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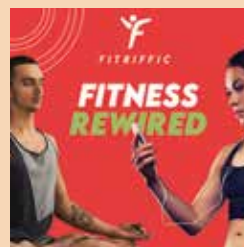
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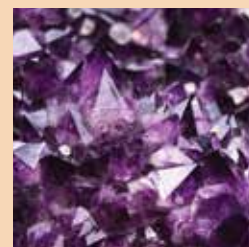
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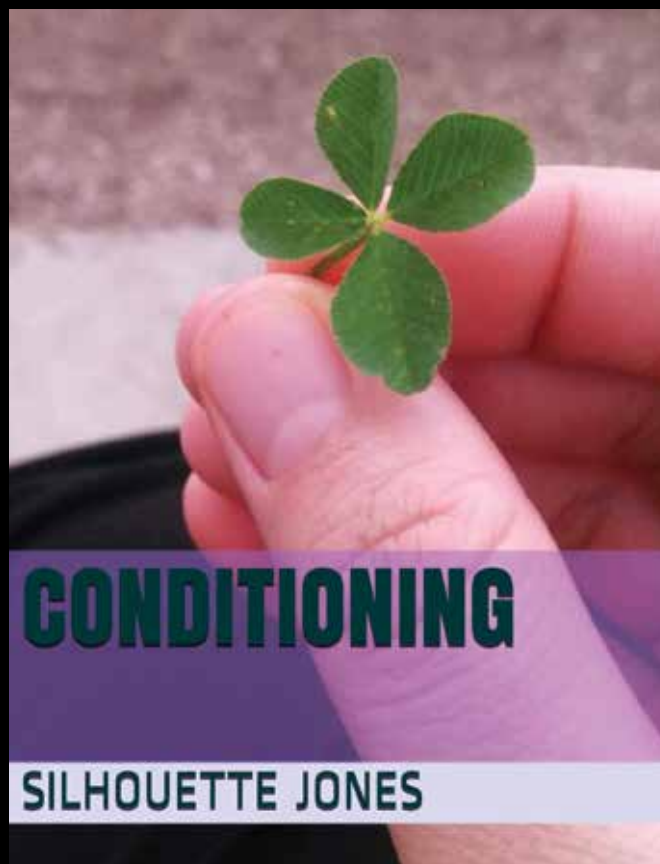
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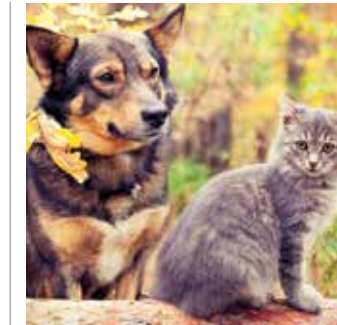
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FROM THE ARCHIVES

In this issue, we asked Atlanta spiritual leaders to comment on how to show up for the holidays amid families divided by partisan politics; this represents a combination of two previous pieces of editorial. Two years ago, we asked spiritual leaders to share messages of the season. And three years ago we convened a focus group of concerned citizens and spiritual leaders to ask: How can we overcome our anger against “them?” Here are links to those articles, plus the associated Letters from the Publisher.

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW YEAR
bit.ly/beginning-new-year

FINDING PEACE IN THE POST-ELECTION WORLD
 Spiritual Panel Discusses How to Rise Above Anger, Conflicts
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Nature's beauty
is a gift that cultivates
appreciation and gratitude.
~Louie Schwartzberg

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When DEATH Comes

mozZi/AdobeStock.com

In a span of 10 days, I have experienced the deaths of two. And in between, there sure seemed to be a feeling of death everywhere in this great land.

As of this writing, I am just two days removed from having to assist the transition of our dear cat, Slider. He was 19 years old; death was long in sight as his poor body deteriorated before our eyes.

On Halloween night, my family was shocked to learn that one of my younger cousins, age 54, died from a heart attack.

In between these two deaths, America voted. It seems as if both sides experienced loss akin to death.

So, death has been on my mind.

But death, whether for a living being or to a moment in time, is never final, although it might seem that way. Accompanying every death is a birth.

While the following wonderful poem by Mary Oliver does not necessarily communicate this particular take on death, it is a positive take. And as we bid good riddance to a most difficult year, and welcome 2021 with an enormous third wave of coronavirus in the dark of winter, it is a good time to contemplate how we choose to live our lives.

For, as the saying goes, every day is the first day of the rest of our lives. And, as Mary Oliver asks in her poem, "The Summer Day," with what is likely her most memorable words:

*Doesn't everything die at last,
and too soon?*

*Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?*



Paul Chen has been owner/publisher of *Natural Awakenings Atlanta* franchise since January 2017. He is a practicing Buddhist and a founding member of East Lake Commons, a cohousing community.

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

When Death Comes

*When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse
to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;*

when death comes

like the measles-pox

when death comes

like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:

what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything

as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,

and I look upon time as no more than an idea,

and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common

as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,

tending, as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something

precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say all my life

I was a bride married to amazement.

I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder

if I have made of my life something particular, and real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,

or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

~ Mary Oliver

MOON ORGANICS

New Location, New Natural Facelifting Services

MOON Organics is now offering Sculptural Face Lifting facials, a method developed by Russian facial master Yakov Gershkovich, which improves the appearance of the facial structure without injections or surgery. The technique can also help relieve tension and release blocked emotions and traumas that are held deep within the facial muscles.

"There are no risks, no prep and no need for recovery," says owner Susan Gonzalez. "Unlike injections, your muscles can move and show expression, but your overall appearance is more youthful."

The technique gets the facial muscles to relax deeply and provides a healing effect due to increased circulation, nerve stimulation and lymphatic drainage and detox. Excess fluids can be removed, helping to fine-tune the structure of the face. The manipulation of the skin also increases oxygenation and lymph flow, giving it a smooth and supple look and feel.

"It's like passive fitness for the face," says Gonzalez. "Getting a session is like

taking your face to the gym. The muscles are worked and trained to tighten and relax where they are supposed to."

Gonzalez holds a degree in nursing and is a licensed esthetician, certified clinical aromatherapist and certified cancer coach. She has been working in healthcare for over 35 years and is the author of *100 Perks of Having Cancer plus 100 Health Tips for Surviving It*. She received her certification in Sculptural Face Lifting under Gershkovich.

MOON Organics recently moved to a new location at The Holbrook of Decatur Day Spa at 1882 Clairmont Road in Decatur. The new spa space is larger than its predecessor, and parking is easier.

"At this time of the pandemic, our new location and the COVID policies we have in place ensure that everyone is treated with the utmost care and safety," says Gonzalez.

For more information or to book an appointment, visit MoonOrganics.com or KindredStudioATL.com or email Susan@MoonOrganics.com.



(Photo: Yakov Gershkovich)



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-Helen Keller



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— Paramahansa Yogananda



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The Gift of Yum

Homemade Treats Spark Holiday Cheer

by April Thompson

Gift-givers seeking memorable presents while avoiding holiday shopping stress need look no further than the kitchen. Edible homemade gifts make special, welcome treats, help slow down the shopping frenzy of the season and increase creativity in the kitchen. While 79 percent of recipients return some holiday gifts every year, food and handmade items rank in the top 10 treasured gifts, according to Survey Monkey research.

Mackenzie Burgess, a Fort Collins, Colorado, dietitian and recipe developer at Cheerful Choices, encourages holiday gift-givers to think beyond the Christmas cookie. One of her go-to holiday gifts, a lentil and brown rice dry soup mix, features colorful dry ingredients layered in a Mason jar and the recipe attached with a pretty ribbon. “This shelf-stable dry soup mix is the perfect, plant-based meal to make on a chilly night, and makes for a unique, affordable and thoughtful gift,” says Burgess, adding that the Mason jars can be repurposed.

For a sweet but healthy treat, Burgess offers freezer-friendly energy bites, which can be made in large quantities in advance and frozen or refrigerated, then popped into jars at gift time. These gluten-free, vegan treats can be made with common pantry items, including a base of oats, nut butter and a sweetener like honey or agave, as well as “fixings” such as shredded coconut, dried cranberries or goji berries, chopped nuts, or chia or flax seeds to boost the flavor and nutrition. Natural food coloring can also be added to foster a more festive look.

To give a gift a “wow” factor, blogger Shelley Fulton, in Hudson, Ohio, recommends making a themed basket that may include a mix of homemade and purchased items. “You can take your signature spice rub or that homemade soup mix everyone raves about and expand into a gift basket with other products that support the theme, like barbecue tools for the spice rub or a kettle with cute soup bowls and a new ladle for the soup mix,” says Fulton, the creator of Two Healthy Kitchens. For the dog lovers on a holiday list, Fulton suggests making homemade sweet potato dog biscuits, which can be bundled in a dog bed with other canine comforts.

Stephanie Hafferty, author of *The Creative Kitchen: Seasonal Plant Based Recipes for Meals, Drinks, Garden and Self Care*, suggests handcrafted items like infused vinegars, herb salts, herbal tea blends or spice mixes for foodies on the holiday gift list.

Infused concoctions can be easily made by steeping a light vinegar like champagne or cider with rosemary, thyme or other perennial herbs, along with a spiraled citrus peel, for two weeks before gifting. “Infused vinegars look so lovely and go with so many winter dishes. They also have the advantage of being antiviral and having the shelf life of a few years,” says Hafferty.

Herb-infused olive oils make another gorgeous foodie gift, but Hafferty warns of botulism risk if the herbs are not completely dried beforehand and fully submerged in the oil. “Make this one closer to the time you plan to give it and include instructions to use within a few weeks,” recommends the Somerset, England, author.

Unusual spice mixes are another favorite gift of Hafferty’s, which can encourage home cooks to get creative. “*Ras el Hanout* is a versatile Moroccan spice blend that elevates dishes to another dimension. You can upcycle an old tin and decorate it with images of Moroccan tiles and add a homemade booklet with recipe ideas,” she says.

For a hostess gift that will be eaten immediately, Fulton loves making fruit kabob bouquets, made festive by using red and green fruits like strawberries and kiwi cut into holiday-themed shapes like stars and bells. “This is a fun one to make with kiddos,” adds the blogger.

If concerned about preparing food items for someone due to COVID-19, Fulton suggests assembling a countertop herb garden or a handmade book of favorite recipes, with a promise to cook together soon.

The spirit that goes into holiday gift-making matters as much as the end product. Making thoughtful presents for loved ones is a great time to reflect upon our blessings, especially those that have blessed our lives this year.

Connect with Washington, D.C., freelance writer April Thompson at AprilWrites.com.



Holiday Gift-Giving Recipes

Christmas Cocoa Crunch Bark

YIELD: 30 PIECES

½ cup 100% cocoa powder, unsweetened

½ cup coconut oil, melted

2 Tbsp raw quinoa

2 Tbsp maple syrup

¼ tsp stevia

¼ cup dried cranberries

¼ cup pistachios, roughly chopped

2 Tbsp candied orange, diced in small pieces

½ tsp pink Himalayan salt

2 Tbsp white chocolate, melted (optional)

Toast raw quinoa over medium-high heat until slightly browned and nutty aroma.

In a small bowl, mix together cocoa powder and melted coconut oil. Stir in toasted quinoa, maple syrup and stevia.

Pour mixture onto a plate or sheet pan lined with parchment paper or wax paper. Sprinkle pistachios, dried cranberries, candied oranges and salt over the melted chocolate mixture. Drizzle white chocolate over the top and use a toothpick to create swirl effect if desired.

Freeze for 1 hour. Break into pieces and enjoy. Store leftovers in freezer for up to 3 months.

Recipe from Mackenzie Burgess, Cheerful Choices.



The Mantram of Unification

The sons of men are one
and I am one with them.

I seek to love, not hate;
I seek to serve and not
exact due service;
I seek to heal, not hurt.

Let pain bring due reward
of light and love.

Let the soul control the outer
form, and life and all events,
And bring to light the
love which underlies the
happenings of the time.

Let vision come and insight.
Let the future stand revealed.
Let inner union demonstrate
and outer cleavages be gone.

Let love prevail.
Let all men love.

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Energy Bites

YIELD: 12 LARGE BITES OR 24 SMALL BITES
These energy bites are the perfect snack to grab and go. They're completely customizable and take 5 minutes or less to make. It's easy to create festive, colored bites for the holidays. Simply add one-quarter cup of oats into a bowl with 15-30 drops of food coloring and give it a stir. Then, simply roll your finished balls in the food-colored oats.

1 cup rolled oats or quick oats
½ cup add-ins (dried fruit, chocolate chips, shredded coconut, chia seeds, ground flaxseed, chopped nuts or a mixture)
½ cup nut or seed butter (peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter, sun butter)
1 Tbsp liquid (plant-based milk, dairy milk, water, coconut oil)
2-3 Tbsp honey or maple syrup

Add oats, add-ins, nut or seed butter, and liquid to a large bowl. Stir to combine. Mixture should be slightly sticky, but still crumbly.

Add in honey or maple syrup, 1 tablespoon at a time, to reach desired sweetness. Stir until mixture starts to come together in a sticky ball. If the mixture is still too dry, add in 1-2 more tablespoons of liquid.

Place bowl in the freezer for at least 30 minutes to chill, then roll mixture into balls using hands.

Store in the fridge until ready to eat or pack into a jar for a gift. Store any leftovers in fridge for up to 1 week or the freezer for up to 3 months.



photo by Stephanie Hafferty

Ras el Hanout Spice Mix

This is lovely sprinkled onto roasting vegetables or added to falafel mixes, soups, stews and tagines.

1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp ground ginger
1 tsp coriander seeds
1 tsp ground nutmeg
1 tsp turmeric
1 tsp fennel seeds
2 tsp cinnamon or 1 cinnamon stick, ground
1 tsp smoked paprika or red pepper flakes
1 tsp black peppercorns
1 tsp cayenne (optional for spicier version)
5 star anise
½ tsp ground cloves
Seeds from 10 cardamom pods
1 tsp dried rose petals



Dry roast the cumin, coriander, peppercorns, fennel and star anise in a cast-iron skillet until lightly toasted. This takes a minute or two and smells gorgeous. Cool and mix with the other ingredients, grinding in a pestle and mortar or spice blender until the mixture resembles a fine powder. Store in a glass-lidded container. This spicy mix is good for up to six months.



Rosemary-Infused Vinegar

This fragrant, versatile vinegar makes a delightful holiday gift that can be enjoyed for months. Rosemary vinegar is delicious in salad dressings, sprinkled on vegetables (it is especially good on Brussels sprouts, cabbage and other brassicas) or added to sauces and homemade mayonnaise. It is also an excellent natural cleaner.

Fresh sprigs rosemary

Light vinegar (organic apple cider vinegar or white wine vinegar)

Clean bottles

Labels

Wash the bottles and lids until they sparkle and then dry them thoroughly. Shake the rosemary sprigs to dislodge any dirt or insects if taken from the garden, then rinse and air dry.

Cut the rosemary so that it is two inches shorter than the bottle. This is so that all of the herb will be submerged in the vinegar. Place two sprigs of rosemary into each bottle.

Cover with vinegar until the bottle is almost full and replace the lid.

Label creatively; a small sprig of dried rosemary tied to the outside of the bottle is a nice touch.

The vinegar will store for a long time in the refrigerator. When using in the kitchen, the level of vinegar will fall below the sprigs. When this happens, remove the rosemary—the vinegar will still taste of the herb. Use up any vinegar past its best as a bathroom cleaner.

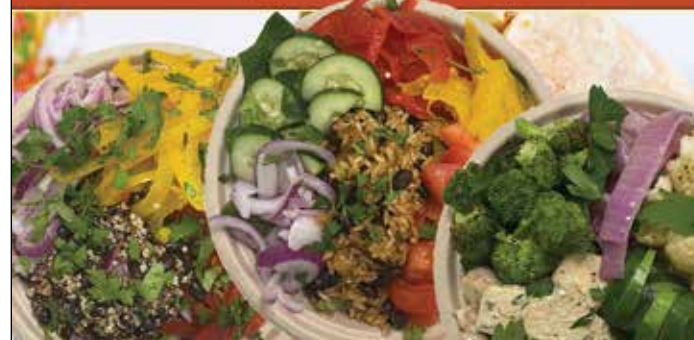
Recipes courtesy of Stephanie Hafferty.

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DECADES OF HEALING WISDOM
MOMENTS OF HEALING GRACE

Seeing the World DIFFERENTLY

by Linda Sechrist

The most familiar form of human activity and the most natural way to describe what happens in our lives is through telling stories. Toddlers listen to stories that have contained the same archetypal characters acting out similar plots for millennia. In literature, folktales and myths all over the world, stories serve the purpose of providing life instructions and answering humanity's fundamental questions about the nature of existence, such as who we are, where we came from, the definition of our purpose and the nature of our reality.



In the 1980s, author and cultural historian Thomas Berry declared that humanity needed a new story that is less destructive and dysfunctional. Berry filled lecture halls, telling attendees, "We are in trouble now because we don't have a good story. The old story, the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it, isn't functioning properly. What once sustained us, shaped our emotional attitude, provided us with life purpose, energized action, consecrated suffering, integrated knowledge and guided education is no longer serving humanity." As we are discovering globally through hard experience, the old stories of rugged individualism and conquering and dominating the natural world have run their course with grim results.

In the last four decades, fragments of a new story have been slowly emerging. Because it isn't deemed worthy of mainstream media, the public is left in the dark about new, life-instructing stories capable of altering human civilization in positive ways. Were these story fragments woven together in an anthology, chapters on climate, economy, religion, environment, science, politics, medicine, education, conscious evolution and community would constitute a useful account of ideas and concepts capable of bringing about a brighter future for humanity and the planet. These possibilities would surely capture readers' imaginations.

New Climate Story

In *Climate: A New Story*, writer and activist Charles Eisenstein suggests that we need a new story that makes possible the more beautiful world our hearts know is

achievable. The story, which he believes is attainable, calls for people, governments and organizations to embrace a partnership paradigm to protect, restore, regenerate and repair damages to our planet's natural world, which we call the environment. Using indigenous wisdom, organizations such as the Pachamama Alliance and Bioneers are helping individuals worldwide to recognize that humanity is here to be in service to life. Creating the right conditions for revitalizing life is the opposite of our collective story that views the natural world only as a resource.

Eisenstein's ideas for regenerative agriculture match those described in environmentalist Paul Hawken's *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*. In October, Drawdown Georgia became the first state-centered effort to crowd-solve for climate change, with solutions tailored to Georgia's unique natural, economic and social resources.

New Science Story

Evolution biologist Elisabet Sahtouris' stories about science shine a light on the broader perspective of life and science gained from studying multiple worldviews. A scholar of ancient sciences, Sahtouris reminds us that the original purpose of science was to find guidance for human affairs by studying nature. During a recent conversation with Ubiquity University founder Jim Garrison in the online Humanity Rising's Global Solutions Summit, she says, "We have acted in opposition and made ecology subservient to our economy, using ecology as a set of resources for human economics. When we make our economy fit into nature's economy, which we call ecology, we'll have ecosophy, the 'wisdom of the Earth itself' that occurs when a man knows how to listen with love."

Sahtouris teaches corporations about ecosophy's new view of a conscious universe and a living Earth in which we are co-creators. This, she believes, takes humans out of fatalistic victimhood so that we can become consciously active agents of our destiny. Lifting the fog of our




self-image as consumers of stuff gives humans the rights and responsibilities to live out our full co-creative humanity.

A Global Commons Sharing Solutions

Through the daily sharing of stories with keynote speakers and panel discussions, Garrison increases the momentum of the Humanity Rising movement, which includes Ubiquity University students, program participants and more than 400 organizations that come together as a "global commons" to take counsel and share what they are developing for their own networks.

Humanity Rising was launched to try to leverage the crisis of the coronavirus pandemic into an opportunity for human renewal and increase our resilience to future challenges. This new form of real-life competency education delivered in TED Talk-style presentations, moderated dialogues, working groups, blogs, ongoing conversations, group discussions and other interactions provides participants a wide scope of possibilities and activities for working together for global solutions.





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Economics Story

If British economist Kate Raworth writes a follow-up to her bestselling book *Donut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist*, she'll certainly add a case study of her consulting work in Amsterdam, where her donut model is now embraced as the starting point for public policy decisions. Amsterdam is the world's first city to make a commitment to Raworth's concepts: "Out with the global attachment to economic growth and laws of supply and demand, and in with ... what it means for countries, cities and people to thrive in balance with the planet," as reported in *The Guardian*. The simple central premise of Raworth's alternative to growth economics is that the goal of economic activity should be to meet the core needs of all within the means of the planet.

Interconnectedness

Author Robert Atkinson's contribution to the new story is his understanding of the underlying unity in all religions and all humanity, expressed throughout his book *The Story of Our Time: From Duality to Interconnectedness to Oneness*. "Nature is an embodiment of the divine, and the whole Earth is sacred. Its vast resources are our common heritage entrusted to us," he says. "Humanity is one family. Having passed through the stage of childhood, humanity is now struggling to leave behind its adolescent ways



while taking on new patterns of thought and action in approaching its maturity. Accepting the oneness of humanity as a biological fact, a social necessity and a spiritual reality will lead us further along our journey toward lasting peace."

Atkinson believes global harmony is inevitable when we exercise our obligation to independently investigate reality and stop blindly and uncritically following various traditions, movements and opinions. He says, "I consider this as one of the main sources of world conflict."

Undivided Wholeness

In a world engulfed by fragmentation, the film *Infinite Potential: The Life & Ideas of David Bohm* is a healing balm with the potential to overturn our ideas about the world and ourselves. "The core work of David Bohm, considered one of the most significant theoretical physicists of the 20th century, is our essential interconnectedness and undivided wholeness from which we get a sense of our own interconnectivity," says producer and director Paul Howard. "This realization makes it logical to start taking better care of ourselves, each other and planet Earth."

Howard notes, "David was interested in the nature of thought and consciousness. Realizing that he wanted to develop full expression of his interests, he explored wider domains and investigated different worldviews with sages, philosophers and spiritual leaders such as the Dalai Lama, who called David his 'science guru'. A lifelong concern with social and political change led him to develop the Bohm Dialogue, a form of communication aiming to break through our collective modes of habitual thought. He also spent time with indigenous people, searching for a new form of language in which to express his ideas in a more process-oriented way."

Indigenous Wisdom

While the early church developed and grew in numbers by assimilating the wisdom of the world about it, including paganism, it neglected to assimilate the intuitive ways in that indigenous people knew the natural world, how it func-



tioned and how intimately they were integrated with it.

Tribes around the globe have ancient extinction stories that foretold the crises we are collectively experiencing, as well as potential outcomes and possible solutions. In *Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change*, Sherri Mitchell (Weh'na Ha'mu Kwasset) tells the story of the Mohawk Seventh Generation Prophecy. "The Onkwehonwe, or real people, rise up and demand their wisdom and way of life be respected and that the natural way of the Earth and way of life be fully restored. Teachings on the indigenous way of life are being sought after, and all that remains is that we work together to restore the Earth to a state of balance and good health," she says.

Medicine and Community

Thousands of people are gathering in online intentional communities associated with personal growth, healing and spiritual awakening. Jennifer Phelps, M.D., owner and director of Phelps MD Integrative Medicine, in Redding, Connecticut, practices mind-body medicine and is a faculty member of the Center for

Mind-Body Medicine, in Washington, D.C. A trained facilitator of small groups, she has been teaching trauma and stress healing via Zoom calls during the pandemic.

Initially, Phelps was concerned about how the levels of intimacy, trust and vulnerability necessary for individuals to develop a sense of cohesiveness and bonding could be formed via computer screens. By using the center's model of self-care, self-awareness and mutual support that has its roots in indigenous culture, she felt her concern dissipate as group members began to bond quickly. "Our guidelines call for no cross-talking and no interrupting. Confidentiality is sacred. I'm a facilitator and a participant, which most models don't allow," says Phelps. She speculates that the success of online bonding might be due to participants feeling safer in their homes with a little extra anonymity, noting, "Not being face-to-face seems to allow people to share more freely. These weird times are creating a commonality and a sense of community connection."

Conscious Choice

Leah Lamb, a sacred storyteller in Topanga, California, defines her role as a seer far beyond the present moment. In Lamb's online classes with her storytelling community, she loves sharing quotes by other storytellers such as Rebecca Solnit, "We think we tell stories; but stories often tell us ... Too often stories saddle us, and they ride us and whip us onward and tell us what to do and we do it without questioning. The task of learning to be free is to learn to hear them; to question them, to pause and hear silence, to name them and then become a storyteller of your own story."

"In our role of storyteller, we can't be without understanding that we tell stories about how we are in the world as much as stories tell us how to be in world. Identify and notice your stories, then understand how they are running you, so you can consciously choose your place in them," advises Lamb, who encourages her students to discover the genius of their own calling.

These are only some chapters in the new story that calls for each of us to be aware of the stories we live by, as well as those we tell ourselves and others. It also begs us to ask what is our role in the new story.

Linda Sechrist is a senior staff writer for Natural Awakenings. Connect at LindaSechrist.com.



BRINGING LOVE HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Sage Advice from Spiritual Leaders Among Us

While December is usually considered a time for closeness and holiday cheer, this month we find ourselves at the end of one of the most turbulent and contentious years in our nation's history. In light of the hope inspired by the holidays and the new year, *Natural Awakenings* asked several of Atlanta's spiritual leaders to help us see how we might bring more peace and reconciliation into our homes, communities and beyond. Additional contributions that couldn't fit in our print edition can be seen at bit.ly/bringing-love-home.

The Power of Love

by Rev. Richard Burdick

The glove has been tossed into the ring! The holiday gauntlet has been thrown down! Masked or not, elated with the election results or not, family festivities are just around the corner. Challenged by racial injustice or not, the invitations to these perilous yearly gatherings have been issued.

With the world in such a tumult, will we accept the challenge?

It is my hope that we will and that we appear in the battle's arena with a new mind and power—the mind and power of love! A non-resistant love that uncovers the heart behind the politics and the spirit beneath the opinions. A non-combative love that hears the echo of fear's cry as a call for connection rather than provocation. Consider that verbal jabs are signs of one who thirsts for intimacy and doesn't know how to quench that thirst beyond the annual folly of expected sparring. Show them a different way. Look within yourself for a love so pure that it heals the deepest divide and reveals a more compassionate possibility beneath the surface of our alleged adversaries.

At Christmas time, we celebrate the birth of a man who taught "Love your enemies as yourself." This year, consider that we have no enemies. Consider that nothing and no one is against us. Although the task is arduous, the rewards are immense. If we enter the arena with the expectation of an enemy, we will find one. Likewise, if we enter the arena seeking light amid darkness, we will find it.

May we prepare ourselves by drinking so deeply of love's well, when conflict rears its head, that we are an unwavering example of love's presence.

From a sincere desire for unity, and the faith that it is possible, lay your plan. Make it a non-defensive plan to see beyond the veils of behavior and attack, challenge and transgression, to a higher possibility. May we, as conscious shifters of family dynamics, prepare ourselves by drinking so deeply of love's well, when conflict rears its head, that we are an unwavering example of love's presence.

Love is demonstrated in many ways: as compassion, understanding, forgiveness and listening. Love presents as sympathy,

concern, sensitivity and silence. Most of all, she appears as our plan to retreat when we begin to feel we have dropped her shield and allowed the edge of ego's blade to rile us to defense, or worse, counterattack. It is not retreat as surrender, but as non-resistance and poise.

Love's grace understands the truth; as written in *A Course in Miracles*, "In my defenselessness my safety lies." Her shield is fearless and eternal. Her mettle, indestructible. Contrary to our own egoic need for competition, love opens a corner of our mind to the Taoist teaching that says, "Because the Sage opposes no one, no one in the world can oppose him." It is a great paradox for the ages that reminds us that in our meekness we will be strong.

Let us rise to the occasion with the mental and emotional softness of one who knows nothing can defeat love's supple truth. Let us be so steeped in love's prayer, immersed in love's meditation and bathed in love's baptism that not only is our journey home inevitable, but the entire family will be there as well, raising a glass to a new tradition.

Rev. Richard Burdick is the Senior Minister at Unity North in Marietta, Georgia.

Where Silence Takes Us

by David Ault

*"Silence is the language of God, all else is a poor translation."
~Rumi*

Imagine that you, as a soul, are in a movie, reading this article and thinking about the holidays. Your movie is just one of millions upon millions upon millions of movies your soul is experiencing. They're all playing simultaneously in a sort of cosmic universal Cineplex on adjacent screens. Though each movie feels separate, they're all one organism—that is, God, Love, Life, Source, the Allness—whatever term feels best to you to describe the indescribable.

Devotion to inner silence has helped me understand the insanity of seeking one-dimensional answers to our multidimensional experience. Silence has taught me that, only when I'm able to fully honor this multidimensional experience as a perfect patterning and see my soul's role and all other souls' roles as perfect, can I fully show up in my movie as a bodhisattva—one who is dedicated to alleviating the suffering of others. A bodhisattva possesses both ancestral power and illumined love. Do not confuse them with hermits who remove themselves from society. On the contrary, silence is the preparatory fuel for the bodhisattva to advocate, march, mediate and to enter into the lion's den of systemic issues with vision rather than an aggressive need to overpower.

The aim is not to create a just and civil world but to reveal the energies of justice and civility that already permeate around us.

The bodhisattva isn't attached to the "how" of the desired transformation. That would be like trying to solve the mysteries of multidimensionality by attempting to apply a frame around an infinite canvas. Transformation is within the mind. What we desire to be, we already are. The aim is not to

create a just and civil world but to reveal the energies of justice and civility that already permeate around us. Like love, we do not go out to seek it. It is fully present; we're invited to remove the barriers within our own mind towards its existence.

The language of God as silence is vital to this awareness.

Whether you decide to engage your inner bodhisattva is not a right or wrong decision. We're all part of a perfect patterning; none of us have ever been kicked out of the garden. We've just forgotten who we are.

David Ault is a thought leader, teacher, coach and global education advocate. He is the founder and executive director of Kaleidoscope Child Foundation, a non-profit organization that helps serve vulnerable children in India, Cambodia and Guatemala.

A Harmonizing and Unifying Universal Force

by Brother Ishtananda

Imagine you are walking in the woods, and you see a beautiful spiderweb, glistening in the early morning sunlight. There, at each juncture of the web, is a dewdrop, and, no matter where you touch the web, every dewdrop is affected. Similarly, the "dewdrops" of our lives are affected by the underlying universal life.

We are all connected by one consciousness.

Currently, that underlying life on our planet is being "touched" by fear, anger, hatred and other unlovely qualities. If we are not very self-aware, we will unconsciously be adversely affected by what is going on in the world. We might express ourselves toward friends and family in negative ways, not realizing where that negativity is coming from. These negative qualities have the effect of creating disharmony and a sense of separation from those around us when they are not in agreement with our way of thinking. The effect is that we are unhappy,

and that makes those around us unhappy.

There are many ways we can try to improve this situation – empathetic listening, trying to be open-minded to others' ideas, be more trusting, etc. But there is one powerful, universal force that unites and harmonizes. Through the use of this force, the other ways of being more positive and improving relationships will come naturally. The word for it is "love."

During the upcoming holiday season, let us try not to be affected by the negativity in the world, but rather open our hearts to that universal force of love so that we are affecting ourselves, those around us, and the world in a very positive, uplifting way.

One of the most powerful ways of tuning in with that universal love is by meditation.

I would like to share with you an excerpt from *Metaphysical Meditations*, a book by Paramahansa Yogananda. The excerpt is called "Expanding Love." He suggested not only reading the words but meditating, dwelling on, and feeling what the words represent.

My kingdom of love shall expand. I have loved my body more than anything else.

That is why I am identified with and limited by it. With the love that I have given to the body, I will love all those who love me. With the expanded love of those who love me, I will love those who are mine. With the love for myself and the love for my own, I will love those who are strangers. I will use all my love to love those who do not love me, as well as those who love me. I will bathe all souls in my unselfish love. In the sea of my love, my family members, my countrymen, all nations, and all beings will swim. All creation, all the myriads of tiny living things, will dance on the waves of my love."

~ Paramahansa Yogananda

Brother Ishtananda is a senior monk of the Self-Realization Fellowship, which was founded in 1920 by Paramahansa Yogananda, and minister counselor of the Atlanta SRF Center.



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Natural Beauty

Homemade Solutions for Glowing Skin

by April Thompson

Skin, our largest organ, plays an important role in supporting and protecting the rest of the body. That's why it should be treated kindly by using natural, chemical-free ingredients. Many U.S. beauty products contain hidden chemicals, including dozens of ingredients that are banned in other countries. Even products labeled "organic" or "natural" can contain potentially harmful petrochemicals, according to the Environmental Working Group.

A natural skincare routine doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. Balms, masks, scrubs and toners can be made from healthy, everyday products already present in most homes. "Oats, yogurt, coconut oil, honey: there are many kitchen staples that you can easily use in your skincare routine," says Marlene Adelman, founder of the Herbal Academy, in Bedford, Massachusetts, and author of *Botanical Skin Care Recipe Book*.

As an example, face masks can be made with ingredients from the spice rack, including turmeric and black pepper. "One-ingredient treatments, like a honey or yogurt mask, feel so good and are easy to make," says Stephanie Gerber, the Nashville author of *Hello Glow: 150+ Easy Natural Beauty Recipes for A Fresh New You*.

Facial, body and foot scrubs are great beginner creations, according to Stephanie Tourles, author of *Pure Skin Care: Nourishing Recipes for Vibrant Skin & Natural Beauty*. The Marble Falls, Texas, esthetician recommends starting with a base of sugar

or salt and adding an edible oil such as almond, plus a few drops of an essential oil. Essential oils should be diluted—add only six to 12 drops per ounce of finished product. Her favorites are lavender, tea tree, sweet orange and frankincense. Lemon, lime and bergamot are phototoxic and can cause sensitivity if added to any scrub before sun exposure.

"Scrubs are wonderful for softening, soothing and exfoliating the skin," Tourles says, cautioning that salt scrubs can sting if applied after shaving or waxing. Other common ingredients that can be added are oats, almonds or sunflower seeds ground in a coffee grinder. When mixed with water, cream or yogurt, they offer a moisturizing facial treatment.

Tourles loves homemade body balms using oil and a thickener such as cocoa butter or beeswax. "Balms are easy to make, great for kids and good for dry cuticles and lips. You don't have to worry about ingredients spoiling. They condition the skin and smell great," she says.

In harsher weather, skin requires a little extra TLC. Tourles suggests a hydrating winter toner made with a 50/50 mix of aloe vera juice and rosewater.

"Honey is also nice for the face and incredibly hydrating for winter," she says. "Simply warm a little bit, apply it to your clean face for 20 minutes, then rinse with warm water."

"People often forget to apply more moisturizer in winter. One of the best things you can do is exfoliate your face with a simple scrub to slough off dry, dead skin. Use gentler ingredients for your face than your body, like oats, baking soda or almonds ground finely," says Gerber. For chapped lips, she recommends a gentle exfoliant like sugar and honey applied as an antibacterial lip scrub.

"Matcha green tea makes a beautiful mask that astringes and tones skin. Combine it with aloe gel and honey for some soothing moisture in the colder months when our skin needs rejuvenation," says Adelman.

Some products are best purchased from a commercial source. "You can make many preparations at home—from masks to cleansing scrubs, cleansers, lotions and creams—but when these recipes contain water, they have a short shelf life. If you are looking for something with a longer shelf life, you're going to run into more complicated instructions incorporating preservatives," says Adelman.

"Moisturizers, creamy cleansers and hand creams have the steepest learning curve to craft yourself," says Tourles. "Trying to emulsify watery ingredients like herb tea and aloe vera with oils, butters or waxes is like mixing oil and vinegar in a salad dressing; these ingredients want to separate." According to Gerber, sunscreen is another product worth buying rather than trying to make at home.

Homemade or store-bought products aside, the best skin enhancer is a drink of water, according to Gerber. It doesn't get easier or more economical than that.

Connect with Washington, D.C., freelance writer April Thompson at AprilWrites.com.



Soothing, Hydrating Mask

From Susan Gonzalez, owner, MOON Organics

This mask works great for anyone with dry, sensitive, over-treated or sunburned skin.

¼ soft, ripe avocado

1 tsp raw honey

Gel from a two-inch (approximately) house-variety aloe leaf

1 tsp ground chia seeds (optional)

A few drops of water to thin if necessary

Mash all ingredients together to achieve a uniform consistency. Work in the aloe gel well. Apply to cleansed, dry face and leave on for 15 minutes. Remove with cool, soft cloth. Follow with a few drops of an anti-inflammatory soothing oil such as marula. Mask can be used daily. Any leftover mask can be spread on toast and eaten to feed the skin from the inside!

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PREVENTING TYPE 2 DIABETES

Natural Lifestyle Choices to Curb the Disease

by Marlaina Donato

Six decades ago, only one American in 100 had diabetes. Today, it's almost one in 10, including rising numbers of youth and one in four people older than 65. More than 90 percent of the cases are Type 2, once known as adult-onset diabetes, which is linked to diet, obesity, inactivity, environmental toxins, heredity and other factors. It can wreak havoc throughout the body—attacking blood vessels, eyes, nerves and organs—and make COVID-19 harder to combat.

The good news is that scientists have identified lifestyle strategies that lower the risk and harm of diabetes. “Type 2 diabetes is a condition, not a disease. It exists in a particular environment; when you change the environment, you can change the condition,” says San Francisco-based Nicki Steinberger, Ph.D., author of *Wave Goodbye*

to *Type 2 Diabetes*. That's important news for the one in three Americans—about 88 million people—that have prediabetes, 84 percent of whom are not aware of the fact, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A key player is the pancreas, a multitasking organ of both the endocrine and digestive systems, which produces insulin to help make and store energy from sugars, as well as enzymes to break down proteins, fats and carbohydrates. While Type 1 diabetes, a genetic autoimmune disease, negates the body's ability to produce insulin, Type 2 results from an insufficient or improper use of insulin.

Type 2 diabetes can be triggered by metabolic syndrome, a condition marked by high blood pressure, a large waist circumference and high

triglycerides. Insulin resistance—the body's improper use of insulin—can also be a sneaky forerunner to the disease, often manifesting as excessive abdominal fat, fatigue and frequent infections years before hyperglycemia—too much sugar in the blood—becomes evident.

“Diet and lifestyle play a tremendous role,” says Lauren Bongiorno, a virtual diabetes health coach and creator of *The Diabetic Health Journal*. “Increasing insulin sensitivity is a multi-prong approach, most notably influenced by improving circadian rhythm, reducing stress, eating lower glycemic carbs, reducing animal fats and increasing activity.”

Hidden Environmental Factors

The American Diabetic Association cites excess weight and lack of exercise as significant risk factors in the development of Type 2 diabetes, while recent studies also point to impacts from toxic air, chemicals and mercury exposure. Research published in 2018 in *Environmental Science and Pollution Research International* reveals a correlation between exposure to phthalates found in plastics and the incidence of new-onset Type 1 diabetes in children, suggesting that the loss of beta cells from phthalate exposure leads to a compromised insulin response.

“Plastics containing BPA can mimic estrogen (xenoestrogens) and can contribute to insulin resistance, insulin over-secretion, beta cell exhaustion and the development and progression of Type 2 diabetes,” says registered dietician and nutritionist Brenda Davis, the Alberta, Canada, author of *The Kick Diabetes Cookbook* and *Kick Diabetes Essentials*.

An earlier Indiana University study published in *Diabetes Care* showed young-adult exposure to mercury can raise the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes later in life by 65 percent. Davis adds, “Heavy metals, such as mercury and arsenic, have been linked to impaired insulin secretion and decreased insulin sensitivity.” Choosing organic produce and fish that contain lower levels of mercury, such as salmon, shrimp and catfish, is advised.

Medication Backlash

Improving gut flora is vital in improving most health conditions, including Type 2 diabetes. “Microbes in the gut that have become toxic for a multitude of reasons create an inflammatory response. This type of assault repeated over time increases the risk of fatty liver and compromised cells—conditions linked to a decrease in insulin sensitivity,” says Steinberger.

Research published in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* suggests that antibiotic use, especially narrow-spectrum ones, can contribute to diabetes. The side effects of certain medications like statins and other cholesterol-lowering drugs has been debated for decades, and 2019 research published in *Diabetes Metabolism Research and Reviews* concludes that statins can more than double the risk of Type 2 diabetes, especially for people taking them for two years or longer.

Sleep and Sugar

The National Sleep Foundation considers sleep deprivation a significant diabetic risk factor and recommends that people take melatonin as a sleep aid and avoid working night shifts. It cites a study in which healthy adults that were restricted to four hours of sleep for just six nights exhibited a 40 percent reduction in their ability to break down glucose.

Although the role of dietary sugar in diabetes is debated by scientists, evidence shows a strong correlation between Type 2 diabetes and sugar, fructose and high-fructose corn syrup in the diet. A 2015 review of 21 studies published in *The British Medical Journal* found that regular intake of sugary beverages can lead to diabetic conditions even when obesity is not a factor. Many holistic health advocates identify all sweeteners, including “healthy” alternatives like honey and maple syrup, as sugars that harbor similar potential.

This mindset is harmonious with glycemic index recommendations, so avoiding any added sweeteners and opting for fresh, low-glycemic fruits like berries, citrus and apples, as well as eschewing pasta, white rice and bread, can go a long way toward maintaining healthier blood sugar levels. Stevia, an herb, is a better

sweet substitute. Preferable in drops or bulk form rather than blended with sugars, it's been shown to help control blood sugar.

Promising Phytotherapy

Insulin-supporting medicinal herbs offer many benefits for Type 2 diabetics. Aloe vera, bilberry, cinnamon, goldenseal, bitter melon, milk thistle, fenugreek, fennel and gymnema sylvestre, among others, have been found to aid in the utilization and production of insulin. Tulsi, also known as holy basil, is a heavy hitter for reducing blood glucose and buffering the kidneys and liver from the metabolic side effects of high blood sugar. Herbs that support the liver, such as milk thistle, dandelion and artichoke, are other noteworthy plant medicines, especially when blood sugar fluctuates from high to low.

Renata Atkinson, a clinical herbalist in Greenbelt, Maryland, says of blood tests, “Clinical trials have shown that many of these herbs can have a significant effect on the clinical markers for diabetes and prediabetes in fasting blood glucose, postprandial glucose and HbA1C, or glycosylated hemoglobin.” Animal and *in vitro* studies show that they impact blood sugar by slowing digestion and the absorption of carbohydrates, thereby improving insulin sensitivity, increasing the release of insulin and modulating the metabolism of glucose in the liver. Some of Atkinson's favorite plant allies are hawthorn, hibiscus and tilia for their anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, as well as lipid, glucose and vascular support.

Atkinson also emphasizes the wisdom of keeping it simple. “I encourage clients to incorporate culinary herbs and spices into their daily diet, like cinnamon, fennel, garlic and onions. For someone taking insulin, it's important to introduce herbs slowly and be sure to take them with meals, monitor blood glucose levels closely and keep their physician informed of herbal protocols and follow their physician's recommendations.”

Improving diet choices can be highly rewarding and fun, too. “Not only does eating well not have to be tortuous, it can be enjoyable, inspiring and creative,” says Steinberger. “It helps to keep it simple by using fresh, whole foods with basic herbs and spices.”

Vitamin D, magnesium, vitamin C, B complex and chromium are also valuable in managing Type 2 diabetes. Polyphenols—antioxidants found in tea and unsweetened cacao nibs—also pack a healthy punch. Alpha lipoic acid, found in broccoli, spinach and fish oil, can help to reduce inflammation. Berries, kale and other nutrient-packed greens, nuts, sweet potatoes and beans promote sugar balance and are versatile for delicious, healthy meals.

Whole-Body Healing

Holistic bodywork modalities such as acupuncture also support diabetic health. In 2019, Iranian researchers reported in the journal *Hospital Practices and Research* that biofeedback training lowered glucose levels and improved the quality of life for diabetic patients. “The biggest mistake I see people with diabetes make is to view the mental piece as not as important as the physical,” says Bongiorno.

Linking all the vital threads in the complex web of Type 2 diabetes, she adds, “I would say to start with the basics—plant-based foods, exercise, stress management and better sleep. When you have a solid base, your body will be less susceptible to the other factors.”

Thriving is possible through commitment and wise choices. As Davis says, “There is strong and consistent evidence that many people who are motivated to reverse Type 2 diabetes can succeed in this task.”

Marlaina Donato is the author of several books and a composer. Connect at AutumnEmbersMusic.com.



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CHOOSE STILLNESS YIN YOGA

by Sheila Ewers

At the intersection of yoga and Taoist philosophy rests a unique type of yoga asana practice known today as Yin yoga. The Taoist principle of “yin and yang” insists that everything in the known universe exists as inseparable and contradictory opposites, such as male and female, dark and light, or sun and moon. The two opposites attract and complement each other, and each has within it an element of the other—as the yin/yang symbol above suggests. In this model, the yin element is feminine, dark, slow, watery, earth-bound, lunar, diffuse and passive. Yang, on the other hand, is masculine, bright, fast, fiery, ethereal, solar, focused, and aggressive.

Most of our Western yoga practices can be characterized as yang. Renowned Yin yoga teacher and anatomist Paul Grilley says, “Analyzing various yoga techniques from the perspective of yin and yang, the most relevant aspect is the elasticity of the tissues involved. Yang tissues like muscles are more fluid-filled, soft, and elastic; yin tissues like connective tissue (ligaments, tendons, and fascia) and bones are dryer, harder, and stiffer. By extension, exercise that focuses on muscle tissue is yang; exercise that focuses on connective tissue is yin.” Any time a yoga practice prioritizes flowing, energetic,

muscular movement, it can be considered yang. When a practice emphasizes stillness and passivity, it is usually yin.

Tradition suggests that yang reaches its greatest influence at the time of the summer solstice, and yin reaches its peak at the winter solstice, making this month, December, the perfect time to explore the deep stillness of a Yin yoga practice.

What is Yin Yoga?

Yin Yoga is an introspective and meditative practice. Postures, which are primarily floor-based, are held for long periods of time, averaging approximately five minutes in order to stimulate the flow of energy through the body’s subtle channels. These are known as *nadis* in yoga, and the energy is called *prana*. In Chinese medicine, they are referred to as *meridians* and *chi*, respectively. The poses apply stress to the dense connective tissues of the body to increase circulation in the joints and maximize flexibility.

What is the Origin of Yin Yoga?

Long-held postures have been practiced in Hatha yoga and Chinese Taoist yoga for centuries, but most people attribute the Yin yoga we practice today to martial

artist Paulie Zink who taught what he called “yin and yang yoga” to his students in the 1970s. He continues to refine the practice even today. In the 1980s, Paul Grilley studied with Zink and combined Zink’s methods with anatomy and Chinese meridian theory to create sequences that worked in ways much like acupuncture—with the aim of purifying lines of energy in the body. One of Grilley’s students, Sarah Powers, further refined and codified the practice and suggested the name “Yin yoga.” Together, Powers, Grilley and Zink began to offer Yin yoga teacher training courses in 2009, making the technique widely available throughout North America and Europe.

How is Yin Yoga Different from Hatha Yoga?

Whenever we move in any type of yoga practice, both muscular and connective tissues are involved. Most Hatha and Vinyasa yoga rely heavily on movements that warm the body and create muscular contraction. Sun Salutations, standing poses, arm balances and inversions are some of the many poses and sequences that build heat and vigor. These types of yoga offer considerable benefits as they strengthen both body and mind. However, too much dependence on yang alone might not prepare the practitioner for long sits in the stillness of meditation or inner contemplation that are the deeper aim of yoga.

To differentiate itself from Hatha yoga, Yin yoga uses different names for similar shapes. *Paschimottanasa*, the “Seated Forward Bend,” becomes “Caterpillar,” *Kapotasana*, the “Pigeon Pose,” becomes “Sleeping Swan,” and so forth.

While yang yoga focuses on muscular contraction, Yin yoga emphasizes complete muscular relaxation to create a static stretch in the deep layers of fascia that wrap muscle tissues. Over time, the increased stress in those tissues actually strengthens them and optimizes elasticity. According to studies conducted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the tension of these longer, static stretches can help alleviate scar tissue and create overall mobility and flexibility in the targeted areas.

In addition, learning to intentionally sit with some degree of discomfort can train the psyche to find equanimity when things grow uncomfortable in everyday experiences off the mat.

How is Yin Yoga Different from Restorative Yoga?

Both yin and restorative yoga are slow-paced and emphasize stillness, but the objectives of each vary. Restorative yoga aims to down-regulate the nervous system of the body, relieve stress and restore optimal health. With this goal in mind, restorative poses emphasize comfort. Most of the time, props like bolsters, blankets and blocks are used to prop the body into a shape that will relieve tension and promote ease of mind and body.

Conversely, in a Yin yoga sequence, practitioners might be encouraged to explore an “edge”—an experience of what some teachers call “comfortable discomfort.” Bernie Clark, author of *The Complete Guide to Yin Yoga*, suggests a “Goldilocks” approach, in which practitioners explore intense sensation that is neither too deep nor too shallow. The “just right” sensation in Yin yoga allows awareness yet invites the initial protective response of the muscular tissues to let go. As a result, access can be granted to the denser connective fibers.

Give It a Try!

Use this brief practice at home to explore Yin yoga for yourself.

Begin in a comfortable, seated position and connect with your breath. Set an intention for your practice, such as, “I create space in my body and mind to fill with the inner light of awareness.” Remain there for two to three minutes.



2 Caterpillar: From a seated position with your legs straight in front of you, fold forward, allowing your spine to gently round. Consider sitting up on a folded blanket or two and resting your head and arms on a bolster or cushion. Relax your legs and spine; it’s OK if your legs externally rotate a little when you do this. Hold for five minutes. Lower to your back in a supine position for one minute.



3 Sleeping Swan: Come to hands and knees. Then, slide your right knee to your right wrist with the right foot positioned at the left hip crease. Lengthen your left leg straight behind you. Center yourself so your weight is even and fold forward over your right leg, propping yourself with a blanket or bolster if you like. Hold for five minutes. Lower to a prone position and rest for one minute. Repeat with the left leg forward.



4 Seal: Lie on your stomach, raise your torso and head, and place your elbows under your shoulders. Let your weight rest into your forearms. Allow your lower back to relax, softening your abdomen and thighs. You’re looking for mild compression in your lower back. If you don’t feel this subtle stress, try pressing your palms down and straightening your elbows to increase your spine’s extension. Hold for five minutes, then lower to a prone position for one minute.

5 Child’s Pose: Come to hands and knees. Press your hips towards your heels, bringing your chest towards your

thighs and your forehead to the earth. Use a bolster to rest your torso if you need it. Hold for five minutes.



6 Savasana: Complete the practice by spending five to 10 minutes in a comfortable supine position, using props to create more ease for a final relaxation.



Sheila Ewers, ERYT500, YACEP, owns Blue Lotus Yoga in Johns Creek. A former professor of writing and literature, she leads group and

private lessons, yoga philosophy workshops, yoga teacher training and retreats. Contact Sheila at Sheila@JohnsCreekYoga.com.

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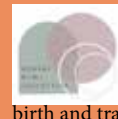
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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 \$10 to attend — to list for free. Otherwise, basic listings are \$35 and enhanced listings are \$75.

Submit free listings to calendar@naAtlanta.com and paid listings to ads@naAtlanta.com.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5

Back to Nature Holiday Market – 10am-5pm. Explore local artisans who have unique handmade and/or eco-friendly gifts for the holiday season. Admission free; cash and check only for purchases. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. 770-992-2055. ChattNatureCenter.org.

Free First Saturday: Opossums – 1-2pm. All programs are free, family friendly and open to the public. Some programs may require pre-registration and have capacity limits. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

Classical Astrology 101: Unlock the Eye-opening Secrets of your Birth Chart – 7-9pm. Understand more than just our sun sign and get intimate with your birth chart to know your purpose. Also learn about the most important astrological energies through the end of 2020 and into 2021. Free. Via Zoom. Register: TheWildOnes.community.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10

Virtual Park Pride Meeting – 6-7:30pm. Representatives from dozens of Friends of the Park Groups, park conservancies and the parks department attend to learn more about the community efforts in that park, discuss current park and greenspace issues and support each other in efforts to improve our parks and our park system. Via Zoom. Register: ParkPride.org.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12

World-Wide Virtual Cacao Ceremony for the New Moon – 2-4pm. Cut through mental mind chatter, connect to the wisdom of your heart and share a cup of sacred cacao with the world. Includes

meditation, intuitive movement, meaningful conversation, as well as wisdom from the heart. Free. Via Zoom. Register: TheWildOnes.community.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

Enchanted Woodland Wonders – 12-4pm. Includes live reindeer, seasonal festivities and more. Included with general admission, free/members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. 770-992-2055. ChattNatureCenter.org.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18

Virtual Park Design Workshop – 11:30am-1pm. Join Park Pride, representatives from Atlanta and DeKalb Parks, and members of local Friends of Park groups to learn about the approval process for community projects in parks. Learn presentation tips directly from government partners to put your best foot forward. Free. Via Zoom. Register: ParkPride.org.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21

Soulstice Yoga – 5:30-6:30pm. Practice yoga in the peaceful and temperature-controlled space of the North Woods Pavilion. With Sally Maxwell. Free. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21

ALTERNATIVE NYE

6:30-7:45pm. Join a group of like-minded individuals for our annual New Year's Eve celebration, this time virtual. Gen Norden, an American Buddhist Nun and Resident Teacher of KMC GA, will guide us in the practice of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion, a beautiful arrangement of prayers and mantras. MeditationInGeorgia.org/newyeareve.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2

ONLINE MEDITATION

New Year, New Mind, New You – 10am-1pm. Begin the year with joy and meaning with Resident Teacher Gen Norden. Live the Buddhist understanding of rebirth and impermanence to appreciate life and seize the day. Guided meditations, practical instructions and Q&A. A great way to begin the New Year. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

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Witch's Brew with Damaris – Dec. 15. 7-8:30pm. Do you ever think of someone and the next day they call you? Do you have to be careful what you think because it may happen? Do you feel like you have a hidden power? If you answered yes, this class is definitely for you. \$20. Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore, 5531 Roswell Rd NE, Atlanta. 404-255-5207. PhoenixAndDragon.com.

Wisdom and Healing Through Shamanic Journeys – Dec. 17. 7-8:30pm. With Vicki Evans. An opportunity to connect with Spirit and your guides for healing and direction. You can use the journeys to ask about all areas of your life, not just the spiritual side. \$20 via PayPal. Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore, 5531 Roswell Rd NE, Atlanta. 404-255-5207. To register: PayPal.me/vickievanhealing. PhoenixAndDragon.com.

ONGOING EVENTS

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Online Sunday Experience – 9am, Adult Study; 9:30am, Meditation; 10am, Music; 10:30am, Service. With Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta. slc-atlanta.org. To watch: [Facebook.com/spirituallivingcenteratlanta](https://www.facebook.com/spirituallivingcenteratlanta).

Red Clay Sangha Sunday Morning Service – 9am, meditation; 10:30-11:30am, dharma discussion. Via Zoom. To watch: RedClaySangha.org.

Online Meditation Open House – 10am. A 30-min meditation and a 30-min discussion via Zoom. To watch: Atlanta.Shambhala.org.

One World Spiritual Center Sunday Service – 11am. To watch: OneWorldSpiritualCenter.net.

Shamanic Journey – 11am. 1st Sun. A virtual healing experience brought to you by Heron House via Zoom. Free; donations accepted. To register: Tinyurl.com/yctrp49j.

Sunday Morning Talks and Discussion – 11am-12pm. With Vedanta Center of Atlanta via Zoom. To watch: VedantaAtlanta.org.

Unity North Online Sunday Service – 11:15am. To watch: UnityNorth.org.

mondays

Meditation & Modern Buddhism – 7:30-8:45pm. Learn how to integrate Buddhist teachings and meditation into daily life so that you can apply a peaceful mind, wisdom and a good heart in every situation. With Gen Kelsang Norden. To register for livestream: MeditationInGeorgia.org.

tuesdays

Heart Jewel Chanted Prayers and Meditation – Mon-Fri, 8-9am. Chanted Buddhist prayers and meditation. Free. To register for livestream: MeditationInGeorgia.org.

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

wednesdays

Zoom Check In: Wellness Wednesdays – 10am. Check in with your community during COVID-19 crisis. slc-atlanta.org.

Guided Lunchtime Meditation – 12:15-12:45pm. Treat your mind to a mid-day get-away. Introductory meditation techniques to help you improve your concentration and create mental stillness in your busy day. No meditation experience needed. To register for livestream: MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Unity North Online Wednesday Evening Experience – 7pm. To watch: UnityNorth.org.

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

thursdays

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

Twin Hearts Meditation – 7pm. This meditation is an act of service. We use divine energy to bless the planet, our

loved ones and every part of our life. With Atlanta Pranic Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: AtlPranicHealing.com.

fridays

Prayers for World Peace – 6:30-7:15pm. An opportunity both to simply pray for world peace and to be a part of the solution. Includes a guided meditation, a short teaching and chanted prayers for world peace. To register for livestream: MeditationInGeorgia.org.

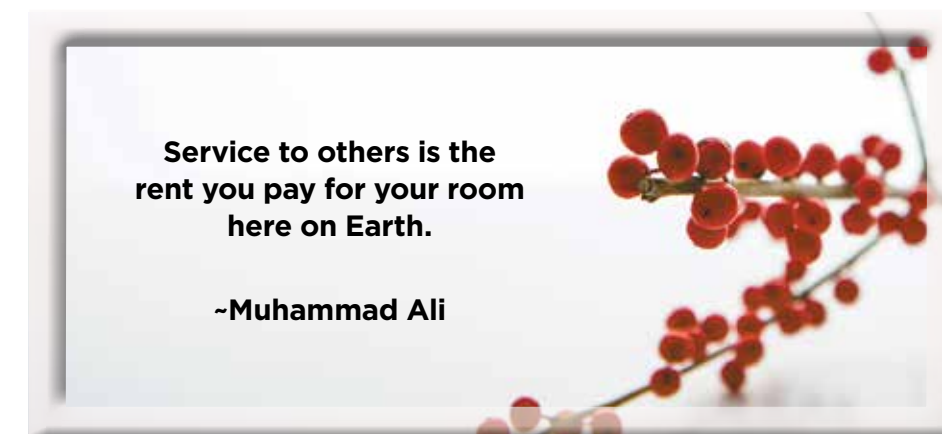
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Holiday Ride-on Train – Sat & Sun, Nov 14-Jan 3. All aboard the Botanical Express for a trip around the Great Lawn. \$5/passenger, \$3/member. Atlanta Botanical Garden, 1345 Piedmont Ave NE, Atlanta. Atlantabg.org.

Free Saturday Meditations – 8-8:30am. To register for livestream: MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Dunwoody Nature Center Saturday Volunteers – 9am-12pm. 2nd Sat. For anyone in the community who wishes to volunteer. A wonderful way to start off your weekend in nature and service. To promote social distancing, sign-up is mandatory; limited to 24 people. 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

Free Online Guided Meditation for All – 9:45-11am. Will go over basics and guided meditation. No prior experience is needed. Classes meant to come together and meditate and learn little by little. Via Zoom. Register: Tinyurl.com/y3x5yy2s.



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Matt Kahn on Transforming the Planet With Love

by Sandra Yeyati

Author of bestsellers *Whatever Arises, Love That* and *The Universe Always Has a Plan*, as well as *The Healing Mantra Card Deck*, Matt Kahn is a spiritual teacher and empathic healer with a global audience, guiding seekers through in-person events and popular YouTube videos.



What lessons can we learn from turbulent times?

A big lesson is that desire is not a requirement for happiness. The things that most people desire for comfort or stability have been displaced, whether we're talking about COVID-19 or the wildfires, for example. But happiness is how content and whole we are with ourselves; the constant needing of things pulls us out of happiness. Perhaps we can discover that just being who we were born to be is what we've always desired.

No matter how dark the world seems or how insurmountable the odds appear, this is part of a grand transformation of the planet. We love ourselves to remain safe throughout each step along the way, and we offer kindness, compassion and forgiveness to anyone around us, knowing that anyone acting out of character is just acting from a level of unprocessed pain. We love ourselves as a way of uplifting the planet, and we bless others as a way of helping to further the evolution of humanity. As we learn to be inner light

workers and healers, we learn to find complete alignment with spirit no matter how the world ebbs and flows.

What's the difference between our personal spiritual journeys and what you call ascension?

Ascension is when a certain percentage of the world starts to awaken in consciousness. It's not just a few awake beings scattered across the globe in a fast-driven, goal-oriented society. It's a world waking up to its true nature on a collective level.

On an individual journey, we're healing our wounds, seeing through limiting beliefs, forgiving those who mistreated us and daring to treat ourselves better so that we can become active participants in the community of evolving beings we are creating.

Giving brings us together. Each of us has something unique to contribute through the gift of diversity; together, we accomplish more than we ever could individually. The individual spiritual path helps clear distractions and awaken your most infinite power, and then you bring that together in community for this potluck of generosity we each get to experience and share.

What is your advice for political protestors in today's America?

Gandhi would say, "Be about what you're for, not what you're against." When we protest, we're saying that something isn't fair and relying on publicly elected officials to do something about it. I think the gathering together of beings can transform from what isn't fair to what all of our talents and efforts can do together to create solutions. How can we solve this on a communal level? What can we do to peacefully and consciously use all the power within us to create positive, tangible change so we can start living in the world that we envision? It's an invitation to quantum-leap out of the identification of problems and into the cultivation of solutions.

Sandra Yeyati, J.D., is a professional writer. Reach her at SandraYeyati@gmail.com.



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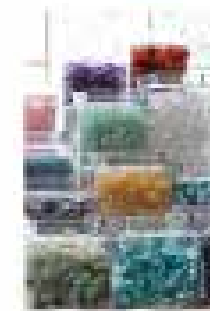
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