

FREE

HEALTHY LIVING HEALTHY PLANET

natural awakenings

BOOSTING BRAIN HEALTH HALLMARKS OF HEALTHY COGNITION

HEALTHY THANKSGIVING RECIPES

HOW TO DIE WELL AND WISELY

WHY HUGS ARE GOOD FOR YOU

DANCING WITH SPIRIT

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Natural Awakenings is a family of 50+ healthy living magazines celebrating 27 years of providing the communities we serve with the tools and resources we all need to lead healthier lives on a healthy planet.

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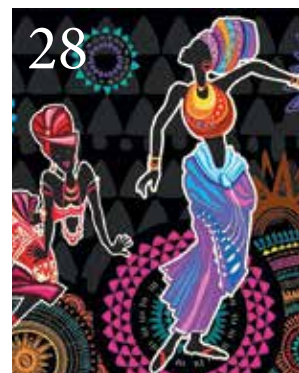
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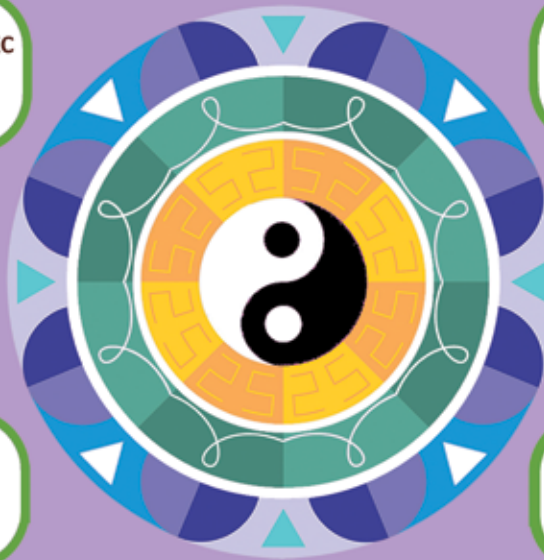
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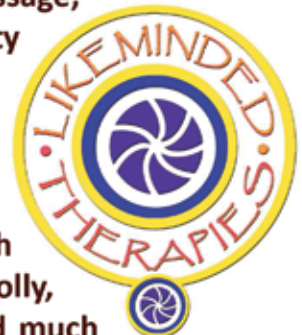
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Monthly Business Highlight - Likeminded Therapies

Likeminded Therapies is honored by our 10th year of service offering massage, movement, energy work, and consciousness healing. While our speciality revolves around touch and teaching massage through our School of Massage, we are all trained in many holistic modalities from Body and Emotion Code, Feldenkrais Somatic Education, Sound and Light Therapies, Shamanic Healing Journeys and more. Our commitment is to continue our journey to be with you in the way of empowering each individual to find the true healer: themselves. Holistically, let us heal, wholly, and together, Body/Mind/Spirit as One. May your days be Blessed, and much love, Likeminded Therapies.



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letter from publisher



Mark and Shanna Warner

Lets Get Controversial

I am about to start a bit of controversy, but before I do... If you are holding the magazine right now, then I would like to encourage you to go sign up for the digital edition, as well. We can't always keep up with demand for the printed magazine, and I don't want you to miss out! We can send the digital edition right to your email inbox each month. Go to the home page of NAOklahoma.com to find the big green button that says "SIGN UP NOW" or scan the QR code down below.

Now for the controversy! Our small publishing team here in Oklahoma works with a whole family of other publishers. Each month, we write great local articles and our staff writers create great national articles that we get to choose from for the next month's magazine. SO, when Mark and I first got the option to read this month's feature story about Conscious Dying, we weren't sure we should run it.

It is never our intention to offend anyone. Our goal is to start open conversations about holistic health and wellness. And yet, that goal creates controversy. We recently published a national story about psychedelic mushrooms and their healing properties. Peyote, cannabis and other entheogens are used traditionally here in Oklahoma and around the world to help people find physical, emotional and spiritual healing. (That national article ruffled feathers and offended a few folks.) There's a local article this month about plant medicines.

We've published stories about yoga, which included pictures of practitioners in various sweaty poses. That also offended a few people for the amount of flesh shown. (Hope they didn't see the revealing picture included in last month's breast health story, because that lady was sweaty, smiling and perky.) So far, no one has complained!

Charging toward the frontier in holistic health and wellness can cause some controversy here in Oklahoma, especially when we talk about the mind-body-spirit connection. This month's article about death and dying opens up that possibility. But, it is a truth that the physical body dies. And what happens next? The process of dying, death and what happens afterward is a deeply held matter of religion and spirituality for many people. We think these ideas are too important to NOT talk about.

We have no intention to cause anyone harm by discussing a controversial issue. So, before you read further, please consider making a cup of tea. I have heard that chamomile is very calming, although I can't drink it because of allergies. I can recommend an herbal blend of peppermint and spearmint together; it's delicious hot or cold. And then enjoy the magazine! All of the articles we print and send out in digital format are designed to make us think, to ponder and ask those deep questions. And maybe, there might be a few answers in these pages, too.

Please join the conversation!

Send us an email: Publisher@NAOklahoma.com.
Contact us on the website: NAOklahoma.com or
online at Facebook.com/naoklahoma.

With love and veggies,

Shanna Warner



HEALTHY LIVING HEALTHY PLANET

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a note from jessica menzel BNC

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EVERYTHING HOLDS AN ENERGETIC FREQUENCY. Our bodies hold intricate layers of these frequencies that contract and expand as we live our lives. These can be measured and affected by everything we come in contact with. Cell phones and TVs, for example, give off a frequency that directly affects our bodies. This is why it is commonly recommended to turn your phone off at night so sleep can easily come and rest can be achieved. With that rest, a recalibration occurs and healing can happen. This is also why high nutrition in our food electrifies the body and promotes an increase in our everyday function. The frequencies in quality, nutrient-dense food interplay with the frequencies in your body creating balanced homeostasis.

Every thought, feeling, and emotion also affect our internal and physical energetic field by either increasing our capabilities or decreasing them day by day. This is because we are not just physical beings; we need energy from the food we eat to live: we are most importantly mental, emotional and spiritual.

At Energetic Wellness through biofeedback technology, we are able to assess what nutrients are necessary to bring balanced energy to your body.

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This process is individualized and unique to your specific needs. It is in-depth and very informative to help you discover aspects of the true roots of why you feel, as well as what you feel in your body.

-jessica

Welcome Casa Galactica



N*atural Awakenings* welcomes Casa Galactica to the magazine. Casa Galactica offers online private sessions and group programs for those that want to follow a path of inner-truth-seeking. Their services normalize intuition and demystify trauma so that personal healing and empowerment are available and accessible to everyone. They help seekers

release their painful past through empowering healing, activating intuition and facilitating the search for personal truth. Casa Galactica also trains those seeking a path as a healer. They train multidimensional healers to connect with Spirit, illuminate their shadow, strengthen their calling and cultivate their professional ethic.

Cofounders Michael Thornhill and Jamie Csizmadia Thornhill met in the rainforests of Peru in 2017 while training in the Shipibo tradition of plant spirit healing. Jamie is an intuitive medium. She grew up in Mustang, Oklahoma. Michael is a trauma-informed healer and channel. He is from Wales in the United Kingdom. With 15 years of combined professional experience as multi-dimensional healers, they are honored to bring this rich tapestry of knowledge and wisdom to the online setting to make it available and accessible to everyone.

Through their life-transformative online workshops, intuitive readings, trauma healing sessions, channeling sessions, intuitive design and branding, along with plant spirit healing retreats, they invite readers to come home to the truth of Who You Are.

For more information, visit CasaGalactica.com/programs. See ad, page 16.

Welcome H2Oasis

N*atural Awakenings* welcomes H2Oasis to the magazine. North-eastern Oklahoma's largest float center offers many services to help relax and rejuvenate the body, mind and spirit. Float therapy takes the pressure of gravity off the joints and muscles and puts the body into a deep state of relaxation. As a result, this reduces blood pressure and increases blood flow.

The benefits of this deep relaxation go far beyond the body. The deep mental relaxation induced by float therapy increases mental clarity, creativity and memory. Float therapy naturally increases dopamine and endorphin levels to naturally boost mood. People report developing complex theories and drafting entire books while floating. Floating is a great way to reflect on life, gaining creative and personal insight. After years of practice, people can enter theta state through deep meditation. But floating can get customers there effortlessly.

H2Oasis offers additional services, besides floating, to continue the positive vibes. They have an oxygen bar that's paired with essential oils to stimulate mind and body, while CBD products are also available to add to any service or treatment to further boost the relaxation. And do not miss their tea bar with over 65 varieties that can be enjoyed in-house or even taken home.

Location: 6564 E. 51st St., Tulsa. For more information, call 918-938-7368 or visit H2OasisFloatCenter.com. See ad, page 20.



What if, today, we were grateful for everything? ~Charlie Brown



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MUSHROOM & CANNABIS CAPSULES




health briefs

Boost Kids' Learning Abilities with Exercise



The right kind of exercise can help kids learn vocabulary better, suggests research from the University of Delaware. An article published in the *Journal of Speech Language*

and Hearing Research reports that when 48 children between 6 and 12 years of age were taught new words before swimming, they scored 13 percent higher on a test of the words than children that did CrossFit-like exercises or colored pictures. Lead researcher Maddy Pruitt says that exercise is known to increase levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor, a protein she describes as the "Miracle-Gro of the brain." Swimming made a difference, she says, because it is an automatic movement, while the CrossFit exercises were new to them and required mental energy.

Lose Weight with Small Calorie Reduction



A reduction of just 200 calories a day combined with aerobic exercise four times a week produced greater weight loss and better heart health in obese, sedentary adults than exercise alone or a 600-calorie reduction plus exercise, reports a new study in *Circulation*. Researchers from the Wake

Forest School of Medicine, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, tested 160 adults ages 65 to 79. Those that combined exercise with 200 fewer calories a day lost 10 percent of their weight, about 20 pounds, over five months. They had a 21 percent average increase in the aorta's ability to expand and contract, a key indicator of heart health. Measures of aortic stiffness did not change significantly for the exercise-only group or the 600-calorie-reduction-plus-exercise group. Weight loss was similar for both calorie-reduction groups, even though one group consumed nearly three times fewer calories per day.



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Boost Cognition with Green Tea Compound



anna.pysniuk/Pexels.com

A single dose of 100 milligrams of the compound L-theanine—the amount found in four cups of green tea—improved reaction times and working memory of men and women in new research from Japan's Central Research Institute, in Shizuoka. In the double-blind, placebo-controlled study, 69 adults that self-reported cognitive decline

reacted more quickly to computer-generated promptings and answered more questions correctly after ingesting the compound compared to the placebo.

Eat High-Flavonoid Foods to Reduce Cognitive Decline



trang doan/Pexels.com

Eating foods high in flavonoids—the antioxidant-rich plant compounds found in strawberries, oranges, peppers and apples—can reduce the risk of cognitive decline by 20 percent or more, reports new research published by the *American Academy of Neurology*.

Researchers followed more than 78,000 people in their late 40s and early 50s for 20 years, asking them what they ate and to evaluate their cognitive skills. They found that those foods with more flavones, such as yellow or orange fruits and vegetables and some spices, reduced cognitive decline the most, at 38 percent—the equivalent of being three to four years younger in age.

Anthocyanins, found in blueberries, blackberries and cherries, were associated with a 24 percent reduced risk of cognitive decline. "The people in our study who did the best over time ate an average of at least half a serving per day of foods like orange juice, oranges, peppers, celery, grapefruits, grapefruit juice, apples and pears," says study author Walter Willett, M.D., a nutrition and epidemiology professor at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "And it's never too late to start, because we saw those protective relationships whether people were consuming the flavonoids in their diet 20 years ago or if they started incorporating them more recently."

Live Healthfully to Mitigate Genetic Cancer Risk



rf_studio/Pexels.com

Healthy lifestyle factors such as exercise, proper diet, low body mass index and abstinence from smoking and drinking correlate with decreased cancer incidence, even in those with a high genetic risk, according to a Chinese study published in *Cancer Research*. The researchers calculated

and applied the genetic risks for 16 cancers in men and 18 cancers in women to genotype information from 443,000 citizens from England, Scotland and Wales registered in a databank. Notably, 97 percent of patients in the study had a high genetic risk of at least one cancer type. Among patients with high genetic risk, the five-year cancer incidence was 7.23 percent in men and 5.77 percent in women with an unfavorable lifestyle. That compared with 5.51 percent in men and 3.69 percent in women with a favorable lifestyle, effectively moving them into an intermediate risk category.



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Tree House

Knock On Wood

A Swedish method of building using cross-laminated timber (CLT) is emerging as a climate-friendly alternative to



courtesy of Svenskt Tra

traditional, concrete-based construction. The foundation is cement, but multi-story wooden structures of 13 floors and higher are possible. Using timber has environmental benefits in the form of lowered carbon emissions.

Mathias Fridholm, director of Svenskt Tra (Swedish Wood), an industry organization, says, "Wood is in many ways an excellent material for building in dense cities, because we can prefabricate all the elements in factories instead of onsite." Prefabrication speeds construction and reduces truck traffic. CLT is not only strong and light, it is breathable; it holds heat, but doesn't need plastic layers to manage moisture like concrete, which also requires sand, a non-renewable resource that requires dredging seabeds. Managed forests are renewable and serve as a carbon storage facility.

Anna Ervast Oberg, a project manager at Swedish real estate developer Folkhem, advises that just changing the structure of a building to wood from concrete would result in an immediate 50 percent reduction in emissions. "What we have to do now is to stop the emissions, very fast. This gives us a hint of where we should be focusing; where we can make the biggest difference."

Wicked Wonders

Banned Invasive Weeds for Sale

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has labeled cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*), a native plant of Southeast Asia, as one of the world's worst invasive weeds. It's banned as an invasive species by the *Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974*, but a study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* by the University of Massachusetts Amherst discovered that this and about 1,300 other invasive plants are sold at garden centers, nurseries and other retailers.

Lead author Evelyn M. Beaury, a graduate student in organismic and evolutionary biology at University of Massachusetts, says that she and her fellows found cogongrass was being sold by 33 outlets in 17 states. She notes, "This is a tricky case, because plant breeders are marketing a sterile cultivar, but research shows these plants are not completely sterile and can still become invasive." According to the USDA, there are no known effective biological control methods. Beaury states, "While patchy state regulations definitely contribute to the widespread availability of invasive plants in the U.S., it's clear we as a public also lack awareness about which plants are invasive and how they spread to new areas. If we want to continue to protect native ecosystems, regulators and managers need more resources to do so."

Sorting Soirée

Renovating the Recycling Stream



courtesy of Recyclops.com

Americans use a single recycling stream in which everything goes into one bin to be sorted and cleaned at the designated collection point; a system that requires too much labor with less-than-stellar

results. A study conducted by the South Korean SK Group asked 1,500 U.S. adults about sustainable packaging and found that 72 percent prefer products with easily recycled or reused packaging, but don't understand what can actually be recycled. Forty-two percent were not aware that containers such as plastic bottles cannot be recycled without removing the label. When dirty and labeled recyclables are deposited with clean recyclables, they contaminate the whole batch, creating massive amounts of unnecessary waste.

SKC Inc. has introduced Ecolabel, the first shrink sleeve label that doesn't need to be removed from plastic bottles to be recycled. This removes the burden from the consumer and recyclers while making the process easier. Recyclops uses independent drivers to service recycling routes, creating income for locals and sustainable living options for residents. They're innovating the recycling pickup process by using an Uber Eats-type phone app to enable the pickup of recyclables from areas that aren't being serviced.



pornisawani/AdobeStock.com

Storm Clouds

Water Shortage is a Global Problem



Lake Urmia, in Iran, has decreased in size by 50 percent from 2,085 square miles in the 1990s to 965 now, and the Department of Environmental Protection of West Azerbaijan is concerned that it may disappear

entirely. Scenarios like this are multiplying in the Middle East because the water table is becoming depleted. Persistent drought and high temperatures, in addition to poor water management and overuse, create a bleak outlook unless changes are made. A study by the Iranian Energy Ministry found the fate of the lake was more than 30 percent attributable to climate change.

Iran, Iraq and Jordan extract copious amounts of water from the ground for irrigation, and Charles Iceland, global director of water at the World Resources Institute, says, "They're using more water than is available routinely through rain." In Iran, a network of dams used by the agriculture sector uses about 90 percent of the nation's supply. "Both declining rainfall and increasing demand in these countries are causing many rivers, lakes and wetlands to dry up," Iceland says. As areas become uninhabitable in the future, political violence may emerge over how to share and manage rivers and lakes. Transboundary usage must be regulated and monitored if there is any hope to resolve the crisis.

Kid Safe

Bye-Bye to a Nasty Pesticide



After a multiyear effort, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has ruled that chlorpyrifos, a pesticide linked to neurological damage in children, including reduced IQ, loss of working memory and

attention deficit disorders, can no longer be used on food. EPA Administrator Michael Regan cites the action as an overdue step to protect children and farmworkers from dangerous consequences of the pesticide. "EPA will follow the science and put health and safety first." The ruling will take effect in February 2022.

Patti Goldman, an attorney for Earthjustice, says, "Chlorpyrifos will finally be out of our fruits and vegetables." The pesticide has been sprayed on crops such as strawberries, apples, citrus, broccoli and corn since 1965. Up until 2000, it was used to kill ants, roaches and mosquitos. The Natural Resources Defense Council notes that it will still be allowed for other uses such as cattle ear tags.

Love Bugs

The Food Revolution—Miniaturized



It may come as a surprise to most Americans, but people have been eating insects (entomophagy) for thousands of years, and they are part of the diets of more than 2 billion people. The United Nations predicts that

this rapidly growing industry could be worth \$6.3 billion by 2030, so bug-based products may soon appear in local stores. Although Western food markets have excluded insects in favor of animal-based protein, insect-based foods offer many health and environmental benefits, especially in light of the pressures from climate change.

Insects produce 80 times less methane than cattle and use less space, feed, water, housing and maintenance. One pound of beef requires 1,850 gallons of water, one pound of chicken uses 500 gallons and one pound of crickets requires one gallon. Nestlé and PepsiCo are conducting research and development forays into the field, and smaller, nimble startups are making plans to introduce new products. Names to watch include Mighty Cricket, Illegal Oats, Jiminy's, Aspire (Exo Bar), BeoBia and FarmInsect. Public acceptance is expected to be gradual.



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to microplastics and dissuade manufacturers from using plastic, avoid any beauty products with microbeads, including certain toothpastes and facial scrubs. Some words on product labels that indicate microbeads are polypropylene, polyethylene and polylactic acid (PLA).

WEAR NATURAL, NON-SYNTHETIC FABRICS. Synthetic fabrics shed microplastic fibers in the wash and as we wear them. Clothing made with natural fibers such as cotton is preferable.

WASH AND DRY SYNTHETIC CLOTHES DIFFERENTLY. When we wash and dry synthetic fabrics, significant levels of microplastics are released into the environment. To lessen this effect, air dry clothes or decrease their time in the dryer. Products are emerging to help filter and collect small synthetic fibers before they wash down the drain and into our waterways or get released into the air. Among the most promising are a washing bag (*GuppyFriend.us*), laundry ball (*CoraBall.com*) and in-machine filtration devices (*XerosTech.com*).

REDUCE MEAT AND FISH CONSUMPTION. As microplastics proliferate and marine and land animals eat them, they are finding their way into our food supply. We can limit our exposure by eating less meat and fish.

VACUUM AND DUST REGULARLY. Our homes are filled with microplastics. Regularly dusting surfaces and vacuuming with a HEPA filter that traps dust is a great way to reduce these particles in the indoor air environment.

DRIVE LESS. As we drive our cars, microplastic flies off the tires and becomes airborne pollution. Find ways to drive less; opt instead for carpooling or public transportation.

Simple Ways to Reduce Microplastic Exposure

Plastic is a petrochemical-based, non-biodegradable pollution nightmare. As discarded water bottles and shampoo containers pile up for hundreds of years in landfills, we continue to produce more and more of the stuff. Meanwhile, plastic breaks down into microparticles that contaminate waterways, air, soil and even snow. They show up in foods and beverages we consume. While more research is needed to understand the human health impacts of microplastics, here are some ways to avoid ingesting these tiny particles.

DON'T DRINK PLASTIC-BOTTLED WATER. Plastic-bottled water has approximately double the microplastics of tap water, studies have found. Ditch single-use, plastic-bottled water. Instead, fill reusable stainless steel or glass containers with filtered tap water, chill and enjoy. Filtering tap water can help improve the taste and reduce other undesirable elements, and most carbon block filters with a micron rating of two or less will remove microplastics.

AVOID BEAUTY PRODUCTS WITH MICROBEADS. To reduce exposure





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H & H PROCESSING

Supporting Oklahoma Through Its Newest Oil Boom

by Shanna Warner



In the early days of statehood, there was a black gold rush in Oklahoma. Finding crude oil set the stage for our state to become a powerhouse in the growing oil economy. The Hallum family was at the forefront of that oil boom.

Now two of the Hallum family members, Brian and Amber, are processing a different type of oil. The Hallums are convinced that there can be another oil rush in Oklahoma, one that offers healing, hope and happiness in the form of physical and possibly even psychological relief.

H & H Processing is owned by the Hallums. The oil they produce now is called FECO: Full Extract Cannabis Oil. It's also known as RSO: Rick Sampson Oil. They are processors and vendors of medical cannabis, CBD and mushroom products at their facility on Monkey Island, up in the northeast corner of the state, near Grove. The Hallums have been at the forefront of a blossoming rediscovery of the benefits of FECO, and their experiences have taken them all around the nation and now back home. They both graduated from the University of Oklahoma, and then travelled the nation working in management, but they say Oklahoma is their favorite place to live.

H & H Processing operates on a simple ethic. They call it ACE: Affordability, Compassion, Education. Amber puts it this way, "People should not have to choose between natural medicine that makes them feel better or their food. Affordability goes hand-in-hand with compassion." Brian adds to that idea, "We put our profits back into our staff and our customers with a loyalty program, an RSO penny program and veteran discounts." They are very proud of the good that their penny program does.

It allows them to purchase large quantities from participating growers and then produce and distribute the natural health products to those with medical needs and limited finances.

On a daily basis, H & H is working on education, another pillar of their ACE ethic. Amber mentions that they are "constantly learning and passing this knowledge on to the communities we serve. The impact we most want to have is that cannabis and mushrooms become a real medical alternative that is available to everyone." The Hallums have worked and travelled throughout the nation, and they have noted that the medical cannabis community is not one powered by greed, but by a real desire to help and serve others.

H & H Processing receives letters almost weekly about how the products they make have changed someone's life for the better. The letters talk about eliminating seizures, replacing medical prescriptions with cannabis with their doctor's help, and even about someone getting positive news about their battle with cancer. Their favorite letters come from children, and it's those letters that give them resolve to continue on.

Their business, although rewarding, is difficult because understanding the laws and tax codes and abiding by them is an ever-changing task. They focus on keeping up with the regulations required for their business. They also focus on changing the dialogue after decades of disinformation and propaganda have propped up a bias against plants and natural remedies. Part of the difficulty is the increasing need for university studies here in the U.S. that look at cannabis and other plants and their

medicinal benefits. That is slowly starting to change; there is exciting research on the horizon that shows a link between cannabis and mushroom products, and clinical relief for patients that suffer with post-traumatic stress disorder or other types of trauma repercussions.

Amber and Brian have already seen the positive effects of these natural remedies during their 20 years in the industry, and through personal experience. Brian believes, "Everyone should incorporate cannabis and mushrooms into their daily diet. I know that sounds typical, but the changes I have seen not only in myself, but in the thousands of people I have served, make an impact on me." He has seen people that had been using alcohol or opioids for PTSD, depression, sleep or pain switch to natural products successfully. The Hallums have seen how non-addictive plant relief is natural, healthier and comes with a host of other benefits. They have seen it happen right before their eyes.

H & H Processing now has 14 employees between the store and lab. The company offers high-paying quality employment, and the business contributes thousands of dollars to the state through tax revenue. The Hallums are involved in charity events that support the Special Olympics through the Home of Hope, Inc. They also offer free classes about the benefits of making changes in diet, supplements, medicines and life by going natural.

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DYING WELL

Four Steps to a Good Death

by Ronica O'Hara

On his deathbed, Apple founder Steve Jobs looked for a long time at his children, his sister and his wife, then moved his gaze to the space behind them. “Oh wow! Oh wow! Oh wow!” he gasped. No one can know for certain what he was experiencing, but his words point to the deep, mysterious potential of our final hours—the awareness of which can transform our life long before its end.

“An awareness of dying, of death, can wake us up to life. It helps us live a life that’s rich and full and meaningful. When we deny the truth of dying, we live less wholeheartedly, less completely,” says Frank Ostaseski, founder of the pioneering San Francisco Zen Hospice Project and author of *The Five Invitations: Discovering What Death Can Teach Us About Living Fully*.

The pandemic has 51 percent of us thinking more about our own mortality, a survey shows. The subject of death has been slowly opening up in America: TV programs like *Six Feet Under* and *Alternative Endings: Six New Ways to Die in America* present dying and grief more realistically; thousands of small conversational gatherings called “death cafes” are being held each year; people are designing their own funerals and choosing green burial sites; and the field of “death doulas” is emerging to help families navigate the legal and emotional shoals. Half a century after the release of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’ seminal book *On Death and Dying*, palliative care to ease pain is offered by two-thirds of American hospitals, and Medicare funding for end-of-life hospice care has grown tenfold over the last two decades.

Yet for many, death remains the last taboo—85 percent of us have not discussed our last wishes yet with loved ones. Thousands of studies in the emerging field of experimental existential psychology have found that when reminded subconsciously of death, people tend to drive faster, drink harder, smoke more and get meaner to out-groups in attempts to lower their anxiety.

But when we look death squarely in the face, that anxiety recedes, the research concludes. Gratitude, self-honesty and the humility of recognizing our place in the larger whole are also proven antidotes. With less fear, we are better able to take the proactive, concrete steps that ease our passage—getting clear on our values and desires, having important conversations, attending to final decisions and opening to our spiritual process. Although death has its own ways and means, these four processes can make it more likely we will die as we would like to.

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Defining What We Value “Deeply consider what your priorities in life are,” says Tarron Estes, founder and CEO of The Conscious Dying Institute, in Boulder, which has trained more than 6,500 doulas since 2013. “Ask yourself, if I had only three months to live, what’s important to me spiritually, emotionally, physically? What do I still need to do or say?” She recommends Stephen Levine’s book, *A Year to Live*, for exercises and meditations for that process.

“Don’t wait until the time of your dying to discover what it has to teach you,” advises Ostaseski, who has sat beside more than 2,000 hospice patients in their last hours. “When I’m with dying people, the things that are important to them are not their spiritual beliefs, but are more about relationships—‘Am I loved? Did I love well?’ Those two questions are useful inquiries now. They help us to discover where value and meaning can be found.”

By applying our values to the dying process, we can start sorting through options. Do we want to die at home or in a hospital? What medical procedures will we accept or decline? What measures do we want to be taken to sustain our life? Who do we want to be at our side? And what do we need to say before that time?

Having Important Conversations

As daunting as the prospect of an end-of-life talk with family and friends may seem, it can start with simple words like “I want to talk with you about something important to me.” Without spelling out our desires, death can become inadvertently medicalized: Nine in 10 of us say we want to die in our homes, but only two in 10 do. “The default systems are all to treat, treat, treat, until someone finally says, ‘No,’ so many people end up on a high-tech conveyor belt to the ICU,” says award-winning journalist Katy Butler, author of *The Art of Dying Well: A Practical Guide to a Good End of Life*. Among people that undertake such talks, 73 percent describe the experience as positive, reassuring and productive. A downloadable Conversation Starter Guide (TheConversationProject.org) provides practical guidance for these critical conversations.

Attending to Medical and Burial Decisions Taking care of business—the paperwork aspects of death known as advance directives—spares loved ones from having to make tough decisions later. A last will and testament precludes pain and infighting among family and friends. A living will specifies what treatments are wanted under what conditions. A medical power of attorney designates a trusted person to make medical decisions if a patient is not capable. A Do Not Resuscitate order approved by a doctor means emergency medical workers are less likely to give CPR, which frequently causes trauma and broken ribs in elderly or frail patients. Either cremation or a burial can be decided upon; environmental options such as a forest burial in a wooden casket can be explored. Local hospice options can be surveyed in advance; nonprofits generally are rated better than profit-making groups.

Opening to the Spiritual Process

Whether or not we have religious beliefs to carry us through waves of loss and sorrow, death can spur spiritual insight. “In dying, we withdraw from our outer circles and come into the inner circles of our lives—the relationships that matter most to us,” says Ostaseski, who has worked four decades with hospice patients. “There’s a growing silence that has us becoming more contemplative and reflective. Our sense of time and space changes and we enter into a kind of free flow. The boundaries we have lived by begin to dissolve, and we start to feel ourselves as part of something larger—not as a belief, but as a natural occurrence. Often people realize themselves to be more than the small, separate self they had thought themselves to be.”

Joan Tollifson, a Zen-trained spiritual teacher and author of *Death: The End of Self-Improvement*, concurs: “When the future disappears, we are brought home to the immediacy that we may have avoided all our lives. With no future left to fantasize about, the focus of attention may finally be fully on right Now, the only place where our life ever actually is. Really getting that ‘This is it,’ there may be a sudden recognition of the absolute preciousness and wonder of every simple ordinary thing and of the people around us, just as they are, with all their flaws and

foibles. Old grudges and resentments often melt away, and love shines through.

"All the things which may have been part of our self-image—independence, physical strength, cognitive sharpness, good appearance and so on—have either disappeared or are rapidly collapsing, which invites the discovery that none of that really mattered, that what we truly or more fundamentally are is not dependent on any of that.

"The greatest gift we can give to a loved one who is dying," says Tollifson, is to "simply be present, listen, follow your heart, trust the process. Everything else will follow from that. There's no right or wrong way."

It can be difficult to know what to say to a loved one near the end, but hospice workers recommend five phrases that have deep healing potential, even if a person seems unconscious: "I love you," "Thank you," "Please forgive me," "I forgive you," and "Goodbye" or "Until we meet again." As Butler points out, the first four phrases can be said any time in our lives.

Increasingly in hospice care, loved ones are encouraged to sit with the body after the death, touching it, sharing stories, perhaps gently bathing it and dressing it in favorite clothes. "Touching the body, feeling the coolness, makes the death real to the family," Ostaseski says. "Research shows that people that went through that process still grieved, but they were able to be with the emotion and not be overwhelmed by it."

Facing the reality of death—as hard and heartbreaking as that can be—can free us to truly live life, said Jobs. After his terminal cancer diagnosis, he told Stanford students in a commencement address, "Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything—all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure—these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart."

Health writer Ronica O'Hara can be contacted at OHaraRonica@gmail.com.

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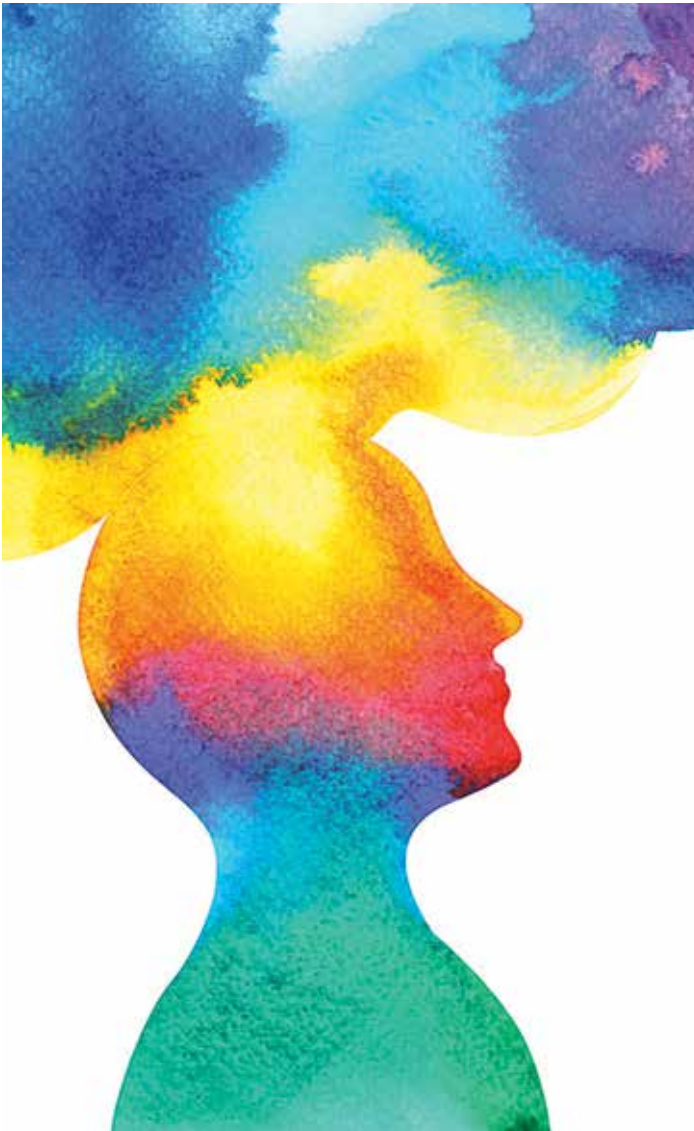
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Healthy Brain Strategies

How to Prevent Cognitive Decline

by Linda Sechrist



A healthy brain performs mental processes known as cognition, which is the acquiring of knowledge and understanding by means of thought, experience and the senses. This includes functions and systems such as memory, learning, language, problem solving, decision making, reasoning and intelligence. The aging process, a stroke or a brain injury can cause a mild to severe reduction in healthy brain

functioning resulting in impaired memory and concentration, and difficulty in learning new things or making decisions that impact daily living.

Functional medicine experts focused on preventive health care agree on the ABC's for optimizing the brain and protecting against decline: eating a healthy diet, exercising, reducing inflammation and stress levels, balancing hormone levels, cultivating healthy relationships and getting enough restorative sleep. With their expertise, they are helping to shift the old paradigm of inevitable aging and cognitive decline into a new one based on the brain's neuroplasticity.

Harvard-trained neuroscientist Jill Bolte Taylor, author of the bestseller *My Stroke of Insight* and the recent *Whole Brain Living*, is a true poster child for demonstrating the brain's neuroplasticity and ability to recover from a massive stroke. She writes about the congenital neurological brain disorder that became a problem when an arteriovenous malformation exploded in her brain's left hemisphere. For four hours, she observed her brain functions systemically shutting down one by one. On the afternoon of her stroke, she could not walk, talk, read, write or recall any of her life. Eight years later, she was not only slalom waterskiing again, but also explaining to the world, "We are the life-force power of the universe, with manual dexterity and two cognitive minds. We have the power to choose, moment to moment, who and how we want to be in the world."

Devaki Lindsey Berkson, author of *Sexy Brain*, a hormone formulator and former researcher at Tulane University's estrogen think tank, advises, "Most people think hormones are sexy, reproductive things and when they get older, they're relieved that they don't have to think about them. Not true. The body has a virtual physiological internet system. Hormones are the email signals to most cells. While the robustness of hormones and their signals affects lungs, gut, kidney and vocal cord health, it especially affects the brain. Balancing hormones with bioidentical hormones is one solution."

David Perlmutter, neurologist and co-author of *Brain Wash*, cites food as the biggest player in both brain and overall health in his books and PBS workshops. "Eating inappropriately causes intestinal permeability, resulting in inflammation, which in the brain, threatens good decision making—from deciding on the foods we eat to turning off our televisions at night, getting

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a good night's rest, making sure that we exercise regularly and connecting with other people. Not good for the gut are dairy products, alcohol, highly processed foods that are low in fiber, high in sugar and refined carbohydrates, as well as antibiotics," he says, adding that meditation and exposure to nature are powerful ways of reducing inflammation in the body and brain.

As explained by neurologist Dale E. Bredesen, author of *The End of Alzheimer's*, stress leads to an increase in cortisol levels that can be toxic to our brains—in particular the memory—consolidating the hippocampus, one of the first structures affected by Alzheimer's. Studies show that high stress levels can also contribute to brain fog, involving difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness and mental fatigue. The Bredesen Protocol, available from health practitioners and online, includes exercising, eating a plant-based diet, supplementing to reduce insulin sensitivity and optimize cognitive function, reducing both gut inflammation and exposure to toxins, treating pathogens and optimizing sleep.

HealthyBrains.org, Cleveland Clinic's Healthy Brains Initiative, is an online resource center with information on how to manage brain health and create a brain span that matches a life span. It offers six pillars of brain health as explained by brain health experts, including exercise, sleep, relaxation, mental fitness and social interaction.

Supplementing for brain health should be done wisely, says Mark Hyman, author of *Food: What the Heck Should I Eat?* and director of functional medicine at Cleveland Clinic. He recommends at the very least taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement, omega-3, extra vitamins B₃, B₆ and B₁₂, folate and a good probiotic that enhances the brain-gut relationship.

Mastery of the ABC's in kindergarten is required as the foundation of language and a lifetime of learning. Living the fundamentals for a healthy brain can result in a brain span that equals our life span.

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



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HOME OWNERSHIP

Growing a Family, a Garden and a Retirement

by Edward Oliver

Buying a house is often the largest purchase people make in their lifetime. There is a sense of pride in owning a home, and it creates a safe and secure place to raise a family. A down payment for a house also makes a great lifetime gift for graduation, a wedding or any addition to the family.

Owning a home gives you a yard to separate you from your neighbors. There are no adjoining apartments for you to have to listen to their noises, such as loud TVs or arguments. You will not have to fight over parking spaces.

You can landscape your own yard with flowers and varieties of trees. This could include fruit and nut trees. You can grow your own vegetables and improve your diet. Sharing homegrown fruits, nuts and vegetables with your neighbors is a great way to help relations. Your back yard will be a great place to put an outdoor grill. You can have wonderful outdoor dinners and

parties and entertain your family, friends and neighbors.

If you have young children, the back yard will make a great private playground. You will have complete control on who plays with your children, while keeping them safe, healthy and happy.

A condo can also be a good purchase if you have children or grandchildren going to college, such as OSU or OU. Buying a condo or house will be better than paying dorm fees or paying rent. This will make a great investment with possible tax benefits. It also makes a great place to spend the weekends during football, basketball and wrestling season. Once all of your children or grandchildren have graduated, then you can sell the condo or house for a nice profit. You could also keep it and rent it out to other students, or you can use it as a second house for weekends. There are people who prefer condos and townhouses because there are no yards to maintain.

There are tax breaks for homeowners; unfortunately, there are not as many as before. It used to be easier to deduct the interest and property taxes. Under the current tax laws the individual deductions are higher than the taxes and ad valorem taxes. Deductions are applied only to higher-end houses and other tax deductions such as large donations. If you have a growing family, you can sell your present house and purchase a larger one. Homes often increase in value each time they are sold. You can usually defer your capital gains for years. Please talk to a tax expert about your taxes and specific advice regarding capital gains, inheritance and other tax issues.

When all of your children are grown and out of the house you can sell the large house and purchase a smaller one. If things go right, you can have enough money to enjoy your retirement and travel. Also, if you want to, you can give a gift to your children or grandchildren for a down payment on their own house.

A house is a great foundation for growing a family. It is a wonderful place to plant and grow a garden, increasing the health of your family and neighbors. Home ownership is also part of growing your financial stability and part of a good retirement plan.



Edward Oliver is a real estate agent with Keller Williams Elite, 4529 N. Classen Blvd., Oklahoma City. For more information, call 405-948-7500

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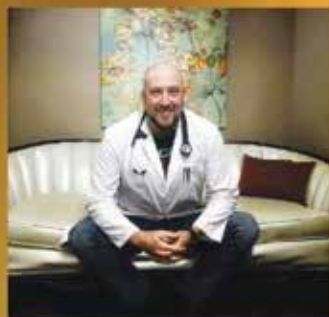
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Eat Well to Feel Well

THANKSGIVING FARE THAT BOOSTS MENTAL HEALTH

by Christy Ratliff



Across America, people of all ages are struggling with mental health issues. Nearly one in five people is living with a mental health condition, and the number of people seeking help for anxiety and depression is skyrocketing, reports Mental Health America. According to the organization's *2021 State of Mental Health in America Report*, suicidal thoughts are increasing among both adults and children, and 9.7 percent of youth is experiencing severe major depression compared to 9.2 percent last year. The highly contagious COVID-19 Delta variant has only exacerbated these mental health challenges.

The hope and help we seek may be as close as our own kitchen. Accumulating research shows that a diet rich in highly processed foods may increase the risk of developing or worsening various mental health conditions. But a nutrient-based diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables; omega-3 fatty acids; nuts, seeds and legumes; whole grains, fresh herbs and spices; fish and olive oil, may help to support and enhance mental health. We can start this Thanksgiving by serving up healthier, nutrient-rich options to alleviate anxiety and depression, stabilize mood and promote mental health and wellness.

"The gut/brain connection helps us understand the food/mood connection," explains Dr. Uma Naidoo, a Harvard-trained nutritional psychiatrist, professional chef, nutrition specialist and author of the national bestseller *This is Your Brain on Food*. "The enteric nervous system—that is, the nerves supplying the gastrointestinal tract—totals over 100 million neurons and communicates directly with the brain, or central nervous system, by way of the vagus nerve, which is responsible for our 'rest-and-digest' response.

"It's also vital to note that the gut contains the highest number of serotonin receptors, and the gut itself produces all the neurotransmitters that are also made in the brain, including serotonin, often called the happiness hormone. In turn, these neurotransmitters are implicated in sound mental health or potential problems when they are deficient."

"What we eat affects mental health in many ways," adds Amy Spindel, a functional holistic nutritionist in Plano, Texas, and founder of *FoodWithThoughtNutrition.com*. "Nutrient deficiencies can cause poor neurotransmitter production. Insufficient vitamin B₆, folate and vitamin B₁₂ can be implicated in depression and anxiety

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symptoms, as they are all needed for various stages of neurotransmitter production, especially serotonin, dopamine and GABA.”

“Traditional sugary, high-carbohydrate foods promote unstable blood sugar and selectively feed inflammatory gut microbes,” Spindel says, suggesting that we skip the typical foods many of us associate with the holidays such as pecan pie, marshmallow-topped sweet potato casserole and canned cranberry sauce. “Blood sugar fluctuations cause the body to scramble in an attempt to re-regulate glucose, which may mean spikes of cortisol or adrenaline, as well as insulin. The end result can be depression and anxiety from excessive stress hormones and a glucose-starved brain.”

But making such changes, particularly during the holidays, isn’t easy. “If the thought of changing up the traditional Thanksgiving menu gives you pause, you are not alone—and this is why I believe in adding in habits (and in this case, dishes) which have a positive ripple effect on our bodies and our brain, allowing for a self-sustaining cycle in our lifestyle,” advises Naidoo.

“As a nutritional psychiatrist, I feel that we are more emotionally nurtured by a feeling of abundance in ‘adding’ new Thanks-

giving dishes than thinking about this as ‘excluding’ foods,” she notes. “For example, tossing a fresh, folate-rich spinach and arugula salad with bits of antioxidant-rich strawberries, crisp roasted chickpeas and omega-3-rich olive oil adds color, flavor and a plethora of mood-nourishing ingredients to the dinner table. Even adding extra veggies to existing dishes, such as allicin-rich garlic to green beans or extra celery and fresh herbs to stuffing, adds in powerful phytonutrients with gut-loving fiber.”

“Thanksgiving favorites that are ample in neurotransmitter-producing nutrients include turkey, shellfish, sweet potatoes and acorn squash, asparagus, leafy greens, oranges and green beans,” Spindel adds.

While it’s true that we cannot control a global pandemic or solve the mental health crisis in America with positive thinking alone, we can minimize our feelings of powerlessness and despair by making small but significant dietary changes—not just on Thanksgiving, but every day of the year.

Christy Ratliff is a professional health and wellness writer based in Central Florida.

Feel-Good Recipe Ingredients

Some study-proven foods to enhance mood found in the following recipes include:



■ **Pistachios.** These tree nuts, which are actually seeds, are rich in healthy fats, vitamins and minerals. According to a Pennsylvania State University study, eating pistachios may reduce the body’s response to daily stress.



■ **Honey.** A National Institutes of Health study shows that the nutrients in raw honey may enhance mood and help with insomnia. It’s also rich in antioxidants, which contain anti-inflammatory properties that help protect the brain.

■ **Fresh herbs.** Sage provides natural anti-anxiety properties, while thyme and rosemary are rich sources of micronutrients and flavonoids, shown to protect against inflammation in the brain, a key factor in major depressive disorder.



■ **Apples.** Nutrient-rich apples are a good source of quercetin, a plant flavonoid, which studies suggest may be beneficial for mental health.

■ **Green beans.** An excellent source of vitamin A, green beans help fight inflammation and support the nervous and immune systems. They are high in folic acid, a B vitamin that studies have shown to potentially lower the risk of depression.



■ **Tomatoes.** Several studies show that regular consumption of tomatoes may help ward off depression.

■ **Olive oil.** Multiple studies show that low levels of olive oil, in conjunction with a Mediterranean-style diet, has a positive impact on mental health and brain function.



■ **Cornmeal.** Naturally gluten-free, cornmeal is an excellent source of folate, an important B vitamin. Research from the National Institutes of Health suggests that those with low levels of folate are more likely to experience depression.



■ **Raisins.** A great source of vitamin B, raisins can help the brain produce serotonin, an important neurotransmitter for reducing many anxiety-related symptoms.



Goat Cheese Appetizer with Honey, Fig and Pistachios

1 medium, fresh goat cheese log (about 11 oz)

¼ cup roasted pistachios, chopped

¼ cup honey (this recipe calls for 2 Tbsp; others call for ¼ cup)

1 to 2 Tbsp fig spread

Healthy selection of whole-wheat crackers, vegetable chips, etc.

Spread chopped pistachios on a small plate. Roll goat cheese in pistachios to coat sides and top. Transfer to a serving tray and sprinkle whole pistachios on top and around the cheese. Drizzle honey over and around cheese log. Warm fig spread for 5 to 10 seconds in a microwave. Drizzle spread over cheese log or half of cheese log, as desired. Serve with whole-wheat crackers or chips.

Courtesy of Susan Randall. For more information, visit SimpleHealthyKitchen.com.



photo by Christy Raliff



photo by Christy Raliff

Buzz's Fresh Herb and Apple Sage Stuffing

1 loaf bread, toasted (whole wheat (WW) or half WW, half French bread)

¼ cup unsalted butter

2 cups celery, chopped

1 large yellow onion, chopped

1 to 2 cloves garlic, chopped (to taste)

3 Granny Smith apples, chopped, with skin on

¼ cup sage leaves, chopped

¼ cup fresh rosemary, chopped

1 to 2 Tbsp fresh thyme, chopped

2½ cups reduced sodium vegetable or chicken broth

2 eggs

1 to 2 tsp salt to taste (may substitute nutritional yeast or fresh dill)

Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease a large, 2-to-3-inch-deep casserole or baking dish. Toast bread and cut into 1-inch cubes. Set aside. Melt butter in a large pan. Add celery, onion, garlic, apples and fresh herbs. Stir to mix and cook until softened, about 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from heat and cool. Beat eggs in a large mixing bowl. Add bread cubes and apple/vegetable/fresh herb mixture into the egg mixture. Add broth and salt (or nutritional yeast or fresh dill) and mix well. Spoon stuffing into prepared casserole dish. Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake for 20 to 30 minutes more or until golden-brown crust forms. Remove from oven, uncover and cool.

Courtesy of Buzz Spence. For more information on fresh herbs for emotional health, visit MotherEarthLiving.com.

Greek-Style Green Beans (Fasolakia Lathera)

*½ cup olive oil
1 onion, chopped
1 lb green beans
1 medium potato, sliced (¼-inch thickness, cut in half)
3 medium tomatoes, grated, or 12 to 15 oz chopped tomatoes
¼ cup parsley, chopped
1 tsp sugar
½ tsp salt
Fresh pepper*

In a medium pot, heat olive oil on low to medium heat. Sauté onion until softened. Add potatoes and heat for 2 to 3 minutes. Add beans and mix with olive oil until coated. Add tomatoes, parsley, sugar, salt and pepper. Mix well. Add just enough hot water to cover the beans halfway. Cover and simmer for about 40 minutes, or until beans are soft and most of the liquid is absorbed. May be served as a side dish for four people or a vegetarian/vegan entrée for two.

Courtesy of Elena Paravantes, RDN. For more information and Mediterranean recipes, visit OliveTomato.com.



Seluisauganasda Cherokee Cornmeal Cookies

Here's a creative, nutritious way to celebrate indigenous tradition during the holidays while also being mindful of mental health.

*¾ cup softened butter
½ cup organic brown sugar
1 egg
1 tsp vanilla
1½ cups flour
½ cup cornmeal
1 tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
½ cup raisins (Other versions of this recipe include nuts and dark chocolate pieces.)*

Preheat oven to 350° F. Spray cookie sheet with nonstick cooking spray and set aside. Using a wooden spoon, mix butter and brown sugar in a large mixing bowl. Add egg and vanilla. Stir until smooth. Add flour, cornmeal, baking powder and salt. Add raisins. Mix well. Drop dough by rounded teaspoonful onto baking sheet. Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until slightly golden. Makes about 2 dozen small cookies.

Courtesy of La Potosina. For more information, visit IndigenousFoods.wordpress.com.

Nature's Virus Killer

Copper can stop a cold before it starts

By Doug Cornell

Scientists have discovered a natural way to kill germs fast. Now thousands of people are using it against viruses and bacteria in the nose and on the skin.

Colds start when cold viruses get in your nose. Viruses multiply fast. If you don't stop them early, they spread and cause misery.

In hundreds of studies, EPA and university researchers have confirmed that viruses and bacteria die almost instantly when touched by copper.

That's why ancient Greeks and Egyptians used copper to purify water and heal wounds. They didn't know about microbes, but now we do.

Scientists say the high conductance of copper disrupts the electrical balance in a microbe cell and destroys the cell in seconds.

Tests by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) show germs die fast on copper. So some hospitals tried copper for touch surfaces like faucets and doorknobs. This cut the spread of MRSA and other illnesses by over half, and saved lives.

The strong scientific evidence gave inventor Doug Cornell an idea. When he felt a cold about to start he fashioned a smooth copper probe and rubbed it gently in his nose for 60 seconds.

"It worked!" he exclaimed. "The

cold never got going. That was September 2012. I use copper in the nose every time and I have not had a single cold since then."



New device puts copper right where you need it.

the same thing, so he patented CopperZap® and put it on the market.

Soon hundreds of people had tried it. The feedback was 99% positive if they used the copper within 3 hours after the first sign of unwanted germs, like a tickle in the nose or a scratchy throat.

Early user Mary Pickrell said, "I can't believe how good my nose feels."

"What a wonderful thing!" exclaimed Physician's Assistant Julie. Another customer asked, "Is it supposed to work that fast?"

Pat McAllister, 70, received one for Christmas and called it "one of the best presents ever. This little jewel really works."

Frequent flier Karen Gauci had been suffering after crowded flights. Though skeptical, she tried copper on travel days for 2 months. "Sixteen flights and

not a sniffle!" she exclaimed.

Businesswoman Rosaleen says when people around her show signs of cold or flu, she uses copper morning and night. "It saved me last holidays," she said. "The kids had crud going round and round, but not me."

Attorney Donna Blight tried copper for her sinus. "I am shocked!" she said. "My head cleared, no more headache, no more congestion."

A man with trouble breathing through his nose at night tried copper just before bed. "Best sleep I've had in years!" he said.

In a lab test, technicians placed 25 million live flu viruses on a CopperZap. No viruses were found surviving soon after.

Dr. Bill Keevil led one of the teams confirming the research. He placed millions of disease germs on copper. "They started to die literally as soon as they touched the surface," he said.

Some people press copper on a lip right away if a warning tingle suggests unwanted germs gathering there.

The handle is curved and textured to increase contact. Copper can kill germs picked up on fingers and hands after you touch things other people have touched.

The EPA says copper still works even when tarnished.

CopperZap is made in the U.S. of pure

copper. It has a 90-day full money back guarantee. It is available for \$79.95. Get \$10 off each CopperZap with code **NATA23**.

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**Dr. Bill Keevil:
Copper quickly kills cold viruses.**

ADVERTORIAL

The Healing Power of a Hug

by Marlaina Donato

When we were children, a hug helped to take the sting out of a skinned knee or quell first-day-of-school jitters. In adulthood, hugs are not as plentiful or practical; many people lack partners or loved ones, and the gesture—both giving and receiving—is too often labeled as sentimentality. As we continue to move through life with pandemic restrictions, hugs can feel risky at a time when we need them the most.



jason stitt/AdobeStock.com

A hug elicits a powerful shot of neurotransmitters like oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine, and we don't necessarily need another human to reap the benefits. Wrapping our arms around a breeze-swept tree in the backyard or on a hiking trail can lower heart rate and set our brains abuzz with feel-good endorphins. Earlier this year, the forestry service in Iceland invited people to cuddle up to trees to offset COVID-19 isolation and get in a good dose of forest bathing. Scientific research, including a study from Carnegie Mellon University, backs what unapologetic huggers have always known: Even the most casual embrace can help to lower stress, boost immunity and promote a better night's sleep.

Cuddling up with a stuffed animal is a part of everyday life for 43 percent of American adults, with men taking the lead. Befriending a plush toy is part of some trauma recovery programs and has a soothing effect on those navigating the dark waters of grief, loss and chronic anxiety. Snuggling up under a warm, weighted blanket is also akin to a hug, and has benefits much like the real thing.

Holding and being held strengthens the body's defense systems, as well as romantic partnerships, friendships and our relationship with ourselves. Opening our arms can foster the spiritual discipline of not only giving, but receiving—a vital requirement in self-care. In a time of chaotic uncertainty, isolation and change, hugs can be medicine; they can also be a powerful metaphor and reminder to remain open, willing and beautifully human.

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

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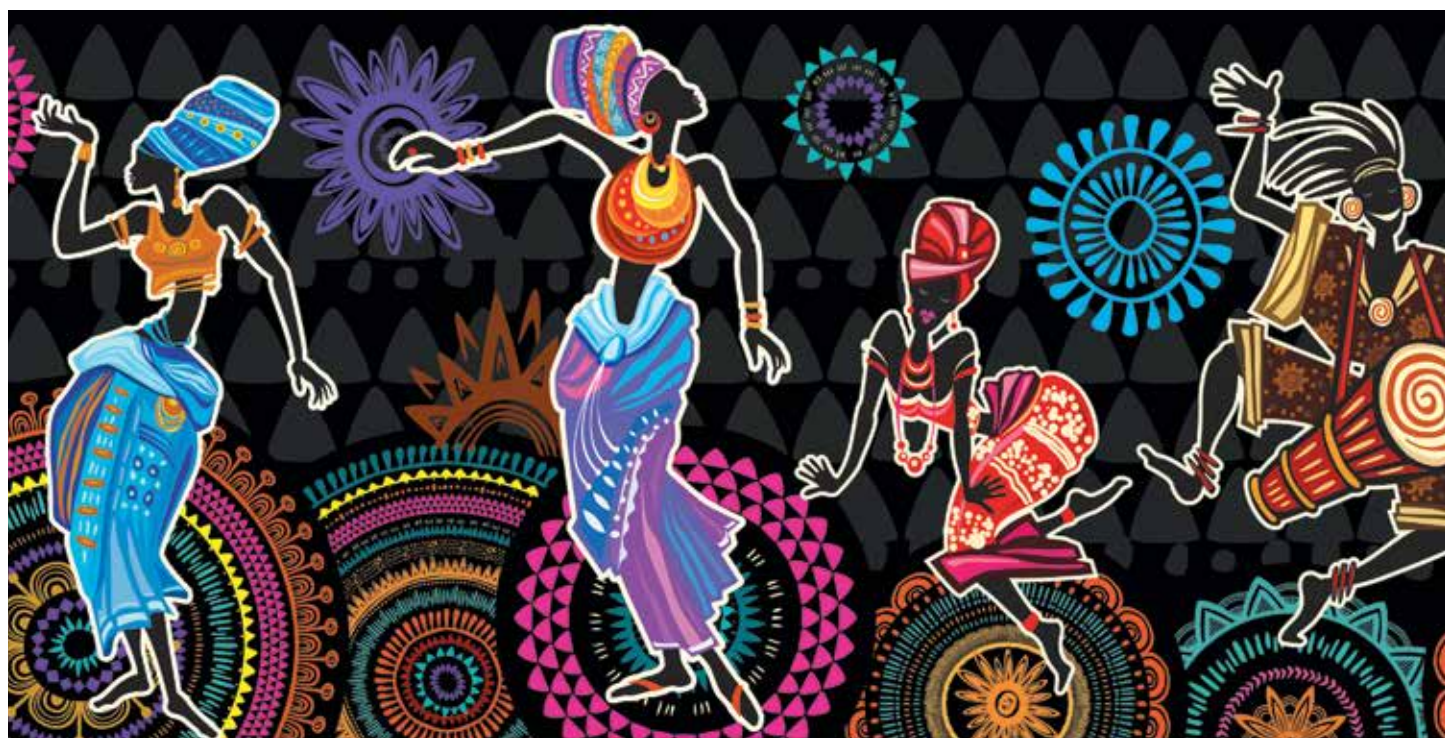
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SACRED DANCE

Moving into Divine Energy

by Marlaina Donato



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Hearth-healthy dancing of all types is known to promote overall physical and mental health. When they are spirit-infused, forms like African, Middle Eastern, ecstatic and yoga-inspired kundalini dance offer us the opportunity to stay in shape while also fortifying the body's intrinsic life force.

Classes in these styles of dance, which are most often conducted barefoot, draw upon a deep cultural well and include the infectious heartbeat of live accompaniment. Just about anyone can find their own blissful groove when going with the flow is the focus. "In class, I choose to emphasize the feeling more than the step itself. The goal is always to get a spiritual release," says Darian Parker, a Brooklyn-based West African dance teacher, professor and choreographer. "I always encourage my students to privilege 'having a good time' over succumbing to self-criticism from not perfecting a step."

Modern Moves, Ancient Roots

There are more than 3,000 ethnic groups on the continent of Africa, and each dance style has a purpose that is defined by its unique history. In the West African tradition, dances are designed to heal the individual and from the broader perspective, restore community. Parker, a faculty member of Cumbe: Center for African and Diaspora Dance, in Brooklyn, celebrates the culture and art of the Mande people. "In short, Mande dance trains your spirit just as much as it trains your body," says Parker. "In many Mande cultures, the ground is thought to be the habitation of our ancestors, who are thought to animate our

bodies when we dance. In this way, you can think of dance as a ritual technology that renews our connections with those who came before us."

While an African dance class encourages high energy and joyous expression, ecstatic dance can be a portal to self-discovery and connectedness. Springboarding from ancient societies worldwide, modern ecstatic dance is freeform and hallmarked by trance or tribal beats. "Ecstatic dance has offered me a portal to my subconscious, my spirit, my deep knowing. It's a way to, as Gabrielle Roth, the creator of 5Rhythms, put it, 'Get out of my head and into my body,' and in my body there is wonderful wisdom," explains Heidi Sheldon, a seasoned ecstatic dancer and licensed counselor in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. "Your spirit knows what to

do when it hears and feels the rhythms. You just need to allow your body to follow.”

Belly of Bliss, Heart of Light

Middle Eastern dance is comprised of many dance styles—folk and tribal, classical and most widely known, belly dancing. In ancient times, the latter was practiced in rituals for fertile harvests and women’s fertility, including physical preparation for childbirth. In 2017, a pilot study published in the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies* showed that belly dance improves depressive symptoms, fatigue and quality of life in women with breast cancer.

“Belly dancing is a tantric form of dance that empowers women to release shame and accept and love themselves and their bodies just as they are. The movements open us to pleasure and sensual bliss in our very own skin. In this way, it is very healing and therapeutic,” says Banafsheh Sayyad, a Persian dance artist and founder of the Dance of Oneness Academy, in Los Angeles. Sayyad’s movement, a fusion of Persian

and Middle Eastern dance, flamenco, contemporary dance and meditative whirling, is deeply connected to an ancient feminine ethos.

As a teacher, she brings the *Sama*—the dervish (pronounced “darvish” in Persian) dance of the Sufis historically reserved for men—into the hands of women. “In the traditional Sama, the right arm is extended up toward the sky with the palm facing up,” she says. “The left arm is extended out with the palm facing down toward the Earth. In so doing, you transmit and emanate the light you’ve received into the world through your heart. So, this dance is about becoming a channel for light and love in the world.”

In essence, stepping into any dance class can be good for the soul. Sayyad reminds us, “Every movement and dance style, if done with the intention of surrendering one’s sense of separateness into an experience of the greater or dissolving one’s identity as a drop of water into the greater ocean of oneness, can be sacred.”

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

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calendar of events



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3

Will Rogers Days & Motion Picture Festival Claremore – 11/3-11/6. Will Rogers Days celebrates the November 4, 1879, birth of Will Rogers, Oklahoma's favorite son, as well as the opening of the Will Rogers Memorial Museum on November 4, 1938. Get ready to screen a diverse array of films at the Motion Picture Festival, held in honor of Will Rogers' first movie and his far-reaching popularity in the dawn of his day. Free. Will Rogers Memorial Museum, 1720 W Will Rogers Blvd, Claremore. 918-906-7258. DogIrons.com.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Fall Home Expo Tulsa – 11/5-11/7. Fri 12-7pm; Sat 9am-7pm; Sun 11am-5pm. Featuring the latest home products, a selection of goods to get ready for the changing of seasons and a variety of holiday gift ideas. Start planning projects with help and inspiration from over 100 on-site vendors and service providers. Free. Expo Square, 4145 E 21st St, Tulsa. 918-605-5480. FallHomeExpo.com.

Dia De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) Arts Festival Tulsa – 4-9pm. This Hispanic cultural celebration serves as a remembrance of loved ones that have passed. Mixing parts of Roman Catholicism with Native American traditions that pre-date the arrival of the Spanish in the Americas, Tulsa's Dia De Los Muertos Arts Festival will feature live music, Mexican food and more. Free. Guthrie Green, 111 Reconciliation Way, Tulsa. 918-585-1234. LivingArts.org.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Autism Speaks Walk OKC – 8am. Pom-poms, balloon arches, community fun and purpose, the Autism Speaks Walk is back, and better than ever. Whether walking together in person or with remote-participation, all people with autism can reach their full potential. Free. Myriad Botanical Gardens, 301 W Reno, OKC. 914-487-1234.

Oklahoma Tribal Celebration Tulsa – 9am-8pm. Oklahoma is home to more than 39 Native American tribes, and together they host one of the region's

largest and most comprehensive Native American festivals. A proud expression of music, dance, art, food and storytelling. Free. The Gathering Place, 2650 S John Williams Way E, Tulsa. 918-779-1000. GatheringPlace.org.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Cox Movie Night: The Lion King Tulsa – 5:30-8:30pm. Bring a lawn chair or blanket and gather around the QuikTrip Great Lawn for Disney's *The Lion King* (2019). Free. The Gathering Place, 2650 S John Williams Way E, Tulsa. 918-779-1000. GatheringPlace.org.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Healing Evolution Online Workshop – The Path of Healing Evolution – 9-11am. In this free workshop by Casa Galactica, you'll learn to activate your own Path of Healing Evolution. You'll be empowered to connect to your eternal sense of Self and to be present with trauma as it arises. There will be Q&A and a multi-dimensional healing ceremony, during which you'll learn to liberate yourself from suffering. Free. Sign-up online at CasaGalactica.com/programs.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Healing Evolution Online Workshop – Fundamentals of Healing Trauma – 9am-4pm. In this workshop by Casa Galactica, you'll learn about the origins of trauma, its effects on the body and nervous system, how to release trauma from your being and how to heal yourself. You'll learn that you are not alone and that you are innately connected to Source. You'll receive multi-dimensional healing in a powerful healing ceremony. Sign-up online at CasaGalactica.com/programs.

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Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center OKC – Daily exhibitions, performances and public programming, focusing on living artists, the art of now and the art of what's next. Free. Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center, 11 NW 11th St, OKC. 405-951-0000. OklahomaContemporary.org.

monday

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wednesday

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

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

thursday

Story Time Tulsa – 4-4:30pm. Fall in love with the magic found in children's books. New guest readers every week. Free. PSO Reading Tree. The Gathering Place, 2650 S John Williams Way E, Tulsa. 918-779-1000. GatheringPlace.org.

1st Thursday Sustainable Tulsa – 6:30-7:30pm. 1st Thur. Sustainable Tulsa's monthly open-to-the-public meeting offers individuals an opportunity to network, and hear presentations from local, regional and national sustainability leaders. **temporarily online only** Free. SustainableTulsaInc.org/1st-thursday.

friday

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

Norman Art Walk 2nd Friday – 6-9pm. 2nd Fri. Norman Arts Council is excited to announce the return of in-person 2nd Friday Art Walks. Free. Downtown Norman. 405-360-1162. 2ndFridayNorman.com.

LIVE! on the Plaza 2nd Friday OKC – 6-10pm. 2nd Fri. Plaza District's free, monthly artwalk, featuring art shows, live entertainment, great food and local shopping. Free. Plaza District: NW 16th St between N Blackwelder Ave and N Pennsylvania Ave, OKC. 405-578-5718. PlazaDistrict.org.

saturday

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

Story Time at Full Circle Bookstore OKC – 10:15am. Weekly morning story time with occasional special guests. For ages 10 & under. Space is limited so guests can maintain social distancing. Come visit friends at Full Circle Bookstore. 1900 NW Expressway, OKC. 405-842-2900. FullCircleBooks.com.

Explore the Flora Tulsa – 10:30am-noon. 4th Sat. Come out and explore the beautiful Oxley flora. Free. Oxley Nature Center, 6700 Mohawk Blvd, Tulsa. 918-596-9054. OxleyNatureCenter.org.

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The thankful heart opens our eyes to a multitude of blessings that continually surround us.

~James E. Faust



FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE

AGING GRACEFULLY
Michelle McElroy, DO
715 W Main, Ste K, Jenks
AgingGracefully.co



Discover a natural approach to your health. Aging Gracefully was founded more than 15 years ago by Dr Michelle McElroy, an OB/GYN and functional medicine physician with more than 20 years of medical experience. *See ad, page 14.*

HEALING & EVOLUTION

CASA GALACTICA
Jamie Thornhill, Intuitive Medium & Healer
Michael Thornhill, Trauma-Informed Healer & Channel
Contact@CasaGalactica.com
CasaGalactica.com



We offer online private sessions and group programs for dedicated inner-truth seekers and multidimensional healers. We help you release the pain of the past, empower your healing, activate your intuition and embody your truth. We provide online intuitive readings, trauma healing sessions, channeling sessions, intuitive mentorship and life-transformative workshops. Come home to Who You Are. *See ad, page 16.*

HEALTH FOOD

NATURAL GROCERS
Jessica Cox, BS, IFNCP
NaturalGrocers.com/Nhc/Jessica-Cox-bs-ifncp
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Natural Grocers' Nutritional Health Coaches provide free 1-on-1 virtual coaching sessions to help community members navigate their health and wellness journeys. Earn a \$5 Natural Grocers coupon & receive free personalized nutrition advice to help you stay rooted in health.

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At Whole Foods, we seek out the finest natural and organic foods available, maintain the strictest quality standards in the industry and have an unshakable commitment to sustainable agriculture.

If it's out of your hands,
it deserves freedom from
your mind too.
~Ivan Nuru



MASSAGE

BRITTANY BASCUE, NMT, OMT, LMT, RP
Neuromuscular Massage Therapist
918-401-0377
Brittany@TulsaHealing.com



Neuromuscular massage therapist offering trigger point therapy, lymphatic, Thai massage, deep tissue and Swedish massage. *See ad, Body Works page 4.*

MASSAGE - CLINIC/SCHOOL

LIKEMINDED THERAPIES
5929 N May Ave, Ste 408, OKC
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LikemindedTherapies.com
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Holistic massage clinic and school. Offering classes and massage therapy, corrective bodywork, yoga, meditation, sound/light therapy, GNM consultations, aromatherapy and energy healing. Call to schedule treatments with student practitioners and licensed professionals. *See ad, Body Works page 4.*

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

H&H PROCESSING
26427 S Hwy 125, Afton
866-726-3420
Amber@HigherHealthOklahoma.com



H&H Processing produces Orion Cannabis Tablets and Blossom Canna Capsules as well as craft FECO (Full Extract Cannabis Oil). The tablets and the capsules are all-natural, vegan, celiac-safe, gluten-free and sugar-free. Blossom mushroom capsules contain FECO and five varieties of mushrooms. The tablets are dissolvable sublingually. *See ad, page 7.*

MEDICAL SPA

PATH TO WELLNESS MEDICAL SPA
Torrey Knight, Esthetician, CNA
6125 S Sheridan, Ste E, Tulsa
918-494-0082 • TulsaPath.com



Come and discover the best version of you. Offering natural, customized facials that will have you glowing both inside and out. Therapeutic body services ranging from body wraps, massage, back facials and full body waxing. As always, all services offer access to our steam rooms. Pamper yourself today!

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ENERGETIC WELLNESS
Dr Jessica Menzel, BNG
2851 W Edmond Rd, Edmond
405-359-1245
EnergeticWellnessOk.com



Board-certified naturopathic doctor specializing in lifestyle changes that align with the body's natural ability to heal. The Energetic Wellness Center is dedicated to bringing to life the Seven Laws of Wellness that create health and happiness as we were each designed to have it. Choose to make well-being a priority in your life. *See ad, page 6.*

QIGONG

QIGONG OF TULSA
Tom Bowman, CQI, CQP
5800 S Lewis Ave, Suite 139, Tulsa
918-855-4222 • QigongOfTulsa.com



Qigong of Tulsa is a wellness center specializing in Clinical Qigong treatments and Qigong exercise training. Certified by the National Qigong Association as a Clinical Qigong Practitioner and an Advanced Qigong Instructor with over 20 years of experience. Training includes exercises, meditation and self-treatment techniques. Clinical practice includes energy work, cupping, acupressure and more. Email Tom@QigongOfTulsa.com. *See ad, Body Works page 4.*

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Reiki Master, Life Activation, Health Ninja. Reiki is a form of energy healing through a nonphysical and invisible universal energy that vibrates at a level higher than personal energy and can help alleviate suffering, whether it be of a

physical, emotional, mental or spiritual nature. *See ad, Body Works page 4.*

TAI CHI & KUNG FU

THOMAS ACADEMY

Shifu Thomas

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918-664-9191

ThomasAcademy.com



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East Winds Well Being Center has launched a new website, *East-Winds.com*. An eCommerce site offering mindful materials. In our shop, you'll find elements to expand your mind or to sport our design. Journals to gain

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Dee Day

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TulsaYogaQuest.com



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