mountain. [bit.ly/Reach-and-Release-042526](http://bit.ly/Reach-and-Release-042526).

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29

**Yoga + Wine Down Wednesdays** – 6:45-7:45pm. Mixed-level yoga flow designed as a midweek reset with movement, breathwork and community connection, followed by complimentary wine. Ages 18+. \$22. Nina Baldwin Gallery, 309 Peters St SW, Atlanta. [bit.ly/Yoga-Wine-Wednesday-042926](http://bit.ly/Yoga-Wine-Wednesday-042926).

### SUNDAY, MAY 3

**The Healing Vibe: Sound Bath & Meditation for Emotional Balance** – 10-11am. Relaxing sound bath and guided meditation designed to release stress, restore emotional balance and promote inner peace through soothing vibrational sound. \$10. 4760 Austell Rd, Ste 5, Austell. [bit.ly/Sound-Bath-Meditation-050326](http://bit.ly/Sound-Bath-Meditation-050326).

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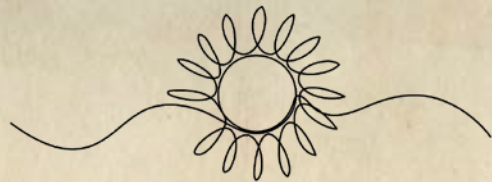
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# The Language of Light

Excerpted from *The Great Remembering: We Are the Result of Thousands of Love Stories in a Little Bit of Heaven* by Tom Blue Wolf, an environmental and peace activist and founder of the nonprofit, EarthKeepers & Co.



We must agree to raise the level of our personal poetry – so that everything we say is a reflection of what we hold dear in our hearts about what it means to be human, walking together on the earth at this most precious of times.

Light is the first language of creation. Before there were words, before there was song, before even the stirring of wind - there was light. It poured itself across the void, speaking in the dialect of brilliance and shadow, wave and particle, seen and unseen.

Scientists tell us that the human eye perceives less than one percent of the electromagnetic spectrum. Less than one percent - and yet from that sliver we have built our entire world of meaning. We call it sunrise and sunset, color and shadow, vision and blindness. But, the truth is, most of the song of light is invisible to us, singing in frequencies we cannot see.

This, too, is *The Great Remembering*: to acknowledge that there is more than what we perceive. That the unseen is as real as the seen. That we are immersed in oceans of vibration, entangled in threads of energy stretching across time and space.

Nikola Tesla once said: "If you want to find the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency, and vibration." The elders have always known this. They sang to the seeds before planting. They drummed the heartbeat of the Earth in rhythm with the stars. They listened not only with their ears, but with their bones, their dreams, their breath.

Every word we speak is vibration.  
Every prayer we whisper ripples out, touching leaves, clouds, and the skin of those we love.  
Every unkind word has weight; every kind word has wings.  
To honor the language of light is to honor the power of frequency – to remember that our lives are instruments in the great symphony of being.

The butterfly effect is not poetry, it is law. A wing beats in the Amazon, and a storm stirs in the Pacific. A child's laughter rises, and somewhere an ancestor smiles. Light entangles us across distance; vibration ties us across generations.

When we forget this, we speak carelessly. We fill the air with noise. But when we remember, we choose words as if they were beams of light - carrying healing, carrying clarity, carrying love.

To live in the language of light is to remember that creation is always speaking, not only in words but in waves, colors, pulses, and silence.  
It is to understand that when we align with this language, we amplify harmony. When we resist it, we create distortion.

The task of *The Great Remembering* is not only to listen but to speak in resonance. To let our prayers, our songs, our actions hum at the frequency of love.

For light has no timeline. It travels, unbroken, across eternity.

And so do we, when we remember.

## TOM BLUE WOLF

by Diane Eaton

Author Tom Blue Wolf grew up in the expansive woodlands of Southern Alabama, near what's now the Poarch Creek reservation. As a boy, he spent hours watching animals, insects and birds—absorbing their patterns, their rhythms, their quiet intelligence and their interconnectedness.

"Life, to me, was alive," he says of his childhood. "Trees were my friends, and the water was my life."

That sensibility was shaped—and given language—by his Muscogee grandfather, who introduced him to the concept of earth-keeping. Not as an abstract philosophy, but as a way of being. "We thought the best way to process life was as a shepherd, to a steward and a caregiver," says Blue Wolf.

His grandfather's work reflected that ethos. He led a wolf-relocation effort that transported wild wolves to Wyoming, moving them out of regions where they were being hunted for their pelts—an act of protection in a time when such interventions were rare.

The "poetry" of nature, as he calls it—and what it taught him about trust, unity and interdependence—"mellowed and saturated" his being as he lived those early years. "I've watched nature sing to itself in order to keep the sweet dream of life alive," he says. It resonated so strongly for him that he has devoted his life to spreading its message. For more than 30 years, he's been traveling all over the world, speaking, leading ceremonies and rituals, building sweat lodges and supporting community-based ecological projects.

"I was in Kenya working with some Maasai people on microorganisms that help replace the topsoil more quickly [than without it]," he says, "because we've destroyed so much topsoil on this Earth. It's alarming—and humbling—to realize we owe our entire existence to 12 inches of topsoil!"

An adopted member of the Ainu people of Sapporo, Japan; the BeVenda tribe of Zimbabwe; the Zulu tribe in South Africa and the Quechua of Peru, Blue Wolf began his international work in 1996, when natural history museums began sponsoring his tours. He called them "Earthkeepers Tribal Revival Tours," eventually traveling to 17 countries to share the insights of his people and the wisdom of the Earth.

With lodges in numerous countries across Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America, Blue Wolf continues to focus his message on honoring tradition, preserving the Earth and fostering global peace. He speaks at schools and universities, cathedrals, museums, and environmental organizations, reminding people of the sacredness of the Earth and inspiring listeners to engage in a deeper relationship with all of life. "We occupy the only planet in our visible and known universe that has trees." He likes to point out that minerals have been found to exist on other planets, but trees—so far—do not. "We are the shepherds of this place—or at least we used to be—and should be again."

Earthkeeping, he says, "is a way of life." His nonprofit organization, EarthKeepers & Co., helps educate, inform, connect and empower people to cultivate that way of life the world over. For the past five years, he has led an EarthKeepers *Indaba*—a Zulu term for "discussion"—every equinox and solstice, bringing together participants from as many as 50 countries via Zoom. In this way, they "keep the conversation going."

And conversation is powerful, he believes. "Language is in fact the fabric of our culture," says Blue Wolf. To change the direction of the culture, he believes we need to change the language we're speaking. "Imagine five million people waking up every morning thinking they're in heaven, because that's the language they know."

Blue Wolf has appeared on radio and TV, in documentaries and on numerous podcasts. For his upcoming book, he aims to bridge the language of quantum physics with that of ancient indigenous poetry and demonstrate that they are expressing the same truths. "Only one is academic, and one has a soul!" he says. "If you study the string theories and the entanglement theories of quantum physics and astrophysics ... our people have been saying that forever."

To Blue Wolf, Earthkeeping holds the keys to cultural, personal, environmental, and global healing. "You're hoping that one day this whole world will come together and everybody will be an Earthkeeper. It took eight billion people to get us into this mess. It's going to take everybody to get us out sooner or later." 🌱

For more information, visit [EarthKeepers.net](http://EarthKeepers.net).



Photo: Sonali Sadeque



# The Other Side of Grief

by Noah Chen

This is the third in our three-part series exploring ideas and practices around conscious death and dying. Read Part 1 at [bit.ly/sadhguru-1125](http://bit.ly/sadhguru-1125) and Part 2 at [bit.ly/peace-at-end-0126](http://bit.ly/peace-at-end-0126).

While death may arrive in a moment, grief unfolds over time. After the final breath, the rituals, the phone calls, the meals and the condolences, those who remain behind are left with something less visible but far more enduring: the task of living with loss. But how can people live with grief within a culture that often seems unsure of what to do with it?

## Grief is Not an Illness

With industries making millions of dollars treating grief symptoms with drugs or distractions, it can be easy to think of grief as something to be eradicated.

But Jenna Pratt, founder of Lionheart Grief Coaching, is careful to avoid using negative labels to describe grief. Instead, she offers a

broad, inclusive definition: “Grief is a set of emotions surrounding an event or a person or a thing that you’ve lost. And that’s a pretty big scope. And I think it’s important for the scope to be large, because we often take away our own license to grieve.”

Grief can manifest after the death of a loved one, but also from a variety of life events like the loss of a marriage, a pet, or a future once imagined. Pratt makes sure to specify that grief is not a disorder or a sign of weakness; it is the natural response to loss.

“There are no negative or positive emotions,” she says. “They’re just signals. From a cultural standpoint, we have been conditioned to think that there are certain emotions that are less acceptable and so are therefore negative, like anger—but anger is the check engine light.” Pratt says these types of emotions exist to invite us to explore our own feelings, but when we suppress or run away from them, it can cause greater issues down the line.

## Grief is Nonlinear

A common misconception about grief is that it follows a course of five linear stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. But Sascha Demerjian, a grief counselor and co-founder of The Grief House in Decatur, says that grief is “definitely not linear.” Moreover, she says the grief response varies a lot from person to person. Some people even seem to have no effects of grief right after a loss at all, only to have symptoms arise years later.

Pratt agrees. “I think the big misnomer is that these stages almost feel like stepping stones. So there will be tons of people asking, ‘Well, what stage are you [in]?’ As if you have somehow overcome denial and now you’re in the anger phase.” This false idea leads to



Sascha Demerjian



Jenna Pratt

people thinking they aren’t “grieving correctly” if they experience certain grief-related emotions persisting months—or years—after the fact. And that can often trigger shame or guilt.

Pratt prefers to liken the process of grieving to circling up a mountain. “Yes, you are circling the same mountain, but you’re touching different parts of it as you move,” she says. Its recurring nature, she stresses, is not a sign of failure but a normal way for grief to progress. Through repeated interactions with grief, one learns how to better navigate its intense emotions.

The work, she says, is in learning to “pause, reflect, respond” when these emotions surface, treating them as signals rather than setbacks. “Integrating a loss is about acknowledging what was and acknowledging what is and weaving them into the present.”

## A Spectrum of Support: From One-on-One to Community

Because grief is unique to each person, the systems of support also vary. Professionals in the field offer different approaches, allowing individuals to find a fit for their needs.

Pratt’s Lionheart Grief Coaching, for instance, focuses on a one-on-one coaching model centered on providing tools and reflective dialogue, and offers a free consultation with prospective clients. Her approach is “faith agnostic,” as she welcomes all beliefs and focuses on integration rather than cure.

In contrast, The Grief House, co-founded by Demerjian, emphasizes communal, group-based support. Offerings range from grief circles to yoga, writing groups and potluck dinners. “People who are deep in grief just need to be able to be there, but maybe don’t want to be alone while doing it,” Demerjian says. “Sometimes the best medicine is just having your story heard and honored.”

Kelly Sklare, a certified nurse midwife, found support in the Grief House community after losing both parents. “Being able to share without feeling shame, and then also to be able to witness other people’s grief ... It’s almost alchemy that happens,” she says. To her, the key to being comfortable “walking with loss,” as she describes it, is community.

“Through being around other people, their loss ... helps me realize [grief] isn’t something you get through—it’s something that enriches and informs my life.” Being around others, she says, is so important for drawing one’s emotions out and into the world where they can be acknowledged and unpacked.

## Rituals and Integration

A thread connecting these approaches is the necessity of moving grief from the inside out. Pratt observes that American culture is often “death averse,” leaving people without tools or permission to process loss and integrate it into their lives. “We do spend a lot of time in our society pretending that everything is okay when it’s not,” she says. “Giving people permission to feel allows them to actually deal with the loss itself and not the cultural or social expectations.”

Enacting rituals is a powerful tool for this integration, with the rituals themselves acting as ways to externalize feelings. Pratt’s own practice includes building nature mandalas using heart-shaped rocks

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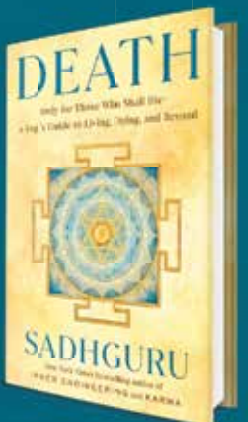
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found on hikes on the anniversary of her son's death. These tokens are reminders that "something beautiful happened, which is the life of my son. And also life is temporary, and therefore it is precious." By externalizing these feelings, she says that she and those she works with are better able to process and respond to them.

## Alternate Modalities for Grief Management

In addition to grief coaches and counselors, other practices can ease the pains that often accompany grief. One such example is PSYCH-K, a psychological methodology aimed at rewiring a subject's subconscious mind to align with their conscious goals. Through this, subjects are reportedly able to make massive progress in breaking unhealthy habits, creating healthy alternatives, and, crucially, rewiring the way they think about specific subjects or events.

Linda Minnick, an Atlanta-based development coach and PSYCH-K facilitator, has used the practice to target the subconscious beliefs that can make grieving so disruptive. "My brother passed not too long ago, and I was pretty angry with him because he was dying, because he had been abusing his body for years," she says. This anger made it difficult for her to appreciate memories of her brother after his passing, and so she focused on the mantra of "I forgive you for leaving us this way."

PSYCH-K works by creating a statement, such as Minnick's about forgiveness, and repeating it during a series of muscle tests to determine how much one's subconscious supports or conflicts with that statement. If there's conflict, a PSYCH-K practitioner guides the subject through a series of "balances" whose purpose is to get the "goal statement to a zero level, which means there is no emotion attached to it," she says.

It's normal and healthy for there to be some amount of lingering melancholy when grief is present, says Minnick, but the goal is to remove the paralyzing pain, shame or guilt that can arise alongside the grief. In her own example, she is now able to feel

appreciative of the time she had with her brother, despite his not leaving the way she would have preferred. "The difference is, you're not punishing yourself."

## When Is the Right Time To Seek Grief Support?

While grief can be accompanied by pain, guilt, or shame, all of the professionals interviewed made it clear that the grieving process itself is healthy and normal. However, depending upon a variety of factors involved, grief can sometimes be dangerously paralyzing.

Minnick and Kristin Tansey, a certified Emotion Code, Body Code and Belief Code practitioner, mention that grief can interrupt some people's ability to engage with the world, their work and the people in their lives. While grief can bring melancholy, it should not cause long-term disruption. By bridging the gap between our conscious and subconscious minds, Tansey says we can bring our emotional and physical states "into a state of balance for healing." She also says we can "bring our bodies into a state of balance for healing."

Tansey sees grief in the context of other emotions. "Grief and the associated emotions often cause or contribute to the buildup of 'heart walls' that prevent the individual from moving forward. Heart walls consist of layers of trapped emotions that surround the heart like armor. These walls interfere with relationships, giving and receiving, creating and achieving goals." Specifically, unprocessed grief often manifests as physical imbalances and pain, she says.

Sklare was drawn to the Grief House after the death of her mother, saying she "knew that it could help with the general grief that touches us all as humans." Spaces like that offered at the Grief House were ideal for her to find healing and support through community. At the same time, she recognizes that individualized support is sometimes called for. "If I was showing signs of depression or the inability to truly engage in my life," says Sklare, "I would seek out professional support from a grief-informed therapist."

Minnick agrees, recommending that the time to seek help is when grief has become a constant companion and starts affecting the choices one makes.

## The Other Side of Grief

The consensus is clear: the goal is not to reach a finish line where grief is gone, but to develop a sustainable relationship with it. DeMerjian warns against solutions that promise to "resolve it, or get you through it fast."

Pratt agrees, stating that a client who wants to be completely "done with grief" is not the best fit for coaching. She shares a moment where, at a wedding party, she broke into tears during the mother-son dance as she realized she would never have this moment with her own departed son. "It was tough in the moment, and I let it happen, and I felt much better. I didn't run away from it. I didn't go and try and hide or pretend that I was okay, and the moment passed and I was okay," says Pratt. By familiarizing herself with grief, Pratt is able to experience these emotions without them destabilizing her life, her work, or her self-image.

Paradoxically, Sklare says that embracing grief has expanded her capacity for joy. "I never, ever could believe that touching the tender parts of me and being a witness for other people's most tender moments could give me a sense of just authenticity and joy," she says. "I feel like I'm living in purpose."

Ultimately, living with grief is about integration, not eradication. It is about making space for a lifelong dialogue with loss, honoring its presence, and allowing it to coexist with a full, changing life. As Jenna Pratt's circling the mountain analogy illustrates, we may revisit the same core of loss, but we are never in the same place twice. The terrain changes, and so do we. 🌱



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.

# 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.

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## Wednesdays, April 1, 15, 29, May 6

**Psychic Development** – 7-9pm. This psychic development series encompasses the following topics: Psychic Perception & Symbols (April 1); Intuitive Nervous System & Energetic Anatomy (April 15); Tuning Your Intuitive Voice (April 29); Expressing the Mystic Voice: Messages in Motion (May 6).

## Saturdays, April 4 & 18

**The Wish Game** – 4-6pm. This is more than a game—it's a mirror for your soul. In this guided experience, we use a beautifully designed, energetic board game to explore the subconscious patterns shaping your life. \$40. bit.ly/wish-game-0426.

## Fridays, April 10 & May 8

**The Voice of Elijah** – 7-9pm. A voice you've always known. A message just for you. Keith channels the voice of Elijah to share stories and messages that speak to what's been stirring in the quiet part of you too long. Free! TheWellofRoswell.com/calendar.

## 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.

**Spring Energetic Refresh Session** – 11am to 6pm. Let go of stagnant energy and embrace a renewed sense of vitality! \$40 intro service with Heather. Book @ www.reiki.holisticwellness.com 1290 Kennestone Circle Suite A-101, Marietta.

## Saturday, April 11

**Weekly Wellness Walk Club** – 9-11am. Community wellness walk along the At-

lanta Beltline encouraging movement, connection and self-care. Meet outside Krog Street Market tables. All ages and fitness levels welcome. Free. Atlanta Beltline Eastside Trail, Atlanta. bit.ly/Weekly-Wellness-Walk-041126.

**Free Abs Class** – 10-11am. High-energy core workout designed to tighten, tone and strengthen abdominal muscles through bodyweight and strength exercises. Suitable for all fitness levels. Free. Jamie The Motivator, 3365 W Hospital Ave, Ste G, Chamblee. bit.ly/Free-Abs-Class-041126.

**Staying in Fighting Trim: Mentally, Physically, and Spiritually!** – 10am-1pm. Community health and wellness fair featuring vendor booths, health screenings, demonstrations and activities promoting mental, physical and spiritual well-being for adults and children. Free. C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center, 3201 Martin Luther King Jr Dr SW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Staying-in-Fighting-Trim-041126.

## Sunday, April 12

**Sunday Morning Yoga @ The Interlock** – 10-11am. Free all-levels community yoga class focused on movement, breath and relaxation to start the week feeling grounded and refreshed. Bring a mat, water and towel. Free. The Interlock, 1115 Howell Mill Rd NW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Morning-Yoga-041226.

**Gentle Stretching and Breath-Work: Mind-Body Connection Through Movement** – 10-11am. Holistic class blending gentle stretching, qigong, yoga, tai chi, meditation and breathwork to support relaxation, flexibility and mental clarity. Ages 16+. Free. Body & Brain Yoga + Tai Chi, 2595 Sandy Plains Rd, Marietta. bit.ly/Mind-Body-Connection-041226.

## Community is Currency Masterclass

Wednesday, April 15 – 7:30-8:30pm  
(Virtual)

What if your greatest source of opportunity and growth is in your community? This masterclass weaves wisdom teachings, breathwork, journaling, and meditation to explore how relationships strengthen and support entrepreneurship, creativity, and personal growth. Led by bestselling author Trish Ahjel Roberts.

Register at  
MasterclassWithTrish.com.

## Wednesday, April 15

**Mocha Mom Wellness Walk Wednesdays** – 8:30-9:30am. Midweek community walk for moms focused on movement, fresh air and connection while supporting physical and mental wellness in a relaxed, supportive environment. Free. Cauley Creek Park, 7255 Bell Rd, Johns Creek. bit.ly/Mocha-Mom-Wellness-041526.

**Gentle Yoga with Joan** – 11am-12pm. Relaxing yoga class supporting balance, mobility and peace of mind, designed especially for older adults. Bring a yoga mat and water. Free. Autrey Mill Nature Preserve & Heritage Center, 9770 Autrey Mill Rd, Johns Creek. bit.ly/Gentle-Yoga-Joan-041526.

## Thursday, April 16

**Survival to Thrival** – 5-6pm. Educational workshop introducing NetworkSpinal Care and how the nervous system can shift from chronic stress into greater ease, resilience and awareness through gentle, body-based approaches. Free. Holistic Alignment Strategies, 3475 Dallas Hwy, Bldg 400, Ste 425, Marietta. bit.ly/Survival-to-Thrival-041926.

**Free Cardio Dance Classes** – 6-7pm. Beginner-friendly outdoor workout blending Zumba, hip-hop, Afrobeats, reggae and reggaeton for a fun, high-energy fitness experience. No equipment needed. Free. North Avenue MARTA Station Plaza, 713 W Peachtree St NW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Free-Cardio-Dance-Classes-041626.

**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 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.

## Saturday, April 18

**SFAC x Emory Healthcare Health Truck Festival** – 10am-2pm. Community health festival offering blood pressure checks, glucose testing, dental screenings, colon cancer education, preventive health resources and wellness information from medical professionals. Free. Welcome All Park, South Fulton. bit.ly/Health-Truck-Festival-041826.

**A Woman's Worth: Grounding, Meditation & Womb Health Workshop** – 1-3pm. Sacred wellness gathering featuring grounding practices, meditation and holistic education on womb health for African American women, with community connection and wellness resources. Suggested donation. Piedmont Park, 1322 Monroe Dr, Atlanta. bit.ly/Grounding-Meditation-Womb-Health-Workshop-041826.

## Sunday, April 19

**Carl McColman, Guest Speaker** – 11am-12 pm. Message title, "The Ingredients of Hope." Carl McColman is a contemplative writer, speaker, and spiritual director. Author of numerous books including The New Big Book of Christian Mysticism, Read the Bible Like a Mystic, An Invitation to Celtic Wisdom, and Eternal Heart. Unity Atlanta

Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

**With Ease: A Nervous System Reset Through Breath & Movement** – 6-7:15pm. Guided breathwork and gentle movement session designed to reduce tension, support nervous system regulation and increase body awareness in a calm, supportive environment. \$24. Sol Yoga Studio, 3931 Mary Eliza Trace NW, Ste 210, Marietta. bit.ly/A-Nervous-System-Reset-041926.

## Thursday, April 23

**Free Kidney Health Screening** – 9am-2pm. Free community screening with kidney health education and tests including blood pressure, blood sugar, urine and blood analysis, plus BMI measurements. Open to adults 18+. Free. The Villages at Carver Family YMCA, 1600 Pryor Rd SW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Free-Kidney-Health-Screening-042326.

## Friday, April 24

**Circle of Life: Pregnancy, Family & Aging Wellness Fair** – 7-8pm. Community wellness event celebrating all stages of life with resources, education and community connection for pregnancy, family wellness and aging. Free. St. John Neumann Catholic Church, 801 Tom Smith Rd SW, Lilburn. bit.ly/Pregnancy-Family-Aging-042426.

## Saturday, April 25

**This Is Me Wellness Tour** – 12-4pm. Transformative wellness experience for girls ages 10-18 and mothers/caregivers featuring workshops on emotional wellness, confidence, self-expression, natural hair, arts and creativity. Free meals and swag bags. Free admission. Clayton County Center, Atlanta, Georgia. bit.ly/This-Is-Me-04-25-26.

## Sunday, April 26

**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.

## Tuesday, April 28

**Yoga in the Park with Dancing Dogs Yoga** – 6-7pm. Outdoor community yoga class welcoming all experience levels. Flow through invigorating poses while enjoying fresh air and skyline views in Piedmont Park. Bring a mat and water. Free. The Promenade, Piedmont Park, Atlanta. bit.ly/Yoga-in-the-Park-042826.

## Wednesday, April 29

**The Crest Walkers** – 9-10am. Community walking club promoting fitness, fresh air and social connection. Walk with others while building healthy habits, boosting energy and enjoying supportive community vibes. Free. Browns Mill Recreation Center, 5101 Browns Mill Rd, Stonecrest. bit.ly/The-Crest-Walkers-042926.

## Friday, May 1

**FREE Trauma Informed Yoga** – 10-11:30am. Gentle yoga class for veterans and trauma

survivors focusing on mindful movement, grounding breathwork and meditation to reduce stress and restore balance in a supportive environment. Free. Healing Hands Reiki & Spiritual Development Inc., 27 Waddell St NE, Ste A, Atlanta. bit.ly/Free-Trauma-Informed-Yoga-050126.

**Karaoke & Open Mic Night** – 7-9 pm. All are invited to this family-friendly evening of entertainment and fellowship. Karaoke music is provided, or bring your instruments, poetry or any form of artistic expression. Potluck meal. Love offering. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

## Saturday, May 2

**Whine Walk Run 5K & International Food Festival** – 9am-6pm. Community 5K fun run and cultural festival celebrating Caribbean food, music, art and wellness. Enjoy cultural presentations, vendors and family-friendly activities. Food festival free; 5K registration separate. Piedmont Park, Charles Allen Gate, 10th St NE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Whine-Walk-Run-5K-050226.

**Red Light Running Society: Run or Walk** – 10am-1pm. Weekly community meetup with group walking, jogging or running followed by cooldown and optional strength training. All fitness levels welcome. Free. Red Light Cafe, 553 Amsterdam Ave NE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Run-or-Walk-050226.



## ONGOING

### 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.

**Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta Sunday Experience.** Starting at 3pm music and Science of Mind message; 4pm 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, Clossie 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. cfmtl.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 healing paths. Transform your life and connect spiritually. Andrea, 404-557-4306. Norcross.

**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. The uplifting Sunday services include prayer, message, and guided meditation. Special music is provided by Unity Atlanta Church's Soulful Harmonics Band and Celebration Choir. 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** – 11:00 am – 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. Efraim 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" (Conexión Divina) Zoom Gathering** – 8-9pm. The Spanish-speaking community is invited to this Zoom prayer and study group, led by Rev. Xiomara Malagon. April features the Unity Booklet "The Power of Faith to Heal." For more info and to receive the Zoom link, email: xioma735@gmail.com. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

## 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. cfmtl.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.

symptoms. Check with your doctor before using an LED light.

- If you are taking medications that cause light sensitivity, such as certain antibiotics, some chemotherapy and Accutane, among others, LED light therapy is not advised.
- LED therapy is not intended for children under the age of 12, and since there are limited studies on using LED on those who are pregnant and those with epilepsy, it's best to consult a medical professional before using.
- Always use the device as directed. Excess exposure may cause damage to the skin.
- Always wear the protective eye covering provided with the device. Don't substitute other eyewear.

Finally, as the number of brands competing for market share continues to increase, claims made by device manufacturers have become less truthful, which has led to class action lawsuits. Three manufacturers—NuFACE Trinity+, Aphrona Moonlight Pro and Omnilux—are facing lawsuits stemming from false advertising and claiming FDA "approval" instead of FDA "clearance." Buyer beware!

While LED lights aren't a cure-all for skin issues, LED light therapy has become an affordable, simple and safe way to treat the signs of aging skin as well as improve general health. With a bit of research into device manufacturers and consideration of one's intentions and expectations, LED light therapy can be a wonderful addition to holistic health routines. 🌿



*Susan Gonzalez is a holistic licensed esthetician, author, nurse and owner of MOON Organics, a skincare company providing clean, healthy skincare and personal care*

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# Silence Isn't Empty

by Toyia Denise

I did not expect anything remarkable to happen in the desert. I traveled there as part of my master's program in leadership, and our class was assigned to spend ten days at a Catholic monastery in the foothills of the Mojave Desert. It was a silent retreat, except for a few brief windows of time when we were allowed to speak with the monks. I had never been around people who held silence the way they did. Their quiet felt spacious and steady, as if it came from somewhere practiced and true, as if the silence itself was speaking and they had learned how to listen.

I was assigned to interview one of the oldest monks. He had migrated from China years earlier and had lived most of his life in the monastery. Sitting across from him, I felt scattered and unsure of myself. My questions came out tentative, as though I was trying to earn permission to be there.

I said, "You have lived here for 50 years. You must really love your brothers." I expected a long response or a story filled with warmth. Instead, he smiled gently, the kind of smile that carries peace rather than performance.

"It is not about love," he said, "although I do love them. They are my brothers. It is about commitment. I am committed to them and committed to a life of prayer and service."

His response landed differently in me. At that point in my life, I had heard people talk about love and commitment, but I had rarely seen them lived out. Watching him embody commitment, quietly and without fanfare, shifted something in me. What he had chosen clearly required sacrifice, but it did not feel heavy. It felt steady. It felt joyful.

I felt a quiet admiration—and a longing to feel that kind of simple contentment and joy in my own life.



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I stumbled through a few more questions, still finding my footing. Then I asked how the monks resolved conflict while living in community every day. He paused before answering, letting the silence sit between us without trying to fill it. In that pause, I felt how practiced he was at trusting the quiet to do its work.

"I cannot speak for anyone else," he said, "but I choose to only speak when I can improve the silence."

Ten words. Simple and unforced. Yet they moved through me as if something inside had shifted.

I thought about all the moments in my life when I spoke too quickly. When I filled the space because silence felt awkward. When I reacted instead of listening. When my words were driven more by urgency than

care. His sentence held up a mirror without judgment and showed me how often I forgot that silence is also a choice.

For the remainder of the retreat, I began to notice silence differently. It was not empty. It was not avoidance. It felt like a place where breath could settle before becoming words. I noticed how the monks moved through their days without rushing to explain themselves. They trusted quiet. They did not fight it.

When I left the monastery, the monk's words stayed with me. They followed me into conversations I wanted to control and moments when my old instinct would have been to explain myself or rush to fill the silence so I wouldn't feel exposed. Before speaking, I started asking myself whether my words would improve the silence already present.

I was used to feeling uncomfortable with silence. It exposes my impatience and my need to be acknowledged. What began to shift was my awareness of what silence does to me—how often I speak to relieve my own tension rather than to bring clarity. And if I don't speak in those moments, I feel vulnerable, like standing without armor.

Since then, I've been listening differently—not just to others but to myself. I notice how much wisdom I drown out by insisting on being heard. I'm less interested in filling space and more interested in honoring it.

I've discovered that silence is not empty; it is a container for truth, holding things my words often cover up. 🙏



*Toyia Denise is an Atlanta-based writer, executive coach and spiritual teacher with over 20 years in organizational leadership, guiding leaders through the patterns and imprints shaping how they lead, live and work. More at ToyiaDenise.com.*

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