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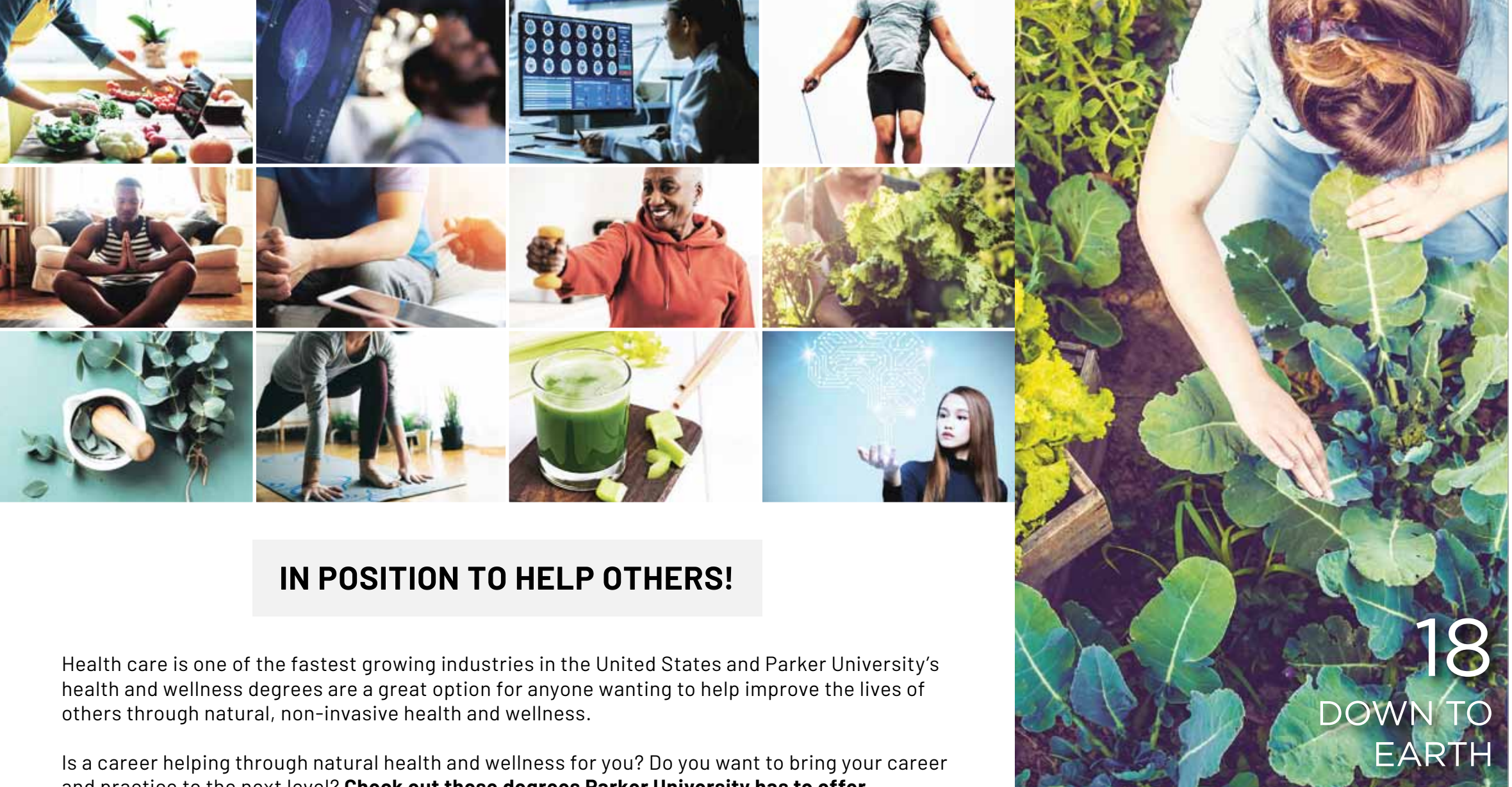
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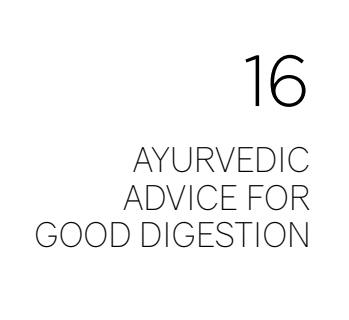
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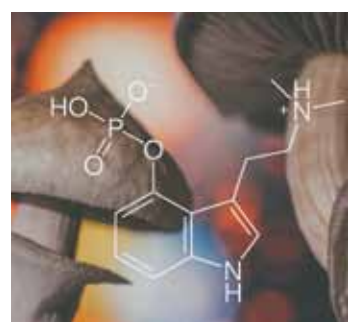
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REWIND

After four years of *Natural Awakenings*, our publisher picks his favorite articles from his first three issues.

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An Essay by Barbara Brown Taylor
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Promise me you'll always remember—
you're braver than you believe,
and stronger than you seem
and smarter than you think.

~ Christopher Robin
from *Winnie the Pooh*



CORRECTION: In the article "Healing Race-based Trauma" in our February issue, the photo labeled "Dr. Joy DeGruy" was not of her. The photo has been corrected in the online version of the story.

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TALK

It crept up on me, unnoticed, until I sat down to write this letter: With this issue, I complete four years of publishing *Natural Awakenings*.

And what I want to say on this anniversary is that I don't hear enough from *you*, dear reader. Yet when I do hear from you, it's always wonderful.

Well, almost always.

One time a woman berated me for unleashing demons all across Atlanta; she claimed that something we published opened the door to the netherworld. Calling from a MARTA bus, having borrowed the driver's phone, she told me about an enormous, winged demon perched on the roof of an office building. When she called again, from another borrowed phone, it was unnerving.

But that was the only bizarre caller. Recently, I received a compliment that I nearly swooned over: "When I read your magazine, I know I'm going to be enlightened," Nancy Tao, a public relations professional, told me.

That was the best! Because here at *Natural Awakenings*, readers come first. A few of my favorites include calls from several individuals wanting dozens of copies for their large family reunions; a woman who was bemoaning the fact that her son accidentally threw out years of archived issues; and two African American women who called after we published *Black and Vegan in Atlanta*, a special section in our August 2019 issue. Each of them said to me, honest to God, "I love you!"

Indeed, while I could do a much better job at several aspects of this business, editorial is not one of them. Over the past few years, the magazine has been supremely blessed with a dazzling array of talent, including managing editors Sarah Buehrle and Diane Eaton; yoga editors Graham Fowler and Sheila Ewers; design and layout gurus Lisa Castro, Kristin Hutchinson, and Steffi Kern; my younger son, staff writer and video producer Noah Chen; as well as a host of contributors, too many to name, but not to appreciate in full.

Tooting our horn here serves the larger purpose of proving and pledging to you, dear reader, that you are always number one. My very first issue earned this stunning praise from the then-national editor: "I believe this is the strongest local editorial I've seen in terms of quality and quantity in a single issue outside of our flagship. And definitely in a first issue!"

That was four years ago. We've only gotten better since then. While feedback to last month's special section, *Healing the*

to ME!



Trauma of Slavery, has been light thus far, it has been 100% positive, starting with the woman we interviewed extensively, Dr. Joy DeGruy, author of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*. After seeing what we published, she said: "Wow, this is THE most comprehensive article that I have ever read regarding generational trauma and African Americans!!!"

Coming from the woman who wrote the book—literally!—we feel quite honored.

Excellent editorial fulfills our mission. As I wrote in my first Letter from the Publisher: "My intention and mission as a publisher is to connect you who are awakening in Atlanta to the information, resources, opportunities and people that can assist you on your path and accelerate your progress."

Healing the Trauma of Slavery has already reaped unexpected rewards. I was shocked to discover that the *Black and Vegan* special section wasn't just a nice group of stories; for some people, it demonstrated that they were actually being seen. I am even more humbled to hear that Blacks are also feeling heard with last month's special section. It is stunning to think that our work is helping some people understand something about their heritage that explains how they show up today.

Yet while I will take this moment to revel in the job we do, we can always do better. And one of the things I've yet to do, despite having a lot of experience in market research, is to gain a better understanding of what's important to you.

So I ask a favor: Take our survey. It will only take about six minutes. The first 100 respondents will have the opportunity to win \$25. In fact, your chances of winning are pretty good—one in ten—because we're giving away a maximum of \$250.

Go here to take the survey: bit.ly/na-survey-0321 or scan the QR in the above graphic.

Of course, you can always reach out to me at paul@naatlanta.com. However, solid survey results will help us fulfill your wants and needs better than ever before. And we always strive to be better than before.



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

ROYAL HEALTH WORLD

Opens Shop in West End

Health and wellness shop Royal Health World has opened its first retail outlet, offering herbal blends and remedies, crystals, raw sea moss and rare rock pieces such as portions of the Sericho meteorite. The shop also features a custom hot tea bar.

Owners Nika and N'ser Tillman have been health and wellness coaches for seven years. "We have always been passionate about how we can truly help our community thrive," says N'ser. "In the spring of 2020, we noticed there was a serious need for health and wellness



everywhere due to the COVID-19 epidemic, so we started online by providing immunity-boosting juices and sea moss gels through our website and on Etsy. We went from receiving 10 orders in a week to 100 orders per week. That's when we knew we needed to expand in order to genuinely connect with our community."

The Tillmans opened their first brick-and-mortar shop in November 2020 in the heart of the West End neighborhood of Atlanta.

"We are so grateful to have become a pillar in the community, where



Photos Courtesy Royal Health World

people know they are able to maintain their health at an affordable price," says Nika. "We provide products for your spiritual, physical and mental wellness."

Royal Health World is located at 889 1/2 Ralph David Abernathy in Atlanta. For more information, call 678-729-7721, email CustomerService@RoyalHealthWorld.com.



New Healing Strong Groups Forming Around Atlanta

A grassroots, non-profit 501(c)3 organization, Healing Strong is an emerging network of volunteer groups throughout the country that believes healing happens best in circles of support. Group leaders help to educate their community about evidence-based, holistic, non-toxic therapies and solutions that have helped thousands of people recover from advanced disease. Groups are often made up of cancer survivors, cancer thrivers, caregivers, family members, friends, practitioners and wellness warriors, according to the national website.

A Healing Strong group in Cumming has been meeting for several

years, and new groups in the East Cobb, Sandy Springs, Buford and Roswell areas are getting established.

"We are an independent group of volunteers empowered by Healing Strong curriculum and resources," says Monica Tempel, a Healing Strong leader. "Our mission is to educate, connect and encourage those seeking comprehensive natural strategies to heal strong and stay strong."

For more information about Healing Strong's mission and educational resources or to find a group near you, visit HealingStrong.org or email HealingStrongAtlanta@gmail.com.



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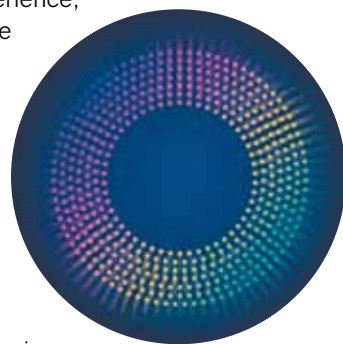
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Main Menu, Retreats, for
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HEALTH BRIEFS

Use Colored LED Lights to Relax

Getting an MRI or CT scan is typically not a relaxing experience, and patient discomfort, anxiety or agitation can affect the quality of the image. Taking note of businesses that use lighting to create a mood, researchers from Pepperdine University demonstrated that patient unease in imaging centers can be modified with the use of colored LED lights. In a pilot study involving 35 subjects, 43 percent found blue lighting most relaxing, while 31 percent preferred yellow. The least relaxing lighting color was red, according to 69 percent of participants, followed by yellow (17 percent) and green (11 percent). Each subject was given a handheld device to set the hue, intensity and brightness of lighting, and most chose blue. No patient preferred the standard bright, white lighting of healthcare environments. "When given the opportunity to change a single aspect of the environmental or imaging facility experience, patients feel much more in control of the otherwise unfamiliar and uncomfortable setting," write the authors in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.



Use Green Tea Extract and Curcumin to Ward Off Oral Cancer

Early signs of oral cancer can include white patches, sores and lumps inside the mouth, biomarkers known collectively as oral potentially malignant disorders (OPMD). To see if two natural chemopreventive agents—green tea extract and curcumin—could reverse these conditions, researchers in India tested 60 people with OPMD, splitting them into three groups. One group was given 400 milligrams (mg) of green tea extract in a capsule, as well as a gel; a second group was given 475 mg of curcumin; and the third received a combination of the first two treatments. After 12 weeks, researchers found that the supplementation had significantly reduced OPMD biomarkers in all three groups, with particularly strong results in the combination group, suggesting a synergistic effect.



Try Mindfulness to Improve Cardiovascular Health

Mindfulness training can lower blood pressure and positively influence behavior that promotes cardiovascular health, report Brown University researchers. The study published in *Plos One* involved 43 people with hypertension. In eight weekly 150-minute sessions, participants learned mindfulness meditation movements and techniques, including eating food mindfully, while also receiving instruction on hypertension risk factors. By the end of the year, they reported improvements in stress levels, diet, physical activity and alcohol consumption. On average, systolic blood pressure fell by six points and diastolic pressure by one point, a small, but significant improvement.



GLOBAL BRIEFS

Fishy Business

Saving Coral Reefs Worldwide



The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) has urged governments to take action to save the planet's remaining coral reefs and their attendant fish populations, because collective human impacts are leaving fewer places untouched, with only 15 percent of the Earth's land mass formally protected and global biodiversity declining at an unprecedented rate. To that end, a new online data platform, MERMAID (*DataMermaid.org*) helps scientists and management officials collect, organize and disseminate data on reef fish biomass and diversity, as well as the cover of hard corals, fleshy algae and other benthic groups—all identified by ICRI as key indicators of coral reef health, integrity and function.

The newly published *5th Global Biodiversity Outlook* and other sources endorsed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services clearly indicate that governments are failing to meet existing global targets for biodiversity and that critical ecosystems like coral reefs will be altered to the point that the biodiversity they harbor, and the services they provide, will be irreparably damaged. Currently, only 2.5 percent of the world's reefs are being actively protected.

Hot Stuff

The Benefits of Renewable Geothermal Energy

Due to the ongoing decay of radioactive elements in the Earth's core, temperatures 4,000 miles below the surface can reach 10,800° F. The molten magma we call lava carries enormous heat to the surface. But despite its enormous potential, geothermal energy supplied just 0.4 percent of U.S. electricity in 2019. In California, the perimeter of the inland Salton Sea lies several thousand feet above a mineral-rich cauldron of hot water that powers 10 geothermal plants. The state has emphasized wind and solar power while neglecting the development of geothermal plants, despite possessing our most productive geothermal fields.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology estimated in 2007 that releasing just 2 percent of this untapped resource in sites around the country could supply 2,000 times our overall primary energy needs without needing any improvements in drilling technology. While the first geothermal plants in the 1960s drained reservoirs of their steam or water, binary plants—a new design from the 1980s—allow operators to extract the heat while maintaining the generating potential. Between 2006 and 2019, the U.S. Department of Energy spent only \$1 billion on geothermal technology due to falling coal prices, a fraction of what was spent on fossil fuels and solar investment.



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Everarde Calk of Yogardener (Photo: Mason Coggins)

HOMESTEADING TAKES ROOT IN ATLANTA

by Noah Chen

The rapid progression of technology has brought about many changes to modern life, and a premium on convenience is certainly one of them. Food, which we humans once planted and harvested ourselves, now comes gift-wrapped in brown-paper packages and delivered to our doors. Stories we used to tell around campfires, we now watch on our phones.

To many, this convenience is rational, even necessary. The workday is long, COVID has made the simplest things taxing, and at the end of the day, a little convenience can be more than just “nice.”

But for others, the technology-aided ease of modern life doesn't have the same luster. For many, homesteading conjures feelings of communal living, DIY grandeur and fresh produce, and while it might not mean sprawling acres in the rolling countryside or the wooded mountains of Georgia, the appeal of homesteading has

grown in recent years. Those taking an interest range from independent homeowners who are adding renewable sources of nutrition and energy to their properties to a man building a close-knit community that's centered around a small farm in southwest Atlanta.

Everarde Calk is a man with one foot in each of these homesteading markets. His landscaping company, Yogardener, enjoys the patronage of well-heeled clients. That said, what sets both Calk and Yogardener apart from other Atlanta landscaping companies is a unique set of values, which Calk describes as: “Earth care, people care, and fair share.” That means he doesn't only treat his employees and clients well—he does so with an eye on environmental sustainability.

“We really try to promote the elimination of the lawn and the use of native plants. We try to mitigate our impact with every action,” says Calk, referencing the fact that the

classic emerald green American lawn isn't exactly environment-friendly.

Still, he discovered a greater demand for conventional lawns than anything else. So Calk decided to change up the game entirely by disrupting what he calls “the lawn and garden paradigm.”

“The homesteading thing is a way for me to bring my knowledge into an urban design context with no pretense of conventionality,” he says.

For Calk, the heart of homesteading is permaculture, which he defines as “a way to map energy flows of a system and look for ways to increase efficiency and increase yields.” From this perspective, lawns aren't flat green sheets of grass; they offer potential space to cultivate crops, house livestock or erect solar panels.

“So we take the system of urban residents, and we say, ‘OK, where are you losing energy? Where are you losing water? How can we capture water?’”

Calk helps clients plan and execute projects around their property with the help of his partner organizations. While homesteading projects do necessitate an investment, the nature of permaculture means they save money over time by providing renewable sources of food and energy.

Yogardener is also helping Nuri Icgoren, owner of Urban Sprout Farms, construct a 30-to-50-unit homesteading community inside Atlanta's perimeter. Icgoren envisions the community to include a local store selling fresh produce and, of course, a farm. Community members can work there as well as purchase from the farm, if they like. Otherwise, the farm will be run by a professional farmer.

Icgoren and Calk met at a Permaculture Action Day, and the two became fast friends. Because of them, homesteading in Atlanta—both on a large scale and small—is that much more of a reality. For Atlanta, there are more ways than ever to embrace healthy habits and sustainable resources.

For more information about Yogardener's homesteading services, call 404-623-2287 or visit Yogardener.com. To learn more about Urban Sprout Farms, visit UrbanSproutFarms.com or follow them on Instagram @urbansproutfarms.

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FOOD FIGHT IN YOUR GUT?

Ayurvedic Advice for Good Digestion

by Ayesha D'cruz

As I poured over my Instagram feed today, I witnessed people add Irish sea moss into their complex smoothies, ghee to their coffee and turmeric to their milk. Social media has enabled some of the world's oldest food traditions to resurface, become accessible and rise to superfood status. I love the fact that we can now hack our diets and find ways to maximize micro-nutrients.



Svetlana Chernykh/DepositPhotos.com

Food is most nourishing when it is in its simplest form. But who doesn't love variety, mixing ingredients and whipping up something new? In our quest to try out the exotic or even rustle up something quick and simple, we often overlook two important factors: the compatibility of the ingredients with each other and the compatibility of the foods with our body types and digestive systems.

Ayurvedic principles have withstood the test of time—5,000 years and counting—and provide fundamental guidelines to almost every aspect of lifestyle. Ayurveda is focused on each individual and their body type, or *doshas*, in the context of your whole self, including lifestyle, history and current health.

According to Ayurveda, every food has its own taste, a heating or cooling energy and a post-digestive effect. *Agni* is the Sanskrit term for the “digestive fire” that breaks down food and other things from the environment that we ingest, assimilating what is useful and eliminating the rest. While, for the most part, *agni* dictates how well food is digested, food

combinations are of great importance. When two or more foods that have different tastes, energy and post-digestive effects are combined, the *agni* can get overloaded, which inhibits the enzyme system, resulting in the production of toxins. Yet, if eaten separately, these same foods help stimulate *agni* and can be digested more quickly, therefore helping rid the body of toxins.

Below is a list of compatible and incompatible foods. Remember that these are broad guidelines only; it is recommended that you take your own food journey deeper based on how your body responds to each of them as well as what your lifestyle and life-stage permits.

1 Honey and heat: While, technically, heat is not a food, it's important to address this combination since its use is so widespread, often being the first step people take to reduce their intake of processed sugar. Honey is a great alternative because raw honey has many benefits. However, it is important to know that when honey is heated above 104° F, its molecules become like glue. They

tend to adhere to mucous membranes in the digestive tract, producing toxins called *ama*. *Ama* is waste that arises out of improper digestion but is not discarded. Ayurveda considers it to be the root cause of most ill health.

2 Fruit and dairy: In general, fruit should be eaten by itself and not combined with anything, especially milk. Fresh fruit is light and very easy to digest so it ferments very easily. If you eat fruit with food or after a heavier meal that is more difficult to digest, it will stay in the belly too long, over-digest and turn stomach contents into slightly fermented goo. It is best to avoid eating fruit with, or just after, heavier foods such as milk, cheese, yogurt, meat, nuts and eggs. However, dates can be eaten safely with milk.

3 Dairy and seafood: According to Ayurvedic principles, the two types of food that should never be combined are dairy foods—including cream, cheese, milk and yogurt—and fish or seafood. They have deeply antagonistic qualities. That means, unfortunately, that those smoked salmon and cream cheese

bagels and fish or seafood pastas covered in cream sauce are a definite “no-no.”

4 Liquids with food: Liquid tends to pass immediately into the intestines, taking away the digestive enzymes from the stomach and inhibiting digestion. Liquids should be consumed at least 20 minutes prior to a meal and one hour after a meal but not with or immediately after a meal. Small sips of warm water during a meal might be OK. Drinking cold water puts a strain on the digestive system and redirects the energy away from its main task of digesting your meal, so drinking extremely cold water during a meal is not recommended.

5 Beans and dairy or beans and seafood: If the vision of loading on black beans, cheese and sour cream on taco night just came shattering down, you're not alone. According to Ayurveda, beans are astringent and have a cold, dry and heavy quality. Dairy is cold and heavy, too, so the two together can work against the digestive fire. That's why beans often are prepared with heating spices, since the combination helps to optimize digestion. Similarly, combining beans and seafood overwhelms the digestive system and results in poor digestion and production of *ama*.

We can't and don't always eat perfectly. Here are a few tips and workarounds that are in sync with Ayurvedic principles for optimal digestion. They can be beneficial as part of a routine and prove to be even more useful when one is consuming food that is typically difficult to digest.

- Take a half teaspoon of grated ginger and a pinch of rock salt before meals to stimulate the digestive system.
- Add spices and herbs to meals to make them more compatible or reduce the dominant effect. For example, cilantro can bring a cooling quality and help to digest spicy foods. Sipping ginger tea with a meal can also help the body assimilate it better.
- Drink a cup of lassi at the end of the meal to aid digestion. Lassi is made from a quarter cup of yogurt, one cup of water and two pinches of ginger and cumin powder.
- Cook ingredients together to make them more compatible. One-pot stews can be very nourishing.
- Eat only until you are two-thirds full and then stop. Like a blender or spice grinder, if your stomach is full, it can't process the food inside very well.

Making small, consistent shifts in routine is more sustainable than trying to overhaul a diet and lifestyle. Take small steps, be mindful of how it is affecting your body, evaluate and improve. 🌱



A “techpreneur,” Ayesha D'cruz is the founder of *Fitriffic.com*, a fitness and wellness portal where members can sign up for classes and consultations with fitness and wellness experts from around the world. See more at *Fitriffic.com*.



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DOWN TO EARTH

The Promise of Regenerative Organic Farming

by Sandra Yeyati

With its dependence on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, heavy tilling techniques, concentrated animal feeding practices and mono-crops—all designed to maximize yields—conventional farming has come at a great cost. “Conventional intensive farming practices have significant negative consequences for the land and surrounding ecosystems,” says Richard Teague, Texas A&M professor of Ecosystem Science and Management. “By disrupting the natural function of these habitats, the valuable ecosystem services they provide are compromised.”



The way we’re growing food now is not sustainable. “According to the United Nations, we only have 60 harvests left before our soil is completely depleted. Years of conventional industrial agriculture have drained the soil dry of all of the organic matter, all the microbes, that microbiome that brings nutrients to our plants and to our planet as a whole,” says Margaret Wilson, content creation and media relations specialist at the Rodale Institute. The UN also reported last year that agriculture and forestry were responsible for nearly a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions. “Agriculture is a climate-intensive process and conventional prac-

tices make that even worse because they’re fossil fuel-intensive,” Wilson says. “They require a lot of machinery to plow fields and distribute pesticides. Fertilizers are fossil fuel-based. Tillage is a huge part of conventional agriculture, where you’re turning the soil over, and that releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.” One third of the world’s land surface is considered desert, and according to Judith D. Schwartz, the Vermont author of *The Reindeer Chronicles* and *Cows Save the Planet*, most deserts are manmade. “If we look historically, we learn that most deserts were once thriving grasslands or some other kind of ecosystem and became deserts

after hundreds of years of poor grazing management or farming that was no longer putting nutrients back into the soil.” The good news is that deserts can be brought back to life. In the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, where much of the land is degraded, ingenious ranchers have figured out a way to support healthy animals and plant biodiversity. “The ranchers were earning money by managing the livestock holistically in a way that was reviving the ecological function of these lands, so there were thick grasses, birds and butterflies flourishing right next to land that looked horrible—absolute deserts with a lot of erosion, the soil so depleted that it couldn’t hold water,” recalls Schwartz, who visited the area. Regenerative organic farming holds great promise to rebuild soil, draw carbon from the atmosphere and ultimately grow healthier food. “When you take out the pesticides, fertilizers and intensive tilling, our farming systems trial concluded that regenerative organic agriculture uses 45 percent fewer fossil fuels and releases 40 percent fewer carbon emissions than conventional practices,” Wilson says, adding that a recent Rodale Institute white paper postulated that by transitioning all global crop and pastureland to regenerative management, we could sequester 100 percent of annual carbon dioxide emissions. As the founder of the Rodale Institute, J.I. Rodale, said, “Healthy soil equals healthy food equals healthy people.” Soil restoration is job one, and we know how to do this. “The goal of regenerative farming is to farm and ranch in nature’s image,” says Gabe Brown, a North Dakota farmer and author of *Dirt to Soil*. He offers the following six principles to create a thriving, regenerating agricultural ecosystem:

- 1 Context:** “There’s a reason bananas do not grow in North Dakota. They don’t fit the context, whereas more spring wheat is grown in North Dakota than anywhere else. You have to farm and ranch in your context.”
- 2 The least amount of mechanical and chemical disturbance possible:** “Nature tills with earthworms and burrowing rodents, but it certainly doesn’t till the soil like we do in farming or even in gardening. Tilling is the worst thing you can do if you want to raise nutrient-dense food. Nature aerates the soil with the use of living plants and soil aggregates. Those soil aggregates will only last about four weeks, then new ones need to be formed, and the only way to form them is by not tilling and allowing biology and fungi to secrete substances that help bind sand, silt and clay to form soil aggregates.”
- 3 Armor on the soil:** “Nature always tries to cover the soil, whether it be leaves in a forest or decaying plants in a pasture or field. Nature does not like bare soil.”
- 4 Diversity:** “Where in nature do you see a monoculture? Usually only where man put it or man’s actions have driven it to be a monoculture. Nature is very diverse, so hundreds of different grasses, legumes all growing in harmony. We’ve gotten away from that. Now we plant monocultures. That’s not the way nature functions.”



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5 A living root being in the soil as long as possible throughout the year: “I go out in the spring here in North Dakota, and you’ve got crocuses coming up through the snow. That’s nature’s way of trying to take the solar energy and all of these compounds out of the atmosphere, and through photosynthesis convert it into carbon to feed soil biology.”

6 Livestock and insect integration: “Nature does not function properly without animals. Too many people think we have to remove the animals from the landscape. That’s the worst thing you can do. What’s going to pollinate the plants? The way our rich soils were formed was with large herds of ruminants, grazing the plants. That plant, once grazed, starts sloughing off root exudates to attract biology, to regrow, and then that plant is able to cycle more carbon out of the atmosphere.”

Brown waxes poetic when he talks about the amazing results of regenerative farming. “Healthy soil looks like dark chocolate cake. It’s full of pore spaces. Healthy soil is dark because of the amount of carbon in it. It smells good, whereas unhealthy soil is very compacted. There’s no pore spaces. Water cannot infiltrate into it. It’s a dull, pale color. You can see it, you can smell it, you can feel it.”

According to Wilson, the Rodale Institute is poised to help farmers adopt these principles and make them profitable. “People say regenerative organic isn’t scalable, but through our farming systems trial, we’re proving that you can do this on a large scale. It might require customization, but that’s why we’re investing so much in providing support and research to farmers to help them navigate that, and we’re seeing that scalability is not a barrier to implementation because so many big companies like Dr. Bronner’s and Patagonia are starting to implement these practices because people are demanding it. The market finds a way to make it doable and as long as we keep up our consumer education and show people that this is a benefit to everybody, I think large-scale farmers and corporations that buy their products will respond.”

Last year, Graham Christensen’s father gave him and his brother full control of a 750-acre farm in Oakland, Nebraska, that has been in the family since 1867. Over the decades, the farm has seen many changes, but the biggest transformation is still to come, as the brothers eagerly transition their once conventional operation into a regenerative organic one.

The family began to incorporate a few innovations 12 years ago when they stopped tilling the land and adopted solar energy, but this year they’ll take bolder steps to eliminate their dependence on GMO seeds and chemical fertilizers and pesticides which over the years have reduced organic matter levels in the soil and led to increased and unhealthy nutrient levels in their waterways.

“For the first time, we’ll be cover-cropping 612 acres and expanding habitats for wildlife, especially in some riparian areas, so we can get more roots in the soil and have better filtration and cleaner water,” Christensen explains. “We’re going to produce nutrients by building a biodiverse ecosystem and we’re incorporating animal grazing systems to help us fertilize naturally rather than having to add synthetics like nitrogen and phosphorus.”

They have planted a 100-tree hazelnut orchard that they hope to expand as a tree crop. “That’s going to help us stop soil erosion, store more carbon in the ground, produce another form of income and also be able to fit right into our cropping system, virtually taking out no extra land; just creating a higher layer, so now we’re farming higher in the air.”

The transition is not without its risks, Christensen adds. “Farms like ours have been heavily subsidized by the federal government to ship our grain to other countries. What we’re trying to do now is produce more small grains and hazelnuts for a regional market and reintroduce livestock to the land—not in confinement—so we can focus more on feeding people in our local community and in Omaha or Lincoln or Kansas City or Des Moines.”

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

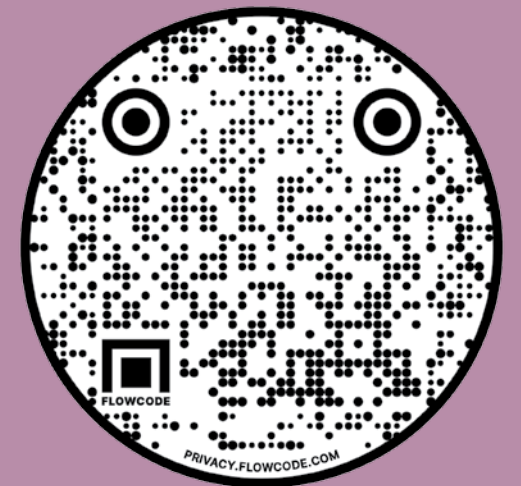
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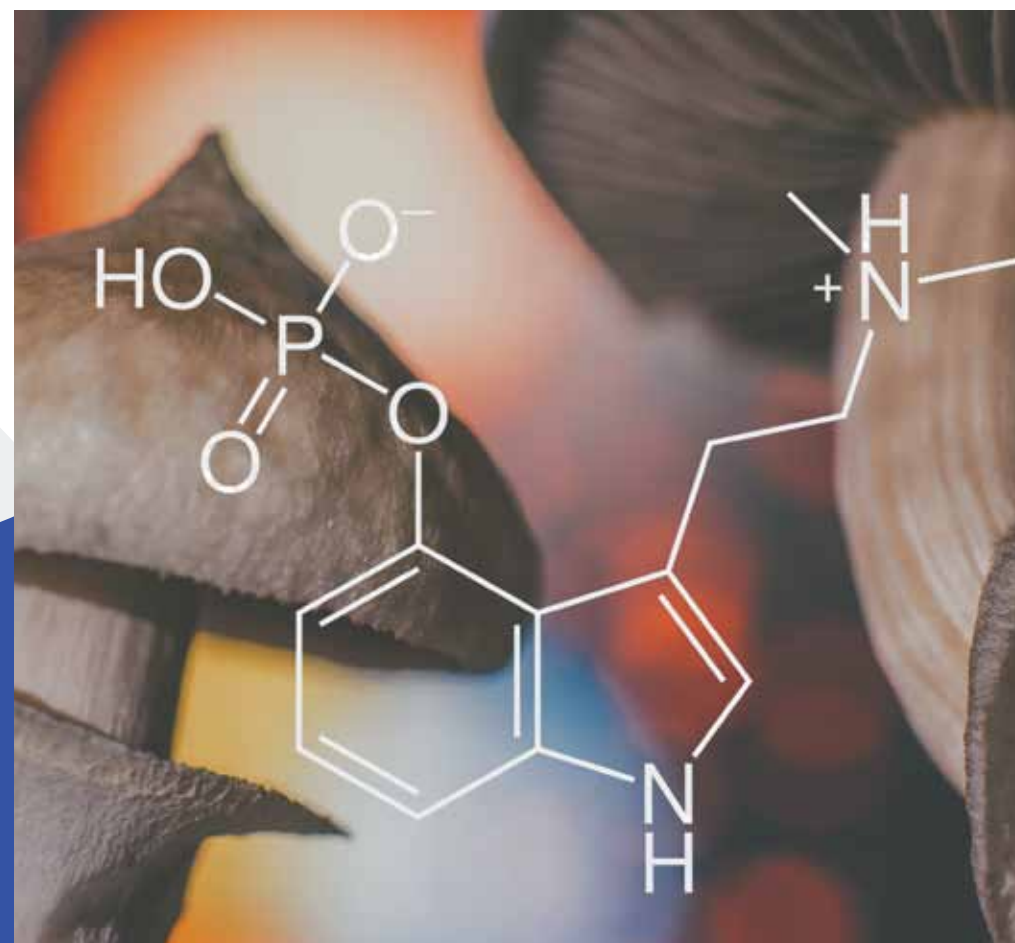
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The Healing Potential of Psychedelic Medicines

Promising Studies on Stress Disorder, Depression and Addiction

by Linda Sechrist



For more than 30 years, intersections of the human and natural world—our plates, farms and gardens—have been of interest to author Michael Pollan, who recently added the mind as another significant association in his latest book, *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression and Transcendence*.

Pollan's interest was sparked by two articles. The first, a *New York Times* story, "Hallucinogens Have Doctors Tuning In Again," details how researchers from Johns Hopkins, the University of Arizona, Harvard, New York University (NYU), the University of California/Los Angeles and other institutions had been giving doses of psilocybin—the psychoactive compound in certain mushrooms—to terminal cancer patients as a way to help them deal with their "existential distress" at the approach of death. The second, a peer-reviewed article in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology* by Johns Hopkins

researchers, was entitled "Psilocybin Can Occasion Mystical-Type Experiences Having Substantial and Sustained Personal Meaning and Spiritual Significance." Pollan turned his journalistic skills to researching the potential of psychedelics to actually heal the mind and treat mental and behavioral disorders, and the book that resulted became a number one *New York Times* bestseller.

Research Breaks New Ground

Much of the research for studying psychedelic medicine has been supported by the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS). The 35-year-old Santa Cruz, California, nonprofit is currently backing research into psychoactive methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), also referred to as ecstasy, which produces effects resembling stimulants and psychedelics, as well as a feeling of connectedness. It plans to publish the full results of phase three clinical trials for MDMA-assisted therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in 2022, the final stage before seeking U.S. Food & Drug Administration approval for its use as a prescription treatment.

MAPS founder and Executive Director Rick Doblin, Ph.D., who spent 30 years studying how psychedelics might help heal trauma and mental illness, was trained and mentored by Stanislav Grof, M.D. A renowned psychiatrist with more than 60 years of experience researching non-ordinary states of consciousness, Grof proposes that psychedelics are to the study of the mind what microscopes are to biology and the telescope is to astronomy. When used wisely, he suggests, they can heal, inspire and perhaps save us.

Researchers have found that psychedelics reduce activity in the brain's default mode network that creates our sense of self—the equivalent of our ego—filtering all incoming information according to personal needs and priorities. When activity is reduced in the default mode network, the ego shifts from the foreground to the background, allowing us to see

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Johns Hopkins and NYU research has demonstrated how psilocybin can help with treatment-resistant depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety and addiction.

that we're part of a larger field of awareness. This can be among an individual's most important experiences, allowing for feelings of connectedness, altruism and acceptance of death.

Psychedelics as Treatment

Since 2010, in addition to treating PTSD, MDMA has shown positive results for depression, social anxiety in autistic adults and anxiety associated with a life-threatening illness. Johns Hopkins and NYU research has demonstrated how psilocybin can help with treatment-resistant depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety and addiction. Both MDMA and psilocybin have been studied as adjuncts or catalysts to psychotherapy rather than as standalone treatments.

Jennifer Phelps, M.D., who teaches for the Center for Mind-Body Medicine, in Washington, D.C., and practices family and integrative medicine in Georgetown, Connecticut, says that psilocybin can transform a terminally ill individual's quality of life for the remainder of their time. "This compassionate use can pres-

ently only be prescribed by a physician with the required license issued by the Drug Enforcement Administration. Presently, LSD, MDMA and psilocybin can only be prescribed for research," she says.

Charley Wininger, a Brooklyn-based psychotherapist, authored *Listening to Ecstasy: The Transformative Power of MDMA* after experiencing its positive effects on his marriage and psyche. "For those who experiment responsibly, psychedelics can open their lives up to spiritual growth and transformation. It's a way to learn about how connected we are to each other, to the natural world and to the world at large. When you experience this level of connection, you and your worldview are transformed," he says.

"MDMA helped me with the aging process. I keep growing and exploring consciousness in an unconventional way," he adds, enthusing that psychedelics can be a unique, life-enhancing opportunity for healthy people across their entire adult lifespan.

Wininger explains that MDMA floods the body with serotonin and oxytocin, cre-

ating a sense of safety and well-being. "It's best to do it with a trained psychotherapist or sitter, so that if any trauma surfaces, it can be relieved with a sense of safety. While individuals report that their relationship to trauma is altered permanently, integration groups give them opportunities to share and anchor their experiences."

Getting Informed

Daniel Shankin, program director of the wellness organization Tam Integration, Align and Flow, in Fairfax, California, offers mindfulness-based coaching and mentorships to integrate psychedelics with life, education and a related career. "Having a guide, preparation coach or therapist is good," he says. "For the transformation to be lasting, preparation work is needed. Answering questions such as—Why are you here? What are your expectations? And what makes you feel safe and comfortable?—helps to build rapport with a guide that can help you form a simple, powerful intention beforehand.

"Personal growth work is invaluable

to psychonauts," says Shankin, who offers podcast interviews on *TamIntegration.com*, as well as replays of a 2019 Psilocybin Summit in which notable speakers explore the facets of psilocybin mushrooms and methods for creating ceremony and holding a safe space. Also discussed are traditional and indigenous use, as well as efforts to change public policy so that individuals can legally have access to psychedelic medicine.

The Center for Psychedelic Therapies and Research at the California Institute of Integral Studies also educates the public about psychedelic medicines and trains psychotherapists to work in the expanding field of psychedelic studies. Its online programs inform the general public via podcasts about conscious medicine and the future of psychedelic-assisted therapy, which appears promising in light of the recent decriminalization of psilocybin in Oakland, Denver and Washington, D.C. 🌱

Linda Sechrist is a senior staff writer for Natural Awakenings.

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CANINE OBESITY

When Doggies Need Diets

by Julie Peterson

A year ago, Leroy became exhausted lifting his furry head. Today, he has energy to run, chase and play, thanks to his owner helping the 11-year-old Shiba Inu lose 14 pounds. Leroy was adopted last May by Peter Nguyen, a facilities coordinator in Bellevue, Washington. Back then, Leroy weighed 56.4 pounds—twice the recommended weight. Nguyen found a holistic veterinarian to provide an integrative support plan to remove him from danger.

Overweight dogs are at risk for joint problems, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease and more. According to a 2018 survey by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP), 55.8 percent of dogs (about 50 million) in the U.S. are either overweight or obese. The APOP also reports that most of the owners of these dogs don't realize or are in denial about this important fact.

Determining Appropriate Weight

"A dog that is a perfect weight, you can feel the ribs, but not see them. And you have an abdominal tuck when you look from the side. From above, right in front of the hips, you can see the waistline," says Leroy's veterinarian, Jackie Sehn, at Mercy Vet, in Mercer Island, Washington. She points out that the dog must be touched to feel the amount of fat, especially in long-coat breeds.

This evaluation can be done at home using the online Body Condition Score chart at PetObesityProtection.org. The American Kennel Club also has a weight chart for dozens of breeds that can help determine an initial goal weight, although ideal weight can vary among individual dogs.

Doggy Diets

Debbie Hensel, who fosters dogs, took in a morbidly obese 13-year-old Chocolate Labrador for the Mr. Mo Project, in Cary, North Carolina. Under her care, the pet went from 108 to 81 pounds within nine months. "Since Bruce was an older dog and overweight, the first thing we did was start him on a joint supplement with turmeric and a prescription diet food. In the beginning, I withheld some of his food and used it as treats throughout the day," says Hensel. Every four to six weeks, Hensel decreased Bruce's food intake.

She also divided up portions to feed him four times per day to help him feel full. "Portion control is important," agrees Nguyen. "Leroy has a habit of wanting to eat more. I think he

has a hard time knowing how much food he really needs."

But the problem isn't just eating too much. Pet owners are often feeding the wrong foods. "It is the quality sometimes more than quantity. Health doesn't come from processed food," says Sehn, adding that most dry kibble is essentially overprocessed junk food that lacks nutrients and contains fillers.

Fortunately, refrigerated and frozen dog food has made it easier to feed organic, fresh, nutritionally balanced, raw food which is based on a dog's ancestral diet. Raw food is also available dehydrated. Treats, if included, should satisfy the chewing instinct without adding many calories. Sehn recommends dehydrated chicken or duck feet, tendons and healthy jerkies.

"Switching to a raw diet helped with Leroy's weight, but I had no idea it would have so many other benefits," Nguyen says. "I noticed that his coat was getting a lot softer and he smelled a lot better."

Ease into Exercise

"Bruce sounded like an elephant falling when he laid down and he couldn't stand for long," says Hensel. Indeed, exercise can overburden the heart and joints of an obese dog. At first, Leroy and Bruce both had a hard time just getting up off the floor, so losing weight first was crucial.

As the weight began to come off, they both became more engaged and stamina slowly increased. Hensel started by walking around in the backyard and letting Bruce follow. Their initial walks were to the end of the block. They would stop and rest before going back home. "As he lost weight and his strength improved, our walks got longer," says Hensel.

Weight loss must be a healthy process. "Breaking down excess fat takes time," says Sehn, adding that losing too fast results in muscle loss. Patience and time are key.

"I think Bruce just needed less food and someone that wanted to do things with him," says Hensel, who has adopted Bruce as her "forever foster dog." 🐾

Julie Peterson writes about health and environmental issues. Reach out at JuliePeterson2222@gmail.com.



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Easier on roads. Bikes are considerably lighter than larger vehicles and cause much less damage to infrastructure.

Health-Friendly Commuting

E-bikes are a great way to bring some physical activity to an otherwise sedentary lifestyle. In a 2018 study, Swiss researchers found that commuters enjoyed similar cardiorespiratory improvements regardless of whether they used an electric bicycle or a conventional, non-motorized model. With the power assist, e-bikers were able to cycle at higher speeds and climb hills more easily, which also proved to be highly motivating.

Safety Tips

Pay attention to traffic. Many car drivers may not expect a biker to reach 20 or more miles per hour. Ride defensively.

Be visible. Outfit the bike with lights and a bell and wear eye-catching clothing.

Start slow. Get a feel for the bike's capabilities at lower speeds before cranking it up.

Give it a brake. With the added speed and power, slowing down well ahead of stop signs, lights and road crossings is a must.

Be careful on the mount and dismount. An e-bike is about 20 pounds heavier than a regular bike, so a step-through frame might make good sense, even for men.

Wear a helmet. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, head injury is the most common cause of death and serious disability in bicycle-related crashes.



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ON A ROLL

Foam Rollers Ease Pain and Workout Recovery

by Marlaina Donato



Foam rolling—rolling parts of the body on top of a lightweight foam cylinder—targets trigger points or painful knots in muscles and is a valuable tool for reducing chronic pain and enhancing workout recovery. From sciatica to pelvic floor dysfunction, there is a foam roller for almost every condition, including low- to high-density, heated and textured types for massage-like benefits.

Research during the past several years shows that using foam rollers before or after exercise quells fatigue, improves joint mobility, lowers risk of injury and eases muscle soreness. Its effectiveness is attributed to the activation of the central nervous system resulting in better circulation and reduced inflammation.

“Foam rollers are used to relieve tension in the fascia (connective tissue), ‘roll’ out sore muscles and provide a soothing, self-controlled, soft-tissue massage,” says Amber Kivett, owner of Kivett Kinetic Solutions, in Monrovia, Indiana. “They can

also be used for proprioception, balance, flexibility, core stability training and most importantly, natural pain relief.”

Freeing the Body

Fascia, the body’s all-pervasive connective tissue, tightens like an invisible net from injury and other stresses and can adhere to the underlying muscles, creating pain and restriction. “Foam rolling has the power to change and realign the 12 fascial lines responsible for human movement and support,” says Kivett. “Those same fascial lines also sense and transmit pain and emotion far greater than any nerve or muscle and respond well to foam rolling. There’s an emotional and spiritual release in the body when fascia is compressed and released. That response facilitates a structural change to human alignment and an immediate change in pain levels for all types and causes of pain.”

Foam rollers offer an opportunity for self-care, according to Los Angeles fitness trainer Ashley Borden. “Foam rolling is one of the best ways to troubleshoot your own body, keep it healthy and mobile. Us-

ing an inexpensive tool like a foam roller not only feels good, but it also connects you to your body. Foam rolling the entire body encourages circulation and an immediate feeling of relief afterwards. My clients who don’t like to work out are usually surprised how good they feel post-rollout and feel encouraged to do more.” She cites research that shows that a dynamic warm-up, paired with the use of foam rollers before and after workouts, amplifies recovery and aids in the repair of muscular micro-tears.

For Rafal Augustynowicz, founder of TeamRAF Fitness, in Kent, England, it’s about counteracting lifestyle stresses. “The foam roller is a beautiful and great tool, especially in the 21st century, when we sit too many hours. It is a great tool to get our mobility and our posture back to normal.”

Recovery, Joint Pain and Sciatica

Gently rolling targeted muscles below and above specific joints can help to resolve certain types of pain, including in the knee. “Many times, when a person has pain in the knee, it’s more than likely they have

tight muscles elsewhere—calves, inner thighs, hip flexors or glutes—and the pain shows up in the knee,” says Augustynowicz. “Foam rolling and using a massage ball have saved me many times when I had a lot of problems with my back, neck, hip and a dislocated shoulder.”

The practice can help ease sciatica, a sometimes-excruciating condition. “Most cases of sciatic pain are caused by tight muscles deep in the buttocks, including the piriformis muscle,” says Kivett. “The sciatic nerve travels through the piriformis, so if it’s tight, it will cause a sensation similar to that of sciatica nerve pain. A foam roller can be used along the back, throughout the buttocks and the legs to relieve tension, soften tissues and calm the nervous system for instant pain relief.”

Kivett, who was introduced to foam rollers during intensive physical therapy after a life-altering accident, found them to be a way to recover from severe fibromyalgia pain. “My nerves were hypersensitive from the injuries, and I used foam rolling to reboot the ‘software’ in my brain, which allowed me to engage in recovering.”

Foam rolling is an all-around boon, Borden highlights. “The immediate relief, the muscle definition, the decrease in cellulite, all of these are added benefits.”

Marlaina Donato is an author and composer. Connect at AutumnEmbersMusic.com.

MORE ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE A ROLL

AMBER KIVETT: Ideally, it’s best to perform foam rolling right after a light warm-up for five to 10 minutes to increase circulation to the muscles and decrease tension and stiffness. If there is extra time, do a quick three to five minutes of foam rolling after a workout, but preferably after you’ve done your cool-down or some walking. You don’t have to foam-roll the entire body post-workout; just do a quick “scan” of areas that are more sensitive or painful.

For those with high levels of pain, fibromyalgia, MS, autoimmune conditions or an acute injury, I would recommend buying a low-density, soft, foam roller or [one] that vibrates, because soft and/or vibrating foam rollers are gentle to fragile areas.

ASHLEY BORDEN: Foam rolling is a valuable tool for the senior population to improve overall body tightness and circulation. Assistance is needed if you have a hard time getting up and down. I would also suggest a non-slip yoga mat and using the softest foam roller first to gauge the pressure. If you feel like you have to hold your breath when you are foam rolling, the surface is too hard.

RAFAL AUGUSTYNOWICZ: Never use foam rollers on bones, joints, the spine or armpits; only on the muscle/flesh. Be informed to avoid arteries, etc. If it hurts too much, it’s probably not right. Watch tutorials or go to a professional.

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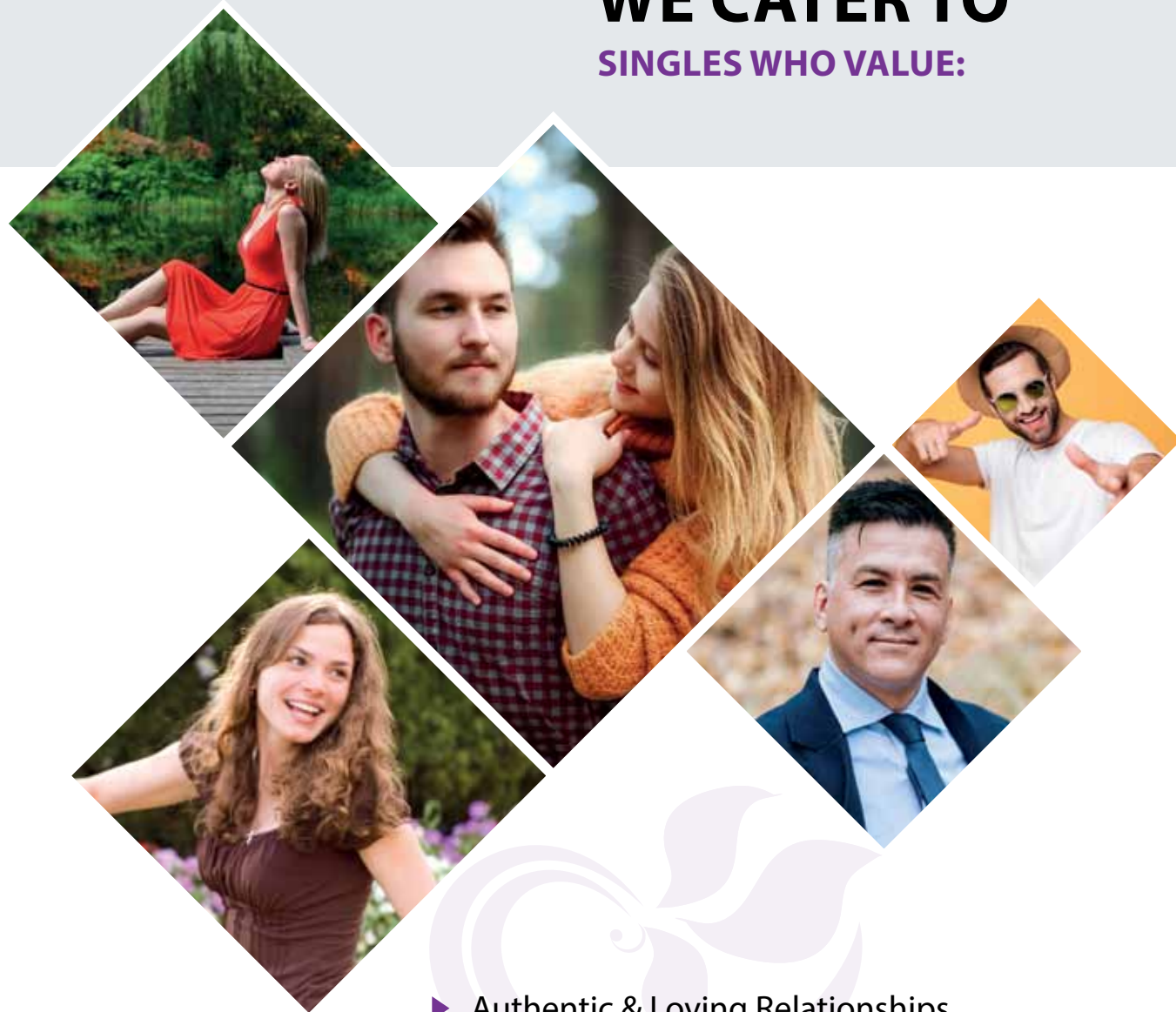
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YOGA

YOGA FOR PREGNANCY

by Marnie Memmolo

As any mother can attest, pregnancy is filled with growth and transformation. Women experience profound physical, emotional and spiritual shifts along with an increased sense of responsibility for self-care and attention to preparations for baby's arrival. Yoga provides tools to navigate each part of this birthing journey with a greater sense of steadiness and ease.

The mother's quality of life is essential to good pregnancy outcomes. Pregnancy is an ideal time for maintaining or adopting a healthy lifestyle, and yoga has been extensively researched as a safe and beneficial activity for uncomplicated pregnancies. Studies show that prenatal yoga supports easier labors, births and recoveries. Yoga postures, or *asanas*, help to condition and balance all bodily systems, and yogic breathing techniques calm the nervous system, allowing it to be in an alert and open state. Meditation strengthens the mind and expands consciousness through sustained attention and mindfulness. All of these are valuable for a smoother pregnancy and birth.

In general, expectant mothers should avoid hot yoga, inversions, closed twists, deep backbends, intense abdominal work and any posture that will compress the abdomen. This is a good time to remember that yoga is non-competitive and non-judgmental. Modify or rest whenever appropriate to avoid overexertion and overstretching. Now is a time to listen to your body's innate wisdom.

Yoga in the First Trimester

While it's often not apparent on the outside, the first three months of pregnancy are filled with subtle, profound changes in the body such as dramatic shifts in hormone levels to support the uterus, placenta and fetus. Blood volume increases to meet the demands of both mother and baby. Heart rate increases and swollen tender breasts are common. Also, symptoms often include nausea, fatigue, headaches and constipation.

Restorative postures, breathing techniques and meditation can relieve symptoms, help manage mood and energy, and promote a calm mind. The quiet, supported postures of restorative yoga invite inner awareness and an intimate connection to the new life forming inside.



Restorative Pose (Photos: Sherrell Photography)


If symptoms in the first trimester are minimal or subside, then most basic yoga poses are suitable and can be modified as pregnancy progresses.

Yoga in the Second Trimester

In the second trimester, early pregnancy symptoms gradually diminish and mothers often experience a surge of energy. The increased size of the breasts and uterus bring weight gain and major structural changes in posture, stretched abdominals and low back strain. In this stage, pregnancy hormones that stimulate lengthening and laxity in ligaments, cartilage, bones and cervix allow for the pelvic outlet to expand for birth but can leave joints unstable and vulnerable.

It is important to balance out the changes in the body by learning proper posture and safe and effective strengthening for the

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pelvic floor and abdominals, especially in functional movement. Asanas such as Cat/Cow, Child's Pose and Down Dog at the wall can relieve tightness in the lower back, while spinal balances such as Bird Dog can encourage core stability.



Child's Pose

To prepare for the remainder of pregnancy and childbirth, focus on building strength and stamina with postures like Warrior II, Intense Side Angle and Half Moon, which boost confidence and courage to face the unknown.



Half Moon Pose



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At this point in pregnancy, mothers should avoid exercises and postures that require them to lie flat on the back longer than two minutes. Doing so can compress the *inferior vena cava*, a major vein that returns blood back to the heart. Prolonged or repeated compression of the vein can reduce blood flow to the placenta, which can impede fetal development. Supine poses can be modified with yoga props such as blankets, bolsters and blocks. Lying on the left side during Corpse Pose allows for optimal blood flow from the vena cava, reduces pressure on the liver and kidneys, improves digestion and encourages optimal fetal positioning for easier delivery. On a more subtle level, the second trimester often brings more sensations from the baby. Flutters, kicks, and baby hiccups naturally turn awareness inward. This is an excellent time to focus on the growing baby; visualizations can invite mothers to feel life inside. Gentle, rhythmic movements coordinated with the breath can bring more attention to the rocking sensation the baby might feel and help one imagine holding and rocking a baby in arms.

Yoga in the Third Trimester

In the third trimester, energy levels might vary. Back pain, postural challenges, poor circulation, interrupted sleep and swelling can be mediated with modified physical activity. Women must learn to adapt to the new shape of their bodies by modifying and discovering what brings comfort. It is helpful to cultivate mindfulness of comfort in preparation for labor. The third trimester is also a good time to educate and mentally prepare for childbirth.

Prenatal yoga classes often reinforce concepts learned in child-birth education classes, offering postures that mimic birthing positions, encourage optimal fetal positioning and provide labor-coping techniques. Seated Bound Angle and Birth Squat postures help open the hips. Goddess builds strength and brings attention to the pelvic floor. Hand and knee work, such as Cat, Cow, Hip Circles and Rocking Lunges, can simulate birthing positions. Experienced as gentle, rhythmic movement paired with the breath, these poses bring the mind into a more internal meditative space that soothes discomfort, calms the mind and accesses the innate intelligence of the body.

Meditation, yogic breathing and vocalization can help balance thoughts and emotions surrounding the anticipation of birth and parenthood. The focus should be on relaxing, softening and open-

ing. The constancy and familiarity of the breath invites security and helps mothers find calm composure in any situation. Furthermore, using slow, soft, steady inhalations and exhalations can decrease the odds of fetal distress by helping mothers remain relaxed themselves. Vocalization on the exhale, such as "Ohhhh," "Ahhhh" and "Mm-mmmm," can help relax the jaw, and since there is a neurological connection between the jaw and pelvic floor, doing so helps to relax the pelvic floor, which can help ease the path for childbirth.



Meditation

Pregnancy and childbirth are rites of passage filled with a sense of self-discovery. Yoga invites mothers into an experience of sustained moment-to-moment presence to address new, profound

and sometimes challenging experiences with empowerment so they can celebrate the gift and miracle of life. A sustained yoga practice fosters healthy habits beyond pregnancy and into the parenting years. For additional support, in-person studio classes or livestream yoga classes allow for community connection, person-to-person interaction and individualized attention. Virtual classes also permit birthing parents to be in the comfort and safety of their home without challenges of additional childcare, yet still allocate time for self-care. 🧘🏻‍♀️

Note: It is best to have a conversation with your obstetrician, your midwife or a member of your healthcare team before beginning yoga or any other exercise program. If you are aware of complications, follow your healthcare provider's guidelines and wait until the pregnancy is firmly established before initiating yoga practice. Once cleared, find an instructor with specialized prenatal training or a prenatal yoga class that offers exercises specifically designed for the pregnant woman.



Marnie Memmolo, ERYT200, RPYT, AWC, YACEP has been specializing in pre/postnatal yoga, Pilates, pelvic floor health and Ayurveda for more than 20 years. She leads group, private lessons and workshops through her virtual yoga studio, Maha Moon. Connect at MahaMoon.com.

Yoga in Atlanta

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Publicize your event! This section hosts free and paid listings. Each month, we select a limited number of events — they must have broad appeal and cost no more than \$10 to attend — to list for free. Otherwise, basic listings are \$35 and enhanced listings are \$75.

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



THURSDAY, MARCH 4

Aromatherapy Foundation Course – Thurs, Mar 4-June 17. 10am-1pm. 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, MARCH 5

Virtual 396 Hertz Healing: Letting Go – 11-11:30am. Party of a series of energy-centric classes with Jamie that you can take in any order. All virtual classes are recorded so no need to be disappointed if you missed class. \$10. More info & register: JamieButlerMedium.com.

Sustainability in Action Roundtable Webinar – 11am-12:30pm. From Competition to Collaboration: Balancing the Natural, Social and Built Environments in a Regenerative Economy. Learn more about the regenerative economy and how it creates value while simultaneously lifting all people and communities and enhancing natural systems. Free. Register: Southface.org.

TUESDAY, MARCH 9

Reflexology Practitioner Course – 10am-1pm, Tues, Mar 9-June 22 or 6:30-9:30pm, Tues, Mar 9-June 8. A 42+ hr, in-class certificate course with Roz Zollinger, Certified Reflexologist and Instructor. Heal Center, 270 Carpenter Dr NE, Ste 505, Sandy Springs. 404-303-0007. HealCenterAtlanta.com.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10

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

Online Wild Woman Moon Meditation – 7-9pm. Guided by our Priestess in Residence, Alana Saporiti, we'll explore archetypal, cosmic energy, meditate, journal and craft intentions for the month ahead. \$15. To register: Santosha-Studio.com.

SATURDAY, MARCH 13

Honeybee Hive Inspection – 1-3pm. Cindy Hodges will teach the important things to look for in a hive and what you can do to make sure that your hive is thriving. \$15. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

SUNDAY, MARCH 14

Flying into the Future – 12-4pm. Learn about flying animals and test your tinkering skills with our STEM-themed partners and activities. EcoTinker Science Stations kick off exploring recycling and consumer science. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Registration required: 770-992-2055 or ChattNatureCenter.org.

THURSDAY, MARCH 25

Virtual Nature Club – 7-9pm. With Naturalist Jerry Hightower, of Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. Topic: Good Golly Goldenrod. \$10/general, \$5/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Registration required by Mar 24: 770-992-2055 or ChattNatureCenter.org.

FRIDAY, MARCH 26

Natural Egg Dyeing – 10am-12pm. Drop-in family program. Certain plants contain powerful dyes that create stunning colors. Join us in this interactive program to learn more about these plants and decorate three vibrant eggs. \$5-\$6. Atlanta Botanical Garden, 1345 Piedmont Ave NE, Atlanta. Space limited; register: AtlantaBG.org.

March BIT Community Call – 2-3pm. Landscaping and Exterior Maintenance. Register: Southface.org.

SATURDAY, MARCH 27

Online Transmission Meditation – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA SE Region. Free. Via Zoom. Info: 404-680-7423, Info-SE@Share-International.us. Register: Tinyurl.com/ylqucfh3.



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://facebook.com/spirituallivingcenteratlanta).

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

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

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

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

Unity Atlanta Sunday Services – 11am. Watch live stream or register to attend in person. 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

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 Qigong – 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 Pranich Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: AtlPranichHealing.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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SUNDAY, MARCH 7

Online Kabbalah and Tarot Monthly Mashup – 6-7pm. With Linda Horton. This laid-back drop-in class looks at one or two elements of Kabbalah each month and how they apply to tarot. The rest of the class time is spent “learning by doing” in the form of micro-readings. \$15 via PayPal. Via Zoom. 404-255-5207. To register: LindaHortonmdiv@gmail.com.

FRIDAY, MARCH 19

Online Past Life Regression – 7-9:30pm. With Don Simmons. Discover for yourself through past life regression why you are the way you are—the hidden meaning of your intimate relationships—the understanding of any difficulty within your life. By seeing it, clarity takes place and healing begins. \$25. Via Zoom.

THURSDAY, MARCH 25

Wisdom and Healing Through Shamanic Journeys – 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. To register: PayPal.me/vicki.evanshealing.

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THE RIDE OF MY LIFE

by Diane Martinez

As the youngest child by many years in my family, I idolized my older siblings. I studied them, wanted to be like them and sought their attention and their time every day. As I grew older, that admiration didn't diminish.

Fast-forward to a beautiful summer Sunday in Atlanta, circa 1994, when my big brother Tom came to visit from Indiana. Instantly, I felt like I was 11 years old again, although the calendar had me firmly in my mid-30s. I egged him on, wanting to play, but more than anything, I wanted to make him proud of me.

Our first outing was to the Whitewater water park. We arrived bright and early before the crowds got big and the lines got

long. Within 15 minutes of our arrival, we walked by the Dragon's Tail ride. Thrill level: Max.

"C'mon D, let's go!" Tom shouted at me.

If anybody else had asked me to go on that ride, I would have politely declined. I love water, but that ride was more about terror than water. I didn't want to disappoint Big Bro, though, so up the multiple flights of stairs we climbed. The wood was hot under my bare feet, and I kept an eye out to see if anyone was walking back down the stairs—opting not to take the plunge to certain death. The line wasn't long, but I agonized every second of the wait. What. Was. I. Doing?

As our turn approached, I started

to panic. My heart was pounding, I felt jittery, and I desperately wanted to turn around and head back down the stairs. Shame seemed a better alternative.

"Lie back, cross your ankles and clasp your fingers behind your head!" barked the teen attendant as I gingerly stepped into the little pool at the top.

"Oh no, I don't think so," I thought. "I'll just scoot my way down nice and slow." Sitting at the top of the slide, I followed none of the directions. I grabbed both sides of the slide and began scooting my way forward. However, the ride's design prevented me from making any real progress with this method; the huge jets of water meant to propel us to the bottom didn't actually make contact with the surface of the slide. I quickly discovered that scooting was not an option.

Seeing no alternative, I laid back, crossed my ankles, clasped my hands behind my head and closed my eyes like never before. Off I flew.

Needless to say, the ride did not last long. Mid-flight, I realized that I was being carried along only by a jet of water, and then I was plunged dramatically into the pool at the bottom. I had survived. Deliriously relieved it was over and proud that I had acted far braver than I felt, I spent the rest of the day in a happy daze.

Decades later, the lessons from that experience took on greater meaning: How often in life do we try to "scoot" forward, attempting to control events, people, and circumstances because it feels too overwhelming and risky to just let life be? We sometimes try to go so slowly and fearfully that we miss the adventure. The sense of control we get from our efforts to manipulate is intoxicating, but it is an illusion. It is no more helpful or sustainable than my attempt to scoot my way down the Dragon's Tail. 🐉



Diane Martinez is a certified holistic life coach based in Sandy Springs. She offers virtual and live one-on-one life coaching and small group classes on Zoom.

Follow her on Instagram @lifecoachmartinez and ConsciousCreatingLifeCoaching.com.

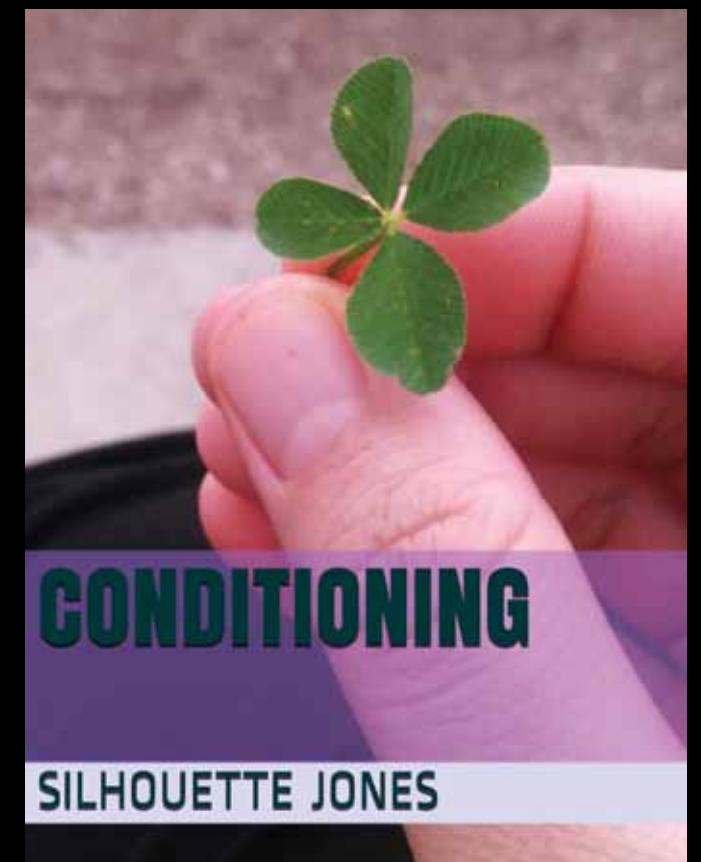


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