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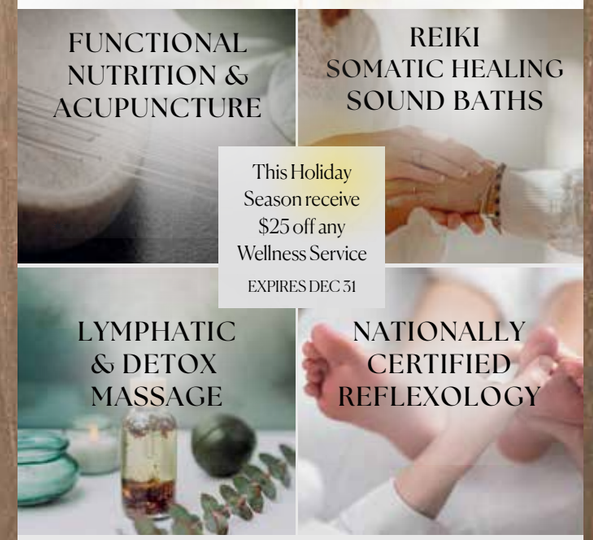
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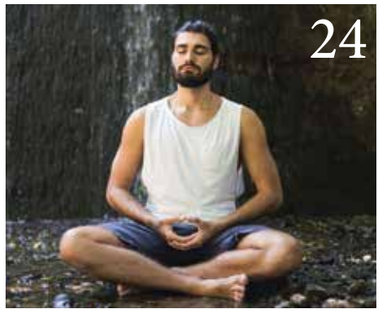
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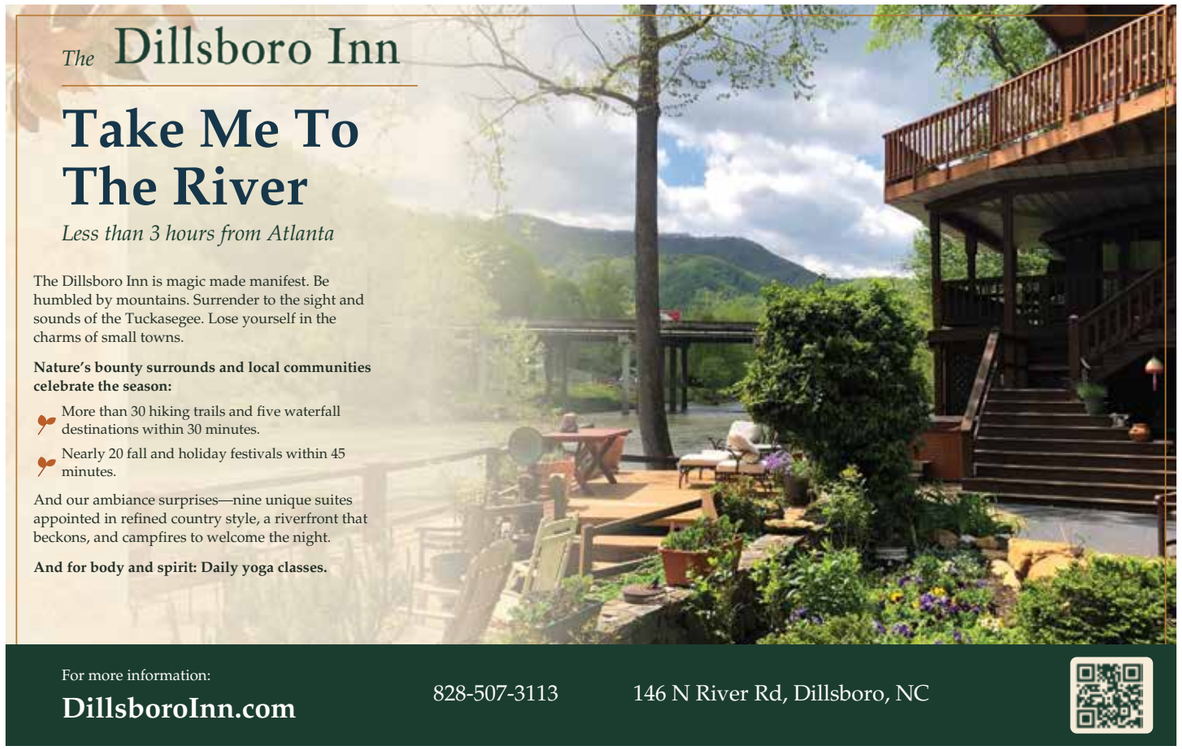
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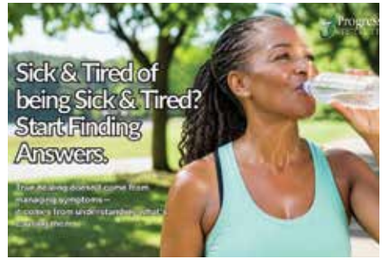
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On the Cover

Our cover subject is Mandara Cromwell, founder of the International Sound Therapy Association (ISTA), which held its 20th annual conference last month.



The photo of Cromwell is by Wanda Morganstern, an actor and entrepreneur with over 30 years of business experience. She works on both sides of the camera, as a performer and photographer. Morganstern brings her creative passion to the screen and enjoys adventures as a world traveler, scuba diver and underwater photographer.

The cover background has been altered with an image from Javier Balseiro on Pexel.com.

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"I Am Jane Doe"

by Alyssa Vee

I've written about my hair-trigger anger about injustice before, and, sadly, it seems there's no end to it. The morning I learned of the Cornell 57, it's a wonder that I didn't drop dead of a heart attack.

I have been stunned, appalled and grateful for the Jane Doe postings on Facebook, women sharing details of attacks endured. Forty-five percent of American women have been sexually assaulted. One in four girls under 18 experience sexual assault. We are not a civilized society, and men are why. Full stop.

I cannot write a measured piece about this. But I came across a remarkable Jane Doe post that offers unexpected grace and an unflinching examination of the gray areas—sometimes expansive—between right and wrong. I cede this month's column to Alyssa Vee, MSW, a holistic embodiment coach with an unfathomable heart.

—Paul Chen, Publisher

I want to change my stance a little on the Cornell Seven case. I haven't had the stomach to follow every detail of this case, but I've been processing some of my own trauma and shame as I've been watching the conversation unfold.

So let's talk about the uncomfortable question underneath all of this: Where exactly is the line of consent?

Not specifically in Jane Doe's case, because none of us were in that room and an investigation is ongoing. We cannot determine from social media which specific acts were consensual, which weren't, who knew what, or which criminal statutes ultimately apply. But we *can* talk about the larger conversation this case is forcing us to have.

Let's use my life as an example. In 2012, I was beaten unconscious by an intimate partner who was 15 years older and had known me since I was four. He broke his hand on my face. I was 22 years old, autistic, barely a year out from living under extremely protective parents. Six months earlier, I'd broken up with him, and he overdosed the next day. By the time the physical violence happened, layers of fear, attachment, guilt, dependency and trauma had wrapped themselves around the relationship.

And after he beat me unconscious? I called him. I begged him not to leave me. I refused to tell the police who had done it. Yet doing so did not make what happened beforehand consensual. It didn't un-break my face. It didn't suddenly make being beaten unconscious not domestic violence. And years later, I desperately wished I *had* pressed charges, because what followed was even worse.

That experience permanently changed how I understand victims. People imagine victimhood as this beautifully linear sequence where someone says no, something terrible happens, they immediately understand what happened, call police, leave the person, tell a perfectly consistent story and never speak to the perpetrator again.

Human beings don't always work like that. Trauma doesn't always work like that. And sex makes these conversations even more complicated.

Consent to one person isn't automatically consent to another. Consent to oral sex isn't automatically consent to intercourse. Consent at midnight isn't automatically consent at 4 a.m. Consent while capable of making decisions doesn't automatically answer what happens later if someone becomes incapacitated. And agreeing to something doesn't mean you've agreed to every possible escalation of it.



Alyssa Vee

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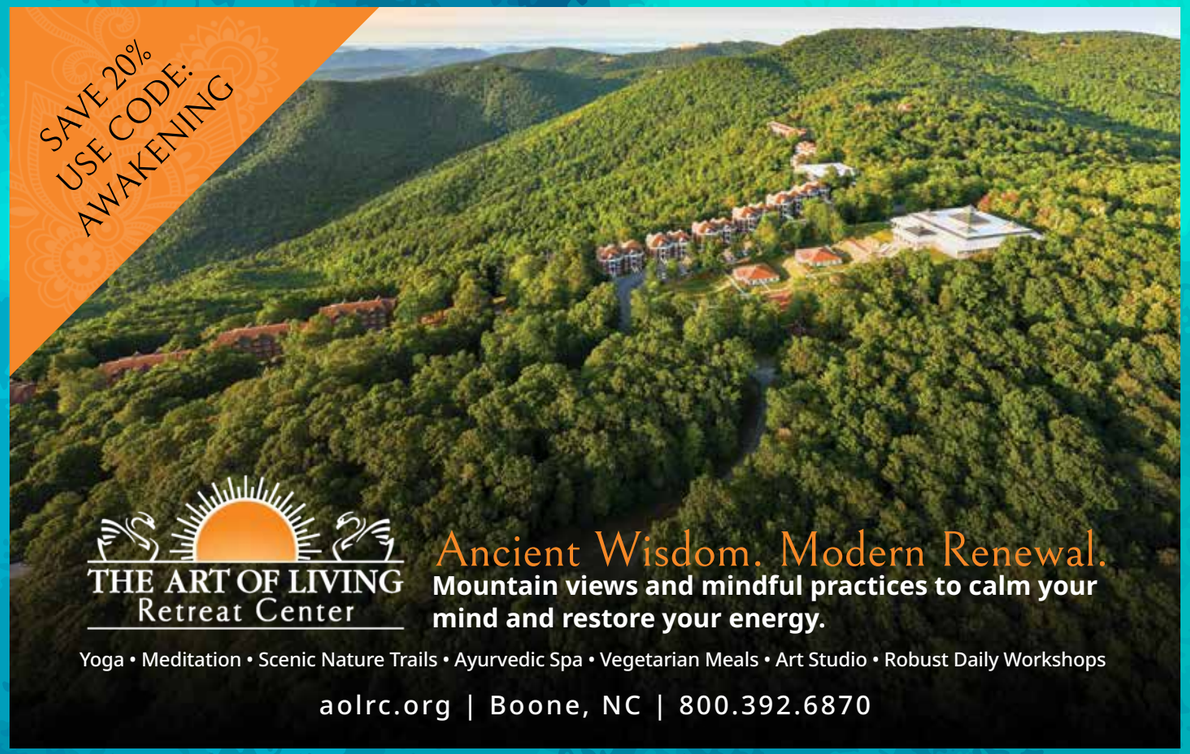
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That's why I think the Cornell case could become part of a much larger cultural shift. We're being forced to ask questions our culture has historically been incredibly sloppy about.

What does affirmative consent actually look like? What happens when multiple people are involved? What happens when drugs or alcohol enter the equation? At what point does intoxication become incapacitation? Whose responsibility is it to recognize that? What happens when someone initially participates willingly and then reaches a point where they no longer want to participate or no longer have the capacity to meaningfully choose? And what happens when someone doesn't fully understand what happened to them until afterward?

I think these questions are worth answering. And I think we hurt everyone when we insist that the people involved must fit neatly into "perfect victim versus evil predator" boxes, into boxes of right versus wrong.

Some acts are wrong, of course. Violence is wrong. Forcing sexual activity on someone who says no, and having sex with someone who cannot consent, are wrong. But in the vast gray area between right and wrong lies the urgent need for our culture to have conversations about communication, intoxication, coercion, power, changing consent and personal responsibility.

Maybe one consequence of this cultural reckoning will be a less hookup-seeking culture. Maybe people become more cautious about mixing sex with extreme intoxication. Maybe "Are you okay with this?" becomes sexy instead of awkward. Maybe people stop assuming that because somebody enthusiastically said yes ten minutes ago, they're still saying yes now. Maybe young men *and* young women learn that consent isn't something to obtain once. It's something everyone involved keeps asking and keeps communicating.

Maybe the answer isn't to fear sex. Maybe it's to become more intentional about it. The standard shouldn't be: "Can I legally get away with this?" It should be: "Is this person actively, freely and presently choosing this with me?"

And if you genuinely don't know? Stop. That's a cultural shift I could absolutely get behind.

In reverence. In love. In peace. ❧

Alyssa Vee, MSW, is a former psychotherapist turned holistic wellness coach, mentor and founder of Rising Phoenix Intuitive Wellness. She advocates for trauma recovery, conscious healing and compassionate conversations that challenge stigma and inspire collective change. RisingPhoenixiw.com

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Decatur Healing Arts Welcomes New Owner



Shankar Subramanian

Decatur Healing Arts, a holistic wellness center serving the community for more than 20 years, is under the new ownership of Shankar Subramanian, a biomedical engineer, naturopath and practitioner of Eastern healing traditions. Subramanian plans to introduce additional services that combine traditional Eastern healing modalities with modern technology.

The center offers a range of holistic wellness services, including massage therapy, yoga, tai chi, reiki, salt therapy and gong bath meditation. Its practitioners and therapists provide services addressing physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Subramanian has studied yogic and healing practices, including advanced methods in which he has received initiation. His background includes travel to sacred sites around the world and study with traditional healers. He also brings years of experience in technology leadership positions at large corporations.

With the ownership change, Subramanian is shifting his professional focus toward sharing his experience in healing practices and technology with the Decatur community. The center plans to expand its offerings, although specific new services and their introduction dates have not been announced.

For more information, call 404-378-6288, email DHA@DecaturHealingArts.com or visit DecaturHealingArts.com. Decatur Healing Arts is located at 619 E. College Ave., Suite A, in Decatur.

Kirkwood's First Classical Pilates Studio Opens



Kali Arnold, MD

Sati Pilates & Wellness will become Kirkwood's first classical Pilates studio when it opens in early November, offering reformer, tower and mat classes. The studio will emphasize the principles of classical Pilates while providing an inclusive approach for students of different experience levels and abilities. Small class sizes will allow for individualized instruction, thoughtful modifications and personal attention.

The opening expands the work of Sati Yoga & Wellness, which has been serving the Kirkwood community for four years. Dr. Kali Arnold, a former orthopedic surgeon, registered yoga teacher (E-RYT 200), Pilates instructor and reiki master, owns both businesses. She says her experience at Sati Yoga & Wellness has helped shape a culture in which students feel comfortable and supported.

"We spent the last four years nurturing our community and our culture so that people feel safe and accepted—and we can't wait to expand that connection into the Pilates community," Arnold says.

For more information, visit SatiPilatesWellness.com. Sati Pilates & Wellness is located at 1610 Hosea L. Williams Dr. NE, Suite I, in Atlanta.

n1.care Launches AI-Powered Patient Health Platform



Jean-Yves Sireau

n1.care, an artificial intelligence-powered health platform founded by Jean-Yves Sireau, launched its patient version in September. The online service brings together medical records from multiple providers into a single view of a person's health history.

"Every person carries years of health information scattered across doctors and labs, and almost no one gets to see it as a whole," Sireau says.

The platform organizes laboratory results, imaging, genetic information and clinical notes collected over time. By presenting records in a chronological timeline, it allows patients to examine changes in test results and other health information that might otherwise remain scattered across separate reports. According to the company, a licensed physician reviews and approves each report before it reaches the patient.

Sireau founded n1.care to help individuals better understand their medical histories and participate in discussions about their care. The platform organizes and interprets existing records but does not replace a patient's physician or make medical decisions.

Patients can open an account at no cost and begin organizing their medical records. The company also offers paid subscription plans based on usage and the extent of a patient's health history.

For more information or to start a free trial, visit n1.care.

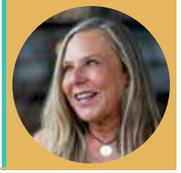
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North American Bird Losses Are Accelerating



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A 2026 study published in *Science* showed that declines in North American bird populations are speeding up year after year in regions with rising temperatures and intensive agriculture. According to the researchers, these accelerating declines were strongly associated with three factors: the heavy use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, which destroy local insects, wiping out the birds' main food source; the replacement of native plants and grasslands with massive crop fields, eliminating nesting grounds; and rising temperatures that compound the problem, adding environmental stress to these altered landscapes. The scientists noted strong statistical correlations between agricultural intensity/rising temperatures and faster bird losses, though they stressed that correlation does not strictly prove single-factor causation.

The researchers used data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey, covering more than 261 species in the U.S. and Canada, rather than tracking other variables such as migratory routes or wintering locations. In the U.S., the highest overall net declines in bird numbers occurred in warmer regions such as Florida, Texas and other Southern states. The fastest acceleration of losses, was most prominent in the Midwest, Mid-Atlantic and California.



Healthy Swaps for the Holiday Table

Thanksgiving Never Tasted So Good

by Marlaina Donato



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Making the Thanksgiving meal healthier does not mean sacrificing the flavor and traditions families and friends look forward to all year. Swapping in nutritious ingredients is an act of love, a way to care for the people gathered around the table while still honoring the dishes and memories that make the holiday meaningful.

With a little planning, delicious culinary adjustments are simple to execute. Ingredient replacements should be viewed as a celebration of abundance rather than deprivation, as they add colors, herbs, textures and more energy after the meal. Ideas include blending cauliflower into mashed potatoes, using Greek yogurt instead of sour cream, brightening dishes with herbs and citrus zest instead of heavy gravies, adding crunchy greens and seasonal salads, and sweetening desserts with fruit, monk fruit, stevia or smaller amounts of honey or maple syrup.

Good Vibes and a Healthy Heart

A balanced holiday plate that combines lean protein, fiber and complex carbohydrates can support increased energy, mood, mental clarity and emotional regulation, especially during a time that can bring stress, along with joy. According to Harvard Health Publishing, diet directly impacts mood and brain function through the gut-brain connection and inflammation regulation.

The American Heart Association recommends using olive oil instead of butter, even in mashed potatoes; herbs and spices like rosemary and cloves instead of butter and salt; and whole-grain bread and pasta instead of white flour.

Improving a Good Thing

"Food and recipes are meant to be adapted, and just because grandma made it one way doesn't mean you can't give it your own spin," says Kathryn Doherty, in Charlotte, North Carolina, a recipe creator, cookbook author and founder of *FamilyFoodOnTheTable.com*. "I happily put my lightened-up twist on old favorites and find ways to adapt classic recipes to work for my family."

Jesse Lane Lee, from Toronto, a holistic nutritionist, corporate wellness educator, cookbook author and founder of *JesseLaneWellness.com*, has the perfect healthy replacement for a dish most Americans wouldn't dream of forgoing. "Mashed cauliflower is much faster and easier to make than traditional mashed potatoes," she explains. "If you aren't a big fan of cauliflower, try swapping the sour cream you add to your mashed potatoes with plain Greek yogurt. The yogurt adds a satisfying tang, as well as extra protein."

Sara Tercero, from Massachusetts, a plant-based chef, cookbook author and founder of *BetterFoodGuru.com*, welcomes the opportunity to surprise and delight guests with flavorful substitutions, noting, "These switches can shave off hundreds of calories and make meals more balanced, while barely changing a recipe's taste or texture."

She relies on spices and vinegars to bring out the flavor of vegetables, helping them take center stage at the holiday table. Stuffing made with gluten-free grains and brown lentils can be surprisingly delicious without the carb crash of a traditional bread-based recipe. Instead of calorie-laden mac and cheese, add puréed butternut squash to high-protein or whole wheat pasta for a delightful, nutrient-rich twist. And a buttery, white flour-thickened gravy pales in comparison to a creamy sauce made with roasted carrots, parsnips, onions and celery blended in a low-sodium broth with sage, thyme and black pepper.

Dessert Reimagined

Topping a sweet potato casserole with a nut streusel instead of marshmallows is one of Doherty's holiday favorites. By combining chopped pecans with a touch of butter, modest amounts of brown sugar and cinnamon, she is able to replace the empty calories of the traditional topping with healthy fats and antioxidants while also adding satisfying texture and complexity to the dish.

Doherty is also strategic about her homemade cranberry sauce. "Adding fresh orange juice and some honey helps add sweetness and flavor and allows you to use less granulated sugar. Start small, taste as you go and see how much sugar you really need," she advises, adding that honey or naturally sweet fruit such as bananas or dates are healthier choices for desserts.

Pure maple syrup is Tercero's go-to sweetener. "I also like to add in something that will make the dessert moist, like apple sauce or tahini, because it gives more depth of flavor than oil and sugar," she says, noting that chia or flax seeds with water (instead of eggs) and avocado (instead of butter or shortening) can also keep vegan baked goods moist and fluffy while adding nutrition.

Marlaina Donato is an author, painter and composer. Connect at WildflowersAndWoodSmoke.com.

MAPLE BALSAMIC BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH HONEYNUT SQUASH AND WALNUTS



Courtesy of Sara Tercero

YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

2 lbs Brussels sprouts, halved
2 honeynut squash peeled, seeded and cut into bite-size pieces
1 cup walnuts
4 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
3 Tbsp pure maple syrup
2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp salt
½ tsp garlic powder

Preheat the oven to 400° F.

To a large sheet pan add the Brussels sprouts and honeynut squash. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and garlic powder. Mix well by hand until all the veggies are coated, and spread them out into a single layer. Bake for 20 minutes.

Take the sheet pan out of the oven, add the walnuts and baste the veggies and nuts with the balsamic vinegar and pure maple syrup. With a spatula, carefully mix until all the veggies are coated with the sweet maple and tangy vinegar. Return to the oven for 10 more minutes.

Transfer the cooked veggies and nuts to a serving platter and enjoy within 2 to 3 days for the best quality.

Recipe courtesy of Sara Tercero and BetterFoodGuru.com.

GARLIC CAULIFLOWER MASH



Courtesy of Jesse Lane Lee

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

1 large head of cauliflower, cut into florets
2 cloves of garlic
2 Tbsp olive oil
¼ tsp sea salt
black pepper to taste

Steam the cauliflower and garlic for 8 to 10 minutes until soft.

Transfer to a food processor with olive oil, salt and pepper. Blend until smooth.

Recipe courtesy of Jesse Lane Lee and JesseLaneWellness.com.



Courtesy of Sara Tercero

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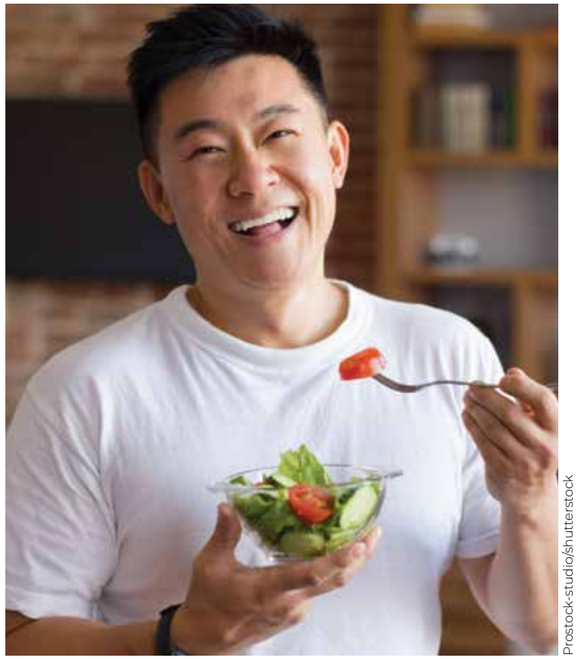
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The Prediabetes Wake-Up Call

Lifestyle Changes To Keep Diabetes at Bay

by Leslie K. Hughes



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A prediabetes diagnosis can feel daunting, but many health experts describe it as an opportunity for positive change. The diagnosis indicates blood sugar levels are higher than normal but have not yet reached the diabetes range, which means the body is still highly responsive to healthful modifications.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than two in five adult Americans are living with prediabetes, about 80 percent of whom are unaware of their condition. A landmark clinical trial showed that the Diabetes Prevention Program, involving lifestyle changes in diet and exercise, as well as modest weight loss, could effectively reduce the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by 58 percent, outperforming medication alone.

Build a Balanced Plate

For many, the journey to diabetes prevention begins with dietary adjustments, not by restriction, as commonly thought, but by the adoption of better food pairings. Hillary Wright, a registered dietitian and director of nutrition at the Wellness Center at Boston IVF, in Massachusetts, recommends a "balanced plate" of one quarter lean protein such as seafood, poultry or tofu; one quarter fiber-rich carbohydrates like brown rice, quinoa or sweet potato; and the remaining half filled with colorful vegetables.

"Pairing carbohydrate-containing foods like rice or pasta with a source of lean protein increases the feeling of fullness a meal or snack provides and complicates the absorption of glucose into the blood, resulting in gentler blood glucose swings after meals," she explains. The order of food consumption also plays a role, although Wright emphasizes the importance of making mealtime enjoyable rather than mechanical. While there is evidence that eating vegetables and protein before carbohydrates can be beneficial, the goal is to establish a sustainable habit rather than adhering to a rigid rule.

Read Food Labels Mindfully

Dr. Rebecca Hunton, medical director of Radiantly Healthy MD, a functional medicine clinic in Indialantic, Florida, developed a shortcut for evaluating packaged foods: subtract the grams of fiber, fat and protein from total carbohydrates. A result of 10 or less indicates a gentler effect on blood sugar and insulin levels, while higher numbers tend to cause spikes in both. "What I am really asking is whether the carbohydrate is arriving mostly by itself, or arriving buffered, slowed down by fiber, protein and fat," she remarks, adding that finely milled whole grains often digest almost like flour, making the fiber count alone potentially misleading.

For protein quality, Hunton offers a second shortcut: multiply grams of protein by 10 and compare that number to total calories. If it matches or exceeds the calories, the food is relatively protein dense, a useful check when comparing yogurts, protein bars or prepared foods.

Consider the Whole Body

Prediabetes serves as a signal from the entire body, not merely an isolated blood sugar anomaly, both experts agree. Hunton notes that insulin resistance often develops before lab values shift, and unexplained weight gain is frequently the first clue. Hormonal changes, including those associated with perimenopause, can accelerate this transition. "Women frequently blame menopause for how they feel without realizing that what is happening is a cardiovascular and blood sugar change," she says. Muscle mass also plays a pivotal role. Resistance training and regular physical activity, ranging from brisk walks to yard work, help the body regulate blood sugar levels.

Use Data as a Learning Tool

Wright holds mixed feelings about the use of continuous glucose monitors before a diabetes diagnosis, as there is insufficient evidence to define a normal pattern in prediabetes, and watching the data closely can inadvertently induce stress. "If wearing a monitor feels like it's creating too much anxiety around eating, it's a good indication to stop," she advises. A more effective approach, she suggests, is to wear a monitor for just two to four weeks, supervised by a physician or registered dietitian that can help interpret the results.

Hunton uses monitors earlier and more frequently, turning nutrition from guesswork into personal data, and comparing the impact of meals, sleep and physical activity on the glucose curve. Still, she agrees with the underlying philosophy: the goal is to understand, not surveil or judge.

Both experts raise a similar caution regarding food tracking, acknowledging that while it can build awareness, it should be approached with caution or avoided altogether by individuals with a history of disordered eating, which is defined by the National Eating Disorders Association as "a spectrum of problematic eating behaviors and distorted attitudes towards food, weight, shape and appearance."

Build Momentum With Modest Adjustments

According to Hunton, change does not have to be instantaneous to be meaningful. The body's patterns take time to rewrite, and consistency matters more than speed. Patience coupled with practical tools like balanced plates, label reading, shortcuts and a willingness to observe personal patterns without judgment, is what makes prediabetes reversible for so many.

Anyone navigating a new prediabetes diagnosis is encouraged to work with a physician, registered dietitian or certified specialist in diabetes care and education because individual glucose responses vary. With the right support, prediabetes transforms from a cause for fear into a window to choose a different course of action.

Leslie K. Hughes writes about physical and mental health issues. Learn more at HouseOfHughes.co and TheVisceralEdit.substack.com.

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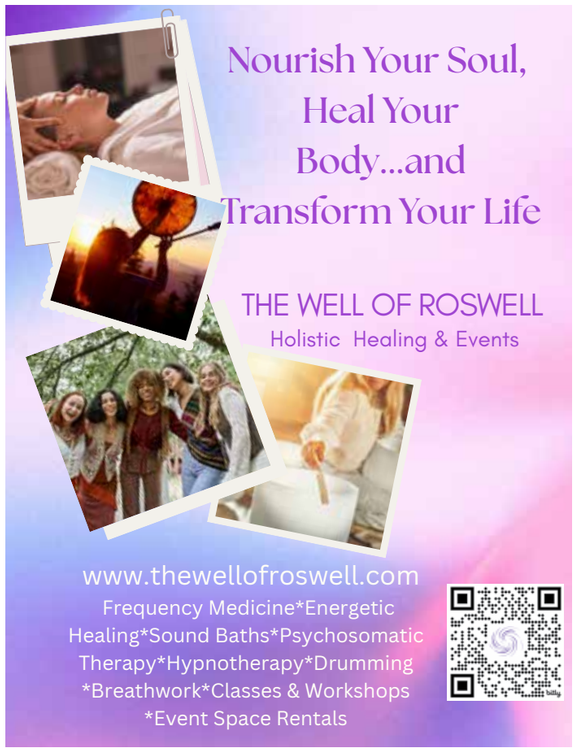
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Stay Grounded This Fall by Calming Vata Dosha

by Catherine Roberts Eads



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Fall brings cooler temperatures, drier air, packed calendars and holiday demands, along with early alarms, school activities, year-end deadlines and the return to standard time. Many people feel all these changes as an unsettling jolt to their system.

According to Ayurveda, the holistic ancient Indian science of life, the natural qualities of fall increase *vata dosha*. The word "dosha" literally translates to "that which can cause harm, go out of balance, or spoil." Dosha imbalance causes symptoms, illness and disease if left unchecked.

For more than 5,000 years, Ayurvedic practitioners have used the three doshas, *vata, pitta* and *kapha,* to teach people how to live long, healthy lives. These three energies govern the functions of the body, the qualities of our food and environment, and the daily and seasonal cycles and rhythms. Our bodies, minds and emotions are governed by the energies of all three doshas, yet one dosha defines the predominant constitution for most people.

Understanding Vata, Pitta and Kapha

The vata dosha consists of the elements air and "ether," or space. Vata governs all movement, including breathing, circulation, nerve impulses, elimination and the flow of thoughts and emotions. As dry leaves fall, crackle underfoot, and scatter in the wind; as trees stand bare, grey, and thin; and as the air turns crisp and cold, vata's influence is felt. Vata's qualities are dry, light, cold, rough, subtle, mobile and clear, and they show up throughout fall and early winter.

Pitta dosha, on the other hand, consists of the fire and water elements and governs all processing from digesting food and absorbing nutrients to processing emotions and absorbing new information. And Kapha dosha consists of the water and earth elements and governs physical stability and moisture in our bodily tissues, while also providing steady calm in mind and spirit.

As Outside, So Within

Ayurveda teaches that like increases like, and opposites bring balance. When the world around us grows dry, cold and windy, those same qualities naturally increase in the body, mind and spirit. Lips and skin feel dry, hands and feet run cold and the mind becomes more active and restless.

Modern life adds fuel to the fire. Fourth-quarter work goals, holiday demands, family obligations, school events and travel all keep people moving faster and thinking harder. Constant busy-ness, irregular meals, late nights and screen time aggravate vata further. Layered on top of the season, it is a recipe for vata aggravation.

Common signs of an excess of vata include:

- Dry, rough or chapped skin, dry hair, brittle nails
- Gas, bloating, constipation and irregular appetite
- Cold hands and feet
- Cracking, popping, stiff or achy joints
- Muscle tightness and tension
- Light, easily disturbed sleep or insomnia
- Worry, anxiety, fear or nervousness
- Feeling scattered, ungrounded and overwhelmed
- Racing thoughts, forgetfulness and difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue and restlessness

Vata Types Need Extra Care In The Fall

Everyone feels vata's influence in the fall, but people with a vata-predominant constitution feel it most. They tend to be slender, creative, enthusiastic, quick-thinkers who naturally lean toward vata's light, dry, cold and mobile qualities. When the season and a hectic schedule add more of the same, vata types easily get imbalanced.

Self-care habits and daily routines helps rebalance vata by bringing warmth, moisture, nourishment and steadiness into our meals.

Dinacharya, the Ayurvedic term for daily routines, provides the solid foundation vata needs. For example, wake, eat, and go to bed at the same time each day. Begin the morning slowly with warm water, a few minutes of stretching or breathing followed by a warm breakfast. A predictable rhythm helps ground the erratic qualities of vata.

It's also beneficial to include more:

- Warm, cooked, moist meals such as soups, stews, porridge and kitchari
- Sweet, sour and salty tastes, which pacify vata
- Root vegetables, winter squash, sweet potatoes, basmati rice, amaranth, oats and well-cooked mung dal





- Healthy fats such as ghee, sesame oil and olive oil
- Warming spices including ginger, cinnamon, cumin, cardamom and clove
- Warm water, herbal teas or spiced warm milk at bedtime
- Mindful, unrushed meals, with lunch as the largest meal

And limit or avoid:

- Raw salads, cold smoothies, iced drinks
- Dry, crunchy, light foods like crackers, chips, popcorn, rice cakes
- Excess caffeine, alcohol and sugar
- Skipping meals or eating on the go
- Late nights, overscheduling and long stretches of screen time
- Intense, high-impact workouts that leave you depleted

Simple Steps to Balance Vata

In "*Ayurvedic Medicine: The Principles of Traditional Practice,*" Sebastian Pole outlines vata-pacifying habits.

- **Eat:** Warm, fresh foods cooked in healthy oils, with warming spices eaten at regular times in a calm environment. Favor grounding grains, root vegetables, soups and stews.
- **Drink:** Warm water or herbal teas throughout the day, including warming ginger or digestive-balancing cumin-coriander-fennel tea, and warm milk with nutmeg or cardamom about an hour before bed.
- **Move:** Incorporate slow, steady exercise, such as walking, gentle yoga, tai chi or swimming. Favor longer holds and grounding poses over fast-paced classes.
- **Routine:** Maintain consistent wake, meal and bedtimes. Aim for bed by 10 p.m. and plan space into the calendar for rest.
- **Self-care:** Give yourself a warm oil self-massage with sesame oil before a warm shower. Add calming breathwork, meditation, quiet time outdoors and dress in warm, cozy layers.

To build a yoga asana practice that balances vata, keep the pacing slow and mindful, the breath deep and steady and the poses grounding, with somewhat longer, strengthening holds. A vata-balancing practice focuses on centering, calming and building strength more than mobility and flexibility. Sequences that include poses that support digestion and elimination also help regulate vata. Daily yoga nidra practice can also calm vata in mind, body and spirit.

Calming *pranayama*, or breathing practices, that settle the nervous system also calm and ground vata dosha, such as alternate nostril breathing, diaphragmatic breathing and humming bee breath. Following a grounding asana practice with a generous *savasana*, or corpse pose, moving into a calming breathing practice, and a short meditation will deeply nourish and balance vata dosha.

Some Vata-balancing yoga poses

- Bridge pose
- Cat -Cow
- Corpse pose/Savasana
- Down Dog
- Forward Fold
- Garland pose or deep yogic squat
- Low lunge
- Low lunge twist
- Mountain
- Supine butterfly
- Supine pigeon and supine twist
- Warrior I
- Wide-leg forward fold
- Wind-relieving pose

Awareness Is the First Step

Knowing which foods, actions and habits calm vata, and which aggravate it, gives you the awareness to prevent imbalance before it starts. It also helps you notice the early signs, such as dry skin, a restless night or a scattered mind, so you can rebalance with a few simple adjustments to your daily habits. Simply keeping consistent, healthy routines will soothe vata without much effort.

To learn your primary dosha and get tips that support your dosha profile, you can take Cathy's dosha quiz here: FindBlissYoga.ScoreApp.com.



Catherine Roberts Eads is an Ayurveda wellness counselor, yoga therapist, and regenerative resilience coach helping midlife women reclaim their energy and feel vibrant again. Learn more at FindBlissYoga.com.



Safe Havens for Happy Dogs and Cats

Designing a Stress-Free Space for Our Pets

by Ruth Roberts, DVM, CVA, CVH, CVFT, NAN



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Imagine the relief of stepping through the front door after a long day, taking a deep breath and feeling the weight of the world lift. For humans, home is a sanctuary, but for pets, it is their entire universe. The constant noise, unpredictable schedules and lack of control over daily routines can leave dogs and cats feeling overwhelmed. Because pets rely so completely on the humans around them, a household's atmosphere tends to become their anchor. Therefore, pet wellness often begins by creating a calm, appreciative environment.

Pets Absorb Their Caregivers' Stress

Companion animals are highly sensitive to the emotional currents inside a home, often acting like mirrors, reflecting the vibe of their surroundings. A 2019 study published in *Scientific Reports* measured cortisol, a stress hormone, in the hair of 58 dog and owner pairs. The results show that long-term stress levels are synchronized in dogs and their owners. And a 2015 study in *PLOS ONE* involving 1,508 dog owners found that dogs of emotionally distant owners were more likely to exhibit separation-related disorder, showing severe distress when left alone.

Marlene Siegel, an integrative veterinarian and owner of Pasco Veterinary Medical Center, in Florida, views this mirroring as information rather than a reason to assign blame. On the *Healing Tails* podcast, she explained that pets are "showing us something that we need to learn," and that it is up to us to pay attention, become aware of it and "shift the energy."

A 2026 article in *Biological Reviews* notes that city dogs face chronic stress because their environments and routines are overwhelming. Living in busy urban areas can overstimulate a dog's senses, and because they rely entirely on humans, they rarely get to make their own choices. This affects the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis—the body's main stress alarm system. In normal settings, the alarm turns on during danger and turns off when the danger passes. But for these dogs, the alarm never shuts off, causing cumulative damage to their physical health and changes in behavior.

Emotional distress can also affect a pet's appetite. For example, a senior, mixed-breed dog stopped eating from his bowl, even avoiding his favorite foods, months after his longtime canine companion passed away. Bloodwork indicated a physical issue requiring its own investigation, but the fear at the bowl was something tests alone could not explain. Offering food wherever he felt safe, before adding supplements, helped stabilize him within days.

Practical Steps to Create a Calmer Home

A supportive home is built on appreciation, where caregivers strive to understand a pet's instincts, rather than expecting the animal to navigate a human world unguided. A 2021 study from University of California, Davis, published in *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, found that dogs displayed signs of fear in response to household sounds, especially high-pitched beeps like smoke-detector chirps, while owners responded with amusement in about 46 percent of the videos analyzed. A 2023 study in *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*

Continued on page 30

ISTA Rings In 20 Years of Sound Healing

by Diane Eaton



Photo: Wanda Morganstern

Professor Jeralyn Glass on crystal bowls, ISTA Conference 2026

One bright day in 2005, Mandara Cromwell was sitting in meditation and heard a voice. It said, "There should be an international sound therapy association headquartered in Atlanta!"

Cromwell was not new to alternative healing practices or to the power of sound as a therapeutic modality at the time. She was a longtime meditator, had lived in India and had studied Ayurveda and Chinese medicine. She had also founded CYMA Technologies, which manufactures noninvasive therapeutic sound technology devices. But she didn't think the message was personal.

When the voice repeated itself for two more days, Cromwell realized it was nudging her to do something. So she invited a group of friends and colleagues over for dinner to talk about it. The response was unanimous: Everyone there jumped in to participate and help bring it about. Within three months, the organizational infrastructure was in place, and the International Sound Therapy Association (ISTA) was born. It held its first monthly meeting with nearly 100 people attending.

The meetings were intended to attract those interested in sound healing and to educate people about what sound is and how therapeutic it can be. Combining sound, music, vibration, art and science education, ISTA members traveled around Atlanta, visiting cancer support groups, schools and veterans groups to provide sound experiences and "to help people kind of reset, because we are an overstressed and overwhelmed world," says Cromwell.

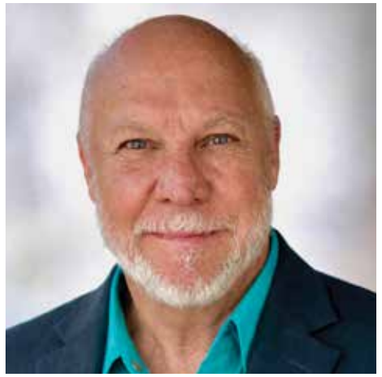
From Meetings to Conferences

In 2006, Cromwell received another message in meditation—this time, to host a conference on cymatics, the study of how sound and vibration create visible patterns in matter, in Atlanta. If ISTA sponsored the event, she reasoned, it could happen, so she put the word out. Two weeks later, Cromwell got a phone call from Steven Halpern—a world-renowned pioneer of "New Age" music and sound healing and a multi-platinum recording artist based in California. He had heard about the upcoming conference and asked if he might participate. Cromwell happily agreed, of course. Since then, Halpern and other internationally recognized musicians and sound artists have become frequent guests at ISTA events.

While their monthly meetings continued uninterrupted until the pandemic of 2020, ISTA members also brought instruments and education to the community. When



Mandara Cromwell



Don Simmons

ISTA's current president, Don Simmons, joined the board of directors in 2007, he launched their Gongs, Bells, and Bowls program, leading a troupe of volunteers to visit schools, hospitals, cancer support programs, memory care communities, veterans groups, addiction recovery programs and other organizations throughout Georgia.

In those early years, membership was primarily made up of people exploring sound therapy, music therapy, tuning forks, crystal bowls, gongs and more. But Cromwell and Simmons soon recognized the tremendous value sound therapy could bring to massage therapists and others in healing professions. "We wanted to get the world of sound into the world of massage," says Simmons, who has studied with Thich Nhat Hanh and Jon Kabat-Zinn and has a background in massage therapy. They set up classes where massage therapists could earn CEUs, but the Georgia Board of Massage Therapy revoked their CEU credential after a few years because, with sound therapy, hands are not placed on the body. "We probably certified close to a thousand people over several years in sound therapy for massage," says Simmons; practitioners hailed from Atlanta, North and South Carolina and Alabama. "I was able to help massage therapists understand how they can use sound to help their client reduce the stress in the muscle effectively. It actually makes the therapeutic work easier." He saw it transform people's lives. "Their reaction to the world of sound is really powerful."

Credibility and Integrity

With music and sound instruments so readily available to the public, ISTA continues to work to increase credibility and integrity in the field of sound therapy. "At ISTA, we want to ensure that those who are calling themselves sound practitioners really know what they're doing," says Simmons, noting that someone could order a set of tuning forks online one day and start calling themselves a sound practitioner the next day. ISTA began to see itself as an independent certifying body for qualified therapeutic sound practitioners, creating ways for practitioners from different schools, traditions and educational backgrounds to share professional standards.

To set a baseline of competence and professional identity, ISTA introduced its Tibetan Bowl Certification in 2015. In 2016, it began offering a Therapeutic Sound Practitioner Certification, an intensive 270-hour educational program that Cromwell co-created with Princeton University music professor Wendy Young.

Around the same time, Cromwell released the Pain Free Living Campaign to encourage practitioners to use responsible professional language, informed consent, proper documentation and appropriate boundaries when working with therapeutic sound.

When the 2020 pandemic limited in-person gatherings, ISTA pivoted. Instead of remaining an event-based community-gathering organization, it re-imagined itself as an international community of sound healers with a mission to establish educational, ethical and professional standards for the whole industry.

Roxanne Lowery completed ISTA's intensive 270-hour Platinum class and started her private practice, Infinite Flow, in 2018. Lowery, a credentialed gong master who travels throughout the Southeast, says the program "relaunched my career in a completely different direction—more toward sound as therapy rather than music as a healing modality." The training also shaped her development as a practitioner. "I learned to hold the space to bring therapeutic sound to people."

The Science of Sound

For decades, people who receive sound healing have reported many benefits, including deep relaxation, stress relief, better mood, emotional balance, reduced pain and improved physical well-being. Today, a growing body of research into sound-based interventions is beginning to lend scientific support to some of those reported benefits—too many to quote in this article. Briefly, clinical studies of certain sound-based interventions have documented reductions in anxiety, depression and tension, and research into music therapy has demonstrated reductions in both psychological and physiological stress. A 2026 review in *Cureus Journal of Medical Science* provided evidence that music-based interventions can improve movement, cognitive functioning and emotional well-being. And, researchers reviewing 28 studies on music therapy and heart rate variability (HRV)—an indicator of vagal influence on the heart—found evidence that music therapy was associated with increased cardiac parasympathetic activity.

Meanwhile, as interest in sound healing grows, so does the chorus of voices attesting to its profound effects. "Many times in a month," says Lowery, "I hear people say that they were able to reach a stillness and a quiet inside of themselves that they have



Roxanne Lowery

not experienced before. They reach a place where they feel like they are one with the universe and connected to all things." And therapeutic sound was the medium for that connection.

An International Community That Resonates

ISTA currently has approximately 300 members and offers three membership options: general membership for those who attend events or use sound practices in their personal lives; professional membership for therapeutic sound practitioners who've completed 100 or 200 hours of training and a certification review; and school membership for educational programs that submit their curricula, including training in ethics and sound modalities, for ISTA's review.

Membership continues to embrace new professions. "In 2026," says Lowery, "there are massage therapists, yoga practitioners, breathwork practitioners and psychologists who are studying therapeutic sound and bringing it into their practice, weaving it into their existing protocols."

Celebrating The Past and Envisioning the Future

Education and service remain at the heart of ISTA's mission. Says Lowery, "Sound therapists have a heart for service—a deep call—to be of service with sound." The nonprofit organization held its annual sound healing conference, Resonance, Research, Rhythm & Community, in October, with 250 people from around the world attending. "The conference is a culmination of ISTA's 20 years of growth … It's a huge celebration of where we've been—from a struggling small entity to where we are now, a vibrant international community."

When Cromwell founded ISTA, her vision was that one day sound therapy would be recognized, respected and embraced as a meaningful field of practice. "We are being called, all of us," she says, "to step up our game because the world really needs us right now." ❧

Many Paths to One Yoga

by Octavia Nasr



Long before yoga became widely identified with physical postures, ancient Indian scriptures described it as a union of body and spirit and a practice that focuses the mind, tames the senses and ultimately leads a practitioner to become one with their higher self. From what was prescribed in classical texts and passed on through generations, several paths emerged to lead practitioners to that state of union. To understand these paths, it is necessary to recognize yoga's original intention as a spiritual path.

"We're not trying to get somewhere else," says yoga therapist Shonali Banerjee. "We're trying to get right here, into presence." For more than two decades, Banerjee has taught yoga as a practice that extends far beyond the mat. For her, the yoga path is a way of understanding that people "intrinsically have wisdom and vitality." Through yoga practice, she honors her own experiences, her breath and her voice. She says her teachers instilled in her the value of exploring direct experiences and reflecting on them, rather than simply doing as she was told.

Banerjee says yoga is interwoven into her life, and yogic principles such as compassion, kindness, temperance and justice have become second nature to her. They show up through her many roles—from wife and mother to two teenagers to yoga therapist and singer. "We have an innate life force energy that flows through us," she says. In her experience, the yogic path allows this energy to expand in the most appropriate ways and leads one to becoming the person they are meant to be. Free from the constrictions of past experiences and the crushing demands of modern life.


Photo: Michelle Hellmann
Shonali Banerjee

"I need to feel the whole of my being and its aliveness," says Banerjee, "taking a moment to ground, to anchor before taking the next right action." Her views offer a modern perspective on the earliest references of yoga in two of the oldest Indian philosophical texts, the *Katha Upanishad* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The *Katha Upanishad* likens the physical body to a chariot, with the innermost self as the passenger, while the intellect acts as the charioteer commandeering the vehicle. It describes the senses as wild horses pulling the chariot in multiple directions. In this metaphor, yoga serves as the restraints, while the mind serves as the reins on the chariot.

The Chariot and the Charioteer

The Bhagavad Gita also uses the chariot imagery, but it presents yoga as an act of worldly action, like a duty or service to others. In it, the character Arjuna represents the individual soul riding in the chariot and Lord Krishna—the supreme divine inner self —is the charioteer. As Arjuna faces a dilemma in which he is forced to go to battle against his own kin, Krishna guides him to achieve self-realization and perform his *dharma*, or righteous duty.

Along the way, the *"Gita"* presents four primary paths to achieve self-realization: *Karma yoga*—the path of action; *bhakti yoga*—the path of devotion; jnana yoga—the path of wisdom; and *raja yoga*—the meditation path. While these paths suit different human temperaments, they all lead to the ultimate goal of union with the Divine. Krishna does not favor any one path over another or present any path as superior to the others; in fact, in some instances, the paths intersect, and in others, one leads to another. As Arjuna sorts through the variations, the reader learns that the paths work together, not separately.


Photo: Genya O'Neill
Dr. Kali Arnold

Dr. Kali Arnold, M.D., is a living example of the intertwining yogic paths. As a yoga teacher and studio owner, she sees the paths of yoga not as separate roads but as different ways of moving toward greater awareness. Her own path, she says, is simply "doing what I can do every single day to get closer to my higher self." For her, yoga is both a practice and a way of navigating life.

What began as a search for relief eventually became a deeper exploration of whole-person wellness. She saw in yoga tools that complement her medical training and help her understand the connection between mind, body and spirit. "Yoga is not something you do," says Arnold, "it is something you live." She believes yoga helps people build resilience physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

Dinah Biggs, an Atlanta certified yoga teacher, sees yoga as a process where the physical practice leads to the "quieter work of understanding what is happening underneath all the noise." Her postural yoga practice taught her how an exhausted body quiets the ego enough "for a deeper voice to emerge."

Biggs finds comfort in the community that emerges in a yoga class. She feels the power of yoga when everyone moves and breathes to the same rhythm through carefully curated sequences and poses. To her, yoga used to be a place where she could disappear in the crowd. Not anymore. "Now," she says, "I accept myself as I am and allow myself to be seen." Committing to a consistent daily practice and offering accessible community yoga classes is Biggs's yogic path.

Biggs, Arnold and Banerjee embody how a yoga path is as unique as the one walking it.

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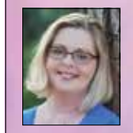
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CALENDAR

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Free Community Yoga Class – 12-1:30pm. Heart-centered, alignment-based yoga with meditation, postures, breathwork, restoratives and yoga wall. All levels and body types welcome. Free. All Life is Yoga, 27 Waddell St NE, Ste D, Atlanta. bit.ly/Free-Community-Yoga-100726.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Hops & Flow Metal Beer Yoga at Little Cottage Brewery – 11am. Metal-themed yoga flow with beer. Bring mat, towel and water. $20; first beverage included. Little Cottage Brewery, 120 Olive St, Ste 500, Avondale Estates. bit.ly/Metal-Beer-Yoga-110826.

Balanced Intention

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Fri 2:30-5pm, 6:30-8pm; Sat-Sun 9:30am-6pm.

Training in yin, restorative and somatic yoga with Patty Schmidt and Marti Yura. $395/weekend; $225/day.

bit.ly/Vista-Yoga.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14

FREE Reiki Infused Yoga & Meditation – 3:30pm. Vinyasa yoga and meditation with distant Reiki, breathwork and chakra-focused practices to support relaxation, strength and balance. Free. Healing Hands Reiki & Spiritual Development Inc., 27 Waddell St NE, Ste A, Atlanta. bit.ly/Free-Reiki-Yoga-111426.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Atlanta Laughter Yoga Club – 5:30-6:15pm. Enjoy laughter exercises, deep breathing and playful activities designed to energize and connect. Free; donations accepted. Trolley Barn, 963 Edgewood Ave NE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Laughter-Yoga-Atlanta-111726.

ATLANTA - Recharge: Post-Election Yoga & Chill – 6-8pm. Recharge after election-season stress with yoga and connect with a community of mothers. Free. The Lola, 621 North Ave NE, D-100, Atlanta. bit.ly/Atlanta-Yoga-111726.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Almost Free Yoga – 6:30-7:30pm. All-levels yoga designed to support movement, stretching, breathing, recovery and stress relief. $10.78. Free parking. Medical & Sports Massage, 6000 Lake Forrest Dr NW, Ste 375, Sandy Springs. bit.ly/Yoga-Run-Club-111826.

Greenbriar Yoga Pop-Up – 7pm. Beginner-friendly yoga with gentle movement, breathwork and guided reflection to release tension and build body awareness. No experience required. Free. Location provided at registration, East Point. bit.ly/GreenBriar-Yoga-Popup-111826.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20

The Alchemy of Man – 7pm. Monthly yoga for men featuring movement, breathwork and guided stillness for healing, growth and connection. All levels; ages 18+. $25.55. LatJohns Pilates, 583 North Central Ave, Hapeville. bit.ly/Alchemy-Of-Man-Yoga-112026.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23

FREE Hatha Yoga – 6pm. Slower-paced Hatha yoga focusing on postures, breathwork, alignment and mindful transitions to support strength, relaxation and balance. Free. Healing Hands Reiki & Spiritual Development Inc., 27 Waddell St NE, Ste A, Atlanta. bit.ly/Free-Hatha-Yoga-112326.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Morning Yoga at Pittsburgh Yards – 9am. Energizing vinyasa flow in a community setting. Bring yoga mat, water, towel and props as needed. Free. Pittsburgh Yards, Atlanta. bit.ly/Morning-Yoga-Pittsburgh-Yards-112826.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

Yoga Class- Sweet Life – 6-6:45pm. Relaxed, all-levels yoga with simple poses to help participants unwind and boost energy. $17.85. Free parking. Kindred Healing Center, 1800 Jonesboro Rd SE, 4th Floor, Atlanta. bit.ly/Yoga-Class-Sweet-Life-120126.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

HIPS & MOTION with Sweet Life – 7pm. Beginner-friendly mindful movement with hip mobility, gentle stretching, balance, coordination and stress relief. $15. Yoga mats provided. Kindred Healing Center, 1800 Jonesboro Rd SE, 4th Floor, Atlanta. bit.ly/Hips-Motion-Sweet-Life-120426.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

FREE Trauma Informed Yoga – 10am. Supportive yoga for veterans and trauma survivors featuring mindful movement, grounding breathwork and meditation to promote balance and resilience. Free; parking available. Healing Hands Reiki & Spiritual Development Inc., 27 Waddell St NE, Ste A, Atlanta. bit.ly/Free-Trauma-Yoga-120426.

Yoga scholars describe yoga as quiet and absorbing—not boastful, not performative and not arrogant. It's a journey, and how one takes it is an individual choice. The paths of duty, devotion, wisdom or meditation lead to *yoga*, which translates from the Sanskrit to "union" and refers to a deep sense of oneness with a higher version of the individual self. "Yoga doesn't necessarily change the world; it changes one's perspective on the world," says Arnold.



Photo: Chloe Ravinia

Dinah Biggs

Four Yogic Paths to Oneness

Which yoga path is right for you? Find out through this overview:

KARMA YOGA: THE PATH OF ACTION

Core focus: Offering selfless service without attachment to results or rewards

How it works: A person acts according to their sense of duty or giving back to their community without concern about symbolic or monetary rewards. While "karma" is commonly known as the universal law of cause and effect, in this context, it represents actions dedicated to the Divine and meant to purify the ego.

Best suited for: People of a giving nature who express themselves through selfless work and community contribution.

JNANA YOGA: THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

Core focus: Wisdom, intellectual achievement, and self-inquiry

How it works: One uses the power of reason and the intellect to discern between the transient physical body and the eternal soul.

Best suited for: People with an inquisitive, philosophical or analytical mind.

BHAKTI YOGA: THE PATH OF DEVOTION

Core focus: Love, adoration, faith and total surrender to that which is divine or sacred

How it works: One channels one's emotions into worship and sees divinity in all things.

Best suited for: People who follow their heart and connect with the Divine through prayer, rituals and chanting.

RAJA YOGA: THE PATH OF MEDITATION

Core focus: Mental clarity, concentration and deep meditation

How it works: One stills the fluctuations of the mind to experience a direct connection to the inner soul.

Best suited for: People inclined toward introspection and contemplative practices. ❧



Born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, Octavia Nasr spent two decades at CNN as a news editor and anchor and has been teaching yoga since 2015. Follow Octavia and pitch her stories on Instagram @OctaviaEightfold.



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Growing Our Capacity for Gratitude

How to Practice Thankfulness Every Day

by Megy Karydes



Ridofs/shutterstock

Gratitude comes in various forms. It can be stealthy (that sense of warmth when the sun breaks through after a gray week) or hard won (appreciating a short-tempered teenager). But researchers and practitioners agree that gratitude must be cultivated to become part of our daily routine.

"Gratitude as a passing feeling is spontaneous," says Brendan Cournane, a certified professional development coach specializing in well-being and mindfulness, and author of *Seeking Serenity: Finding Happiness by Embracing Your Present Attitude*.

"Anybody who practices mindfulness or meditation has moments of gratitude daily, even several times a day, but that's not the same as developing a practice."

The distinction matters most, he emphasizes, during times when gratitude doesn't come naturally, such as when we're late for work, blindsided by an angry spouse or absorbing someone else's bad day. "By developing gratitude as a practice and as a part of our lives, we allow ourselves to pause and acknowledge that no matter how challenging this moment is, there is something to be grateful for."

Build New Pathways in the Brain

According to David R. Hamilton, Ph.D., a bestselling author and speaker on the science of kindness and well-being, whose newest book is *The Joy of Actually Giving a F*ck: How Kindness Can Cure Stress and Make You Happy*, the key to turning any practice into a consistent habit is neuroplasticity—the brain's capacity to reorganize itself based on repetition.

"Anything that is consistent can shape your brain networks and build a habit. That's when a gratitude practice becomes a habit," he explains, comparing the concept to cutting a new trail across a cornfield. "There's already a path that's been made. But suppose you decide to walk another path. Initially, that takes a little bit of work. But as you walk it daily, it becomes a habit. The old path begins to overgrow because the brain doesn't want to waste energy."

Cournane observes a similar transformation in his coaching work: "We know through neuroplasticity that our brain waves can change, and by forming a gratitude practice, we can transform all of our circumstances into something more positive."

Hamilton and Cournane's experiences align with research findings. A 2023 systematic review and meta-analysis published in the *einstein (São Paulo)* journal, which analyzed 64 randomized clinical trials, found that gratitude interventions were associated with greater life satisfaction and significantly reduced anxiety and depression symptoms. The participants also reported more positive moods, greater optimism and less worry. Additional research summarized by the American Brain Foundation indicates that practicing gratitude activates the brain's reward system, reduces the amygdala's stress reactivity and, with repeated practice, reorganizes neural pathways between neurons.

Be Specific, Not General

Both experts agree that gratitude must be specific to truly resonate. "'I'm grateful for my wife' is too generic," says Cournane. "Instead, 'I'm grateful for my wife because we walked along the lakefront holding hands and enjoying the sunset' is specific and activates more brain receptors." Sensory details are key: "I see the sunset. I hear the wind and the waves along the shore. I feel her hand's touch. I smell the air from the water or trees in the park."

Another powerful shift suggested by Cournane is saying, "I'm grateful my sister called when I felt overwhelmed and she reminded me I wasn't alone," instead of "I'm grateful for my family." This specificity enhances the gratitude practice and its benefits.

Gratitude Is Not Forced Positivity

Neither Hamilton nor Cournane suggests that gratitude replaces grief or hardship. "When challenging things have happened, it's like, 'I've made it through this day. I managed to get out of bed this morning,'" says Hamilton. After his father's death, his gratitude practice shifted. "I could remember all these great things about him, and that became something I could hold onto. We tend to only turn inside when we're faced with difficulties and challenges in our life because there's nothing else in the outside world that's giving us any happiness. So all you're left with is: 'I'm still here.'"

Cournane offers a psychological perspective on why gratitude helps during conflict or stress. "The brain cannot hold two opposite feelings or thoughts or emotions simultaneously. I can't be angry and grateful at the same time," he remarks, adding that seeking gratitude in difficult moments isn't about denying the challenge. It's about avoiding taking it out on the nearest person.

Turn Thankfulness Into Action

Gratitude does not have to remain private, according to both practitioners. Hamilton points to research showing that people consistently misjudge the impact of a compliment. "We underestimate how grateful people would be if we paid them a compliment," he says. "At the same time, we overestimate how much we think it will annoy them." Voicing appreciation, he notes, can even have a physical effect: Connection triggers a release of oxytocin—the kindness hormone—that helps regulate blood pressure.

Continued on page 30



My Coming brings peace.

Likewise, My Presence brings cleavage.

My Sword, that Love which I am, will separate all men, will show the true from the false, will clear the way for the New Light which I bring.

May it be that you can withstand this change and accept My Light.

Many times before have I told you that My Appearance is nigh.

Look then carefully, My friends, and miss Me not.

My Blessing goes with you all.

Maitreya, the World Teacher



Continued from page 21

found that cat owners with misconceptions about feline behavior were more likely to respond with yelling, hitting or water sprays.

Because the stress levels of pets and their caregivers tend to synchronize, quiet shared moments such as mindful petting offer a calmer counterpoint to a busy day. Siegel suggests a simple routine: "Put yourself in a state of gratitude every morning, midday and every night." The moments do not need to be grand. "You open your eyes and you may see the sun coming through. You may hear birds chirping." She believes the shift reaches pets too: "You're going to reset them while you reset yourself."

Establishing a safe haven, such as a quiet corner away from foot traffic and appliances, provides a pet with a place to retreat. Small, safe choices—like choosing which bed to sleep on—can restore a sense of autonomy. Sniffing walks suit many dogs; vertical space and separate litter boxes suit many cats.

A calm, appreciative home supports behavioral well-being, but does not replace veterinary care. Sudden behavior changes, such as a spike in aggression or a loss of appetite, can signal a physical issue that requires prompt veterinary evaluation. Siegel's rule of thumb is "Test, don't guess."

Creating a calm household does not require perfection every day. Noticing how an owner's presence and emotional energy ripple outward to their animals is a meaningful start. Note also that emotional support is a two-way street. An analysis of 1,421 primary caregivers in the peer-reviewed journal *Anthrozoös* found that as family conflicts rose, so did people's attachment to the family pet, suggesting that animals offer comfort to humans during hard times. The connection is mutual.

Ruth Roberts is an integrative veterinarian and holistic pet health coach. Learn about The Original CrockPet Diet and her coach certification program at DrRuthRoberts.com.

Continued from page 29

Cournane shares a smaller, more recent example. When ordering a sandwich, the woman behind the counter said, "It looks like you've been working hard today, so you deserve a nice sandwich." He returned the compliment and saw her face light up. "There's a mutual respect, a mutual give-and-take that stimulates gratitude and other positive emotions within us," he says.

For families looking to build this habit together, Hamilton recommends a gratitude jar. Everyone writes what they're thankful for on slips of paper throughout the year, then opens the jar on a meaningful date. This can become a very emotional bonding experience that the family may want to repeat every year.

Start Small, Stay Committed

Growing our capacity for gratitude requires practice. "Begin with 30 seconds or a minute, and soon half an hour or an hour will feel manageable," counsels Cournane, who begins his daily gratitude practice by drinking a glass of water. "I appreciate having clean, fresh water, which not only is healthy for me but also reinforces the positive benefits I'm experiencing."

Psychologist Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D., professor emeritus at the University of California, Davis, has dedicated much of his career to this field. In *Gratitude Works!: A 21-Day Program for Creating Emotional*



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Prosperity, he describes sustained practice as a journey toward emotional prosperity—not the absence of hardship, but an inner richness and resilience regardless of circumstances. When practiced consistently and with specificity, gratitude is more than a mood; it is an infrastructure built one small, repeatable moment at a time until it becomes a natural path, like a well-trodden trail across a field.

Habits Can Lead to Real Change

- **The One-Memory Journal:** Write three sentences about a specific moment of support, kindness or relief.
- **The Specific Thank-You:** Clearly tell someone what they did and why it mattered. We underestimate how much it will mean to them.
- **The Gratitude Reframe.** When stressed, ask, "What is still here to support me?"
- **The Gratitude-to-Behavior Step.** Choose one thing to be grateful for and let it guide an action. This could be a text, a call, a note or a moment of patience.
- **Start Small.** A daily and consistent practice, even if imperfect, is more effective than sporadic efforts.

Megy Karydes is a Chicago-based writer and author of 50 Ways to More Calm, Less Stress.

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Homeopathy Myths

Refuting the Most Common Misconceptions

by Christina Donka, CCH

Myth: Homeopathy is just another name for herbal medicine.
Homeopathic remedies come from natural sources, including plants and minerals. While an herbal tincture relies on measurable amounts of a plant or plants, a homeopathy remedy follows homeopathic principles and is prepared through a specific process of dilution and vigorous shaking.

Myth: The pellets are nothing but sugar.
Most homeopathic remedies come in the form of a tiny sugar pellet that dissolves under the tongue; this is simply the carrier. During manufacturing, the pellet is infused with the prepared homeopathic remedy.

Myth: Nobody regulates these products.
Under U.S. federal law, homeopathic remedies are classified as drugs, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration oversees their manufacture, marketing and sale.

NataKor/shutterstock

Myth: More is better.
The opposite is true. The "minimum dose" principle dictates taking only enough of a remedy to spark a healing response. If symptoms return, then the dose can be repeated, although it is best to check with a homeopathic practitioner.

Myth: Homeopathy is only good for the sniffles.
Colds, flu, sore throats, earaches, bumps and bruises are where most families begin, and that's where a homeopathy home kit really shines. But homeopathy goes well beyond first aid.

Myth: There is no research behind homeopathy.
Thousands of studies on homeopathy have been published in medical journals, including clinical trials and laboratory research into the biological activity of highly diluted substances.

This article is based on information in HomeopathyCenter.org. Christina Donka is executive director of the National Center for Homeopathy, providing education, resources and advocacy since 1974.

To read an expanded version, visit TinyURL.com/HomeopathyMythsNA or scan the QR code.

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Wise Perspectives For Trying Times

For our Everyday Spirituality column, we've recruited a panel of Atlanta's spiritual leaders—representing a variety of spiritual and religious backgrounds—to answer a question we think you might want to ask them. Suggest a question or send feedback to: Diane@naAtlanta.com.

I do several practices to center and calm myself but they don't seem to be enough given how scary and stressful the world has become. Is there a perspective I'm missing that might help?



REV. DR. STUART HIGGINBOTHAM

First, thank you for taking the time to share your deep desire to cultivate an intentional practice in these uncertain days. It is so important to live in a conscious and grounded way when so many things around us seek to distract and provoke anger and hatred. I always liken nurturing practices to strengthening the spiritual muscles that we need to stand more surely in the face of the pressures of life.

In reading your question, I am always curious about the range of spiritual practices that are available to us, as well as how we approach them. In our particular Western and American culture, it is easy to quickly focus on a more rational approach, as though spiritual practices are merely means of solving a problem or task. We can even approach spiritual practices from an angle of accomplishment or success. "Am I doing this correctly? Am I doing this so that I get a certain result?"

At the heart of all spiritual practices lies a deep yearning for wholeness, for what it means to be "a human being fully alive," as St. Irenaeus described it in the second century. What does it mean to live fully, consciously and compassionately in a community that honors the dignity of every person and all creation? When our spiritual practices are grounded in our heart space, they most definitely offer us refuge in the midst of uncertainty, anxiety and even fear.

As to your question about a missing perspective, I wonder whether there is an area of your spiritual life that you feel needs more attention. As our spiritual practices call us to live integrated lives, do you feel you need a more embodied practice that honors the wholeness of your life? Is there a particular practice that honors creation and our interconnection? Do you feel drawn to a particular practice that cultivates compassion or peace? Is there a practice that nurtures a sense of honesty in naming what needs to be named?

I am thankful for moments like this that bring us back to awareness as we take our next steps together with support and grace.

The Rev. Dr. Stuart Higginbotham is an Episcopal priest, retreat leader and poet. He serves as rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Gainesville, Georgia. His ministry focuses on nurturing spiritual imagination and contemplative practices within communities. His latest book, Bones of Light: Poems of Spiritual Imagination, is a collection of poetry.



DAVID AULT

The human world has always been scary and stressful. Seen through the human lens, it always will be.

That isn't an invitation to roll over. It's a description of the realm we live in. If you are waiting for the outside world to grow calm before you can feel calm, you will wait forever. If you are waiting for the world to change before you give yourself permission to relax, you will wait for the remainder of your life.

Here is the strange, helpful part. Fear and stress are not produced by events on the world stage. They live in the way we perceive those events. If you are sincere about uncovering the calm that already lives in you, there's no need to keep applying bandages. Go to the heart of it.

The human world will always cycle through inequality, disruption, war and the familiar repetitions of our inhumanity because it is built on duality. It is a yin-yang curriculum. Perhaps our reason for being here is to become aware of that, and then to free ourselves from needing the world to change so we can feel better.

The most potent spiritual practice I know is recognizing that even in the midst of chaos there is order. Even in the apparent absence of love, there is love. Every waking hour in this human costume is a laboratory, and the experiment is this: Can I see love and divine order in the very places they seem to be missing? That changes what practice is for. It stops being a pacifier for the anxiety of the moment. It moves from something I'm interested in to something I'm invested in: understanding that the true nature of Reality (capital R) is that there is only one creative power in existence.

I can shake my fist at any teacher, text or practice that tells me so, especially when it doesn't match my pictures, or when I want an exception carved out for this war or this election. But the turn comes when I take ownership of one fact. The thoughts that feel so frightening, so heavy, so insurmountable are not holding me. *I am holding them.*

Then I can stop wasting time in pursuit. I can offer myself as the hands and feet—the instrument—of a life devoted to being the love where love seems absent and the peace where peace seems absent. There is no proselytizing or need to convert anyone. I can simply change myself, knowing that as I mirror the world, the human realm changes with me.

So yes, there is a perspective you may be missing. Stop asking what can fix this for you. Start asking how you can see it differently and how long you can stay with what feels uncomfortable without rushing to quiet the fight-or-flight, without reaching once more to fix the world outside.

Calm was never waiting out there. It was waiting for you to stop waiting.

David Ault is a spiritual teacher, award-winning author and founder of Kaleidoscope Child Foundation, a global education nonprofit serving vulnerable communities. With 30+ years in mindfulness and service leadership, he creates programs that foster literacy, empowerment and compassionate action worldwide.



Photo: Nicole Tyler Photography

REV. JENN SACKS

Commotion and chaos in the outer world can make finding inner peace and equanimity seem daunting. An encouraging perspective I offer to the Unity Atlanta Church congregation is: "You are a spiritual being with a radiant soul, living in a sacred body temple, having human experiences."

Remembering that we are spiritual beings first, witnessing and/or experiencing human events, helps us embrace our inner soul power and strength to meet life with an elevated mindset. This is the way of spiritual masters. As renowned Minister Emmet Fox taught: "Life is consciousness." So how we direct our energy usually determines our destination. Putting our spirituality first shifts our perspective toward positive outcomes rather than fearful ones. Though we do not say, "Everything is fine," like Pollyanna, we remain optimistic about what we can do for ourselves, our family and our community. We imagine the best that can happen and direct our energy accordingly.

Here are some practical ways to focus on best outcomes:

- Use meditation, prayer and reflection to release fear and worry, including ideas about how everything in life "should" be.
- Notice what you can control (your behavior, choices, tone of voice, etc.) and what you cannot.
- Recognize feelings of anger, frustration, grief or upset as divine messengers inviting you to heal yourself and live in healthier, happier ways.
- Acknowledge others' opinions and religious practices, even when they differ from yours, so you can appreciate what you have in common, like wanting the Falcons to get to the Super Bowl.
- Be strategic about what news sources you follow and when, especially if you are highly sensitive. Instead of following mainstream media, tune into inspiring sources, such as Positive.News or The Happy Broadcast.
- Refrain from doomscrolling through social media. If you dislike what appears in your feeds, you can change your follows and like new, uplifting posts to shift your algorithm.
- Gather with people who honor your boundaries and feelings, assure your continued growth, and support causes that matter most to you. For instance, you can feel both prosperous and grateful while packing grocery bags at the local foodbank.
- Trust your intuition—your own still, small voice—rather than the crowd mentality. Just because "everyone is doing it" does not mean you have to join in.
- Appreciate simple pleasures like chirping birds around the feeder, cascading autumn leaves, warm sips of coffee or hearty laughter during a favorite comedy.

The more we envision the best, the more ease and calm we can feel. However our lives unfold, we might also discover that affirming best outcomes inspires others around us to shift their perspectives, too.

Rev. Jenn Sacks, senior minister of Unity Atlanta Church, is also a writer and energy healer. She holds a Master of Divinity from Unity Institute and Seminary, and a Master Certification in Intuition Medicine from the Academy of Intuition Medicine. Connect with her at RevJenn.com.

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.

Friday, November 6

Kitchen Table Talk: Girlsgiving Edition ATL – 6-8pm. Friendsgiving gathering with dinner and guided conversation centered on gratitude, abundance and connection for Black women and femmes. Free. Pittsburgh Yards, 352 University Ave SW, Atlanta. bit.ly/GirlsGiving-Atl-110626.

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, Nov 7 & Dec 5

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.

Saturday, November 7

Diabeating The Odds Presents: 4th Annual Lock-In For Diabetes Awareness – 8am-12:30pm. Community event with diabetes walk, trampoline fitness, line dancing, screenings, education and resources for all ages and fitness levels. Free. Dogpound Athletic Club, 2040 Headland Dr, East Point. bit.ly/Diabeating-Odds-110726.

DYCW 8th Annual 5K Walk for Diabetes 2026 – 8am-12pm. Join a community 5K walk supporting diabetes awareness and a diabetes-free future. Free. Tribble Mill Park, 2125 Tribble Mill Pkwy SE, Lawrenceville. bit.ly/Dycw-5k-Walk-2026-110726.

The Color of Autism Foundation: Parent Training Session – 10am-3pm. Practical, neuro-affirming training for parents, caregivers and supporters covering communication, sensory regulation, emotional wellness, advocacy and family connection. Free. Marcus Autism Center, 1920 Briarcliff Rd NE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Color-Of-Autism-110726.

Sunday, November 8

Feng Shui for Your Home and Life – 2-3:30pm.Explore Feng Shui Principles, Bagua Map, Five Elements, Ch'i energy, Enhancements, and Clutter Clearing with Practitioner Roberta Grant.Printouts and Giveaways. $10 Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore, 5531 Roswell Rd NE Sandy Springs. RobertaFengShui.com.

Monday, November 9

H.I.P. WALK-A-THON – 11am. Community wellness walk focused on healing, unity, health, peace and purpose, with free smoothies afterward. Free. Westside BeltLine Trail, Atlanta. Sponsored by His Innocence Project. bit.ly/HipWalkathon 2026-110926.

Mind Your Health: Stress and the Nervous System – 7-8:30pm. Learn how stress affects the nervous system, how the body holds tension and simple practices to help calm it. Free. Ignite House, 1928 Stanton Rd, Atlanta. 404-426-5864. bit.ly/Mind-Your-Health-Atlanta-110926.

Tuesday, November 10

Sandy Springs Senior Expo – 10am-1pm. Connect with local organizations serving seniors and their families. Includes prize drawings, refreshments and health screenings. Free. Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center, 1 Galambos Way, Sandy Springs. bit.ly/SandySprings-SeniorExpo-111026.

Thursday, November 12

The Amethyst Healing Circle – 7pm. Experience healing energy with Vicki Evans and six energy healers; selected attendees receive focused individual sessions, and all participants receive personalized healing. Free. Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore, 5531 Roswell Rd NE, Sandy Springs. bit.ly/Amethyst-Healing-111226.

Monday, November 16

Pilates in the Park – 7pm. Outdoor Pilates session focused on stretching, strengthening and movement for beginners and experienced participants. All ages and genders welcome. Bring mat and water. $13.62. Adair Park, 742 Catherine St SW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Pilates-In-The-Park-111626.

Wednesday, November 18

Wellness Wednesdays – 8am. Start the morning with a 30-minute virtual fitness session followed by complimentary fresh-pressed juice. Free. Kimpton Shane Hotel, 1340 West Peachtree St NW, Atlanta. bit.ly/Rise_and_Vibe-111826.

Official Beltline Baddies Weekly Community Walk/Run – 7pm. Walk, jog or run a 3-mile out-and-back route at your own pace with a welcoming community. Free. Atlanta BeltLine Eastside Trail, meet at Steel Columns Sculpture. bit.ly/Baddies-Walk-111826.

Thursday, November 19

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, November 21

Too Much in Your Head? Reset Your Body & Mind in 60 Minutes – 10am. Outdoor Tai Chi and Qigong with gentle movement, breathing and mindfulness for stress relief, mobility and balance. Beginners welcome. Free-$17.85. 1500 McLendon Ave NE, Atlanta. bit.ly/Reset-60-Minutes-112126.

Sound Bath Journey – 7pm. Relax with crystal singing bowls in a sound-healing experience designed to encourage deep relaxation and inner peace. Mats, pillows, eye masks and blankets provided. $25.31. La Paz Portal, 1352 Haynie Rd, Moreland. bit.ly/SoundBath-Moreland-112126.

Monday, November 23

Mind Your Health: Plant Protein Strength and Healthy Aging – 7-8:30pm. Learn which plant foods provide complete protein, how much you need as you age and how to build sustaining meals. Free. Ignite House, 1928 Stanton Rd, Atlanta. 404-426-5864. bit.ly/Ignite-House-102326.

Tuesday, November 24

Introduction to Transmission Meditation – 7:30pm. Online via Zoom. Free. Sponsored by Share International USA. 770-302-2208. Info-se@share-international.us. tinyurl.com/y47fh9yn.

Wednesday, November 25

Girls Who Walk Dunwoody: Weekly Walks – 6pm. Midweek community walk for women to move, chat and connect at a comfortable pace. Free. Brook Run Park, 4770 North Peachtree Rd, Dunwoody. bit.ly/Girls-Who-Walk-Dunwoody-112526.

Thursday, November 26

Senior Body Fitness – 9am. Gentle fitness session for seniors focused on movement, strength and staying active in a relaxed social setting. Free; parking available. Browns Mill Recreation Center, 5101 Browns Mill Rd, Stonecrest. bit.ly/Senior-Body-Fitness-112626.

Sunday, November 29

Gentle Stretching and Breath-Work – 10am. Gentle stretching, breathwork and meditation blending yoga, Tai Chi, tapping and Qigong for mind-body wellness. Ages 16+. Free. Body & Brain Yoga Tai Chi, 4641 Roswell Rd, Ste C, Atlanta. 678-750-3246. bit.ly/Gentle-Stretching-112926.

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.

Monday, November 30

Hot Pilates Push – 7pm. Low-impact, high-energy workout blending Pilates and strength training with core control, sculpting, endurance and intentional movement. All fitness levels welcome. $23.18. Creatives Rental Space, 1483 Chattahoochee Ave NW, Ste 110, Atlanta. bit.ly/Hot-Pilates-Push-113026.

Saturday, December 5

Decatur Healing Arts Open House – 10am-8pm.Throughout the day, you'll have the opportunity to enjoy complimentary massage therapy demonstrations, explore a variety of energy healing modalities, experience salt therapy, and participate in yoga classes designed for all levels. It's the perfect chance to meet our practitioners, try something new, and learn more about the services we offer. This is a free event! 619 E College Ave, Suite A, Decatur, GA 30030. 404-378-6288. www.decaturhealingarts.com. dha@decaturhealingarts.com

Wednesday, December 9

Mocha Mom Wellness Walk Wednesdays – 8:30am. Midweek wellness walk for moms to get moving, boost their mood, enjoy fresh air and connect with others. Free. Cauley Creek Park, 7255 Bell Rd, Johns Creek. bit.ly/Mocha-Mom-Wellness-120926.

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 3 pm music and Science of Mind message; 4 pm Food and fellowship; 5 pm New Thought workshops. 2650 N. Druid Hills Rd. N.E., Atlanta, GA 30329. More Info: slc-atlanta.org

Red Clay Sangha Sunday Morning Service – 9am, Sitting/Walking Meditation; 10:30, Morning Service;10:45am, Dharma Discussion;11:30am, Close and Brunch. Via Zoom or in person. 3420 W Hospital Ave, Ste 102, Chamblee. More info: RedClaySangha.org.

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

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

Meditation 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 – 12.00 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 Pranic Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: AtlPranicHealing.com.

MONDAYS

Chair Yoga with Corina Genson – 12 -1 pm.All are invited to this gentle yoga class focusing on basic yoga poses, stretching and breathing exercise. Designed for all fitness levels, including beginners and those with physical limitations or injuries. Drop in for $20 or 5 classes for $75. Unity Atlanta Church, 3597 Parkway Lane, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

TUESDAYS

The Art of Preserving Balance and Vitality Through Movement – 6-7pm. Discover the ancient art of cultivating Chi to enhance well-being. Learn to manage stress, channel emotions, and deepen your connection with life. $18/class; packages available. Zoom. Efraín Brady, 470-281-8645. PathsTo Integration.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. 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 – 7-8.15 pm. 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: Meditation Circle.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 resister 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. Morningside-Market.com.

Oakhurst Farmers Market – 9am-1pm. Year-round. Fresh produce, meat, baked treats, and more. Additional offerings include live music and chef demonstrations featuring seasonal recipes. Sceptre Brewing Arts, 630 E Lake Dr, Decatur. cfmatl.org/oakhurst.

Tea & Tarot – 11am-2pm. Casual spiritual mixer with tea, snacks and tarot conversation for all ages and experience levels. No cards or experience required; bring a dish if desired. $25. Heart, Soul, & Art, Marietta. 770-369-3438. HeartSoulandArt.com/products/tea-tarot.

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To place a classified ad, email your listing to ads@naAtlanta.com. Cost is $1/word; minimum $30. Deadline: Fifth of each month for the next month's issue.

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The Sweet Harvest

by Toyia Denise


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I have always admired pristine kitchens, the kind that look like they're straight out of *Architectural Digest*. Pots and plates perfectly placed. Every surface spotless.

I have dreamed of an immaculate French country kitchen with warm cream cabinets and a long, clear counter. Every appliance hidden. Everything tucked away. To me, it looked like a life with no worries. Everything where it belonged. I imagined how light I would feel in it.

I have never been able to accomplish it.

There is always something happening in my kitchen. Something soaking. Something cooking, baking, brewing or boiling. Too many seasonings pulled out for jerk, Mediterranean, Italian, Asian, and, of course, Southern food.

For years, I thought maybe I just wasn't that woman. The pristine-counter type.

After my father died earlier this year, I started baking. Something in my grief met me in the kitchen. Kneading dough and baking bread gave me peace. It was where I had felt the most cared for all my life.

This fall, plums and bread flour moved onto my counters. I found myself wanting fresh bread and preserves, like the ones my grandma made. As I stood at the stove watching the plums and sugar simmer, I remembered her "toast" on cold fall mornings before school. She'd place slices of bread on a cookie sheet, cut butter into little squares and put one square on each slice. I can't remember if we simply didn't have a toaster or if she just believed the oven made better toast.

Her bread always came out crisp around the edges, with the butter melted into the center. Then she would bring out the plum preserves and spread a spoonful across the hot toast. Sweet and tart, warm and sticky. It felt like the best treat in the world.

The plum preserves weren't the only thing she put away each summer. Her Thanksgiving started in July. We'd drive from Detroit to Canada to buy fresh produce for her canning. She'd put up peaches and tomato sauce, made cha-cha for the greens.

The jars waited in her basement until the seasons changed. By Thanksgiving, the peaches made their grand entrance. Other people went to the store for Del Monte. We went downstairs and brought summer back up in a jar. The peaches became cobbler for a house filled with my grandma's 16 children, their children, and whomever else came through the door.

During the holidays, there was nothing immaculate about her kitchen. Pots covered the stove; plates and utensils crowded the sink. Someone was always cooking, washing, tasting or looking for somewhere to set down one more thing.

But her table was set every night before dinner—whether it was Thanksgiving or just a Tuesday with grilled cheese.

I can hear her voice. "Baby… set the table for you. You deserve to sit at a table that's set," she would say.

As a child, I saw turkey, dressing, mac and cheese, and more than 20 other things she had prepared for the feast of the year. A buffet full of cakes and pies. A house full of family. My family laughing and joking, catching up after time apart. Stevie Wonder's "Ave Maria" playing beneath the holiday noise. I never counted the months of planning or the years she had spent making our favorite dishes so she'd know them by heart. I only knew there would be plenty—and that I belonged there.

Back in my kitchen, my own preserves came out glossy and spreadable, though the cinnamon and nutmeg spoke a little louder than I intended. They didn't taste exactly like hers. Still, when I looked at the jars lined across my counter, I saw my kitchen differently. That afternoon, I did not wish the counter were empty. The jars belonged there. So did the seasonings, the plates, the fruit and all the evidence that people were fed and loved in this room.

All these years later, I am still gathering from what my grandma planted in my life. And, one cold morning, I'll put bread in the oven and place a little square of butter on every slice. Someone I love will sit at my table, and I will open one of these jars.

For now, they are cooling on the counter I once wanted empty. ❧



Toyia Denise is an Atlanta-based writer, spiritual teacher and executive coach who guides leaders through the patterns and imprints that shape how they lead, live and love. Learn more at ToyiaDenise.com.

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