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Featured Speakers at Alive! Expo

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As a sponsor of Atlanta's largest consumer trade show focused on holistic health and green products, *Natural Awakenings* is thrilled to work even more closely with Alive! Expo to make its educational offerings the best ever. This year we're proud to announce that speakers at the Expo include a *Natural Awakenings* editor, two contributors, customers and a former customer. For speaking dates and times, please visit: bit.ly/naa-ae-speakers-2022.



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Co-Owner, Nuts 'n Berries
Which Hemp Derived CBD Product Is Right for You?



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Plant-Based Chef, Author, Educator, Health Coach
The Power of Elevated Foods



TAMMY BILLUPS
Certified Interface Therapist, Award-Winning Author
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MILA BURGESS
Yoga Teacher, Trainer & Retreat Leader
The Healing Benefits of Gratitude



ADELE WANG
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The #1 Thing That People Often Miss in Health & Wellness



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Self-Sabotage: Why We Do It & How To Stop



SHANNON GOWLAND
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Alive! Expo will be held on May 14 and 15 at the Cobb Galleria. To request a *free* ticket: bit.ly/alive-expo-tix.

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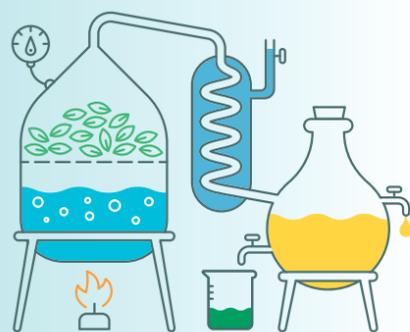
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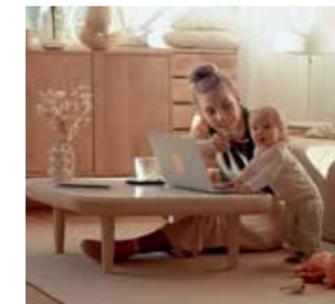
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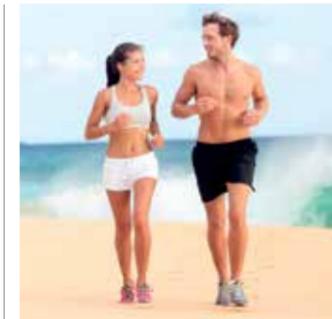


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May '22 with Adele Wang

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bit.ly/naa-aac-0522

If you'd like to pose a question to our life coaches, go here: bit.ly/naa-ask-a-coach

DIRECTORIES & RESOURCES

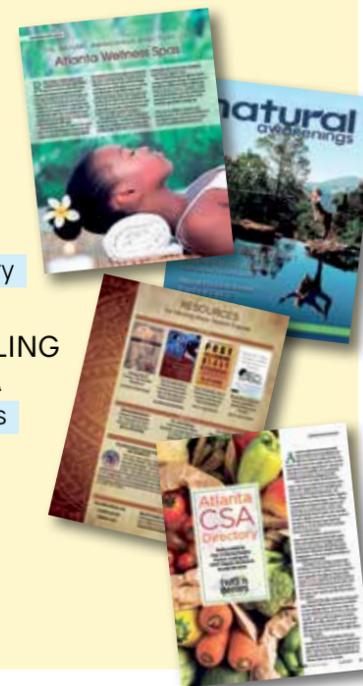
This month we offer a directory of Atlanta Farmers Markets. Some of our most popular content are directories and resource pages. Here's several of our most recent.

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My mother, Flora Chen, as a child, with parents Anna and Lu Xinyu

Mother's Day
WITHOUT MOM

This is my first Mother's Day without my mother, and I'm really unsure how I feel.

We weren't very close, but our relationship wasn't difficult, either. She lived in Atlanta, having moved from my hometown of Louisville in 2006. I'm the only sibling here; my brothers live in Houston. She had three years of normal life here, but in 2009, her health began to decline. I spent the whole year taking her from one appointment to the next to address her back pain. She did not want to undergo surgery, but after months of failing to find a solution, she gave in.

That's when she was diagnosed with colon cancer, and surgery was required immediately. It took the whole of 2010 for her incision wound to fully heal, and by then, back surgery was out of the question.

The cancer cleared and never returned, but then came Parkinson's. I don't recall when that was diagnosed, but it took a few

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

years for it to become debilitating. Her case did not manifest with the severe shaking that is most commonly associated with the disease; her issue was balance, and she fell many times. I'm surprised she didn't die, directly or indirectly, from a fall.

The hardest part of relating to Mom was being exposed to her negativity. It wasn't a horrible type of negativity, but it was constant. It showed up as worry, concern about this, fear about that. I can't tell you much about her worries because the vast majority seemed picayune and unrelatable to me.

Even everyday greetings invited negativity. When asked, "How are you?" I don't believe Mom ever replied positively. It's not that she would go on and on about what was wrong; it's that she rarely, if ever, found things to be joyful about. I finally found a way around it in an article about dealing with negative people. Instead of greeting her with "How are you," I would say "It's good to see you," and then I'd launch into some small talk about the day's events.

I allowed her negativity to really bother me while her health declined because I subscribe to the Buddhist belief that the biggest factor in determining the circumstances of one's rebirth is their state of mind at the time of death. In a very real way, Buddhists spend many hours of their lives training to die happy. Of course, because I love my mother, I took it upon myself to change her personality.

That ended up as well as you might imagine. At some point, I learned the difficult lesson that we are not responsible for the well-being or happiness of others—even those we love completely. We can only suggest, encourage, give... and pray. The truth of enlightenment and self-realization is that it is not handed to you. There must be the wish, the desire, some initiative, and effort. Yes, others can inspire you, educate you, guide you, and walk beside you, but you must want it first.

So I stopped trying to convince my mother to meditate, to read what I found inspiring, and to think about spirituality and the afterlife the way I do. Instead, I did something that was more appreciated: I started saying the Rosary with her. She raised us as Roman Catholics, and we closed many of our get-togethers by saying the Rosary.

As time passed, the saying of the Rosary became a measurement of her health. I watched her go from being able to say the whole thing, to needing to stop short of completion, to doing one decade, to requiring prompting for words, and, finally, to just listening to me recite one "Our Father" and one "Hail Mary."

As I'm sure anyone who has been in my shoes will tell you, the most difficult aspect of caring for a parent is witnessing their deterioration from normal to needing care 24/7. At the end, she had no mobility and even had difficulty standing. In perhaps the cruelest of degradations, Parkinson's robbed Mom of her ability to communicate; although she passed away this January, my last real conversation with her was in 2019. For a year and a half, the

Continued on page 45

Esposito, Geier and Chef Beee Head Speaker Lineup at Alive! Expo

Atlanta's Dr. Joe Esposito, a chiropractor holding certifications in clinical nutrition, pain management and traumatic brain injuries, will talk on the topic of "Secrets to Natural Stress Management and Optimum Nutrition" on Saturday, May 14 at 2 p.m. on the main stage at this year's Alive! Expo.



Dr. Joe Esposito

Esposito runs Health Plus Wellness Center, is a frequent speaker at the expo and heads up an expanded list of speakers thanks to the recent addition of a small speaking area in the *Natural Awakenings* booth.

Also presenting on the main stage are Mari Geier, co-owner of Nuts 'n Berries, and Chef Beee, a plant-based chef, author and educator. Geier's talk, "Which Hemp Derived CBD Product Is Right for You?," will be presented at 2 p.m. on Sunday, and Chef Beee's talk, "The Power of Elevated Foods," will be presented on Saturday at noon.

Other speakers include energy healer Tammy Billups, author of two books on animal-human relationships; life coaches and



Mari Geier

Natural Awakenings contributors Adele Wang and Diane Martinez; Shannon Gowland, herbalist and owner of Seeds of Wellness and the Roswell Farmers Market; interior designer Kathryn Rigsby, owner of Celestine Living Design and expert on biophilic design; and physical therapist Oren Bar.

Billups will also appear on the main stage and speak on The Emotional Well-Being of Your Animal Companions, while the other speakers will speak at the

smaller speaking area at the *Natural Awakenings* booth.

Alive! Expo, Atlanta's largest consumer trade show focused on natural health and green products, will be held May 14 and 15 at the Cobb Galleria. Free tickets are available from *Natural Awakenings* at Bit.ly/alive-expo-tix.

Disclosure: Natural Awakenings is a sponsor of Alive! Expo and helped to engage speakers for the event.

9th Annual WONDERFUL WIZARDS OF RAW Arrives in June

The ninth annual Wonderful Wizards of Raw, a celebration of raw food that offers vendors, speakers, entertainment and a raw chef competition, will take place June 3 through 5.

Produced by Tassili's Raw Reality Café, a vegan restaurant in the West End, this year's festival theme is Return to the Garden: Mother Nature's Remedy to Build Immunity. More farmers have agreed to speak and share their wares—five and counting—than any previous year.

The festivities kick off with The Libation at Cascade Springs Nature Preserve on Friday afternoon. The Libation, held from 4 to 8 p.m., is an opportunity to come together as a community, take a nature walk, partake in libations, and enjoy music, drumming and dancing.

The festival's main event will be held in the backyard of Tassili's Raw Reality Café, located at 1059 Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard. Saturday and Sunday hours are from 1 to 11p.m.

Referring to this year's theme, Tassili Ma'at, founder and owner of Tassili's Raw Reality Café, says: "We need to stress the importance, at this time, of being in alignment in with nature. It's about eating right, getting sunshine and fresh air, drinking clean water, taking supplements and taking care of Mother Earth. Just as we pick up litter to keep the planet healthy, we need to keep litter out of our bodies."

Early-bird pricing for vendors runs through May 14. The festival is offering a savings of \$50 on one-day and two-day booth slots. For more information, visit Bit.ly/WWR-2022

Disclosure: Natural Awakenings is a sponsor of the Wonderful Wizards of Raw.



Larese Dockery, IAMOH Herbs, winner of 2021's raw chef competition

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ATLANTA BRIEFS

HEAL THYSELF MOVES TO EAST ATLANTA



Lala Huseynova, right, with daughter Tomris Ahmad Shah. [Photo: Tomris Ahmad Shah]

In January, Heal Thyself Atlanta, a full-service wellness center and spa, moved to new digs on Moreland Avenue.

"Our wellness center is known for being a one-stop shop to help our clients get on track with their health, unwind and feel rejuvenated," says owner Lala Huseynova. "We offer services from colon hydrotherapy to massages, organic facials, foot detoxes, hip baths, reiki, hyperbaric chambers and chakra balance work. Essentially, we cover all of the bases for healing."

Huseynova wanted to find a location that clients could get to easily without having to drive out of town. "But we also wanted a place where people could decompress and feel like they were away from the city's hectic environment. When we toured the Moreland area, we realized that our vision for the wellness center could be fulfilled in East Atlanta; it would allow us to be in the heart of the city yet give our clients the feeling of being in a charming small town."

The new 3300-square-foot space has 14 rooms for the wide range of services offered at the wellness center.

With a background in healthcare finance, Huseynova noticed that instead of working to keep healthy people healthy, the healthcare industry just treats people at their sickest. "It never felt good to me since it doesn't help people address root causes and really get to the bottom of what's going on in people's health. So we decided to create a place for those who want to heal themselves before it's too late—and enjoy a fuller, healthier lifestyle."

Heal Thyself Atlanta is located at 158 Moreland Ave. SE in Atlanta. For more information, visit HealThyselfAtlanta.com, call 470-558-6339 or email HealThyselfAtlanta@gmail.com.

ATLANTA'S ONLY U-PICK STRAWBERRY FARM CHANGES LOCATION



Photo: Kirsten Simmons

Ecosystem Farm, which claims to be the only u-pick strawberry farm within Atlanta city limits, has relocated to 500 Springside Drive SE.

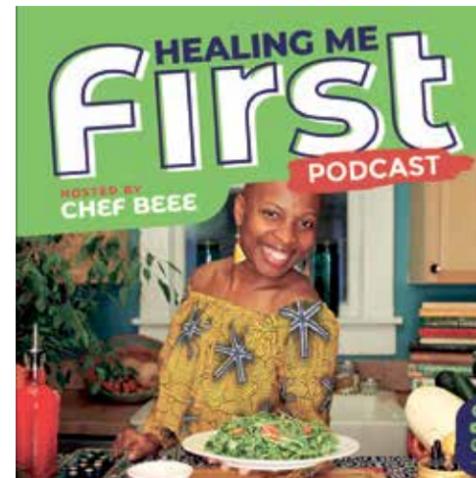
"We are thrilled to be opening our fields again," says owner Kirsten Simmons. "There were many moments when I questioned whether we would survive losing our old space and rebuilding on completely raw land. We've cleared 12-inch privet trees, removed over 100 yards of trash and brought over 1000 yards of compost into this space. Seeing berries finally growing again is so satisfying!"

Weather permitting, Ecosystem Farm will open its strawberry field the first week of May. Because parking is limited, appointments to pick are required and can be made for Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. A \$25 fee covers the first three pounds of strawberries, and each additional pound costs \$10.

Ecosystem uses no pesticides, herbicides or fungicides, and Simmons says it is just one of three organic u-pick strawberry farms in Georgia.

To schedule an appointment, visit EcosystemFarm.com/index.php/u-pick/.

Chef Beee Relaunches Healing Me First Podcast



After Chef Beee, aka Natasha Brewley, launched her Healing Me First: Stories of Breakthroughs, Transformation and Healing podcast in April 2020, she quickly decided the time wasn't right for her. But now it is. Chef Beee has recently relaunched her podcast and now has nine episodes available.

"I happen to know some pretty amazing healers and health seekers, and I am bringing their stories of healing, elevation and introspection to you," she says in the podcast's introduction. "I hope that you will be inspired as much as I am by these stories and will use them on your wellness journey."

Chef Beee is a plant-based chef, author, educator and owner of Nyansapo Wellness Institute. "When folks are working to improve their lives, they need some encouragement along the way to continue doing what they are doing. We also offer tools that people can incorporate into their health and wellness arsenal."

The weekly podcast drops new episodes on Mondays. It can be found on Anchor, Apple, YouTube and Spotify. Visit Spoti.fi/3uSDfnh.

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Intermittent Fasting Basics

HOW TO IMPROVE HEALTH BY EATING LESS OFTEN

by Sheila Julson



Ильяна Кревичская/AdobeStock.com

Fasting has been part of religious and cultural practices since ancient times, but now it is entering into everyday American eating habits. Intermittent fasting (IF), which involves restraining from eating for periods ranging from hours to days, was the most popular dietary strategy among Americans in 2020, outpacing low-fat keto diets and “clean eating,” reports the International Food Information Council. About 10 percent of survey respondents reported that they were following IF diet procedures, usually for weight loss and better health.

“Intermittent fasting is a lifestyle,” says Jerron Hill, an anesthesiologist, in Plano, Texas, who has practiced it for two years and found himself with more energy. “Many metabolic syndromes and diseases can be avoided by making IF a way of life.”

Research on the health benefits of IF is ongoing, but Hill says that advantages include stabilized blood sugar levels, because insulin levels rise after eating meals. “In a fasted state, insulin levels fall, blood sugar stabilizes and fat stores can be utilized as a source of energy,” he says. Other benefits he cites include lowered

blood pressure, decreased low-density lipoprotein, or “bad” LDL cholesterol, and lower triglycerides

There are several IF methods. The 16/8 method is most popular and involves fasting for 16 hours and eating within an eight-hour window each day. The 5:2 plan is for those that would rather fast twice a week and eat regularly the other five days. Another method known as OMAD involves eating one meal a day. While most IF models do not restrict specific foods, they encourage the consumption of nourishing, satiating, whole foods. Snacking is discouraged.

Women’s Fasting Needs Differ

“In the United States, 90 percent of Americans are metabolically unhealthy. Fasting is one of many strategies that can help people improve their metabolic health. That translates to being a healthy weight and having balanced hormones,” says Cynthia Thurlow, a nurse practitioner in Washington, D.C., and founder of the Everyday Wellness Project, an online subscription plan. Her new book, *Intermittent Fasting Transformation*, integrates IF with women’s

hormonal needs during every stage of life.

“Women need to fast differently,” Thurlow emphasizes. “A woman in peak childbearing years under age 35 has to account and fast for her menstrual cycle, meaning her body is much more sensitive to macronutrient depletion or changes than a menopausal woman. Younger women need to limit fasting if they are already lean. They need to avoid fasting five to seven days prior to their menstrual cycle and remain attuned to messages their bodies send them in response to sleep, stress, nutrition and exercise.” In general, once women reach menopause, they experience less hormonal fluctuation and thus more flexibility to fast on a daily basis, she says, although they, too, should keep an eye on their experiences with sleep, stress, nutrition and exercise.

Planning for Success

The word “fasting” often conjures up thoughts of hunger and starvation, but proper planning will leave us full and satisfied while practicing IF. “When you’re eating a balanced diet and not necessarily following a particular fad or specific type of diet, you can enjoy nourishing meals without restrictions and still practice IF,” says lifestyle coach Laura Fuentes, of Madisonville, Louisiana, author of the e-book *Intermittent Fasting for Women*.

Fuentes recommends starting with the 16/8 model, because approximately half of the 16-hour fasting time is spent sleeping. “There’s also downtime in the evening while you’re preparing to sleep. In the morning, most of us are getting ready for work or getting kids off to school, and we don’t eat right away. Those hours are generally not focused on food.”

When it’s time to eat, fasts should be broken with satiating, nutritious food, not a light snack. The first meal of the day should be nutritious, with protein and healthy fats. Breaking a fast with just an apple, or carrots and hummus, will lead to hunger and eventual snacking.

A common misnomer is that we must eat ketogenic or low-carb diets while practicing IF. While carbs need to be considered, Thurlow emphasizes eating nutrient-dense, whole foods and fewer processed foods, whether they are part of keto, paleo, omnivore or vegetarian diets.

Some people practice “clean” fasting by consuming only water, black tea or other calorie-free beverages during the fasting time. Others prefer “dirty” fasting and might consume a handful of grapes, walnuts or other foods or beverages containing less than 50 calories during the fast. “I like patients to understand the value of a clean fast,” Thurlow says. “People might think 50 calories doesn’t count, but that is food, and that does break a fast.” 🍌

Sheila Julson is a Milwaukee-based freelance writer and contributor to *Natural Awakenings* magazines throughout the country.



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Resilient Mothering

How Moms Are Forging Ahead in a Changing World

by Carrie Jackson



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Two years after “coronavirus” became a household word, the pandemic continues to affect every aspect of our lives. Mothers, in particular, have learned to reimagine what it means to be a parent, employee, partner and friend, while still finding time for themselves. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, almost 70 percent of mothers say that worry and stress from the pandemic have damaged their mental health.

While social distancing, quarantining, remote learning and masking quickly became a new and often unwelcome normal, positive shifts have also been developing. Already resilient mothers are exploring how to adapt to an ever-changing situation and learning when to hold on and when to let go. They are discovering new ways to be available for their children’s mental health, maintain their jobs, stay connected with other moms and prioritize self-care.

Shae Marcus, publisher of *Natural Awakenings* South Jersey (NASouthJersey.com), says that the pandemic has brought a number of unforeseen silver linings. As a single mother of two

young children, she has been in a constant state of transition the last two years and is starting to achieve greater balance. “Like most other mothers, my life before the pandemic was nonstop. I was getting by, and at the same time comparing myself to other parents. The world had to slow down so I could catch up, and I’ve been forced to stop, breathe and take it in stride,” she says.

Marcus shares a common concern, that the isolation has affected her kids’ development. “I worry that the lack of social integration over the past two years will have a lasting impact on my children. My son, who is now in third grade, was in kindergarten the last time he had a full year in a ‘normal’ school setting. That’s a lot to miss out on. While he is academically on track, I’m concerned about him being mature enough. Having sports and other extracurricular activities starting back now is helping to get them integrated again, and I’m able to fully appreciate going to an outdoor spring football game that wasn’t able to happen for so long,” she says.

Marcus has discovered that working from home has had advantages. “Now, I can do a load of laundry in-between meetings, go to the grocery store when I would have been commuting and be more present when my kids are home. Since I’m not worried about rushing out the door, we have time to talk during breakfast, and I’m able to accompany them to the bus stop. Afterwards, I take 10 minutes for myself to walk around the block and gather my thoughts for the day,” she explains.

Reordering Priorities

Seventy-one percent of mothers describe being a working mom during the pandemic as very challenging, according to research done by the global consultancy group APCO Impact. As president of Families and Work Institute (*FamiliesAndWork.org*), a New York-based research nonprofit, Ellen Galinsky has seen employers grant access to a wider variety of benefits that fit their employees’ individual and family needs. “The pandemic, coupled with racial reckoning, has made many of us rethink our priorities. It now is becoming clear that the world that seemed relatively normal before wasn’t working. Mothers and fathers were thrust on the front lines of schooling and saw firsthand how different teaching and parenting are,” Galinsky notes.

An estimated 82 percent of employers plan to allow their employees to keep working remotely after the pandemic, reports a survey by human resources consultancy Mercer, but that turnaround is just a first step, says Galinsky. “Studies show that having workplace flexibility procedures in place is a floor, but how employers treat you when you need that flexibility matters the most. The pandemic made us all experience collective and multiple losses together and brought some difficult issues to light,” she explains.

In juggling work and life duties, Galinsky shies away from the word “balance,” which suggests that time and energy needs to be split evenly. “Work and home lives are deeply intermingled, and often when one is in sync, the other will follow,” she says. “It’s important for mothers to set

realistic expectations for themselves and let go of the notion that they’re not doing a good job, their kids have to be perfect or they don’t have time to take care of themselves. Children will absorb what they see, so being mindful in your words and actions around work will have an impact on them. If you have a stressful meeting and bring that home with you, the energy in the house will change. It’s okay to tell the kids that you’re upset at your boss and are going to call a friend and talk or go for a walk; let them know it’s not their fault and that parents get stressed, too.”

Stress Survival Skills

The pandemic also put many mothers in a chronic state of hypervigilance, because they not only had to manage their own anxiety, but also help kids manage their experiences. A University of Rochester study of 153 mothers of toddlers found that ongoing strains can disrupt the body’s natural stress response, making it more difficult to respond with patience and sensitivity to a child’s needs.

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Elizabeth Cohen, a clinical psychologist and director of the Center for CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) in New York City (CenterForCBTInNYC.com), says that a shock to the nervous system can only be released with the acknowledgement that the trauma is being experienced in the first place. “Having an understanding of how you’re responding to this stress and uncertainty is key to moving through it. Even going back to the office after so long may trigger a panic attack if the trauma of the past two years isn’t addressed,” she says. “Mothers need to practice compassionate awareness for themselves and what they’ve gone through. They need to be seen, heard and witnessed in the same way their children are.”

Cohen advises that while part of a mother’s job is to make kids feel emotionally safe, it’s not as effective if they are themselves depleted. She recommends adopting simple, actionable practices

throughout the day to help restore and reset the mind and body, suggesting, “Put some Epsom salt in the bottom of the tub and allow your feet to soak for a few minutes during a shower. Before brushing your teeth, take three deep breaths and pay attention to where you might be feeling tension in your body. Keep a gratitude journal handy to reflect and record your observations and interactions.”

She advises us to remember that we have all had different experiences of this trauma, and nobody is the same as they were in 2019. “It’s okay to tell a friend, ‘I’m excited to see you and also, I’m uncomfortable not wearing a mask.’ We’ve also had to be more selective about who we spend time with, and that has allowed us to foster more nurturing relationships,” she says. “Be more discerning about who you spend time with, instead of saying yes to every invitation to get coffee. It’s okay to do less, and making authentic decisions

in the moment will help you truly feel aligned with your thoughts and actions.”

Joint Healing

Claire Zulkey, a Chicago-based writer and mother of two young boys, has found creative ways to stay connected with other mothers and not feel so isolated. She pens a newsletter, *Evil Witches* (EvilWitches.substack.com), which gives her a platform to share stories of everyday motherhood triumphs and concerns. Topics have included perimenopause, end-of-life options for the family pet, finding the best hand lotion and other subjects that mothers in her circle think about.

She also maintains a Facebook group of 100-plus mothers, providing a safe place for members to commiserate and support each other. “The group has allowed me to really get to know mothers in a more intimate way, truly understand what they’re going through and appreciate how much they care about their kids,” says Zulkey.

She made a personal decision to stop drinking a few months into the pandemic, a lifestyle choice that she has maintained for the past year. “While I was not an alcoholic, there were too many times when I would wake up with a hangover or get into a tipsy argument with my husband. I quickly learned to appreciate how much easier parenting is when I’m in a stable mood, and the entire household has benefited, especially during the pandemic, when we were in such close quarters,” she says.

For all of us, moving forward after two years of collective grief, loss and uncertainty will undoubtedly present new unforeseen challenges, yet maintaining a sense of perspective can help if things start to feel overwhelming. “At the start of the pandemic, I started to feel sorry for myself, but soon I realized that I actually was so much better off than a lot of people. Once I oriented myself with that reality, it was easier for me to move on with a sense of gratitude and desire to help others,” says Zulkey. 🙌

Carrie Jackson is an Evanston, IL-based freelance writer and frequent contributor to Natural Awakenings magazine. Connect at CarrieJacksonWrites.com.

SELF-CARE FOR STRESSED-OUT MOMS

For mothers trying to juggle it all, making their own mental health a priority is key. Here are some practical ways busy moms can incorporate their overall wellness into a daily routine.

Set Up Self-Care: Sneaking in breaks throughout the day can have a positive cumulative effect. Follow a guided meditation while waiting for soccer practice, use essential oils in the car, keep a favorite lotion next to the bed or savor a favorite nourishing snack.

Cultivate a Network: Nurturing relationships with supportive peers can provide emotional and social support. Meet a friend for a morning coffee or afternoon walk, join a book club, host a potluck with other mothers or volunteer with a community group.

Prioritize Therapy: The right therapist can provide an unbiased and supportive perspective and help process new and lingering issues. Find a practitioner that understands a mom’s unique needs and a modality that resonates with us. Traditional talk therapy works well for some, but be open to exploring other forms, such as movement therapy or art therapy.

Keep Communication Open: Modeling and encouraging dialogue gives kids a safe space to practice sharing and lets everyone feel valued. Find time during car rides, at the dinner table or before bed to check in with the family and share each other’s thoughts.

Take a Class: Learning a new skill can spark creativity and help build a social network. Try a pottery workshop, join a dance club, take a photography class or study a foreign language just for fun.

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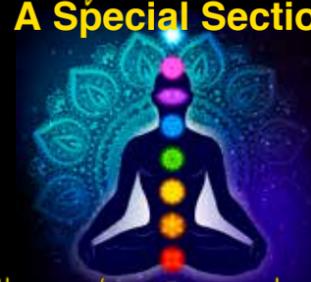
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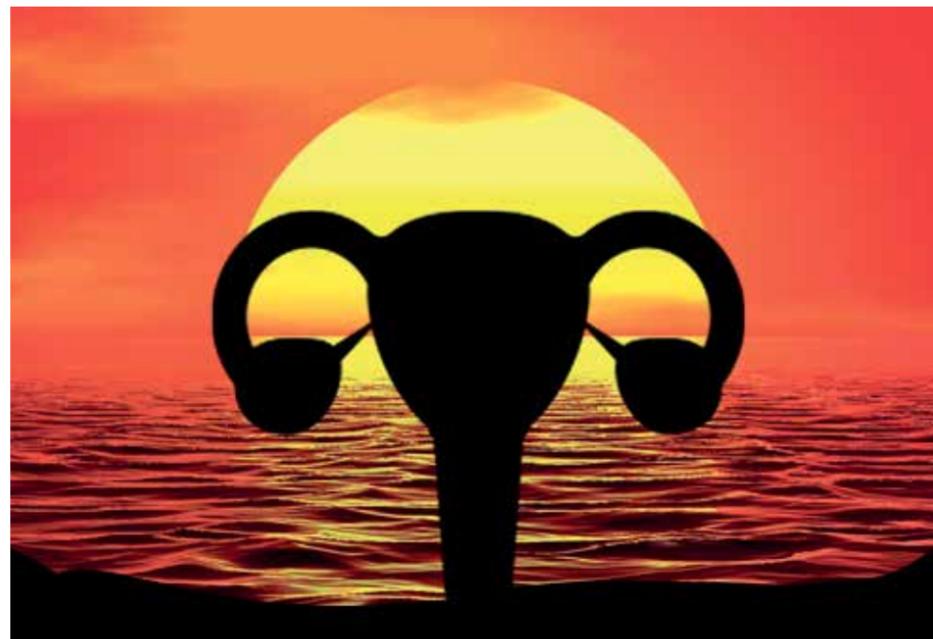
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HEALING WAYS

Fending Off Fibroids

NATURAL APPROACHES OFFER RELIEF

by Marlaina Donato



Optimal reproductive health is key to our vitality, which is why living with uterine fibroids can be debilitating. Studies indicate that as many as 80 percent of American women develop these non-cancerous growths during their childbearing years. Oftentimes, the condition is free of symptoms, but an estimated 26 million women currently suffer from associated effects like chronic pelvic and back pain, frequent urination, excessive menstrual bleeding and a swollen abdomen. Also called myomas, fibroids can often be a hidden cause of infertility, even in asymptomatic cases.

Asian women have a lower incidence of fibroids, while African American women are two to three times more likely to develop them than white women, particularly at a younger age. Genetics, obesity, estrogen-promoting foods and environmental toxins can fuel the fire of this condition, but a tailored, natural approach can minimize symptoms and for some, ward off the need for invasive surgery.

Happier Hormones Through Diet

While there is no definitively known cause of fibroids, the most accepted theory is a disruption in the ratio between estrogen and progesterone. Italian researchers that examined data from 1990 to 2020 reported in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* last year that diets deficient in fresh fruits, green vegetables and vitamin D increase the risk for the onset and formation of uterine fibroids.

"I do believe prevention is important by avoiding the use of toxic cosmetics and cookware with chemical components, and by choosing lower-inflammatory foods," says Crystal Fedele, a doctor of Chinese medicine who treats patients with acupuncture and

Chinese herbs at her clinic, Holistic Women and Families Natural Health Center, in Port Orange, Florida.

Conventionally farmed produce and farm-raised fish are treated with environmental estrogens to stimulate growth, which in turn contribute to estrogen dominance and an increased risk of fibroids in women that consume such foods. "It's important to eliminate dairy and meat raised with synthetic hormones that can act like estrogen in the body," advises Alisa Vitti, a New York City-based women's hormone expert and author of *In the FLO: Unlock Your Hormonal Advantage and Revolutionize Your Life*. "While no diet can guarantee fibroid prevention, altering the food you eat may help slow fibroid growth. When it comes to food, your first step is to remove inflammatory foods."

Vitti recommends opting for fiber-rich whole grains that aid in the elimination of excess estrogen, as well as nixing gluten and all dairy products unless they are made from organic goat or sheep milk. "High insulin levels from white, starchy stuff—which acts like sugar in the body—is a factor in making fibroids grow," she says.

Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, kale and bok choy are allies in the fight against fibroids by boosting detoxifying enzymes in the liver. Regular servings of sweet potatoes, carrots, apricots, pumpkin, spinach and other carotene-rich foods are also valuable.

Ancient Healing Modalities

Traditional Chinese Medicine offers promising benefits, but when using recommended herbs, it's important to seek out qualified practitioners rather than self-treat, advises Fedele. "In Chinese medicine, each case is individual, so herbal formulations are often constructed to treat the whole health of the person and modified as we see improvements," she says. "We also use a lot of supplements that can help regulate hormones—DIM (diindolylmethane) and broccoli seed extract being two that are commonly used for estrogen-related disorders." Fedele also recommends acupuncture, but says it is most effective when combined with herbals, supplements and dietary therapies.

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STRATEGIES TO STAVE OFF FIBROIDS

FROM HORMONE EXPERT AND AUTHOR ALISA VITTI:

Eat to balance estrogen. Prioritize foods that help modulate and balance estrogen, like flax seeds, beans and whole grains. Pears and apples are liver-supporting foods that contain lots of fiber, along with a flavonoid named phloretin, which impairs tumor growth. Be mindful of alcohol and caffeine consumption. Just a couple of glasses of wine significantly raises estrogen levels. Coffee suppresses ovulation, thereby suppressing production of progesterone and increasing the likelihood of estrogen dominance. Organic, unprocessed soy in the form of tempeh and miso can be beneficial, with an anti-estrogenic effect on the uterus.

Balance the microbiome. The microbiome contains a colony of bacteria that helps metabolize estrogen. When the good and bad bugs in the microbiome are out of balance, the estrobolome can't do its job efficiently, and estrogen builds up. Another key to building and maintaining a healthy microbiome is supplementing with a high-quality probiotic.

Cut out the chemicals. Many chemical-free options are less expensive than conventional products, especially when bought in bulk. Use baking soda and vinegar to clean around the house. Refrain from treating the lawn with chemicals. Replace plastic food storage containers with glass and stainless steel options which last a lifetime and don't leach harmful agents into comestibles. Opt for a shower curtain made of less-toxic materials than plastic.

FROM ACUPUNCTURIST SUSANNAH NEAL:

Fibroids that are smaller than two centimeters will respond more quickly to treatment and may only require the use of one or two modalities, such as monthly, professional, abdominal massage; self-care massage at home; and herbal medicine prescribed by a licensed herbalist for three months. Larger, more chronic and severe fibroids may require multiple modalities and a longer course of treatment in addition to these measures, including weekly acupuncture sessions and dietary recommendations. Three to six months of treatment may be required. Natural medicine understands and respects that each person's ability and time required to heal is complex and must be individualized.

Susannah Neal, a licensed acupuncturist in Iowa City, Iowa, concurs, saying, "Chinese medicine is highly effective for rebalancing the flow or energy and breaking up old patterns of imbalances." Neal, certified in the Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy, attests to this gentle modality designed to invigorate the circulatory, lymphatic and nervous systems of the digestive and reproductive organs. "Fibroids may be a result of impaired blood flow in the uterus, and while many styles of massage use techniques to improve circulation, these techniques focus specifically on the reproductive and pelvic organs," she says.

According to Neal, one benefit of the Arvigo technique is regulation of the menstrual cycle. When applied regularly, the massage may reduce the size and severity of fibroids. In cases of larger, chronic or more severe fibroids, she says that three to six months of treatment or longer may be required, and in some cases will be used only as adjunctive treatment along with therapies prescribed by a medical doctor.

No matter which alternative approach is taken, monitoring progress is key. Fedele says, "I usually suggest six months to a year of trying holistic options under the care of a licensed provider and then at that time re-evaluating the scenario." 🌱

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

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The Atlanta FARMERS MARKET Directory

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For Atlanta foodies, nothing says "spring" quite like the opening of farmers markets. While our friendly climate encourages many markets to remain open year-round, most open in the months of March and April. From the bounty of local farmers, to the offerings of mom-and-pop food shops, to the unexpected surprises of artists and craftspersons, a trip to a farmers market is an adventure for the senses and the soul. The best part of shopping local? Maybe running into friends doing the same and picking up recipe ideas for that piece of produce you've never prepared before!

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THE BOUNTY OF FARMERS MARKETS

Buying Local Boosts Health, the Economy and the Planet

by Sandra Yeyati



Throughout the nation, an estimated 8,000 farmers markets offer some of the freshest food available anywhere. Often open on weekend mornings or select weeknights, these nutritional meccas allow local farmers to sell their fruits, vegetables, eggs, meat and dairy directly to consumers, thereby providing an attractive business channel for them. “If you buy direct from a farmer, 97 cents of every dollar goes home with the farmer, whereas if you buy from a traditional grocery store, only 17 cents makes its way back to that farmer,” says Janie Maxwell, executive director of the Illinois Farmers Market Association.

Dollars spent at farmers markets boost local economies. “When farmers make money, they buy seeds at their local co-op or purchase tools from a nearby hardware store, which infuses economic capital into rural communities,” says Katie Myhre, technology research manager at the Farmers Market Coalition. “If we can focus on

growing the capacity of our farms within our region and building consumer habits around what we can grow locally, that’s going to help our region become more resilient.”

This type of localized commerce offers environmental benefits, too. Produce from a local source carries a much smaller carbon footprint than one that travelled halfway across the country. “Farmers markets are uniquely positioned to encourage environmentally responsible farming by providing a solid economic platform to climate-positive farmers that are taking care of land and water quality,” Myhre asserts.

According to a study commissioned by the U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance, 72 percent of consumers know “nothing” or “very little” about farming or ranching. Farmers markets facilitate ongoing dialogues between growers and consumers, serving as valuable educational sites. “Getting to know your farmer offers you an opportunity to ask questions directly to the person growing the product and make a choice accordingly, whereas when you go into grocery stores, you’re fed a lot of advertising and greenwash labeling with terms that you don’t understand,” Myhre says, adding, “While many small farmers decide not to go through the costly United States Department of Agriculture organic certification process, their farming practices are often just as clean or even more so, and at a farmers market, consumers are able to look the farmer in the eye and learn about their growing methods.”

Maxwell appreciates the opportunity to make an educated choice. “As a consumer,



you have to decide what is your highest value. For me, the most compelling reason to shop at a farmers market is the peak, in-season, quality of the food, the incredible taste and nutrition that you get because it was freshly harvested and didn’t have to be transported over long distances. The number of people that touch your food is significantly lower at a farmers market, so there’s less opportunity for it to be mishandled or cross-contaminated. It carries the name of the producer on it. This is their life’s work, and their reputation is on that label. I sense that there’s a real desire to ensure great quality and safety.”

Regularly buying fresh food from a farmers market allows families to get into the habit of eating in season. “Cooking seasonally allows you the opportunity to capture the incredible flavor profiles of what’s fresh. It has just been picked and tastes incredible—very different from the flavors you get from grocery store products that were produced someplace else, maybe even weeks or months ago,” Maxwell explains.

Myhre concurs: “If we can build our habits, cooking preferences and skills around those seasonal rhythms, that’s a really beautiful benefit. It’s awesome for me

to know that these herbs were harvested yesterday. There’s also a wide diversity of products. You’re not going to see 12 varieties of squash at your big-box grocery store. I’m always surprised by what I see, and it’s a really fun experience as somebody who loves food. Taking home really great-tasting products that were produced with so much care is a central benefit.”

For many, the farmers market is a community gathering. In addition to local growers, they often include cottage food vendors offering homemade jams and jellies, baked goods, sauces, preserved and pickled items and other delicious foods, as well as arts and crafts vendors and musical entertainment. “The wonderful thing about the farmers market is that it leads with joy,” Myhre says. “It’s fun. You don’t invite friends to the grocery store, but you might meet your friends for coffee at the farmers market.”

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



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April 2 – November 26
11770 Haynes Bridge Road
Alpharetta, Georgia 30004
AlpharettaFarmersMarket.com

Avondale Estates Farmers Market **U**

Sundays 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Year-round
22 N Avondale Road
Avondale Estates, Georgia 30002
AvondaleEstatesFarmersMarket.org

Brookhaven Farmers Market **W**

Saturdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
March – November
1375 Fernwood Circle, NE
Brookhaven, GA 30319
BrookHavenFarmersMarket.com

Castleberry Farmers Market **H**

Mondays 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Year-round
492 Larkin Street, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30313
CastleberryFarmersMarket.org

Decatur Farmers Market **S**

Wednesdays 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
March 30 – November 16
First Baptist Church
308 Clairemont Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia 30030
cfmatl.org/Decatur

Dunwoody Farmers Market **3**

Saturdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
March 5 – December
Brook Run Park
4770 N Peachtree Road
Dunwoody, Georgia 30338
DunwoodyFarmersMkt.com

East Atlanta Village Farmers Market **Q**

Thursdays 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
March 31 – November 17
572 Stokeswood Avenue, SE
Atlanta, Georgia 30316
cfmatl.org/eav

East Point Farmers Market **B**

4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
March – December
2757 East Point Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30344
bit.ly/eastpoint-fm

Emory Farmers Market **R**

Tuesdays 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Year-round
Emory University
569 Asbury Circle
Atlanta, Georgia 30322
bit.ly/emory-fm

Freedom Farmers Market **O**

Saturdays 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Year-round
The Carter Center
453 John Lewis Freedom Parkway, NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30307
FreedomFarmersMkt.com

Fresh MARTA Market

April – December, all locations
cfmatl.org/marta

Bankhead Station **D**

Wednesdays 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
1335 Donald Hollowell Pkwy
Atlanta, GA 30318

College Park Station **A**

Thursdays 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
3800 Main St
Atlanta, GA 30337

Doraville Station **X**

Fridays 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
6000 New Peachtree Rd
Doraville, GA 30340

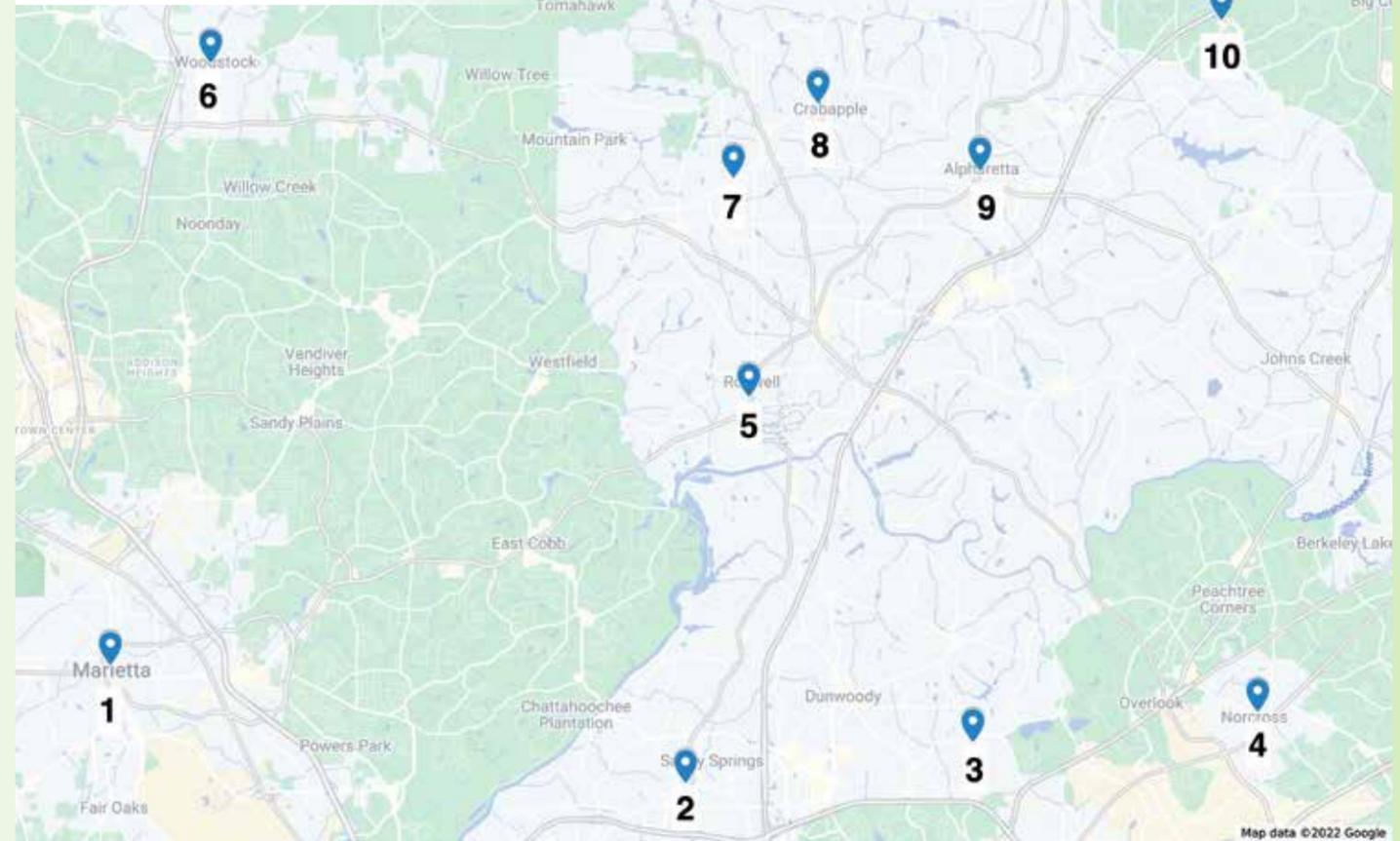
Five Points Station **I**

Fridays 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
30 Alabama St SW
Atlanta, GA 30303

HE Holmes Station **C**

Wednesdays 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
70 Hamilton E Holmes Dr, NW
Atlanta, GA 30311

North Metro Area



West End Station **G**

Tuesdays 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
680 Lee St, SW
Atlanta, GA 30310

Grant Park Farmers Market **P**

Sundays 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Year-round
The Beacon Atlanta
1030 Grant Street, SE
Atlanta, Georgia 30315
cfmatl.org/grantpark

Green Market at Piedmont Park **K**

Saturdays 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
March – December 10
1071 Piedmont Avenue, NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
PiedmontPark.org/green-market

Halcyon Farmers Market **10**

Tuesdays 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Year-round
6365 Halcyon Way
Alpharetta, Georgia 30005
bit.ly/halcyon-fm

Marietta Square Farmers Market **1**

Saturdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Year-round
41 Mill Street
Marietta, Georgia 30060
MariettaSquareFarmersMarket.com

Milton Farmers Market in Crabapple **8**

Wednesdays 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Year-round
City Hall Plaza
2006 Heritage Walk
Milton, Georgia 30004
Facebook.com/miltongafarmersmarket

Morningside Farmers Market **M**

Saturdays 8:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Year-round
Morningside Presbyterian Church
1411 North Morningside Drive, NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30306
MorningsideMarket.com

Norcross Community Market **4**

Wednesdays 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
May 4 – August
Lillian Webb Park
20 Skin Alley
Norcross, Georgia 30071
NorcrossCommunityMarket.com

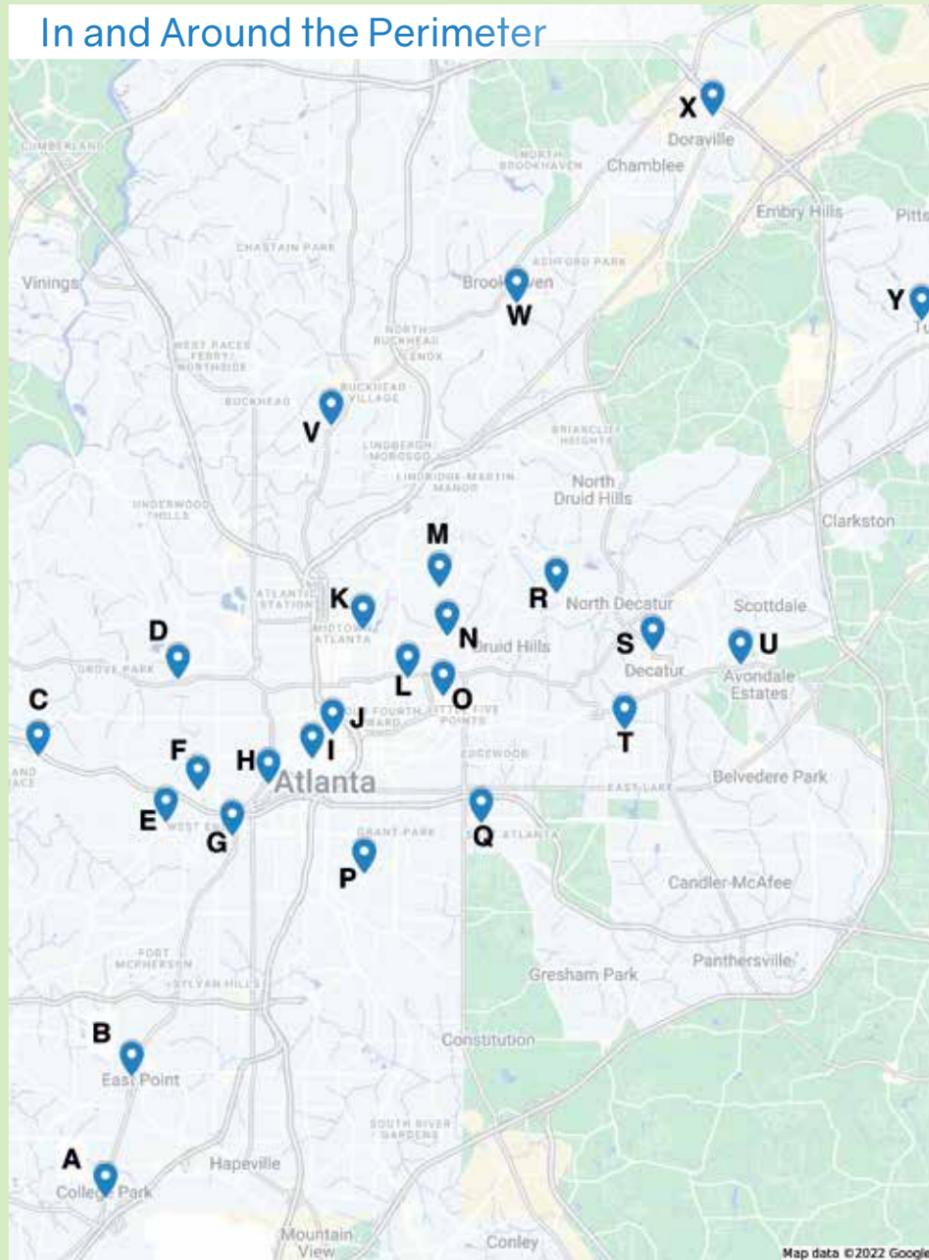
Oakhurst Farmers Market **T**

Saturdays 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Year-round
630 East Lake Drive, Suite E
Decatur, Georgia 30030
cfmatl.org/oakhurst/

Peachtree Center Green Market **J**

Thursdays 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
April – October
Peachtree Center Courtyard
225 Peachtree Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
peachtreecenter.com/green-market-is-back/

In and Around the Perimeter



Peachtree Road Farmers Market **V**

Saturdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
 March 5 – December 17
 2744 Peachtree Road, NW
 Atlanta, Georgia 30305
PeachtreeRoadFarmersMarket.com

Ponce City Farmers Market **L**

Wednesdays 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
 March 30 – October 26
 The Trestle (BeltLine entrance to Ponce City Market)
 675 Ponce De Leon Avenue, NE,
 Atlanta, Georgia 30308
cfmatl.org/poncecity

Roswell Farmers & Artisans Market **5**

Saturdays 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
 April – October
 Roswell Presbyterian Church
 755 Mimosa Boulevard
 Roswell, Georgia 30075
RoswellFam.com

Sandy Springs Farmers Market **2**

Saturdays 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
 April – November
 1 Galambos Way
 Sandy Springs, Georgia 30328
CitySprings.com/farmersmarket

Sweet Apple Farmers Market **7**

Thursdays 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
 Year-round
 World Harvest Church
 320 Hardscrabble Road
 Roswell, Georgia 30076
Facebook.com/SweetAppleFarmersMarket/

Truly Living Well Farmers Market **F**

Fridays and Saturdays 12:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
 Year-round
 324 Lawton Street, SW
 Atlanta, Georgia 30310
TrulyLivingWell.com/ctownmarket

Tucker Farmers Market **Y**

Thursdays 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
 (April – October)
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 (November – December)
 April 2 – December 17
 4882 Lavista Road
 Tucker, GA 30084
TuckerFarmersMarket.com/about-the-tfm

Virginia Highland Farmers Market **N**

Thursdays 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 March 31 – November 17
 Virginia Highland Farm Burger
 1017 North Highland Avenue, NE
 Atlanta, Georgia 30306
cfmatl.org/virginia-highland/

West End Farmers Market ATL **E**

Fridays 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
 Saturdays 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
 June – August
 1354 Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard
 Atlanta, Georgia 30310
WebMarket6.org

The Woodstock Farm Fresh Market **6**

Saturdays 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
 April 23 – December 31
 105 Elm St
 Woodstock, Georgia 30188
bit.ly/woodstock-fm



Alpharetta Farmers Market.
 Photos: Julie Carter

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Ask a Coach



by Diane Martinez

“How do I stop being a perfectionist?”

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“How do I stop being a perfectionist? When I was growing up, achievement was valued highly in our home. Doing ‘pretty good’ was frowned upon, and now I feel stuck. I want to make some changes in my life, but I’m afraid of making a mistake.”

We pick up many beliefs along our journey from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood. Many of these beliefs serve us well, such as believing that it’s wrong to hurt others, that it’s important to be polite, that we are capable of achieving our goals, that it’s good to help others and that saving money is responsible. These beliefs guide us to create lives that are rewarding for us and contribute to a healthy society.

However, some of the beliefs that have been ingrained in our psyches hold us back from challenging ourselves and taking the bold steps that would lead to a fulfilling and rewarding life. These are often referred to as “limiting beliefs.”

A pervasive limiting belief that fuels perfectionism is that we are not acceptable as we are—that value, worth and love must be earned, and they are earned through success. If we hold these beliefs, it is easy to become risk-averse. The stakes are high, and the payoff is not satisfying, as we are expected to crank out one success after another. How daunting.

Consider that your worth and value have already been established by Source. They are not enhanced or diminished by the success or failures that society recognizes. Your worth is immutable. You are loved and whole as you are. It is like walking on a tight-rope that is one foot above the safety net. There is nothing truly at stake.

Whatever changes you strive to make, do so knowing you are lovable and worthy as you are. Your value is not on the table. You are free to explore this life as your heart and soul beckon you to; you are free to experience the full range of successes and failures that a life well lived encompasses.

“My boss is driving me crazy with what I consider poor leadership. I almost turned in my keys today and walked out. Am I just being overly dramatic, or is this a sign to take the leap and leave?”

This is a great question, and I commend you for pausing to consider your best course of action, as it can be tempting to act in the heat of the moment. Taking time to clearly consider your options is wise! In this case, to determine your best next steps, consider sitting down with a sketch pad or journal and thoughtfully exploring the feelings this incident brought to the surface. Here are some questions that can be helpful to ask yourself:

- Have you shared your concerns with your boss?
- If not, what would you say?

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Founder, Vibrology Center
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- Is this a pattern, or were one or both of you just having a bad day?
- Are their leadership choices impeding the work you do?
- What specifically would you like to change?
- Does your dissatisfaction mostly stem from the current situation, or do you feel stymied in your creative expression?
- Are you bursting with new ideas or simply dissatisfied with what is?
- What are the best aspects of your current employment?
- What would you miss about the job if you were to leave?
- If you were to leave, what would you do? Would you seek another position or start your own business?
- What are the financial implications?
- What attributes would an ideal job have?

As you reflect on your emotions and thoughts surrounding this situation, tune into your body. How do you *feel* as you explore the alternatives? Listen deeply for the responses. Is there a feeling of dread when you truly consider not working there anymore? Or is there a rush of excitement when you sketch out how you would run a similar business of your own?

What we sense viscerally in our bodies are clues that can carry helpful information and can steer us to our best next steps. If you feel guilty that you haven't yet spoken to your boss to discuss your concerns in a professional manner—you've only complained to friends—that guilt is telling you something. Make an appointment and have the conversation. Whatever way the meeting goes, you will gain clarity.

Conversely, do you feel excited, almost giddy, at the thought of having a shorter commute or having greater flexibility in your job? Or are you excited at the thought of doing a different sort of work altogether? Is this your opportunity to get out from behind a desk or into nonprofit work?

The truth is that for any question that arises in our minds, the answer lies within. As you reflect on both the positive and the not-so-positive aspects of your current job and the possibilities that come with leaving, your inner wisdom will guide you to your best course of action.

Trust yourself and the process. 🙌

Diane Martinez is a certified holistic life coach based in Sandy Springs. She offers virtual and live one-on-one life coaching and small group classes on Zoom. Follow her on Instagram @LifeCoachMartinez and visit ConsciousCreatingLifeCoaching.com.

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and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born.

~Anais Nin

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Optimum Hydration

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT DRINKING WATER

by Sandra Yeyati



Maintaining proper hydration is one of the most important measures we can take to benefit our health. “The human body is made up of 55 to 75 percent water, and proper fluid levels are essential for many important body functions, including nutrient and oxygen transportation, temperature regulation, blood pressure stabilization, removal of waste from the body and muscle repair,” says Josh Axe, a Nashville-based clinical nutritionist and doctor of chiropractic and natural medicine. “Drinking enough water allows for healthy digestion and detoxification, supports hunger control and improves the appearance of your skin, eyes and hair.”

Throughout the day, our bodies expend liquid to perform these vital functions. “Dehydration occurs when you lose more bodily fluids than you consume,” says Axe, the author of *Ancient Remedies* and founder of *DrAxe.com*. “Your body needs water and electrolytes replenished, otherwise you’ll experience symptoms such as dry mouth, thirst, muscle weakness and spasms, headache, dizziness, nausea and fatigue.”

“How we live today is why we’re so much more dehydrated than we were 30 to 50 years ago,” says Dana Cohen, a New York City integrative medicine physician and co-author of *Quench*. “Air conditioning and heating are so drying. Electronics, prescription drugs, processed foods, fluorescent lighting—all these things coming at us and affecting our cells—are sucking the hydration out of our environments and out of us.”

According to Cohen—the risks of day-in-day-out, low-grade dehydration—the kind most of us experience—include constipation, joint pain, stiffness, brain fog and cognition problems. “There’s some evidence that it is also a risk factor for diabetes, Alzheimer’s and certain cancers like colon and kidney cancers,” she adds.

How to Hydrate

Optimum hydration is more nuanced than simply drinking eight to 10 eight-ounce glasses of water a day. It depends on our body size, age, diet and level of physical activity or exposure to hot temperatures, Axe says. He recommends

more fluids for women that are pregnant or breastfeeding, teenagers that are developing quickly and people on medications like antibiotics, diuretics, hormone pills, blood pressure medications and cancer treatments.

Cohen points to a few reliable markers: “We’re meant to urinate every two to three hours throughout the



day, and you want the color of your urine to be strong, but not too orange or too brown, which indicates dehydration, and not crystal-clear, because you could be over-hydrating.”

In her book *Quench*, Cohen delineates a five-day plan to optimize hydration.

Start every day with a big glass of water, which can include a squeeze of lemon and a pinch of real salt (pink or sea salt, not processed table salt).

Drink a glass of water before every meal. “For people who are trying to lose weight, a few published studies suggest that this will help them lose five additional pounds over a three-month period when dieting,” she says.

When feeling hungry, drink a glass of water. We often mistake hunger for thirst.

Consume one or two green smoothies a day made with a blend of greens, water and added ingredients to taste. This will incorporate a healthy amount of daily fiber, which helps to absorb and hold on to water.

Add what Cohen calls “micro-movements” throughout the day, such as nodding the head up and down, rotating the wrists and ankles, scrunching fingers and toes or twisting the torso. “These little movements help to move fluid throughout the body and lubricate joints,” she explains.

Hydrating Foods

According to Axe, some foods are naturally hydrating, including coconut water, melons, celery, cucumber, kiwi, citrus fruits, carrots, bell peppers, berries, lettuce, avocado, zucchini and tomatoes.

Cohen recommends one to two tablespoons of chia seeds mixed into a liquid every day. “They’re incredibly hydrating. If you soak chia seeds in water, they form this gel-like structure on them. Thanks to some fascinating research by Dr. Gerald Pollack from the University of Washington, in Seattle, this gel water, which has different properties from regular H₂O, is believed to store energy like a battery. Getting more of this structured water by

eating plants should be your goal, so your body and your cells are better hydrated.”

Best Fluids to Drink

“The best option is purified water that goes through a filtering process to remove chemical pollutants, bacteria, fungi and algae, but still has beneficial minerals,” Axe says. Both Axe and Cohen recommend the Environmental Working Group’s water filter guide (ewg.org) to find the best at-home system for every budget, as well as its database that lists the safety of tap water in each U.S. zip code.

“The research shows that under four cups of coffee a day is not a diuretic, so it does contribute to your hydration; anything above four cups starts to become a diuretic and goes against you,” Cohen notes, adding that herbal teas are always a great hydrating option with added medicinal properties. ☘

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

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Super-Agers and YOGA

by Mila Burgess

While it is considered normal for brain power to decline as people age, studies show that it is not inevitable. Super-agers are people in their 80s, 90s and beyond that exhibit cognitive functioning comparable to people decades younger.

Many institutions have invested a great deal of research on this segment of the population, including Harvard University, the National Institute on Aging, the National Institute of Health and Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine. Magnetic-resonance imaging of this group consistently shows that super-agers exhibit slower loss of brain volume than their peers, providing them with better protection against dementia.

While many factors can contribute to becoming a super-ager, there are a few common habits researchers have noted among this set. Super-agers are physically active. They challenge themselves mentally and embrace stepping outside of their comfort zones to learn new things, which stimulates and engages the brain in a variety of ways. They also report strong relationships with others and tend to have excellent communication and social awareness skills.

Yoga is one of the most popular forms of exercise practiced by adults in the United States. Due to its relatively low-impact and highly modifiable nature, it is an excellent form of exercise for individuals with varying levels of experience, ability and mobility; it is quite suitable for the aging population. Compared to more traditional forms of exercise, yoga purposefully incorporates more elements of mindfulness and meditation, thus making it both a physical and mental endeavor. The combination of movement, rhythmic

breath and meditative qualities offers practitioners a holistic, mind-body experience.

Recently, the breathwork and meditation associated with yoga have garnered attention from neuroscientists investigating ways to stave off dementia.

Regardless of the style of yoga one practices, it offers many layers of challenge, both physical and mental. Long-held poses challenge participants to find stillness in body and mind; vigorous, fast-paced practices require focused concentration and muscular endurance. Yoga provides an opportunity to lean into the growth and development that is available outside of one's comfort zone.

Dance, Yoga and Neuroplasticity

A major study from the Albert Einstein Institute measured mental acuity in adults 75 years and older over a 21-year period by monitoring rates of dementia. The researchers were curious to see if any specific physical or cognitive recreational activities influenced brain functioning and were surprised to find that almost none of the physical activities in which the senior citizens participated offered protection against the loss of cognitive function. However, there was one important exception. Seniors who danced frequently showed a significantly reduced risk of dementia. Researchers theorized that dancing requires greater neuroplasticity; the brain rewires itself with new neural pathways in order to learn choreography. The more complexity people introduce to their minds, the healthier the brain remains over time, and the more likely they are to achieve super-ager status. Working through the step sequences of a dance routine requires greater brain power than other forms of exercise. Dancing enhances several important brain functions simultaneously as participants rely on motor skills, memory, touch, listening and emotion to move through choreographed numbers.

The sequencing in yoga evokes a similar effect on neural connectivity in the brain. Yoga requires practitioners to tap into several elements of cognition at once—kinesthetic, rational, emotional and often

musical. Like dance choreography, yoga sequencing can be simple or complex; it can be predictable or unpredictable. Some forms of yoga invite students to flow freely to the rhythm of their breath, requiring split-second decision-making about where to go next in the sequence. These components help create new ways of thinking and lead to greater neuroplasticity.

In fact, yoga has gained traction as an area of interest in the research of combating neurodegenerative disease and as a vehicle for super-aging. In addition to the neuroplasticity benefits, researchers hypothesize that yoga's combination of breathwork, meditation and physical proprioception—the body's ability to sense movement, action, and location—supports memory, concentration, organization, attention, impulse control, decision-making and flexible thinking.

More Benefits for the Brain

Several studies examining the brains of yoga practitioners, including many over the age of 60, show that the practice can change the brain's structure, encouraging the development of new connections. It strengthens areas of the brain that play a key role in memory, attention, thought and language. These are the same areas of the brain that contribute to the phenomenon of super-aging.

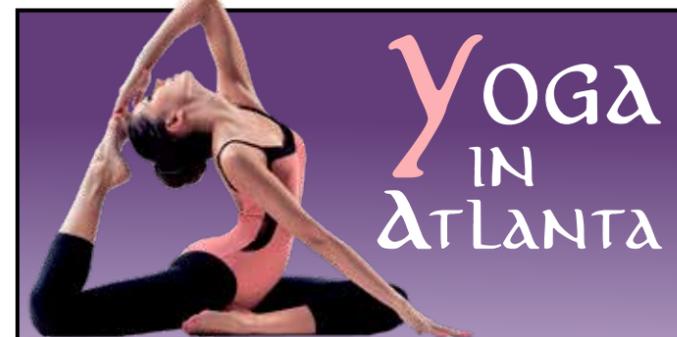
Yoga classes don't just offer the brain-boosting benefits conducive to super-aging; they also provide a rich environment for cultivating and nurturing social bonds. Given the importance researchers place on the link between super-agers and strong relationships, activities that bring people together and foster a sense of community are recommended. Studies show that synchronized movements, like those that often occur in yoga classes, enhance feelings of connection among participants. Barbara Frederickson, a positive psychology researcher, notes, "When people move together as one orchestrated unit, they later report that they experienced an embodied sense of rapport with each other—they say they felt alive and connected, with a mutual sense of warmth and trust."

Many yoga practitioners also experience enhanced interpersonal relationships as a result of the compassion, nonreactivity, kindness, patience and acceptance fostered by the practice. The self-awareness and presence that are cultivated in a yoga practice also facilitate interpersonal bonding, which can lead to deeper feelings of connection and belonging.

Yoga offers participants of any age a space to be physically active, take on new challenges, leave their comfort zones and stimulate their brains while engaging socially within a community of like-minded people. The practice taps into each of the major categories associated with the phenomenon of super-agers as it provides opportunities to learn, grow and connect. 🧘



Mila Burgess, E-RYT 500, YACEP, teaches at LifePower Yoga in Sandy Springs. She is the owner of Metta Yoga, offering workshops, private lessons, virtual classes, teacher trainings and retreats. Contact her at Mila@MettaYoga.studio.



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yogasmyrna.com
770-626-1559

YOGA CALENDAR

SUNDAYS

Sunday Evening Yoga in the Park – 6-7pm. 2nd Sun. Enjoy a weekend wind down by moving your body in the great outdoors and set intentions for the new week. With Dr. Krystal Fannin. Free. Blackburn Park, 3493 Ashford Dunwoody Rd, Atlanta. Register: Tinyurl.com/yaz3phza.

MONDAYS

Yoga with Angie – 6pm. Whether you're a beginner or intermediate yogi, we welcome you. Free. Neva Lomason Memorial Library, 710 Rome St, Carrollton. Tinyurl.com/2p9x5pn6.

WEDNESDAYS

Atlanta Laughter Yoga Club – 12-12:30pm. 1st Wed. With Celeste Greene. Come as you are. Free. Trolley Barn, 963 Edgewood Ave NE, Atlanta. Celeste GreeneLaughs.com.

Yoga with Amador – 5-6pm. Also Sat, 10-11am. Free yoga and meditation.

Bring own mat. The Interlock, 1115 Howell Mill Rd NW, Atlanta. Tinyurl.com/2wkewr9t.

THURSDAYS

Yoga at The Avenue West Cobb – 6-7pm. An all-levels beginner friendly practice with Mia Yakei. Free. The Avenue West Cobb, 3625 Dallas Highway, Ste 470, Marietta. Register: Tinyurl.com/yck6ap26.

SATURDAYS

Sunrise Yoga Meditation – 7-8am. Simple mantras, gentle asanas, pranayama and guided meditation. Love offering. Unity North, 4255 Sandy Plains Rd, Marietta. UnityNorth.org.

Zen Sound Bath – 11:30am-1pm. 3rd Sat. With Gabriel Nelson Sears featuring crystal and Himalayan singing bowls, gongs, bells, flutes, drums and chimes. \$16. Trinity Center for Spiritual Living, 1095 Zonolite Rd, Atlanta. Registration required: TrinityCenterAtlanta.org.



WORKSHOPS & RETREATS

A FOCUSED ADVERTISING SECTION



Do you have a workshop or retreat coming up and want to advertise it in this section? Call us for special rates! 404-474-2423

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More Information & Registration

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Publicize your event! This section hosts free and paid listings. Each month, we select a limited number of events – they must have broad appeal and cost no more than \$20 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.

SUNDAY, MAY 1



Artisan Boutique Market – 10am-5pm. Vendors will offer their hand-made products for purchase including, custom-blended essential oils, bath salts, unique jewelry, Spirit drawings, sun catchers, stones, tuning forks, soaps and more. Free admission. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

TUESDAY, MAY 3

Brick Road Meditation to Healing Guided Meditation & Healing – 1pm. Be guided through a gentle meditation down a multi-colored brick road through the 7 chakras, and finally into an ethereal healing space of pure white light. \$20. Online. More info and to register: WithLoveAndLight.com.

FRIDAY, MAY 6

Remote Healing for Chakra Alignment – 11am. Alignment occurs when your chakras are communicating well with each other and are operating at their highest health and purpose. \$15. Online. JamieButlerMedium.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 7

Georgia Audubon Society Bird Walk – 8-10am. All welcome. Free. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. DunwoodyNature.org.

TUESDAY, MAY 10



Simple Exercises to Bring Calm/Reduce Stress: Nervous System Regulation – 11am. Easy tools that you will be able to utilize in your life to help to bring calm and reduce stress in any situation and to begin to regulate the nervous system. \$10. More info and to register: WithLoveAndLight.com.

THURSDAY, MAY 12

Online: Transmission Meditation – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA SE Region. Free. Via Eventbrite. Info: 770-302-2208 or InfoSE@Share-International.us. Register: Tinyurl.com/5t4bxn34.

FRIDAY, MAY 13

Full Moon Meditation & Healing: Releasing Labels – 1pm. Be guided through an exercise to call forth the labels/roles we are currently holding and loosen them up so our unique light can shine through the structure of our life more clearly. Donation. More info and to register: WithLoveAndLight.com.

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SUNDAY, MAY 15

Full of Luck – 2:30-4pm. Intuitive & Predictive Astrologer Kali. The Sagittarius full moon is brimming with luck destined to cross your path. Learn how to bring in the abundance of creative prosperity so we can gain financial benefit off our natural talents. Free.

SUNDAY, MAY 22

Change Your Interiors, Change Your Life with Feng Shui – 2-3:30pm. With Roberta Grant. Join this informative, interactive and fun workshop to learn about the history, principles, Bagua Map, The Five Elements, Ch'i Enhancers, Clutter Clearing and more. Free; love offerings gratefully appreciated.

SATURDAY, MAY 28

Herbal Distillation with Fleur + Forage – 2-5pm. Join us as we fire up our Copper Still to create an herbal pine hydrosol (the water portion of a plant distillation). Hydrosols have a long history of use and are tantalizing to all the senses. \$20.

Friday Night Hike – 8-9pm. Join us for a fun and educational hike through the woods at night. \$5. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. Registration required: DunwoodyNature.org.

SATURDAY, MAY 14

Alive! Expo – May 14 & 15. 10am-6pm, Sat; 11am-5pm, Sun. The only Green Living Event in Atlanta and the Southeast. Interactive demos, live health lectures and kids' activities. Learn how to integrate natural products and green living into daily life. \$10/person. Cobb Galleria Centre, Two Galleria Pkwy, Atlanta. AliveExpo.com.

Free First Saturday: Wildflower Walk – 1-2pm. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. Registration required: DunwoodyNature.org.

MONDAY, MAY 16

Scorpio Full Moon Gong Bath Meditation – 6:30-8pm. With Eve Smith. The perfect

opportunity to tap into our deepest and most honest feelings and foster space for fulfilling connections. Decatur Healing Arts, 619-A E College Ave, Decatur. DecaturHealingArts.net.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18



Virtual Green Reads Book Club – 6:30-8pm. Delve into essential reads related to land conservation and protection, sustainable growth and stewardship among other environmentally focused subjects. May book: *Regeneration: Ending the Climate Crisis in One Generation* by Paul Hawken. Register, Liza Mueller: GreenReadsBookClub@yahoo.com. GeorgiaConservancy.org.

THURSDAY, MAY 19

Sacred Beats Drumming – 7-8:30pm. Drumming utilizes traditional rituals, ceremonies, rhythms, and chants as a means to access a transformative healing process. Free. The Well of Roswell, 900 Old Roswell Lakes Pkwy, Ste 300, Roswell. 770-778-2051. TheWellOfRoswell.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 21

Birding for Beginners – 8-10am. Take a stroll with Master Birder Rose Guerra to gain valuable tips and strategies for spotting different birds and learning to identify them. Free/member, \$10/nonmember. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. Registration required: DunwoodyNature.org.

THURSDAY, MAY 26

Online: The Nature Club Dine and Discover – 7-9pm. Living History at Oakland Cemetery with Marcy Breffle. \$10/general, \$5/CNC Members. Via Zoom. Registration required: 770-992-2055 or ChattNatureCenter.org.

FRIDAY, JUNE 3

The The Wonderful Wizards of Raw – June 3 - 5. 4-8pm, Fri; 1-11pm Sat and Sun. The ninth annual West End celebration of raw food with vendors, speeches, entertainment, a chef competition and more! Saturday and Sunday at 1059 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd. www.fassilisrawreality.com/wonderful-wizards-of-raw-extravaganza/



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ONGOING

Sundays

Online & In-Person Sunday Experience – 9am, Adult Study; 9:30am, Meditation; 10am, Music; 10:30am, Service. Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta, 3107 Clairmont Rd, Ste A, Atlanta. More info: slc-atlanta.org.

Red Clay Sangha Sunday Morning Service – 9am, meditation; 10:30-11:30am, service & dharma discussion. Via Zoom or in person. 3420 W Hospital Ave, Ste 102, Chamblee. More info: RedClaySangha.org.

Adult Education Class at Unity Atlanta – Thru Dec 4. 9:45-10:45am. 1st Sun. With Dr. Rocco Errico. Class will focus on the Metaphysical meaning of the Gospel of John, with an emphasis on the Aramaic text. Free. 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Online: NWUUC – 10am. Via Zoom. North-west Unitarian Universalist Congregation: 770-955-1408 or nwuuc.org.

SRF Atlanta Meditation Service – 10-10:45am. An opportunity to meet with other truth-seekers to commune with God and share spiritual fellowship. 4000 King Springs Rd, Smyrna. 770-434-7200. srfatlanta.org.

Meditation Open House – 10-11:30am. Discussion at 11:30am and tea at 12pm. Meditation instruction available from 10-11am for those new to the practice. Atlanta Shambhala Center, 1447 Church St, Decatur. More info: Atlanta.Shambhala.org.

Second Sunday Sober Bike Ride – 10:30am. 2nd Sun. Brings together people from all walks of sober living who are seeking fun and active ways to connect with likeminded people. BTA Bicycle Tours of Atlanta will provide a bike at no charge if needed. Bicycle Tours of Atlanta, 659 Auburn Ave NE, Atlanta. Register: Tinyurl.com/yjzutj4.

OneWorldSpiritualCenterSundayService – 11am. To watch: OneWorldSpiritualCenter.net.

Unity Atlanta Sunday Services – 11am. Attend in-person or watch via live stream. 3597 Parkway Ln, Peachtree Corners. 770-441-0585. UnityAtl.org.

Online: UUCA Service – 11am. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta: uuca.org/live.

SRF Atlanta Reading and Inspirational Service – 11am-12pm. An opportunity to meet with other truth-seekers to commune with God and share spiritual fellowship. 4000 King Springs Rd, Smyrna. 770-434-7200. srfatlanta.org.

Sunday Morning Talks and Discussion – 11am-12pm. With Vedanta Center of Atlanta via Zoom. To watch: VedantaAtlanta.org.

Unity North Online & In-Person Sunday Service – 11:15am. 4255 Sandy Plains Rd, Marietta. More info: 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. For location: Hi@KosmicBrew.com or Linktr.ee/KosmicBrew.

Meditation Classes – 4-5pm, Level I; 5-6pm, Level II. All religions, all ages and all people. Learn how to meditate for spiritual enlightenment. \$15. 5161 Brook Hollow Parkway, Ste 220/225, Norcross. Register, Andrea:404-557-4306. MeditationWellnessClub@gmail.com. MeditationWellnessClub.com.

Mondays

Online: Monday Night Meditation – 7-8pm. A live, instructor-led meditation and discussion. Develop a meditation practice by maintaining a moment-to-moment relaxed awareness of our surrounding environment, bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions. All levels. \$10. Register: TheOpenMind-Center.com.

Tuesdays

Online Meditation Open House – 7pm. A 30-min meditation and a 30-min discussion via Zoom. To watch: Atlanta.Shambhala.org.

Metro Atlanta Sierra Club Meeting – 7:30pm. 2nd Tues. More info: SierraClub.org/georgia/atlanta.

Wednesdays

30-Minute Guided Meditation – 8am. Be guided through a simple yet powerful meditation that gives rise to an experience of mental peace and wellbeing. No experience necessary. Beginners welcome. \$5. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

Zoom Check-In: Wellness Wednesdays – 10am. Check in with your community during COVID-19 crisis. slc-atlanta.org.

Online: Joy of Breathing Class – 1-1:30pm. Learn the Joy of Breathing technique, practice a deep Pranayama session and enjoy the benefits. Free. Register: Tinyurl.com/muwwanm9.

Decatur Farmers Market – Thru Nov 16. 4-7pm. Local farmers, artisanal food makers and crafts. First Baptist Church of Decatur, 308 Clairmont Ave, Decatur. 404-373-1653. cfmatl.org/Decatur.

Angel Message Circle – 6:30-8:30pm. Sharron Ragan works with the energy of

thousands of Angels and guides you in your next steps. \$20. Heart Soul and Art, 1470 Roswell Rd, Marietta. Pre-registration required: Heart-Soul-And-Art.square.site.

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

Tai Chi & Qigong – 9:30am. For beginners. \$7/at door. Meets in The Jefferson Parks and Recreation Dept, 2495 Old Pendergrass Rd, Jefferson. 678-510-9573. CarolOsborne.org.

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.

Meditation Fundamentals – 6:30-7:30pm. Suitable for complete beginners. Get a practical introduction to meditation and includes topics such as the benefits of meditation, mindfulness, good posture, types of meditation, and how to start a daily meditation practice. In-person & online. \$15. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. MeditationInGeorgia.org.

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

Meditation Classes – 6pm, Level I; 7pm, Level II. See Sun listing. 5161 Brook Hollow Parkway, Ste 220/225, Norcross. Register, Andrea:404-557-4306. MeditationWellnessClub@gmail.com. MeditationWellnessClub.com.

Drum Circle – 7-9pm. 2nd Sat. With Rhythm Healer Eric Olson. No experience necessary. \$10. Unity North, 4255 Sandy Plains Rd, Marietta. More info: UnityNorth.org.

Saturdays

Free Saturday Meditations – 8-8:30am. A guided meditation to start your day with a positive state of mind and carry that inner light with you for the rest of the day. No prior meditation experience necessary; all welcome. Kadampa Meditation Center Georgia, 741 Edgewood NE, Atlanta. 678-453-6753. 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 – 9am-1pm. Year-round. 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/y3x5y2s.

Earth Care Sangha Gathering – 10am-12pm. 1st Sat. Rain or shine. Meet in the back parking lot and then carpool to a nearby park for a meditative walk in nature. In case of inclement weather, meet in Holy Grounds Cafe. Unity North, 4255 Sandy Plains Rd, Marietta. More info: UnityNorth.org.

Reiki Share Group – 3:30-5:30pm. A gathering of like-minded reiki practitioners who participate in group healing treatments on each other. \$21. Healing Hands Reiki & Spiritual Development, Inc, 27 Waddell St, Ste A, Atlanta. Tinyurl.com/2rykarft.

Meditation Classes – 6pm, Level I; 7pm, Level II. See Sun listing. 5161 Brook Hollow Parkway, Ste 220/225, Norcross. Register, Andrea:404-557-4306. MeditationWellnessClub@gmail.com. MeditationWellnessClub.com.

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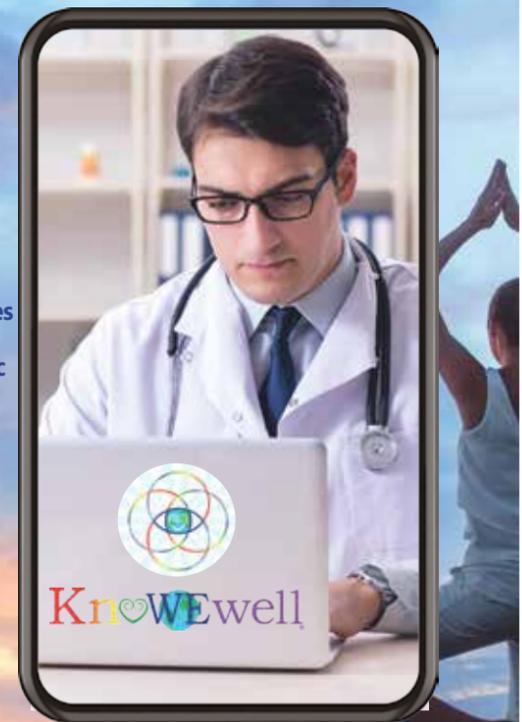
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Continued from page 11

words I hated most to utter came from my mouth again and again: "I'm sorry, Mom, I don't understand what you're trying to say."

To watch Mom descend into an existence not worth living was almost unbearable. To see her wasting away, not being able to do anything meaningful, not being able to take enjoyment in anything at all and depending on others for practically all of her daily needs was to confront and understand hell on earth. For years, Mom asked for God to take her; I am grateful that when the end came, it came quickly.

Buddhism teaches that we should rejoice when bad things happen to us because we are paying off karmic debts that will not be revisited upon us. Somehow, that's easier to accept and follow when bad things happen to me, but not so much when seeing Mom suffer. I'm sure that the length of her suffering—13 years—impacted my ability to rejoice and that the total destruction of her body assaulted my spiritual reserves. But ultimately, I believe the mother-child connection was at the heart of my suffering.

It is said that our parents raise us, and then, much later in life, we parent them. As a parent-to-be, I knew it would be my job to love my children unconditionally, as I chose to have them. I also knew that the reverse was true: My children are not obliged to return my love, as they did not choose to be born. For years, I felt I wasn't a very good son, that I could do more, and even today, I feel so. But, in the end, in my heart, I found I loved my mother as I love my own children. To echo the sentiment of the last line of Sheila Ewers' "Walking Each Other Home" article this month, I hope that my mother knew, as the most certain thing in her life, how very much I loved her. 🌸



Publisher of Natural Awakenings Atlanta since 2017, Paul Chen's professional background includes strategic planning, marketing management and

qualitative research. He practices Mahayana Buddhism and kriya yoga. Contact him at paul@naAtlanta.com.



Sheila Ewers (middle) with her daughter Kate McVay and son Sean McVay [Photo: Sylvia Guardia Photography]

The Art of LETTING GO

by Sheila Ewers

Sometimes I feel like being a mother consists of little more than a million goodbyes. The first one was a farewell to who I was before children. Cast into what often felt like a world full of danger and uncertainty and left to navigate with nothing but the pole star of my own heart, I became something altogether new, capable of a love more fierce and more pure than I had even known existed.

Each and every day, I fell in love with the child in my arms, only to realize that by the next morning, they had awakened, changed, and I had to meet them again as if for the first time—even while longing for the baby they had been the day before.

Every year brought a whirlwind of disentanglement as I cast them into the arms of teachers, babysitters, coaches, friends and other families. I moved them to colleges

and apartments and watched them begin to accumulate the accoutrements of a life without me. I did so until that life suddenly became their norm, and my presence—once the only thing that mattered—faded into the background.

Don't misunderstand. I know that I am lucky; my children are strong and independent, thriving in a confusing and chaotic world, and they sometimes even want to be with me! Every now and then, I get to fill my insatiable parent hunger for a few days or a few hours. But those occasions are fleeting, as they should be, and inevitably, I find myself saying another goodbye—as I did at 5 o'clock this morning. I watched my daughter get into a cab and head back to the dreams she is building, the love that awaits her and the new adventure whispering her name.

I don't quite know how to hold this strange brew of pride and longing and love and memory—all at the same time. It's too much and not enough and I don't have the words to express any of it.

So I say only this: Goodbye, my amazing child. May your dreams be bold and your obstacles be few. May you be loved and cherished by those who hold you when I can't. May every day I spend apart from you be one day closer to when we meet again. May you know as the most certain thing in your life how very much I love you. 🌿



Sheila Ewers, E-RYT 500, YACEP, teaches group and private yoga lessons, yoga philosophy workshops and yoga teacher trainings and leads yoga retreats. She's

also a former professor of writing and literature and a former yoga editor of this magazine.

It seemed to me that the people who were genuinely thriving in their lives were the ones who had made room for well-being, wisdom, wonder, and giving.

~Arianna Huffington

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