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ON RADICAL
RELIEF FROM
AUTOIMMUNE
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LOSE WEIGHT
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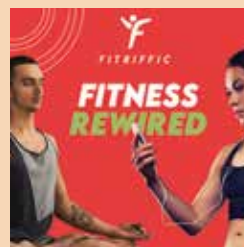
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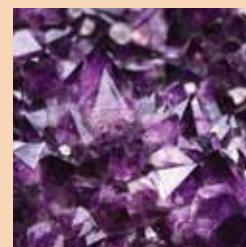
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WE GOOFED

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publisher **Paul Chen**
 managing editor **Diane Eaton**
 yoga editor **Sheila Ewers**
 calendar editor **Theresa Archer**
 copy editor **Patricia Staino**
 writer **Noah Chen**
 design & production **Kristin Hutchinson**
 distribution **Donna Abbott**
DistribuTech

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ceo/founder	Sharon Bruckman
coo/franchise sales	Joe Dunne
art director	Josh Pope
layout	Gabrielle W-Perillo
financial manager	Yolanda Shebert
assistant director of ops	Heather Gibbs
digital content director	Rachael Oppy
national advertising	Lisa Doyle-Mitchell
administrative assistant	Anne-Marie Ryan

Natural Awakenings Publishing Corporation
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Prayers and Wishes for 2021

As you know, yoga is near and dear to our hearts here at *Natural Awakenings*. At the very least, a regular yoga practice induces peace—an extraordinary claim for any activity. Because of the immense importance of yoga to us, I turn over this month's space to our inestimable yoga editor, Sheila Ewers. As every January is a new beginning that absorbs the lessons of the past, Sheila has some thoughts to share about yoga in the anticipated post-coronavirus world.

~ Paul Chen, publisher

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This time last year, I owned two vibrant studios that regularly hosted classes of 20 to 30 people. My marketing team had just published a slick, 16-page booklet advertising our 2020 offerings, including three international retreats, more than 18 multi-day workshops, and a schedule of 40+ classes. Reviewing our work, we congratulated ourselves and felt a sense of pride and excitement about the year to come. It felt like the years of hard work building our two communities were finally paying off. The future looked bright and full of prosperity.

Then came March.

When the pandemic hit, and the world shut down, so did every yoga studio in the United States. I closed our doors, created an online platform, reinvented all of our workshops, rescheduled all of our retreats, counted our reserves, and calculated that we could last for about three months before things grew dire. I never imagined that we would still be in the throes of such challenging times as we enter 2021.

Around metro Atlanta, many long-established yoga studios have closed their doors permanently—YogaWorks, Sacred Chill, Sacred Thread's Beltline location, Westside Yoga, Grey Owl, Progress Yoga, Bhumi Yoga, to name a few—as well as my own Duluth Yoga Center.

As we grieve these losses, many might find themselves wondering what will remain when we finally have relief from the fear of the contagion. Will the yoga culture change, or will we return to what we had before?

As a long-time practitioner, a seasoned teacher and a studio owner, I hope that we learn and grow from the struggles of the past year. I hope that we make a commitment to fortify our practice, our studios and our communities to build deeper resilience and longevity.

Here are my wishes for where we go with yoga—post-pandemic and beyond.

- May those students now practicing yoga in the privacy of their own homes retain

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



an appreciation of their ability to trust their unique inner teacher, lighting the way for greater wisdom and self-awareness to emerge.

- May the emerging collective thirst for tools to bring peace and healing lead each of us on a lifelong quest towards wellness. May that quest include the embrace of all eight limbs of yoga and a deepening understanding of the connections that bind us together.
- May the isolation and silence forced upon us in quarantine become chosen and cherished as we learn to nourish ourselves with stillness and quiet the fluctuations of our minds.

For the sustainability of studios

- May studios, awakened by the racial unrest in our nation, consciously create communities with greater equity and inclusion, adopting programs and policies to ensure that shared spaces are welcoming and safe for students of all colors, beliefs, cultures and orientations.

Continued on Page 33



BEAUTIFUL SPA L

Opens in Snellville

Beautiful Spa L, which features facials, Swedish massage, colonics, ionic foot detox and beauty products, opened at 2150 Fountain Square in Snellville in early December.

Three levels of monthly memberships offer clients regular access to services on a discounted basis, and any membership comes with a 15% discount on any additional services.

Founder and owner, Venus McClinton-El, has been in the health

and wellness field for over 20 years and is a licensed esthetician and certified colon hydrotherapist. Prior to Beautiful Spa L—the “L” stands for “Love”—McClinton-El owned her own business, which she closed so she could care for her ailing mother, and worked in her sister’s spa, Andrea’s Place, located in Norcross.

The new spa also offers a weight loss program and a range of beauty products. “The weight loss program

includes deep tissue detox, colonics, fasting, exercise, meditation, and herbs and vitamins,” says McClinton-El. And the spa features products by Skin Script, which El-McClinton describes as “very fruity and very natural. They smell good, and they work!”

Beautiful Spa L is open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm. For more information: www.beautifulspal.com; beautifulspal@yahoo.com; 770-676-0721.

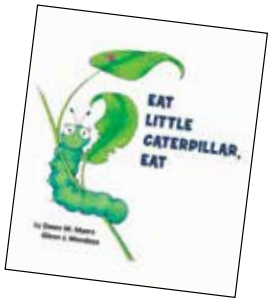


Dawn Myers (Photo Johanna Nichols)

NEW CHILDREN’S BOOK

from Atlanta’s

DAWN MYERS



Atlanta life coach and pranic healer, Dawn Myers, has just released her second children’s book, *Eat Little Caterpillar, Eat*. Co-author, Dr. Glenn Mendoza, is a practicing pediatrician and one of the world’s eight master pranic healers. The book is illustrated by Myers’ long-time friend Jim Boughton of Rutland, Vermont.

Myers describes her book as “a beautiful story that infuses magic in the hearts and minds of readers as they embark on a loving journey of transformation.” She invites readers to “join our little caterpillar as she journeys through fears, lets go of the past and embraces the good to help her transform and move forward.”

The idea for *Eat Little Caterpillar, Eat* “just came to me,” says Myers, and she reached out to Mendoza to collaborate.

“Our intention was to express the journey of letting go of the inevitable negative situations that we are faced with in life and to seek those who inspire, uplift us to heal, digest and transform our lives,” she says. “We cannot evolve by staying the same.”

From beginning to end, the process took just four months. “We believed it was meant to be published and released in 2020,” says Myers. “The book is a beautiful symbol for a year when we withdrew from the normal everyday life to transform and reemerge a better version of ourselves.”

To purchase the book, go to bit.ly/eat-little-caterpillar. It will be available on Amazon in January 2021.

Roberts’ New Release

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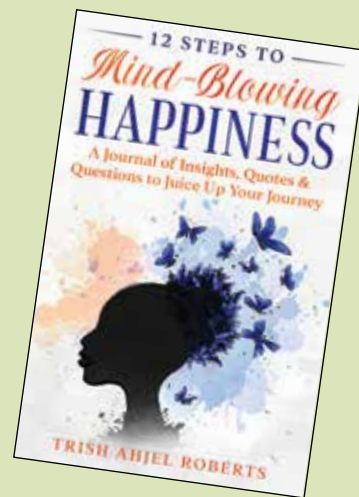
Author and self-actualization coach Trish Ahjel Roberts recently released a new inspirational journal, *12 Steps to Mind-Blowing Happiness: A Journal of Insights, Quotes & Questions to Juice Up Your Journey*.

The journal is designed to walk the reader through a 12-step approach to happiness that Roberts developed over many years of studying Buddhist and yogic philosophy, life coaching strategies and therapeutic techniques. The reader is invited to craft their own story and enhance the trajectory of their life.

“As you unfold the joyful truth in each step, you will undoubtedly ‘juice up’ your life’s journey,” says Roberts.

“Everyone wants happiness and freedom from suffering—people, animals and even insects—but the desire for mind-blowing happiness is unique to humans,” says Roberts. “We have the ability to access our Divine consciousness in ways that other species simply cannot. This innate ability gives rise to a profound desire for exceptional joy, purpose and fulfillment.”

Roberts is a freelance writer, blogger, self-actualization coach, yoga and meditation instructor, Reiki practitioner, plant-based retreat organizer and founder of Black Vegan Life™ and HoneyButterflyz, LLC. She is the author of the ebook, *Black Vegan Life™ Guide*



to Self-Care, and the self-help memoir, *Thinking Outside the Chrysalis: A Black Woman’s Guide to Spreading Her Wings* in addition to *12 Steps to Mind-Blowing Happiness: A Journal of Insights, Quotes & Questions to Juice Up Your Journey*.

For more information, visit HoneyButterflyz.com or MindBlowingHappiness.com.

Integrative Nutrition Coach Joins

ADVANCED WELLNESS

Advanced Wellness of Atlanta, an interdisciplinary healing clinic in Decatur, welcomes integrative nutrition health coach Molly Lindberg to its health care team.

Lindberg received her training in dietary theories and practical lifestyle coaching methods at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. In one-on-one sessions or in group coaching series, she guides clients from stress, overwhelm and negative coping mechanisms to being fully equipped to excel in every area of their lives.

“Health and nutrition are not limited to just food,” says Lindberg. “I help busy men and women achieve their personal health goals through a holistic lens.”

“Especially during these unprecedented times, now is the perfect time

to make aligned action towards a greater sense of health and happiness,” says owner Dr. Karen Tedeschi. “Molly is a support, guide, and accountable for her clients as they make sustainable changes to their lifestyle that promote their own self-healing.”

Advanced Wellness of Atlanta is located at 1549 Clairmont Rd. #105 in Decatur. For more information, or to get on the email list for upcoming classes and programs, visit AdvancedWellnessATL.com or call 404-320-0204.



Molly Lindberg (Photo: Jameson Little)



Integrative Hospital Care

Medicine Embraces Holistic Modalities

by Marlaina Donato

Thirty years ago, hospital patients were treated for symptoms based on the Western medical model, and holistic modalities were excluded, largely due to a lack of reliable scientific studies. More recently, because of promising research, the traditional template is expanding. The Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine & Health encompasses 75 university health centers and health systems that offer integrative approaches—a remarkable seven-fold increase in 21 years. America's top hospitals, including the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, the Mayo Clinic, the Duke University Medical Center and the Yale New Haven Hospital, now offer therapies such as acupuncture, reiki, homeopathy, touch therapy, yoga, clinical aromatherapy and chiropractic.

According to a report in *Advances in Medical Education and Practice*, nearly half of Americans receiving medical care use alternative medicine (although 80 percent don't inform their doctors) and physicians agree on the importance of further research and training in such modalities. A 2017 University of California survey published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* found that hospital patients of all ages were willing to pay out of pocket for healthier food, therapeutic massage and energy work.

Disease: The Big Picture

“Research has repeatedly shown that even with full medical access and optimal medical treatments, a population's health improves by only about 15 to 20 percent. The rest comes from lifestyle, environment and

the social and personal determinants of health. Even factors like emotional health, what you feel is your purpose in life and what motivates you to be healthy plays a role,” says physician Wayne Jonas, in Alexandria, Virginia, a clinical professor of family medicine at Georgetown University and former director of the World Health Organization Center for Traditional Medicine. As executive director of Samueli Integrative Health Programs, which aims to make integrative health regular and routine, Jonas emphasizes that patients become healthier and medical costs are reduced when they are engaged in the healing process.

For Jonas, the shift toward integrative health care has become most evident during the current opioid crisis and the search for non-pharmacological ap-

proaches like acupuncture and therapeutic massage therapy for pain management. “The evidence body for many of these approaches has grown tremendously over just the past five years, and has shown a spotlight on what works and what doesn't. These approaches are now recommended in national guidelines as mainstream for chronic pain.”

Denise Millstine, integrative physician and internal medicine specialist at Mayo Clinic in Arizona, concurs: “The opiate crisis is an example of the need to broaden our clinical toolbox to incorporate care strategies that are less risky. I believe this change has been multifactorial, based on patient demand and more awareness of the importance of lifestyle management.”

Patient demand is also fueled by a desire to avoid medication side effects. In 1998, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that 106,000 hospital deaths take place each year from adverse reactions to prescription drugs. With more than half of Americans already taking a pharmaceutical drug, and three being the average, adverse side effects can easily mount in a hospital setting.

For Millstine, integrative medicine offers many solutions. “We might recommend the best medication or provide cutting-edge therapies, but without considering stress management, resilience, movement and what people ingest, it's hard to get optimal results. Integrative medicine expanded my approach to include nutrition, exercise, mind-body (connection), spirituality and other medical philosophies like Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in the patient's therapeutic plan.”

Whole-Patient Cancer Care

A 2016 meta-analysis by Taipei Medical University published in the journal *PLOS ONE* concluded that certain applications of acupuncture reduce pain and opioid use on the first day after surgery. Acupuncture—an ancient modality based on the concept of energy meridians in the body—is also offered in many major hospitals to offset the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation.

Acupuncture treatments at the Mayo Clinic are given in a calming atmosphere

of soft lighting and music, and performed by trained doctors, as well as licensed acupuncturists with a firm TCM foundation.

Integrative health care addresses the emotions that accompany a cancer diagnosis, and patients undergoing conventional treatment now have access to not only acupuncture but therapeutic massage, meditation, movement therapy, clinical aromatherapy, herbal applications, bio-feedback and yoga. Millstine says of the Mayo Clinic, “We have oncology-trained massage providers who are comfortable with what is and what isn't safe after someone has had a cancer diagnosis and/or treatment.”

Jonas highlights that when given under the supervision of a doctor and with conventional cancer care, complementary therapies may help people to manage cancer symptoms, boost overall well-being, better handle side effects of treatment and reduce the risk of cancer recurrence. “Integrative cancer care can help by activating one's ability to heal and feel better physically and emotionally,” he says. “Lectures on nutrition, yoga classes and support groups for cancer patients are now common.”

The Urban Zen Integrative Therapy Program, launched by American fashion designer Donna Karan in 2009 after her husband died from cancer, partners with heavy hitters such as the American Cancer Society and the Beth Israel Medical Cen-

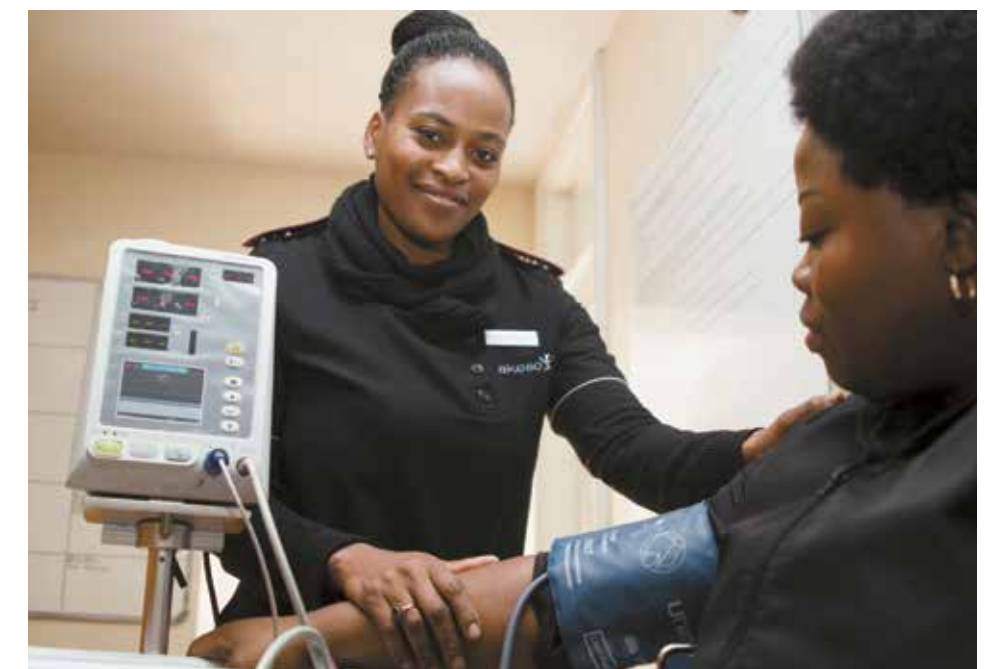
ter, in New York City. In many hospital settings, Urban Zen is creating “Zen dens”, calming nooks where staff can discuss cases with colleagues, take a break for self-care or talk to their patients in a nurturing environment. Urban Zen's dedication to healthcare integration is international and promotes therapeutic applications of reiki, essential oil therapy, nutrition and other contemplative care.

Energy Medicine Goes Mainstream

“Alternative therapies are no longer considered ‘alternative’ when conventional medicine adopts them—for example, using calcium and vitamin D supplements, which are a standard consideration,” says Millstine. “With high-deductible plans, many patients are accustomed to paying out of pocket for care, thus making payment for alternative providers possibly more palatable.”

Reiki, a Japanese form of energy medicine once considered alternative, is now offered at major hospitals like Yale New Haven, where it's given free of charge to cancer patients. Many hospitals are also offering classes in energy work to families of patients, hospital staff and the community.

“A medical doctor introduced me to the practice when my grandmother was diagnosed with lung cancer,” says Denise Baron, a Philadelphia-based reiki practi-



tioner who works with referrals from clients and wellness professionals. “A hospital does not hire me directly, but the staff know I am available. I’ve worked on patients post-surgery, during and after births, people with cancer and people in hospice. I would say 96 percent of clients walk away with a deep experience of peace, harmony and lower stress levels.” Most recently, she has seen an increase in nurses asking for support during stressful times, with many wanting to learn how to practice reiki themselves.

According to a 2017 study published in the *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, reiki is more effective than a placebo and activates the parasympathetic nervous system via the vagus nerve. Results include lower blood pressure and less anxiety and depression. Other research shows that the modality also reduces nausea, improves appetite and lessens fatigue.

Holistic Nursing’s Role

Collaborating with physicians and holistic practitioners, nurses play a key role in integrative hospital care. “We all work together to facilitate the client towards a higher level of well-being. Each profession brings something to the table,” says Margaret Erickson, in Cedar Park, Texas, CEO of the American Holistic Nurses Credentialing Corporation.

The nurse’s role in a patient’s healing journey is an intimate one, and holistic nurses ensure that the whole patient is tended to. “The roots of holistic nursing, grounded in holism, were



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verbalized over 150 years ago by Florence Nightingale,” says Erickson. “She believed in the mind-body-spirit-emotion connections and that all aspects need to be nurtured in order for people to heal.”

Due to increased demand, more nursing schools are creating educational programs grounded in holistic philosophy, she says. “What makes a nurse holistic is not the skills or alternative therapies she/he/they do, but rather how they show up in their interactions with others. They value and recognize that they are gifted with sharing a person’s most vulnerable moments, and that this shared space is sacred.”

Some holistic nurses may use healing therapies such as guided imagery, aromatherapy, energy work, bodywork, deep breathing, mindfulness and meditation to help both their clients and other healthcare providers.

Those in the field of integrative medicine agree that the future of medicine is now. “People are becoming more self-aware and taking responsibility for their health and life. Consciousness is growing [by] leaps and bounds,” says Baron.

Jonas, drawing on 40 years of experience, agrees. “By working as partners with our patients to help find the care that works for them, we can help them achieve better health and quality of life.”

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

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FRUGAL WELLNESS

Healthy Living on a Tight Budget

by Yvette C. Hammett

Living healthy on a tight budget may seem like a daunting task, but by setting up a self-care plan, prioritizing and shopping smart, the barriers can seem not quite so tall. With so many people unemployed or under-employed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for workable options is more important than ever.

A sports and nutrition company, My Protein, did a study that shows the average American spends \$155 per month on health and fitness. That's \$112,000 over a lifetime. There are, however, strategies that can lower these costs.

Jen Smith, a financial writer and co-host of the podcast *Frugal Friends*, often

talks about ways to spend less, save money and be in control of our spending. "You may spend more up front or more on the things you really care about, but cutting out the waste or things that are not so necessary can be a huge cost savings. This is not just for a penny-pinching, stay-at-home mom. Being frugal doesn't mean you are a cheapskate, but being wise with the limited resources that you have."

Smith says she had a pricey membership to a cross-fit gym, but in the long run, staying in shape can greatly reduce the costs of health care and prescriptions. "Any way you can stay active is what you need to do. Spending

money in any way that gets you to commit to and consistently move your body is the answer." Focus on eating good food and moving your body, Smith says. "When emphasis is placed more on that and on self-care, you save more money."

The National Institute on Aging recommends several ways to eat healthy on a budget: use coupons, consider purchasing store brands, know that convenience costs more, focus on priority foods, buy store-brand organics and forgo fresh for frozen organics. Sotiria Everett, a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Family, Population & Preventive Medicine at the Stony Brook Renaissance School of Medicine, in New York, agrees. "One thing to consider is seasonality. If out of season and organic, that will increase the cost. If you want clean living and healthy eating for the planet, that doesn't make sense either, because of the cost of fuel and the pollution involved."

Everett recommends frequenting farmers' markets because they offer seasonal, fresh, local, organic produce that is easier on the wallet and better for health. Her favorite tip is, "Learn how to plant foods. You don't need a lot of space, but do need sun and water access. You can keep it organic. A couple of seeds can give you a whole season's worth of produce."

Jody Gatewood, assistant state nutrition program specialist for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and a registered dietitian, works with people on tight budgets through the university's Spend Smart Eat Smart program. "We do a lot with families with young children," she says. "They are on a budget and concerned about having enough food to eat. One thing we teach a lot, and it helps with a budget, is to plan your meals. Look and see what is on sale at the grocery store. If there's a big meat sale, buy it then and use it throughout. I think what happens is if we don't plan, we go to a restaurant or get convenience foods which can really add up."

Fresh, frozen, canned and dried foods can all have a part in our diet, she says. "I use a lot of frozen vegetables. If you use frozen, you just heat it up and it is ready to go. Protein can be expensive, so have some meals where black beans or lentils are the source of protein. Have that balance."

As for healthcare costs, Smith recommends to those that cannot afford typical insurance or costly prescriptions in their budget to consider using manufacturer discounts and a service like *GoodRx.com*, which details how much prescriptions will cost at different pharmacies.

Consider using a "sharing ministry" for other costs, Smith says. With Liberty HealthShare, for example, people pay in every month and are billed like a cash payer when they have a medical bill while Liberty pays the cash. "When a doctor or hospital is billing an insurance company, they try to get as much as they can, but cash payers pay a lower amount," she says.

Yvette C. Hammett is a freelance writer from Valrico, Florida. She can be reached at YvetteHammettHull49@gmail.com.

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Lose Weight Without Dieting

How to Eat to Feel and Look Your Best

by April Thompson

One of the top New Year’s resolutions is to lose weight, and to that end, millions of Americans go on a diet each year. As we look to reset after holiday indulgences, nutrition experts say it’s a great time to cultivate healthy, long-term eating habits rather than unsustainable diets that lead us in circles.

“A ‘live it’ is better than a diet: small, manageable changes you can live with over time,” says Lisa Mallonee, a registered dietitian and professor at the Texas A&M College of Dentistry, in Dallas. “People get focused on losing 15 pounds, but once they get to the finish line, they don’t have a plan for after and often end up regaining the weight.”

While navigating the labyrinth of nutrition information can be tough, eating better is actually simple, says David Katz, M.D., founder of both the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center and the nonprofit True Health Initiative, and co-author of *How to Eat: All Your Food and Diet Questions Answered*. “There are two general shifts to make: first, to less processed foods, and second, to more plant-based foods,” says Katz.

In making such shifts, Mallonee suggests applying the 80/20 rule to food. “If 80 percent of the time you are making healthy choices, and the other 20 percent of the time you allow splurges, you’re less likely to feel deprived and revert to old ways.”

Katz agrees that small shifts are more likely to stick, in part because of our adaptable palates. “If you commit to improving your diet little by little, you will find that taste buds are adaptable fellas that will learn to love the foods they are with. For example, try something as simple as switching from regular soda to diet to seltzer to water over time.”

The good news for dieters with questions, suggests Katz, is there is no one superior diet. “You can have a high-quality diet whether you are flexitarian, pescatarian or vegetarian, low-carb or high-carb,” he says.

For Jill Weisenberger, a registered dietitian nutritionist, in Yorktown, Virginia, and author of *The Overworked Person’s Guide to Better Nutrition*, a healthy diet comes down to three meals a day, each with a good source of protein and fiber. “When losing weight, it’s especially important to eat enough protein so you don’t lose muscle mass with the fat,” she says, suggesting a target of 25 to 35 grams of fiber a day, achieved through a diverse diet that focuses on fruits, vegetables and legumes.

Katz, Mallonee and Weisenberger all caution against a diet like keto that restricts many nourishing foods only because they contain carbs. “There is no evidence of long-term safety or benefit of keto,” says Katz. “A truly keto diet cuts out a lot of highly nutritious foods like fruit, grains and beans, all associated with better health and longer life. I think a diet excluding these foods would be a colossal mistake.”

While weight loss is an exercise in delayed gratification, the power of high-quality food is immediate.

Weighing In

While it’s not healthy to obsess over numbers on the scale, it is important to understand the health risks of carrying extra weight, particularly around the middle. “Belly fat is a concern for co-morbidities like pre-diabetes, diabetes, increased blood pressure and even sleep apnea,” says Mallonee, stating that women should aim for a waist circumference of less than 35 inches and men of less than 40.

Katz advises that the effects of abdominal fat can vary. “Certain ethnicities are extremely vulnerable to excess weight around the middle, which can result in insulin resistance and metabolic mayhem. However, many people can gain considerable amounts of weight and show no metabolic effects,” he says, suggesting that a comprehensive health checkup can clear up any doubts.

Physiologically, it is hard to keep weight off, says Weisenberger, but people should not get discouraged if they fall short of their goals. “If you are overweight, you will get an enormous boost from the first 5 to 10 percent of weight loss—it’s much more important than that last 5 to 10 percent.”

While weight loss is an exercise in delayed gratification, the power of high-quality food is immediate, advises Katz. “You can improve the quality of your immune response with a single meal. It’s the gift that keeps on giving, too, as those positive health benefits accumulate over time.”

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

The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will instruct his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet and in the cause and prevention of disease.

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Staying Fit in 2021 Workout Trends Bend to the Times

by Marlaina Donato

For 2021, fitness will be more about better health and inner peace rather than weight loss. Gyms and studios will be on the top of their game adhering to hygiene standards and offering safer environments with smaller class capacity and vitamin D-enhanced outdoor sessions. From remote coaching to cost-effective wellness apps, the workout will get a fresh makeover.

High-Tech Wellness

Pandemic repercussions in 2020 amped up client demand for alternatives and also inspired trainers to get more creative. “I’ve enjoyed working with private clients virtually through FaceTime and Zoom. It has required me to create more precision with my training programs depending on what each client has at their home or home gym,” says Hollywood, California, fitness trainer Ridge Davis.

“Results have been going through the roof because my clients are more likely to dive into healthy routines and meal plans with my daily guidance.”

For those that cannot find local, in-person fitness provisions, subscriptions to streaming-fitness websites like *DailyBurn.com* and *OnePeloton.com* provide plenty of guides to workouts from yoga to muscle-building.

Health apps can tailor individual wellness strategies for the new year. “Fitness and health apps are becoming more popular, and trainers are able to interact with clients all over the world. If you are like me, you need accountability if you cannot meet your trainer directly,” says Dominic Kennedy, a personal trainer in Los Angeles and creator of the newly launched fitness and nutrition app *Dominic Effect*. “Nutrition is also going to be key now more than ever. Apps will help keep

you in check and on track with your food and goals, helping to set up monthly meal plans, as well as recipe suggestions.”

Wearable tech in the form of watches and smart clothing will be another hit in 2021, providing accurate readings on calories burned, number of daily steps and even heart rate and blood pressure.

Virtual Variety, No Pressure

Having the option to work out at home might motivate more people to begin a fitness routine without the pressure of comparing with others. Sampling classes online can help them find what they like before they sign up at their local gym or studio. “Virtual fitness classes provide an opportunity for people to test out different instructors at different times all around the country and even the world,” says Paris Alexandra, co-founder of the BK Yoga Club, in New York City. “People are now realizing the things we can control is our breath and our bodies. Because of this, there’s an appreciation of our capacity, challenging ourselves to try something new.”

Even with gym cutbacks, there is a silver lining. “One of my private weight-loss clients has loved our FaceTime workouts so much that she swears she will never go back to in-person training with a coach,” says Chicago-based Stephanie Mansour, host of the weekly national PBS show *Step it Up With Steph*. “Even on vacation or while traveling, people can still get in their workout because everything is virtual. Trainers also win because they can still do their job, but at a distance.”

Me-time with a private virtual coach will offer a tailored regimen for those that prefer a one-on-one experience. Mansour muses, “Private fitness and health coaching sessions will be the hottest trend in 2021. By now, many people’s excitement toward their ‘pandemic workout’ is waning, and they’ll be looking for a totally customized approach to kickstart their motivation and goals.”

Allies for Body and Mind

Davis predicts there’ll be greater appreciation for stress-recovery tools such as massage guns for percussive self-treatments, foam rollers to release muscle tightness and stretching apps, noting, “There’s so much noise, uncertainty and anxiety that has come with this pandemic; on-demand meditation classes will be huge.”

Mansour concurs, “Focusing on finding inner peace, meditating and positive programming are all huge trends that have emerged due to COVID. By getting your head in the game, you’re 75 percent of the way to your goal.”

Mostly, 2021 will be a year for self-care. “I think growth mindset is everything right now,” says Kennedy. “We need to fill our minds with positive affirmations, thoughts or whatever it is that makes you light up inside.”

Marlaina Donato is an author and recording artist. Connect at AutumnEmbersMusic.com.

Other Fitness Trends on the Rise

- Outdoor classes from yoga to strength training
- Boutique and micro-studios with specialty clientele
- Safer small groups, especially for seniors
- Broga yoga, with a focus on strength training, cardio and muscle toning for men
- Less-crowded yoga classes with BYO mats and props
- Mind-body fitness

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OBSTACLES TO HIGHER AWARENESS

The Five Kleshas

by Sheila Ewers

For many people, 2020 marked a year of great suffering. The combination of the ongoing pandemic, racial discord, political strife, and financial uncertainty has, by many accounts, led to increased worry and fear. In June, the Center for Disease Control reported that the prevalence of anxiety disorder among adults in the United States had increased more than threefold from the previous year. By October, 30% of American adults surveyed fit the diagnostic criteria for anxiety, depression or substance abuse.

The teachings of yoga recognize that disruptions on the path to awakening originate in both the external forces of the world around us and the internal field of our own awareness. Because we live in a material world, we have no choice but to deal with circumstances, like those of the last year, that create challenges. Still, according to Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, which are widely considered to be the authoritative texts on the theory and practice of yoga, we can choose to recognize our responses to difficulties and dismantle the habitual reactions that create suffering. The Sutras call these hindrances to awareness "*kleshas*," which translates to "afflictions" or "poisons." Overcoming our kleshas, advises the Sutras, leads to liberation from suffering in this life and from being locked into an endless cycle of death and rebirth.

The five kleshas are ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion and clinging to embodied life.

Ignorance | Avidya

Ignorance is at the root of all of the remaining afflictions. The philosophy of

yoga presupposes that all sentient beings derive from one great sea of consciousness that is infinite, eternal and united, but most people see the world through a narrow lens that defines reality as limited to what we perceive through the senses. Yogis call this perception "*maya*"—the illusion that we are separate from the universe. The Sufi poet Rumi puts it this way: "You are not a drop in the ocean; you are the ocean in a single drop." Having forgotten our true nature, we over-identify with all that is fleeting and temporal in the world rather than what is permanent.

What's more, each of us has a unique perception of the world in accordance with our past experiences, beliefs and cultural integration, yet each of us believes that our thoughts are true, our perceptions are reality, and what we believe is absolute. Our entrenchment in these beliefs makes it difficult for us to harmoniously co-exist with those who see through a lens that bears little resemblance to our own.

Ego | Asmita

Once we believe ourselves to be separate from the whole, the second klesha develops out of a need to define exactly who we are. "Asmita" translates literally to "I-am-ness," or ego. It encompasses the entire image we create of ourselves. It can have external references, such as, "I am tall/short, black/white and old/young," and it can have internal references, as in, "I am bad/good, quick-tempered/patient, extroverted/introverted," and so on. Most of us create many layers of an identity throughout our lifetimes, using our stories and patterns to help narrow and entrench

the definition of ourselves into something we believe to be permanent and unique. We identify with how we look and feel, what we do for a living, our relationship status and so on, rather than seek to identify with the part of us that is changeless.

Attachment | Raga

Attachment inevitably follows the development of ego identification. Once we narrow our definition of ourselves to a particular identity, we begin to identify with what brings us pleasure, whether it is tasty food, joyful conversation, a hug from a child—or something more toxic like drugs and alcohol. In our modern world, we have almost unlimited access to what brings us pleasure. We seek more of the things that create joy—in relationships, experiences and sensations—and we fill our lives with as much pleasure as we can manage. The philosophy of yoga suggests that while we can and should appreciate the things that bring us joy and happiness, attachment to them causes suffering. Even happy memories can create disruptions to our equanimity when they become a source of longing or a sense of disconnection from the present moment and internal awareness.

In his book, *Yoga: The Art of Integration*, Rohit Mehta writes, "Life can be experienced. It cannot be held." The affliction of attachment keeps us trying to hold what we love permanently; this clinging creates suffering.

Aversion | Dvesha

The opposite of raga, *dvesha* refers to *aversion*, or the avoidance of that which



produces an unpleasant experience. It can be easy to recognize as it often manifests with strong emotional responses such as disdain, anger and sadness. Since we inevitably have things we enjoy and things we prefer to avoid, attraction and aversion are essentially two sides of the same coin. They are not inherently bad or wrong, according to yogic philosophy, but aversions can create suffering and limit awareness when they consume our thoughts. When we obsessively focus on what we perceive as wrong or bad in ourselves or the world around us, we cloud our minds with negativity and fail to see what is whole and good.

Fear of Death | Abinivesha

The translation of the final klesha, *abhinivesha*, can be "clinging to life" as much as "fear of death." The inescapable result of identifying with a finite self is the arising of a fear that nothing else exists and that death destroys all. To fear death is to fear the unknown, to resist change, and to cling to what is impossible to hold. Yet humans are deeply and subconsciously programmed to fear death above all things.

As we journey towards self-realization and begin to remember our true nature with a yoga practice, we begin to undo the suffering caused by the kleshas. Through consistent practice, self-study and a willingness to accept what we cannot change, we have the ability to dismantle the hold of these afflictions. When we see through the veil of ignorance that clouds our awareness and understand ourselves as infinite, eternal and whole, we are free from the bondage of our illusions and recognize that what we experience in the external world—even if difficult or challenging—is transitory. Then, even the greatest challenges hold no more power to disrupt our equanimity. 🙏



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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Octavia Raheem Offers Immersion into Restorative Yoga

One of Atlanta's yoga luminaries, Octavia Raheem, is offering a virtual multi-weekend immersion into the power of restorative yoga for Black women and women of color.

"A rested woman is an unstoppable woman," says Raheem. "I know this much is true."

Called "Starshine & Clay," the course is "for those of us who are tired of being tired and want to commit to self- and collective-care and rest with a group of accomplished women who are brave enough to lay down," says Raheem. "I say 'brave enough' because rest requires courage in a world that's hell-bent on working, grinding, hustling as the only way of being productive."

Three guest instructors will also teach: psychotherapist and author Jennifer Sterling, sound meditation guide and healer Shana Nunnelly, and yoga nidra teacher Tracee Stanley.

By the end of the course, says Raheem, students will learn, in an embodied way, how the nervous system works, why restorative yoga is essential, how to create a sacred resting place, three to four yoga poses and how to modify them, how to move towards effortlessness, and how to build a work life that honors rest.

The course will be held on the four final weekends of the months of January through April and includes Friday evenings, Saturdays from 12 to 4 p.m., and Sundays from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

For more information, visit OctaviaRaheem.com



This month, Rawr Yoga Life, founded by Marsha Shakelford, moves into a new space at the Russell Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at 504 Fair Street, S.W., in Atlanta.

Shakelford began the business three years ago from her in-home studio in Roswell, and she will continue to serve some private clients there and online. The Atlanta location, however, will allow her to offer private lessons, group classes and events across three rooms, one of which opens to the outdoors. She hopes to make the classes available to a broad and diverse population and to bring more alternative and holistic healing modalities into the heart of the city and to the Black community.

The name "Rawr Yoga" was inspired by Shakelford's sons. She says the word "rawr" means "I love you" in dinosaur language. She aims to help others connect joyfully to the heart through fun and creative movement, including dance. Classes will include Ashtanga, Vinyasa, and Yin yogas as well as breathwork, meditation, dance, and more.

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Terry Wahls on Taking Control of Chronic Conditions

by Sandra Yeyati

Twenty years ago, University of Iowa Clinical Professor of Medicine Terry Wahls was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). Conventional treatments didn't work, and her health deteriorated to the point where she was wheel-chair-bound and facing a progressively grim future. Through rigorous scientific study and clinical trials, she developed a groundbreaking diet and lifestyle protocol that allows people to take control of their health, reversing many chronic disease states, including her own. She is the author of *The Wahls Protocol: A Radical New Way to Treat All Chronic Autoimmune Conditions Using Paleo Principles*, as well as an accompanying cookbook, *The Wahls Protocol Cooking for Life*.

What is your personal journey with multiple sclerosis?

In 2000, I had problems walking, which led to the MS diagnosis. After consulting the best doctors and taking the newest drugs, I went downhill anyway. At my lowest point, already in a tilt-recline wheelchair, I realized that conventional medicine wasn't going to stop my decline into a bedridden, possibly demented state with intractable face pain due to trigeminal neuralgia. My physicians introduced me to the work of Loren Cordain, who developed



the paleo diet, so after 20 years of being a vegetarian, I went back to eating meat; gave up grains, legumes and dairy. I also studied the basic science for animal models of multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and ALS, and decided that mitochondria—the organelles that generate the energy that cells use to run the chemistry of life—were leading to my early loss of myelin and brain cells. I also discovered The Institute for Functional Medicine and took their course in neuroprotection. Based on the science, I devised a supplement program to support my mitochondria. My decline slowed.

Then came my "Aha!" moment: What if I redesigned my paleo diet, combining ancestral health with functional medicine principles, relying less on supplements and more on food to support my mitochondria? I did that, and my pain, brain fog and fatigue resolved. I began to get stronger, started walking. In three months, I was able to go for a bike ride with my family around the block for the first time in six years. It felt miraculous.

It changed the way I think about disease and how I practice medicine. I now talk to patients about diet, lifestyle, exercise, toxics exposures and stress management, and I'm able to stabilize, reverse and greatly improve their blood pressure, blood sugar, pain and chronic diseases that I was struggling to manage using the latest drugs.

What have you learned about resilience?

People who maintain a sense of control have more robust immune function and are generally healthier. Many of my patients say that their diagnosis ended up being a tremendous gift because it allowed them to take stock of their lives and understand their priorities. That's true for me. If I eat gluten, dairy or eggs, or I'm exposed to too much stress or toxins, my trigeminal neuralgia will turn on and I'll have horrific facial pain, but I consider it to be a tremendous gift, because that's my barometer for the inflammation levels in my brain, which reminds me to look at my triggers and re-commit to my self-care. We teach patients how to track their biosensors.

Are you cured of MS?

No. I still have the genetic vulnerability and lesions in my spinal cord, and will always be sensitive to gluten, dairy and eggs. If I become severely stressed or don't sleep, I'll probably have a problem again. I caution all of my patients: If you go back to your previous diet and lifestyle, your disease states will return.

Isn't it easier to just take a prescription drug for symptoms?

It's a smaller level of effort, but they're not cures, either. The underlying disease state progresses, so people typically need higher doses of their medications. They also develop co-morbid diagnoses that require new medications. Conventional medicine is effective for some symptom improvements, but it has never been evaluated for improving global health, whereas studies have shown that improving diet quality and incorporating exercise and meditation will improve multiple chemical pathways in the body, gene expression and your microbiome, and dramatically improve health outcomes across many disease states. 🌱

For more information, including diet protocol guidelines and online courses, visit TerryWahls.com.

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

ADVERTORIAL

The Awakening of Humanity

By Lynne Girdlestone

Today we are all experiencing one or more of the negative effects of an incredibly destructive 'agent of change.' Although horrific things happen every day on this planet, they usually affect other people elsewhere. COVID-19, however, can potentially reach anyone, anywhere, upending our lives in a multitude of ways. The obvious questions—how do we stop this virus, will a vaccine help, will the global economy recover—are all unknowns. They occupy our thoughts and emotions with every newscast.

For some, the crisis is merely an inconvenient interruption in their 'business as usual.' For others it has created new ways to profit at the expense of others. But for most, it's an amplified survival issue.

We know that nothing happens by chance: "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction" and "As you sow, so shall you reap." What is happening today has its roots in everything that has gone before. When dysfunction reaches a tipping point, something extraordinary happens to get our attention. This pandemic may be saying "STOP... NOW ... look at the world you've built ... untold suffering amidst obscene excess ... all life forms and the planet itself in mortal danger!" The slowing and isolation are giving us the opportunity to consider these issues deeply and emerge with a better Plan B.

That so many people are getting the message is an incredibly hopeful sign. Neighbors are helping each other; service organizations are expanding their roles and methods; scientific organizations around the world are sharing their research findings on possible treatments and vaccines; governments are trying to lift the financial burden of their citizens.



What would happen if this behavior were to continue post-Covid-19? Could it lead to treating a recovering planet as a 'global village' and its citizens as the one human family it is? It would take time, but we can start by demanding of our 'leaders' that we all push the 'reset' button and begin to move in that direction!

Fortunately, at this very time, a little-known cosmic event is also taking place. As we move into the Aquarian age, characterized by energies of synthesis, unity and cooperation, the spiritual custodians of human evolution—the Masters of Wisdom—have once again sent one of their great ones into the world to act as a teacher for the coming time. Some of the past teachers we have known historically as Confucius, Krishna, Buddha, the Christ and Mohammed. Major world religions all expect another great teacher at some future time, and his imminent appearance has been foreseen by some writers since the late 1800s.

For more than 40 years, British esotericist and lecturer Benjamin Creme informed the world of a coming change—of the collapse of our old structures to make way for the new. He served as a herald for the World Teacher for this age, Maitreya—the one expected by many and longed for by millions (consciously or not), who has come now to guide us through this perilous time and into a cleansed and transformed new world.

Maitreya has advised humanity to make the needed changes to put our world on a saner, fairer path:

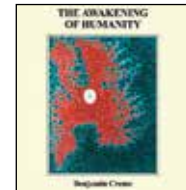
"He [Maitreya] will show that essentially men are one, no matter the colour or the creed, that the bounty of Earth belongs to all, and that sharing of that

bounty is the key to man's future. Only sharing, and the justice which it will bring, offers hope to man. Only justice wrought out of sharing will end the plagues of war and terror. Only sharing and justice can bring men to that Brotherhood which is their true inheritance. When men see this they will rise to the challenge and tackle one by one the many problems which daunt us now." (Benjamin Creme's Master from 'Transformation,' *Share International* magazine)

Maitreya and his group have worked behind the scenes for millennia to guide our human family. Now, with these powerful, incorruptible allies openly in the world for the next 2,000 years and beyond, we have the opportunity to build a new world that works for everyone. Will we take it? In response to today's injustices, we are marching. We are protesting. We are sharing resources and helping others. We are agitating for change. We are on the right track! Let's not even consider returning to 'business as usual.'

For free information:

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In *The Awakening of Humanity*, Benjamin Creme leads us on a journey of hope for the joyful world-changing events that are on the way.

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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 re \$35 and enhanced listings are \$75.

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

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1

Virtual Yoga “4U” – 10:30am. With Bobbye. More info & to register: DecaturHealingArts.com.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2

New Year, New Mind, New You Online Meditation Course – 10am-1pm. Beginning the year with joy and meaning with Resident Teacher Gen Norden. Guided meditations, practical instructions and Q&A. No experience necessary. Everyone welcome. To register: MeditationInGeorgia.org.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6

WTF is Next?: Four Experts Look into the Future of 2021 – 6-8pm. We have brought together four incredible women for one mind-blowing live panel discussion featuring an astrologer, an intuitive, an Akashic Records reader and a tarot reader. Free. Via Zoom. Register: TheWildOnes.community.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7

Aromatherapy Foundation Course – Jan 7-Apr 22. 10am-1pm or 6:30-9:30pm. A 50-hr Certificate Course with Roz Zollinger, certified Aromatherapist and Instructor. Learn key elements of this increasingly popular natural therapy. Heal Center, 270 Carpenter Dr NE, Ste 505, Sandy Springs. 404-303-0007. HealCenterAtlanta.com.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8

Sustainable Atlanta Roundtable Webinar – 11am-12:30pm. Topic: Managing Stormwater to Reduce Coastal Pollution: A Comprehensive Approach. A panel of experts from the greater Sarasota area and the national stage will describe the benefits of a comprehensive approach to stormwater management as an example for coastal cities worldwide. Free. Register; Southface.org.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16

CSA Online Meditation Retreat: Prosperity – Led by CSA Minister Ryan Strong with Leode Franklin and Michael Gadway. A free copy of The Spiritual Basis of Real Prosperity by Roy Eugene Davis. More info & to register: CSA-Davis.org.

Family Night Hike and Campfire – 7-9pm. Listen for the sounds of winter in the woods and gaze up at the stars, while enjoying the crisp air of the season. Then enjoy campfire where you can roast a marshmallow. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Registration required: 770-992-2055 or ChattNatureCenter.org.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27

Virtual Park Pride Meeting: 5338 Redan Road – 7-8pm. DeKalb County residents are invited to participate in the Park Visioning process to create a long-term plan for the property at 5338 Redan Road. Your opinion is crucial to the success of this process. Via Zoom. Register: ParkPride.org.

Virtual Sacred Sisters Book Club – 7-8:30pm. Book Club begins by covering Chapters 1-5 of Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Over 3 months we’ll explore rich intercultural myths, fairy tales, folk tales and stories in order to reconnect with the fierce, healthy, visionary attributes of women’s instinctual nature. More info: SantoshStudio.com.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28

Virtual Nature Club – 7-9pm. Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites with Kim Hatcher. Space limited. \$10/general, \$5/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Registration required by Jan 27: 770-992-2055 or ChattNatureCenter.org.

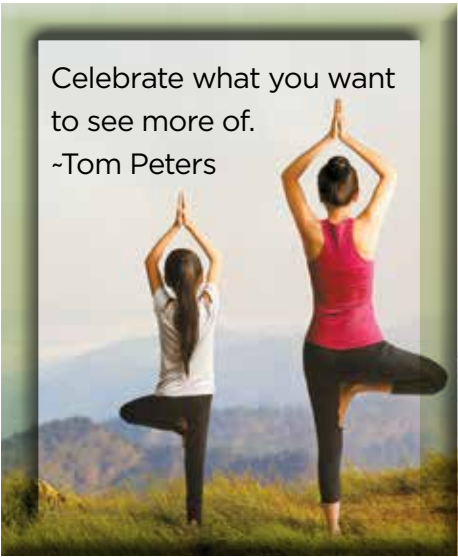
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Shamanic Women – Jan. 8. 7-9pm. With Vicki Evans. If you’re a woman who has had shamanic training or feels called to the shaman’s way of life, please join us at our monthly meetings. Limited to 10 people. \$20 via PayPal. Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore, 5531 Roswell Rd NE, Atlanta. 404-255-5207. To register: PayPal.me/vickieevanshealing. PhoenixAndDragon.com.

Witch’s Brew with Damaris – Jan. 19. 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 – Jan. 28. 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/vickieevanshealing. PhoenixAndDragon.com.



ONGOING EVENTS

sundays

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: OneWorld-SpiritualCenter.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

The {SAMA} Class: Virtual – 9am. Also held Thurs & Fri. Incorporates 25 mins of yoga, 10 mins of breathwork, finishing off with 10 mins of meditation. Each teacher will bring their own spin to the class based on their particular lineage of training. More info: SamaFoodForBalance.com.



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.

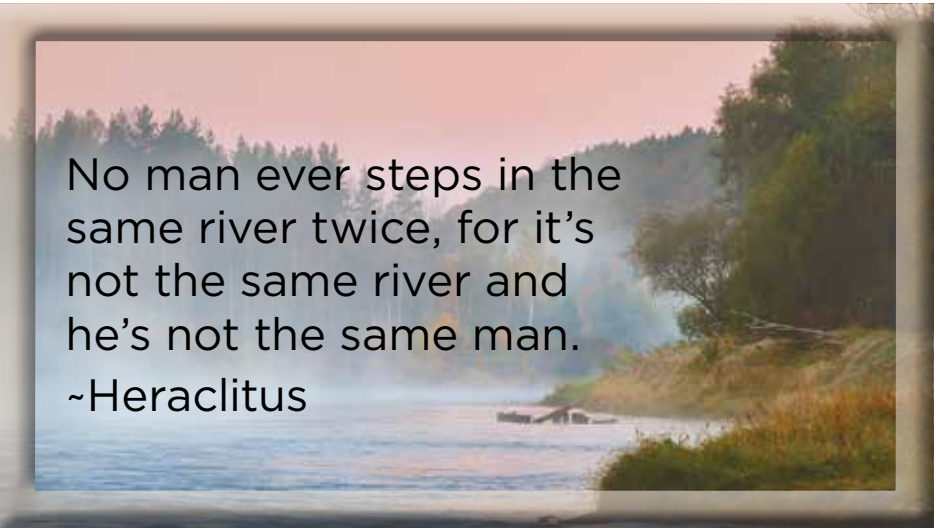
Unity North Online Wednesday Evening Experience – 7pm. To watch: UnityNorth.org.

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

Virtual Qi Gong – 6-6:45pm. More info & to register: DecaturHealingArts.com.

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.

saturdays

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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Continued from Page 9

- May communities and students who've witnessed the economic fragility of independent workers and privately owned businesses realize the value of their support and contribute generously to help make the business of yoga more viable.
- May students who've felt the pangs of separation from their beloved studios recognize the value of *sangha*— spiritual community—and nurture companionship by returning to yoga spaces to mingle with others on the path.

For the community

- May the national and international communities, awakened to the fact that we are inextricably united, recognize what yogis have always known: that we are all one. May we learn to honor the divine light within everyone we encounter.
- May more yoga teachers—stirred to action by witnessing the suffering that has permeated so many lives—help bring the healing practices of yoga into communities that need it most.
- May administrators and decision-makers of schools, corporations and other large organizations recognize the power of mindfulness, meditation, conscious breathing and yoga to alleviate stress, increase awareness and cultivate the health of mind and body. May they support programs that make these more accessible to all.

For the planet

- May the benefits of our yoga practices reach beyond the mat as we recognize all sentient beings' inherent dignity and value and as we work to bring peace for all beings everywhere. 🌱



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

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

TIME TO PIVOT

by Trish Ahjel Roberts

2020 is definitely one for the record books. In this one strange year, I wrote three books, fell in love with solo travel and discovered I'm a natural on camera. Sometimes I couldn't fall asleep and sometimes I didn't want to get out of bed. I lost my father and my uncle to heart disease and my favorite aunt to COVID-19. Two of my friends were hospitalized with COVID. Between the pandemic, isolation, ongoing police brutality, conspiracy theories and a mind-numbing election, I was beginning to feel like a character in a dystopian movie. 2020 has become my personal definition of bittersweet, like a microcosm of life jam-packed into a single year. I learned more about myself in the past year than I have in the past decade.

When I first "sheltered in place," I bought bottles of Prosecco, packs of vegan sausage and enough sushi rice to feed a small village. The days ran into each other—a perpetual "Blursday." I canceled my yoga teacher training in Ghana, my vegan retreat in Jamaica, the BookExpo in NYC, a week-end trip to Chicago and a writer's conference in Alabama. I learned I wouldn't be able to run the NYC marathon, speak at the Veggie Connection or participate in the Decatur Book Festival. Worst of all, I couldn't visit my ailing father in Brooklyn. For a while it seemed the sense of loss, chaos and isolation would never end. Then, I got up one morning, stepped on the scale and scared myself

straight. I had gained a full 15 pounds in what felt like two weeks.

It was time to pivot.

I dusted myself off and started walking. I made my way back to the gym and hot yoga. I read a lot of books, watched a lot of television and hosted a lot of Zoom events. I donated time and money to social justice, animal activism and political campaigns. I leaned into my Buddhist faith. I journaled. I ran. I hiked. I meditated. I threw up my hands, and I surrendered. I learned to be resilient.

I took old clothes, art and appliances to Goodwill. I taught free yoga classes in the park for other quarantine survivors. I called and texted folks to check on them and mailed an occasional card the old-fashioned way. I learned to be thoughtful.

I found new plant-based recipes. I worked with passion, sometimes forgetting how many hours had passed or what day it was. I started a YouTube channel. I turned my kitchen into an office suite, my living room into a video set, and my closet into a recording studio. I learned to be creative.

My newfound resilience didn't stop the losses or the pain, but it helped me recover. First, from the senseless murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, among far too many others who lost their lives to the pathology of racialized violence, then from the loss of icons Chadwick Boseman, John Lewis, B. Smith and Bill Withers.

I consoled myself with unapologetic self-care. I burned incense and candles. I diffused lavender and frankincense. I mixed fragrances. I anointed myself with oils and whispered affirmations. I went for massages and treated myself to online shopping. I learned to be forgiving.

There were moments when it seemed like there wouldn't be a tomorrow. I watched as our delicate democracy was tested and won. I leaned on friends and family. They leaned back. I saw my first year of self-employment come to a close during a global pandemic. I created a sea of accomplishments in a very strange ocean. I learned to be hopeful.

Through all of this, I've learned that leaning in to love can calm just about any fear or anxiety, and I unearthed a new joy for living. 2020 was one hell of a year. As much as I appreciate all the lessons, I'd like 2021 to know I've had enough school to last a lifetime. It's time to pivot. 🌱



Trish Ahjel Roberts is a self-actualization coach, yoga and meditation instructor and author of *12 Steps to Mind-Blowing Happiness: A Journal of Insights, Quotes & Questions to Juice Up Your Journey*. More at HoneyButterflyz.com and MindBlowingHappiness.com.



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