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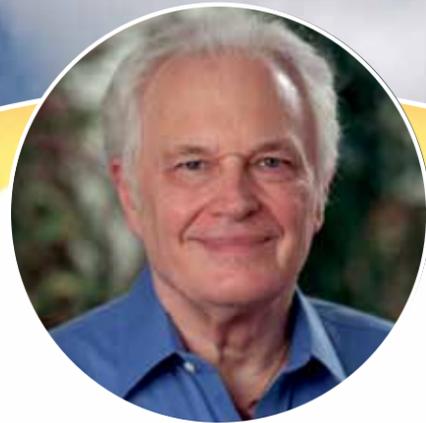
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18

INTEGRATIVE WOMEN'S WELLNESS

DEPARTMENTS

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------|----|-------------------------|
| 10 | atlanta briefs | 30 | wise words |
| 12 | business spotlight | 33 | green living |
| 15 | conscious eating | 34 | calendar |
| 18 | healing ways | 36 | community directory |
| 26 | fit body | 38 | walking each other home |
| 28 | yoga | | |

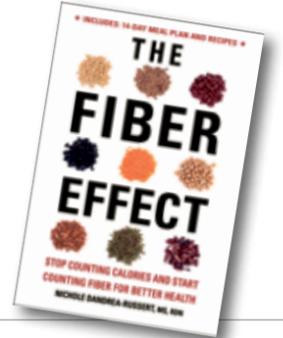
Contents



12
GENEXA:
MEETING THE
DEMAND FOR
CLEANER
MEDICINES

15

OPTIMIZING
GUT HEALTH
THROUGH
PREBIOTICS AND
PROBIOTICS



24
EXFOLIATION
REVEALED

28

THE EAGLE
POSE AND THE
MYTHOLOGY OF
GARUDASANA



金継ぎ



38
KEEP
DREAMING



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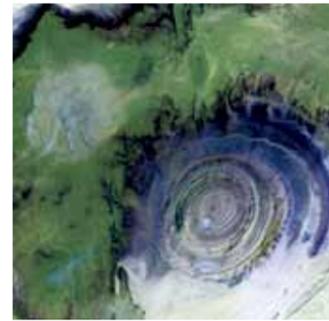
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REWIND: ATLANTA CSA DIRECTORY

Get your produce straight from the source!

From April 2020, our listing of Atlanta area Community-Supported Agriculture programs, sponsored by Nuts 'n Berries.

One of our Top 10 reads from 2020!

bit.ly/CSA-2020

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INDEX OF DISPLAY ADVERTISERS

A Wonderful Approach.....	13	Mindy Strich.....	17
Atlanta Dental Wellness.....	03	MOON Organics.....	25
Cassie Gaub.....	17	Natural Awakenings Corporate.....	37
Celestial Azul.....	06	Natural Awakenings Singles.....	09
Center for Spiritual Awareness.....	20	Naturally Healthy.....	19
DawnCarrie.....	17	Parker University.....	14
Dragon Rises College.....	25	Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore.....	11
Elohee.....	20	Ready for Reboot.....	31
Forever & A Day.....	19	Rose Dental.....	40
Georgia Eye Center.....	12	Sevananda.....	15
Heal Center.....	27	Share International.....	31
Healworks.....	04	StrayFit.....	26
Infinity Floating.....	21	Tammy Billups.....	28
Inga's Skin & Body Care.....	13	Tassili's Raw Reality Café.....	15, 39
KnowWeWell.....	32	USA CBD Expo.....	02
LaVida Massage.....	17, 28	Vibrate Higher.....	17, 28
Linda Minnick Consulting.....	17	VitaLife Center.....	20
Lisa Watson.....	17	Writing Doctor.....	13

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CORRECTION: In our April issue article "Atlanta Yoga Studios Top Georgia's Best of Year List," the name of evolution yoga, an Atlanta-based yoga studio, was misspelled.

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 yoga editor **Sheila Ewers**
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 copy editor **Patricia Staino**
 writer **Noah Chen**
 design & production **Steffi K. Kern**
 website **Nick Bruckman**
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CONTACT US

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ADVERTISING

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NATIONAL TEAM

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

Natural Awakenings Publishing Corporation
 4851 Tamiami Trail N., Ste. 200
 Naples, FL 34103
 Ph: 239-434-9392
NaturalAwakeningsMag.com

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Women's Month

Did you know:

- One in three women is diagnosed with cancer over their lifetime, but, overall, cancer death rates have declined by 1.4% each year for the last 15 years.
- One in three American women die of heart disease, but they are often misdiagnosed since their symptoms tend to be different from men's.
- 80% of those suffering from autoimmune disorders—including fibromyalgia, lupus, celiac disease, Type 1 diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis—are women?

In our feature story this month, "Integrative Women's Wellness," on page 18, you'll find an illuminating overview of the current state of women's health issues. The article doesn't just

discuss symptoms; it reveals helpful new research, hopeful new treatment advances and wise preventative strategies. It's a must-read if you are a woman or if you are related to one!

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

We also dig deeper into the complex interrelationship between hormones, stress and environmental toxins in my interview with Martin Van Lear, MSN, FNP-C, titled "Women's Wellness: New Tools for More Challenging Times" on page 23. Owner of Tree of Light Health, LLC, Martin is always a wellspring of cutting-edge information, and this discussion was especially enlightening and practical. I'm ordering a new supplement myself because of it!

Have you ever been told that hormone replacement therapy (HRT) increases the risk of cancer in women? The 2002 study that originated that perception has been superseded by numerous additional studies that tested HRT using *bio-identical hormones*—hormones that are made from plant estrogens and are chemically identical to those our bodies produce naturally.

Continued on page 35

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USA CBD EXPO IN ATLANTA JUNE 11-13

The USA CBD Expo lands in Atlanta at the Georgia World Congress Center from June 11 to 13. It is a trade and consumer show that runs from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day. However, all of the Friday hours and the Saturday hours between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. are open only to industry attendees. Consumers can attend on Saturday starting at 2 p.m., and both industry and general public can attend on Sunday.

USA CBD Expo, which produced three CBD events in Miami, Las Vegas and Medellin prior to shutting down due to the pandemic, expects to host 300-plus vendors, 50-plus speakers and as many as 10,000 attendees. The cost of two-day general admission tickets for consumers is \$20.

Among the many speakers are two from Atlanta: Brandé Elise, chief communications officer of Unoia, an Atlanta company that makes CBD-infused honey and agave, and Dr. Joe Esposito, founder of Health Plus Wellness, a chiropractic practice with three offices in the Atlanta metro area.

"We are excited to be back," says Nicole Beiner, marketing director at USA CBD Expo. "The amazing feedback we've received from previous attendees motivates us to keep providing a unique platform for thousands of brands to network and push this industry forward."

For more information: USACBDExpo.com/Atlanta.



(Photos: Andy Rance, Luminary Visuals)

Art of Living Retreat Center Reopens

The Art of Living Retreat Center (AOLRC), situated on 380 acres on a mountaintop in Boone, North Carolina, reopened on April 15 with its signature meditation programs and Ayurveda and R&R retreats.

AOLRC offers three meditation programs. The Happiness Retreat is offered twice a week and teaches participants the *sudarshan kriya*, "a powerful breathing technique proven to reduce stress, bolster immunity, relieve anxiety and much more," according to the website description. The Meditation Retreat is offered twice a month, and The Silent Meditation Retreat is offered once a month.

In addition to its own programs, AOLRC hosts a wide variety of third-party retreats.

From August 20 to 22, Iyanla Vanzant, known for her work on *Iyanla Fix My Life* on the Oprah Winfrey Network,

will lead a Fix Your Life Weekend workshop, teaching the skills and tools needed for people to become the best versions of themselves. The Wild Awakenings workshop from October 1 to 3 will be led by best-selling authors Cheryl Strayed and Roda Ahmed. Aspiring writers will enjoy a new program that explores the stories they long to tell while learning how to do so with clarity, courage, consciousness and depth.

"We look forward to welcoming guests back to Art of Living Retreat Center and introducing both new and past guests to our diverse wellness retreats, special guest speaker events and more, all set against an inspiring and serene mountain background," says Venkat Srinivasan, AOLRC's director of operations.

For more information: ArtOfLivingRetreatCenter.org



Group meditation (Photo: Katie Basile)



Aerial view of the Art of Living Retreat Center (Photo: Andrew Keaveney)

Wonderful Wizards of Raw Adds Sunday to Festival

The Wonderful Wizards of Raw, an annual celebration of raw food that includes vendors, speakers, entertainment and a raw chef competition, will take place June 4 through June 6.

Produced by Tassili's Raw Reality Café, a vegan restaurant in the West End, this year's festival theme is "The Divine Family," and the kickoff to the weekend starts at 5 p.m. at Cascade Springs Nature Preserve. It will include a nature walk, libations, and more.

The main event will be held in the backyard of Tassili's Raw Reality Café at 1059 Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard. Saturday hours are from 1 to 8 p.m. and Sunday hours are from 2 to 7 p.m. This year's event is the festival's ninth, and it is

Tassili Maat (Photo: Hakim Wilson)

the first year that it extends into Sunday. While there were Sunday elements to the weekend in the past, those elements did not include raw food vendors. Given the addition, festival managers anticipate twice the number of raw vendors signing up to participate.

"Our vision for 2021 and beyond is to transform the Wonderful Wizards of Raw from a backyard event into a full-fledged community festival," says Tassili Ma'at, founder and owner of the café. "We have moved the Ancestor's Commemoration to Friday evening at the Cascade Nature Preserve to start the Festival off with a meaningful vibration."

For more information: bit.ly/WWR-2021

Disclosure: Natural Awakenings is a media sponsor of *The Wonderful Wizards of Raw*.

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GENEXA

Meeting the Demand for Cleaner Medicines

by Noah Chen



Max Spielberg and David Johnson (Photos courtesy of Genexa, Inc.)



When someone takes Tylenol for a headache, they're taking more than just acetaminophen, Tylenol's active ingredient. A Harvard research team found that the average over-the-counter medicine contains nine inactive ingredients, though some have as many as 35.

It wasn't until longtime friends Max Spielberg and David Johnson both started families that they became aware of how many extra ingredients are included in pharmaceuticals and the problems they can cause.

"We were really looking to do something that had some meaning and could make the world a better place," says Spielberg. "We saw that most ingredients being used in over-the-counter medicines were basically dirty ingredients."

Spielberg mentions filler substances like talc—a combination of magnesium, silicon and oxygen—that have been linked to cancer growth with continued exposure over time. Other ingredients, such as synthetic dyes, have been known to cause allergic reactions, making certain medicines inaccessible to an unfortunate few.

Johnson says this awareness led Spielberg and he to get together to "push forward and make a difference in a space that had been lacking change." The result of their efforts is Genexa, a clean medicine company that manufactures over-the-counter pharmaceuticals without problematic filler ingredients.

Last year, they moved the company to Atlanta from California. "I've always loved this side of the country," says Johnson. "We saw Atlanta as a place of great diversity and a place with great companies to hire from."

Getting started, their only problem, according to Johnson, was "we didn't know what we were doing." Neither he nor Spielberg had a background in medicine, so it took them a while to find partners willing to invest in the research and creation of clean medicine. But once they were able to explain their business pitch to the right people, it became a little easier.

"Who wouldn't choose beetroot extract over Red Dye No. 40?" says Johnson. "The price is competitive, and the product is cleaner."

With their funding and development secured, Genexa quickly grew with the help of micro-influencers. "These are the moms and dads, not necessarily big-name influencers, but people who are very passionate about what we are doing," says Johnson.

After finding success in mom-and-pop shops and with the help of micro-influencers, Genexa expanded into larger retail outlets while maintaining a connection to the community centers that gave them their start. "I'm hoping they get through this," says Spielberg, noting the asymmetrical impact the COVID pandemic has had on privately owned stores. "They've always been an important force in the pharmacy space and the health and wellness space of building a community."

Genexa has grown more than 100% every year since it was founded in 2017; the brand can now be found in more than 45,000 locations across the country.

Part of Genexa's growth is due to the fact that, for some, clean medicine is the best option available to them. Spielberg says the most vocal feedback they receive comes from those who take Genexa products because they need the cleaner ingredients.

"With my disability comes so many medical complexities," says Michaela Davert, a 21-year-old born with osteogenesis imperfecta, a genetic disorder that causes a person's bones to break easily. "By making small steps like taking Genexa instead of Tylenol, I can give my body the best chance of thriving," she says.

While Johnson and Spielberg are honored to provide clean pharmaceuticals to those who would face much tougher choices otherwise, they're also glad they can serve the growing number of savvy

consumers who place a premium on clean and organic products.

"There's been a huge shift when it comes to food and beverages, makeup and pharmaceuticals," says Johnson. Ultimately, "consumer smarts" are driving the change, and it's been pushing larger drug companies to acquire other clean startups.

Johnson and Spielberg hopeful for the future. "We're looking to take on the top products in every category of over-the-counter medicine," says Johnson, laying out Genexa's plans for 2021 and beyond.

"We were founded to do something good for the world, and that's what drives us every day," says Spielberg. "The future of Genexa is to continue to make clean medicines and the best class of products—and to continue doing what we're doing now."

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Optimizing Gut Health Through Prebiotics and Probiotics

by Nichole Dandrea-Russert

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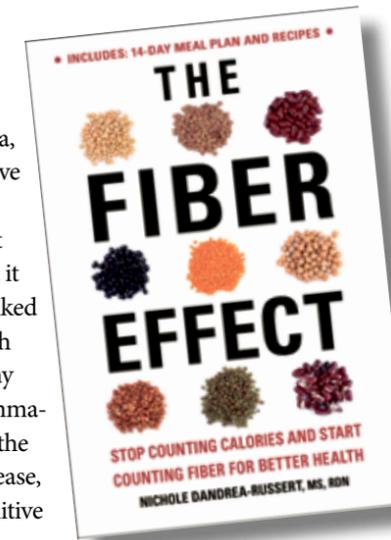
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If you've been paying attention to the media, more than likely you've heard the news that gut health plays an important role in overall health, and it might even be directly linked to mental health. Research studies show that a healthy gut might decrease inflammation, which can decrease the risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and cognitive decline. The gut has also been named "the second brain" due to its signaling pathways to the brain and its impact on brain health. The gut affects every part of our bodies, from digestion to the immune system to the brain.

Your body is home to trillions of bacteria. In fact, the microbes in your body outnumber your cells 10 to one. Microbes might affect how you store fat, how your body balances blood sugar, how hunger hormones are regulated and how you respond to viruses and bacteria. Good bacteria can help to regulate mood neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, dopamine and GABA. Because the gut can play a large role in overall health and communicates with the nervous system, an imbalance of gut bacteria can disrupt the gut and its overall physical and mental health.

Unfortunately, many factors can disrupt our gut microbiota. Some examples are diet, physical environment, stress and antibiotics. Here's the good news! Even a lifetime of unhealthy eating is fixable, at least as far as your gut is concerned. Your body can create new gut microbiota in as few as 24 hours just by changing what you eat. What you eat determines which bacteria are able to thrive



in your gut. Research tells us that good bacteria get stronger when fed colorful, fibrous, plant-based foods. A 2014 study found that vegetables, fruit and whole grains fed good bacteria while meat, dairy, eggs and processed food fostered an unbalanced gut microbiota.

So, how to create a healthy gut? Think

fiber, prebiotics, probiotics and nutrient-dense foods—typically, plants. Additionally, avoid things that can disrupt your gut balance: acidic foods including meat, dairy, eggs, sugar, alcohol and processed foods, as well as antibiotics and a toxic environment rife with plastics, pollution and pesticides. Red meat, high-fat dairy products and fried foods all reduce the growth of healthy bacteria and enhance the growth of bacteria linked to chronic disease.

In other words, getting enough fiber is a key component in keeping the gut healthy, as well as consuming prebiotic and probiotic-rich foods daily. Prebiotics and probiotics help to balance your gut microbiota and improve overall health.

Prebiotics

Prebiotics are non-digestible carbohydrates that fuel healthy gut bacteria and help support a healthy microbiota balance. Basically, prebiotics are food for beneficial bacteria that live in or on us. Since your body cannot completely break down prebiotics, they pass through your digestive system to the colon, where they are fermented by your gut mi-

croflora. This fermentation process feeds the friendly bacteria in your gut, helping them to produce essential nutrients, including short-chain fatty acids—such as butyrate, acetate and propionate—which nourish the digestive system. The fermentation process also helps improve mineral absorption, production of vitamin K and overall health.

By feeding healthy bacteria in our gut, prebiotics might help:

- support digestion
- reduce the risk of autoimmune disease or decrease symptoms associated with it
- reduce the risk of gut infections
- support the immune system
- reduce allergy symptoms
- reduce eczema symptoms
- reduce inflammation
- decrease cholesterol
- balance metabolism
- support bone health
- balance hormones
- boost mood
- relieve stress and anxiety
- aid in weight loss or management

Prebiotics and probiotics work synergistically. While prebiotics are non-digestible foods for our gut, probiotics are live microorganisms that feed on prebiotics. Prebiotics and probiotics work together, keeping the gut healthy and communicating with other systems keeping our whole body healthy and mind clear.

Foods that are high in prebiotics include dandelion, asparagus, bananas, apples, chicory root, Jerusalem artichokes, leeks, garlic, onion, jicama, millet, barley, oats, wheat bran, cocoa, flaxseeds, sweet potatoes,



seaweed and more. There is not a specific recommendation for adequate intake of prebiotics. Therefore, a diet that includes a diverse variety of high-fiber fruits and vegetables has the most potential for obtaining adequate prebiotics.

Probiotics

The International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics defines probiotics as “live microorganisms that, when administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host.”

Colonized in the gut, probiotics can help inhibit the growth of pathogens, enhance mineral absorption, synthesize vitamins, reinforce the gut barrier, increase enzyme activity and neutralize toxins. They might help keep you healthy by:

- Decreasing the number of bacteria in your gut that can cause infections or inflammation
- Stabilizing the digestive tract's barriers against unwanted bacteria or producing substances that hinder their growth
- Replacing the body's “good” bacteria that have been lost, for example, when you take antibiotics
- Restoring the body's microbiome balance, which then helps to keep your body functioning properly

Where Are Probiotics Found?

Probiotics are found naturally in our intestines. It is estimated that 500 to 1000 different bacterial strains live in the human gut. A lack of diversity in probiotic strains has been linked to obesity, digestive issues and many other health issues.

Fermented foods, such as miso, tempeh, sauerkraut, kimchi, pickles, olives and plant-based yogurt and kefir, might contain probiotics. Fermentation is a natural process through which microorganisms like yeast and bacteria convert complex molecules like starch and sugar into alcohol or acids. Through fermentation, beneficial bacteria such as probiotics are formed. Still, the final food product does not always contain probiotics. Pasteurizing and cooking fermented foods can destroy healthy probiotics. For example, some sauerkraut is pasteurized

before landing on grocery store shelves. These foods will still be nutritious and have fiber, so don't disregard them. Just know that you will not get the probiotic benefit. Look for the terms “live cultures,” “unpasteurized” or “raw” to ensure live probiotics are in the product. Tempeh is also cultured; however, since it's important to cook tempeh before consuming it, probiotics are no longer present when we consume it. However, tempeh is one of the most nutrient-dense foods, so I still highly recommend it!

Some probiotic supplements contain many strains of probiotics, but more is not always better. Each strain has different functions and might or might not be what you need. There are strains specific for gastrointestinal health, immune function, cognitive function and more. Research is still needed and emerging on the many functions of the various strains and species of probiotics. Most healthy people tolerate probiotic supplements without any issues, but immuno-compromised and critically ill individuals might not tolerate them. Infections have been seen in those with a weakened immune system.

If you are considering a probiotic, start small. High doses—in quantity and in the number of different strains—can potentially create gastrointestinal upset. Just like increasing fiber in your diet, start with lower quantities of probiotics. Probiotic supplements are not regulated, so when you're choosing one, look for good manufacturing practices or third-party verification from USP, NSF International or ConsumerLab.com. Doing so can help you ensure that the product was properly manufactured, contains the ingredients listed on the label, and does not contain harmful levels of contaminants.

Personally, I don't recommend probiotic supplements in my practice since there are so many species, and we really don't know if the species in the supplement is what's needed. Instead, I recommend whole, plant-based foods, organic whenever possible, and daily consumption of fermented foods or foods with probiotics.

Putting It Into Practice

Synbiotics bring prebiotics and probiotics together, either in food or supplemental form.

It makes sense, since they work together, that they would be consumed together for optimal health. For healthy individuals, I recommend optimizing gut health naturally through whole plant-based foods. That means following these recommendations:

- Eat 30–40 grams of fiber a day from a variety of plant-based foods, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Fiber is essential for gut health. Choose organic whenever possible.
- Incorporate a variety of prebiotic foods daily. For example, cook with garlic, add onion to a sandwich, include asparagus in your stir fry or eat oatmeal in the morning.
- Add 1–2 tablespoons of a probiotic food to your diet daily. You can add kimchi to avocado toast, add sauerkraut to a sandwich, make a miso sauce or salad dressing to use throughout the week or snack on probiotic-rich coconut yogurt daily, for example.
- Drink plenty of water.

Things that interfere with good gut health include:

- sugar
- alcohol
- animal products (dairy, meat, eggs)
- processed foods
- fried foods
- stress
- environmental toxins, such as plastics, pollution, and pesticides

For individuals interested in preventing or treating conditions such as Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome or ulcerative colitis, please check with your physician or dietitian nutritionist as there might be specific strains that can help. 🌱



A 25-year registered dietitian nutritionist with a focus on plant-based lifestyles, Atlanta Nichole Dandrea-Russert, MS, RDN, has been featured

in Yoga Journal, Veg News and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Visit PurelyPlanted.com, her plant-based wellness blog.

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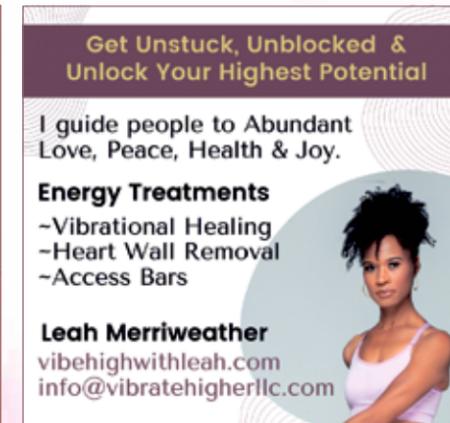


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INTEGRATIVE WOMEN'S WELLNESS

Five Top Health Concerns and What to Do

by Ronica O'Hara

Anyone walking into a U.S. hospital today will notice something that was inconceivable 50 years ago—one in three practicing physicians is a woman, and among physicians under age 35, it's three in five. That compares to one in 14 in 1970. For women needing health care, that fact can change everything. "Research says that female physicians provide better care to female patients than male physicians do," says Harvard Medical School Associate Professor Alice Domar, Ph.D., a pioneer in women's mind-body medicine. "They are more likely to listen carefully and take complaints seriously."

That's just one factor in how health care is improving for women. Only three decades ago, women were simply considered "small men" in medical research and rarely included as subjects in clinical studies. Today, after a 1993 federal mandate ensured their inclusion, it's been well established that women metabolize drugs differently than men, respond to health threats with a more robust immune system and are more likely to experience side effects. These findings have helped spur major changes for women in standards, dosages, medications and procedures—resulting in fewer cancer deaths, better treatment of autoimmune disorders and more nuanced cardiac care strategies. Although much has improved about women's health, much more remains to be done.

Cancer

About one in three women is diagnosed with cancer in the course of a lifetime, and they have better survival rates than men, of which one in two receives that diagnosis. Between 2001 and 2017, the overall cancer death rate for women declined by 1.4 percent each year as diagnoses and treatments became more refined and targeted. The number one cancer killer for women is lung cancer, although 19 percent diagnosed have never smoked. The next most deadly are cancers of the breast, colon/rectum, pancreas and ovaries.

Breast cancer deaths have dropped by 40 percent since 1989,

thanks to greater awareness, early detection and better treatments. "Women learned from the AIDS crisis that making noise gets results," says Domar. "Look at how far breast cancer research and treatment has come in the past 10 to 20 years, how powerful Breast Cancer Awareness Month is, and that everyone recognizes that pink ribbon."

Common symptoms: Bowel changes, lingering sores, fatigue, lumps, unusual discharge, difficulty digesting or swallowing, nagging cough or hoarseness, belly or back pain.

New research: An international research team has identified a direct molecular link between meat and dairy diets and the development of antibodies in the blood that increases the chances of developing cancer.

Medical advances: Painful, invasive biopsies may become a thing of the past. Mayo Clinic researchers have developed a simple blood test that detects more than 50 types of cancer, as well as their location within the body, with a high degree of accuracy, and the City of Hope Cancer Center, in Los Angeles, has developed a urine test that analyzes cell-free fragments of DNA to detect cancer.

Preventive strategies: Vitamin D supplementation lowers the risk of mortality across all cancers, German researchers found, estimating that if all Germans older than 50 took such supplements, up to 30,000 cancer deaths per year might be avoided. A 10-year study found that people between 55 and 74 that took a low-dose

aspirin at least three times each week lowered their risk of all types of cancer by 15 percent and overall mortality by 19 percent.

Heart Disease

One in three American women die from heart disease, more than all cancers combined. "Unfortunately, awareness that heart disease can and does happen to women remains low, and this results in delay of care," says cardiologist Nicole Harkin of Whole Heart Cardiology, in San Francisco. "Women tend to seek medical care later in the course of their heart attack and with more risk factors, resulting in poorer outcomes, and they are more likely than men to die of their first heart attack."

Women have different symptoms of heart disease than men, are often misdiagnosed and have a 20 percent greater risk of dying within five years of a heart attack. Pregnant women that develop hypertension are two to five times more likely to later develop cardiovascular disease.

Common symptoms: Heart pressure, fatigue, breathlessness and pain between the shoulder blades.

New research: Eating more than seven servings per day of refined grains like croissants and white bread increased the risk of heart disease by 33 percent and stroke by 47 percent, concluded a study in *The British Medical Journal*. In a Stanford study, participants that ate plant-based meat for eight weeks had improved markers of heart health, lower LDL levels and lost two pounds compared to those eating meat.

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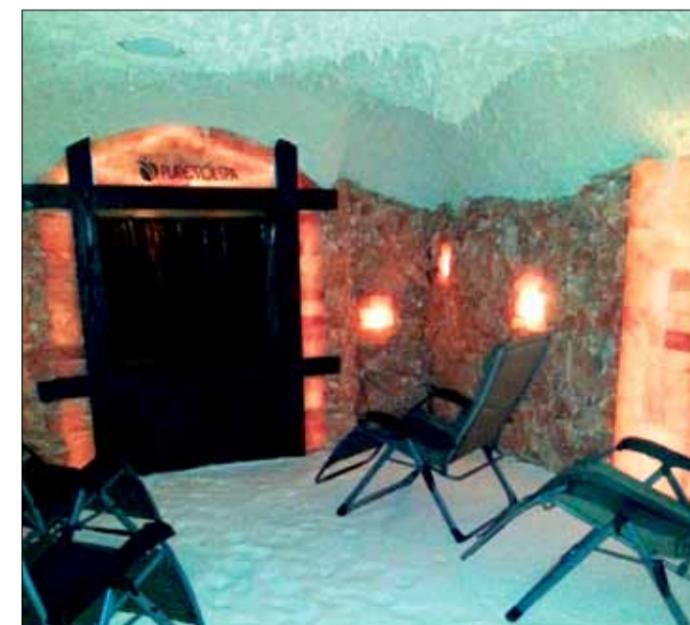
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Medical advance: To successfully fix a floppy mitral valve that's hampering blood flow in the heart, doctors can guide a catheter up a patient's leg vein and staple the troubled parts of the valve with a tiny clip, a safer and less invasive procedure than open-heart surgery.

Preventive strategies: Eating nuts several times a week lowers by 30 to 50 percent the risk of heart attacks, sudden cardiac death and cardiovascular disease, four large cohort studies have shown. Older women with high fitness levels have one quarter the risk of dying from heart disease as women that are out of shape, report Spanish researchers.

Autoimmune Diseases

The prevalence of autoimmune diseases has grown by one half in two decades, even as medications and targeted therapies have kept more patients active and out of wheelchairs. "Where it used to be the norm for many physicians to consider women with some autoimmune illnesses to be neurotic, that approach is now being recognized as being abusive and unacceptable. This is a critical step towards recovery," says chronic fatigue expert Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic!*

About 80 percent of the 23 million Americans that suffer from debilitating autoimmune diseases are women, and those conditions tend to develop during childbearing years. The eighth-leading cause of death among women, these illnesses shorten lifespan by an average of eight years. The 80-plus diseases, including fibromyalgia, lupus, celiac disease, Type 1 diabetes, psoriasis and rheumatoid arthritis, are linked to genetics, environmental triggers, some medications, obesity, injuries and stress.

Common symptoms: These vary widely, but may include achy muscles, fatigue, recurring low-grade fever, joint pain and swelling, skin problems, abdominal pain and swelling, hair loss, swollen glands and tingling in hands and feet.

New research: Eating significantly fewer foods containing the amino acid methionine, found at high levels in meat, fish, dairy and eggs, could slow the onset and progression of autoimmune disorders such as multiple sclerosis in high-risk individuals, reports a study in *Cell Metabolism*.

Medical advance: Evidence is mounting that low doses of naltrexone, a substance-abuse treatment drug, can treat conditions like lupus, Crohn's disease and rheumatoid arthritis by normalizing the immune system and relieving pain with few side effects. "It costs only about 70 cents a day, is made by compounding pharmacists and is remarkably beneficial for a host of autoimmune conditions," says Teitelbaum.

Preventive strategy: To fight inflammation, take a daily turmeric or curcumin supplement that includes piperine (black pepper) for better absorption. A University of Houston meta-study in *Nutrients* found that curcumin supplements improved symptoms in 14 osteoarthritis, two ulcerative colitis and eight Type 2 diabetes studies.

Hormonal Imbalances

The past 20 years has seen significant improvements in the studies and treatments of female hormonal issues. "There are now treatment options that allow women to transition into menopause, options for prevention of osteoporosis and momentous changes in fertility," says Stephanie Seitz, a naturopathic family physician in Scottsdale, Arizona. At the same time, she adds, "I have seen environmental toxins rising in my female population. I see young girls coming in with polycystic ovary syndrome, early menarche and painful menstrual cramping; women having trouble getting pregnant for unknown reasons; the rise of fibroids, premature ovarian insufficiency and endometriosis."

Hormones are the body's chemical messengers, regulating processes ranging from hunger to blood pressure to mood and playing a key role in reproduction. They have come under assault from endocrine disruptors, thousands of largely unregulated per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, abbreviated PFAS. These "forever chemicals" are found in everything from plastics to cushions to canned foods, and are in the blood of 98 percent of Americans. Studies have linked them to girls experiencing puberty one year earlier than 40 years ago; to rising cases of infertility, miscarriages and low birth weight; to menopause occurring two to four years earlier; and to obesity, polycystic ovarian syndrome, endometriosis and breast cancer.

Common symptoms: Because hormones regulate all of the body's processes, symptoms of imbalance run the gamut and may

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include fatigue, weakness, erratic menstrual cycles and weight gain or loss.

New research: Early menstruation increases the likelihood of hot flashes and night sweats decades later at menopause, according to a University of Queensland study. Eating five teaspoons of extra-virgin olive oil daily reduced women's moderate to severe menstrual cramps by 83 percent in two months, Iranian researchers found.

Medical advance: A major study of 9,000 postmenopausal women with hormone-sensitive breast cancer showed 94 percent that received hormonal therapy, but not chemotherapy, did not have recurrences.

Preventive strategies: To avoid toxic chemicals, buy organics; replace plastic kitchen containers with glass; replace Teflon pans with ceramic or cast-iron; use chemical-free cosmetics and shampoos; nix air fresheners and chemical cleaners; and check out food and care products at the Environmental Working Group (ewg.org). To help detox the body, consider working with a naturopathic doctor to develop a program that may include cleansing foods, herbs, saunas, elimination diets and chelators such as activated charcoal and algae.

Depression

Women are twice as likely as men to develop depression, with one in four having a major episode at some point in life, yet fewer than half seek treatment. "Many women are too busy caring for others and feel guilty about their depression, fearing it could get in the way of their caregiving goals," says New York psychoanalyst Claudia Luiz. "Many have the fantasy that if they open that door and allow themselves to focus on their feelings, they won't be able to keep going."

Depression occurs most frequently in women ages 25 to 44, and one in five teenage girls reports having had a major depressive episode, a number that has exploded due to social media use. Psychotherapy is effective for 62 percent of adults with depression, antidepressants work for 54 percent and combining the two is helpful for 72 percent.

Common symptoms: Sadness, anxiety, flat feeling, loss of motivation or feelings of pleasure, change of eating or sleeping patterns, low energy, difficulty concentrating or headaches.

New research: Sleeping irregular hours, doing night shifts and working for more than nine hours a day have been shown to put women at higher risk of depression, while eating more dietary fiber in produce, grains and legumes significantly lowers this risk.

Medical advances: For the estimated one in four people with depression that doesn't respond to medication or therapy, emerging approaches offer fresh hope. Low doses of the anesthetic drug ketamine lifted the depression of 70 percent of hard-to-treat subjects by targeting specific serotonin receptors, Swedish researchers report. Transcranial magnetic stimulation, which uses magnetic pulses to stimulate parts of the prefrontal cortex, lifts symptoms for 50 to 60 percent of subjects, studies show.

Preventive strategies: Eating at least two servings a week of wild-caught, oily fish or a daily 1,000-to-2,000-milligram fish oil supplement with a 60-to-40 EPA to DHA ratio has been shown to be effective for symptoms of depression, bipolar disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and postpartum depression. Taking a brisk daily walk in nature with a friend or dog lowers four factors linked to depression: a "nature deficit", physical inactivity, low vitamin-D levels and isolation. 🌿

Natural health writer Ronica O'Hara can be reached at OHaraRonica@gmail.com.

WOMEN'S WELLNESS

New Tools For More Challenging Times

by Diane Eaton

Within an increasingly toxic world and an increasingly stressful cultural environment, women's health is being tested more than ever. But an emerging understanding of how stress, environmental toxins and hormones intertwine and affect each other is bringing new tools and helpful solutions to light.



Martin Van Lear, MSN, FNP-C (Photo: Laura Davis)

Hormonal Balancing Act

It was not too long ago when most doctors were male, and most insisted that women's menopausal symptoms were all in their heads. Fortunately, a more evolved and informed understanding of the powerful role that hormones play in women's health has begun to emerge.

In his work as an integrative and functional medicine practitioner, Martin Van Lear, MSN, FNP-C, owner of Tree of Light Health Clinic in Decatur, sees a lot of patients suffering from symptoms related to hormonal imbalances.

"We are seeing an increase in estrogen dominance in just about everyone," says Van Lear, referring to the condition of relatively high estrogen levels compared to the levels of progesterone and/or testosterone in the blood. Perimenopause, premenstrual syndrome, enlarged prostate glands, and early heart attacks all have estrogen dominance in common. The condition is widely acknowledged in functional medicine circles.

Too much estrogen can spawn symptoms like fatigue, weight gain, insomnia and mood swings and can increase the risk of cancer. As estrogen levels are brought into balance, women experience fewer of the extreme side effects of PMS, menopause and perimenopause—and often sleep better, too.

Almost all of Van Lear's female patients over the age of 45 have some level of

estrogen dominance, he says.

One of the strongest factors feeding hormonal dysregulation is the prevalence of toxins in the environment—and in our bodies. Test almost anyone's blood, and you'll find harmful toxins such as glyphosate, BPA, and other chemicals that mimic estrogen and inhibit the body's ability to detoxify and remain hormonally balanced. And women aren't the only ones that are affected: Many men struggle with sexual dysfunction, fatigue, weight gain and growth of breast tissue due to toxic overload in the body.

What to Do

To mitigate the damage done by toxins, Van Lear encourages people to detox, not just for hormonal health but for general well-being. "Everyone should be detoxing a little bit every day," he says. Lymphatic work, saunas, massage, gentle movement, coffee enemas, liver and gall bladder cleanses and intermittent fasting—if done correctly—are very helpful.

There's help on the testing front, too. The Dried Urine Test for Comprehensive Hormones (DUTCH) test provides much more data about reproductive and adrenal hormone levels than traditional blood testing, especially as they relate to stress. "The DUTCH test has really given us a better view of what's going on with hormones and what to do about them," says Van Lear. The method tests for several things, including low hormone levels, estrogen dominance, adrenal fatigue, cortisol dysregulation, the need for antioxidants, and the effects of stress on hormones. While it's well-known that hormones are affected by stress, its impact now can be measured by a test.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is another valuable tool to reestablish hormonal balance. But HRT got a bad rap in a 2002 study that reported participants' risk of cancer increased as a result of the therapy. However, subsequent studies found that similar therapies done with bio-identical hormones (BHRT) did not result in increased cancer risk. Quite the contrary: there were many benefits. "Especially for women between the ages of 45 and 65, BHRT gives you anti-aging, cardiovascular, bone density and cancer risk reduction benefits and reduces the risk of chronic illness," says Van Lear. (See more about BHRT in "Bioidentical Hormones For Long-term Health" on page 30.)

Certain supplements can also make a big difference. Van Lear recommends three compounds found in cruciferous vegetables that can help counter the effects of toxins and hormonal imbalance when taken in significant enough doses. The phytonutrient, DIM, its parent molecule, I3C, and calcium D-glucarate are available as nutritional supplements and can help metabolize estrogen, improve hormonal balance and reduce symptoms of estrogen dominance. It's no coincidence that, according to WebMD, D-glucarate is also used to help prevent breast, prostate and colon cancers and to help remove cancer-causing toxins and steroid hormones from the body. 🌿



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EXFOLIATION Revealed

by Susan Gonzalez

Exfoliation is one of the most necessary yet misunderstood concepts in skincare. There's no disputing that it is vital to glowing skin—but the “when,” “why,” and “how” of exfoliation can be confusing.

Exfoliation is the process of removing dead skin cells from the epidermis, the outermost layer of the skin. As new skin cells form in lower layers of the skin, they push up the cells that are above them, and as those reach the surface, they die. Ideally, they fall away, but some want to hang on way too long. This gives skin a dull, drab appearance and can cause clogged pores, acne and other issues. Exfoliation loosens the “glue” that binds skin cells together and removes the lingering cells so the skin can be replenished with new, freshly formed, glowing cells.

Proper exfoliation can have many benefits, such as:

- improved skin texture and moisture retention
- increased hydration
- reduced fine lines and wrinkles
- lightening of dark spots, sun spots or age spots
- softer and smoother skin
- improved conditions such as acne, clogged pores and dry skin
- stimulation of collagen and elastin, the structures that keep skin plump and young-looking

Mechanical Exfoliation

Exfoliation can be accomplished in two ways, either mechanically or chemically.

Mechanical exfoliation is the process of removing the dead skin cells using physical means. For example, the use of scrubbing brushes or the use of crushed shells,

jojoba beads, rice powder or similar substances helps to scrub the dead skin cells away. Let's face it, scrubbing feels good and there is a certain amount of satisfaction that comes from a well-scrubbed face.

However, mechanical exfoliation can have a dark side. Improper abrasion can damage the delicate balance of the skin barrier that protects the skin's function and keeps it healthy. Too much scrubbing or scrubbing with harsh means can actually damage the skin and cause redness, irritation and rebound acne. Flaking skin is usually a cry for help, not exfoliation.

Using a washcloth with a cleanser is a form of mechanical exfoliation, but it is not recommended as it can cause redness, dryness and irritation. Shaving is also a form of mechanical exfoliation.

One professional form of mechanical exfoliation is microdermabrasion. Using either small particles of salt or an aluminum or a diamond-tipped wand hooked up to suction, dead skin can be removed by scraping the dead skin off and sucking it up into a machine. See a licensed esthetician to receive proper treatment with this method.

Tips for best mechanical exfoliation

- Most people should exfoliate just once or twice per week and no more than three times.
- Use gentler, smaller particles in scrubs, such as jojoba beads, instead of large abrasive ones like crushed walnut shells. (Please! Drop the apricot scrub and slowly back away!)
- Use gentle, circular motions without pressure, and let the scrub do the work.
- After use, your skin should feel cleansed but not raw. If the skin shows redness or feels like a sunburn, it's a sure sign to lighten up the technique.
- Those with skin conditions such as rosacea or swollen and painful acne should not use mechanical methods.

Chemical Exfoliation

Chemical exfoliation offers many benefits that mechanical exfoliation does not. While both offer the benefits of softer,

smoother skin and improvement of conditions such as clogged pores and acne, only chemical exfoliation can increase moisture retention, stimulate collagen and elastin production and have a meaningful effect on dark spots.

Chemical exfoliation involves applying substances to the skin that dissolve the “glue” that holds the dead skin on the surface. No scrubbing is needed since the dead skin cells don't stand a chance of hanging on.

The categories of chemical exfoliators are:

Alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs) Forms of AHA that are more recognizable include glycolic acid, lactic acid, mandelic acid, malic acid and tartaric acid. While these are chemicals, they are derived from foods. Mandelic acid, for example, is an almond derivative. AHAs are great exfoliators but must be used with care since they can be strong.

Beta hydroxy acids (BHAs) BHAs include salicylic acid. BHAs are perfect for oily, acne-prone skin. They have soothing properties, are anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial, too. Skin products sometimes contain salicylic acid and an AHA to address more issues.

Polyhydroxy acid (PHAs) PHAs include lactobionic acid and gluconolactone. These new chemical exfoliators are super gentle, so they are great for sensitive skin. They also hydrate dry skin.

Retinoids Types of retinoids include retinol, retinyl palmitate and Retin-A, which is the brand-name version of generic tretinoin. Retin-A is the strongest form of retinoids and is typically available from a dermatologist. Retinoids are vitamin-A derivatives in various strengths and are usually applied only at bedtime.

Enzymes The three most commonly used enzymes are papain, which is a papaya enzyme; bromelain, which is a pineapple enzyme; and pumpkin enzyme. Enzymes are the safest form of chemical exfoliation, although skin irritation is still a possibility. Masks are a great way to use enzymes.

Tips for best chemical exfoliation

Sunscreen is a must! The use of chemical exfoliators makes skin much more susceptible to sun damage. All of the benefits of using an acid will be lost if skin is left unprotected from the sun.

Go slowly! There are many different skincare products that contain acids, such as cleansers, toners, serums, masks and moisturizers. To begin, pick one form of acid in one product and increase the potency over time or add another product after several weeks. It's easy to irritate the skin if products are piled on.

If using pure acids, such as in a serum, apply to skin after toner. Oils block acid absorption, so apply oily products and creams after the acids.

When first using acids, light, mild tingling is normal, but nothing should burn or sting the skin. Any tingling sensation should be no more than a two out of 10 on a zero-to-10 scale. Pain is not the goal.

If you decide to start using a chemical exfoliator, stop using a mechanical one since it is not necessary.

Be sure to monitor your skin. If you develop irritation, address it right away with an additional application of your current moisturizer, by applying a moisturizing mask or by skipping a day or two in your routine to allow skin to balance.

Skin gets “used to” some chemical exfoliants after several months of use, so if the skin is slipping back to its old ways, it might be time to increase the percentage of the serum.

Proper exfoliation is a crucial step in any skincare routine and can be the difference between success and failure in reaching your skincare goals. If you need help choosing the right exfoliant, a licensed esthetician is recommended. ♡



Susan Gonzalez is an Atlanta-based holistic licensed esthetician, author, nurse and owner of MOON Organics, a skincare company providing clean, healthy skincare and personal care products. Reach her on FB, IG and TW at @MoonOrganics or visit MoonOrganics.com.



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Stay Fit with Bodywork Therapy

Enhance Workout Performance and Recovery with Massage

by Marlaina Donato



Therapeutic massage and other bodywork modalities are well-known stress-busters, but they can also hasten recovery after a workout or injury. A little restorative TLC with a bodywork practitioner before or after exercise can combat post-workout soreness and stiffness, maximizing our fitness investments in and out of the gym.

Approaches such as Swedish, deep tissue and sports massages, and myofascial trigger point release therapy can boost both blood and lymphatic circulation, giving soft tissues a vital shot of cellular nutrition. Massage modalities affect biochemical processes and on the deepest level, mitochondria—the cell’s energy-producing engines. Research from 2015 published in the journal *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* shows that massage immediately following injury due to resistance training encourages tissue regeneration.

Tailored Tools

“In the context of exercise, someone who trains three to five times per week at a high intensity will likely have a higher level of fitness. However, the demand placed on the soft tissue structures will equally be high, and may require more treatment to offset this. This may vary from once a week to once a month,” says Andy Stanbury, head of soft tissue therapy at Pure Sports Medicine, a London clinic for sports injuries.

After working with high performance athletes for 15 years, he always asks, “What do I need to add to improve a patient’s fitness or performance?” For a patient that wants to improve fitness by running, “I would want to optimize their range of movement and stimulate the nervous system in readiness to exercise. I may look to use some myofascial release techniques, active release therapy, instrument-assisted soft tissue mobilization or muscle

energy techniques. This would of course take place before the run.” For post-run recovery, Stanbury suggests more relaxing modalities, such as gentle massage, combined with breathwork.

The Fascia Factor

Fascia, a network of connective tissue, wraps the body in protective layers from the most superficial muscle to the deepest organs and plays a central role in flexibility. This complex netting can become stuck due to inactivity, injury or surgery. Keeping it supple is vital for everyone.

Bodywork like myofascial release that targets trigger points—knots of tension—can help to ramp up postoperative and overall injury recovery. “Myofascial release is a technique used to reduce the tension in the fascial membrane. Slowly stretching the fascia will unwind and reduce the pressure on the muscles and nerves, reducing pain and creating range of motion and flexibility,” explains Anthony Hansen, a myofascial release therapist at Therapy on the Gulf, in Naples, Florida.

Hansen, who specializes in a “fast release” technique, emphasizes the importance of a gentle approach. “Trigger points are caused by cellular debris encapsulated by the fascia, so it’s much better to stretch it loose than it is to force it. Normally, it takes about three to five sessions, depending on the condition of the patient, for the fascial system to unwind before the patient will feel relief.”

Active trigger points refer, or radiate, pain elsewhere in the body while latent

points tend to be more localized and are sore when compressed. “From a whole-body perspective and when we put this in the context of fascial planes, restoration of efficient movement is key, particularly post-surgery and when progressing training load,” says Stanbury. “However, this is not just movement of the body (muscles), but movement of blood, lymph and energy.”

A supple, tension-free body helps deter and bounce back from injuries. Regular bodywork, especially Swedish and deep tissue massage, fosters muscle recovery and helps prevent future issues. Self-massage using foam rollers and massage balls or canes can also be very helpful.

Bodywork offers full-spectrum perks, points out Stanbury, including “improved tissue mobility and elasticity, more efficient blood circulation and reduced anxiety and stress. This will, in turn, help promote better sleep, which is, of course, where we recover best.”

Marlaina Donato is a body-mind-spirit author and composer/recording artist. Connect at AutumnEmbersMusic.com.

MODALITIES TO HELP EASE PAIN AND STRAIN

SWEDISH MASSAGE: Gentle, gliding strokes to stimulate circulation, lower blood pressure and reduce muscle tension.

DEEP TISSUE MASSAGE: Specific, focused massage to break up muscle congestion and reduce restrictions.

SPORTS MASSAGE: Offered at many gyms, physical therapy facilities and recreational sports events for recovery and prevention.

MUSCLE ENERGY TECHNIQUES: Stretching and hands-on techniques that enable gentle muscle contraction to improve joint function and lengthen muscles.

MYOFASCIAL RELEASE: Modalities that specifically target trigger points in the muscles and fascia to release adhesions, increase oxygen and reduce pain and tightness include the following:

Active Release Therapy: May be beneficial for chronic pain due to repetitive movements, especially where muscle weakness, numbness or tingling/burning is experienced in the soft tissues.

Instrument Assisted Soft Tissue Mobilization: Also known as the Graston technique, practitioners use an array of hand-held instruments for deep trigger points in the fascia and muscles—beneficial after injuries and conditions such as piriformis, muscle-induced sciatica and back pain.

Myofascial Cupping: A technique that employs cups to create suction on the muscle tissue to move lymph and blood through the area of deep trigger points.

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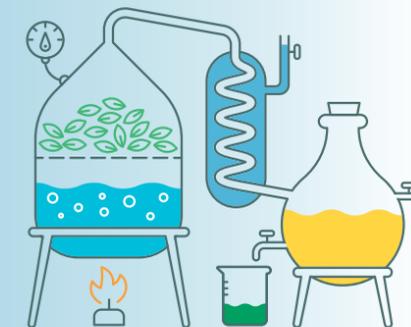
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YOGA

Fly Like an Eagle

The Eagle Pose and the Mythology of Garudasana

by Sheila Ewers

In cultures around the world, the eagle has long been a symbol of strength, vision and perseverance. In Greek mythology, the *Aetos Dios*, a giant eagle, serves as Zeus's constant companion and messenger. In Native American folklore, the eagle flies between heaven and earth, carrying messages from the people to God. In Aztec culture, the sun-god *Hiutzilopochtli* takes the form of an eagle in a well-known prophecy that leads to the settlement of Mexico. And in Norse mythology, the storm god *Thiassi* often appears as an eagle to take in a view of the entire planet. In India, Indonesia and Southeast Asia, tales of the powerful eagle, Garuda, have inspired state symbols, a national airline, peacekeeping forces and even a yoga pose.

According to the *Mahabharata*, one of the primary mythological texts of Hinduism, Garuda emerged from his eggshell with the body of a man and the head and wings of an eagle, more radiant than the sun and larger than all of the *devas*, or gods, in heaven. When Indra, the king of the heavens, and all the other *devas* beheld his bright shining light, they went blind and sent messengers to extol his virtues and to implore him to reduce his brightness so that they would not be burned by his radiance. In humility and obedience, Garuda complied with their request, diminishing his light and size a thousandfold.

Meanwhile, Garuda's mother, Vinata, had lost a wager to her sister, who was the mother of 1000 serpent sons called "the Nagi." She became their prisoner and servant, compelled to do their bidding in all things, and eventually, the diminished Garuda joined her in servitude. One day, having grown tired of obeying the commands of his serpent cousins and eager to free his mother and himself, Garuda asked the Nagi to propose a price for freedom. The Nagi told Garuda that if he could steal the nectar of immortality, *amrita*, from heaven, he and his mother would be set free.

To steal the nectar, Garuda had to fight against the entire army of heavenly guards. He first resumed his full size and radiance, flapping his wings and blinding his opponents with the dust from the earth until they scattered in all directions. When he reached the *amrita*, he found it surrounded on all sides by great flames reaching up to the sky. Garuda made his mouth very large, flew away and swallowed the contents of many rivers to extinguish the flames. Then, confronted by a wheel with razor-sharp edges spinning



very fast to block access to the nectar, he assumed a tiny form and quickly flew between the spokes. He broke open the mechanism that was guarding the *amrita* and rose to the skies, carrying the vessel in his claws.

Eventually, Indra struck a deal with Garuda so that he could take back the nectar of immortality from the serpents, but he allowed Garuda to deliver it first and ransom his mother. As a reward for his selflessness and courage, Garuda then became the vehicle and companion to Vishnu, helping him to preserve the Universe.

The Eagle Pose on the Mat

When we practice *Garudasana* on the yoga mat, we embody the qualities and stories of this great mythical being. The pose involves a shrinking of sorts as we cross our arms and legs and hug everything to the midline, folding the body into a smaller shape than is comfortable, while tenuously balancing on one foot. The philosophy of yoga teaches us that this "shrinking" is part of our human condi-

tion. The soul is unbounded, infinite and as vast as the ocean, but through birth, we take on a limited form and often forget our own magnificence. We learn to play small, as Garuda did, to fit in and please those around us. To gain eternity, we need only remember our true nature. When we heed the call of our higher consciousness, we are freed from the cycle of rebirth just as Garuda's mother is freed from servitude.

In *Garudasana*, entangled in our own limbs, we remember how we have diminished ourselves. Our sight is limited by the tangled arms and hands before us, and our breath is more difficult to fully access. When we release and stand fully expanded and upright, we remind ourselves that it is our nature to be fully open and free from the bonds that restrain us.

Try it yourself and see how it feels!

- From standing Mountain pose, bend your right knee slightly. Lift your left foot off of the mat and cross your left leg over your right. You can allow the toes of the left foot to gently touch the floor to assist with balance, or you can wrap



Photo by 2TPHOTO

your toes behind your lower right calf. Once the legs are fully engaged, bend your right knee more deeply.

- Reach both arms wide with palms facing outward. Then scoop your left arm under your right and nestle the right elbow

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into the crook of the left arm. Press your forearms together with the backs of your hands pressing into each other. If possible, cross your forearms and press your palms together. Lift your elbows to the same height as your shoulders.

- Hold for five to seven breaths. Then untangle the arms and legs and return to Mountain pose. Give yourself a few moments to savor the feeling of spaciousness and release, then repeat on the other side.

For an extra challenge, try shrinking even more:

- When you are fully in Garudasana, exhale and lean your torso forward until you can press your elbows or forearms against the top of your thigh. Hold for five breaths, then inhale and rise. Unwind your arms and legs and remain in mountain pose for a few breaths before repeating on the opposite side. ♣



Photo by 2TPHOTO



Sheila Ewers, ERYT500, YACEP, owns Blue Lotus Yoga in Johns Creek. A former professor of writing and literature, she leads group and private lessons, yoga philosophy workshops, yoga teacher training and retreats. Contact Sheila at Sheila@JohnsCreekYoga.com.

WISE WORDS

Devaki Lindsey Berkson on Bioidentical Hormones for Long-Term Health

by Linda Sechrist

Hormone scholar Dr. Devaki Lindsey Berkson, a nutrition and gut expert as well as a continuing education professor for medical doctors and pharmacists, frequently lectures at conferences to clarify misinformation about hormones, such as the difference between synthetic hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and plant-based bioidentical hormone therapy (BHT).

This peer-reviewed, published researcher is the bestselling author of *Safe Hormones Smart Women and Sexy Brain: How Sizzling Intimacy & Balanced Hormones Prevent Alzheimer's, Cancer, Depression & Divorce* and a breast cancer survivor of 26 years.

Why do you refer to hormones as nature's physiologic internet system?

Hormones send invaluable "email" signals to cells throughout the entire body and brain.

What is the difference between HRT and BHT?

Synthetic hormones are altered by pharmaceutical companies to make them profitable. Bioidentical hormones are



like those made by the body and designed by Mother Nature. I advise tracking hormone levels every decade throughout life to determine which levels help an individual feel their best. Unfortunately, doctors are still being taught that hormones are mainly important for reproductive or sexy things, addressing issues like peri- or postmenopause, andropause, erectile

dysfunction or disease.

How did the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) affect the use of hormones?

Up until 2002, when WHI prematurely stopped one of its hormone study groups which was prescribed a combination of Premarin plus synthetic progesterone, estrogen therapies were the recommended standard of care for menopausal women and the biggest-selling pharmaceuticals in history. Medical journals, research institutions and expert cancer doctors accepted that estrogen was safe and did not increase the risk of breast cancer.

Carried out by the U.S. National Institutes of Health from 2002 to 2008, WHI conducted a series of 40 group studies following the health of 161,809

postmenopausal women. Studies covered various aspects of aging women's health from diet, bone health and nutrients to heart health and the risk of hormone-driven cancers, as well as two randomized trials on hormone therapies. The resulting claims that the HRT combo of Premarin plus synthetic progesterone significantly increased the risks of breast cancer, cardiac events, Alzheimer's disease and stroke alarmed the public and huge numbers of U.S. doctors stopped prescribing hormones.

What has changed?

By 2004, re-analysis of the combo study demonstrated opposite findings, and a 19-year follow-up WHI analysis revealed that estrogen protects against breast cancer while on it and even 10 years after, while progestins do the opposite. Dr. Leon Speroff, professor at the University of Oregon and the physician who authored *Clinical Gynecologic Endocrinology and Infertility*, twice concluded after reviewing every statistical nuance of the WHI, "There continues to be good reason to believe that there are benefits associated with treatment, including improvement of quality of life beyond the relief of hot flashes, maximal protection against osteoporotic fractures, a reduction in colorectal cancers, maintenance of skin elasticity and the possibility of primary prevention of coronary heart disease and Alzheimer's."

Although new science clearly showed that hormones rule body and brain health and are critical for staying healthy, fighting illness long-term rather than short-term and lowering mortality timing by preventing heart attacks and strokes, CEOs of Big Pharma companies that provided the synthetic hormones used in the WHI trials continued to fight hard against BHT formulated by compounding pharmacists. Now these very same CEOs have released a BHT combination of estradiol and progesterone and are writing in peer review studies about how much better and safer it is. Big Pharma intends to be the sole source of supply. They plan to do that by eliminating their competition: compounding pharmacies.

What is your experience with compounding pharmacists?

The FDA purports that compounding pharmacies are dangerous, unregulated and use items that are too complicated to compound. Not true. Compounding pharmacists are skilled professionals at mixing bioidentical hormones to a doctor's prescription. I've successfully been using compounding pharmacies for more than 30 years. A compounding pharmacist should be part of the health team when natural, bioidentical hormones are prescribed. Their knowledge can provide a wealth of experience for doctor and the patient. Furthermore, they provide an invaluable service at manufacturing a safe product that is unique for a particular patient.

Hormones are so critical that even if you're prescribed HRT, it's better than losing out for decades on the hormone signals that keep your body younger and less inflamed. To be without healthy hormone signals is an aging and pro-inflammatory process to the body. In other words, get hormones any way you can. While synthetic is better than nothing, bioidentical trumps synthetic. ♣

DrLindseyBerkson.com offers a podcast archive, blog, newsletter and membership opportunities that include live, monthly, Zoom conversations.

Linda Sechrist is a senior staff writer for Natural Awakenings.

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

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

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

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Hemp-Derived Cannabidiol

A Primer on the Latest CBD Research

by Sandra Yeyati

Ever since the Farm Bill of 2018 legalized the commercial production of hemp, U.S. sales of cannabidiol (CBD) have exploded onto the scene with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of vendors popping up around the country. CBD, a cannabinoid, is abundant in the hemp flower. “By law, hemp is defined as a variety of cannabis plant that has less than 0.3 percent THC, the psychoactive cannabinoid that induces a high,” says Shannon Livingston, a cannabis consultant for Florida Gulf Coast University, in Fort Myers.

Proven Benefits of CBD:

“The enthusiasm for CBD is soaring above the actual scientific evidence,” says Peter Grinspoon, M.D., a leading medical cannabis expert and primary care physician at Massachusetts General Hospital. “What’s known is that it helps with childhood epilepsy, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved a CBD drug for that. It is believed, and there’s good animal data and some human data to suggest, that CBD helps with chronic pain, insomnia and anxiety.”

Anxiety Under Study:

A clinical trial examining a high-CBD, low-THC (the psychoactive component) sublingual custom formulation for patients with moderate to severe anxiety is being conducted by Staci Gruber, Ph.D., director of Marijuana Investigations for Neuroscientific Discovery at McLean Hospital, in Belmont, Massachusetts, and associate professor of psychiatry at Har-



vard Medical School. “In the open label phase of this study, we’ve seen a rather dramatic and precipitous drop in symptoms of anxiety and depression after four weeks of treatment. We’ll see if this holds in the double-blind phase, which is underway now,” she explains.

Entourage Effect:

Gruber notes that this customized formulation is a full-spectrum, whole-plant formula, saying, “You often seem to get a bigger bang for the buck using a full-spectrum or broad-spectrum (whole plant minus THC) product, rather than just a single extracted compound.” The process she’s describing is called the entourage effect—an assumption that all elements of the cannabis plant, working together, are most effective. “I believe there’s a significant role for terpenoids, flavonoids and other cannabinoid constituents of the plant, in addition to the big two (THC and CBD), and I have a grant to look at that very question,” she says.

How to Start CBD:

Experts agree that the best approach is to start low and go slow. “With experimentation, the patient will know what works for them,” Grinspoon says. “When CBD doesn’t work with my patients, the next step is to add a little bit of medical cannabis; it often takes a very little dose to help them with their sleep or their chronic pain.” Medical marijuana has been legalized in 36 states and the District of Columbia.

Route of Administration:

“When you smoke or vape, it’s an almost immediate onset, which is helpful for breakthrough pain, nausea and anything you want to treat immediately, but the effect is very short-lived,” Livingston explains. “For chronic pain, you might take a capsule or the patch that will last six to eight hours. If you want to fall asleep, a sublingual will work. For a skin condition, you might rub an oil on your skin. It’s really about the time of onset, how long you need it to last and what you’re treating.”

Ensuring Quality Control:

“Choose CBD providers that are certified for good manufacturing practices; conduct batch-specific, third-party testing on all of their products; and provide certificates of analysis directly from those labs. These tests can detect the presence of heavy metals, bacterial or microbial life, mycotoxins and pesticides, and also provide cannabinoid potency and terpene profiles,” says Grace Kaucic, senior communications and content manager at Bluebird Botanicals, a CBD company in Louisville, Colorado.

Our Built-In Cannabinoids:

In the mid-1990s, researchers discovered the endocannabinoid system of receptors and neurotransmitters throughout the body, which uses cannabinoids that our own bodies produce. “This system is believed to control homeostasis, the body’s ability to regulate itself and maintain normal functioning,” Grinspoon says, adding that he believes this system will become central to medicine over the next few years as more research is conducted.

Research is Ongoing:

“It’s an incredibly exciting time for cannabis science,” Gruber says. “There’s every reason to be optimistic about the potential of harnessing and exploiting the benefits of cannabis and cannabinoids in ways that may still surprise us, but to be cautiously optimistic. It is not a panacea. It will never be one-size-fits-all.”

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

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

SATURDAY, MAY 1

Pedal the Parks: Brookhaven — May 1-31. Pedal the parks of Brookhaven all month long. More info and to register: BrookhavenBikeAlliance.org/pedal.

Monthly Energy Update — 11-11:30am Shannon Maley uses her intuitive abilities and her knowledge of astrology and guides you through the astrology of the month in a fun, informative and supportive way empowering you to make the most of the energy. More info and to register: WithLoveAndLight.com.

Free First Saturday: Bee-utiful Spring — 11am-12pm. Learn all about the busy bees at the Nature Center and go on a walk looking for pollinator-friendly native plants. Free. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. Registration required: 770-394-3322 or DunwoodyNature.org.

SUNDAY, MAY 2

With the Heart of the Goddess — 11am-1pm. With Lindsay Harrington. Deepen into connection with your heart and nourish your soul through gentle movement, guided meditation, and a self-love inspired ceremony. Santosha Studio, 896 Davis Dr, Atlanta. More info and to register: Santosha-Studio.com.

TUESDAY, MAY 4

Human Design: Strategy — 12-12:30pm. Your strategy is the way you are meant to engage with the world, how to best exchange energy with people, ideas, opportunities. Dive into the 4 different strategies so you can learn how to get what you want without struggle, minimizing wasted energy and negative thoughts. Free. Via Zoom. More info and to register: WithLoveAndLight.com.

THURSDAY, MAY 6

Aromatherapy Foundation Course — Thurs, May 6-Aug 19. 10am-1pm or 6:30-9:30pm. A 50-hr Certificate Course with Roz Zollinger, certified Aromatherapist and Instructor. Learn key elements of this increasingly popular natural therapy. Heal Center, 270 Carpenter Dr NE, Ste 505, Sandy Springs. 404-303-0007. HealCenterAtlanta.com.

SUNDAY, MAY 9

Chatt Mother's Day Special — 12-5pm. Mom's get in free. Bring a picnic, enjoy CNC programs, walk the Wildlife Walk or walk the trails. CNC, 9135 Willetto Rd, Roswell. 770-992-2055. ChattNatureCenter.org.

TUESDAY, MAY 11

Online Wild Woman Moon Meditation — 7-8:30pm. Guided by our Priestess in Residence, Alana Saporiti, explore archetypal, cosmic energy, meditate, journal and craft intentions for the month ahead. \$15. To register: Santosha-Studio.com.

THURSDAY, MAY 13

Online: Tuning In: A Channeling — 12pm. For those who are new to trance channeling, Jamie will allow spirit guides to speak directly through her to you. Spirit guides, Grace and Maitland join us. More info and register: JamieButlerMedium.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 15

Honeybee Hive Inspection — 10am-12pm. 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, MAY 16

(Y)in Tune: Poolside — 7-8:30pm. With Margo Gomes and Amanda Trevelino. Includes yin yoga and vibrational sound therapy to open the meridian channels and create an embodied experience of harmony. Santosha Studio, 896 Davis Dr, Atlanta. More info and to register: Santosha-Studio.com.

MONDAY, MAY 17

Health and Longevity Webinar Series: The Key to Health and Longevity — 7:30-8:30pm. Learn the basic principles for creating health and longevity and slowing the aging process. Includes an introduction to rejuvenation exercises. \$20. Via Zoom. More info: 404-303-0007 or HealCenterAtlanta.com.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19

Online: How to Talk to Your Body — 7-8pm. Join Licensed Unity Teacher, Larry Bergmann, for this powerful healing service. Learn techniques for connecting your mind and body together for healing, empowerment and more. Love offering requested. Visit the calendar listing for Zoom link: UnityAtl.org.

SATURDAY, MAY 22

Arabia Mountain Day Hike — 9am-1pm. Features incredible granite rock outcroppings, wetlands, creeks, pine and oak forests and the remnants of the area's quarrying past. \$15 donation. Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Nature Center, 3787 Klondike Rd, Lithonia. More info: GeorgiaConservancy.org.

Online: What Is Karma & Why We Have It — 11am-1pm. The law of karma exists entirely for our own good. It allows us to make progress in our soul's evolution according to our soul blueprint. Experience a guided group hypnosis to release some of our energy blocks that are for our highest good. You will be guided by your higher self. Free. Via Zoom. AwakenAnanda.com.

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FRIDAY, MAY 14

Poetry Open Mic Night — 7-9pm. With Michael Burke. An evening of splendor with enchanting and thought-provoking spoken word performances from some of Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore's flourishing community of poets. Poets of all ages. Free. On Zoom and in person.

FRIDAY, MAY 14

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, MAY 27

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/vickievanshealing.

TUESDAY, MAY 25

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@ShareInternational.us. Share-International.us/se. Register: Tinyurl.com/56pbyxh4.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26

Online: Evening Prayer — 7-8pm. Join Rev. Jennifer L. Sacks and Unity Atlanta for a monthly time of prayer and guided meditation, as we rest from our daily activities and find renewal for a new day. Love offering requested. Visit the calendar listing for Zoom link: UnityAtl.org.

THURSDAY, JUNE 10

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FRIDAY, JUNE 11

USA CBD EXPO

The nation's largest CBD/hemp event will be at the Georgia World Congress Center June 11-13. 300+ vendors, 50+ speakers, 1000+ products, and all weekend long networking. Get your CBD-related questions answered! See ad on page 2 for 25% off tickets! usacbdexpo.com/Atlanta

ONGOING EVENTS

sundays

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

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

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

One World Spiritual Center Sunday Service — 11am. To watch: 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.

Last Sunday Social — 12:12-3:33pm. Last Sun with Kosmic Brew. Join us and our community of vendors as we share a healing space, engage in meaningful dialogues and create lasting memories. Gallery 992, 992 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd, Atlanta. More info: Hi@KosmicBrew.com or Linktr.ee/KosmicBrew.

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.

Decatur Farmers' Market — Thru Nov 17. 4-7pm. Local farmers, artisanal food makers and crafts. Masks required. First Baptist Church Decatur, 308 Clairmont Ave, Decatur. cfmatl.org/decatur.

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

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

thursdays

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

Twin Hearts Meditation — 7pm. This meditation is an act of service. We use divine energy to bless the planet, our loved ones and every part of our life. With Atlanta Pranic Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: AtlPranicHealing.com.

fridays

Qigong Exercises & Meditations — 12-12:45pm. 1st and 3rd. Led by Master Cheng, who has been teaching in Atlanta since 1976. Free/member, \$8/nonmember. Tai Chi Association, 3079 Midway Rd, Decatur. More info and registration: Tai-Chi-Association.com.

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.

Oakhurst Farmers' Market — Thru Dec 2021. 9am-1pm. Closed Dec 25. Fresh produce, meat, baked treats, and more. Additional offerings include live music and chef demonstrations featuring seasonal recipes. Masks required. Sceptre Brewing Arts, 630 E Lake Dr, Decatur. cfmatl.org/oakhurst.

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.



Continued from page 9

In comparison, the traditional hormones used in HRT are made from synthetic hormones and urine from pregnant horses, believe it or not. Read more about the benefits of BHRT in our Wise Words department on page 30.

As usual, in this issue, we share contributions from some of our illustrious local experts. Our indefatigable yoga editor, Sheila Ewers, immerses us in the myths and inspiring intentions of yoga's Eagle Pose. Nichole Dandrea-Russert shares a full chapter from her new book, *The Fiber Effect*, helping us understand how probiotics and prebiotics help support gut health—now recognized as essential for a strong immune system and as a cornerstone of efforts to fend off chronic illnesses. Susan Gonzalez, owner of MOON Organics, offers her expertise about exfoliation best practices in “Exfoliation Revealed,” and Mindy Strich writes about her discovery that we have the power to “re-right” our histories in “Keep Dreaming.”

Enjoy! Here's to your health, sanity, awakening and fulfillment of your dreams! 🌱



Diane Eaton,
Managing Editor

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To place a classified ad, email your listing to ads@naAtlanta.com. Cost is \$1/word; minimum \$25. Deadline: Fifth of each month for the next month's issue.

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金継ぎ

[kintsugi]

KEEP DREAMING

by Mindy Strich

I grew up in a family where the glass was neither half-full nor half-empty. In the minds of my tribe, the glass was always empty.

Negativity was the norm. Life was hard, and life was unfair. Good things happened to other people. It wasn't wise to expect too much because doing so would only lead to disappointment. The only way up was to either hit the lottery or marry someone rich. I wasn't placing my bets on either one.

When I was in fourth grade, I auditioned for a lead role in my school play, and when I got the part, I was over-the-moon excited. I decided right then that I was going to be a famous actress one day. My mother was happy for me and proud of my accomplishment, but when I told her what I wanted to be when I grew up, she sarcastically commented: "Keep dreaming."

When I look back on it now, my heart hurts. I realize how discouraged that little girl felt and what a burden my parents and the past generations of my Jewish relatives endured. I have nothing but empathy for all of them and a deep respect for the feelings of victimization that cut deep into the veins of my personal history and heritage.

For most of my life, it was easier to see the dark before the light, the broken before

the whole, the bad before the good. I could imagine the worst things happening—the difficulties, the rejections—but it was almost impossible for me to visualize my wildest dreams coming true.

In Japan, there is a custom for repairing broken pottery. It's called *kintsugi*. Instead of hiding the breaks, *kintsugi* emphasizes them.

The pieces are put back together with gold! The "scars" become part of the design. How healing is that? To believe that when we repair the things that have broken we actually create something more unique, more beautiful and more resilient.

I had to decide where I was going to put my trust. What if I could see the beauty in the broken pieces? What if I could believe in the miracles that life had to offer instead of the misery? If I could put my faith in that, it could change the trajectory of my life. I was determined to let go of the part of me that held on to those ancient beliefs of lack and limitation. I was committed to rising above the generations of sorrow and despair. I was going to create a new vision for myself and for my family. In other words I was going to *keep dreaming*.

Sometimes, like the ache of old scars during a rainstorm, those negative voices

come back to visit. And when they do, they serve as reminders of the ancestral patterns I inherited. I know they are part of me. But I also know something my ancestors didn't. I know that I have a choice. I am aware that I can choose a different thought and create a more empowering belief.

Albert Einstein said, "We cannot solve a problem from the same level of consciousness in which it was created." In 2021, I have the privilege of an abundance of information and an education that allows me to live my life from a higher state of consciousness than my mother, my grandmother and my great-grandmother. I have the opportunity to "re-right" my history and break the chain of negative thinking. By setting these wheels in motion, my choices become a catalyst for change, not only for my life, but for the lives of generations to come.

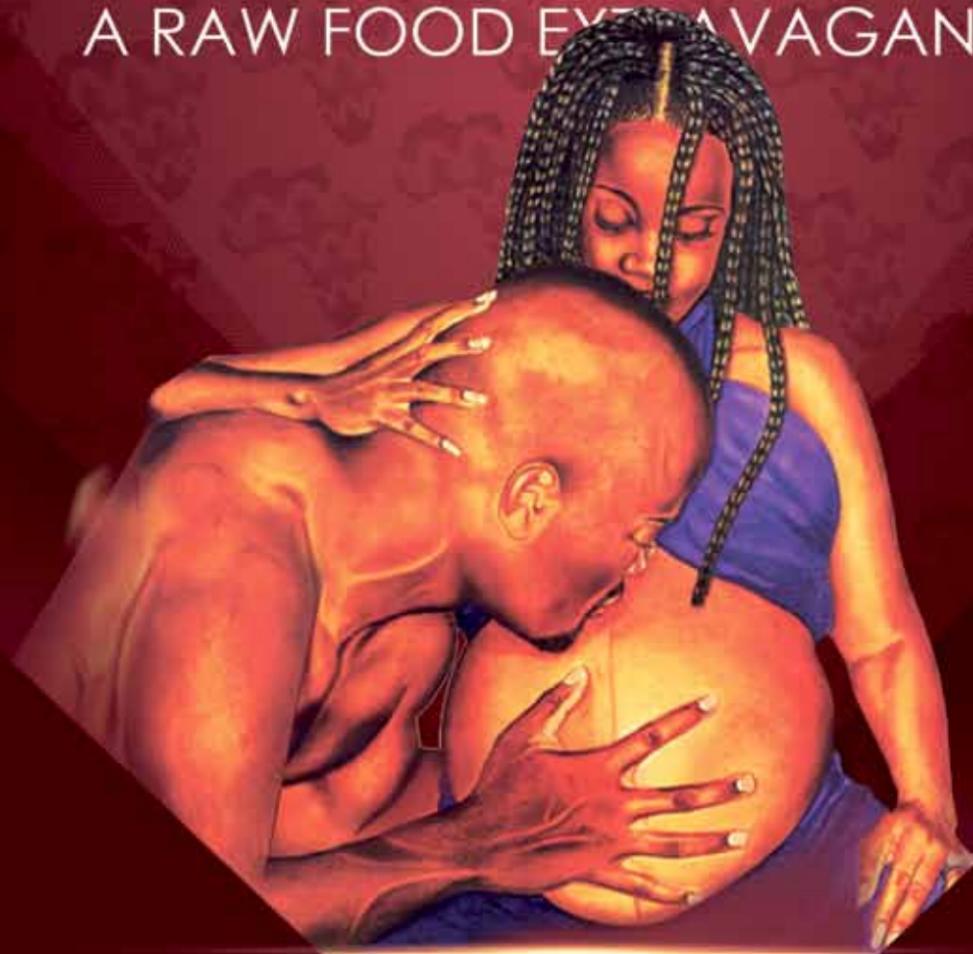
And to them, I say, "Keep dreaming." ✨



Coauthor of *The 28 Day Thought Diet* and *F*A*I*T*H*: Finding Answers in the Heart*, Mindy Strich is a certified I.E.M. Biofield Therapist

and I.C.F. Life Coach. For more information, visit MindyStrich.com or call 678-642-7771.

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