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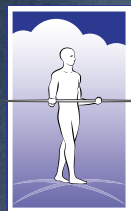
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The articles and resources offered by Pathways Magazine and its affiliated hosted events demonstrate a common belief on the part of local individuals, businesses and contributors that sharing ideas and expertise builds community and commerce in a spirit of unity, cooperation and understanding while maintaining a high level of integrity, responsibility and service. Our content embraces these ideals; we are a conduit — a pathway — for the most loving and dynamic insights and information that enable all of us to live more consciously.

The views and opinions expressed in Pathways Magazine, and by vendor materials for our hosted events, are those of the contributing writers, editors and merchants, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Pathways ownership or any Pathways staff. Any content provided by our contributors is of their opinion and is not intended to malign any religious, ethnic, or cultural group, organization, company or individual. Furthermore, the products and services presented herein and at our hosted events do not necessarily constitute an endorsement of use or a recommendation on the part of Pathways and its staff, and are largely paid advertising and vending.

Making Connections

Join our Pathways Community! Through our quarterly and online publications, and our scheduled hosted events, we are committed to providing the public with free or affordable access to local resources focused on holistic health and wellness practices, spirituality and personal growth, community activism and outreach, and stewardship to the environment. We foster these opportunities through information, ideas, events, goods and services.

Our goal is to provide a platform for businesses to reach the public in a comprehensive and cost-effective way. Through advertising, packaged marketing, live events and retreats, and event planning support, we offer businesses opportunities to market themselves through a variety of channels, and use our expertise to facilitate this growing network. Pathways is your one-stop resource to make connections, nurture growth and achieve success.

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Pathways Magazine print edition is distributed through dozens of outlets in Maryland, DC and Virginia. Visit our “Where To Find” page online for the nearest locations to pick up your print copy. More distribution outlets are being added with each issue. We also provide an online digital edition with interactive links to references, resources and businesses for each issue. Our website features our current issue, as well as a magazine archive, where you can view issues dating back to 2010.

Subscriptions for Pathways Magazine are available for \$16/year and direct-mailed. Order yours through our website: www.PathwaysProductions.com/magazine/subscriptions.

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Pathways advertising opportunities are available through all of our outreach channels: our free quarterly journal, Pathways Magazine, distributed in print and digitally; our hosted events; and our comprehensive website and growing social media presence. We offer ad rate discounts with custom packages for Expo exhibitors, and provide design services for low one-time fees. For more information, upcoming deadlines and our editorial calendar, visit us online.

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Book Reviews
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On The Cover
EMBODIMENT #22
By Martina Sestakova

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Until then, we have peace on our minds. Peace for our planet. Peace within ourselves. Much of this issue is devoted to thinking about what peace means and how to achieve it. As we delve into this season of gratitude and turning inward, we invite you to reflect on what peace means to you and for you, and how you will help promote it. Be the light. Share the light.

From our families to yours, we send you blessings for a wonderful holiday season, gratitude for your continued support, and hope for a more peaceful world.

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The Peace Choice - Creating A Life of Bliss

BY PRAMELA THIAGESAN

Peaceful is the one who is not concerned with having more or less. Unbound by name and fame, he is free from sorrow from the world and mostly from himself. ~ Rumi

In a perfect world, there would be peace across all nations and harmony within communities. We look at world peace as a concept that is detached from our personal capacity — it is something to be wished for, a sweeping solution to nuanced disharmony that in fact begins within the individual world view. If we are to be the change we wish to see in the world, then let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with (you and) me.

The Global Peace Index (GPI) exists to evaluate how peaceful a country is based on a matrix of variables. One of the markers is the level of conflict that is present — this is considered **negative peace**, as it is measured by the absence of what threatens it. Using this same model, **positive peace** is measured by the frameworks, attitude, infrastructure and investments within the country that lead to continued and sustained peace. (Download the 2023 report at www.vision-of-humanity.org/.)

Aspiring for peace as a quality within our lives is not only arguably a more mature human desire, it is one that holds a higher vibration and is closer to enlightenment than any other quality, including joy and love. According to the Emotional Vibration Analysis Frequency Chart, an arbitrary scale created by Dr. David Hawkins and featured in his book *Force vs. Power*, the vibration of peace aligns with emotions associated with bliss and the life view that everything is as it should be. In short, that life is perfect. The chart measures Peace at 600 Hz, just below Enlightenment at 700+ Hz, and above Joy at 540 Hz and Love at 500 Hz. At the other end of the spectrum is shame, guilt, apathy, grief, fear, anger and pride (ranging between 20 Hz and 175 Hz). On closer inspection, it is evident these lower vibration emotions are often what diminishes love, joy, and without doubt, peace.

The progression to identify peace as an elevated state of being is potentially a natural passage through the journey of life and the wisdom we pick up along the way that peace is more valuable than prosperity, fame, success, and actually even the ever-transient happiness.

Within our physical body, peace has a different name, and this is *homeostasis*. Homeostasis is defined as “a self-regulating process by which a living organism can maintain internal stability while adjusting to changing external conditions”. Homeostasis is not static and unvarying; it is a dynamic process that can change internal conditions as required to survive external challenges. So, we achieve homeostasis when all our chemical, energetic, and aerobic/anaerobic systems are functioning at optimal balance to accommodate the toxic, inflammatory, parasitic, viral, and oxidative stress that are part of life without compromising on the internal balance. When translated to our emotional health, it is our ability to maintain peace through adjusting our perception, and despite experiencing events that threaten it.

In the world of alternative wellness practices, peace is associated with 528 Solfeggio Frequency. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the 528 Hz frequency can offer a wide range of benefits, which include improved sleep quality, reduced stress and anxiety, increased energy levels, improved concentration and focus, improved digestion, and reduced pain and inflammation, among other benefits. A 2017 research study by the Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics at the University of Tehran found that the frequency of 528 Hz increased cells’ viability about 20%, and the level of ROS (free radicals) pro-

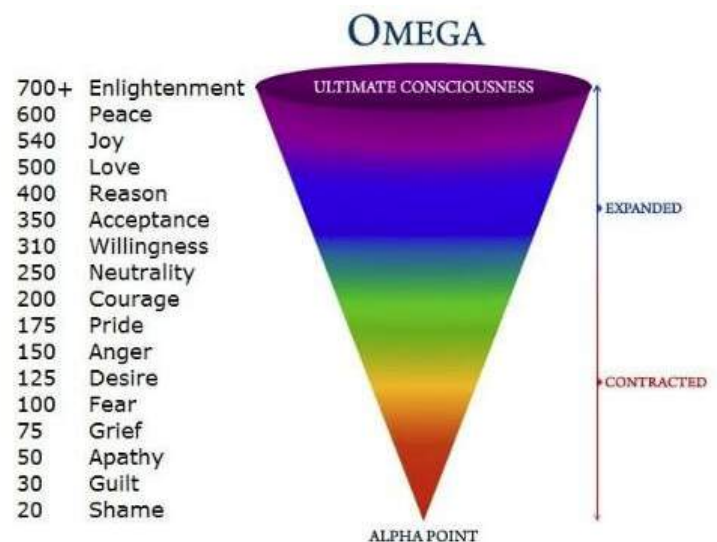
Waiting for the absence of challenges, adversity, grief, judgment and loss to find peace is not a sustainable model. It is negative peace.

Pramela Thiagesan

duction was reduced up to 100%. It also noted that the 528 Hz sound wave has compelling effects, such as increasing the ability of repairing human DNA. Additional research in 2018 by the Center for Advanced Kampo Medicine and Clinical Research in Tokyo, Japan, measured the effects of this frequency on the endocrine system and found that Tension-anxiety and Total Mood Disturbance scores were significantly reduced after exposure to 528 Hz music.

One of the wonderful opportunities the human experience offers us is perspective. When we look at moments of adversity and stress in our life and consider how we responded or reacted to those moments, we usually come to the conclusion that while the situation may have been hectic, heartbreaking, or stressful, our reactions to these situations play an important role in the narrative of the event and how it impacts us after the fact. Worrying about what we are not, what we don’t have, what we should do or haven’t done actually served no purpose in the eventual outcome and was possibly disruptive. When we care for the aspects of our inner world to facilitate vibrations, frequencies, and perspectives that facilitate peace, while also mindfully integrating practices that create peaceful and balanced body systems, our whole life changes. We become able to move through a world of chaos, stressful situations, adversity, grief and even world turmoil without

continued on page 43



Emotional Vibration Analysis Frequency Chart, © Dr David Hawkins, <https://veritaspub.com/dr-hawkins>



Wanda Lasseter Lundy

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The Lasseter Lundy Institute is an educational organization that provides a full curriculum for intuitive healers to be certified as Lasseter Lundy Method practitioners and to become faculty members of Lasseter Lundy Institute. We provide learning for becoming a master of intuitive healing. The course material is unique to Lasseter Lundy Institute and provides a comprehensive education in energy healing, intuition and combining the two skill sets. You will understand how intuition and energy work, how these skills can be fully developed, and you will become more enlightened in the process.

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How Would I Know If I'm A Medium?

BY ANNIE LARSON

Seer, prophet, oracle, sibyl, necromancer, spiritualist, clairvoyant, witch, shaman, psychic, and medium... These are all words used to describe the ability to communicate with disincarnate beings who supply information or messages to the living. Throughout history all cultures and religions have held some form of belief of life after life. *We are spiritual beings having a human experience*, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest and scientist who died in 1955, reminds us.

Mediumship is met with both skepticism and awe. In a 2021 [study conducted by the Pew Research Center](#), about seventy percent of Americans say it is possible to feel *the presence of someone who has died*, while forty seven percent believe they can communicate with them in some way. Religious influence may also play a role in how you approach the belief in communicating with loved ones in spirit. Indeed, we've seen how religion has played a role in shaping beliefs throughout history, including attitudes toward the mystical and metaphysical.

From my own experience as a medium, skeptics become believers once they have lost a loved one that they wish to communicate with and experience evidentiary proof during a mediumship session. Believer, skeptic, or somewhere in between, it is worth exploring your own connection to the spirit world by first understanding what mediumship is, its historical background, and the characteristics associated with what it means to have mediumistic abilities.

A Brief Summary of Mediumship Throughout History

Communicating with spirits is recorded as early as in the Hebrew Bible, where Saul, the king of Israel, asks the mistress of Endor (a Seer) to communicate with the spirit of the prophet Samuel (who, by the way, when he was alive, was against such *sorcery*) to gain insight on defeating the Philistines. As history portends, the Endor medium didn't give Saul good news about the battle. Saul's sons were slain, and he committed suicide on Mount Gilboa in the 11th century BCE.

The suppression of paganism, esoteric beliefs and practices was greatly influenced by the conversion of Constantine the Great to Catholicism, after he had a vision of a great illuminated cross before a battle. He won the battle, and as Emperor of Rome, he and all his subjects converted. To bring consistency to the Bible and unite Catholic teachings, in 325 AD Constantine created the First Council of Nicaea, where 318 Christian bishops met to mold the New Testament as we know it today.

Many gospels of the Bible were discarded or destroyed; and if it wasn't for the sale of antiquities in Egypt in the 1800s and the discovery of the Dead Seas Scrolls in 1946, we might not ever have known there were other gospels written with references to mystical practices. Take, for instance, the Gospel of Mary, a fragment of which resurfaced in Egypt in the late 1800s, nearly 1500 years after it was originally written. According to the account written in *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*, by Karen L. King, Mary comforts the disciples of Jesus by explaining his prophecy from a vision she received from him, "The Savior had explained to her the nature of prophecy and the rise of the soul to its final rest, describ-

ing how to win the battle against the wicked, illegitimate Powers that seek to keep the soul entrapped in the world and ignorant of its true spiritual nature."

From the time of Constantine into the next millennium, the Catholic Church's papacy became the authority that governed. Any deviation from their beliefs, with an emphasis to not engage with mediums, was heresy punishable by death, as clearly stated in *Leviticus 20:27*, "A man or woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them." Joan of Arc, who had celestial visions and heard disincarnate voices, led the French army into victory against the English. Joan continued to claim she heard divine voices until the very end, when in 1431, the English tried and condemned her as a heretic and burned her at the stake.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church was the theocratic authority in all of Europe, until Martin Luther, tired of their corruption, posted his 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany; and thus, the Protestant Reformation was born, on October 31, 1517. It's interesting that Luther picked the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (modern day Halloween) — when the veil is very thin, and costumes are worn to ward off spirits that are allowed to walk the earth — to make his revolutionary proclamation.

Coming out of the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, early Modern Europe began with a wave of witch hunts, accusations, and executions. In England, King Henry VIII believed his second wife, Anne Boleyn *en-*

chanted him; and with her inability to produce him a male heir, Henry accused her of sorcery, adultery, and incest, and she was executed in 1536. A few years later, King Henry VIII's Act of 1541 was the first to make the "practise or exercise...[of] an Invoacons, or cojuracons of Sprites witchcraftes enchauntements or sorceries to thentent to fynde money or treasure" illegal and punishable by death.

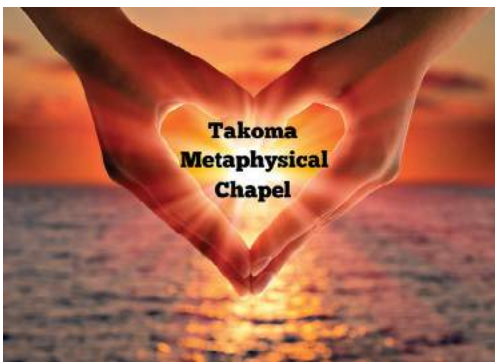
Many, mostly elderly, unwed, or independent women, were executed in a 90-year period spanning 1560 to 1670. This eventually extended to the puritanical American Colonies, which were at the height of witch hunts during the Salem witch trials, in Massachusetts, from 1692 to 1693. In 1702, the Salem witch trials were declared unlawful in the Colonies, as written in "A Brief History of the Salem Witch Trials," by [Jess Blumberg in *Smithsonian Magazine*](#). The last innocent woman accused of being a witch was executed in Europe in 1782, after which time the suppression of mostly women accused of witchcraft began to fade.

In the 1800s, as America transitioned from an agrarian society to an industrialized one, inventions like the telegraph made communication across vast expanses seem like magic. It's no wonder that a belief in mediums and communicating with the disincarnate grew. In 1848 in a farmhouse in Hydesville, New York, the Fox sisters began communicating with *otherworldly intelligence* through a series of audible raps on their bedroom walls, and Spiritualism was born. Spiritualists believe that consciousness exists outside the human physical body, and spirits can be communicated with by virtue of a *medium*, or go between, between the two worlds. Like Pierre Teil-

continued on page 56



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The Shreds and Threads of Equity As Seen Through My Personal, Multicultural Lens

BY TARAH SINGH; EDITED BY CAM MACQUEEN

My name is Tarah Singh. I am a Guyanese American, and a multicultural artist, born in Washington, DC, in the fall of 1975, and raised between Teaneck, NJ, and Asheville, NC, where I currently reside. As a creative visionary, I've worked for nearly 20 years in a variety of media to communicate with the world around me.

During my early years, I spent summers back north in Marlow Heights, Maryland, visiting my maternal great-grandmother. My mother's youngest sister attended Howard University in the early 90's, when I was in high school and spent summers visiting her while she lived in DC. We would also travel back to New Jersey and New York during my stay. I am grateful that my aunt and her now husband took the time to make sure I remained in an understanding of 'Black Culture' — that it was a necessity for me to maintain balance in my identity while growing up in the rural South. Coming from Hendersonville, North Carolina, they would take me shopping for "current" clothing styles from "up north", to see current pop culture movies like *New Jack City*, and make cassette tapes of R&B music and NYC's top 40 hits. They provided these experiences so I would have exposure to a world outside of Western North Carolina. There was no Internet then, and my mother did not want us to have a television in the home, so without these cultural discoveries, I would have had a very insulated upbringing.

My mother is from a family of famous musicians. When they went places, people were starstruck and clamored for autographs. My father's family is from Georgetown, Guyana, and of Indian descent. His grandmother was an entrepreneur who helped with agricultural improvements and supported the creation of an orphanage in Georgetown. His grandfather started a bank which improved the standard of living for our family and the greater community.

With close connections to my family on multiple continents, I am aware of my unique background, and I have had a difficult time relating to a narrative of ethnic people being considered less than. I know my story isn't like everyone's, but these are the experiences I had, and it is my norm. I wish to share it with others, because it has greatly empowered me.

As a child, I was constantly asked, "What are you?" I wondered what the right answer was. My final answer was "HUMAN," something that should allow everyone to relate to me while treating me with respect and affording me the same opportunities they also wished to receive. Thus, a crucial point — if we consider the innate humanness we share, we clearly have much more in common than not.

Although words are not my favorite medium, nor am I an expert on race relations, I will attempt to interlace my ideas, opinions, and experiences, in hopes that they will initiate a thought-provoking conversation on a challenging subject.

In the vast tapestry of history, the threads of race and nationality have played an undeniable role in shaping societies and individuals alike. These constructs both divide and unify; yet I am left wondering what will help us truly move toward a more integrated, progressive future.

Could it be a paradigm shift that invites us to see beyond the scope of race and color? A shift that informs our own humanity causing us to recognize the beauty and majesty of our interconnectedness, and our differences. As humans, we have that ability — and if we tapped into it, anything is possible.

Currently, the trend is for racial equity classes to be readily available. While they attempt to create awareness on many historical mat-

ters, I am still unclear as to their true objective. I understand these classes address systematic disadvantages faced by marginalized individuals and communities. Yet, during classes, I have witnessed people feeling guilty, angry, and crying — all valid responses to the experience of being flooded with traumatic subject matter.

It's curious to ponder: are these classes effectuating true change in the here and now, and for our futures, or are they just engendering guilt and remorse? We can say we want racial justice, but if our actions are futile, it's impossible to institute new ways of seeing and being.

Perhaps we need to begin with separate groups meeting first, to get our own stories straight and reduce the trepidation some have that they will say something offensive, or will be attacked for the actions of their ancestors? I question when the conversations will evolve and the topic of equity will emerge; unfortunately, it never has in any of the classes I have attended.

To illustrate this point, one facilitator requested, "All the people here who consider themselves white, raise your hands" and then asked, "Who makes up the constructs of race anyway?" As one can well imagine, there was a heaviness that hung in the air as they looked around.

Microaggressions occur on both sides of the race card. I am repulsed when experiencing them in the context of one of these events. These classes are meant to de-escalate tension, yet I feel apprehensive every time I attend one. After my last racial equity class, I went on a tirade to friends and family, in order to process the trauma I felt from the experience of having someone else impose their narrative that shreds my identity.

Instead of continuing that type of upset, what if we could shift the focus to cultural inclusivity that cultivates acceptance, understanding, respect, and ideally, love? Nurturing appreciation for the significance of various traditions, customs, foods, philosophies, and artistic expressions that transcend racial and geopolitical boundaries plays a crucial role — just as curry is a blend of spices that is recognized globally, and each region has its own blend of specific flavors that makes it unique and enjoyable for most everyone.

When we remove the lens of race and nation, we can truly appreciate the universal aspects of culture that resonate with all people, regardless of their origins. We can explore different stories, histories, and ways of life, seeking to foster a sense of curiosity. We can celebrate shared human experiences and coalesce our values.



"Hope" - mixed media on tar paper - is a discussion about growth and resilience, hence the butterfly symbology. There are no rose colored glasses, but knowledge can help us facilitate transformation.

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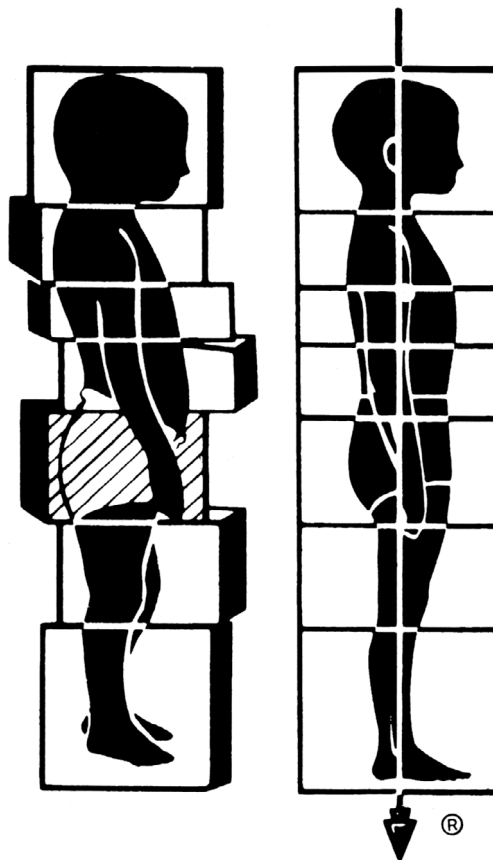
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Combating Light Pollution, Preserving Dark Skies

BY AURORA B.

When you sit outside at night or in the wee hours of the morning, what do you expect to see?

In ancient times, priest-shamans would observe the night sky, which they saw as a key to understanding our past, present and future. The ancient Maya tracked the movement of *Xibalba Be*, the Mayan “Dark Road” aka The Dark Rift (or Great Rift) that appears to the eye as a dark streak through the Milky Way, which they saw as the entrance to the Underworld. These days, we’d be lucky if we saw half of what Ptolemy observed when he named his original famous 48 constellations.

Light Pollution is defined by the National Geographic Society as “the excessive or inappropriate use of outdoor artificial light, affecting human health, wildlife behavior, and our ability to observe stars and other celestial objects”. Just like air or water pollution, “light pollution” describes conditions that are inhospitable to life as we know it. Our modern world is absolutely flooded with artificial light, whether it be from streetlights, sports arenas, shopping centers, or overly-lit individual properties, you name it. And with modern Light-Emitting Diodes (LEDs) oftentimes being very bright and blue-enriched, which flicker and emit light in specific directions instead of evenly dispersing, it’s not a far stretch of the imagination to say that life systems are impacted by this. Such drastic changes to our environment in the form of lighting has been blamed as the primary reason why we have migrating birds flying into skyscrapers, baby turtles navigating inland instead of out to sea, and molluscs that aren’t feeding for as long as in the past due to the way these new lights penetrate water.

While there is some evidence in scientific literature of the effects these bright lights have on wildlife, little has been confirmed about their effects on humans. However, initial research on artificial light at night (ALAN) has shown worrying effects, such as increased risk of breast and prostate cancer and circadian rhythm/sleep-wake cycle disruption. (The NIH National Library of Medicine has [several articles](#) available online on ALAN-related research.) If someone’s sleep is disturbed, they’re vulnerable to a whole host of other mental and physical issues.

We are also often told the reason for having such bright lights is that it’s for security purposes. But, brighter is not always better. When considering that bright lights create high contrast shadows, thereby providing safety to potential perpetrators as a place to hide, it might be time to reconsider that notion.

Introducing DarkSky

Currently, there are only a handful of organizations tackling the issue of light pollution. Of those, DarkSky International (recently rebranded, and formerly called the International Dark-Sky Association) is perhaps the most well-known (<https://darksky.org/>). They aim to educate on the fact that light pollution exists, and advocate for common-sense policies that protect human health, wildlife and the environment. Turning the lights off, guidance for buying and installing lighting that has less impact on the environment, and how to talk to light-loving neighbors when their floodlights trespass into your bedroom windows at night are just some of the every-day tips they promote that anyone anywhere can do.

DarkSky not only develops these resources for people at an individual-level, but they lead efforts to set policies that reduce light pollution around the world. They track policy developments and engage with

policymakers at the earliest stages of policy formation. Importantly, they also encourage citizens to get actively involved with protecting the night sky in their own towns (check out their [guide on Lighting Ordinances](#), which includes a template for a Model Lighting Ordinance, for example).

As if DarkSky’s vast resource library wasn’t enough, they also certify and help conserve starry sky parks, communities and other places around the world with their [Dark Sky Places program](#). Some of the more well-known places include Big Bend National Park in Texas, Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah and the community of Flagstaff, Arizona. These locations have protections in place for dark skies, which minimize light pollution and trespass. For example, the Lighting Ordinance for Flagstaff specifies type of lamps preferred (Low-Pressure Sodium [LPS] or narrow-spectrum amber LED), along with their allowed level of light output. Fully shielded lamps for outdoor lighting are required in almost all cases. Certified sites also engage in public outreach and education, and monitor local light pollution levels.



Benefiting from the absence of light pollution, Cherry Springs State Park in Coudersport, PA, is one of the closest DarkSky certified sites to the DMV. Photo source: cherryspringsstatepark.com/

As of January 2023, there were 201 certified Dark Sky Places across 6 continents. The two closest to us in the DMV are the Cherry Springs State Park in Pennsylvania, and Mayland Earth to Sky Park & Bare Dark Sky Observatory in North Carolina. But some exciting local news! Our very own Turner Farm in Great Falls, Virginia, may in future be designated as a “DarkSky site.”

Local Advocacy

Simply being aware that light pollution is an issue is the first step. From there, you can adjust your lighting at home and then widen your radius, if you’re called to do so. As an example, I found that my local Lighting Ordinance in Fairfax City allowed for outrageously-high output from a single light source — up to 200,000 lumens or 2 million candela are allowed! For comparison, High-Intensity Discharge (HID) lamps, like those used at sports stadiums, can emit somewhere in the range of 15,000 lumens per lamp, and Flagstaff limits many lamps to 10,000 lumens. So there seemed to be a disconnect between my local Ordinance and what’s reasonable in terms of lighting. I presented my findings at the local Planning Commission meeting, and the ordinance is now being reviewed.

There is work to be done here, but I am confident it can and will be done. Our actions today affect the world of tomorrow. If just one less person turns on their floodlights tonight after seeing this article, just imagine what we can do once more people tune in.

Ms. Aurora B. has been involved with DarkSky as an Advocate, and is a member of the Soft Lights Foundation. Disclaimer: This article is not affiliated or endorsed by DarkSky International.



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Sacred Herbs of Yule: Mistletoe

BY ELLEN EVERT HOPMAN

Where mistletoe stays in the house, love also stays.

~ Traditional English Saying

*The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry men go.
To gather in the mistletoe . . .*

~ Sir Walter Scott, "Marmion" (1808)

While the ancient Romans once decorated their homes with Mistletoe at Saturnalia, the custom of kissing under the Mistletoe most likely has Scandinavian origins. Mistletoe is associated with the Pagan Goddess Frigga, wife of Odin, king of the Norse gods. She is the Goddess of love and mother of Baldur, the gentle God of the summer's light.

Once upon a time, Baldur dreamed of his own death. This alarmed Frigga greatly, because if Baldur died so would all life on Earth: plants, animals, humans, and all other creatures. Baldur was greatly loved among the Gods, and Frigga immediately asked all beings — elementals, plants, animals, and Gods — to promise to never harm him. But the trickster God Loki saw that Frigga had overlooked just one plant: the Mistletoe.

The Gods began to play a game in which they shot arrows at Baldur, just for fun, because he was now "invincible." But Loki, ever jealous and now disguised as a woman, made an arrow of Mistletoe wood and gave it to Hoder, the blind God of winter, who unwittingly shot Baldur dead. As soon as that happened, the world went dark. As all creatures began to weep for the death of gentle Baldur, Frigga's tears fell on the Mistletoe, and they became its white berries.

Baldur was laid out on his boat, called Ringhorn, and his wife Nanna fell down dead at the sight. The mourners placed her body next to his, and Odin lay the magically self-replicating golden ring, Draupnir, on their funeral pyre to take with them to the Otherworld.

Odin laid on the pyre that gold ring which is called Draupnir; this quality attended it: that every ninth night there fell from it eight gold rings of equal weight. (Snorri Sturluson, "Gylfaginning," thirteenth-century, Prose Edda)

Baldur's brother Hermod the Swift was sent to the Underworld to beseech the Goddess Hel to return Baldur to the Aesir (the high Gods of Norse religion). Hermod rode upon Sleipnir, his father Odin's eight-legged horse, and it took nine days for him to make it through dark valleys and high mountains.

When Hermod finally got to the Underworld, Hel promised to let Baldur return to Asgard, the home of the Gods, as long as all beings in nature wept for him. And all did — except the giantess Tökk, who crouched in her cave and refused to shed a tear (some say that Tökk was actually jealous Loki in disguise). That meant Baldur could not return! But Hermod did bring back the golden ring Draupnir.

Now, it is said, Baldur cannot return to his home with the Gods until Ragnarök, also known as the "Twilight of the Gods," the final destruction of the world in the conflict between the Aesir and the powers of Hel, led by Loki.

Mistletoe was also an important herb of the Celtic Druids. Pliny the Elder, writing in his first-century *Natural History*, states:



Photo 204422277 | Ancient Mistletoe © Natalia Golubnycha | Dreamstime.com

We must not omit to mention the admiration that is lavished upon this plant by the Gauls. The Druids — for that is the name they give to their magicians — held nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and the tree that bears it, supposing always that tree to be the robur [Oak]. . . . The mistletoe, however, is but rarely found upon the robur; and when found, is gathered with rites replete with religious awe. This is done more particularly on the fifth day of the moon. . . . This day they select because the moon, though not yet in the middle of her course, has already considerable power and influence; and they call her by a name which signifies, in their language, the all-healing. Having made all due preparation for the sacrifice and a banquet beneath the trees, they bring thither two white bulls, the horns of which are bound then for the first time. Clad in a white robe the priest ascends the tree, and cuts the mistletoe with a golden sickle, which is received by others in a white cloak. They then immolate the victims, offering up their prayers that God will render this gift of his propitious to those to whom he has so granted it. It is the belief with them that the mistletoe, taken in drink, will impart fecundity to all animals that are barren, and that it is an antidote for all poisons.

While Pliny does not indicate the source of his account, researcher Jean-Louis Brunaux argues that it was likely Posidonius of Rhodes, a first-century BCE polymath. This is, in fact, the only recorded Druid ritual we have. The "golden sickle" must have been made of bronze because gold is too soft for cutting herbs. Or the "golden sickle" may be a reference to the Moon Herself! The "white cloak" refers to a white cloth the Druids held below the tree to catch the sprigs of mistletoe as they fell, because they considered the herb too sacred to ever touch the ground. They would then divide the branches into many sprigs for use as medicine and distributed the branches to the people to hang over doorways as protection against thunder, lightning, and other calamities.

Whenever a culture weaves ceremony, lore, and magic around a particular plant, we can be sure that the herb has immense practical value. Stories and seasonal rituals were a way of handing down the knowledge that a plant was useful, from generation to generation. Mistletoe must have been an important medicine for the Celtic Druids and other ancient societies.

Medicinal Properties

Mistletoe is a tonic for epilepsy and convulsive neurological conditions, including urinary and heart conditions. I have successfully used it to help a person with neurological effects from Lyme disease, though they still required standard antibiotics to purge the organism from their system. Mistletoe is also used for treating heart conditions and to stop internal bleeding.

Mistletoe is given for very high fevers, such as those caused by typhoid; it reduces blood pressure and slows the pulse (after an initial rise). It also enhances the immune system and has an antitumor effect; a commercial preparation made from it, called Iscador, is used to shrink cancerous tumors.

Combine mistletoe with Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) and Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) for nervous conditions, with Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) for myo-

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Sacred Herbs of Yule...

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carditis, with Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*) for irregular menstruation, and with Hawthorn and Linden flowers (*Tilia spp.*) for hypertension.

To prepare Mistletoe, steep 1 teaspoon of twigs and leaves per cup of freshly boiled water, covered, for about 20 minutes. Take ¼ cup four times daily.

CAUTION: Be sure you are using only *Viscum album*, the common Mistletoe, sometimes called European Mistletoe. Other species are harsh and abortive and can be poisonous. Also, use only the leaves and twigs; the berries of all Mistletoe varieties, including *Viscum album*, are poisonous.

Two leaves seems to be the correct amount for an adult dose. Anything more can cause side effects such as vomiting, diarrhea, and cramping. Frequent use or large dosages of Mistletoe can cause liver or heart damage or worsen heart conditions and liver disease.

The preparation Iscador is generally injected, but large doses given by injection can cause fever, chills, skin rashes, pain, nausea, vomiting, allergic reactions, and other side effects. Medical supervision is necessary when injecting this herb.

Women who are pregnant should avoid the plant because it stimulates the uterus and could cause a miscarriage. There is not enough data regarding the use of Mistletoe during breastfeeding, so it is best to avoid it at that time.

Because it stimulates the immune system, Mistletoe could increase the symptoms of autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis, lupus, and rheumatoid arthritis. A more active immune system might increase the risk of organ rejection, so any person with an organ transplant should avoid it. It could also worsen leukemia.

Mistletoe lowers blood pressure, so it should not be used in combi-

nation with other antihypertensive drugs and should not be taken for 2 weeks before a scheduled surgery.

Magical Uses

Mistletoe grows high up in a tree, usually an Apple or Poplar, and occasionally an Oak. It gets its nourishment from the sap of the tree and has no need for soil or water. It is a mysterious plant, oriented to the Pleiades rather than the Sun, that blooms and fruits in midwinter. Not surprisingly, it is an herb of air. Hang Mistletoe in the home or burn it in the hearth to protect the occupants. Hang it in the house at Yuletide to attract and bond lovers. Hang it in a bedroom to protect against bad dreams.

Nicholas Culpeper's seventeenth-century *English Physician* recommended wearing Mistletoe around the neck as a charm against witchcraft. Wear Mistletoe in an amulet or charm if you are the target of hexes or ill-intentioned sorcery.

Mistletoe and Oak trees have a sacred affinity. Oak trees show divine favor because they attract lightning but are able to ground the stroke and survive. The lightning comes as a message from the Gods, and lightning-struck Oak can be added to any spell to magnify its power. Mistletoe found on Oak, known as "all heal," has immense magical power and can be added to any spell to enhance its potency.

Because it is a holy plant revered by the Druids and other magical practitioners, "all-heal" must never be allowed to touch the ground. Mistletoe is sacred to Frigga, Odin, and Baldur; place it on or hang it over the altar in their honor.

Mistletoe at Yuletide

As told in the story above, Mistletoe is a sacred herb associated with the Scandinavian God Baldur and with the return of the Sun at Winter Solstice. We modern people still kiss under the Mistletoe in remembrance of the tender and loving Baldur and the story of Baldur

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Winter 2023: The Clues Are Around Us

BY MISTY KUCERIS

Every so often in history, we go through a time period in which upheaval creates changes that herald a revolution. While this feels like it occurs overnight, it actually starts slowly, perhaps like a quiet pulse, and keeps going until it becomes a great drumbeat or throbbing of the heart. By the time you hear the sound, you feel as if it were sudden and unexpected; yet all the clues were there. There were just too many other personal situations getting in the way. The revolution is not quite here, and will still take a bit longer before we recognize what the revolution is and how it impacts us. But the clues are around us as we look to various astrological events, especially the re-entry of Pluto for another short time period into the sign of Aquarius.

Although you want to rush out into the world at the time of the new Moon on December 12, 2023, you still feel the need to be cautious. With the Sun and the Moon in the sign of Sagittarius, you're excited to try new things and experience the world. But with this new Moon also forming a square to Neptune and a quincunx to Uranus retrograde, you realize not all is as it seems. Things are happening behind the scenes and you're not getting all the information you need. If you have to start a new project, pay attention to what is being left unspoken to get clues to the details that will help you succeed.

Paying attention to the unspoken clues becomes easier on December 13th when Mercury in Capricorn turns retrograde. As a matter of fact, you want to re-evaluate your job and place in society. Situations at work are undergoing changes. You may no longer be able to continue working remotely. Or, you may realize you made too many commitments, and those commitments are interfering with your personal life. While making changes at the time of Mercury retrograde isn't easy, you do need to take the time now to either re-write that resume, limit your commitments, or research new lifestyle choices. When Mercury

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Winter 2023 Astrology...

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does go direct on January 1, 2024, you'll have many of the answers you need to proceed to the next phase of your life.

December 21st, when the Sun enters the sign of Capricorn and the winter solstice occurs, represents another important time to understand your place in society. This year is even more important than most and indicated by the Sun forming a conjunction to Mercury retrograde and a trine to the Moon and Jupiter retrograde in Taurus. With the current events occurring, you'll be asked to give an opinion, even if you don't want to. You will be put into a situation where people are going to ask you why you think the way you do. Suddenly you may find you do start questioning your values or your perception of the world around you. If you feel confused, it's alright to just pull back and turn this confusion into reflection. This reflection will serve you well as the Sun, Mercury retrograde, Moon, and Jupiter retrograde all form sextiles to Saturn. This indicates you'll find a path that leads you from this confusion.

As Mercury retrograde re-enters the sign of Sagittarius on December 23rd, you become more concerned with external events in your life and how people perceive you. You're tempted to justify your beliefs. Yet, the lesson with Mercury retrograde in Sagittarius is to realize you don't need to explain yourself. It's alright to be who you are. And when Mercury turns direct in the sign of Sagittarius on January 1, 2024, you'll be glad you realized you didn't need to explain yourself to the important people in your life.

Once again you may feel pressure coming from your work environment at the time of the full Moon on December 26th, which forces you to consider your family obligation. With the Sun in Capricorn, there may be increased pressure to either return to the office on a full-time basis or in a hybrid work situation. Or, with the Moon in Cancer, you may feel increased family obligations. While these situations might

cause you stress, there is some good news. With the Sun and Moon forming beneficial aspects to Jupiter retrograde and to Saturn, you're able to develop some plans of action enabling you to find a balance between work and family needs. Just remember, if you're tempted, this is not the time for any ultimatums.

As the year ends and the New Year begins, Jupiter in Taurus turns direct on December 30, 2023, and Mercury in Sagittarius turns direct on January 1, 2024. With both planets turning direct within less than 24 hours, you find it's easier to recognize your priorities. You may start reaching out to other individuals or organizations who also support the same priorities. You may make some decisions about the extent of various obligations. You may even realize you don't need to take on all those commitments, and you learned the lesson of delegation so other people can take on some tasks.

The new Moon on January 11th is a day of reflection as the Sun and Moon in Capricorn form a square with the Moon's North Node in Aries and the Moon's South Node in Libra. It's important to think about your past and what has brought you to where you are today. It's also important to consider your future and where you want to be tomorrow. More importantly, it's a day to include your loved ones in any plans you want to make. This is a day to realize you don't need to do everything on your own — you can find support in your life if you ask for it.

Depending on your sensitivity to energy, you may feel a critical shift on January 20th as Pluto re-enters the sign of Aquarius. This critical shift of energy is very important. Outer planets such as Pluto move slowly and represent major paradigm shifts that take years to implement. The best way to understand these paradigm shifts is to study past historical events when the planet was in the same sign. For the planet Pluto, this means every 248 years. And because Pluto has an erratic orbit, the cycle that occurs every 248 years can take anywhere from 14 to 28 years to complete.

Historically, every time Pluto enters the sign of Aquarius, upheavals occur in government that lead to some form of revolution. Exam-



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ples of this include: the final years of the American Revolution and the years of the French Revolution; or the time period when England disposed of the Roman Catholic Church to create the Anglican Church; or the coronation of Charlemagne; or even when the Spanish invaded South America. Revolutions also occur in critical communications techniques that impact the masses, such as the Chinese invention and use of moveable type in printing.

Pluto initially entered the sign of Aquarius on March 23, 2023, and went up to only 0 degrees and 21 minutes of Aquarius when it turned retrograde and began its motion backwards to re-enter the sign of Capricorn on May 25, 2023. From May 25, 2023 until January 20, 2024, it sits in the sign of Capricorn. This time Pluto will be in the sign of Aquarius a little longer, but still not that long. Pluto will go to 2 degrees and 6 minutes, before pulling back again. Pluto will turn retrograde on May 2, 2024, and once again re-enter the sign of Capricorn on September 1, 2024. On November 19, 2024, just a few weeks after the US national election, Pluto will finally enter the sign of Aquarius and remain there for a little more than 18 years until March 9, 2025.

This back and forth is common with the planet Pluto because of its erratic orbit. Yet when you look at Pluto from a spiritual perspective, this back and forth energy makes sense. Pluto represents passion, which can overtake your sensibilities. It also represents your method for processing information, which leads to long-term psychological and life changes. On a mundane level, Pluto represents various value systems that are either embraced for their similarities or disdained for their differences.

When Pluto initially entered the sign of Aquarius in March, AI (Artificial Intelligence) dominated the news. The AI Revolution had begun, and various industry experts issued warnings that the race to develop AI was moving too quickly and was perhaps even out of control. In March, Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak and others signed an open letter asking for a six-month suspension. Now it's over six months later and no suspension has occurred.

AI is just the tip of changes that will influence your life when Pluto

finally enters the sign of Aquarius. Others involve the increased use of digital currency in lieu of cash for payments...the virtual appointments with doctors and professionals in lieu of personal meetings...the other systems developed to "help" make your life more efficient yet somehow lessening your individuality in how you approach matters. Basically, technology is going to be the major revolutionary change when Pluto is in Aquarius. AI is only the beginning.

This is the time to understand just how technology will impact your life and what value it will bring to you. This is also a time to focus on your personal relationships with acquaintances, friends, and family so you can maintain a system built on love and support. Finally, during this second time Pluto is in Aquarius, approach life in a creative manner that supports your individuality.

Developing a firm foundation is so important at the time of the full Moon on January 25th. With the Sun in Aquarius and the Moon in Leo, the energy of Pluto re-entering the sign of Aquarius continues to be emphasized. There is also a fixed T-square created with the Sun, Pluto, and Moon forming a square to Jupiter retrograde. What this means is you find it important to understand circumstances as fully as possible before you move on with any plans. You may even feel you need to hold on a little longer because the timing to make changes is not quite right; and if that's the case, that's alright. Once you have complete understanding, you will move quickly to make the necessary changes in your life, which give you that firm foundation you need.

A few weeks later, on February 9th at the time of the new Moon, you realize there were a few pieces of information you missed as you started to make changes in your life. That's indicated by the Sun and Moon in Aquarius forming a square to Uranus. Basically, you took your needs into consideration but you may not have taken the needs of your loved ones into consideration. All you need to do today is communicate with them. Ask them what they need. By hearing what they have to say, you can actually improve circumstances in your life.

As the winter quarter draws to an end, you experience a full Moon

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PURIFYING *the* THOUGHT STREAM

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—Sri Harold Klemp
The Mahanta, the Living ECK Master



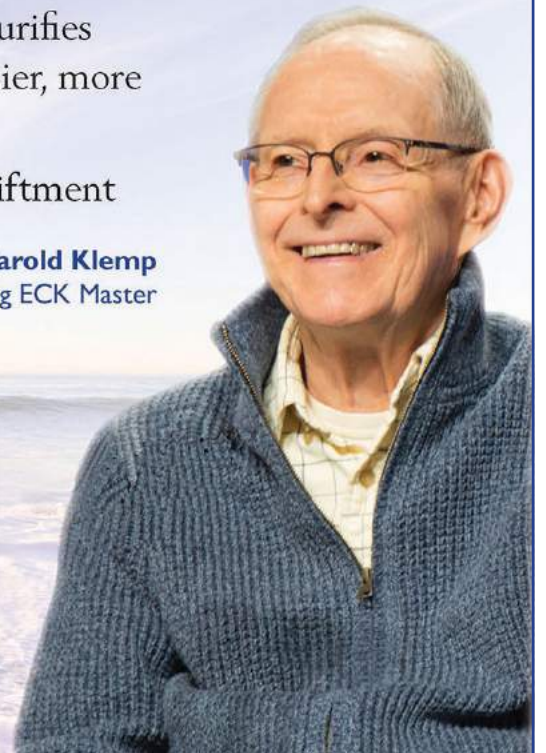
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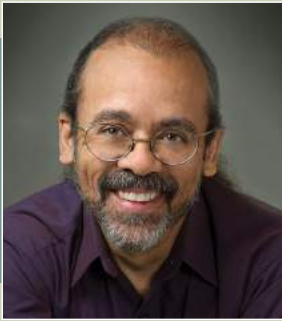
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on February 24th that indicates the energy is shifting from making changes in your life to understanding how those changes will affect your life. The Sun is in Pisces forming conjunctions with Mercury and Saturn while the Moon is forming oppositions to Mercury and Saturn. When you were implementing your foundation you tried to pay attention to everything important in your life. Now you no longer want to be bothered with details. Instead, you want to enjoy your life without feeling pressured to make choices. It helps that the Moon is forming a trine to Ceres and a trine to Jupiter. This indicates you just want to encourage relationships that bring you joy. It also indicates you are doing the best you can to keep yourself and your loved ones safe as you try to understand all the changes in the world going on around you. You are now listening to the clues.

© 2023 Misty Kuceris | Misty Kuceris is a Certified Astrological Professional, a Reiki Master, and Co-founder of the NOVA Astrology Group. She has contributed to Pathways for over 30 years. See her website for monthly astrological reflections: www.EnhanceOneself.com. Contact her at: misty@EnhanceOneself.com.



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Eric Weinstein
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I'm not a therapist, but I always have therapists among my clients. They come to me for:

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Functional Medicine Treatment for Long COVID

BY HELENA AMOS, M.AC. L.AC., EURO. PHYSICIAN

When thinking about COVID-19, consider how far we have come since the outbreak of the pandemic in spring of 2020. While COVID-19 is no longer considered the crisis that it was in this country, and globally, we are still dealing with it as a persistent health concern, and with the reality that it is here to stay. The existence of Long COVID is the other reality here to stay, and about which we still have much to learn.

Long COVID, also known as post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 infection (PASC) or long-haul COVID, refers to the condition where individuals experience a range of persistent symptoms that last beyond the acute phase of a COVID-19 infection. These symptoms may continue for weeks or months after the initial infection has resolved.

The Long COVID condition can affect individuals of any age, including those who initially had mild or asymptomatic cases of COVID-19. The symptoms can vary widely and affect multiple organ systems, leading to a significant impact on the physical, mental, and cognitive well-being of the affected individuals. Furthermore, Long COVID may not affect everyone the same way. People with Long COVID may experience health problems from different types and combinations of symptoms that may emerge, persist, resolve, and reemerge over different lengths of time. The unpredictability in both the variance and severity of symptoms, and their duration, consequently impairs the ability of affected individuals to carry out daily activities and may result in a reduced quality of life.

Symptoms of Long COVID

There is a long list of common symptoms associated with Long COVID, affecting practically every major system in the body in some way or at some point. Here is a brief overview, much of which I've seen in my own practice:

- **Fatigue** - Persistent and overwhelming exhaustion, which can greatly impact daily functioning.
- **Shortness of breath** - Difficulty breathing or a feeling of breathlessness even during mild physical activity.
- **Brain fog** - Cognitive difficulties, such as problems with concentration, memory, and thinking clearly.
- **Muscle and joint pain** - Persistent or intermittent pain in muscles and joints.
- **Headache** - Frequent or persistent headaches of varying intensity.
- **Chest pain or tightness** - Discomfort or pressure in the chest area.
- **Sleep disturbances** - Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, or having unrefreshing sleep.
- **Loss of taste and/or smell** - Persistent or recurring loss, or changes in taste and/or smell.
- **Anxiety and depression** - Increased levels of anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues.
- **Gastrointestinal symptoms** - Digestive issues such as nausea, diarrhea, or stomach pain.

Some individuals may also experience ongoing issues with the respiratory system, cardiovascular system, gastrointestinal system, or neurological system.

Functional Medicine and Long COVID

Like the condition itself, the treatment of Long COVID typically demands a multifaceted approach. Functional Medicine is ideally suited

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Long COVID...

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for this task because of the holistic perspective it brings to identifying and managing the symptoms, which we've discussed can be very individual for each affected person. A Functional Medicine practitioner assesses your symptoms and develops a personalized treatment plan, which typically and particularly focuses on addressing the chronic fatigue and brain fog reported by the majority of Long COVID sufferers, and includes a comprehensive evaluation, nutritional support, and targeted mind-body techniques. When combined with specific acupuncture points to deal with systemic complaints, Functional Medicine is a very effective modality.

Here are some key components of the Functional Medicine approach for Long COVID:

1. Comprehensive evaluation: This involves a thorough assessment of the patient's medical history, symptoms, and lifestyle factors to understand the contributing factors. Bioscan, or Biomeridian, also known as bioelectric impedance analysis (BIA), is a diagnostic tool that measures electrical currents in the body to assess various health parameters. Biomeridian assessments may potentially play a role in identifying and treating underlying chronic factors associated with Long COVID.

One aspect of Biomeridian assessments involves evaluating meridians and organs in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). Meridians are energy channels that are believed to connect various organs, and imbalances within these meridians can indicate potential health issues. Biomeridian assessments can help identify any imbalances or blockages within the meridians, which may aid in understanding how certain organs or systems are affected in Long COVID patients.

Additionally, Biomeridian can also be utilized to assess chronic underlying factors such as cardiovascular disease (CVD), diabetes, respiratory conditions, autoimmune disorders, and more. For example, if the Biomeridian assessment reveals imbalances in the cardiovascular meridians, it helps to treat this underlying condition. Similarly, for diabetes, respiratory issues, or autoimmune disorders, Biomeridian assessments may help identify imbalances or dysfunctions in the related meridians or organs, providing a basis for targeted treatments or therapies.

2. Nutritional support: A nutrient-rich diet plays a crucial role in supporting overall health and recovery. Functional medicine may involve personalized dietary recommendations, including adequate intake of essential nutrients, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory foods to promote healing and boost energy levels.

3. Gut health optimization: The gut microbiome has a significant impact on overall health, including immune function and the production of neurotransmitters affecting cognitive function. Addressing gut health issues, such as dysbiosis (imbalanced gut bacteria) or leaky gut, through targeted interventions like probiotics, prebiotics, or dietary modifications, may help improve brain fog and fatigue symptoms, digestion, absorption, and strengthen the immune system.

4. Mitochondrial support: Dysfunction of mitochondria, the cellular powerhouses responsible for energy production, can contribute to fatigue. Functional Medicine may involve supporting mitochondrial function through targeted supplements, such as Coenzyme Q10, L-carnitine, or NAD+, to enhance energy production and alleviate fatigue. Other beneficial supplements include Magnesium, Zinc, Selenium and Vitamin C.

5. Stress reduction and sleep optimization: Chronic stress and inadequate sleep can exacerbate fatigue and brain fog, reducing immune system strength. Implementing stress reduction techniques, such as mindfulness, meditation, Yoga, or relaxation exercises, along with improving sleep hygiene and addressing sleep disorders, can be beneficial. Supplements such as Baikal Skullcap, Lemon balm, Passionflower, and Melatonin can also offer support in this area.

6. Exercise and movement: Gradual and tailored exercise programs can help improve energy levels, strength, and overall well-being. Supplements are a great way to boost the body when exercising, particularly with Biotin and amino acids, among others. It is essential to work closely with healthcare professionals to develop an appropriate exercise plan considering individual abilities and limitations.

7. Mind-body approaches: Techniques like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), neurofeedback, or acupuncture may be recommended to address cognitive symptoms, reduce stress, and enhance mental clarity.

Acupuncture and Long COVID

Acupuncture can play an important role in helping with long COVID recovery by addressing various symptoms and conditions that persist after the acute phase of the illness. It is an effective treatment for pain, inflammation, fatigue, stress and a host of other complaints, all common symptoms found to accompany Long COVID. Here's how acupuncture can help:

- **Pain Relief:** Many Long COVID patients experience persistent pain, such as headaches, muscle aches, and joint pain. Once the underlying source of the pain is identified, acupuncture can deliver targeted relief or alleviate the pain altogether. For example:

A. Improved Circulation: Acupuncture can enhance blood flow to the affected area, promoting the delivery of oxygen, nutrients, and immune cells, which can aid in tissue healing and reduce pain.

B. Restoration of Nerve Function: Acupuncture can stimulate nerve pathways, helping to restore normal nerve function in the area and reduce pain signals sent to the brain. It may also release endorphins, which are natural pain-relieving chemicals.

C. Activation of Specific Acupoints: Acupuncture relies on the insertion of needles into specific acupuncture points that have been identified as having analgesic effects. By stimulating these points, acupuncture can activate the body's natural pain-modulating mechanisms, providing targeted pain relief.

- **Inflammation Reduction:** Long COVID often involves chronic inflammation in various body systems. Acupuncture can help regulate the immune system and reduce inflammation by stimulating specific points that have been found to have anti-inflammatory effects.

- **Respiratory Support:** Some Long COVID patients may continue to experience respiratory issues like shortness of breath, chest congestion, or cough. Acupuncture can help clear the lungs, improve lung function, and remove phlegm by stimulating specific points associated with the respiratory system.

- **Energy Restoration:** Fatigue and low energy levels are common in Long COVID. Acupuncture can help restore energy levels by improving blood circulation, regulating the nervous system, and rebalancing the body's energy flow. This can lead to increased vitality and reduced fatigue.

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Body, Mind, and Spirit Psychotherapy: A Synergistic Approach



Farinaz Amirsehi, RN, LPC
Licensed Professional Counselor
In McLean, VA

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Farinaz Amirsehi is a Registered Nurse, Licensed Professional Counselor, and a Nationally Certified Counselor practicing at the Healing Light Center, LLC in McLean, VA.

Trained as an EMDR Therapist, Emotional Transformation Therapist, Clinical Hypnotherapist, Deep Memory Process/Regression Therapist, Reiki Practitioner, Somatic Integration Therapist, and Ancestral Family Constellation Therapist, Farinaz combines the principles of Eastern philosophies, Transpersonal Psychology, Body Psychotherapy, Subtle Energy Fields, and cutting edge technology in facilitating the healing process of her clients.

Additionally, Farinaz has extensive experience with severely traumatized populations such as survivors of politically motivated torture as well as a wide range of somatic, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual issues. Farinaz is also an established presenter at national and regional conferences. She has provided trainings for professionals of different disciplines on the impact of trauma on body, mind, and spirit.

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Make Your Own Medicine: Fire Cider

BY HAWATU DAVOWAH

Winter is here!

Each season has its own unique energetic signature that influences our bodies, minds, and spirits. Fall and winter are significant transitional periods for our inner and outer worlds. We transition from the warm, social, and vibrant energy of the summertime and into the cooler, introspective, and nostalgic energy of the colder months ahead.

Fire Cider is a handy medicine to keep in one's cabinet around this time of year. Many people use Fire Cider as a daily tonic to ward off colds or the seasonal flu. On a related note, I find Fire Cider gives me a much-needed energy boost in the colder seasons. Energetically, its ingredients like turmeric and ginger can be grounding and uplifting for the mind and spirit. Fire Cider can be taken as is, drizzled on salads or meals, splashed in a beverage of choice, or used as a condiment. Personally, I like adding Fire Cider to my tea.

What is Fire Cider?

Fire Cider is a folk remedy that is used to boost the immune system, stimulate digestion, support metabolism, and improve circulation, among many other benefits. It also has the ability to reduce congestion and inflammation in the body. This powerful herbal preparation has numerous antibacterial, antifungal, and antioxidant benefits.

*Fun Fact: Fire Cider is an **oxymel**, which is a herbal preparation of apple cider vinegar and honey. These two ingredients make Fire Cider a wonderful medicine with an extended shelf life. If using fresh herbs, ideally the preparation will be used within 6 months. Prepar-*

ing your Fire Cider using dried herbs will allow for a shelf life of up to 12 months in a cool, dark pantry. I like to use fresh herbs and store mine in the fridge for even more longevity!

There are so many wonderful Fire Cider recipes out there, all of which are a testament to this medicine's origin as a folk remedy. However, there are a few staple ingredients, such as ginger, horseradish, turmeric, and jalapeño — known for their fiery constitutions — that led Rosemary Gladstar to give this medicine its unique name in 1970. The beautiful thing about Fire Cider is there is no wrong way to prepare it! You can adjust this recipe to support specific health concerns, like adding nettles or yellow dock to boost iron levels, or sarsaparilla for joint support. Or simply adjust your ingredients based on what is in season at your local market.

Fire Cider is considered generally safe for consumption and daily use. There are no known side effects in people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have chronic conditions like diabetes. Nonetheless, always consult a trusted healthcare practitioner before making changes to your wellness regimen. **NOTE: Fire Cider should not be given to children under 12 months of age, as it increases the risk of infant botulism.**

FIRE CIDER RECIPE

Shelf Life: 6+ months using fresh herbs; 12+ months using dried herbs (and stored in a cool, dark pantry. Lasts longer when stored in the fridge.)

Dosage: 1 tablespoon per day. Increase dosage to 1 tablespoon every 3-4 hours if experiencing symptoms of a cold or illness.



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What You Will Need

Materials:

- 2 1 quart mason jars and lids
- Parchment paper
- Cheesecloth
- Fresh fruits, roots, and vegetables (listed below)
- Fresh or dried herbs (listed below)

Ingredients:

- 1 red onion, sliced
- 1 club turmeric root, roughly chopped
- 1 club ginger root, roughly chopped
- 1 orange, sliced
- 1 lemon, sliced
- 5-10 cloves of garlic, roughly chopped
- 1-2 jalapeños, roughly chopped
- Unpasteurized Apple Cider (ACV): a tonic with numerous benefits. ACV also works as a prebiotic to support the good bacteria in your gut. Look for ACV with the cloudy stuff at the bottom (also known as the “Mother”)
- ¼ to ½ cup of Local Raw Honey: its components, like propolis, include antiviral, antifungal, and antibacterial properties. Raw honey also includes trace amounts of pollen from the local environment, so regular use reduces your immune system’s sensitivity to the pollen in the local environment

Consider adding the following herbs to your Fire Cider...

- Rosemary: anti-inflammatory and encourages healthy circulation in the body. Also promotes mental calm and clarity



- Lemon balm: a gentle, yet incredibly versatile mint that promotes mental calm and clarity, soothes stomach upset, and boasts of antibacterial and antiviral abilities
- Tulsi (Holy Basil): known as “The Incomparable One,” this herb is an adaptogen that helps reduce cortisol levels in the body. Tulsi is an

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Fire Cider...

...continued from page 27

tibacterial, antiviral, and rich in iron. Tulsi Rama is great if you are looking for an herb that supports circulation.

- **Moringa:** an incredibly nutritive plant that contains many of the essential and non-essential amino acids that make our bodies healthy and strong
- **Nettles:** I endearingly introduce this herb as “Nature’s Multivitamin.” This mineral-rich plant nourishes the hair, skin, and nails, gently cleanses the lungs, and helps relieve the sinuses of seasonal allergies
- **Rosehips:** rich in Vitamin C, antioxidants, and flavonoids that can reduce the risk of developing cancer
- **Ceylon cinnamon:** helps curb sugar cravings and reduces insulin-resistance in the body. It also rounds out the Fire Cider’s flavor quite nicely!

Making Your Cider

1. Chop and slice your roots, fruits, veggies and herbs. Place them into your glass jar. Mind your eyes when chopping your onions and peppers (and consider using gloves to avoid any mishaps later on!)
2. Pour the apple cider vinegar in the jar. Cover all ingredients and fill the jar as close to the top as possible.
3. Place a piece of parchment paper under the lid to keep the vinegar from touching the metal (this creates rust). Shake well.
4. Place in a dark, cool place, and allow it to infuse for 4-8 weeks. Remember to shake the jar daily!

4-8 weeks later...

5. Use the cheesecloth to strain out the roots, fruits, veggies and herbs from the infused vinegar. Pour the infused vinegar into another clean jar. Be sure to squeeze as much of the infused vinegar from the cheesecloth as possible.
6. Add honey to taste, as well as any additional powdered herbs. Stir until well incorporated.
7. Label your Fire Cider with the date to track its shelf life.
8. Enjoy your Fire Cider with loved ones!

What will you add to your Fire Cider this year?

Hawatu is an ever-budding herbalist who believes that some of the best medicine can be found in our kitchens and in the nature that surrounds us. When she is not immersed in herbalism, foraging, and farming, she can be found creating dessert recipes, writing, and dancing.

How’s those photos on your website looking?
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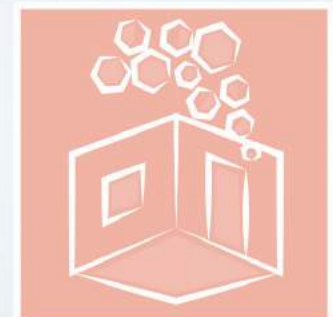
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A Deep Dive Into Sound Healing

BY LINDSEY HALDEMAN

If you want to understand the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency, and vibration.

~ Nikola Tesla

Everything is made of energy — from the stars we gaze at in the night sky, to the worms that wiggle in the dirt beneath us and everything in between, including each and every one of us. As humans we often think of ourselves in terms of our physical body, which contains a plethora of systems and organs. And each of these organs and systems is made up of countless microscopic cells. And these cells are made up of atoms, all vibrating together to keep us alive.

In addition to our physical body, we also each have an energetic body. Our energetic body is made up of subtle energies. There are many systems that detail the subtle body. One commonly known system is the Chakra system, which corresponds to different energetic centers in the body. There are also Nadis and Meridians, which are energetic lines that flow throughout the entire body system. Our subtle energies also extend beyond the body in the layers of the Aura and the sheaths of the Koshas. However you identify with the subtle energy of the body, it is often hard to deny the existence of self beyond the physical.

It is important to find wellness practices that can align us on a physical as well as energetic level. One such practice is sound healing. Sound healing sessions, often referred to as sound baths, utilize different instruments to create varied sounds, tones, and frequencies which aid in optimal functioning of both our physical and energetic



bodies. Sound baths are also a pathway to befriending silence and opening the doorway to our inner world. Let's explore the methods, benefits, and science behind sound healing.

Methods of Sound Healing

Each instrument used in sound healing has specific qualities to help attune both physical and energetic bodies into alignment. Some common instruments used by sound healers include: metal Tibetan bowls, crystal bowls, chimes, gongs, rain sticks, ocean drums, tongue drums,

continued on page 30



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Misty Kuceris, Reiki Master
& Pathways Columnist

Sound Healing...

...continued from page 29

handpan drums, tuning forks, and the tingsha. Some practitioners use a variety of different instruments in their sound healing sessions. And some practitioners have an affinity for a specific instrument and will delve into creating special experiences with multiple variations of that one instrument; for example a gong bath, which utilizes many different styles and sizes of only gongs.

A sound bath is usually a group event where participants will lie down, or be seated, with their eyes closed while the facilitator plays a symphony of different instruments and sounds. The sounds of the instruments gently fade into silence while participants find relaxation in following the variation of sounds as they drift into the quiet. Sound baths can also be paired with group chanting or vocalizations. Some sound baths are coupled with guided meditations or visualizations which are enhanced by the many sounds created.

There are also one-on-one sound healing sessions, where a practitioner will give you a personal sound healing experience. They may strategically place bowls on or around your body in specific areas for attunement. The practitioner may select certain instruments based on your current life challenges to assist in creating alignment for your journey.

The Science Behind & Benefits of Sound Healing

There are many energetic and physical benefits of sound healing, and they can differ from one person to the next. Benefits can even vary for an individual from one healing session to the next. In order to appreciate these benefits, one must first understand the science and psychology behind this healing modality.

In our daily waking state, our brain is functioning with Beta waves, where we can analyze and problem solve. When we become more relaxed, we begin to tap into Alpha waves. During a sound bath, when our aural senses are flooded, we can experience even deeper relaxed states, tapping into Theta brain waves. Theta is a deeply meditative state where creativity & intuition thrives. Here we are exposed to new insights for our journey and can imagine new ways of being.

In a sound healing experience, various instruments are being used, with each vibrating at a different frequency. These frequencies trigger the vibrating cells in the body to come into alignment. This is made possible through the concept of *resonant frequencies*. The idea of resonance is that if there are two objects with similar frequencies and one object begins to vibrate, the other object will also begin to vibrate with that frequency, bringing itself into alignment with its natural state. As the two objects vibrate together, they become synchronous in harmony with each other. In this way, the instruments that are emitting pure frequencies and tones can help the cells of the body re-align with their true vibrational frequencies.

The nervous system is one of the body's more mysterious systems, and it is particularly impacted by the vibrating frequencies, which translates to health benefits for the individual. The autonomic part of the nervous system has two parts: the sympathetic and the parasympathetic. Many people with high stress levels and anxiety are mostly operating from the sympathetic part of the nervous system, also known as "fight or flight mode". Sound healing has the capacity to move us off of the sympathetic track and naturally activates the parasympathetic track, which is often referred to as "rest or digest mode".

In this state our physical body has the ability to focus on repairing and healing. The many vibrations experienced help our cells move into alignment and our body systems can become more balanced. A

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sound bath induces a meditative state and can bring about a sense of relaxation, calmness, and a decrease in stress. Due to the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system and Theta or Delta brain waves, one can experience lower blood pressure, a slower heart rate, deeper breathing, increased digestion, and as a result, decreased anxiety symptoms. It is important to drink water following a sound healing session, so our body can stay hydrated, flush out toxins, and have optimal performance with this increase in more aligned body functions.

Psychologically, a sound bath has the tendency to take you right to the edge of awareness, to the space you experience right before falling asleep. This is known as the “Hypnagogic State”. In the Hypnagogic State we are able to have dream-like experiences while maintaining awareness. From these deepened states of consciousness, our intuition and creativity are heightened, and spirit guides are able to communicate with us via visualizations and auditory messages, all of which can contain insights into solutions for current challenges, or ideas for new ways of thinking. On the edge of consciousness, we can find help to move energetic blockages in our subtle body systems, and divine inspiration for our human journey. Due to the deep states of consciousness that one can reach, it is important to practice grounding exercises after a sound healing experience before returning to everyday life.

Personal Experience

For most of my life, the present moment was a place where I rarely spent my time, and silence was a space to contemplate every little detail of my past experiences, or worry about the outcome of the future. I stumbled onto a spiritual path, desperate for relief from the churnings of my mind. I found practicing guided meditation helped to ease my relationship with the present moment, but only through intently listening to another’s guidance. Still seeking relief from my inner machinations, I signed up for a sound bath and found myself lying in savasana on a cheap Yoga mat, dreading keeping my eyes closed in silence waiting for it to begin.

Once the Sound bath started, I was delighted to find that the unpredictability of the sounds managed to keep my mind occupied. I was able to follow the varied sounds into the unknown depths of silence. Before I could slip into the old patterns of overthinking, another sound would erupt and I could trace it back into the quiet. Eventually the fear of soundlessness began to dissipate. To my surprise, instead of an enemy, I found a friend, dare I say an ally, in the solitude of silence. In the ending moments of that first sound bath, I felt like a child wrapped in a warm, cozy blanket.

Needless to say, after that first sound healing experience, I was hooked. I attended monthly sound baths and eventually completed a sound healing training. I bought my own set of instruments and now share my passion for sound baths with others. From experiencing and practicing the art of sound healing I have come to befriend silence and the present moment in a way I did not think was possible. It has even allowed me to become acquainted with formerly unknown feelings, like safety, security, and harmony.

If you want to better understand the universe, and yourself, I encourage you to attend a sound bath in person. Bring your Yoga mat, a blanket, and an open mind. I hope the instruments take you deeply into yourself where you may find relief, delight, and peace. Vibe On!

Lindsey Haldeman candidly illuminates visionary ideals, bringing them into the everyday. With a BA in Psychology, she finds the psyche to be a treasure map and seeks the Gold in every experience. As an ongoing student of life, she continuously strives to be on the leading edge of thought and values the many varied adventures that life has to offer. Lindsey is a certified Yoga instructor, Reiki Master, and Sound Healer. For more information visit: www.lindseyhaldeman.com.



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Telling the Truth: The Paradox of Peace As R/Evolution

BY CAROL BURBANK

The world has always been full of questions, but lately, it seems like we are deeply attached to finding definitive answers. That always feels a little dangerous to me. Of course, like anyone, a convincing answer gives me comfort and a foundation. But I often find out that I haven't asked the right question, and the foundation shifts uncomfortably. The truth seems no closer than it was before; peace feels far away. With our communities reeling from changes we never anticipated and uncertainties we cannot minimize, peace evolves slowly in the tenuous balance of expansive questions and layered answers.

It's hard to live with today's realities. I try to gracefully navigate the pell-mell progress of the human machine, framed by technology and a desperate need for love and clarity, twisted by nationalism and deprivation and misunderstanding and rage. But things feel so muddy, with all these alternative and real, uncertain and passionate "facts" circling like a whirlpool. I often feel certain about what's right. I'm not often sure what's true.

Now is a time when we must find the discernment that can lead us into connection and expansion, because the stakes are so high. But how do we know what we know? How do we know that what we know is true? I'm not talking about that felt knowing that we value so much as spiritual people. That way of being and becoming is foundational to our personal evolution, at the same time part of our souls and resourced from something larger than our human lives.

Many would argue that liminal knowing is part of our cultural evolution as well. But the challenge I see daily is that this inner knowing is too often intimately woven with the ego's needs, obscured by our personal hopes, beliefs, fears, and dreams. Unconsciously, we weave the facts around these intuitive and aspirational ways of knowing as a way of constructing a mirror in the world. We can't see what we can't see. We don't know what we don't know.

This self-centered projection turns facts into silly putty. Remember silly putty? We pressed an image into that malleable rubbery toy and stretched it for our amusement. Fun when it's a game, but not so great when it's information we need to help us make sense of a crisis or a conflict. Facts always intersect with our beliefs, but the truth doesn't change just because it doesn't mirror our hopes and fears. With discernment we can trust our inner compass, but the answers we seek in mirrors are never as trustworthy as we might wish.

We must have the courage to ask a lot of questions as we look for answers, living more in experimentation than certainty. Certainty polarizes us. Because facts exist in an ever-evolving web, each one is influenced by our understanding and by the questions we've asked to arrive at those answers. These answers always combine facts with our internal beliefs and constructs. That makes for good conversations, interesting insights, and innovative solutions to challenges we face.

Which brings us to peace, at last. Peace is a process not a destination, a negotiation not a rigid fact. We know peace is active because truth serves community, giving us a foundation from which to understand, accept, and explore facts without distorting them. Peace allows us to understand, accept, and explore ourselves authentically. To co-create authentic communities. To bridge divides that we create by denying or stretching or misaligning the truths that make us who we are.

Facts arrange themselves in sides, opposing columns, marching to mirror our small selves and smaller relationships. Some of them are irrefutable; others are only facts in certain situations and contexts. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference. Yet facts are building blocks. If we pick and choose, we grow weaker. If we explore them with discernment, we can construct something real, something that can hold meaning.

Truths occupy a larger space, beyond the ego's mirror, more com-

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plex and demanding, more liberatory and honest. Some of them are comfortable, and feel like home; others remind us that home is a larger place than we ever imagined. Truths speak to our souls, connect us with each other, teach us compassion, illuminate the worlds we navigate. If we listen with discernment, we align with the larger vision that holds all of us together, and gives facts meaning.

Peace is the puzzle we hold together, fact by fact, truth by truth, soul by soul, community by community. Finding peace is almost always a relief; at other moments, it is a compromise

that forces us to change, to grow, to learn. Peace makes the present equitable, and a healthy future possible. If we lead with discernment, we embrace the possibility of co-creating something that brings us together as people who matter to each other.

Peace helps us see the visionary possibility that artist and politician Vaclav Havel defined in *The Power of the Powerless*: “The real question is whether the brighter future is really always so distant. What if, on the contrary, it has been here for a long time already, and only our own blindness and weakness has prevented us from seeing it around us and within us, and kept us from developing it?”

Carol Burbank is a writer, writing mentor, and teacher, a specialist in the arts and social change. She teaches at Pacifica Graduate Institute, and is working on a book about creative leadership and personal/social change. She also trains educators in building equity for at-risk students, and researches systemic and organizational change in education. Find out more at www.storyweaving.com.



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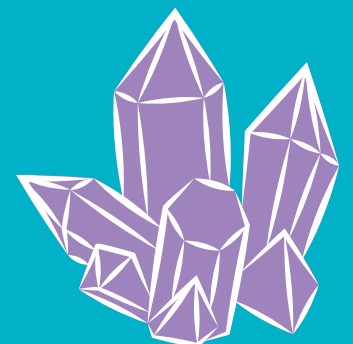
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DECEMBER

— 2 —

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— 7 —

Numerology - Compatibility & Harmony Zoom. Harmony, what a beautiful word. We all seek it. At work as well as in our

private lives. However, most of us are going about finding it in the wrong way true lasting harmony is only possible by connecting with our inner selves. This online class will reveal the five most important numbers to consider when evaluating compatibility with a person, location, situation, or profession. Come explore with Rev. Dr. Craig Wright; online from 7-8:30pm. To register: www.isd-dc.org/events-1/compatibility-exploring-numerology-with-rev-dr-craig-wright

— 9 —

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— 10 —

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event-details/ayurvedic-cooking-for-healing-monthly-course-dec23

— 12 —

Sacred Rhythms New Moon Drum Circle, 6:30pm - 8pm. Drop-Ins Welcome, Berryville Wellness Sanctuary, michellejoy.tsb@gmail.com. <https://lovenotesmusictherapy.com/sacred-rhythms-full-and-new-moon-community-drum-circles.html>

— 13 —

Trataka - Candle Gazing Meditation, 6:30pm-8pm. Trataka is an ancient meditation practice that uses candle gazing to improve and strengthen eyesight, clear the mind, and open the “third eye”, i.e. attain heightened spiritual awareness. Students will learn and practice the complete routine of Trataka, beginning with gentle eye exercises. Learn more and register at: www.vedicyoga.org/event-details/trataka-candle-gazing-meditation-10

— 16 —

Winter Sound Bath, 6:30pm-7:30pm, SCUU Yurt, Germantown, MD. “Ditch the Winter Blues and Boost Your Spirits!” Join Lindsey Haldeman and prepare for the shortest day of the year with a peaceful & relaxing sound bath. De-stress & unwind while immersed in a soothing soundscape created by crystal singing bowls, Tibetan metal bowls, chimes, rainsticks & more (plus silence). Chairs will be provided. Please bring a mat if you would like to lie down. Pay What You Can (suggested: \$5-\$25), Cash, PayPal or Venmo Accepted at time of event. For more information on Sound Baths visit www.lindseyhaldeman.com.

— 17 —

Learn the Wisdom & Practices of Awakened Heart Shamanism with Rachel Mann PhD, 11am-1pm. Tap into the wisdom and vibrant practices of Awakened Heart Shamanism. It is a mystical, cosmic pathway

for partnering with creation to maintain inner and outer harmony and balance, to activate healing, to bring joy, and to keep the peace. Love-light, the animating force of the universe and universes, is conscious and alive, and waiting for us to pay attention and to reach out with our hearts and minds so we can experience the medicine and the wisdom available there. At Sacred Circle, 919 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314; 703-299-9309. www.sacredcirclebooks.com/events

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JANUARY 2024

— 1 —

Profound Intention: Simple Practices for Powerful Living, with Claudia Neuman, 10am-12pm. Through precise sequences of breath and movement, we can achieve a state of Yoga, meaning we can enter into a state in which the mind is clear and the body is balanced.

— 6 —

1/6-7 Connect With Your Spirit Guides Workshop via Zoom. Learn how to connect with your spirit guides and angels and how to receive their wisdom, insight and guidance for various life situations. Learn a number of different ways to help you make the connection and to

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S. Alice (Alicja) Jones is a psychic, medium, and intuitive healer who gives spiritual and past life readings. These messages many times include Past

Lives and how they impact your current life, solutions to pressing problems, or a loved one in spirit to comfort you.



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Rev. Trish Hall, Spiritual Leader
International Best Selling Author
Founder of Way2Peace.org

enhance your life. Meeting via Zoom from 9:30am-12:30pm (EST) both days. Contact Konstanza Morning Star at 240-543-9414 if you have any questions about this two-day class. silver-springoflight@gmail.com; www.mediumshamandc.com/connect-with-spirit-guides

— 7 —

Make Your Own Medicine: Fire Cider 101. Winter is here! Fire cider is a handy medicine to keep in one's cabinet this time of year. Many people use This folk remedy as a daily tonic to ward off colds or the seasonal flu; it can boost the immune system, stimulate digestion, support metabolism, and improve circulation, among many other benefits. In this 2-part class series, you will learn how to make your own fire cider. In Part 1, participants will create vinegar infusions that can be taken home to infuse until we meet again for Part 2, where we will strain our infusions and add final touches (like honey!) to our fire ciders. At Smile Herb Shop, College Park, MD, 11am-12:30pm. To register: www.eventbrite.com/e/756348497717?aff=oddtcreator. More info: smileherbalist@gmail.com; 301-474-8791; www.smileherb.com.

— 14 —

Beginning Mediumship Workshop via Zoom. Open up your ability to connect with the spirit world and bring forth strong evidential information that demonstrates the continuity of life beyond physical death. You will learn how to connect in a safe, secure, supportive and time-proven manner that builds fluency and confidence. Meeting via Zoom from 3pm-6pm (EST) on four Sunday afternoons: January 14, 21, 28 and February 4, 2024. Each class builds on the previous material, so it is essential that participants attend all four classes. For more information, call Konstanza Morning Star at 240-543-9414; silver-springoflight@gmail.com. www.

mediumshamandc.com/beginning-mediumship

— 17 —

Mediumship Development Circle, 8 Weeks Via Zoom. This mediumship circle provides participants with the ongoing opportunity to practice their ability to connect with the spirit world and receive evidential information from that realm. Meeting includes psychic exercises, meditation, connection with the spirit world, sharing with others and receiving validation and feedback. 8 Wednesday evenings via Zoom from 7:30pm-9:15pm (EST) beginning on January 17, 2024. For more information call Konstanza Morning Star at 240-543-9414; silver-springoflight@gmail.com. www.mediumshamandc.com/circle-in-silver-spring-md

— 20 —

One Day Healing Virtual Event, 12pm- 5:30pm. Come receive powerful and profound healing provided by Wanda Lasseter Lundy for all participants. The healing has the power of the group behind it. You will receive healing for your body, mind, emotions, soul and past and future lives based on the group collective as well as individual healing for participants. You will receive healing for your family and other relationships, and have improvements for your life path. To register: Purchase a ticket at www.Lasseterlundy.com; or call our office at 812-705-5135 or email wanda@lasseterlundy.com.

— 21 —

Reiki Level I Certification, 1pm-5pm, in Sterling, VA, with Annie Larson. No prerequisites to attend. Learn Usui Reiki as taught in the tradition and lineage of Dr. Mikao Usui, to activate the natural healing energy processes of the client's mind/body/spirit to restore physical and emotional well-being. After this introductory course, you will

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be able to give Reiki to yourself, family, and friends. More info & to register: Annie Larson, mediumAnnieLarson@gmail.com; 844-585-8885; www.mediuman Nielarson.com/.

— 26 —

1/26-28 Anatomy Trains in Structure and Function, 9am-5pm each day. This is the first part of the Structural Essentials (SE) Program. Functional, fascial, and structural approaches in one program. Understand how the body really moves! Suitable for Manual Therapists (massage therapists, physiotherapists, osteopaths, chiropractors. Offered by Potomac Massage Training Institute (PMTI), 8701 Georgia Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20910. 21 CEUs. Learn more, RSVP & register: www.pmti.org/events-1/anatomy-trains-in-structure-and-function-3

— 27 —

Washington Gardener Seed Exchange, 12:30pm - 4pm at Brookside Gardens, Wheaton, MD. Seed Exchange attendees trade seeds, exchange planting tips, hear expert speakers, and collect goody bags full of gardening treats. The event also includes such "green" features as the garden book and catalog swap. Participants are encouraged to bring their gently used garden books and mail-order garden catalogs to trade with each other. The event coincides with the annual Seed Swap Day. <https://washingtongardener.blogspot.com/>

FEBRUARY

— 10 —

Level One: Foundation Program - Becoming Intuitive: Empathy is a Gift, virtual workshop, 12pm-5:30pm, taught by Elizabeth Bava. Many people are naturally empathic, i.e., able to feel what others are feeling,

either physically or emotionally. Often empathic people are uncomfortable with these feelings and affected by them for a period of time after having them. This class teaches you how to turn empathy into a gift that informs you about others and situations while simultaneously maintaining your energy and feeling well. To register: Purchase a ticket at www.Lasseterlundy.com; call our office at 812-705-5135 or email wanda@lasseterlundy.com.

— 11 —

Reiki Level II Certification, 1pm-5pm, in Sterling, VA, with Annie Larson. Reiki Level II will focus on an extensive opening of the energy channels while practicing Reiki on others. Students will receive an attunement along with Reiki symbols that allow the practitioner to connect more deeply to draw on the benefits the symbols represent. This includes the ability to send distance Reiki, clear energy blockages across time, and unblock physical objects and locations. Prerequisite: success-

fully completed a valid Reiki Level I Certification regardless of the Reiki lineage. More info & to register: Annie Larson, mediumAnnieLarson@gmail.com; 844-585-8885; www.mediuman Nielarson.com/.

— 17 —

2/17-18 Dream Interpretation 2-Day Workshop via Zoom. This two-morning workshop, 9:30am-12:30pm (EST) both days, will teach you a variety of modalities to crack the code of what your dreams are trying to convey. Whether you have a dream that has you stumped, a nightmare that makes you dread bedtime, or whether you just want to learn how to receive better guidance from your dreams, at the end of the workshop you'll have the tools you need. No prior experience is necessary. Konstanza Morning Star, 240-543-9414; silverspringofflight@gmail.com. www.mediumshamandc.com/dream-interpretation

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— 28 —

“Exploring Balance”, Meditation & Mandala Workshop, 6pm-7pm. No matter what ‘balance’ may mean to you, the theme will inspire us during a guided meditation and a visual exploration of ‘balance’ in a colorful mandala. By the end of the workshop, you’ll have created a one-of-a-kind artwork communicating your particular experience. No experience needed. Zoom workshop with artist Martina Sestakova (connect@radostbymartinastakova.com), presented by Smith Center for Healing and the Arts; suggested donation to Smith Center: \$15. <https://smithcenter.org/programs-retreat/exploring-balance-meditation-mandala-workshop/>

UPCOMING

3/10/2024 **Intuitive Development**, 1pm-5pm, in Sterling, VA, with Annie Larson. Begin your journey learning how to tap into your own voice and intuition. You will focus on the subconscious mind and ways to bring information forward in a useful way. Through lessons, observations, and practice, you will begin to rely on your own thoughts and feelings to move you forward into being able to tap in for other people. You’ll begin to work with and understand symbols and signs. More info & to register: Annie Larson, mediumAnnieLarson@gmail.com; 844-585-8885; www.mediumannielarson.com/.

4/25-28/2024 **Enlightened Rest 108: Yoga for Serenity, Strength & Resilience Retreat**, at the Pathways Retreat Center. Enjoy a long weekend fortifying our bodies and spirits and learning to rest in sublime serenity. This retreat is suitable for all levels of Yoga. The retreat will include asana sessions (all levels), meditation instruction, prana yama (breath work), Para® Yoga Nidra (The Yoga of Sleep), and a special practice to harness the power of our subconscious minds. Space is

limited ~ Register early to secure your spot! www.PathwaysProductions.com/retreats

ONGOING

A Course in Miracles Study Group meeting each Wednesday evening from 7pm-8:30pm EST. All are welcomed. Contact Tammy Batcha for more information: tammybatcha@gmail.com; 540-550-1971.

Adams Morgan Farmers Market, Saturdays, 8am-1pm, Washington, DC. Saturdays starting May 6 through December 23, 8am - 1pm, at Unity Plaza (across from The Line Hotel, Columbia Rd and Euclid St, WDC). Sustainably grown, affordably priced fruits, veggies & more. RAIN OR SHINE. CSA Memberships pick up at this location. Email Licking Creek Bend Farm to join, for more info, or to volunteer: info@lickingcreekbendfarm.com, 301-587-1739. www.lickingcreekbendfarm.com

Cannabis 101, every 3rd Saturday monthly from 2pm-4pm, presented by Cannabis Karma & Lifeluxee. It’s a wonderful opportunity to learn about Cannabis therapy and CBD as an alternative medicine. Learn about your Endocannabinoid system. Ask questions? We promote #plantbased healing ideas. Hempstress onsite for sampling. Hemp kettle tea provided onsite. LifeLuxee, 825 Upshur St NW, Washington, DC 20011. www.cannabiskarma.org

Elevated Brunch, 2pm -4:20pm, the last Saturday of every month. Cannabis Karma is known for creating an impeccable vibe and its friendly, yet chic atmosphere. Our monthly Elevated Brunch is a must-try brunch experience if you’re in Washington, DC. The menu includes delicious, hearty all-day breakfast items with everything from infused waffles, home fries, crispy fried chicken,

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First Friday Drum Circles with Jona. Bring friends and family to enjoy love, light and positive energy! This is recurring the first Friday of every month at The Sanctuary Wellness Center in Berryville, VA. Donations at the Door! www.sanctuaryberryville.com/events-and-workshops

Group Meditation. Learn Basic Heartfulness Practices, a simple and powerful meditation on the energy of the heart. Heartfulness practices are based on increasing love, compassion and courage in our lives, resulting in a sense of ease with daily

life and reaching higher levels of consciousness. The practice consists of four basic elements: relaxation, morning meditation, evening cleaning, and nighttime prayer. Locations for weekly practices in Rockville, MD, Vienna, VA and online; more info at <https://tinyurl.com/HFNDC-website>.

In-Person Spiritual Discussion. Lively, in-person spiritual discussion exploring our relationship to the Eternal. How can we embrace our true destiny as immortal Soul? Join us at the Northern Virginia ECK Center in Fairfax, VA, every 2nd Sunday from 11am-12pm for stimulating spiritual conversation! Eckankar of Northern Virginia: 703-916-0515; spiritualdiscussions12@gmail.com; www.eck-va.org.

Intuitive Readings by Amor Fati, Saturdays 12-6pm and Sundays 12-4pm. Intuitive Tarot Reader, Psychic/Medium, Heal-

er, & Intuitive Crystal Jewelry Artist/Creator Fati Shakeri will be providing readings (<https://www.amorfatihealing.com/>) at Earth Addictions in Historic Occoquan, VA. Depending on the type and length of reading, prices start at \$25. Spaces fill fast so booking ahead via the link provided is recommended. www.facebook.com/EarthAddictions

The Mary Jay Party! Join us on the first Thursday of every month for an open smoke session sponsored by Cannabis Karma. Join us for an evening of complimentary food, quality smokes and good vibes. Weed love to host you! Tickets include: Complimentary pre-roll; Food and drinks; Unlimited hashish bar; Hi-tea; Pre-roll station; Smores; Raffle ticket (\$50 value); Ganja inspired games; Cake; Flowers, rolling supplies and lessons provided by the Cannabis Karma weed fairies.. #askaweed-fairy *while supplies last www.cannabiskarma.org

Meditation for Peace and Well-being, every Monday and Thursday, 7:30pm - 8:30pm. Meditation for peace and well-being. A portion of each session is specifically designed for healing. Join us on Zoom. For beginners and experienced meditators. For reservations: 301-452-7780 or savitri@newfuturesocietycenter.com. <https://newfuturesocietycenter.com/offerings-events/#meditation>

New Moon-Rainbow Therapy Healing Circle, 6:30pm-8pm, every third Friday of the month at BrandArtYoga (BAY) by Author Sharon Price - Spiritual Translator, Grief & Wellness Specialist (www.authorsharon-price.com). A combination of aromatherapy & energy therapy with guided meditation to restore the natural flow of energy in the body. Rainbow Therapy assists in the release of stored emotions and blocks within the energy pathways. There are intuitive messages received



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WINTER CALENDAR

during this process of releasing and learning to tune into your own spiritual channel to create balance and harmony. BAY, Francis Scott Key Mall, Suite 820, Frederick, MD 21703. Luz T Brand-Lopez, brandartyoga@gmail.com; 808-375-7162. www.brandartyoga.com

Spirit Vigilante Club, 6pm -7pm monthly on the first Wednesday. Become a Spirit Vigilante and attend monthly virtual mind/body group check-ins and access to our online community. Weekly emails including a wellness lesson, meditation, and mantra to keep you healthy and focused. Monthly one-on-one sessions to develop personalized suggestions and plans of action, and set intentions to meet your goals, and track your progress. 11% off all Spirit Vigilante offerings — retreats, workshops, online programs, etc. Bonus surprises. To join: www.thespirtvigitante.com/join.

Spiritual Video Night Online. Join us online every 2nd Wednesday from 7-8pm for an uplifting 30-minute video that offers insights about some of the perplexing mysteries of life. The video will be followed by a group

discussion. Together, we'll share our experiences and questions about life's challenges. Sponsored by ECKANKAR, the Path of Spiritual Freedom. For more info: spiritualdiscussions12@gmail.com; 703-915-4701; www.eck-va.org.

Stoned Salutations Yoga, 2nd Saturday of every month, 1pm - 2:22pm, for an elevated Yoga experience. We invite you and your like minded friends to a serene, mindfully curated event for the conscious cannabis consumer. All levels welcomed. The first and last fifteen minutes are dedicated to mindful cannabis consumption. We will guide you and your fellow "stoners" through forty-five minutes of intuitive flow. <https://cannabiskarma.org/index.php/product/stoned-salutations/>

Voice of the Gatekeeper Molly Rowland 33 New releases on YouTube. After a long wait I am able to add to my YouTube Channel. Watch for Moon Rituals, Teachings from St. Germain and much more. More information: www.voiceofthegatekeepers.com



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Our May Intensive will be May 3rd, 4th and 5th. Title: *Becoming Your New Self from Within*. Check out my newsletter "Pot of Gold," my Facebook St. Germain page.

Teaching for 2024 is "Twelve Steps to Revelation." St. Germain calls this the Year of Discovery.

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More information on
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For details, rates and booking inquiries:

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The Peace Choice...

...continued from page 9

these conditions of upheaval shifting our personal balance. Facing conflict, abuse, hardship, disappointment and challenges without it taking away our peace of mind is a gift — and it is one worth fighting for.

While we can take proactive steps to ensure we experience restorative and healing sleep, maintain a well functioning parasympathetic nervous system, and expose ourselves to frequency modulating techniques through meditation, biofield adjustments such as Solfeggio sounds, chakra alignment, and vibrational corrections; the bigger power comes in practicing peaceful dialogue as a part of our inner narration. This can influence our perception of the experiences we encounter. The goal is to maintain bliss regardless of insult, adversity, fear and uncertainty.

Within our physiological body, homeostasis is not achieved with the absence of what threatens it; instead, it is achieved when the body *can* withstand the toxic load that comes with living, interacting, and aging. It is all about resilience in maintaining balance even when that balance is under attack. Safeguarding this homeostasis becomes more challenging when the body sustains hits without remediation or intervention.

As the Global Peace Index teaches us, positive peace comes when we invest in frameworks, attitudes, and infrastructures of peace. These are the so-called “Pillars of Peace”, eight complex and interconnected external factors that include “Acceptance of the Rights of Others”, “Good Relations with Neighbors”, and “Well Functioning Government”, just to name a few. Our internal frameworks are our paradigms on how we see the world. Are we victims of our childhood, relationships, hardships, economic status, societal limitations and cultural restrictions? Or are we in fact sovereign beings responsible for the story we tell about our lives despite or rather in spite of the judgment, blame and expectations of others and life’s limitations? Waiting for the absence of challenges, adversity, grief, judgment and loss to find peace is not a sustainable model. It is negative peace.

The process of finding sustainable and positive peace within us begins with the intention and the commitment to embody it. It begins one experience at a time. One awareness at a time. One choice at a time. Going into past experiences by looking back at a big impact event that robbed us of our peace and created stress instead is a great way for us to understand this opportunity. With hindsight, we understand we are able to look back because *we are still here*. We survived that event. Appreciating that stressful thoughts or reactive responses didn’t actually help the situation or lift our vibrational frequencies, and instead perhaps worsened the experience, is a teachable moment. How could this experience have been different in our personal story if we were capable of maintaining a peaceful outlook while handling the situation? How would that have kept our relationships safer, our health and wellness less stressed, our choices more aligned toward our highest self? How would that memory now sit in the memoir of our life?

Peace is an intangible quality with very tangible outcomes. Practicing the maintenance of Peace, and investing in keeping that pace of grace within our responses, language, perceptions, aspirations, and self-awareness, are powerful steps toward enlightenment and living a life filled with big love, magical moments and meaningful impact. It is a compelling legacy that offers a collective impact toward creating communities that foster safe environments within which we can all thrive.

The Rumi quote speaks to the ideation that we are not the sum of what we have or don’t have, who we are or are not — for those prior-



Pillars of Positive Peace

ities are destabilizing and ever-changing. Instead, when we embrace our success and failures, and our joyful celebrations and heartbreaking grief with the same reverence, detachment, and tenderness, our lives are not filled with destabilizing impact, but instead with sustained and unwavering peace.

The Latin word *Invictus* doesn’t mean victorious; it actually translates as “undefeated”. There is immense peace in this translation. We are only defeated when we allow ourselves to believe we are. We can also choose to embrace the truth that our adversities cannot take from us what we will not give them. We can choose never to surrender our peace, remaining always *Invictus* — always undefeated — our peace intact. And this peace now becomes our story of bliss.

Pramela Thiagesan is a personal development/business coach specializing in Biofield Correction and Manifesting Techniques. Her clients find her through word of mouth and she has successfully practiced in this field with a constantly full client roster for almost a decade. She lives in Asheville, North Carolina, with her 2 children. To learn more, contact Pramela at 828.777.6787.



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Winter Plant Picks - Part 2

BY KATHY JENTZ

Last winter, we shared five plants in this column to add to your garden for flower, foliage and bark interest when the rest of the garden is bare and gray. Here are three more selections to consider adding — or adding more of — to your garden for winter interest and beyond, as well as two plants to have fun growing indoors from forced bulbs for the new year.

River Birch

River Birch (*Betula nigra*) is a fast-growing tree that is a good choice for home landscapes. It is popularly known for its attractive peeling bark and multi-stem growth habit. It is known alternatively as Water Birch or Red Birch. It looks similar to Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*), but River Birch is more heat tolerant, while Paper Birch has a purer white bark color.



River Birch is native to the Eastern United States and hardy from zones 4-9. It can grow up to 70 feet tall, but there are dwarf varieties available. These include 'Summer Cascade', 'Fox Valley', and 'Shiloh Splash'. Look at local garden centers and nurseries for 'Heritage,' which is more tolerant of heat than the straight species. This cultivar was named the "Urban Tree of the Year" in 2002 by the Society of Municipal Arborists.

Plant it in spring or fall in a full sun location. River Birch prefers

moist soils, as the common name would indicate. Be sure to give it extra water during any drought periods. It tolerates most kinds of soils and likes a heavy mulching over its root zone, but the mulch should not touch the tree's bark.

There is no need to fertilize River Birch. If you must prune it, do so after August as early season pruning can cause a sap to run from its wounds.

Stinking Hellebore

Stinking Hellebore (*Hellebopus foetidus*) is a perennial plant that is native to the mountains of Europe and south-west Asia. Despite the common name, the flowers don't smell bad at all. In fact, to notice the "stink" you will have to actually crush the foliage and take a whiff of that. So don't let that scary name keep you from growing it.

This tough plant has beautiful, finely cut leaves and bright-green flowers. They bloom in late winter and early spring. It is very low-maintenance. In mid-spring, you can prune off any spent flowers as well as any old, tattered foliage. The plants spread fairly quickly and form large clumps that can be divided every few years. Plant the divisions immediately and water them in well to give them a good start.

Stinking Hellebore thrives in part-shade and rich, well-draining soils. It is hardy to USDA zones 6 through 9. They are fairly drought-tolerant once established. Like its Hellebore cousins, it is poisonous if ingested and therefore deer-resistant.



Boxwood

Boxwood (*Buxus species*) is an evergreen shrub that has been grown ornamentally for thousands of years. It is used



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in the landscape as an edging, in containers, in mass groupings, and as a single specimen plant.

Boxwood can be fast-growing or slow. They also come in many different shapes — from upright and columnar to round and full. There are varieties that have longer leaves, variegated foliage, and even miniature ones. Avoid English boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* ‘**Suffruticosa**’), if your nose objects to the strong boxwood scent. The other boxwood species are fairly scent-free.

The best time to plant boxwood is in the early spring or early fall. It prefers a neutral soil pH between 6.5 – 7.0. After planting, make sure to water the shrub consistently. However, boxwood hate soggy roots, so don't plant them in wet areas or near downspouts.

Don't plant boxwood too close to your home's foundation or right next to sidewalk and driveway edges either. They will need room to spread and grow. They also have shallow root systems and do not like anything planted under them. It is best to mulch lightly and never use stone or marble chips around them.

Boxwood is fairly deer-resistant, but has some disease and insect pressures. For a healthier planting, choose a boxwood variety from the newer blight-resistant introductions. You will also need to thin the plant's interior growth periodically to assure good air circulation and sunlight gets inside.

You can see extensive boxwood collections at public gardens in the Mid-Atlantic region, such as the [National Boxwood Collection at the US National Arboretum](#), and the more than 160 boxwood cultivars on display at the [Virginia State Arboretum at Blandy](#). You can find out more about boxwood at the American Boxwood Society's website: www.boxwoodsociety.org.

Paperwhites

Paperwhites (*Narcissus papyraceus*) is a white-flowering daffodil relative that is hardy to zones 8-11.

Forcing these bulbs into bloom is a great holiday season project for beginning gardeners and children. These bulbs are of Mediterranean origin and come pre-chilled for you, so they are virtually ready to “pop” into bloom once you place them in water. They are generally inexpensive, around \$1-\$2 each, so you can buy several and pot



them up as gifts for everyone on your list.

I like to place them individually in votive candle holders or heavy-bottom rocks glasses then line them up on windowsills, down the middle of a dining table, along the fireplace mantel, or singly next to the bathroom sink. You can also take a large glass bowl or tall vase and place several bulbs together to make a small “forest” of paperwhites. I have used fishbowls, teapots, and old watering cans; really anything that is water-tight can be used, so look around your home for inspiration.

To anchor the bulbs in and prevent them from toppling over as they grow leggy, you can place the bulbs in a variety of decorative media, from aquarium pebbles to glass marbles. (You can always use potting soil to plant them in.) I like to use hydrating water beads you can get from florist supply and craft sources. They come in many shades, but I tend to stick with the classic clear ones. Whatever media you use, keep the water level only up to about the bulb's bottom hip area, so as not to rot it. If your home is as dry as mine in winter, you will need to top off the water every few days, so keep an eye on that.

Once “potted,” place them in a sunny window until the leaves emerge and a stalk with flower buds starts to form (usually about 10 days to 2 weeks); then place them wherever you'd like to display them. After the flowers start to fade, pull the bulbs out of the water and pry off any marbles/stones/glass that you want to re-use next year then throw out the whole plant in your compost pile. In our Mid-Atlantic USA region, they are not winter-hardy, so there is no need to try and plant or save them for next season.

Warning! The scent of paperwhite blooms is a love/hate thing. I personally fall on the “not-my-favorite smell” end of things, so I keep paperwhites in well-ventilated rooms and out of any bedrooms. If you really cannot stand the scent, there are paperwhite varieties that are lighter in fragrance than the mass-produced ‘Ziva’ that you find everywhere. These include ‘Inbal’ and ‘Galilee.’

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Winter Plant Picks...

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Amaryllis

Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum sp.*) is a large flowering bulb that is commonly grown indoors for holiday decoration. It is native to Central and South America and includes 90 species and over 600 cultivars. The flower colors can range from the classic red to white, salmon, pink, or creamy yellow. Some flowers are very large, others are more delicate and narrow types. They also come in single- and double-flower varieties.



As many as six flowers will bloom on a single stem. In general, the larger the flower bulb, the more flowers it will produce.

To prompt the Amaryllis to start to grow, place the bulb in a container filled with lukewarm water for an hour. You can then plant the Amaryllis bulb in a container filled with sterile potting mix. Be sure to leave at least the top third of the bulb above the soil level and to choose a container with good drainage that is only an inch or two wider than the bulb itself. Amaryllis like to fit snugly in their pots. Because the flowers can be top heavy, pick a pot that has some weight and heft to it.

Amaryllis prefer a room temperature between 68 and 74 degrees. They also need sufficient light to bloom. If it doesn't get enough, its stems will stretch out and need support. Rotate the pot a quarter turn each time you water the plant.

After the flowers finish blooming, the bulbs need a period of recov-

ery and rejuvenation. Cut off the flower stalks, but leave the foliage intact and reduced watering. They can be grown as a houseplant and then placed out in the summer to gather more energy for blooming again in the winter. Re-pot them every 3 to 4 years.

If you live in USDA zones 8-11, they can be planted outdoors in the spring and stay there year-round.

Bring them in before the weather gets cold and discontinue watering. Place them in a cool, dark place to remain dormant for at least two months. Then take them out of storage, water them thoroughly, and put in a sunny spot again to start the bloom cycle over.

Kathy Jentz is editor/publisher of Washington Gardener magazine. She is also the host of the popular GardenDC Podcast. All photos by Kathy Jentz.

Washington Gardener magazine is the gardening publication published specifically for the local metro area — zones 6-7 — Washington DC and its suburbs. The magazine is written entirely by local area gardeners. They have real-world knowledge and practical advice. They share their thoughts on what to plant in deep shade, how to cover bare spots, which annuals work best throughout the humid DC summers, and much more.

The magazine is published monthly online and includes timely information such as a local garden events calendar and gardening to-do list for that month. A year-long digital subscription is \$20.00. To subscribe to the magazine: Send a check/money order for \$20.00 payable to "Washington Gardener" magazine to: Washington Gardener, 826 Philadelphia Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910 OR to pay via Paypal/credit card click on the "subscribe" link at www.Washington-Gardener.com.

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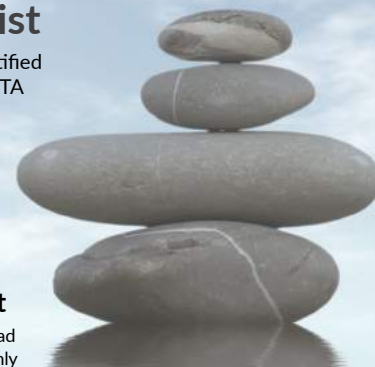


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Hypnotic Help for Seasonal Affective Disorder

BY BETH CHARBONNEAU, LCSW-C

The long, dark nights of winter, bare tree branches and colder temperatures might be delightfully inviting to some people that long for more rest and quiet, ready to cozy up with blankets and books for a while. But for others, it can be a disheartening time of year — the long nights can seem oppressive as they feel antsy or sluggish after being stuck inside all the time, frustrated in their melancholy or agitation. This condition has a clinical term known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D), also sometimes called the winter blues, and it impacts millions of Americans every year, with higher rates among women than men, as well as for people already living with depression.

Researchers aren't completely sure how S.A.D. works, but believe that the reduced daylight hours impacts both melatonin and serotonin production in the brain, leading to the common symptoms of low energy and mood, problems with sleep, and difficulties with concentration. There are a variety of strategies for managing S.A.D. and improving wellness throughout the winter months. Many people find light therapy very helpful, as well as getting exposure to the daylight that is available. Physical activity, psychotherapy and medication are also proven treatment options and supports. In addition to these wonderful options, hypnosis can help provide a boost in lightening the load of dealing with S.A.D.

Hypnosis for S.A.D.

There are a lot of misconceptions about what hypnosis is and is not. Simply put, it's a focused state of relaxed awareness. In this relaxed, focused state, helpful suggestions may be more easily and readily absorbed. Many hypnotherapists believe all hypnosis is essentially self-hypnosis — the client is always in control over what suggestions they wish to take in and also their own depth of absorption in the

trance. A good hypnotherapist can help facilitate that for a client, with custom suggestions tailored to be optimally helpful for each individual; but ultimately, the client is in full control. Hypnotherapy is all about helping clients access inner resources, and learning self-hypnosis is a key element in this.

Some elements of self-hypnosis can be used by anyone, even without any formal hypnosis experience, and may be useful for relieving some of the difficulties of S.A.D. When we can intensely imagine an event, using all of our senses, we can have the experience of feeling, in this moment, how we feel in that event that we are intensely imagining. While this can be a challenging thing when we are stuck in our thoughts, ruminating about a negative experience, it can be of great benefit by



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Hypnotic Help...

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deliberately calling up positive experiences in order to enjoy some of those pleasurable feelings here and now. Regardless of whether we are actually experiencing something or just intensely imagining it, our brains react in the same way, sending out corresponding signals and neurotransmitters. This can be an invaluable tool for boosting mood and opening ourselves up to helpful thought patterns, instead of negative ones.

How It Works

Hypnosis can happen under a variety of conditions but often starts with relaxing and focusing within, much like a guided meditation practice. Some slow, smooth belly breaths can set the stage for slowing down and turning inwards. There are a number of wonderful, free resources online for guided practices of body scans or progressive muscle relaxation — ways of relaxing the whole body, part by part. Many major medical institutions recognize the benefit of these relaxation practices and have free audio or video tracks available to use — check out [UCLA Health](#) or [Dartmouth College health resources](#) for examples. If you already have experiences with using a body scan meditation or progressive muscle relaxation, you can do that on your own, to ease into greater relaxation, in preparation for opening the benefits of the next steps of this process.

After some relaxation of the body and breath, either guided or on your own, now is the time to employ the strategy of allowing the brain to experience something very pleasant, just like if it were happening right now. For managing S.A.D., many people find that they miss how they feel in the warmer, more light-filled months. Using the imagination, many of those positive feelings and sensations can be replicated, even in the dark, cold winter months.

Pick a favorite warm weather experience, either from memory or imagined, and bring in all the senses to make the experience as vivid as possible. Move slowly through the senses, noting all the many things you can see, hear, feel, smell and taste in this imagined experience. Even if it is an imagined beam of warm, glowing, golden sunlight, there can be a real sensation of warmth experienced in the body, much like just remembering an intense argument of the past can create real muscle tension in the body now. Invite yourself to relax deeper and deeper as you move through imagining the use of each of your senses in this delightful warm-weather scene. Take as much time as you like to drift and float through this pleasant experience, indulging in any enjoyable feelings and sensations.

Once you feel this part of your experience is complete, you will hopefully be in a very relaxed and pleasant state of mind, open to helpful thoughts and suggestions. This is a great opportunity to repeat a thought that you'd like to plant, like a seed, in your mind. For managing winter mood concerns, helpful suggestions might include things like, "I feel light and energized", or "I enjoy pleasurable activities with my friends", or "I find enjoyment in the restfulness of this season, knowing more active times are coming soon". It's helpful to state these thoughts in the present tense, using positive language. After repeating this helpful suggestion to yourself a few times, you can return your full awareness to the present moment, perhaps stretch a bit, and then go on with your day knowing you can return to this practice any time that it's helpful to access those resources within.

Just like all skills, the more this is practiced, the easier it is to use. Take charge of your winter wellness by finding that warmth and light within that is available all year long. Used in conjunction with other treatments and supports, hypnosis is a great way to find relief from the winter blues.

Beth Charbonneau, LCSW-C is a psychotherapist and hypnotherapist, practicing in College Park, Maryland & online. www.beth-charbonneau.com

Long COVID...

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- **Stress and Anxiety Reduction:** Long COVID can cause significant mental and emotional distress, including anxiety, depression, and Post-Exertional Malaise (PEM). Acupuncture can help calm the nervous system, reduce anxiety, and promote relaxation, aiding in stress management and improving mental well-being.
- **Sleep Improvement:** Many long COVID patients struggle with sleep disturbances and insomnia. Acupuncture can help regulate sleep patterns, promote relaxation, and alleviate insomnia by addressing underlying imbalances in the body.

So much is still unknown about how, why and how long Long COVID and its mixed bag of symptoms will occur or can last. Since this is a health condition that is here to stay, it's most important to note that the treatment for Long COVID should be personalized and tailored to individual needs. It should also be noted that everything written above is true for immune system enhancement during cold and flu seasons. The holistic health care approach of Functional Medicine in conjunction with acupuncture is an effective treatment method to consider if you are one of the countless sufferers looking for answers and relief.

Helena Amos, M.Ac., L.Ac., is a licensed acupuncturist, European physician and Functional Medicine practitioner with 30+ years of clinical experience combining modern Functional Medicine with the ancient wisdom of Traditional Oriental Medicine, as well as providing Biomeridian assessments, and treatments using natural, safe herbal and nutritional approaches. She is Founder/Owner of the Acupuncture and Natural Medicine Clinic in Rockville, MD, and is available for free 20-minute in-office and telehealth consultations. Visit rockvilleacupunctureemd.com for appointments and to see her list of services offered and conditions treated.



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A Peace of My Mind: Practical Ways to Prioritize Your Inner Space

BY LINDSEY VAN WAGNER

Peace be with you.
Rest in peace.
Peace out!
I come in peace.
For peace of mind.
Peace on earth.
Give peace a chance.

The dictionary definition of the word *peace* is “freedom from disturbance.” What does peace mean to you?

Images of a calm lake or a tranquil forest may come to mind, a serene sunset over the beach, palm trees blowing in the breeze. Yes, those sceneries *are* peaceful, but peace cannot be found there because places don't generate peace.

It lives within.

Sure, those picturesque environs may facilitate an opportunity to happen upon peace, but if our inner space isn't in order, it doesn't matter where you are, how you get there, what you do, who you're with. You will still feel disturbed. You will still be in the same head and body. You will still lack freedom, despite a beautiful island view.

We must pay attention to our mental states, energies, and conditions of the soul. If we have the capability to properly nurture and care for ourselves, it doesn't matter what happens around us. We can live in the eye of the storm, remaining unflappable no matter what crosses our paths.

I find it ironic that our holiday season, heralding themes of “Joy to

the World” and “Peace on Earth,” can cause such a rigmarole! It is easy to get lost between the hustle and bustle, the sales and the greeting cards. I understand that presents and parties and cookies can be fun, but at what cost? Though we have the best of intentions, we usually end up overexerting ourselves and missing out on the whole point.

The holidays showcase a dilemma we face year-round. We procrastinate Peace when it is something we could be prioritizing.

“When I go on vacation, then I'll get some peace of mind...”

“When I retire and finally slow down....”

“When the kids go to college and it is finally quiet around here...”

Do you actually think those outside circumstances are robbing you of your peace? Or is it your perception of them and how you manage your inner space accordingly. When your nervous system is used to operating in a state of constant dysregulation, you won't feel comfortable in your body, even if you are on vacation, and despite the ambient calming influences.

The miraculous, yet hard-to-grasp truth is that peace comes in all shapes and sizes, and we can access it *any* time. You don't need to wait until your one-hour Yoga class to finally let yourself relax. You don't need to wait for a major life change to start incorporating rest into your daily life. You don't need to put off your peace.

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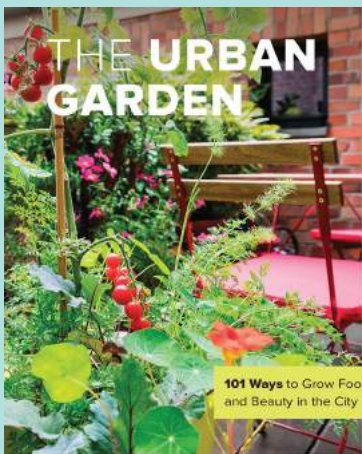
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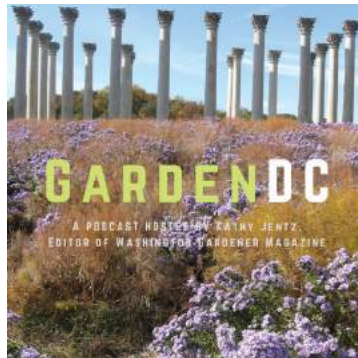
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A Peace of Mind...

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Nurturing Moments of Peace

Here are some practical ways to reconnect with your inner space that won't cost you any money or take hardly any time. Think of them as accents to your existing life.

Moments of Peace:

- **Standing in line at the store, post office, bank, anywhere...** Let your shoulders drop, close your eyes, separate your upper and lower back teeth, loosen the jaw, let your tongue fall to the bottom of your mouth. Take three deep breaths. Inhaling for the count of three, holding for a count of three, and then exhaling for the count of three. Easy as (pumpkin) pie!
- **In transportation (driving, taking the bus, metro)....** Turn off the podcast you are listening to, the music, the news, and just listen. Notice the sounds around you. Which sound is the closest, the farthest? Enjoy the rhythm and symphony — whether it is a bird chirping, a friendly conversation, or even a not-so-friendly conversation. Just observe and be mindful.
- **When you start to feel yourself getting all wound up (this may be a tightening in the chest, racing thoughts, or feelings of dread)...** Walk outside. Stand there for 60 seconds and take it all in. The sights, the sounds, the smells, watch how your senses become activated. You will feel more deeply connected with the natural world and your problems won't feel as galactic.
- **Feeling an ache of meaninglessness, boredom, apathy, and/or defeat...** Change things up! Visit a new restaurant, try a different route home, learn something new, change up your

routine and let yourself explore your creativity, spontaneity, and child-like wonder.

- **States of confusion, chaos, and indecision...** Put pen to paper. Let out the dialogue reeling in your brain. Write to learn more about yourself and what is actually going on. Develop a newfound clarity and focus by looking at the words in front of you and taking an objective stance on the issue. This helps us live in the solution rather than staying stuck in the problem.

Honestly, what is more important than living in peace? Accepting everything in each moment as a natural occurrence is a lovely way to live. Believe that instead of plotting against you, the Universe is conspiring for you. This faith and connection make you stronger, clear-headed, and more capable of making wise decisions, learning how best to respond to a situation rather than immediately overreacting.

Peace is not a black-and-white issue. It is gray matter. Throughout the day, peace can flow with us, in us, around us, and through us. It is not something we have to shove in a suitcase or compartmentalize for some elusive point in the future. You deserve to feel serenity. Peace is always here, we simply have to tune in to allow it to be part of our experience and to receive its gifts fully.

What are you waiting for? Life is fragile and things change in the blink of an eye. Tomorrow is not promised.

Give yourself permission to access the miracle of peace. Live it, breathe it, and go in peace.

Lindsey Van Wagner is a writer, speaker, instructor, and lifestyle guide known for empowering clients to live with more intention, higher energy, and peace. She is passionate about behavior change and teaches graduate courses at American University. Her knowledge of health psychology and her own personal experience contribute to her passion to help others transform. On Instagram: @spiritvigilante. www.thespirtvigilante.com

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The Shreds and Threads of Equity...

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As we strive to embrace and broaden our perspectives, we challenge our assumptions, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the world. When we emphasize the positive aspects of culture, such as its ability to express creativity, e things that make me feel like a powerful individual — definitely not a photo of a slave and a master, repeating old stories — while, simultaneously, never forgetting our past so we aren't doomed to repeat it.

I was considering why I didn't really like history in school and thought, maybe it's simply because I didn't see anyone who looked like me represented in positive and powerful positions. Our classes need to empower us, invite inclusivity, and entertain what actions are equitable. There will never be a life given for a life stolen. Money alone cannot be the representation. A new narrative is required that begins before slavery. This is the work I practice as a teacher.

Let's shred the archaic, negative narrative and use the threads of what intertwines us to weave a new, beautiful future. Let's learn more history that highlights ethnic explorers, inventors, thought leaders, Pharaohs and Queens. This is exciting educational terrain that offers a way to create more permanent, positive societal change.

You may not agree with my viewpoint, but I am simply offering you a glimpse of life through my lens as a multicultural person, who is trying to navigate society and survive. Arts, culture, and my spirituality are what ground and nourish me. I find myself drawing from all of my DNA to create the regal, empowering images that will contain my lasting energy signature.

If in fact, as I believe, we are all created in God's image of excellence and power, then by all means let us celebrate our humanity. These ideas have fueled my #Human brand, reminding us of the common thread of HUMAN(s) as diverse, powerful, and equal beings.

If you would like to share your ideas, collaborate, or join my newsletter, please contact me at www.tarahsingh.com or create@tarahsingh.com. To view more of my art, you may also visit www.soulhaus.art.

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Heartfulness: A Transformation System for Our Spiritual Anatomy

BY VASU MURTHY

Fellow seekers of spiritual wisdom and growth! Let's embark on an enlightening journey to explore the fascinating concept of Spiritual Anatomy and its profound impact on our spiritual evolution, guiding us towards oneness with the Ultimate. To do this, we will talk about the Heartfulness system and its main features.

Basic Heartfulness Practices

Heartfulness practices are based on increasing love, compassion and courage in our lives, resulting in a sense of ease with daily life and reaching higher levels of consciousness. The practice consists of four basic elements: relaxation, morning meditation, evening cleaning, and night time prayer.

The relaxation element offers progressive relaxation of different parts of the body. It takes about 5-6 minutes and produces good relaxation of the entire body. In Heartfulness meditation, we bring awareness to the energies of the heart. This simple process brings profound changes in consciousness and increases self-transformation. The evening cleaning process helps to remove emotional complexities and impurities that we collect in our subtle bodies throughout the day. Finally, heartfulness prayer cultivates an attitude of humility and acceptance, and establishes our relationship with the source in the right manner.

These four practices working together will create a virtuous cycle propelling us forward in our inner journey of transformation. People will experience progress quickly using this method. Once you are comfortable with basic practices, there are some supplemental practices to

LOCATION OF THE CHAKRAS
FROM THE HEART TO THE CENTRAL REGION

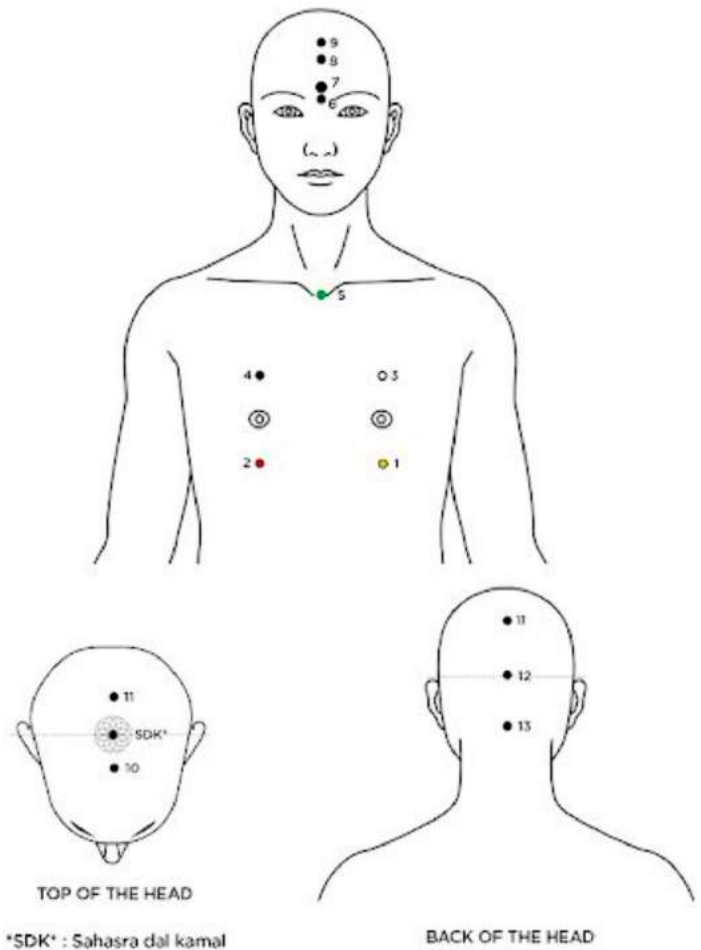


Fig. 1: Thirteen Chakras of the Heartfulness System

deepen the meditative state and overcome fear and anger. These are easy to do, yet powerful techniques that create rapid self-transformation.

Spiritual Anatomy of Chakras for Advanced Self-transformation

Many are already familiar with the traditional seven chakra model that is described in all yogic literature, i.e., the Root Chakra, Sacral Chakra, Navel Chakra, Heart Chakra, Throat Chakra, Third Eye Chakra, and the Crown Chakra. The Heartfulness system expands on this concept and presents a deeper view into the energy system of the body.

Within the Heartfulness system, we find *thirteen chakras* that form the path to spiritual progress, and here's where it diverges from the traditional approach. In this advanced system, the bottom three chakras — the Root, Sacral and Navel Chakras — are not given prominence, as they are more relevant to our existence in the material world and do not directly contribute to our spiritual growth. Instead, these thirteen chakras are thoughtfully categorized into three regions — the Heart region (Chakras 1-5), the Mind region (Chakras 6-12), and the Central region (Chakra 13) — each uniquely possessing diverse psychological characteristics that offer us profound insights and empowerment on our spiritual journey. (See Fig. 1.)

In the Heart Region there are five chakras, each one possessing a positive attribute as well as a negative attribute that needs to be tran-

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scended. It is within the Heart Region where the dance of *maya* (illusion) and duality takes center stage. In this realm, we find ourselves constantly oscillating between the positive and negative characteristics of the chakras, experiencing the ebb and flow of life's myriad emotions and experiences. It is in this region that the majority of people find themselves, navigating the complexities of their inner and outer worlds. (See table.)

Through the dedicated practice of the Heartfulness system of Meditation, we embark on a journey of self-discovery and growth, gradually reducing the negative characteristics of the chakras while enhancing their positive attributes. As we delve deeper into our meditation practice, we begin to untangle the web of duality and illusion that surrounds us, gaining clarity and insight into our true nature. With each meditation session, we peel away the layers of negativity that have accumulated over time, and we begin to witness a subtle but powerful shift within ourselves. The negative traits lose their hold on us, and the positive qualities of the chakras shine brighter, bringing about a sense of balance and inner harmony.

As we eliminate the negative characteristics of all the chakras, a remarkable transformation occurs. We find ourselves becoming less

Chakra	Positive Characteristic	Negative Characteristic to be transcended
Chakra 1- located below the left nipple	Contentment	Discontentment
Chakra 2- located below the right nipple	Calm	Disturbance
Chakra 3- located above the left nipple	Compassion	Displeasure (anger)
Chakra 4- located above the right nipple	Courage	Discouragement (Fear)
Chakra 5- located in the throat region	Clarity	Delusion

Fig. 2: Five Chakras of the Heart Region

affected by the ups and downs of external circumstances, for we have anchored ourselves in the stable core of our being. The turbulent waves of life can no longer toss us around, and we stand firm in the face of challenges. In this newfound state of equanimity, we are ready to progress to the next phase of our spiritual journey — the “Mind Region.”

Spiritual Evolution with Higher Chakras

As we bid farewell to the Heart Region, we carry with us the wisdom and lessons it has bestowed upon us. We shed illusions and duality, thereby paving the way for a profound evolution of our spiritual selves, moving us closer to the ultimate truth and oneness with the Divine. With a heart brimming with compassion and a mind growing in clarity, we step forward into the uncharted territory of the Mind Region, where even deeper insights and self-realization await us.

In our journey through the Mind Region, the evolution of consciousness reaches ever higher levels, and the ego gracefully diminishes in significance. This is a profound transformation that unfolds as we traverse through higher chakras, leaving behind the veils of illusion and delving deeper into the realm of self-realization. Fig. 3 shows the journey in the higher regions of consciousness. The Mind region has eleven circles of egoism representing a decreasing state of ego as one goes through this region. We traverse through the Chakras 6-12 in the Mind region, where the feeling of consciousness, surrender, oneness with the divine and other higher consciousness attributes expand as we traverse through this region.

Beyond the Mind Region lies the sacred domain of the Central region, a realm of exquisitely refined consciousness. Here, we encoun-

ter a gateway to a higher state of being that surpasses our previous understanding of spiritual evolution. In this ethereal realm, our consciousness expands to embrace a more profound connection with the universal consciousness, transcending the limitations of the ego.

The Heartfulness system of Meditation introduces us to a different transformative approach, centered around the energies of the heart. It not only focuses on the thirteen chakras but also harnesses the power of yogic transmission to accelerate our spiritual progress. Through regular practice, we reduce the negative characteristics of the chakras, enhance the positive qualities, and embrace inner harmony and self-realization. Moreover, we caught a glimpse of the advanced concepts of spiritual evolution found within the higher chakras of the Heartfulness system. As we progress through the Mind Region, our consciousness evolves to higher levels, while the ego diminishes. The Central region becomes an avenue to a refined level of consciousness, transcending the boundaries of the material world.

This is just an introductory look at the intriguing concepts you can find when you explore heartfulness meditation with consistent practice. To learn more, a treasure trove of knowledge is available in a newly released book, *Spiritual Anatomy: Meditation, Chakras, and the Journey to the Center* by Kamlesh D. Patel. You will find a comprehensive exploration of the characteristics of the higher chakras and their pivotal role in the awe-inspiring journey of spiritual evolution. May the knowledge we have gained be a guiding light, leading us towards oneness with the Ultimate and a profound transformation of our inner selves.

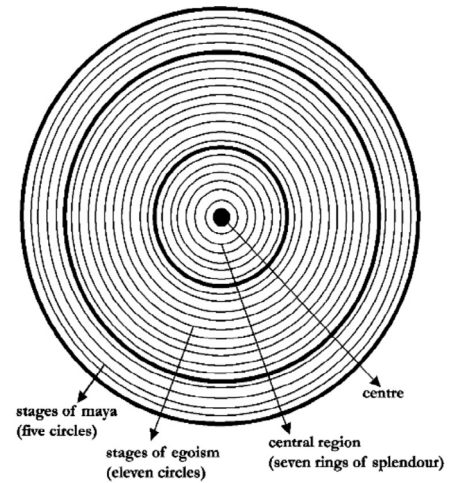


Fig. 3: Evolution of Consciousness in the Higher Chakras

Vasu Murthy is a certified Heartfulness meditation trainer. He is active in community service working on several initiatives in the area of Meditation, peace, non-violence, education and wellness. He is the Director of the information technology company ORP Versatile. He previously served on the board of Sri Siva Vishnu Temple and currently serves on the board of Dharma Into Action Foundation and ORP Charitable Foundation. He can be reached at vasu.murthy@volunteer.heartfulness.org.

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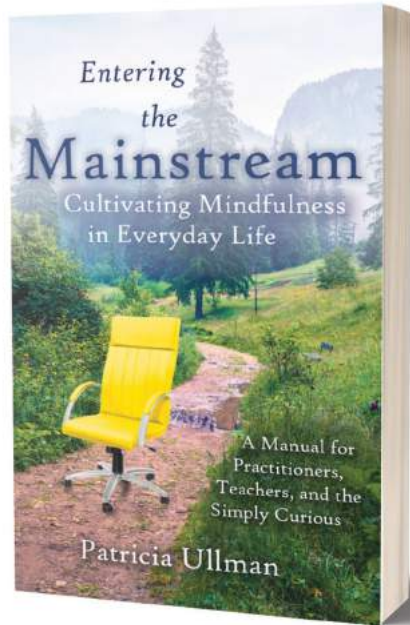
Entering the Mainstream:

*Cultivating Mindfulness
in Everyday Life*

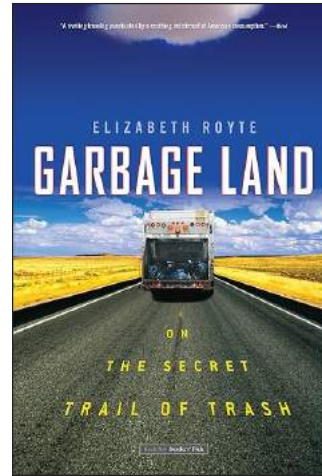
(A Manual for Practitioners, Teachers, and the Simply Curious)

Lauded by critics as “brave,” “authoritative,” and “highly readable,” *Entering the Mainstream* features stories and guided meditations that are as stimulating to the seasoned practitioner as they are accessible to the novice. It is equally valuable for mindfulness teachers, offering guidance and a range of tools to help lead individuals and groups in urban settings.

This new book and Patricia’s first book, *Eight Steps to an Authentic Life: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Times*, are available on amazon.com.



REVIEW BY ALYCE ORTUZAR



Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash

By Elizabeth Royte
2006; Little, Brown and Company
336 pp (PB); \$13.99
ISBN-13: 9780316154611

That a book about garbage — a subject we can all relate to but would rather avoid discussing — can be as riveting and as informative as this book reflects the outstanding research and writing abilities of Elizabeth Royte. Her chapter titles are just the beginning: “Quantifying in the Kitchen”, “Dark Angels of Detritus”, “Stocking the Active Face”, “The Spectacle of Waste”, and (my favorite) “Behold This Compost”. The last 2 chapters focus on “The Dream of Zero Waste” and “The Ecological Citizen”.

Royte takes readers on a deep dive into our increasing amount of trash and our struggles to properly accommodate it. Since 1960, we have almost tripled our municipal waste stream. By 2003, we individually “generated 1.31 tons of garbage per year. Slightly less than 27 percent was composted or recycled; 7.7 percent was incinerated; and 65.6 percent was buried in a hole in the ground.” Royte begins her journey by first taking a close look into her own kitchen waste bin. She was truly surprised when an empty wine bottle weighed in on her kitchen counter scale at one pound.

Royte also provides a detailed history of efforts in New York City to resolve crises resulting from garbage/waste disposal and lessons learned along the way. “In 1898, Tammany Hall recaptured the mayor’s office and ended the recycling program by restoring ocean dumping. The garbage killed the oyster beds and interfered with shipping.” The federal government finally banned ocean dumping in 1934.

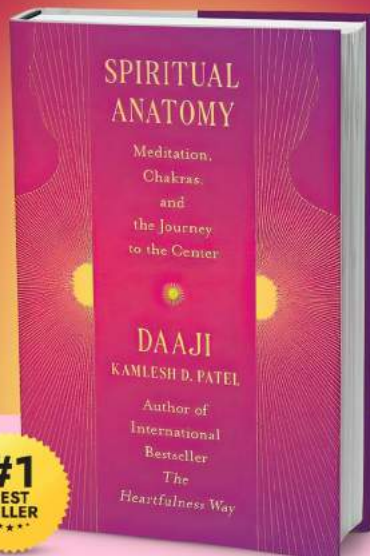
States vary when considering and choosing their energy options. Pennsylvania’s fifty-one landfills fill the state’s coffers with forty million dollars in fees from importing “ten million tons of waste per year from neighboring states. However, 86 percent of the more than 40,000 trucks transporting the waste into Pennsylvania that were inspected in 2001 had serious safety and environmentally-related violations that included leaks and inadequately covered loads.” In addition, covering these loads under several feet of dirt did not eliminate or reduce their environmental harms.

Burying what we no longer want under several feet of dirt does not reduce or eliminate the harms they may pose. “When organic matter decomposes, it creates methane and carbon dioxide. Both are greenhouse gasses.” As the organic matter filters up through layers of buried garbage, it acquires and transports carcinogens into the environment that the wind can then carry into nearby offices and homes.

Incineration, possibly even more than landfills, competes with the need to reduce our nation’s enormous amount of trash, because of the huge amount of tonnage incinerators require in order to operate. According to the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, that tonnage requirement could interfere with and even discourage recycling.

Landfill covers can also fail and give way in freezing temperatures and in thawing-and-freezing cycles. Critters such as woodchucks,

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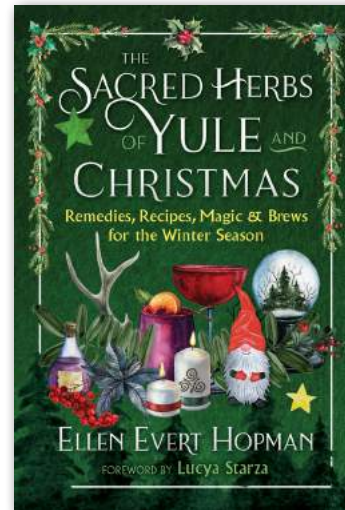
BOOK REVIEW

mice, moles, voles, snakes, tortoises, ants, and bees “innocently attack the cover from above, while buried tires have a habit of rising from the dead to threaten the cover from below. So fragile are these systems, say landfill opponents, that so-called state-of-the-art landfills nearly delay — rather than eliminate — the massive pollution of groundwater.” As a solution, they remain our “ultimate evidence of failure.”

“Can zero waste mean anything,” the authors asks, “considering the limits of our recycling efforts and our reluctance to alter our lifestyles and our purchasing habits?” Our actions must include creating markets for repurposed and recycled items. IBM and Hewlett-Packard are successful models to replicate and support. They both offer buy-back programs for their products for repurposing and recycling. Royte includes other very good advice for purchasing recycled products and for legislation supporting and enabling zero-waste policies and options. She also provides an extensive bibliography of the resources she used to write this book.

Alyce Ortuzar is a freelance medical and social science researcher, writer, and editor living in Montgomery County, Maryland. She runs the Well Mind Association of Greater Washington, a holistic medicine information clearinghouse that focuses on environmental and nutritional influences on our mental and physical well-being. For five years, she edited the U.S. Surgeon General's smoking and health reports. She can be reached at (301) 774-6617.

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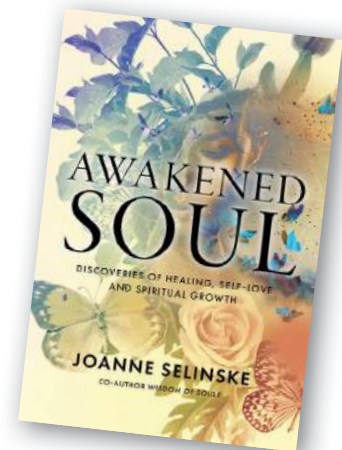
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Mediumship...

...continued from page 11

hard de Chardin describes, we are spirit having a human experience — wearing a skin bag.

Spiritualism surged well into the 20th century due to three wars (the Civil War, WWI, and WWII) and the 1918 influenza epidemic. With so much loss of life, the living wanted to stay in touch with loved ones who had passed, especially ones who passed on suddenly. This ushered in a modern age of Spiritualism and mediumship that continues today. Britain's *Fraudulent Mediums Act of 1951* that prohibited people claiming to be psychics or mediums for profit was repealed in 2008.

What is a Medium?

Defined in contemporary terms, a medium has heightened etheric senses to see, hear, feel, touch, taste, and smell, or to be the vessel through which something manifests. Furthermore, a medium is someone with an extraordinary level of receptivity that one might refer to as a “sixth sense”. We refer to these senses as *Clair* senses (French for “clear”). Spirits sense those that have a sixth sense.

Beyond our five traditional Aristotelian senses — see, feel, touch, taste, and smell — scientists have found other senses. Each sense sends information to the brain to help us perceive the world around us. Take, for instance, *proprioception*, or the ability to know where your body parts are without looking. You might be familiar with the gymnast, Simone Biles, who stopped competing because she experienced the “twisties”. Biles no longer trusted her sense of the spatial location of her body parts while in the air. “I have no idea where I am in the air, I also have NO idea how I’m going to land. Or what I’m going to land on,” as she shared in a 2021 [interview with Women’s Health magazine](#). She and others considered her twisties as a mental block; but, maybe, just like when we lose our sense of smell or taste when we have a cold, Biles may have had one of her senses temporarily suppressed.

Mediums are the people to whom spirits are drawn, so it’s not just an ability to see what others can’t see — it is an ability to be seen or get the attention of whatever it is that is out there. Mediums are beacons for spirit. No matter where a medium is — sleeping, driving, shopping, traveling, hiking — she will sense spirits all around.

How Do I Know if I Have Abilities?

While we might all have a modicum of spirit connection, not all are mediums. If you are communicating with a loved one in spirit, does that make you a medium? The short answer is no.

Annie, I spoke with my grandfather shortly after he died. Does this make me a medium?

This is a common question I get asked. I believe we all have the ability to connect with our own family members and perhaps close friends after they have left the body. Many people have shared very vivid dreams where loved ones in spirit appear. I call these *dream visits*, and believe it is an uninhibited and approachable way for our loved ones to communicate with us without fear. What makes one a medium is the ability to connect to a *stranger’s* grandfather, and to do so on command and with little effort.

Most, if not all, mediums are not able to ever close their connection to the other side. Try as we may! According to one Arthur Findlay College (AFC) collegiate staff, “Only one in 10,000 has true mediumistic ability and only one in 100,000 will go on to realise his or her potential.” AFC is a college of Spiritualism and psychic sciences at Stansted Hall in Essex, England, founded in 1964.



Photo 61236086 © Katarzyna Bialasiewicz | Dreamstime.com

Born Knowing

Many mediums are born knowing. They are the natural mediums where spirit communication happens effortlessly; and sometimes it is unwelcome. These mediums came into this world with abilities, much like renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who by the age of three had mastered many musical instruments but settled on the cello at age four. Yo-Yo came into this world with natural musical talents that were welcomed, nurtured, and developed. He is probably one of the 100,000 musicians who achieved such a level of mastery from the natural musical skills with which he was born.

Natural mediums usually begin having experiences with ghosts or spirits by the age of three. The veil between this dimension and the dimension of spirit is very thin for young children. Spirit encounters are common among children having a natural inclination of seeing, feeling, hearing, or sensing ghosts as effortlessly as seeing embodied humans. By age seven, considered the “age of reason”, most children lose their connection to the spirit realm. According to Dr. Dana Dorfman, PhD, a psychotherapist and co-host of the [podcast 2 Moms on the Couch](#), at this age, children become “more capable of rational thought.” She explains that, “Despite their wish to maintain childhood wonder, latency age (7- or 8-year old) kids are increasingly able to problem solve, identify patterns and apply logic to questions. Thus, their beliefs in imaginary characters, like Santa and monsters diminishes during this time.”

As a result, children may be trained out of believing in ghosts as our society, as a collective, doesn’t believe in communication with the dearly departed. Some young mediums may be ashamed of their be-

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liefs in spirit, or may run away from them fearful of what they are experiencing.

Other Ways to Mediumship.

But what if you're not born to mediumship? There are many other ways one can arrive at or develop these abilities. For example, another potential pathway is through Near Death Experiences (NDEs). Countless mediums have found their abilities awakened after a NDE, as is the case with two of my mediumistic mentors, Michelle Whitedove and Reverend B. Anne Gehman.

Whitedove, considered a top Spiritual Medium until her premature death in 2022, recalled her fatal car accident, where she crossed into the spirit world and was shown visions of heaven, forever changing her life and opening her gifts. Michelle was mentored by Reverend B. Anne Gehman, after they met on the set of the 2010 film, *No One Dies in Lily Dale*. Reverend Gehman, a world renowned medium and Spiritualist Teacher who predicted JFK's 1963 assassination, opened to her natural gifts after her near-death experience.

My friend and fellow medium, Susan Grau, who works as an Intuitive Medium with Gwyneth Paltrow's lifestyle brand *Goop*, personally shared her near death experience. As a child, she was trapped in an abandoned freezer that closed on her, cutting off her air supply. Her NDE at the tender age of four impacted her profoundly. After she was rescued by her mother, who herself kept hearing *Your daughter is in the freezer*, Grau woke up and could see and communicate with spirit.

Being born with the *caul* — the membrane that encloses the amniotic fluid — where the amniotic membrane encloses the face, head, or entire body of the baby, has also long been seen as a sign of those born with abilities, as it is such a rare occurrence in birth. Being *born with a veil* (caul) is considered good luck. Carrying a child and giving birth seems to be another spark that has been shared with me by some of my students who reported having mystical and unexplained experiences during and after giving birth. And being born into a family lineage of mediums is a sign of possible mediumistic abilities as our DNA remembers.

Sandra Ingerman, a world-renowned shaman, teacher, and author, has shared her own unique arrival to her gifts, writing, "From a classical shamanic point of view, being hit by lightning is typically a sign of a shaman in the making.... It was the initiation into becoming a shamanic healer. So, in my own life, first I was hit by lightning when I was seven."

Finally, tragic, untimely deaths of loved ones are a few other ways that might spark an interest to explore mediumship, though it is not a sign or catalyst for mediumship.

What Type of Medium Might I Be?

Just as there are various paths to the destination of mediumship, once you get there, abilities can manifest through a number of outlets. The four main types of mediumistic abilities are: mental, physical, trance, and channel.

Mental mediums (called Evidential mediums in the USA) *tune in* to the spirit world using their mind by listening, sensing, or seeing spirits or symbols to deliver evidence of the afterlife and messages from loved ones in spirit. Within mental mediumship we have diverse ways of how we receive information from spirit, and one might refer to themselves as a spiritual medium, psychic medium, or intuitive medium.

Physical mediums, who are the rarest of all the mediums, allow spirits to use the medium's physical body to share information. In addition, physical mediums can produce apports (objects such as jewelry and small objects), knocking, rapping, and other physical

manifestations from spirit, usually during a *séance*. They can produce *ectoplasm*, created from their own bodies, to produce a voice box that spirit is able to communicate through. Physical mediums are said to be naturally born that way rather than being able to develop into physical mediumship.

Trance mediums allow themselves to go into a trance state, where they may stay aware or may be fully immersed into trance to allow the disincarnate to use their body, voice, and mind, to give messages and advice. Edgar Cayce, often called "The Sleeping Prophet" due to the fact he would close his eyes to enter a state of altered consciousness, is probably the most well-known Trance medium.

Channel mediums go into trance to receive messages from specific sources such as *Ascended Masters*, like Buddha or Jesus, or from other spirits or angels. *Seth* (channeled by the late Dorothy Jane Roberts) and *Abraham* (channeled by Esther Hicks) are two of the most popular and currently channeled sources. Both offer sage and uplifting answers to the purpose and meaning of life and the ideas that we create our own reality.

Other kinds of mediums include healing and medical mediumship that fall under one or all four types of mediumship, as you can be more than one type of medium.

Trance mediumship healing is a way of allowing spirits or spirit guides to step into and blend with a medium's energy to help channel and heal the sitter or client. If you ever get the privilege of having healing services such as those offered in a Spiritualist church, please do so. It is an other-worldly experience you will not soon forget.

Medical mediumship, recently made popular again by Andrew Williams, who created a craze of drinking large volumes of celery juice, offers medical and health advice based on communications from spirit. Here again, Edgar Cayce was the first modern prophet to do this while under full trance with almost (if not) 100 percent accuracy. Although he died in 1945, his skills as a medium are still being studied today.

Lastly, while not considered a form of mediumship, Reiki is a connection to a channel of healing that sensei Mikao Usui discovered on Mount Kurama, Kyoto, Japan, in 1922. At age 56, Usui underwent *shugyo* — an austere daily training, or in his specific case, a 21-day inner peace meditation — under an *Osugi* (cedar tree) until he had his revelation about a channel, or method of natural healing, he called *Reiki Ryoho*, or Spiritual Energy Healing Method. In practice, Usui Reiki Ryoho addresses the whole person on the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual levels.

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Mediumship...

...continued from page 57

Common Traits of Mediums

Mediums share a lot of common traits, including ailments, diseases, electronic anomalies, childhood trauma, atmospheric sensitivities, food allergies, learning issues, sleep disorders, astrological signs, and heartbeat irregularities. Mediums have been studied by universities, governments, and private organizations. Both the University of Virginia and North Carolina's Duke University have some of the oldest psi study programs. *Psi* (from the Greek word *psyche*, meaning "mind" or "soul") is often used as an overall term for extra-sensory perception, or ESP (psychic abilities or our sixth sense), and psychokinesis, the ability to move objects with our mind.

In a [2019 study by the Windbridge Research Center](#), researchers conducted a survey of 124 who identified as mediums, and 222 who identified as non-mediums. As detailed in *Disease Burden in Mediums*, a significantly higher proportion of mediums reported having been diagnosed with at least one autoimmune disorder (35.2% vs 18.9%). The disease most often reported by mediums was Hashimoto's thyroiditis (11.2%). It's not surprising that mediums, like me, suffer from Hashimoto's as the thyroid, found in the throat, is affected by the disease. (If mediums are suppressed from being able to speak their truth, it will have an impact on the throat area. Few mediums readily share that they have abilities, especially if the abilities came at a young age.) Other reported disorders that were higher amongst those identified as mediums are: water retention, bruising easily, migraines, asthma, food intolerances, and sleep disturbances.

Dyslexia, a learning disorder that involves a difficulty in the ability to read, is anecdotally common amongst mediums, although there isn't research to support this — yet. However, there might be good reasons for this, given a person with dyslexia processes information visually, or conceptually, in their head (or mind's eye) in 3D. Only ten percent of the population naturally process data this way. Most process information verbally, as written in *The Dyslexic Advantage*, by Drs. Brack and Fernet Eide.

To understand how dyslexia might help with spirit communication, take for instance, reading the word *orange*. A verbal processor sees the word *orange*. A visual processor sees an orange. One with dyslexia sees the orange as both a picture and a symbol of an orange, which engages distinct parts of the brain. In mediumship communication, this is extremely important to be able to use the language of

symbols as this is how spirit communicates. One cannot become dyslexic — and nor would you want to have dyslexia! As one who suffers from it, the world of words is challenging.

* * *

If you recognize yourself in this article, or if you have a deep interest in developing your connection to spirit, innate or not, I strongly encourage you to do so. While we may not all rise to the Yo-Yo Ma-level of mediumship, there is room for the medium equivalent of wedding singers, shower crooners, and coffee house performers amongst us. The path to mediumship will be the most difficult and emotionally challenging pursuit you will ever love.

Annie Larson, a psychic medium, is a sought-after speaker, reader, teacher, and healer who has been featured in TV, radio, podcasts, magazines, and newspapers, including the Washington Post. She meets clients in-person in her office in Sterling, Virginia, via phone, and online. She also hosts immersive intuitive development and mediumship retreats to help those looking to explore individual abilities. Learn more at www.MediumAnnieLarson.com.



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EMBODIMENT #22

BY MARTINA SESTAKOVA

About “Embodiment #22” ... In my “Embodiment” series, I am exploring the human body’s capacity to always reside in the present while our minds may be reliving the past or imagining the future. There is energy and a sense of change in these paintings: layers, scrapes, twists and turns. Just like there is energy and change in our body’s sensations: impressions, observations, pauses. It’s an intriguing process: many steps that can be easily erased and/or recreated as I work on a non-porous paper called Yupo. Acrylic inks slide around on the surface and I use rubber brushes to create bold movements and contrasts of textures before the paint dries. The main driving forces - in search of embodied living - are my body’s messages in the particular moment.



Martina Sestakova engages in wearable art, painting, and art education. Martina creates scarves that invoke inspirational stories from life experiences. Her scarves have been featured on Voice of America and at the Smithsonian National Gallery of Art and American Art Museum in Washington, DC.

In her artworks on Yupo, she communicates the meaning of words through colors and textures and explores healing and mindful aspects of art through abstraction. Martina also creates a colorful collection of heart paintings and black-and-white illustrations on greeting cards. As an art educator, Martina brings creative projects to communities with limited access to the arts.

Martina Sestakova resides in Kensington, MD.

Instagram: @radostbymartinasestakova @martinasestakovaart
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Other pieces in the “Embodiment” series...



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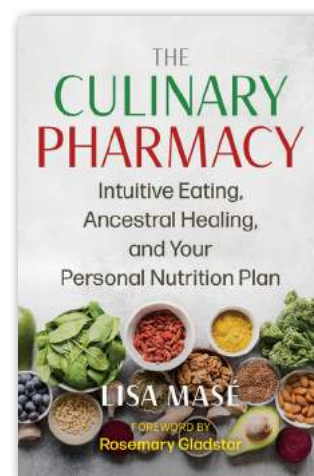
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This Precious, New, Now Moment

BY TRISH HALL

There is only this precious, new, now moment! What are you doing with it?

What is a “past life experience”? How far before this moment does the experience need to be to be considered a “past life experience”? Some people believe such an experience predated their arrival in this present human form. They attribute present conditions to things that occurred before they were born. If they judge this life to be good, they assume they are the beneficiaries of good energy deposited in some celestial bank that is there for them to withdraw. If they deem this life to be filled with turmoil and trials, they believe atonement is being exacted upon them. This perspective leaves the individual a disempowered victim of external circumstances for which they are not responsible and, alas, powerless to change. Some believe themselves to be victims beset by the effect of some far distant past cause.

Other people believe their human ancestry dictates how their lives will unfold; and yet others claim the society into which they were born mandates conformity and predetermines the outcome of their lives — totally out of their control.

I invite you to consider that how life came to be the way it is, is irrelevant. There are myriad possibilities that might explain how ‘what is’ evolved. You are welcome to choose whichever explanation suits you with one caveat: guide your choice to one that does no harm to you or anyone else. Be open. Make your selection in the present moment rather than reverting to an old thought-habit. Choose to say ‘yes’ to re-relating to your choice. Reposition yourself in relation to it rather than blindly returning to an old pattern. Be new in this new, now moment.

This human journey has subjected us to the beliefs of well-meaning (and some not so well-meaning) authority figures in our lives. Often, they have instilled fears and anxieties in us in the guise of protecting us from an array of possible threats. They may, in fact, have diminished our ability to deal with our environment by not giving opportunities to develop our own discernment and decision-making abilities through testing, failing, trying again, succeeding or failing again, and learning.

Since I cannot change whatever may have happened in the past, I tend to release concerns about how we got here and focus on what is.

It’s the only thing I can influence at this point, and it is the only time in which I can take actions that will affect my future life experiences.

What we do with our every moment is relevant. Are we using these precious moments to enrich, uplift and serve others, and in so doing enrich and uplift our own life? Are we instilling present moments with elements that are most likely to insure the greatest possible array of opportunities to celebrate the Oneness of All Creation and glorify our Creator?

In *Grist for the Mill: Awakening to Oneness*, Ram Dass and Stephen Levine shared ...

So we ask ourselves, ‘How do I use my every moment to get there?’ ... dancing, trusting, quieting, flowing. It’s got to be done with the flow of love and the quietness of mind. It’s like the women in India who go to the well and come back with jugs full of water on their heads. They’re talking and gossiping as they walk, but they never forget the jugs of water on their head. The jug of water is what our journey is about. In the course of it we do what we do in life, but we don’t forget the jug of water. We don’t forget what it’s all about. We keep our eye on the mark. At first, we have to prime the pump a little bit to do it; and we keep forgetting and remembering and forgetting and remembering. That’s what the illusion is.

The illusion keeps pulling us back into forgetting. Lost in our melodrama... And every now and then we remember. We sit down and we meditate, or we read [a holy text] and suddenly, “oh yeah, right; whew! That’s what it was about.” And we remember again. And then a moment later we forget. But what happens is the balance shifts... and that’s the beginning of awakening. And we come in, and we sit down and meditate, and suddenly there’s a moment when we feel the perfection of our being and our connection and even beyond that, we just are... Over and over, this happens, and [eventually] we find that we naturally just want to sit down and be quiet... The balance has shifted ...”

Carrying our water jug, the intuitive flashes of awareness entrusted to us, is the dawning of our purpose, freeing us to dance and sing and celebrate life.

In life, there seem to always be distractions — events that cause us to resume old thought patterns and revert to behaviors that generated our present ‘what is’ ... the ‘what is’ that we desire to change for the better. We wander along toting all those beliefs and attitudes that have obstructed our view and embodiment of what could be. Much like ancient travelers who sought shelter and sustenance in the magical, opulent walled city, we have been gifted the key that unlocks the door to our most wonder-filled world of love, peace and prosperity. However, we must comply with the conditions that make the key work.

We are each blessed and cursed with the gift of volition — that amazing power of choice. We get to use it to choose wisely, and we get to use it to choose unwisely. We have the opportunity to draw to us the life we desire — call it heaven. We have the power to make choices that do not serve us — call it hell. We get to choose how we relate to what is. This super-power determines the quality of our lives: we can enjoy and bring joy to the simplest of lifestyles, or the most opulent. Joy is not dependent on circumstance — it arises from within. Contemplating how making choices affects every area of my life, I find myself called to actually become the person I desire to be, now and flowing into the future. I realize I am the cause of my own evolution.

Realizing that I hold the key to the ‘magic kingdom’ just beyond to-



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day's door, brings a deep sense of awe. We each hold the key to our future life based on how we use these precious moments. Each has a key hidden in a pocket, and our hands are so full we can't reach in. We can each meet the conditions of how to reach the key — we can empty our hands, release what is not serving us, and put our gifts to work, or not.

We must meet the conditions of how to reach the key to make it function. We can put down what we thought mattered in exchange for a more abundant life, one richer and fuller with what truly matters, or not. It can be confusing, scary, and tumultuous if we focus on circumstances, or we can focus on our desired experience of living our values, embodying peace, being love. The choice is up to you... to m ... to each of us.

Ask yourself: How am I to be in these times of turmoil? Do I have the courage to make tough decisions? Am I willing to conform to my values when those around me make other choices? What will it be? How am I to use this power in this new, now moment?

Am I planting the seeds for some future incarnation? That is not mine to know. What I do know is we don't have to wait to find out if we will be reincarnated in order to create our future life. With every breath I take, I am planting the seeds for my future, and that of all I may influence in whatever time I have remaining in this incarnation. My future life is being created right here and right now.

I invite you to join me in consciously creating a world that works by consciously creating ourselves — the people that are appropriate participants in a world that works. I cannot do it alone; nor can you. But together we can, we can attract others, and collectively we can change the world. For this I am grateful.

"Gratitude turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity...it makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow." ~Melodie Beattie

Trish Hall is an international best-selling author and acclaimed speaker. She is the Spiritual Leader of Center for Spiritual Living Metro (www.cslmetro.org) where you are empowered to live the fullest expression of you. We come together in Oneness, celebrate the uniqueness of each person, and invite you to "be you with us!" Hall is also the founder of Way 2 Peace, a grassroots, not-for-profit association of people around the world, who are committed to attaining and sustaining peace for everyone, everywhere by introducing this simple and amazingly effective Way 2 Peace. (www.Way2Peace.org)



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Sacred Herbs of Yule...

...continued from page 18

is rife with solar symbolism. Even though gentle Baldur remains in Hel's Underworld kingdom, the return of the golden ring Draupnir is symbolic of the Sun's return. Draupnir (whose name means "the dripper") has the magical ability to copy itself. Every ninth night, eight new rings "drip" from the magical golden ring, each new ring the same size and weight as Draupnir. Thus, the golden ring implies periodicity and a regular cycle, such as the ebb and return of the seasons making Mistletoe a sacred herb for the Winter Solstice and return of the sun.

Mistletoe and Yuletide have a long association, and in old England, rituals were once done with Mistletoe to ensure a healthy harvest in the coming year:

In parts of Herefordshire . . . a mistletoe bough was traditionally cut and hung up inside the house as the clock struck twelve on New Year's Eve; the old bough, which had remained in place for the past year, was removed and destroyed in a practice called "Burning the Bush." A globe of twigs, woven from hawthorn and mistletoe, was taken out to the first field that had been sown with wheat and burnt on a straw fire. At Birley Court two globes, one inside the other, were thrown onto the fire, while at Brinsop a single ball of twigs was set alight and a man ran with it across the first twelve ridges of the field. If the flames died before he reached the end, it was considered an ill omen for the coming harvest. Afterwards, there was much cider-drinking and merriment.

Yuletide Mistletoe Ball

A 4½-inch floral foam ball

Garden shears

24-gauge wire

Sheet moss

20 to 30 branches of mistletoe

Ice pick, skewer, or other hole-making tool

3½-inch pearl-tipped florist pins (optional), for extra decoration

Length of red, white, or golden ribbon



- Submerge the foam ball in water for about 15 minutes, until fully saturated.
- Use the shears to cut one 16-inch length from the floral wire. Cut the rest of the wire into 1½-inch pieces, and bend these pieces into a U shape.
- Cover the soaked foam ball with sheet moss, securing it with the pieces of floral wire.
- Cut the mistletoe into 2- to 3-inch pieces (you might need as many as 150). Poke small holes all over the ball with an ice pick, skewer, or other hole-making tool. Push the mistletoe stems through the moss and directly into the holes, continuing until the mistletoe completely covers the ball.
- Place the florist pins as desired; the pearl ends will look like mistletoe berries.
- Firmly bend the 16-inch length of wire into a sturdy U and insert it into the mistletoe ball as a loop for hanging. Use the red, white or golden ribbon to suspend the ball from a doorway lintel or a strong light fixture.

Remember that the berries and leaves are poisonous—do not allow children or pets to swallow them!

Ellen Evert Hopman is a master herbalist and homeopath, who has been a Druidic initiate since 1984. She is the author of several books, including Secret Medicines from Your Garden and The Sacred Herbs of Samhain. She lives in Massachusetts. www.Elleneverthopman.com

The Sacred Herbs of Yule and Christmas by Ellen Evert Hopman © 2023 Destiny Books. Excerpt is printed with permission from the publisher, Inner Traditions International. www.InnerTraditions.com

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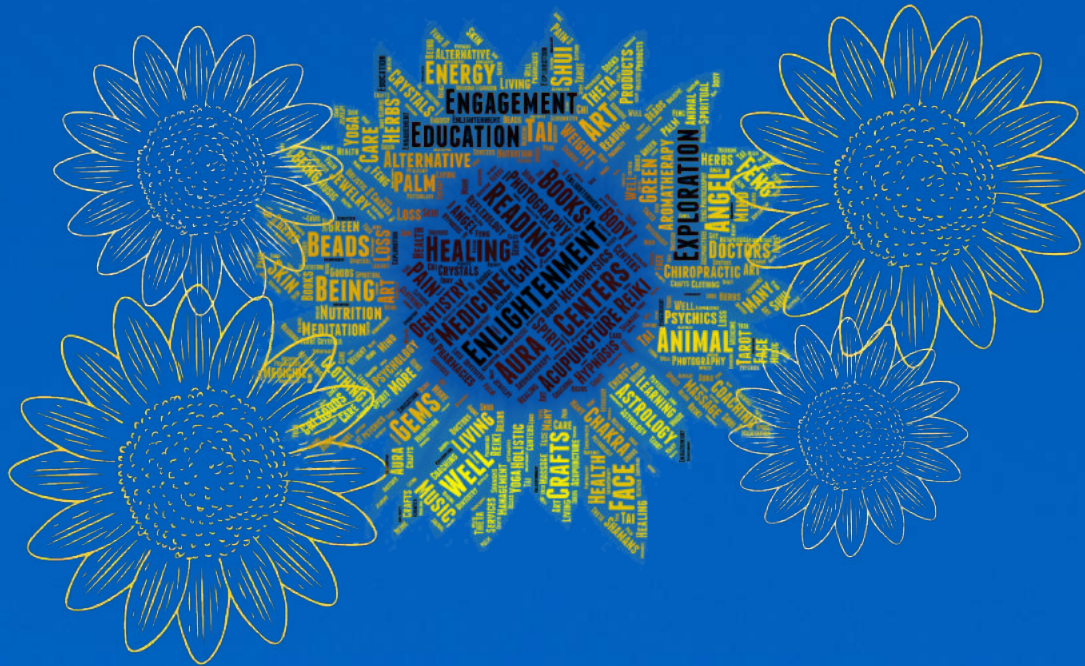
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