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[LEFT TO RIGHT]: Jeremy Lamb, PA-C, Candace Sturlin, PA-C,
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letter from publisher



Mark and Shanna Warner

Love is a Verb

Are you ready for the *Natural Awakenings* February love-fest? We are heart-centered! We've got healthy recipes, ways to get kids (and adults) to love veggies, ways to find self-love, tips for consciously loving your partner, some love for our planet and a focus on adorable pets that help us feel and share more love. And in exclusive, website-only content, we have tips for helping your heart by lowering blood pressure, along with even more love for our planet.

While February 14th is known around the world as a holiday for celebrating love, the 15th has been recognized in my family as a separate holiday. It is the hallowed time when all those unsold Valentine's Day treats go on deep discount, also known as Chocolate Day. Thankfully, Mark knows that chocolate is my favorite treat.

While my tastebuds love it, my heart and waistline do not. So what's a chocolate-lover like me to do? Well, I am not one to deny myself the best things in life, and, for me, chocolate ranks right up there with campfires on a starry night, happy tears shed at weddings, hugs from adorable grandkids and Beethoven's third symphony. Yeah, it's that good.

So, I take my chocolate treats dark with less sugar and fat; you get more of the chocolate benefits and flavor that way. (My heart and waistline thank me.) I also make my own treats at home. Check out my seriously delicious and healthy brownies on page 21. They are gluten- and dairy-free, low-sugar and full of fiber. They might remind you of a healthy version of those dark, dense brownies packaged up by that deceptively skinny-looking gal known as "Little" Deb.

While I might talk of "love" for many things, from pets to my mocha latte, my understanding of the true nature of love developed decades ago after reading *The Road Less Traveled* by M. Scott Peck. It is my favorite non-fiction book, and I had the pleasure of reading it to my co-publisher hubby recently.

In Peck's definition, love is not the warm, fuzzy feeling we get in the good times when we hold hands with our sweetheart. Love is not a noun. Love is a verb. It is the action we take in the difficult times when we hold their hand and help lift them up; it is support we give when we help another grow and become. Love is action.

As you read this magazine, please know that Mark and I have put our love into it. We bring it to you in the hopes that it will help you take action in some way, by bringing hope, health, happiness and harmony. We are heart-centered. Welcome to our February love-fest!

Shanna

Shanna Warner



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For more information, visit NaturalAwakeningsSingles.com. See ad, page 17.

An Enchanting Getaway Awaits at
Keystone Ancient Forest



Standing beside the trees, visitors can just imagine that magical creatures, like Ents, wander the woods. Deer, mountain lions, bobcats, American eagles and hundreds of migratory birds share the forest during this time of year. More than 80 different species of butterflies have been known to visit the forest, as well.

It is an enchanted place to share with family and friends. No reservations are necessary, but please treat the ancient trees and the preserve with care. Pets are allowed on specific hiking days, the first Saturday and the third Sunday of each month. The forest is open Thursday through Sunday, from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Location: 160 Ancient Forest Dr., Sand Springs. For more information, call 918-246-2661 or visit Facebook.com/KeystoneAncientForest.



NamaStay Sober’s
Sobriuary Challenge

NamaStay Sober is holding their fourth annual Sobriuary (Sober February) Challenge. Whether someone is already in recovery, sober-curious or just looking to swap a misused habit for something healthy like meditation or yoga, NamaStay has resources that can help. Whatever wellness journey individuals are on in life and wherever they find themselves on that journey, NamaStay invites them to participate in the Sobriuary Challenge alongside their community.

NamaStay Sober is a nonprofit organization founded in 2015 by Nico Longo after the loss of a friend to opioid addiction. Based in Massachusetts with community chapters in other states, its mission is to aid those in recovery by reconnecting their bodies and minds through affordable yoga, fitness, meditation and wellness-focused community events.

“It is difficult to put into words how grateful I am for @namastaysober. In its infancy, NamaStay provided solace in a time when I was grieving the loss of a dear friend to addiction. Over time, it developed into a place where I felt safe to share about my own struggles with an eating disorder. Eventually it led me to discover a community of like-minded individuals that support one another through healthier outlets, such as yoga and meditation, so that we all may live a life of more freedom, self-expression and peace,” says Longo. “In essence that is what this year’s Sobriuary Challenge is all about—supporting each other in discovering what we put in the space that sobriety creates.”

For more information on NamaStay Sober or their Sobriuary Challenge with expanded virtual programming, email Info@NamaStaySober.com or visit NamaStaySober.com.

Frontier-Era Schoolhouse Still
Teaches Visitors

Visitors to Edmond’s 1889 Territorial Schoolhouse step back into the frontier days. It is the earliest one-room schoolhouse in the Oklahoma Territory. This formative schoolhouse helped to shape and create the beginnings of higher education in the region and led the way to other educational facilities.



Years of hard work and dedication by the Edmond Historic Preservation Trust brought the schoolhouse back to its original function and appearance. The 1889 Territorial Schoolhouse is located on the corner of Second and Boulevard, in Edmond.

The schoolhouse is open to the public by appointment. Representatives from the Edmond Historic Preservation Trust, owners of the schoolhouse, provide tours to the general public.

Location: 431 S. Blvd., Edmond. For more information, call 405-715-1889 or visit EdmondHistory.org/1889-territorial-schoolhouse.

Spend Sundays Together Online,
Creating Art

Throughout February, enjoy Sundays together online with the OKC Metropolitan Library System. They host a weekly art program that is broadcast live on Facebook, so that everyone can stay safe at home. This is a free program and is suitable for all ages.



Each Wednesday, a special announcement on the Metropolitan Library’s Facebook page previews the project for the coming Sunday, so viewers have plenty of time to gather the materials needed. The goal is to foster creativity by learning about new art techniques and inspiring books, and to build connections within the OKC community.

The OKC Metropolitan Library System has many more online classes, like online storytime, children reading to dogs, and Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL).

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Take Propolis and Vitamins A, E and D for Respiratory Tract Infections

Two new studies offer hope for dealing with the winter's respiratory woes. Propolis, the resin-like substance made by bees from plants to build their hives, has been used for centuries to heal wounds and treat colds. In a new study, researchers from Italy's University of Naples Federico II gave either a propolis extract oral spray or a placebo three times a day to 122 people with mild upper respiratory tract infections. After three days, 83 percent of the patients in the propolis group enjoyed remission of all symptoms such as sore throat, hoarseness and throat swelling and redness, compared to 28 percent of the placebo group. The propolis reduced the duration of infection from five days to three days, two days less than the placebo.



A second study in Britain of 6,115 adults found that those with adequate intakes of vitamins A and E from diet and supplements had fewer respiratory complaints. People taking vitamin D as supplements, but not from their diet, also fared better at fending off such symptoms as breathlessness, bronchial trouble, viral pneumonia and throat infection.

Consider Melatonin to Lower COVID-19 Risk

Melatonin, a hormonal sleep aid that can be purchased for a few dollars at local pharmacies, appears to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19 by 30 percent, report researchers from the Cleveland Clinic. Among African Americans, a group disproportionately impacted by the virus, the risk was reduced by 52 percent. For the study, published in *PLOS Biology*, researchers used artificial intelligence to compare the host genes and proteins of the novel coronavirus to those of 64 other diseases across a range of categories. They found 34 drugs for possible repurposing, then combed through 27,000 patient records to find which drugs had in fact lowered the risk of contracting the virus. "We're excited about these results and to study that connection more, but large-scale observational studies and randomized controlled trials are essential to confirm what we've found here," says lead researcher Feixiong Cheng.

Government Updates Risks of Amalgam Fillings



In updated guidelines, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is warning that dental amalgam fillings may cause health problems for some high-risk groups because of mercury vapor leaks. Among those advised to avoid amalgams, which

contain mercury, silver, copper and tin, are pregnant women; women that plan to become pregnant or are nursing; children, especially those under the age of 6; and those with kidney problems or preexisting neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's or Alzheimer's. Over time, amalgams can release small amounts of mercury vapor, depending on how extensively people grind their teeth or chew gum and how old the filling is, studies show. It's a more cautious tone for the FDA, which along with the American Dental Association, has long maintained that amalgams are safe, a finding disputed by health advocates. Mindful of health and aesthetics, patients are increasingly opting for tooth-colored resin composites. Nearly half of all U.S. dentists no longer use mercury, and its use is being legally phased out in more than a dozen countries.

Use Glass Baby Bottles to Avoid Microplastic Particles

Polypropylene baby bottles—which comprise 82 percent of the global baby bottle market—release an "extraordinary" number of microplastic particles, reports a new study by Trinity College Dublin. In a study published in *Nature Food*, which covered 48 regions worldwide, researchers found that flexible plastic baby bottles release as many as 16.2 million particles per liter. "A study last year by the World Health Organization estimated adults would consume between 300 and 600 microplastics a day—our average values were on the order of a million or millions," study co-author John Boland told *The Guardian*. He called for more studies to understand the implications, saying the researchers were "absolutely gob-smacked" by the numbers. The microplastics are released when heated liquid is used to sterilize the bottles and to dissolve powdered formula and when the bottle is shaken to dissolve the powder. The higher the water temperature, the greater the release of particles. Polypropylene bottles have a "5" on the recycling symbol on the bottom.



Energetic Wellness
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Heart Healthy February

Heart attacks were rare in the U.S. until the 1930's, but by mid-century this "disease" had become the leading cause of death, especially in women.

After years of reckless fiddling with the American diet heart disease is still the number one cause of death in America. Dr. Menzel believes we suffer more heart attacks today because of the lack of nutrients we are getting to support the heart and body for natural healing to occur.



Get a Heart Scan!

Heart Rate Variability is one of the key tests used to determine the heart and nervous system's resilience. This 3-minute test will help you discover your risk factors. Come in to learn about your personal heart health, what nutrients are beneficial and your potential for health recovery after illness.

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Plastic Particles Ingested in Food and Water



Researchers at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, estimate people that drink bottled water ingest an additional 90,000 microplastic particles annually compared to 4,000 microplastics for those that drink only tap water. Food is contaminated with plastic as well, which we also ingest. The researchers took data from 26 studies that measured plastic in salt, beer, sugar, fish, shellfish, water and urban air, and combined it with U.S. dietary guidelines to calculate how many particles people likely consumed annually. The results are 50,000 particles per year for adults and 40,000 for children. When inhalation is included, the estimate rises to between 74,000 and 121,000 particles per year for adults. Even these figures are likely underestimated, because the foods in the studies make up only 15 percent of the typical American caloric intake.

The particles' effect on the human body is not yet understood. Another study revealed that some plastic is expelled from the body in feces. But there is also evidence that it gets absorbed, and that the tiniest particles can enter the bloodstream and lymphatic system, which could affect immune response and aid transmission of toxic chemicals.



Outdoor Fun

Childhood Immunity Enhanced by Natural Environment

At the University of Helsinki, in Finland, a new project recorded in the journal *Science Advances* found that switching a child's playground from gravel to natural forest floor could foster a better immune system within a month by exposing them to a greater variety of skin and gut bacteria. The researchers studied 75 children between 3 and 5 years of age at 10 daycare centers in two Finnish cities to see how a change in their playing environment altered their skin and gut microbiota, as well as immune markers in their blood.

Four centers turned their gravel playgrounds into fields of forest floor, soil and grasses, while three already had that setting. Three others kept their existing gravel playground. One month after the changes were made, scientists collected samples of skin, blood and feces from the children. In just a few weeks, microbiota of the children at the renovated daycare centers quickly shifted to become more like the microbiomes of children that attended centers that already had more natural play surfaces. The children at the renovated daycare centers developed a higher ratio of the anti-inflammatory proteins to pro-inflammatory proteins in their blood, indicating that their immune systems were in better shape.

Hard Knocks

Low-Carbon Cement Offsets Climate Change



The manufacture of cement creates up to 8 percent of the total global carbon dioxide generated by humans, according to the Chatham House, a London-based think tank. Four billion tons of cement are produced every year, but that figure is expected to rise to 5 billion tons in the next 30 years. The emissions result from the fossil fuels used to create heat for cement formation, as well as the chemical process in a kiln that transforms limestone into clinker, which is then ground and combined with other materials to make cement. In 2018, the Global Cement and Concrete Association, which represents about 30 percent of worldwide production, issued the industry's first sustainability guidelines, a set of key measurements such as emissions and water usage intended to track performance improvements and make them transparent.

A variety of approaches are being explored and implemented to lower these worrisome carbon emissions. For example, CarbonCure, in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, stores carbon dioxide captured from other industrial processes in concrete through mineralization, rather than releasing it into the atmosphere as a byproduct. Solidia, in Piscataway, New Jersey, uses a chemical process licensed from Rutgers University that has cut 30 percent of the carbon dioxide usually released in making cement. It uses more clay and less limestone and heat than typical processes.

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Keys to Pure Love, Peace and Wisdom

by Melissa M. Nikhila

Learning and practicing meditation for a few minutes each day helps us to become more centered and balanced. Feeling emotionally and physically stable assists everyone in completing daily work and tasks. Becoming more centered and balanced increases the ability to remain calm and relaxed when faced with stressful situations. The less stressed we feel, the more joy we experience in our lives. The joy we bring to others also fosters positive relationships. Being less reactive to situations and learning how to respond when faced with negative stimulus creates a positive environment within which to live.

The average person is unaware of the many benefits of meditation. The common perception about meditating is that it is used only to control thoughts in order to become more focused. This misperception discourages people from attempting to develop a meditation practice. Clearing the mind is perhaps the result of meditating, but not the goal in the beginning—trying to sit quietly without having much practice can be difficult.

Chanting meditation, which involves repeating a mantra for five minutes or more, has the powerful ability to provide relief from anxiety and fear. Some chants help with releasing anger and creating a space filled with peace. An easy expansion-filled mantra to chant is “Om Shanti Om” with hands placed over the heart. Another simple, but transforming, sound is the vowel “Ah” pronounced while the hands are placed in the lap, overlapping and with thumbs touching.

Focusing at the third-eye point—an area centered in the middle of the forehead—creates an energetic reaction. This causes the mind to release negative



Melissa M. Nikhila

thoughts, leaving room for peace to fill in. Clearing the mind has more to do with letting go than it does with attempting to control the thoughts. The thoughts that stick around want attention. They signal the need for healing or the need to address them in another way. After a few minutes of mantras, even if the unwanted thoughts stay, an uplifted feeling and a new perspective will be present.

Many other meditation techniques exist to help become relaxed, centered, calm, balanced, energetic, whole and confident. An important technique is learning how to work with the breath. Breathing well is invaluable in daily life, allowing us to remain centered while staying calm and alert.

A valid goal for meditation is to feel good and relaxed. Trying to willfully force the mind to focus, however, only causes frustration. Mental focus will occur with time spent practicing meditation. Many other fun and interesting techniques are available for those who want to go within to find peace, health and joy. Meditation can be an adventure for everyone.

Melissa M. Nikhila is a certified meditation teacher. She has a master's degree in religious and spiritual studies from the University of Oklahoma. Connect at LovePeaceWisdom4u@gmail.com.

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Live a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle

Integrative Cardiologists on Preventing Heart Disease

by Ronica O'Hara



Cardiology has made mind-boggling advances in efficiently repairing everything from clogged arteries to floppy mitral valves and even replacing the entire failing heart itself. Yet the stubborn fact remains that almost half of all Americans suffer from cardiovascular disease, killing one in four of us, and those numbers are rising. Research shows that simple lifestyle changes can prevent 80 percent of these deaths, but many cardiologists typically reach for a prescription pad rather than explore diet, exercise and other prevention options with their patients.

“Medicine can be life-saving, but optimal heart health can’t come from medicine alone,” says cardiologist Stephen Devries, co-author of *Integrative Cardiology*. “There is a common belief among many physicians that patients generally don’t want to make lifestyle changes—an assumption that is often dead wrong and refuted by surveys of patients that show that the majority are looking to do exactly that.”

Los Angeles restaurateur and musician Gianni Neiviller, 54, is such a case. When he found holistic cardiologist Cynthia Thaik three years ago, he had already endured four major surgeries for gut illnesses; was suffering from obesity, high blood pressure, anxiety

and depression; and was heavily abusing alcohol and marijuana. Thaik ordered tests that uncovered sleep apnea, and she encouraged him to turn to an all-organic diet, take vitamin and mineral supplements, exercise and practice mindfulness and meditation.

“At first it was all fairly hard, but as I started losing the pounds, my mind became more clear, and little by little, it all started getting a bit easier,” Neiviller says. He lost 86 pounds within a year, got sober and ceased taking blood pressure medication and using a sleep apnea machine. He now walks six miles a day; practices a hybrid

regimen of qigong, yoga and meditation; and is switching to a holistic health career. “When people try to push my buttons, they rarely succeed these days,” he smiles.

Rebounding into vibrant health is what integrative cardiologists like Devries and Thaik strive for. Also known as preventive or holistic cardiologists, they focus on guiding patients to change long-held, harmful, physical and emotional practices. Although they are comparatively few in number—probably no more than 100 nationally—these doctors are vocal and influential, imparting valuable advice about preventing and reversing heart disease through daily lifestyle choices.

Heart-Happy Eating

Substantial research affirms that one major line of defense against heart disease is what we put into our mouths every day, yet only 8 percent of cardiologists consider themselves capable to give nutritional advice, a survey showed. To counter that, Devries co-founded the Gaples Institute, a Naperville, Illinois, nonprofit that offers free nutritional training online to the public and nutritional accreditation for medical clinicians. Devries, who trained at Dr. Andrew Weil’s Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona, lectures internationally and recently authored *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Cholesterol*. “People have a lot more power over their heart health than they realize,” he says.

According to Devries, the name of a diet is not as important as the anti-inflammatory foods it should contain, such as “a wide variety of vegetables and fruit, plenty of beans, whole grains in place of refined, minimizing or eliminating meat (especially processed meat like bacon and sausage), minimizing added sugar (especially from sugar-sweetened beverages) and using small amounts of the most healthful oils, like extra-virgin olive oil.” And the evidence is increasing, he says, of “minimizing or eliminating animal products and getting most or all of your protein from high-quality plant sources like beans, tofu, whole grains and nuts. Fish is one exception for which there is good evidence.”

He’s backed up by a November 2020 study of 220,000 adults published in the

Journal of the American College of Cardiology. It concludes that those with diets high in red and processed meat, refined grains and sugary beverages had a 46 percent higher risk of heart disease and a 28 percent higher risk of stroke compared to those consuming anti-inflammatory diets rich in green and yellow vegetables, whole grains, coffee and tea.

Devries suggests that gradual, incremental changes to the diet may be easier than abrupt and dramatic choices. For example, he might recommend switching from sugary soda to flavored seltzer first, then trying lemon water and black tea with milk before opting for plain, green tea. Sipping a cup of green tea at least every other day reduces the risk of heart attacks and dying of heart disease by one-fifth, Chinese researchers report in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*.

Powerful Supplements

As a young cardiologist frustrated by the revolving-door nature of his patients, Stephen Sinatra came upon an obscure 1982 study of coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) that he realized could have saved the life of a favorite patient. This catalyzed his intensive studies into nutrition and bioenergetics that produced 17 books, including the bestselling *Reverse Heart Disease Now* and *The Sinatra Solution*. He helped formulate the new field of metabolic cardiology that proposes preventing and treating cardiovascular disease with nutraceuticals to improve energy production in heart cells.

In addition to suggesting a high-potency, multi-nutrient, fish oil, magnesium and vitamin C for prevention, he recommends four key nutrients that produce and use adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the body’s basic cellular fuel:

♥ **CoQ10** is synthesized in the body, but declines with age and statin use. It protects from the free radical damage linked to inflammation. Dosage: 90 to 250 milligrams (mg) daily for prevention, 180 to 360 mg for hypertension and 300 to 600 mg for heart failure.

♥ **L-carnitine** ferries fatty acids to be oxidized to make ATP and moves toxic metabolites out of heart cells. Dosage:

1,000 to 1,500 mg in divided doses to prevent deficiency and up to 3,000 mg for heart disease.

♥ **Magnesium**, required in all reactions involving ATP, is depleted by some gastrointestinal medications and diuretics. Dosage: at least 400 mg.

♥ **D-ribose** is a naturally occurring sugar derivative of ATP that hastens energy regeneration. Dosage: five to seven grams (gm) daily as a preventive, seven to 10 gm daily for heart failure.

In other nutrient news, adults that took glucosamine/chondroitin every day for a year or longer had a 65 percent reduction in cardiovascular-related deaths, reports West Virginia University researchers that analyzed 16 years of data from 16,686 adults.

Smart Testing

Preventive cardiologist Joel Kahn, the author of *Your Whole Heart Solution* and *The Plant-Based Solution*, says that lab tests typically prescribed by cardiologists and other doctors are inadequate. “Standard lab tests have not changed in 30 to 40 years, but science has,” he says. “For example, inflammation is now understood to be a fundamental process for most chronic diseases like heart disease and cancer. A simple lab test, hs-CRP, is available to measure inflammation. Very few doctors add this to their panel. When it is high, it leads to a search for why there is inflammation and diet, lifestyle and other measures to resolve it.”

After 25 years as a cardiologist treating heart-attack emergencies, Kahn, who is vegan, went back to college to study preventive cardiology and set up the Kahn Center for Cardiac Longevity, in Bingham Farms, Michigan, which focuses on dietary counseling and preventive screenings. His list of “must have” tests includes:

♥ **Advanced cholesterol panel** for a breakdown of LDL-cholesterol particle number and size, which is highly predictive of cardiovascular problems.

♥ **Lipoprotein(a) cholesterol** to detect a risk-elevating genetic form of cholesterol that’s present in about 20 percent of those tested.

- ♥ **High-sensitivity C-reactive protein** (hsCRP) to identify inflammation of blood vessels.
- ♥ **Hemoglobin A1c** (HbA1C) to obtain the three-month measure of sugar in hemoglobin, a marker of both diabetes and heart disease.
- ♥ **Vitamin D** to identify deficiencies linked to a higher risk of hypertension, heart failure, angina and heart attacks.

Move It or Lose It

The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (brisk walking, water aerobics, gardening, tennis, dancing) or 75 minutes of vigorous activity (running, jumping, swimming laps), as well as muscle-strengthening activity (weights) at least two days a week.

Only 20 percent of adults exercise for the full 150 minutes per week, which may be why physical inactivity is a major factor in an estimated one-third of heart disease deaths. “I like to frame it as ‘being active,’ because exercise sounds onerous,” Devries says. “Even a small amount of activity goes a long way—walking at a gentle pace 30 minutes a day confers very significant benefits. Up to a point, more can be better, but only for some people, and only to a point.”

Even moving a few minutes daily can add up. Doing 12-minute bursts of vigorous exercise favorably impacts 80 percent of the metabolites that govern such functions as oxidative stress, inflammation and vascular reactivity, reports a new study in *Circulation*. Just one hour a week of strength training significantly lowers the risk of heart attack, stroke and heart disease death, another study found. And simply holding thigh and calf stretches for 45 seconds for a total of five minutes daily improved arterial blood flow, reports a study in the *Journal of Physiology*.

The Emotional Heart

As a child in Myanmar, Thaik witnessed hands-on healing at a clinic she visited with her physician mother, but holistic care only entered her life after 20 years of practice as a frustrated cardiologist, when she was laid low by severe anemia that required transfusions and surgery. Today, the Harvard-trained cardiologist is the author of *Your Vibrant Heart* and founder of the Holistic Heart Healing Center, in Los Angeles, which integrates the medical model with lifestyle strategies and approaches like homeopathy and acupuncture.

“I very much believe that we are both physical beings and energetic or spiritual beings. Our physical makeup is closely intertwined with our mental and emotional makeup,” Thaik says. She counsels patients to practice the following:

♥ **Mindfulness.** “A mentor of mine, (life coach) Mary Morrissey, taught me to avoid the three Cs—complaining, comparing or criticizing. If you attempt to do this for even an hour, you will find that it is actually a hard task. Practicing this allows us to be acutely mindful of our thoughts.”

- ♥ **Gratitude.** “I wake up every morning and before my feet hit the floor, I make this statement five times and fill in five different answers: ‘I am so happy and grateful now that ...’”
- ♥ **Releasing.** “I believe the most important ingredient to health and healing is the ability to release—to forgive self and others, to let go and abandon all of our negative thoughts, our self-limiting beliefs, our notions of right and wrong, our feelings of injustice and being wronged.”

She advises, “When we can abandon all these beliefs and allow ourselves to float or drift unimpeded—imagine yourself on a tube in a lazy river—that is when healing within our bodies begins, when our parameters of stress and the hormones and neurotransmitters associated with stress start to down-regulate, and we can literally feel a wave of relaxation passing through our bodies. This will lower our heart rate, blood pressure, adrenaline and cortisol levels, thereby mitigating our risk of a heart attack or stroke.”

Ronica O’Hara, a natural health writer, can be contacted at OHaraRonica@gmail.com.

More Heart-Healthy Strategies

- TAKE LONG SOAKS.** Middle-aged Japanese adults that took a daily bath in warm or hot water had a 28 percent lower risk of cardiovascular disease and a 26 percent lower risk of stroke than people that didn’t bathe in the tub more than twice a week, concludes a study in the journal *Heart*.
- OUTDO EACH OTHER.** People that competed with each other to walk more steps ended up walking about 100 miles more in nine months than people that simply walked on their own, reports the *JAMA Internal Medicine*.
- CONSIDER CANNABIDIOL.** This non-psychoactive form of cannabis has been shown in small lab studies to lower inflammation and ease arrhythmia. “CBD can help to reduce stress, lower blood pressure, improve anxiety and depression, reduce inflammation, improve glucose regulation, diminish pain and thereby lower our adrenergic (fight-or-flight) tone,” says holistic cardiologist Cynthia Thaik.
- BRUSH A LOT.** In a 10-year Korean study, people that brushed their teeth three or more times a day had a 10 percent lower risk of atrial fibrillation and a 12 percent lower risk of heart failure.
- SIDESTEP POLLUTION.** Stay away from traffic and industrial areas when exercising. Even a few hours of exposure to the ultrafine particles generated by emissions may potentially trigger a nonfatal heart attack, reports research in *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

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Heartfelt Eating

Best Foods for a Heart-Healthy Diet

by April Thompson

Hypertension affects nearly half of all Americans, increasing the risk for heart disease and stroke, the leading cause of death. We can help mitigate that risk and have a healthy “change of heart” by revamping our diets.



While food fads are constantly changing, the basics of a heart-healthy diet have not, says Cheryl Strachan, a registered dietitian in Calgary, Canada, and founder of *SweetSpotNutrition.ca*. Strachan notes the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet has been used to help lower blood pressure and with other heart disease risk factors since its development in the 1990s. The DASH diet is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, beans and low-fat dairy foods. While it includes lean meat, fish and poultry, it limits sugary foods and fatty meats.

The Mediterranean diet, says Strachan, is another proven regimen for heart health, citing a five-year Spanish study in *The New England Journal of Medicine* that found the incidence of cardiovascular events was 30 percent lower among participants on this diet, supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil or nuts, compared to those assigned a reduced-fat diet.

A Mediterranean diet doesn't necessarily mean eating dishes specific to that region. “It's the type of foods that matters: a largely plant-based diet focused on whole grains such as the bulgur in tabouli, legumes, nuts, seeds, olive oil and some animal products like fish, poultry and dairy,” says Strachan.

Michael Greger, a Seattle physician and author of the bestseller *How Not to Die*, disagrees that meat-based proteins have a place in a heart-healthy diet. “Only one way of eating has ever been proven to reverse heart disease in the majority of patients: a diet centered around whole-plant foods,” says Greger, adding that the most critical risk factor is elevated LDL cholesterol. “To drastically reduce LDL cholesterol levels, we need to drastically reduce our intake of trans fat, which comes from processed foods and naturally from meat and dairy; saturated fat, found mainly in animal products and junk foods; and playing a lesser role, dietary cholesterol, found exclusively in animal-derived foods, especially eggs.”

Michelle Routhenstein, a preventive cardiology dietitian and owner of Entirely Nourished, a nutrition counseling practice in New York City, likes to meet clients where they are rather than trying to force a drastic switch they can't maintain. “Often, people get very broad advice, like ‘Adopt a

plant-based diet,’ but when it comes to the heart, you have to find a way of eating you can commit to long term. I start by asking what foods bring them joy, as well as their food dislikes, history and culture.”

For Routhenstein, an optimal diet for the heart includes a healthy balance of good fats, lean protein and the complex carbs that are important sources of fiber. “Research has shown that every additional 10 grams of fiber per day can decrease the risk of coronary heart disease by as much as 25 percent,” by helping the body remove excess cholesterol, says the dietitian and author of *The Truly Easy Heart-Healthy Cookbook: Fuss-Free, Flavorful, Low-Sodium Meals*. While fatty foods are sometimes scapegoated for poor health, unsaturated fats are “really good for blood vessel health,” she adds.

Nutrients for Heart Health

Potassium is a key mineral for heart health, as it can help the body remove excess sodium, lower blood pressure and improve blood flow and blood vessel health. Yet research shows less than 2 percent of Americans get enough. Beans, sweet potatoes, lentils, beets and avocados are among many potassium-rich foods with multiple heart benefits.

There is a growing awareness of the importance of inflammation-fighting omega-3 fatty acids, particularly in fish like wild salmon, arctic char and sardines. Routhenstein also advocates omega-9 fatty acids such as in tahini and avocado. Omega-9s have been shown to help increase HDL “good” cholesterol and decrease LDL “bad” cholesterol while protecting blood vessel health.

Heart attacks often seem to occur suddenly simply because the damage happens gradually and quietly, warns Routhenstein. “Heart disease is progressive, so over time a poor lifestyle and diet can damage blood vessels and accelerate hardening of the arteries that lead to heart attacks,” she warns. “Some damage may not be entirely reversible, but it's never too late to optimize heart functioning.”

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

Servings for the Heart

Quinoa, Edamame and Carrot Salad with Ginger-Sesame Dressing

Edamame are whole, young, green soybeans that are mildly grassy in flavor. They have about five times the folate—a highly important cardiovascular nutrient—of mature soybeans. Edamame's flavors pair well with fluffy quinoa, crunchy cabbage and carrot slaw, and combine seamlessly with the spicy, toasty notes of the ginger-sesame dressing.

YIELD: 2 SERVINGS

- ½ cup quinoa
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup edamame, fully cooked and chilled
- 2 Tbsp ginger-sesame dressing
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- 2 cups shredded cabbage



In a small pot, bring the quinoa and water to a boil. Lower the heat to low, cover and simmer for 8 minutes.

Add the edamame to the pot and cook for an additional four minutes, until the water in the quinoa pot has been absorbed and the edamame is tender.

In a medium-size bowl, combine the quinoa and edamame with the dressing, shredded carrots and shredded cabbage and serve.

Tip: There are three ways to make this easier: batch-cook the quinoa; thaw, cook and shell the edamame and keep overnight in the refrigerator; and buy prepackaged slaw. Just assemble.

Ginger-Sesame Dressing

Typical sesame dressing is high in sodium from the soy sauce; even the low-sodium varieties are high in salt. This dressing is well-balanced, low in sodium and adds flair to just about any dish. Toasted sesame oil is aromatically pleasing and adds immediate flavor that is balanced by tangy rice vinegar, zesty ginger and crunchy sesame seeds.

- 2 Tbsp toasted sesame oil
- 2 tsp fresh grated ginger
- 2 tsp rice vinegar
- 2 tsp unsalted sesame seeds

In a small bowl, mix the sesame oil, rice vinegar, ginger and sesame seeds until well combined. Store in the refrigerator in an airtight container for up to one week.

Flavor tip: For added heat, add ½ teaspoon of hot sauce and 1 teaspoon of lime juice to balance it out.



Blueberry and Pumpkin Seed Yogurt Bark

This dessert is for lovers of froyo, ice cream or frozen treats. Plain yogurt is blended with refreshing mint, sweet blueberries and a hint of honey—all topped with crunchy pumpkin seeds. This bark can also be an easy breakfast alternative that balances high-quality protein, dietary fiber and heart-healthy fats. Eat this delicious snack in a bowl to catch the yogurt bark liquid goodness as it melts. Add a drizzle of dark chocolate for extra decadence.

YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

2 cups nonfat plain yogurt
1¼ cups blueberries, divided
1 Tbsp coarsely chopped fresh mint
1 tsp honey
¼ cup raw, unsalted, pumpkin seeds

courtesy of laura flippen

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, making sure the edges are covered. In a medium-size bowl for a food processor, combine the yogurt, 1 cup of blueberries, the mint and honey. Blend until smooth, about 2 minutes.

Using a rubber spatula, evenly spread the yogurt mixture over the parchment paper. Evenly add the remaining blueberries along with the pumpkin seeds on top of the yogurt mixture.

Freeze for 2 to 4 hours until the bark is fully frozen. The best way to check is to poke the middle of the pan with a fork to see if it has hardened. Once fully frozen, the edges should easily lift, as well.

Break the bark up into 12 pieces and freeze in an overnight container or a freezer-safe, zip-top bag for up to one month.

Lentil, Raisin and Pecan–Stuffed Acorn Squash

This meal fills up a home with the smell of warm, sweet cinnamon and is accompanied by a toasted mixture of flavorful lentils, sweet and fruity raisins and buttery pecan pieces. It tastes like dessert, but is well-balanced with lean proteins from the lentils, complex carbohydrates from the squash and heart-healthy fats from the pecans to keep one satisfied and properly nourished.

YIELD: 2 SERVINGS

1 large acorn squash
2¼ tsp ground cinnamon, divided
1 cup low-sodium canned, cooked lentils, drained and rinsed
¼ cup pecan pieces
¼ cup raisins

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

Cut the acorn squash in half and scoop out the seeds. Sprinkle ⅛ teaspoon of cinnamon on the inside of each squash section and place them flesh-side-down on the baking sheet. Cook for 30 minutes until fork-tender and lightly golden brown.

In a medium-sized mixing bowl, mix the lentils, pecans, raisins and the remaining 2 teaspoons of cinnamon. Scoop evenly into the inside of each squash and bake for an additional 5 to 10 minutes, until the pecans and the top of the lentil mixture are lightly golden. Once ready, place half an acorn squash on each plate and serve. This can also be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to three days.

Make-it-easier tip: Reduce cooking time by cutting the acorn squash in half, placing it in a microwave-safe dish and microwaving it covered on high for about 10 to 12 minutes until tender. Add the squash to the oven and continue with earlier step for a crispy finish.

Source: The Truly Easy Heart-Healthy Cookbook by Michelle Routhenstein.



courtesy of laura flippen



Mark's Favorite Brownies

by Shanna Warner

These dark and delicious brownies are veggie-based, gluten-free, low sugar and higher in fiber than many chocolate treats. Enjoy!

1 15-ounce can of unseasoned black beans, rinsed and drained well
3 Tbsp cocoa powder
½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp instant coffee or espresso powder (optional)
½ tsp salt
½ cup quick oats
⅓ cup vegetable oil
½ cup honey (or packed brown sugar)
2 tsp vanilla extract
⅔ cup dark chocolate chips

Preheat your oven to 350°. Prepare an 8x8-inch baking pan with spray oil, butter or parchment. Mix all ingredients, except the chocolate chips, in a food processor or blender. Process until everything is smooth. Stir half of the chocolate chips into the batter. Spread the batter in the prepared pan and sprinkle the rest of the chocolate chips on top. Bake for 15 minutes. Let cool completely. These are very soft and tender, but they will firm up as they cool down. Cut into squares and enjoy!

Honey tip: Measure and pour out the oil first. Without cleaning it, use the same measuring cup for the honey, which will now pour out easier.

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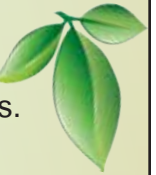
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Shefali Tsabary on Conscious Relationships

by Sandra Yeyati

Offering innovative approaches to mindful living, Shefali Tsabary, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist, international keynote speaker and bestselling author of *The Conscious Parent*, *Out of Control* and her latest, *The Awakened Family*. She has presented talks at TEDx, the Kellogg Business School, The Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education, and *SuperSoul Sessions with Oprah Winfrey*, who has endorsed her work as revolutionary and life-changing.



attract people who are going to be mirrors that show us how we need to reparent ourselves and force us to repeat childhood patterns. If we have an issue of unworthiness, that's going to show up. If we have fear of rejection, that's going to show up, and all fingers point to the imperative that we do our own inner work.

Why do we have so much trouble with our romantic relationships?

Because we enter relationships without having entered a relationship with ourselves. We look to the other person and the relationship to fill us up, to give us what we are missing from within, and what we don't realize is that the other person is there for the same reason. After the initial chemical, hormonal lust phase, we realize that the other person cannot be our parent figure and that they cannot fulfill our unfulfilled inner child needs. The disappointment is so great and the anger so livid that we spiral into hurt, disappointment and unmet expectations without realizing that the other hasn't done anything. We typically

What does that inner work look like?

The first step is realizing that what's happening in the relationship is really a reflection of the inner state of being, and therefore isn't the other person's fault that I'm feeling rejected, hurt or unworthy. We stop trying to change, fix or blame the other. We then hire a therapist or join a self-development course and begin to understand our inner wounds from childhood that are being repeated in this current dynamic. We have to do the work. It's not easy. It's not going to happen just because we made an intellectual decision. It's a quest, a constant unfolding, unlayering, evolving and becoming more. The goal is your arrival into your most authentic self—into your whole, free self.

How do we remain in a relationship while doing this work?

We become more honest, more up front, more candid and ready to meet the other

at our new place of growth. If the other doesn't want to grow and cannot do this inner work because of their own inner demons and resistance, then maybe you won't be able to continue on, but you will be conscious enough to be able to release the other of the expectation to continue on. A healthy relationship is a relationship where each person takes responsibility for their own inner growth and their own inner wounds, doesn't project their needs on the other, parents themselves into a state of wholeness and then releases the other to be free.

How do you define love?

Most of us love egoically, which is loving the other because they make us feel good about ourselves, and the moment they stop making us feel good about ourselves, we actually leave them. That's why there's so much divorce. That's not love. Egoic love is possession, ownership and control. Most of us are mired in those kinds of relationships; the institution of marriage actually supports ownership, possession and control. True, or high love, is the understanding that the other is with you and you are with them to encourage each other's growth and to see each other be their most authentic, free selves. If that includes being with us, we're happy. If that includes not being with us, we're as happy. That's true love, because you're in love with the other person's essence and you're more invested in the other person's whole self rather than the self that you want to own and possess.

What is conscious intimacy?

Conscious intimacy starts with how intimate and honest you are with yourself—how sexually connected you are with your needs and your desires. The more unabashed, bare, spontaneous and transparent you can be with yourself, the more you will seek and be around partners who can hold that space with you.

For more information, including online courses, visit DrShefali.com. Her *Free to Be* course specifically addresses conscious relationship issues.

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



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Monthly Business Highlight - Cari Rief at Owasso Healing

Owasso Healing is excited to be offering healing therapies for the community and greater Tulsa area. We opened January 5th in Village Market Offices after outgrowing our Tulsa office in just 2 years. Owasso Healing offers massage and energy healing, as well as Rife and PEMF. Cari Reif, our Energy Healing Practitioner, offers reiki, Life Activations, Egyptian Aura Healings and meditation. Brittany Bascue, our massage therapist, offers neuromuscular, lymphatic, pregnancy and other types of massage. She also offers cupping, stretching, trigger point and other specialized techniques. We are both excited to partner with you so you can live your best life!

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VEGGIE TRICKS

How to Get Kids to Eat Better

by Ronica O'Hara

It's the rare parent that doesn't have to plead and plot to get a child to eat vegetables. That's not surprising; almost no one is born with a natural hankering for broccoli, and being wary of strange new foods may be hardwired in us so we can survive as a species. Happily, clever workarounds can help move a child past exclaiming, "Yuck!" as these parenting bloggers, nutritionists and other grown-ups have learned in the veggies-are-good-for-you trenches.

SERVE SMOOTHIES. "The combinations are endless. Pack it full of spinach, kale, frozen zucchini or cauliflower. Then add a frozen banana or other fruit, plus your milk of choice (like cashew milk) then blend. Bam! You have a naturally sweetened, veggie-filled, delicious drink for your child, and they don't even know they're drinking their vegetables," writes Emily Lesh, at *ExperiencedMommy.com*.

USE SPRINKLES. "Everyone loves sprinkles! You can use chia seeds, microplaned broccoli head, flaxseed, grated carrots or even frozen yogurt dots. It transforms the food into something much more exciting," writes Danielle Zold, at *PickyEatingDietitian.com*.

GET THEM COOKING. "My kids love to help in the kitchen, and I have found that they are much more likely to try foods that they have helped to cook. We made our cranberries from scratch for Thanksgiving. My kids loved watching the cranberries boil and pop in the pot and seeing them change colors as they cooked. When dinnertime came, they were excited to try the cranberries, and my daughter ended up loving them!" writes Sarah Miller, at *HomeSchooling4Him.com*.

ROTATE FAMILY CHOICES. "Everyone in the family gets to choose one meal on one night of the

week. We all commit to eating whatever the family member has chosen. This has helped our kids to try meals that aren't on their favorite list, as they know that they'll get their turn to choose soon," writes Sophia Nomicos, at *MasAndPas.com*.

TEMPT THEM. "When I'm making dinner, I like to have carrots or cucumbers available on the counter. They always come in to try to get snacks and if they see those, they will 'sneak them away' to eat them, since I tell them no more snacks or food til dinner," writes Heather Hoke, at *EmbracingChaosWithLove.com*.

REWARD MULTIPLE ATTEMPTS. "Just because a kid hates a veggie the first 10 times you offer it doesn't mean they'll hate it forever. I try to make it fun by having kids track veggies they've tried and the number of times they've tried them with stickers on a veggie discovery table, which means even foods they dislike feel rewarding to try," writes Jess Dang, at *CookSmarts.com*.

BE SNEAKY. "Take something kids already like and make it with healthier ingredients. For example, if your kid loves meatballs, start by making them homemade, then adding in healthy things like frozen chopped spinach. I'll grate zucchini and carrots and put them in about any pasta, meatloaf, burgers. I used to think sneaking in veggies was a bad thing, but honestly, it's been great for our family," writes Stephanie Rapone, at *PantryToPlate.net*.

TALK UP THE BENEFITS. "I have found that when my son doesn't want to eat something, he is much more likely to eat it if I tell him its benefits. For example, I told him, 'When you eat carrots, they make your eyes stronger, and they help you see in the dark.' He loves to eat carrots now. He says, 'Now I will be able to see in the dark!' I am learning a lot this way, too. We Google the benefits of food at least once a day," writes Elizabeth Manly, at *DiscoveryPlayShop.com*.

REINFORCE. "Explain that when a child feels good, she can attribute it to eating healthy. For example, if we managed to get our daughter to eat an apple—her favorite fruit that she now eats every day—I would say, 'Wow, you sure ran around a lot at the playground. That apple you ate gave you a lot of energy,'" writes Kirsten Schuder, author of *Schooling Your Kids Through a Pandemic*.

Ronica O'Hara, a natural health writer, can be contacted at OHaraRonica@gmail.com.


What the Research Shows

BE PERSISTENT. Don't give up too soon. Researchers have found that it can take toddlers five to 10 times in tasting a new food before enjoying it; and for 3-to-4-year-olds, up to 15 trials.

PUTTING ON AN APRON HELPS. A study of Canadian fifth-graders in 151 schools found that those that helped with meal prep and cooking were more likely to eat vegetables and fruit.

GIVING KIDS A CHOICE WORKS. Australian kids that were offered a choice of broccoli, cauliflower or green beans for five weeks ate twice as many veggies as children offered only one vegetable.

THINKING A FOOD IS RARE MAKES IT SPECIAL. In a recent study, 5-year-olds that were told there weren't many more carrots than were on a plate ate 50 percent more carrots; 96 percent of those kids rated the carrots as yummy, compared to 67 percent in a no-limit carrot control group.



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Tools for Inner Peace

Exploring Mindfulness and Meditation

by Marlaina Donato

The practices of mindfulness and meditation, although closely related, offer individual, science-backed benefits for both body and psyche. Mindfulness has been shown to amp up immunity and increase gray matter in the brain, and 2018 research published in *Experimental Biology* shows that just an introductory hour of meditation using breathwork and awareness of thoughts significantly reduced anxiety. The study indicates that when applied regularly, mindfulness minimizes arterial pressure and cardiovascular health risks associated with long-term nervous system stress.

Immersion in the Moment

Mindfulness—cultivating present-moment awareness by noticing body sensations, thoughts and details in our environment—not only makes life more enjoyable, but enables us to acknowledge life experiences and emotions without aversion and judgement. Mindfulness techniques are now being used in psychotherapy for insomnia, eating disorders and addictions. Physiological benefits are also significant. *Harvard Health Publishing*, referencing the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, highlights mindfulness for cardiovascular and gastrointestinal conditions, as well as clinical depression.

For healing arts practitioner Evelyn Hall, in Santa Cruz, California, mindfulness is a lifestyle choice. “When my mind runs off into the future, it can create not only anxiety because I fear the unknown, but also worry about all the ‘what ifs.’ When I find myself lost in the past, it can bring me sadness and regret. I have learned from mindfulness that these are just mental habits.”

Cara Bradley, a mental fitness coach in Philadelphia and author of *On the Verge: Wake Up, Show Up and Shine*, says, “To be mindful is to show up to experience the moment as it is, with all your senses—when we eat, when we walk, whatever we are doing.”

Diving Deeper

While mindfulness can be the simple act of noticing the geometric design of a flower or the variety of tastes on a dinner plate, meditation brings awareness to the deepest levels of consciousness through a variety of focused techniques, including breathwork, chanting, visualization or gazing at a candle flame.

Contrary to common assumption, meditation need not be associated with religious structure. Neuroscientist Tony Nader, who heads the global Transcendental Meditation (TM) organization in 100 countries, underscores, “When you say meditation, there are numerous kinds of meditation with different origins. It can’t be assumed that just because meditation involves the mind that it involves dogma, or that meditation is religious because it has its roots from the Eastern traditions. Over time, some traditions integrated aspects of these ancient techniques into their own religions, yet not all meditations are religious.”

Meditation can bring us into the eye of the storm. “The ocean is a great analogy for understanding different approaches to meditation. Just as the ocean can be turbulent on the surface with innumerable waves and quiet at its depth, so, too, the mind is active on the surface with innumerable thoughts, but it is also naturally, profoundly quiet, deep within.”

TM, taught in personal, one-to-one instruction by a certified instructor, is one

of the most thoroughly studied approaches and does not involve breathwork or repetition of chants. “There are 600 scientific research studies about the effectiveness of the Transcendental Meditation technique to develop the full brain—actually, the full potential of the human nervous system,” says Nader.

Today, meditation has moved into the mainstream, with more than 2,500 digital apps offering quick, convenient access to every type and tradition. With names like Calm and Headspace, they were downloaded by more than 52 million first-time users in 2019—and that was before the anxiety-inducing pandemic. Most can be easily customized: InsightTimer, for example, offers 45,000 free meditations that can be sorted by need, duration or style.

By practicing meditation, mindfulness is also cultivated. “You can think of it as a workout for your mind, a way of becoming familiar with our mind and training our mind,” says Bradley.

Meditation can simply help to lower blood pressure or boost memory, yet it can bring mindfulness to a more spiritual level. “In a meditative state, I can feel how everything around me is alive and communicating with their own tongue and song,” says Hall. “I feel peace, no longer lost in wishing, praying or pleading that things be different. I am free from the burden of having to do something.”

Marlaina Donato is a body-mind-spirit author and composer of visionary music. Connect at AutumnEmbersMusic.com.

Meditative Approaches to Try

Cara Bradley: There are times in life, during a busy workday or after watching the news, when you can feel that your mind has gotten very small and fixed. One of my favorite, super-simple practices is called Tibetan sky-gazing. Go outside or look out your window and look up into the sky. Use your inhale to help you expand your breath, but also your mind; allow your mind and your eyes to widen to the peripheral, and as you exhale, you just let go of any fear, worry or control. Inhale—expand up and out; exhale, let something go—tension, struggle, expectation.



Evelyn Hall: Close your eyes, take a couple of nice belly breaths and relax. Send waves of relaxation through your entire body, from the top of your head to the soles of your feet. As you do this, just listen to the sounds around you, both near and far. Then notice what you smell, both near and far. How does the air feel on your skin? Expand all your senses to experience what is present in this moment.

Once you are deeply relaxed, just rest within the present environment, doing nothing. Unplug, reset. Try three to five minutes to reboot. Tip: It’s helpful to remember a time when you were totally relaxed—in nature or on vacation. The mind and body love to work together; think it and the body will respond.



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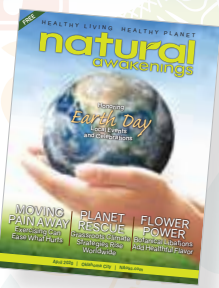


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Big Love From Small Animals

The Joy of Furry Little Companions

by Julie Peterson

People think rabbits are quiet carrot-munchers, but they're much more. Like many other small furry mammals, pet rabbits are expressive, intelligent and enjoy spending time with their humans.

Shana Cobin, a veterinary technician from Foster, Rhode Island, points out that just like dogs and cats, each rabbit is unique. Having had four house bunnies at different times, Cobin enjoyed getting to know each one. "They can be quite entertaining with their playful antics. My first rabbit, Koko, would come to me and lick my face," says Cobin. "She also made a purring sound for me, which they actually make by grinding their teeth."

Small and Sweet

For first-time pet owners, veterinarians often recommend pets smaller than dogs or cats. These can include a variety of rodents such as hamsters, gerbils, rats and mice, although guinea pigs usually top the list for their general durability, especially with children. Smaller pets can be the furry friend that a family may long for without posing the long-term commitment and higher care costs of a dog or cat.

For those that prefer a small furball that isn't a rodent, a rabbit may be appropriate. "House bunnies are curious



and very smart, which can be both terrific fun and problematic," says Cobin, noting that "house-bun" curiosity, coupled with an intense need to chew, can wreak havoc on cords and other items within reach. "They always have to chew to keep their teeth filed down, but that's why you give them appropriate things to chew." Ferrets, members of the weasel family, are also intelligent, and like rabbits, can be trained to use a litter box.

Buyer Beware

Just because small animals seem simpler to care for, it should be noted that their

health depends on specific diets, bedding, housing, exercise and grooming. Rabbits, for example, have delicate digestive systems. "Feeding the right diet is extremely important," advises Cobin. "A bunny's primary diet should be hay, which helps grind down their teeth and is good for their digestion. Dark, leafy greens are also good." As for carrots, Cobin says half of one is the most one rabbit should have in a day.

There is more to consider. "People need to think beyond the cute fluff ball," says Jennifer Miller, a former volunteer with the Animal Humane Society in Minnesota. "Small animal cages need regular cleaning, and ferrets have a natural musky odor to begin with. People start out wanting the cuteness, then they get tired of the work and get tired of the smell. Surrendered animals can be difficult to rehome." Before adopting a small animal, it's wise to research the species' specific care requirements and other information at HumaneSociety.org.

Annual veterinary checkups are something else to plan for, because many animals hide illness symptoms as a survival instinct. Having a small-animal veterinarian in place is important in case emergency care is required. "Zoological companion patients are unique and delicate. Their anatomy, physiology and

behavior is vastly different from dogs and cats, yet they require the same or more expertise and care," says veterinarian Scharlet Kelly, medical director at the VCA Acacia Animal Hospital and Pet Resort, in Escondido, California.

Health Helpers

In 2019, the journal *Aging & Mental Health* published a survey that concluded pets benefit older adults by "providing companionship, giving a sense of purpose and meaning, reducing loneliness and increasing socialisation."

According to Jeremy Barron, M.D., medical director of the Beacham Center for Geriatric Medicine at the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, in Baltimore, "Owning a pet provides an amazing array of health benefits." Indeed, numerous studies have shown



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that petting an animal can lower blood pressure and heart rate, soothe PTSD, decrease stress hormones and boost serotonin. Simply put, petting animals is not only good for people, it feels good, too.

"Love can come in small packages," says Liz Warner, a retired teacher in Richmond, Virginia, who adopted Laverne and Shirley, two Peruvian guinea pigs, to keep her company during the isolation of the pandemic. "I enjoy brushing their long coats and giving them their necessary haircuts. When I hold them, they kind of purr. It's comforting."

Cobin agrees that pets provide comfort and add joy to the home. "Bunnies do this thing called a binky. My most recent rabbit, Vivian Bucket, would just be hopping around and then she would dart, jump up and twist in the air. It's what rabbits do when they are happy and playful, and it's adorable."

Julie Peterson writes about health and wellness from rural Wisconsin. Reach out at JuliePeterson2222@gmail.com.

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Some events are being postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19.

If you plan to visit an attraction or event in Tulsa, Oklahoma City or the surrounding areas over the coming days and weeks, please contact that organization directly prior to visiting to get the latest details.



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Oklahoma African American Film Festival Virtual – 6pm. The OHS Black Heritage Committee will present *Blacks on the Oklahoma Frontier: Lawmen, Outlaws, Cowboys, Cowgirls and Rodeos*, African American pioneers on the Oklahoma frontier. Topics will include notorious outlaws such as Crawford Goldsby, better known as Cherokee Bill, and fearless lawmen like Deputy US Marshal Bass Reeves. Art Burton, author of numerous publications including *Black, Red, and Deadly: Black and Indian Gunfighters of the Indian Territories* and *Black Gun, Silver Star: The Life and Legend of Frontier Marshal Bass Reeves*, will be a special guest. Free. Online. OkHistory.org/calendar/event/oklahoma-african-american-film-festival-virtual.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

SWOSU Jazz Festival Virtual – 4-7pm. Enjoy the sounds of renowned jazz musicians during the 51st annual SWOSU Jazz Festival. Held virtually for 2021, this two-day festival will feature livestream performances by headliner Stockton Helbing Trio, along with other exciting big band shows. Guests can also participate in free music clinics led by Stockton Helbing. Tune into this year’s exciting online festival and get ready for two days full of great jazz music. Free. Online. SwosuJazz.Weebly.com.



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

SWOSU Jazz Festival Virtual – 10am-8pm. 2nd day filled with Jazz classes and a concert at 8pm with Jazz A and B - Music of Stockton Helbing. Free. Online. SwosuJazz.Weebly.com.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Davis-Waldorf Performing Arts Series Virtual – 10am-8pm. Enjoy an online, live performance by award-winning composer and pianist Daniel Kelly. This concert will reinterpret texts from Shakespeare’s most beloved plays as lyrics for original jazz songs, accompanied by Nicole Zuraitis’ powerhouse vocals. After the show, viewers can engage with the artists to collaborate on work. Free, but you must subscribe online to receive your meeting invitation and passcode via email. Online. Usao.edu/arts-and-culture/dwpas/20-21-shakespeare-in-jazz.html.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20

35th Annual Tulsa Women’s Expo with a Cause Tulsa – 10am-5pm Sat; 11am-4pm Sun. Sip, sample and shop your way through 190 exhibits and enjoy special events on two stages. The expo is Tulsa’s the largest two-day women’s event, featuring Tulsa Upfront Women, The Reasor’s Salmon Chef Cookoff, The Made in Oklahoma Showcase, The Food &

Wine Pavilion, The Reasor’s Chef’s Kitchen Stage, runway fashion shows, fitness demos, beauty makeovers, celebrity guests, inspiring speakers and expert chef demos. Indulge yourself with delicious food and great wine from local vineyards in the Great Tastes Food & Wine Pavilion. Bring your girlfriend, your sister, your mother and your daughter and share the fun! \$7 general admission (\$5 w/coupon) 2-for-1 with Reasor’s Rewards Card. Central Park Hall at Expo Square, 4145 E 21st St, Tulsa. 203-259-3351. WomensLivingExpo.com/Tulsa-2021.

Native Indian Taco and Arts & Crafts Sale (drive-thru only) OKC – 11am-7pm. Pull up to the Indian Taco & Native American Arts and Crafts Sale in Oklahoma City. This modified drive-thru event invites guests to feast on delicious Indian tacos stuffed with meat, lettuce, cheese, tomatoes, onion and sour cream, or enjoy juicy Pow Wow burgers. Upgrade either entree with a drink and dessert for a fully satisfying meal. Church of the Open Arms UCC, 3131 N Pennsylvania Ave, OKC. 405-213-9862. Facebook.com/events/398804274661248.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Fish Hatchery Open House OKC – 10am-4pm. Guests will get to see the inner workings of Oklahoma City’s fisheries program. Free. H.B. Parsons Fish Hatchery. 10940 N Meridian Ave, OKC. 405-297-1426. Okc.gov/Departments/Parks-Recreation.

ongoing events

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various

NAMI Family Support Groups Statewide – Many day choices. Free, virtual, confidential and safe group meetings for families helping other families who live with mental health challenges. Family members can achieve a renewed sense of hope for their loved one who has mental illness, ranging from ADHD to schizophrenia. Free. NamiOklahoma.org.

Seeing Now at 21c OKC – A broad selection of multi-media works and contemporary art by over two dozen artists. 21c is a multi-venue contemporary art museum with thought-provoking exhibitions, interactive site-specific art installations and a full roster of cultural programming. Free. 21c Museum Hotel, 900 West Main St, OKC. 405-982-6900. 21cMuseumHotels.com.

Fieldworks Beyond Measure OKC – Dec 17-Apr 19, 11am-6pm. Featuring art works produced by Fieldworks project collaborators Todd Stewart and Robert Bailey. A diverse archive of objects, photos, texts, videos and more. Clusters of photos by Stewart immerse viewers within the landscapes they depict. Text by Bailey excavates layers of meaning throughout the display. Free. Timed tickets required. Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center, 11 NW 11th St, OKC. 405-951-0000. OklahomaContemporary.org/Exhibitions/Current/Fieldworks-Beyond-Measure.

wednesday

Dog Play Wednesday Tulsa – 9am-8pm. Bark your calendars; Dog Play Wednesday is back! Keep checking the events schedule to see Pup-coming activities that are not to miss. Tails are wagging just thinking about it. Free. The Patio at The Gathering Place, 2650 S John Williams Way E, Tulsa. 918-779-1000. GatheringPlace.org.

Dope Poetry Night OKC – 7:30-9:30pm. All levels are open to the mic and it is uncensored. Sign-ups begin at 7pm and the show begins at 7:30pm-ish. Free. Ice Event Center Sports Bar and Grill, 1148 NE 36th St, OKC. 323-346-8683. Facebook.com/events/209553842825723.

friday

First Fridays on the Paseo OKC – 6-9pm. 1st Fri. Over 80 artists in more than 25 businesses and galleries participate, all within walking distance. Some galleries offer refreshments, and food trucks will be available. Free. Paseo Art District: between NW 30th & Dewey and NW 28th & Walker, OKC. 405-525-2688. ThePaseo.org.

Norman Art Walk 2nd Friday is now VIRTUAL – 6-9pm. 2nd Fri. In lieu of physical art walk events, we are presently broadcasting digital arts content through our Facebook page. Free. Facebook.com/2ndFridayNorman. 405-360-1162. 2ndFridayNorman.com.



Tulsa Arts District First Friday Art Crawl – 6-9pm. 1st Fri. Visitors can explore artwork inside galleries, studios and museums and catch a few live music performances or even an exciting fireworks display. As an added bonus, art crawlers can take advantage of free museum and gallery admission while shopping later than normal business hours would allow. Free. Northern section of downtown. 918-492-7477. TheTulsaArtsDistrict.org.

LIVE! on the Plaza 2nd Friday OKC – 6-10pm. 2nd Sun. Plaza District’s free, monthly artwalk, featuring art shows, live entertainment, great food and local shopping. This month’s theme is Seinfeld’s holiday known as Festivus! Free. Plaza District: NW 16th St between N Blackwelder Ave and N Pennsylvania Ave, OKC. 405-578-5718. PlazaDistrict.org.

saturday

Adult Birding Walk OKC – 8-9:30am. 2nd Sat. These walks in Martin Park offer adults the opportunity to go birding and socialize with other birders in the quiet hours of the morning. No binoculars needed. Led by retired Naturalist Neil Garrison. Free. Martin Park Nature Center. 5000 W Memorial Rd, OKC. 405-297-1429. Okc.gov.

Saturday Morning Birding Tulsa – 8-9:45am. 1st Sat. Birding at Oxley. All skill levels are welcome. Binoculars are recommended. Free. Oxley Nature Center, 6700 Mohawk Blvd, Tulsa. 918-596-9054. OxleyNatureCenter.org.

Coffee and Cars OKC – 8-11am. 1st Sat. The largest monthly gathering of car enthusiasts from across the state. Come share a passion for automobiles. The event will be held at the property just north of Pawnee Dr and Cabela Rd. Everyone is welcome. Free. Chisholm Creek, 13230 Pawnee Dr, OKC. 405-418-8590. ChisholmCreek.com.

Tulsa Farmers’ Market Tulsa – Winter hours: 8:30am-noon. 1st and 2nd Sat. Over 75 Oklahoma Grown-certified vendors from across Eastern Oklahoma. Free. Kendall Whittier neighborhood. Admiral & Lewis, Tulsa. 918-633-1934. TulsaFarmersMarket.org.

Gardens Monthly Walking Tour OKC – 10am. Last Sat. Learn about Oklahoma plants and find gardening inspiration with educational walking tours. Each month will feature different plants from the outdoor collection. Spots fill up fast, so register early. Free. Myriad Botanical Gardens, South Lobby, 301 W Reno, OKC. 405-445-7080. OklahomaCityBotanicalGardens.com.

See You Saturdays OKC – 10am-5pm. 2nd Sat. Visit the museum for uniquely themed programming geared toward everyone—children to adults. Be inspired each month with interactive experiences and meet new Hall of Fame heroes. Free. Oklahoma Hall of Fame. Gaylord Pickens Museum, 1400 Classen Dr, OKC. 405-235-4458. OklahomaHof.com/See-You-Saturdays.

Explore the Flora Tulsa – 10:30am-noon. 4th Sat. Come walk the trails and explore the beautiful diversity of plants and creatures along the way. Free. Oxley Nature Center, 6700 Mohawk Blvd, Tulsa. 918-596-9054. OxleyNatureCenter.org.

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~Buddha

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I AM YOGA STUDIO
Melissa Cameron Fullerton
2633 E 15 St, Ste D, Tulsa
918-640-5180 • IAmYogaTulsa.com



Offering a variety of yoga classes seven days a week, including beginners, gentle, vinyasa and power yoga. Also offering private classes, special events and teen classes. They provide both in-studio and online classes with almost 20 classes to choose from each week. *See ad, Body Works page 23.*

YOU POWER YOGA
Denise Shaw
1904 E 2 St, Edmond
405-348-9979 • YouPowerYoga.com



Free yoga class for first-time clients. They offer both in-studio and live-streaming classes. In-studio classes limited to 15 students. For either option, book online or via their free You Power Yoga app or the online schedule. Teacher training available. *See ad, Body Works page 23.*

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