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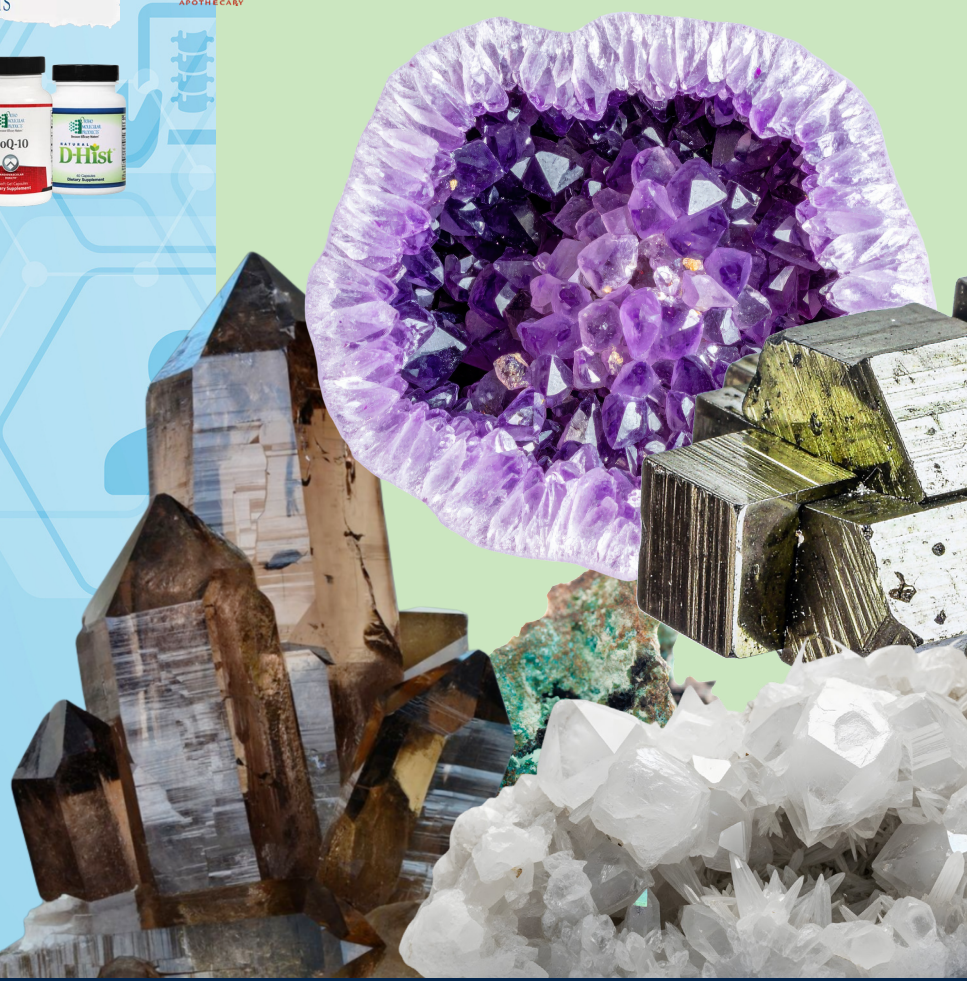
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Pathways Productions is a full-service advertising, marketing, event and publishing company serving the mind, body, spirit community since 1979. From the start, we have been a small, family-run business. Today, we have a women-led team dedicated to helping all businesses — local, small & independent — succeed and thrive. Over the years, we have expanded our offerings to include live events, most notably the widely successful and always popular Natural Living Expo.

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.

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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 \$20/year and direct-mailed. Order online at: www.PathwaysProductions.com, under the Magazine dropdown menu.

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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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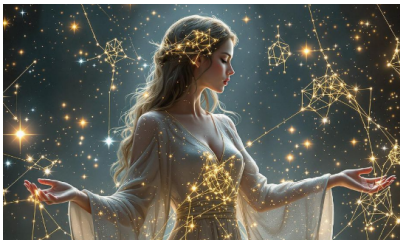
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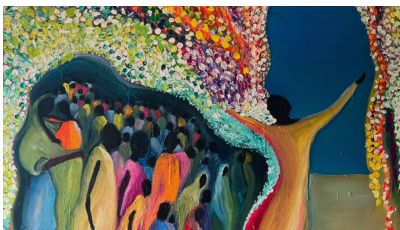
SPRING 2026 – What’s Inside



“How long should one wait after a loved one’s passing before having a mediumship reading?” When to have a mediumship session is a personal choice, influenced by factors surrounding grief, emotional readiness, cultural and religious views, and more. Medium Annie Larson discusses the decision-making and selection criteria for a medium session. *Page 17*



Reiki and astrology both explore our relationship to the universe in their own ways. By integrating them, the living dialogue between energy and cosmos awakens more fully. Ally Ayala, a professional astrologer and certified life coach, invites you to experience this collaboration for yourself with five practices. *Page 71*



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PATHWAYS MAGAZINE KICKS OFF 2026

Plus An Invitation To Our Spring 2026 Natural Living Expo

A Message From Your Pathways Team

In traditional Chinese culture, 2026 is the year of the Fire Horse, which symbolizes strength, courage, loyalty, and freedom while embodying passion and transformation. We are embracing all these attributes as calls to action for the year ahead, and believe everyone in the Pathways Community has their role to play. We see ourselves as purveyors of radical joy and ambassadors for collectivism, activism and self-care. What role will you take on this year?

Fortunately, we have opportunities to channel these intentions, starting with all the incredible content here, and with the upcoming Spring Natural Living Expo on March 22, in McLean, VA. Join us for this joyful day of inclusion, exploration and connection — our Radical Resistance against chaos and hate — where you can contribute your energy while finding ways to invest in yourself and your community. It’s a very special experience, and it isn’t possible without you. We hope to see you all there! And until then, embrace the new beginnings of spring and remember to take care of one another!



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Voting As an Act of Resistance: Why Voter Engagement Might Be the Most Important Thing You Do This Year

BY BRENDA MURPHREE

— Save Us from the SAVE Act! —

A Note From Brenda: Just as we were going to press, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the most restrictive voter bill in modern American history. The so-called SAVE America Act requires documentary proof of citizenship, such as a passport or original birth certificate, and a photo ID, all matching the voter's current legal name, in order to vote. The bill passed the House along party lines on February 11 by a vote of 218-213. It is currently sitting with the Senate waiting for a vote.

The Brennan Center estimates more than 21 million Americans lack ready access to these documents. Roughly half of all Americans don't have a passport, millions lack access to paper copies of their birth certificates, and millions of women who changed their names after marriage don't have their current legal names on either document.

This bill would also:

- Eliminate online voter registration in 42 states
- Threaten volunteer election workers with criminal charges if they make a mistake
- Create a national database of voters' personal information.... controlled by Trump

Citizenship is already a requirement to vote, and we already have checks in place to prevent noncitizens from voting. The actual result of the SAVE America Act is to make it harder for certain citizens to vote, disproportionately harming low-income, rural, disabled, and marginalized voters, as well as millions of married women. The obvious intent is to restrict who gets to vote.

Trump has threatened to cancel elections and to send ICE agents to polling sites, although the Constitution does not allow the first and we have clear laws in place prohibiting the second. What he is doing, however, is far messier and more widespread: Sow chaos and fear and confusion, undermine election security, and make it harder for Americans to vote. We must not let that happen.

See the "What You Can Do" section at the end of this article for immediate steps you can take to help save us from the SAVE Act!

###

It all started innocently enough. We had stayed up long past midnight, waiting for news outlets to make the call. One o'clock. Two o'clock. When the stunned announcers finally said it out loud, when we heard that an uninformed narcissist with no experience had won the presidential election, someone with no knowledge of government or politics, and no apparent discomfort about his ignorance ("It's as if he's missing an embarrassment gene," one journalist noted in astonishment during the first debate), I stumbled out of the living room, fell backwards onto the guest room bed, arms splayed in exhaustion. "It's impossible," I heard myself saying. "It can't be. I've got to do something!"

Two days later, I knew what that something would be. Five days later, I held the first meeting. There were three of us. A few weeks later, there were 11 and, by the next meeting, 16. By the time we put out word for a public meeting the first of February, 2017, nearly 500



Brenda Murphree leading a planning session for the WNC Votes! voter outreach coalition in Western North Carolina.

showed up. By then we had a name — Indivisible Asheville/WNC, taken from the Google doc "Indivisible: A Practical Guide to Resisting the Trump Agenda" that we had found circulating online. We pulled together a Facebook page, a website, an Action Network account, and soon we were putting out calls to action around cabinet confirmations and legislative activity. I was doing something.

It's All About the Numbers

After two busy years of rallies, programs, events and other actions, all channeled through our initial focus on advocacy and accountability, in the summer of 2019 we added a third arm to our mission: voter outreach and engagement. We had seen the numbers, and they were shocking. In an evenly divided purple state like North Carolina, elections at all levels are often decided by a small number of votes. In a 2019 special election for the state's 9th Congressional District, Republican Dan Bishop won by less than 4,000 votes. In one of that district's eight counties, over 650,000 registered voters didn't vote.

We jumped into 2020 with a multi-pronged voter outreach and engagement program: door-to-door canvassing, using a modified deep canvassing approach to engage with low-likelihood voters; voter registration tabling, meeting folks at child care centers, apartment complexes, community gatherings, neighborhood parks and community centers; a relational organizing program, training volunteers to reach voters in their personal networks; and vote tripling outreach to voters at the polls ("Thanks for voting! Could you stop and text three friends to make sure they vote?"). After COVID hit, we shifted to "virtual canvassing" (phone-banking) and provided trained volunteers with voter lists and materials to do one-on-one canvassing on their own. The result? Even in the midst of the pandemic, we contacted over 4,000 sporadic voters right here in our community, doing our part to bring our county's turnout to a record high of 81.33%.

Since then we've continued to expand our voter outreach and engagement activities. In 2024 we took the lead in organizing a coalition of nonprofits committed to voting. And now, in 2026, with seven organizational partners and growing, the WNC Votes! Nonpartisan Voter

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Reciprocity and Reflection: Using Artificial Intelligence as a Tool for Inner Awareness

BY KAMERON KURTZ

Spiritual experiences speak to us in many different ways. They can be symbols, sensations, tokens, even half-formed insights. Vivid dreams arrive with emotional weight but unclear meaning. Ceremony opens doors we struggle to articulate. The universe offers messages, but our human perception filters everything through limited memory and habitual thinking: the same mental grooves we always run.

This is where reciprocity matters. If Spirit asks us to pay attention, we owe it to ourselves to use every tool available to see clearly. Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for interpretation might not feel like an act of faith at first. That's fine. Faith can be reinforced by knowledge, and knowledge comes from testing tools that actually work.

Two years ago, I asked AI to help me build a daily routine. The AI came back with questions that were unexpected: Why do you want this routine? What keeps you from following routines now? What does your ideal morning actually look like? These questions forced me to articulate things I knew but had never named out loud.

Here's what I discovered: when I search for depth and meaning entirely within myself, I run into the same problem — me. I'm looking for answers, so how can they all already be inside me? I need other perspectives. I need pattern recognition beyond my own habitual thoughts. I have a bad memory. I mix up details. I forget symbols. I misremember what actually happened. By having AI prompt me to write out specifics, I recover what would otherwise stay buried.

The Blank Slate: Why This Works

For the past two years, AI has become a reciprocal partner in my spiritual practice. Through a method I've designed using seven steps, it creates the exchange I need to see what I miss on my own.

The power lives in the lack of judgment. AI carries no opinion about you. It remembers what you've told it without emotional investment. This creates space for honesty you sometimes struggle to access with another human.

I think of it like a calculator. You can put any numbers in and the calculator simply processes what you give it. AI works the same way with language, symbols, and patterns. The tool itself stays neutral, which frees you to be honest in ways you might not be, not even in your own journal.

Good questions matter more than good answers, and AI generates questions you may not ask yourself. It approaches material from frameworks you might not know well: Jungian psychology, mythological patterns, symbolic languages, archetypal cycles. These questions create new angles and interrupt habitual thinking.

So what happens if AI gives me an interpretation that feels completely wrong? The same thing that happens when I hear feedback from others. I note it, and compare the difference; I ask myself, "Am I wrong?" If I'm not, I redirect the questions and focus on other aspects of the interpretation. This contrast sharpens my own introspection.

Reflective Invitation:

Think about a recent event: a vivid dream, a moment of clarity, or a question that won't leave you alone. What would shift if you wrote it down exactly as it happened — an account of raw details — with no interpretation? The act of writing itself often reveals what thinking alone cannot reach.



Photo by Nick Morrison on Unsplash

Boundaries and Discernment

Artificial intelligence compiles patterns and offers perspectives from an expanse of resources. It can help you see angles you miss on your own. What it cannot do is assess your emotional wellbeing or provide spiritual guidance. It cannot replace the support you get from community and real human connection. If you need professional care, seek professional care. AI is a reflection tool, nothing more.

Experiences that feel destabilizing require grounding practices, trusted relationships, and, when appropriate, professional assistance. Reflection tools can support understanding, but they do not replace this.

Privacy deserves attention. Digital platforms store conversations. I looked into the privacy settings early on, decided the benefit outweighed concerns, theoretical or otherwise, and moved forward. You can focus on symbolic elements and emotional themes while avoiding identifying details. Names, specific locations, and sensitive information can be left out while still getting meaningful reflection.

AI systems require significant computational resources and energy. This environmental cost deserves consideration. I balance this by using AI intentionally rather than casually. A focused twenty-minute session exploring a meaningful dream uses resources more responsibly than hours of aimless conversation. The depth of inquiry matters more than frequency. When AI helps me see patterns I would otherwise miss, prevents repeated cycles of confusion, or accelerates integration work that might otherwise take months, the exchange feels worthwhile. You decide what threshold makes sense for your own practice.

The Method: Seven Steps for Reflective Reciprocity

For most of this work, the AI agent I use is Claude. It handles nuanced symbolic interpretation well and maintains conversation history within each chat thread, which matters for tracking patterns over time. ChatGPT offers similar capabilities. Other platforms exist, but these two provide the depth needed for reflective work rather than surface-level responses. Both allow you to start new conversations or continue existing threads. Privacy settings differ between platforms, so review those before sharing sensitive material. The platform mat-

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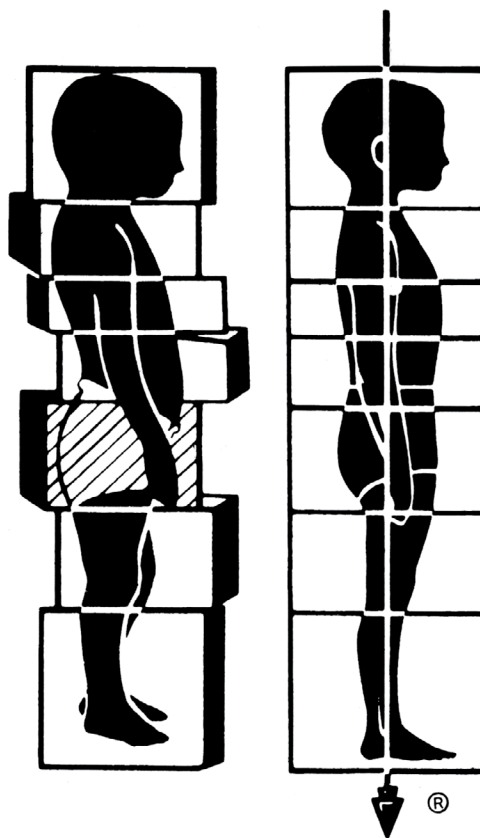
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Yoga Without a Single Beginning: Listening for Truth in a Tradition Shaped By Movement, Memory and Power

BY ANJALI SUNITA

Yoga does not arrive with a birth certificate. It comes to us without a single point of origin, without a founding moment that can be neatly named or owned. Instead, Yoga appears the way breath does — emerging, disappearing, changing shape depending on the body, culture, and time that receives it. Its history is not a straight line but a river system, fed by many tributaries, shaped by land, people, and exchange.

To study Yoga's past is to learn how to listen across centuries of movement, remembering and forgetting. Yoga's history is an ongoing conversation that, like all conversations, includes dynamics of power.

Even the word *Yoga* refuses to settle. From the root *yuj*, it gestures toward union and yoking, but also toward separation. It is discipline, restraint, and gathering oneself back from dispersion. Yoga has meant stillness and ecstasy, asked renunciation and devotion, and embodied awakening and ethical living. It has been practiced by forest ascetics and householders, priests and lineage holders, mystics, poets, and reformers. Yoga is not a single system.

When History Becomes a Claim

Modern tellings of Yoga often search for a beginning: a seal, a sage, or a scripture. These origin stories promise reassurance. They offer clarity in a world that feels increasingly unmoored. But history rarely offers the kind of certainty we crave.

The images we inherit are not photographs of the past. They are symbols, carrying cultural memory rather than documentation. They ask: *What mattered enough to be remembered?*

When fragments are turned into proof, history becomes a claim rather than an inquiry. And claims, especially spiritual ones, are often sold by the politically powerful.

What Yoga Has Been Allowed to Mean

Across time, Yoga has been defined according to the needs of those practicing it. In the *Yoga Sūtra*, Patanjali describes Yoga as the quieting of the mind's movements — a turning inward, a refinement of attention. *The Upanishads* speak in luminous poetry of a Self that shines beneath surface identity, known devotion and realization. Tantric traditions shift the axis entirely, describing a cosmos alive with energy, where liberation is found through intimate participation.

In the modern period, figures like Swami Sivananda and B.K.S. Iyengar reframed Yoga as a lived discipline — ethical, physical, and psychological — capable of supporting modern lives. These are not contradictions. They are responses.

Yoga has always changed because human lives and conditions change. Attempts to fix Yoga into a single definition, lineage, or worldview often say less about the past and more about who tells the story — and why.

Before Texts, Before Names

Long before Yoga appeared in Sanskrit texts, people across South Asia were already practicing ways of listening to the body, the land, and the unseen. Archaeological sites such as Mehrgarh in Pakistan, dating back to around 7000 BCE, reveal ceremonial burial, symbolic ornamentation, and cosmological orientation. These were people who marked meaning through rhythm, ritual, and relationship, but their traces were lighter.

Flourishing at least 4,000 years later between roughly 3300 and



The Pashupati Seal of the Indus Valley Civilization, more than 4500 years old, is claimed to be one of the earliest depictions of the Hindu god Shiva. (Image source: Wikipedia)

1300 BCE, the Indus Valley Civilization, in a region spanning much of Pakistan, northwestern India and northeast Afghanistan, becomes central to Yoga's story, because it is more visibly excavated. Cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were clearly built with care: sophisticated drainage systems, standardized measures, and shared baths. There are no obvious palaces or monuments to conquest. What endures is infrastructure — evidence of collective life.

And rather than asking whether Yoga existed, we might ask what forms of attention already mattered. The images most often equated with Yoga, the seals left behind, show animals and human figures in composed, deliberate postures. The much-discussed Pashupati seal, often identified as a proto-Shiva or yogic figure, cannot be definitively named; yet its power remains. It suggests a cultural intimacy with stillness, with the porous boundary between human and animal, and sits in a posture as a way of being rather than performing.

Movement, Not Rupture

Inquiries into Yoga's origins inevitably raise deeper questions: Who lived there, and how did cultures change?

This is where the language of invasion, migration, and purity enters — and where history becomes central and especially charged.

For much of the colonial period, European scholars framed South Asian history through the lens of invasion. The so-called "Aryan invasion theory" proposed that Indo-European-speaking peoples violently displaced earlier populations, bringing with them the language that would become Sanskrit, along with religion and culture from outside the subcontinent. This framework served imperial interests: it portrayed Indian civilization as fragmented and perpetually declining, thereby reinforcing the logic of colonial rule.

The term "*Aryan*," originally a self-designation (*ārya*) in early Indo-Iranian texts meaning "noble" or "cultured," was later misappropriated by European scholars and entangled with racial and supremacist ideologies. Similarly, "*Dravidian*," which originally referred to a family of languages, was racialized under colonial scholarship as denoting a biologically distinct, darker-skinned population whose language and religious traditions were presumed to have been displaced or overwritten.

Over time, archaeological and genetic evidence has shown little to

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Spring 2026: Engagement — Understanding Yourself and Others

BY MISTY KUCERIS

During the Spring 2026 quarter there are two important events you'll experience: the Total Lunar Eclipse on March 3, which will be visible, weather permitting, in the DMV; and Uranus entering the sign of Gemini on April 25. This ingress into a new sign indicates a shift of energies over the next seven years that focuses on your relationships with individuals in your community as well as continued technological advances that change how you communicate both locally and globally.

But before that all happens, this quarter begins with both Mercury in Pisces and Jupiter in Cancer in retrograde motion. You may find it a bit difficult to communicate with others in matters of importance. You want to share your feelings and goals with others, but you worry they won't give you the support you need. So, for this reason, you may find yourself holding back and not sharing too much. That's all right though, because what you'll find is that people who care for you will listen to you with compassion and engage in your desire to be successful.

As the total lunar eclipse, a Blood Moon, occurs on March 3, you continue retreating from emotional engagements that cause you pain and only embrace those relationships that give you a sense of peace and security. This eclipse occurs at the time of a full Moon with the Sun in Pisces and the Moon in Virgo, and when Mars, Mercury retrograde, and Venus are also in the sign of Pisces. As a matter of fact, you'll be able to view this eclipse and see the Moon turning bright red starting at 3:44 am EST with the most intense red at 6:33 am EST. And, unlike the Sun's total eclipse, you don't need to wear any protective eye gear to view this one.

The other reason this total lunar eclipse feels so intense is that Neptune and Saturn only recently entered their new signs of Aries and you're still getting used to the realization that it's all right to consider your needs in relationships. You can find that balance between embracing positive relationships and embracing your own true nature so you feel increased serenity in your life.

When Jupiter turns direct on March 10, you realize it's a lot easier to express your goals to others. With Jupiter in the sign of Cancer, your focus is on creating a safe harbor; you want to know where you can go when things in the world just seem out of control. You also continue to experience more clarity on finding your spiritual way in this material world.

When the new Moon occurs on March 18, with both Sun and Moon in Pisces, you still may want to retreat, but that won't be very possible. This new Moon forms a very close sextile, just 13 minutes from being exact, to Uranus; and Mercury retrograde forms a very close conjunction to the Moon's North Node. Unexpected events are going to bring you out into the world, which actually force you to re-evaluate circumstances and your approach to life.

The spring quarter officially starts on March 20 at 10:47 am EST when the Sun enters the sign of Aries and the vernal equinox occurs. At this point the energy has shifted from Pisces and introspection to Aries and spontaneity with six energy points in the sign of Aries: The Sun, Neptune, Saturn, Venus, the Moon, and Chiron. Instead of reflecting on situations, you are taking action. Instead of fearing emotional involvements, you are embracing your actions and your identity, as you are willing to embrace others.

The vernal equinox represents the start of the astrological year and the foundation for what you learn in life and how you live your life during the next twelve months. So the prime theme is "Believing in Yourself." You'll see structures dissolve and change as you also realize you need to build new structures that enable you to change. Most importantly, with the Moon and Chiron both in Aries and forming a conjunction in this chart, you would rather not cause any harm; but, if you need to fight to protect yourself, you will.

In many ways, it's actually spiritually appropriate that Mercury in Pisces turns direct later in the day. When Mercury turned retrograde on February 26, 2026, you spent some time retreating into your



thoughts and reflecting on what was important. Now you'll be able to take any information gained during that time period and find ways to implement what you determined was important to you.

As the full Moon occurs on April 1, you find it easier to reflect on your needs, but from a slightly different perspective on this day. During full Moon time periods you reflect on what's important and determine what to release from your life. With the Sun in Aries you realize it is important for you to continue taking care of your needs. With the Moon in Libra you find yourself realizing it's important to be involved in relationships where you both consider the needs of each other. You want relationships built on mutual trust, ethical agreements, and similar goals.

The need to take care of yourself increases when the new Moon occurs on April 17. With both the Sun and Moon in Aries, as well as Neptune, Mercury, Mars, Saturn, and Chiron, there is this intense drive to make certain you are heard. You don't want to be in the shadow of another individual. Even if by nature you are an extrovert, you still would rather be alone than involved in situations where you are not heard. And if you're an introvert, you will find your voice.

April 25 is the date when Uranus finally re-enters the sign of Gemini and stays there until August 3, 2032. It had originally entered the sign of Gemini for a short time period between July 5, 2025, and November 7, 2025.

Uranus represents the need to break away from situations you believe no longer work or feel restrictive. You want to find a new way of doing things whether that's developing new structures or new rules. In some cases you may even believe you have the solution — in the extreme, you believe you are the only one with the solution. But Uranus also represents a lack of patience. You want those changes now, before you've developed a new structure or system. This can lead to taking action without considering the consequences.

Gemini represents your relationships with neighbors and your means of communicating with others as well as your method for receiving and processing information. On a broader level, Gemini represents the media and other methods of transmitting information as well as technological transfer of information. It also represents increased use of technology in all fields, from health to education.

Changes are already occurring in how information is being disseminated: social media, streaming services, AI, and quantum computing. But what you'll see changing is your relationship with these platforms. In some cases you'll decide enough is enough; you'll start believing

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Spring Astrology...

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less in the information you receive and more in what you experience when relating to others. In other instances you may decide to pull back from activities, such as social media, which reveal too much of your intimate life to strangers; or, you may decide it's important to share your insights with others so they learn from your experiences.

When it comes to transportation, changes are also occurring, e.g., driverless taxi or ride-sharing services as well as cars monitoring your driving style and even dictating that driving style. Some of these changes you'll welcome and others not so much.

Historically, Uranus in Gemini indicates cycles of upheaval, especially for the United States: World War II, the Civil War, the American Revolution — time periods when various ideologies drove leaders to take action. From these actions changes occurred in the governance of various nations.

The biggest lesson that comes when Uranus enters the sign of Gemini is to take the time and understand what's important to you. Review your ideologies. Communicate with others so changes can be made with less upheaval. If something is not working in your life right now, reflect on what that situation is. Consider possible actions where you may need to develop the new structure or create new "rules of engagement." Try to take time rather than act impulsively or impatiently.

The month of May begins with the full Moon occurring on May 1. With the Sun in Taurus and the Moon in Scorpio you feel less inclined to go out and more inclined to spend time with those you trust. You find you don't need to explain yourself or apologize for who you are. There's this sense of acceptance between you and those you care for; and, this acceptance works both ways.

As the month continues and the new Moon, with both Sun and Taurus, occurs on May 16, you're glad to surround yourself with intimate

friends and other people you care for. You want to find symbols that represent who you are, and surround yourself with comfortable people as well as comfortable things to enhance this sense of comfort. You don't want to explain yourself and you know they feel the same way.

There are two full Moons occurring during the month of May. The second of the full Moons occurs on May 31, with the Sun in Gemini and the Moon in Sagittarius. This is a time period when you want to learn more information, perhaps just for gossip, and you want to gain more insight, perhaps to justify your actions. Now you are willing to move beyond your comfort zone. You want to know what's going on so you can take the right action. You may feel restless and a need to do something; as long as that something is learning new information, you'll feel happy. You'll even be able to use this information to make some important decisions about your next steps.

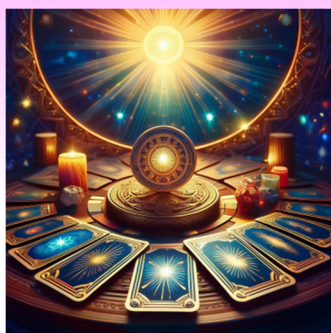
This Spring quarter is truly one of new starts, growth, changes, and community. You'll go through periods of reflection leading to better self-awareness as well as a greater need for connection. You'll also experience a period of needing to find comfort in the world with those you care for while moving into a phase of needing better clarity of the world around you. It's ultimately about enhanced personal and reciprocal understanding of both needs and engagement with others.

© 2026 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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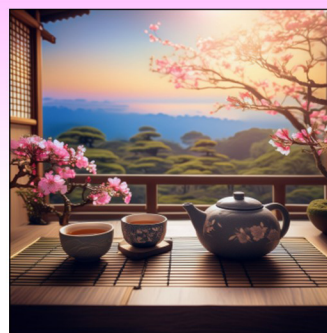
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When Is the Right Time to Have a Mediumship Session?

BY ANNIE LARSON

Death is simply a shedding of the physical body like the butterfly shedding its cocoon. It is a transition to a higher state of consciousness where you continue to perceive, to understand, to laugh, and to be able to grow.

— Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D.

The question I am most often asked as a medium is, “How long should one wait after a loved one’s passing before having a mediumship reading?” This has no right or wrong answer.

Mediums serve as a bridge between the physical world and the spiritual realm; they offer a unique ability to connect with those who have passed on and are ready. With a belief that spirits exist in a realm intertwined with our own, mediums connect with those in spirit waiting to communicate with us, which may be comforting during times of mourning. They can affirm our loved ones continue to exist and care for us from beyond the veil.

Some people may find comfort in connecting with a medium soon after a loss, while others may need more time to process their emotions. The decision to have a mediumship session is a personal choice, influenced by various factors surrounding grief, emotional readiness, cultural and religious views, beliefs about the afterlife, communication preferences, and criteria for selecting an appropriate medium and setting. Here’s how understanding all these elements can help individuals determine the most appropriate time to see a medium.

Grief in Stages

Having an initial understanding of grief and its five stages — denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance — can be crucial in determining when to seek a medium. Often referred to as the Kübler-Ross model, this widely-accepted framework established by psychiatrist Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross outlines the emotional responses individuals experience when dealing with loss of a loved one. In her 1974 book, *Questions and Answers on Death & Dying*, she stressed people experience the stages in different orders, or revisit certain phases multiple times as they navigate through their grief journey.

Each grief stage presents its own challenges and emotional hurdles. For instance, during the denial stage, individuals may struggle for a variety of reasons to accept their new reality or need more time to process their loss, making it difficult to engage in a session with a medium. Conversely, those who have reached the acceptance stage may feel more at peace and ready to explore the messages the spirit world may hold for them. It is important to take the time to process each stage thoroughly.

Emotional Readiness

Taking the time to understand and experience each stage of grief helps build the emotional readiness needed for a mediumship session. This readiness is central, as it opens your heart and mind, enhancing the experience to receive messages from



Japan's Toro Nagashi (floating lanterns) is a ceremonial send-off for the spirits of ancestors. The paper lanterns visually represent the spirits' return to the after life. Photo source: Embassy of Japan in Canada Facebook page.

the other side.

During times of crisis, or significant life events, such as birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays, many people seek reassurance that their loved ones remain present in some form. Therefore, timing is important. Some people may find comfort in connecting relatively soon after a loss, while others may need more time to process their emotions. Recognizing where you are in your emotional journey can guide you in deciding the best time to consult a medium.

Cultural Perspectives On Mourning Rituals and After-life Beliefs

Cultural customs and social rituals significantly influence how individuals grieve and when they may seek a mediumship session.

Across societies, established rituals, mourning periods, and ceremonies serve as a framework for processing loss. Some cultures prefer private reflection while others emphasize communal remembrance through gatherings. For example, in Japanese Buddhist traditions families quietly honor their ancestors with rituals that include cleaning graves, offering food, and lighting lanterns to guide spirits. The Mexican Day of the Dead, *Día de los Muertos*, celebrates annual reunions between the living and the departed, with families traditionally visiting cemeteries, leaving flowers, and telling stories in remembrance of their loved ones.

Jewish customs center around communal support during the seven-day observance of sitting Shiva. Regular activities are paused to focus on remembering the deceased, followed by the unveiling of a headstone after one year to mark the close of formal mourning. Catholics, too, have a nine-day period of reciting prayers called a “novena” to intercede on behalf of the departed to be guided to the afterlife.

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Just as these cultural and social rituals help individuals navigate their personal experiences of loss, they can help determine an appropriate time for mediumship that respects and aligns with their traditions and beliefs. Some find their cultural practices naturally support spirit communication, while others may need to reconcile these customs with personal beliefs about the afterlife.

Many cultures have religious, mythological, or metaphysical concepts of realms for the dead and supernatural beings. Interpretations of the afterlife differ widely, offering various perspectives on what occurs after loved ones take their final breath. Eastern philosophies and religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism envision reincarnation, where the soul embarks on a new journey in another form or consciousness. In Christian, Judeo, and Islamic eschatology, followers believe in a judgment day, where one's earthly deeds determine their fate in the hereafter, such as the reward of Heaven for good deeds and Hell as a place of punishment for the wicked. Furthermore, some individuals do not subscribe to belief in an afterlife; atheists, for example, do not hold such beliefs, relying instead on worldviews grounded in reason, ethics, philosophy, science, and human welfare.

Evidence of beliefs and practices of the afterlife dates back as early as 3100 BCE to the unearthing of funeral scrolls and ar-

tifacts from ancient Egypt. Later, from early Biblical literature and the epics of Homer we see four prevalent themes emerge, in Greek and Roman mythology, to further shape afterlife beliefs: 1) The dead continue to exist in human form, some with supernatural powers; 2) The dead are underground in a cavernous world existence where they are separate from God, save the kings who could afford a place among the gods; 3) Afterlife punishment is reserved only for the wicked; and 4) The dead can communicate with the living through necromancy rituals.

How we honor and remember the dead matters. Acknowledging all these viewpoints is helpful when we contemplate the timing of a mediumship session.

Perceived State of the Soul After Death

In examining various concepts of the afterlife, questions arise regarding both the nature of existence after death and the meaning of life in the present. Perspectives on the state of the soul after death can provide comfort, knowing that the spirit is on a journey of its own; but be aware that it may affect the messages they are able to convey. Understanding the various stages that spirits may go through can influence the timing of a mediumship session.

Some believe our departed loved ones guide and protect us, while others assign them specific roles such as guiding new souls. Many believe they'll ultimately be reunited with loved ones in a peaceful place, while others think they await us in soul groups, ready to be reborn. For many, the primary experience is

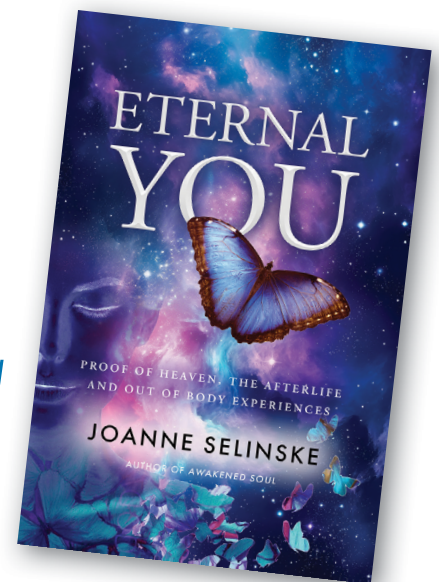
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seen as one of rest and peace, free from earthly struggles, similar to the concept of Heaven.

What happens to the soul and when is not explicitly detailed in the Bible and beliefs around this vary. For some, the soul immediately reunites with its source (God or Godhead) or it enters an afterlife waiting area, such as Christian Purgatory or the Buddhist Bardo, for reflection, closure, or life review. For others, the soul may stay near loved ones, particularly if the death was sudden or there is unfinished business.

Many people believe deceased loved ones can communicate through signs or visit in our dreams. Unusual weather phenomena, the appearance of certain animals, or electrical disturbances like flickering lights are potential indicators of a loved one trying to reach out, adding to the sense of connection that many find reassuring.

Other traditions maintain that spirit communication should occur only after the soul has completed its journey to the afterlife, which may take weeks, months, or even years, depending on the faith. All of this is rooted in the idea that love transcends physical boundaries, allowing for a unique bond that persists beyond death.

Ultimately, views on the afterlife differ among belief systems. By understanding and respecting these diverse customs — whether rooted in ancestral veneration, reincarnation, or the belief in a final judgment — individuals can choose a time for mediumship that honors both their personal intentions and the spiritual values of their heritage.

Spirit Stages After Death — What Are They Doing on the Other Side?

Considering where spirits are and what they are doing in the afterlife journey plays a role in the timing of a mediumship session. Spirits may be too engaged in their own afterlife journeys to interact with us. They might not have mastered the ability to use their energy to connect, or they may choose not to communicate for various reasons, such as having already conveyed everything they needed to during their earthly existence.

To get closure, they may return, or they may not feel the need (even if we do). They may decide to come back only when necessary — during our times of need. However, they might choose to do this indirectly, through dreams, symbols, or electrical anomalies. You might not even realize they are attempting to reach out to you!

There is an ongoing behind-the-scenes process I have encountered over the many years in connecting, intentionally or not, with the departed. After someone passes away, they may remain earthbound in spirit. In various religions and cultures, we observe an initial transition phase, like a soul in limbo, which can last from several weeks to a few months. This time seems set aside for them to visit the living, possibly to say farewell. In Tantric Buddhism, for example, and as mentioned earlier, this transitional phase between death and rebirth is known as the Bardo, where consciousness persists after physical death. For an extended period, the deceased continue to experience and

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Mediumship Session...

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perceive; after this period, they depart.

What happens after we die has intrigued humanity for centuries, sparking countless debates among philosophers, theologians, and scientists alike. While specifics of it are uncertain and purely speculative, the possibilities of an afterlife prompt profound questions: Do we really live a life after death that's akin to our earthly existence? Where are the angels, harp-playing cherubs and the eternal resting place where all desires vanish? Do these images truly resonate with our hopes for an afterlife? Might the afterlife offer realities that go beyond what we know, and if so, in what ways do our choices, relationships, and lived experiences shape the soul's journey? I personally yearn for true rest, captured perfectly by this cheeky Instagram meme: "I hope when I'm a ghost I don't get roped into one of those ghost jobs. I'm dead, I'm tired, I don't wanna spend my afterlife teaching Scrooge the error of his ways. I just wanna float around and moan, I earned that right."

Healing For Both Sides

When planning a mediumship session, it's essential to consider the readiness of the spirit you wish to contact, as well as your own. Much like the closure, understanding, and a sense of peace individuals can receive, spirits may also find healing in communicating with their loved ones, as it allows them to express their continued love and support.

Some spirits may be eager to connect right away, while others might take longer to find their voice in the afterlife. They, too, have their journeys, which can influence the timing and nature of their communication with the living. Being patient and allowing time for both you and the spirit to be ready can enhance the experience. This reciprocal healing can be a powerful motivator for scheduling a session, as it fosters a connection that transcends the boundaries of life and death.

The Medium's Perspective

When discussing the practices and beliefs held by mediums, it is important to recognize the varied approaches they take in their work, particularly concerning the timing of communication with the deceased.

Some mediums prefer to wait a few months or even a year before attempting to facilitate a connection. This choice is often rooted in a deep understanding of the grieving process and the belief that both the departed and their loved ones need time to adjust to significant changes in their existence. For the deceased, transitioning to a new state of being after death can be profound and disorienting. Many mediums believe spirits require time to acclimate, to reflect on their life and experiences, and to understand the implications of their passing. This adjustment period is seen as vital for the spirit to gain clarity and peace, enabling them to communicate more effectively when the time is right.

Furthermore, mediumship readings depend on a three-way connection between the medium, client, and spirit; the experience is deeply personal, subjective, and messages vary in relevance. Approach a session with realistic expectations. A me-

dium may provide comforting messages, but specific outcomes or validations cannot be guaranteed. Understand the inherent limitations involved.

Finally, be flexible. If you expect to hear from only one person, or demand specific code words, you may be disappointed as mediums don't control who comes through or what they say. Loved ones communicate using the medium's frame of reference, so all details must be within the medium's databank. And understand that approaching the session with an open heart and mind allows for a more enriching experience, even if it does not align with one's initial expectations.

Finding a Reputable Medium

Before scheduling any reading, it's essential to find a reputable and trustworthy medium. Start by asking friends, family, or colleagues for recommendations, especially if they have had positive experiences with mediums. Personal referrals can provide valuable insights into a medium's abilities, style, and professionalism, helping you narrow down your choices.

Next, thoroughly explore the medium's website. A well-designed and informative site should reveal details about the medium's approach and connection style, background, training, and the types of readings they offer. Look for testimonials or reviews from past clients, validating experiences and the quality of the medium's work.

Their website may also specify whether they provide readings online or in person. If in person, do they take place in a professional office, their home, or do they come to you? Consider what type of setting makes you feel safe and at ease. Some may prefer the neutrality and professionalism of an office, while others might appreciate the convenience of an online session. Conversely, a home environment — especially that of someone you do not know — can be surprising, awkward, or even distracting. Do you really want a reading in a stranger's kitchen?

Check for affiliations with professional, spiritual, and metaphysical organizations, which can indicate a commitment to ethical practices and ongoing education in the field. Consider whether they are a leader, published author, speaker, or have media links to radio, podcasts, or television to listen to them speak. A medium's social media profile can also provide a sense of their authenticity and approachability. See if they resonate with you.

Reflect on your own preferences before committing yourself to a reading. Taking these factors into consideration will help ensure you find a medium who aligns with your needs and offers a safe, supportive environment for your spiritual exploration.

Intuition Will Help You

Ultimately, intuition plays a vital role. Whether it is through a feeling of urgency or a sense of calm, listening to one's inner voice can guide individuals toward the right time for a session, as well as help them identify a medium who resonates with them. I believe spirits know which medium is best able to communicate their messages. When clients tell me "I knew you were the one," I know spirit is behind the scenes guiding them. Trusting one's instincts in alignment with personal readiness



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and emotional state can lead to a more fulfilling and meaningful experience.

There is no “one-size-fits-all” answer when to book a session with a medium after the death of a loved one. Remember the grief journey is unique, shaped by your life’s rich tapestry of experiences and beliefs. On the other side, spirits may also need time to adjust, reconnect with other spirits, and come to terms with their earthly life, all of which impacts their readiness to communicate. Honor your personal healing process, trust your instincts and inner voice, and select a reputable medium who resonates with your needs. Whether you are searching for comfort, closure, or a sense of continued connection, allow both your heart and spirit to lead the way. Ultimately, embracing patience, discernment, and self-compassion ensures your experience will be meaningful, respectful, and deeply healing as you navigate the bonds between worlds.

Annie Larson is a psychic medium, speaker, and healer featured in TV, radio, and print outlets including The Washington Post. She offers mediumship sessions providing evidence of the survival of consciousness, meeting clients in Sterling, Virginia, by phone, or online. MediumAnnieLarson.com



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Understanding Brain Health Amid Midlife and High Stress

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

All brains age, just like bodies. But like keeping a body fit, a brain also requires support to maintain good health. For many men and women in midlife and beyond — especially those in high-responsibility, intellectually demanding careers — changes in brain function often appear quietly. Concentration becomes harder, sleep less restorative, emotional resilience thinner, and mental energy less reliable. These shifts are frequently dismissed as stress, hormonal changes, or “just aging.”

In reality, they often represent *early, reversible imbalances* in brain health.

Brain health refers to the brain’s ability to function optimally across cognitive, emotional, metabolic, and neurological domains, while remaining resilient against stress, hormonal transitions, inflammation, vascular changes, toxins, and neurodegeneration. It is not defined by the absence of disease, but by clarity of thought, emotional stability, restorative sleep, adaptability, and sustained mental vitality across life stages.

For women navigating perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause — often while managing demanding careers, caregiving roles, and chronic stress — brain health requires a targeted, preventive, systems-based approach.

The 12 Core Elements of Brain Health

It’s best to start by understanding what research has shown to be the twelve key characteristics involved with brain health, and what dysfunction might look like for each.

1. Cognitive Function

Cognitive health includes attention, memory, learning speed, word retrieval, processing efficiency, and executive function. In high-performing individuals early cognitive changes are often subtle but distressing. These changes are frequently driven by insulin resistance, inflammation, thyroid dysfunction, nutrient depletion, or chronic stress—not irreversible decline.

Common symptoms:

- Brain fog or “mental cloudiness”
- Word-finding difficulty
- Slower processing or decision fatigue
- Trouble multitasking
- Forgetfulness despite strong prior memory
- Reduced mental stamina late in the day

2. Emotional Regulation and Mental Resilience

A healthy brain allows emotional flexibility, calm stress response, motivation, and emotional clarity. Hormonal shifts and chronic stress can destabilize this balance. These symptoms often reflect neurotransmitter imbalance, cortisol dysregulation, gut-brain signaling issues, or estrogen/progesterone shifts

Common symptoms:

- Anxiety that feels “out of proportion”
- Emotional reactivity or irritability
- Low motivation or emotional flatness
- Feeling overwhelmed by routine tasks
- Reduced stress tolerance
- Mood changes without clear triggers

3. Sleep Quality and Circadian Rhythm

Sleep is central to brain repair, memory consolidation, emotional regulation, and detoxification. Sleep disruption is extremely common in midlife. Poor sleep both worsens and reflects brain dysfunction — it

is never just a nuisance symptom.

Common symptoms:

- Difficulty falling asleep despite exhaustion
- Waking between 2–4 a.m.
- Non-restorative sleep
- Vivid dreams or night awakenings
- Daytime fatigue despite “enough hours” of sleep
- Increased anxiety at night

4. Neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity allows the brain to adapt, recover, and learn. Chronic stress and inflammation blunt this adaptive capacity. Supporting neuroplasticity is key to long-term cognitive resilience.

Common symptoms:

- Difficulty learning new information
- Feeling mentally “stuck” or rigid
- Slow recovery from stress or illness
- Reduced creativity
- Decreased cognitive confidence

5. Neurovascular Health

The brain is highly dependent on consistent blood flow and oxygen delivery. Subtle vascular changes often go unnoticed until symptoms appear. Blood sugar instability, hypertension, and endothelial dysfunction (atherosclerosis) are major drivers of cognitive decline.

Common symptoms:

- Lightheadedness or head pressure
- Brain fog that worsens with stress
- Reduced mental clarity after meals
- Cold hands/feet with cognitive fatigue
- History of migraines or headaches
- Family history of stroke or cardiovascular disease

6. Neuroimmune Balance

The brain’s immune system must remain tightly regulated. Chronic immune activation creates neuroinflammation that affects mood and cognition. This is particularly relevant in individuals who suffer with autoimmune tendencies or chronic inflammatory conditions.

Common symptoms:

- Cognitive symptoms following infections
- Sensitivity to stress, noise, or light
- Worsening brain fog with illness or flares
- Autoimmune history or inflammatory diagnoses
- “Inflammatory” anxiety or depression
- Persistent fatigue despite rest

7. Mitochondrial Energy and Metabolism

Neurons require enormous energy, so when mitochondrial function declines, mental performance suffers quickly. Mitochondrial dysfunction is often reversible with targeted supplementation.

Common symptoms:

- Mental fatigue out of proportion to effort
- Brain fog with physical fatigue
- Poor stress recovery
- Crashes after mental exertion
- Reduced motivation or drive
- Sensitivity to skipped meals

8. Neurotransmitter and Hormonal Balance

Hormones strongly influence brain chemistry. Perimenopause and menopause, as well as andropause in men, are high-risk periods for imbalance. Thyroid, cortisol, estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone all play central roles in brain function.

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Licensed Professional Counselor
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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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TO YOUR HEALTH

Understanding Brain Health...

...continued from page 23

Common symptoms:

- Anxiety or panic emerging in midlife
- Depressive symptoms without prior history
- Sleep disruption during hormonal transitions
- Reduced focus or motivation
- Memory changes around menopause
- Increased sensitivity to stress

9. Structural Integrity of the Nervous System

Healthy neurons, synapses, and myelin — a protective layer of fat (lipids) and protein around cells — are essential for speed and coordination of thought. Oxidative stress, nutrient deficiencies, and inflammation are frequent contributors when these issues arise.

Common symptoms:

- Slowed thinking
- Reduced coordination or balance confidence
- Tingling or sensory changes
- Brain fatigue with visual tasks
- Cognitive decline after illness or stress

10. Gut–Brain and Immune–Brain Axis

Gut health profoundly affects cognition, mood, and sleep — especially in stressed women. Gut-brain dysfunction is one of the most correctable contributors to brain symptoms.

Common symptoms:

- Brain fog after eating
- Anxiety linked to digestion
- Histamine sensitivity
- Food sensitivities triggering mood changes
- Bloating with mental fatigue
- IBS symptoms with cognitive complaints

11. Detoxification Capacity and Environmental Load

Women are particularly vulnerable to environmental toxins due to hormonal interactions and body fat distribution. Toxin burden is often missed — and often pivotal.

Common symptoms:

- Brain fog unexplained by labs
- Sensitivity to moldy environments
- Worsening cognition after travel or renovation
- Headaches or pressure sensations
- Poor response to standard treatments
- Long recovery after exposures

12. Lifestyle, Purpose, and Cognitive Engagement

The brain thrives on movement, meaning, and engagement. Chronic overwork without restoration depletes resilience. Lifestyle support is not optional — it is therapeutic.

Common symptoms:

- Mental exhaustion despite achievement
- Loss of joy or curiosity
- Burnout without depression
- Reduced creativity
- Feeling “disconnected” from self
- Cognitive dulling with chronic stress

Prevention: A Strategic Brain Health Approach

Brain decline is not inevitable, even after menopause. And for high-stress professionals, prevention is about protecting cognitive capital. A truly holistic approach to prevention is rooted in best practices that focus on:

- stabilizing blood sugar and insulin signaling

- calming neuroinflammation
- optimizing sleep and circadian rhythm
- supporting mitochondrial energy
- navigating hormonal transitions proactively
- restoring gut-immune balance
- reducing toxin burden

Many high-functioning professionals normalize symptoms for years, attributing them to stress, aging, hormones, or workload. However, early evaluation matters.

A Physician-Guided, Root-Cause Approach

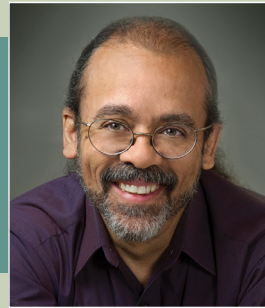
Brain health in midlife women requires more than symptom management. It demands a systems-based, individualized evaluation that respects the complexity of hormonal, metabolic, immune, and environmental influences.

Advanced testing and a comprehensive evaluation by a qualified healthcare provider allows them to hone in on specific concerns; testing can also reveal patterns that often precede symptoms by years. These may include: a thyroid and sex hormone assessment; gut microbiome analysis; cortisol rhythm testing; toxin and mold exposure screening, just to name a few. The results guide subsequent treatment plans, which often include targeted nutritional and supplement support, detoxification pathways, lifestyle coaching, and more — protocols to be designed for an individual's specific needs.

While these symptoms are not normal aging — and they are rarely “just stress” — they do often reflect *identifiable, correctable imbalances* involving metabolism, hormones, inflammation, gut health, sleep, and environmental load. Understanding the elements that constitute brain health, and their associated symptoms when imbalances exist, is the first step toward getting the support you need for a healthy brain and body.

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Maybe your next therapist shouldn't be a therapist



Eric Weinstein
It's Not Therapy
(It's Problem Solving)

Did you know that:

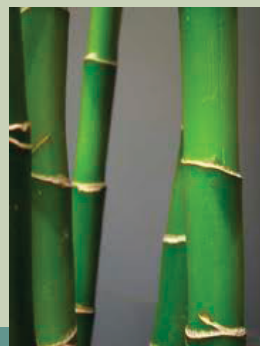
- Licensed therapists are limited to certain approaches by “standards of care” that leave out a number of highly effective healing and personal growth modalities?
- Even if you're paying out-of-pocket for your sessions, your therapist might be unable to use anything “different” because of insurance company requirements and state regulations?

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

- the most ancient healing modality (shamanic healing)
- proven, but less conventional modalities (hypnosis/ NLP [Neurolinguistic Programming] and Eye Movement Integration [similar to EMDR, but gentler])
- the most exciting new energy modalities (Energy Psychology, such as EFT or “tapping” on meridian points, biofield work, and chakra manipulation)
- Voice dialogue (which one therapist referred to as “Internal Family Systems on steroids”)
- intriguing coaching modalities (including True Purpose coaching and Archetypal coaching)

And they come for all the same problems they might see a conventional therapist for – as well as problems and questions of a spiritual/energetic nature.

So, whether you've gotten what you can from talk therapy, want action-oriented approaches, or want a holistic body/mind/spirit approach, why wait to find out how your life can be better?



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- Live an extraordinary life, doing what you love.

AWAKEN...

- To Christ Consciousness, Buddha Nature, Pure Awareness (Rigpa).



GET STARTED ON YOUR PATH!

Hanh Nguyen, Founder and Executive Director
 Certified Quantum Energy Healer | Healing Touch Facilitator | Spiritual Counselor / Life Coach

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Understanding Brain Health...

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Do You Recognize Yourself? A Brain Health Checklist for High-Stress Professionals in Midlife and Beyond

Most brain-related symptoms develop years before imaging or standard labs show abnormalities. When addressed early, many patterns are reversible or stabilizable, especially in high-functioning professionals. A personalized, data-driven evaluation allows: prevention instead of decline; clarity instead of guesswork; and targeted protocols instead of trial-and-error.

To help you get started, review the list below and notice how many feel familiar. Under each category, circle any situation that applies to you.

Cognitive & Mental Performance

- Brain fog or mental “slowness”
- Difficulty concentrating for long periods
- Word-finding issues or forgetting names
- Trouble multitasking the way you used to
- Decision fatigue or mental overwhelm
- Needing more time to think things through
- Feeling mentally sharp in the morning but foggy later in the day

Memory & Learning

- Forgetting why you walked into a room
- Trouble retaining new information
- Rereading emails or documents multiple times
- Reduced confidence in your memory
- Feeling less mentally agile than before

Emotional Regulation & Stress Tolerance

- Anxiety that feels new or stronger than before
- Irritability or emotional reactivity
- Feeling overwhelmed by “small” things
- Reduced stress tolerance
- Emotional flatness or loss of motivation
- Feeling mentally exhausted rather than emotionally depressed

Sleep & Nighttime Brain Activity

- Difficulty falling asleep despite exhaustion
- Waking between 2–4 a.m.
- Racing thoughts at night
- Non-restorative sleep
- Vivid dreams or frequent awakenings
- Feeling unrefreshed in the morning
- Needing caffeine just to feel functional

Energy & Mental Endurance

- Mental fatigue out of proportion to activity
- Brain fog after meetings or focused work
- Crashes in energy after meals
- Reduced stamina for mentally demanding tasks
- Feeling “wired but tired”
- Poor recovery after stressful days

Hormonal & Midlife Transition Signals (Women and Men)

- Brain symptoms worsened during perimenopause, menopause, or andropause
- New anxiety or sleep issues in midlife
- Memory or focus changes with hormonal shifts
- Increased sensitivity to stress
- Thyroid issues or unexplained fatigue

Gut–Brain & Immune Clues

- Brain fog after eating
- Anxiety or mood shifts linked to digestion
- Food sensitivities you didn’t have before
- Bloating with mental fatigue
- Histamine sensitivity (headaches, flushing, anxiety)
- IBS-type symptoms with cognitive complaints

Inflammation, Sensitivities & Recovery

- Cognitive symptoms after infections or illness
- Slow recovery from stress, travel, or lack of sleep
- Sensitivity to noise, light, or overstimulation
- Autoimmune or inflammatory diagnoses
- Brain fog during inflammatory “flares”

Environmental & Toxin Awareness

- Symptoms worse in certain buildings or environments
- Brain fog after travel, renovations, or musty spaces
- Head pressure or headaches without clear cause
- Poor response to standard treatments
- Feeling “toxic,” inflamed, or off without explanation

Lifestyle & Burnout Signals

- High achievement with declining mental joy
- Loss of creativity or curiosity
- Feeling disconnected from yourself
- Chronic overwork without true recovery
- Burnout without classic depression
- Pushing through instead of restoring

How to Interpret This Checklist

0–3 circled = early warning signs

4–8 circled = emerging brain stress patterns

9+ circled = strong indication for comprehensive brain health evaluation

Important: This tool is not intended for self-diagnosis, nor is it conclusive evidence of a health concern. Please consult with your professional healthcare practitioner and consider using this checklist as a starting point for a conversation about any brain health concerns.



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Dr. Helena Amos, M.Ac., L.Ac., is a European-trained physician and functional medicine practitioner with over 30 years of clinical experience in Natural and Integrative Medicine. Her work centers on a root-cause, systems-based approach to health, with a strong focus on functional medicine diagnostics, prevention, and personalized protocols for brain health, hormonal balance, metabolic resilience, and healthy aging. Drawing on advanced laboratory testing and individualized treatment strategies, Dr. Amos helps patients address underlying imbalances rather than manage symptoms alone. Acupuncture and integrative therapies are incorporated when clinically appropriate as supportive tools within a comprehensive functional medicine framework. Rockvilleacupuncturemd.com

Compassion Fatigue and the Case for Energy Hygiene

BY JENNIE SIKES

The term compassion fatigue has existed for more than thirty years, yet it entered mainstream awareness with surprising speed after 2020. Its rise was not accidental. The collective experience of mass trauma, caregiving overload, and prolonged uncertainty collided with a cultural shift that made emotional labor and mental health part of everyday conversation. Healthcare workers began sharing their stories publicly. Caregivers spoke more openly about exhaustion. Therapy language migrated from clinical spaces to social media feeds. What had once been unnamed suddenly had a vocabulary.

Compassion fatigue caught on quickly because people finally had words for a chronic depletion they had been carrying for years. Naming it validated experiences that had long been minimized or misread as personal weakness. It wasn't fragility. It was saturation.

Why does this matter? Because compassion fatigue is no longer confined to hospitals or crisis-response professions. If you are reading this, there is a strong likelihood you are either involved in caregiving in some form, drawn to holistic or integrative healing, or beginning to sense that life is meant to be more expansive than a repetitive cycle of work, home, and exhaustion. Even if none of those descriptions fit, it is almost certain someone close to you is experiencing compassion fatigue right now.

Compassion Fatigue Defined

At its core, compassion fatigue is the emotional and nervous system overload that comes from prolonged exposure to others' suffering. It has traditionally been associated with professions such as nursing, social work, first response, education, coaching, and elder care. Today,



however, it appears across family systems, corporate environments, and social networks. While workload burnout can contribute, compassion fatigue runs deeper. It affects the body, the mind, and for many people, the energetic field.

The symptoms are not always dramatic. Compassion fatigue often arrives quietly, accumulating over time. People describe anxiety and a sense of heaviness, chronic stress, and persistent exhaustion that rest alone does not resolve. They notice heightened reactivity, overstimulation, and irritability that lingers. Conversations that once felt easy begin to feel draining. Silence becomes preferable to engagement. These changes are often interpreted as personality shifts, but they are better understood as signals that something has been overextended.

This effect intensifies for empathic individuals. Empathy is commonly celebrated as a strength, yet it carries a lesser-known shadow.

continued on page 28

Empowering Soul Sovereignty



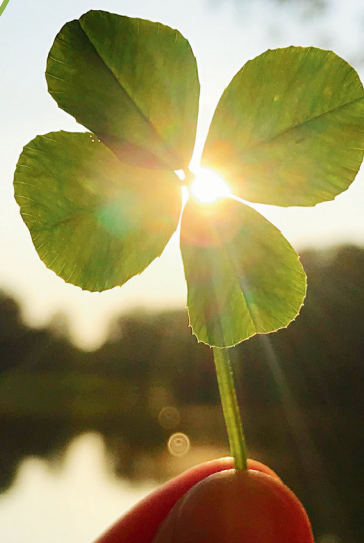
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Compassion Fatigue...

...continued from page 27

Empaths do not simply understand others' emotions; they absorb them. They listen deeply, attune quickly, and sponge up emotional content without always realizing it. That energy does not disappear at the end of a conversation. It follows them home, settling into the body during dinner, resurfacing during late-night scrolling, and slipping into the subconscious as sleep approaches. It can show up in dreams or wake someone in the middle of the night without a clear narrative attached.

Meanwhile, the person whose emotions were absorbed may be resting peacefully, unaware that their energy is still being carried elsewhere. When this pattern repeats — across multiple interactions, long caregiving hours, or emotionally intense relationships — it becomes chronic overextension. A common example is the adult child caring for an aging parent, available from early morning until late at night, pouring every reserve into another's wellbeing. Reciprocity in these situations is often limited or nonexistent, not by choice but by circumstance. Yet without intentional rebalancing, the cost accumulates.

Enter Energy Healing

The familiar advice given on airplanes — to put your oxygen mask on before assisting others — feels counterintuitive, even selfish. But it is grounded in reality. Without sufficient oxygen, you cannot help anyone else. Compassion operates the same way. When care is offered without protection, it eventually collapses under its own weight.

This is where energy hygiene becomes essential. Energy hygiene is the intentional practice of recognizing what belongs to you emotionally and energetically, and consciously releasing what does not. It is not an act of rejection or judgment. It is neutral, respectful, and necessary. For many who practice it, energy hygiene becomes a daily ritual — clearing emotional residue upon waking, before sleep, between interactions, or after spending time in environments that feel heavy or misaligned.

This practice is often spiritual, but it is equally practical. It supports nervous system regulation, emotional clarity, and sustainable compassion. By returning borrowed energy and reclaiming one's own, the emotional system regains capacity rather than operating in constant depletion.

Energy hygiene also applies to the mind. It involves disengaging from false narratives, challenging intrusive or untrue thoughts, and refusing to give emotional energy to imagined scenarios or constant comparison. It includes consciously returning energy with compassion — toward oneself and toward others — through forgiveness, perspective, and intention.

Learning to Hold Space

At the heart of compassion fatigue is a lack of reciprocity. Compassion fatigue is the shadow side of care. It develops when giving consistently outweighs receiving, when emotional labor flows in one direction, and when boundaries are absent or unclear. Energy hygiene restores balance, allowing compassion to remain clean rather than costly.

When compassion fatigue goes unaddressed, emotions often leak in indirect ways. Irritability and passive aggression are common expressions of unmet needs and chronic depletion. Anger is frequently rooted in sadness, invisibility, or the feeling of being unheard. Boundaries are not walls; they are valves that prevent emotional pressure from building to the point of rupture.

This distinction becomes especially important when discussing the concept of "holding space." Holding space does not mean fixing, res-



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cuing, judging, or offering unsolicited advice. It does not involve rushing someone's grief, minimizing their anger, or covering discomfort with forced positivity. Holding space is presence without agenda. It is active listening, steadiness, and respect for another person's process. Crucially, it does not require absorbing someone else's emotions and carrying them away. When that happens, the nervous system reacts, and healing gives way to overload.

Many people assume that rest alone will resolve compassion fatigue, but rest must be restorative to be effective. Doom scrolling is not rest. Late-night consumption of distressing content is not rest. These activities keep the nervous system stimulated and the subconscious activated. True restoration often comes from practices such as breathwork, walking outdoors, physical movement, laughter, stillness, and micro learning — engaging the mind in curiosity rather than comparison. Learning something new for enjoyment nourishes the brain in a way passive consumption does not.

None of this is an argument for caring less. It is an invitation to care differently. Caring with capacity instead of collapse allows compassion to remain sustainable. As energy hygiene becomes part of daily life, rhythms naturally adjust. People become more intentional with their time and attention. They regain energy, clarity, and presence. From that place, it becomes possible to offer deep, steady compassion without losing oneself in the process.

A simple daily rhythm supports this balance. Beginning the day with gratitude, clearing emotional and energetic space, moving through interactions with awareness, releasing what does not belong to you, nourishing the body, setting boundaries when needed, and protecting the mind and subconscious before rest. This is not indulgence. It is responsibility.

Compassion fatigue is not a failure of character. Energy hygiene is not optional for sensitive people. Together, they offer a path forward — one that allows care, service, and connection to continue without self-erasure. In a world that asks so much of those who care, learning to protect that care may be one of the most important acts of compassion there is.

Jennie Sikes is the founder of Ascending Dawn Doula, LLC, where she supports people through major life transitions including career shifts, spiritual awakenings, empty nesting, and periods of personal growth. Blending practical guidance with intuitive tools such as tarot, astrology, energy work, and hypnosis, she helps clients move from feeling stuck to feeling aligned. Her work is grounded, compassionate, and refreshingly real. <https://linktr.ee/ascendingdawn>



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The Reciprocal Dance of Staying Healed

BY TANIESHA GARRISON, ED.M.

Picture this: A woman commits to a daily fire breathing practice. She heard about the transformative power of breathwork. She followed the pull toward energy and insight. She watched the videos, went to the workshop, and committed. The first few days are hard but exhilarating. She can feel it working. Then life happens. The alarm doesn't go off. A child gets sick. Work explodes. Within a week, the practice is abandoned, along with the daily fire ceremony, the meditation routine, the altar work, and the journaling.

Our culture glorifies the breakthrough moment: the rupture, the revelation, the ensuing rapture. But the phase that comes after — the one where you figure out how to integrate practices to sustain the change — gets far less airtime. There are no dramatic before-and-after photos for the work of anchoring insight into everyday life. No viral testimonials about the Tuesday morning you chose presence over autopilot.

Yet the actual healing lives in the reciprocal work of sustaining.

Reciprocity as Dance, Not Balance

Most healing frameworks invoke balance: light and shadow, giving and receiving, effort and rest. The aspiration is to become that centered mark on a tug-of-war rope, hovering perfectly above the X. It's a valid goal.

However, sustaining a healing practice requires a different understanding of reciprocity altogether. Here, reciprocity is the ongoing negotiation between who you're becoming and the life you're still living. It's learning to dance with expansion and with the days of just get-



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ting through. This reframe shifts the question from “Am I doing this right?” to “What does my system actually need today?” It's a vulnerable question, and answering it demands infrastructure — the practical systems that hold transformation in place through daily rhythms and sustainable practices. Building that infrastructure starts with a few realizations.

First: Less Is More (Even Though We Don't Believe It)

There's a particular kind of spiritual ambitiousness that emerges right after a powerful healing experience. That woman who committed to fire breathing? She didn't just add one practice. She added five. Each one made sense in isolation; she received joy and benefits from practicing them at the retreat. But she very quickly experienced them as an unsustainable mandate in real life.

The wellness industrial complex trains us to pile on practices: *More is more! Deeper is better! Daily is non-negotiable!* We collect practices like talismans and tell ourselves we should do it all, convinced that the right combination will lock in our transformation. But our nervous systems don't respond to shoulds. They respond to what's actually sustainable within the rhythms of a real life — the one with jobs and relationships and unexpected crises and ordinary Tuesdays.

Some practices create presence and awareness, giving insights time to integrate. They help you notice when you're contracting back into old patterns and offer a touchstone when life gets chaotic. Other practices look good on paper but create internal pressure, becoming one more thing to get right, one more metric of whether you're “spiritual enough.” The practice stops serving the healing and starts serving the ego's need to be seen as transformed. Discernment helps us distinguish between what genuinely anchors our expansion and what performs the image of someone doing the work.

Second: Flexibility Signals Relationship

Not every practice needs to happen every day. While discipline matters, it isn't the same as rigidity. The difference lies in whether your practice responds to your system's actual needs or to the shoulds you've absorbed.

Responsive practice prioritizes purpose over form. Consider our fire breathing woman. Let's say the practice is really about creating somatic presence. Practicing reciprocally would mean responding to what she actually needs in that moment. Some days, that's ten minutes of breathwork. Other days, it's three conscious breaths before getting out

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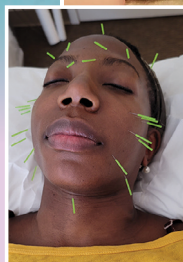
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of bed. The form changes, but the purpose persists.

To practice reciprocally, ask: What actually creates spaciousness rather than obligation? The specific practice matters less than the honesty about what your system needs and can sustain; and this requires letting go of the fantasy version of your spiritual life so you can meet the real one with compassion.

Third: Compassion Holds It All

Perfectionism thrives in healing communities. It sounds like: “I was committed to this practice... but I’ve already failed.” Or: “I did so well for three weeks... but now I’ve lost all my progress.” Somewhere along the way, many of us absorbed the idea that spiritual maturity means maintaining perfect consistency. Under this lens, the need to begin again looks like weakness rather than wisdom.

Compassion offers a different lens. Beginning again — after abandonment, after life intervening — is the practice. It’s precisely what allows healing to sustain over a lifetime. Restarting requires compassion toward the reality that transformation doesn’t move in a straight line. It calls for a gentle curiosity about what pulls you away and what invites you back, and the willingness to release perfectionist timelines.

Reciprocity makes the restart possible, because the relationship between you and your healing practice is meant to be one of honest exchange. Some days you show up with full presence and the practice gives you exactly what you need. Other days you can barely manage a gesture toward your commitment, yet the practice still holds you, drawing on reserves it built up in better times. This is the dance.

The Ongoing Negotiation

The unsexy truth about sustaining a healing practice is that it requires ongoing negotiation. Not the one-time commitment made in a heightened state, but the daily choice to stay in relationship with your healing even when — *especially* when — it’s inconvenient. Like any relationship, some days one partner gives more. The relationship sustains because both parties keep showing up, imperfectly, repeatedly, with as much presence as they can manage.

This is the spiral nature of deep healing. You revisit the same questions — How do I sustain this? What practices serve me now? — but you meet them with more wisdom at each turn of the healing spiral. The infrastructure you build flexes and adapts as you continue to expand. And this work of sustaining, of constantly adjusting that infrastructure, is unglamorous precisely because it lives in ordinary time. It happens in the gap between inspiration and integration. It lives in the choice to honor your expansion and your ordinary life simultaneously, knowing that neither cancels out the other.

That’s the reciprocity. That’s how healing stays.

Taniesha Garrison, Ed.M., is the founder of The Healer Within Collective, where she guides others in remembering their innate wholeness through energy work and reflective practice. A healer, teacher, and coach, she created The Healer Within Spiral to illuminate the cyclical nature of personal and spiritual transformation. Holding a master’s degree from Harvard’s Graduate School of Education, she bridges intellect and intuition to help others heal, grow, and lead from within. www.thehealerwithincollective.com



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Embodied Knowing in the Garden

BY TAYLOR LOGSDON

I have felt drawn to the cultivation and care of plants since I was a child. Over time, my interest has taken me from curiosity to practice — from backyard experiments to working on farms, market gardening, and eventually working as a professional gardener and landscaper. Along the way, I've studied soil science, plant nutrient needs, and the complexity of the soil food web. I find these subjects endlessly fascinating. In gardening, there is more than one lifetime of learning.

And yet, if we become too focused on modern tools of measurement and classification, we can miss something larger. Academic ways of knowing alone can leave us unsure and hesitant, stuck in our heads. We can fall into a kind of gardener's analysis paralysis, fearing that our actions will do more harm than good. Thankfully, there is another, more intimate way of knowing our gardens that is direct and accessible — one that predates soil tests, nutrient recommendations, and abstract measurements.

For millennia, our ancestors relied on their *senses*, honed through experience and by dependence on land and living things for daily sustenance. Though largely forgotten in our culture, this way of knowing remains part of our inheritance: a body that recognizes healthy ecosystems and the conditions that support them.

Our senses, refined and calibrated by experience and inherited knowledge, are among our finest instruments for reading the health of the land and our gardens. We feel the relief of a hydrating rain after a dry summer spell, the gentle goodness of morning and evening sun on our skin, and the vibrancy of leaves emerging in spring. In an age of expertise, specialization, and abstraction, relying on the senses invites



us back into our bodies and into relationship with the natural world.

My own knowing of this kind began as a child when I somehow got the notion to grow a bean from the neighbor's farm field. I didn't realize at the time these were soybeans and might not offer the culinary experience I was familiar with. Regardless, I went out to the field in the fall, collected a bean from the dried plants awaiting harvest, and gave it a name. I brought little Beany home and planted it in a pot filled with compost from the backyard, then set it in our sunroom window.

When that bean sprouted, it felt like a small miracle. I watched with joy as its first leaf sprouted, then its second, steadily growing into a



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small bush. I sang songs to the plant, checked on it daily, felt the moisture of the soil with my fingers, and noticed the way it leaned toward the sunlight. I got to know that bean in an intimate way.

Tending and caring for plants brings us into relationship with our gardens whereby familiarity and intimacy develop. We pay attention — or, as it is summarized in permaculture’s first principle — we observe and interact.

Gardening With Our Senses

When we begin to pay attention, sight is often the first sense to guide us. This is one reason I love to place gardens near areas we frequent, ideally daily. Each time we walk by on our way to the car, the trash, or the mailbox, we take in our plants, often without even realizing it. Over time, these glances deepen what our eyes are able to see.

We begin to notice subtle changes: how the vibrancy of spring green becomes muted in the intense heart of summer; how a once-lustrous leaf dulls; how some plants droop in the afternoon heat while others remain upright and strong. Sight teaches us through repetition and familiarity; not through a single diagnostic look, but through many small moments of noticing. Does the plant have the nutrition it needs? Enough light? Enough water? Our eyes can register these signals, offering an intuitive read on the plant’s well-being.

But much of life is hidden from view, unfolding beneath leaf and soil, or blending into its surroundings. As I write this, we are in the depths of winter. Outside, snow blankets the ground, and the plant world sleeps beneath it. Insects lie dormant in leaves and stems, or exist only as eggs, awaiting warmer temperatures to hatch. Birds have flown south or are quietly conserving their energy during the cold. Each year I am struck by the stillness of winter and by the contrast of the season that follows.

With the first awakenings of spring comes the song of spring peepers, and thus begins the return of sound to the landscape — the chorus of life’s diversity and abundance.

What is the tune of your garden? A simple song or a symphony? Listen for the drunken buzz of a bumblebee leaving a giant squash flower, or the hum of honeybees covering your peach tree’s blossoming branches. The morning chorus of birds. The throb of summer cicadas. These sounds tell us our gardens are home and sustenance to more than ourselves, and remind us their edges blur into the larger living world beyond the garden gate.

If sight and sound orient us to life around us, smell draws us closer. It collapses distance and reveals processes hidden from view. In this way, smell deepens our knowing.

I have found this especially true when becoming familiar with composts and soils. My first experience of sensory soil sampling was with my dad when I was about ten years old. He had returned from a visit to my uncle’s farm in northern Ontario. Though I don’t know why — as my dad wasn’t a gardener — he presented me with a bag of soil collected from the forest floor and enthusiastically invited me to feel and smell the black earth.

I took a handful and held it up to my nose. It felt soft and spongy and smelled earthy and woody, with a hint of chocolate-cake sweetness. It smelled like it held the soul of the boreal forest from where it came. What wonderful world of microbes was I communing with? The nose knows this is fertile soil, ground on which one could live and be nourished.

Smell is also particularly useful when assessing compost. A wide spectrum of composts exists in the marketplace. While I always ask

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Embodied Knowing in the Garden...

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about the materials used to make a compost, my next criterion is how it smells. We are detecting the biological communities present and the chemical compounds they produce as they vaporize and reach our noses. Organic acids, alcohols, and esters register as earthy, faintly sweet, or pleasantly fermented. Ammonia and hydrogen sulfide — the smell of rotten eggs — offend us in just the right ways.

Which bouquet of aromas soothes and delights you? Soft rain on a forest floor, faint notes of vinegar and yogurt, a touch of fermentation, a mushroom-like undertone...? What a wonder that we can distinguish such complexity with just a sniff.

Our hands, too, know healthy soil, and touch reinforces what sight and smell suggest. On a felt level, we recognize the difference between hard, compacted ground and soft, living soil. Our hands register resistance or yield, warmth or coolness, dryness or moisture, and teach us how to treat the soil well.

When we work the soil, our bodies learn its condition directly. Soil that is alive gives way under gentle pressure, crumbling while still holding together. It accepts a seed, a root, a tool. Compacted ground resists, pushing back against the hand and the shovel alike.

Touch teaches patience. It tells us when soil is too wet to work, when it needs rest rather than intervention, when care would do more harm than good. In this way, the hands become teachers, guiding our actions through sensation rather than instruction.

When the steady work of our hands finally culminates in harvesting and eating what we have grown, another sense completes the relationship. Taste is a highly refined tool for detecting the nutritional profiles of the foods we eat. Though the ancestral cravings of our palates have been confused and capitalized upon by today's processed food indus-

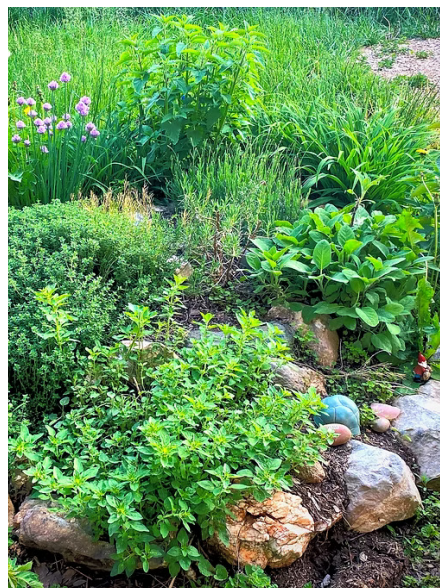


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try, taste was once the primary way humans detected nutrition — and it still serves that function today. Soda drinks aside, flavor remains a profound measure of nourishment.

While caloric density may be the most obvious and exaggerated metric, flavor also correlates with vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals. This relationship between taste and nourishment is explored deeply in Fred Provenza's book, *Nourishment*, which gives language and evidence to what our bodies have long known. These compounds — the real personality of the plant — are responsible for defending against insects and weather, attracting pollinators, and communicating with the surrounding environment. When assimilated into our bodies, they act as powerful antioxidants and confer a wide range of benefits.

Do the supermarket tomatoes you've been buying all winter — likely grown in soilless hydroponic greenhouses and picked green and shipped long distances — pale in comparison to your garden's summer offerings? Does your mouth water at the thought of the explosion of flavor from the first vine-ripened tomato? Though you may appreciate the orderly look of a perfect slicing red tomato, your tongue has already cast its vote for the eccentric heirloom, with its endless range of flavors and phytochemical richness.

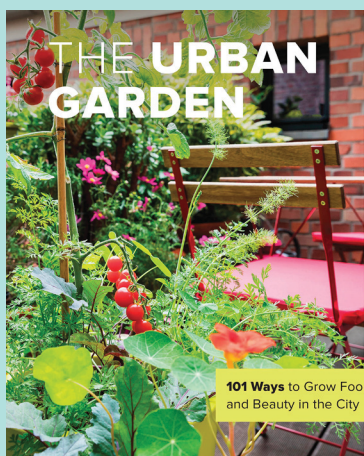
Delight in the Knowing

As your intimate knowing of your garden deepens, so too will your intuitive sense. That fabled gift of the gardener, the green thumb, may simply be a felt sense developed through sustained attention and care over time. It grows slowly, through repeated encounters and small acts of noticing, rather than through instruction alone.

Take time to delight in the rainbow of colors, the smell of flowers, to kneel and touch the soil, to listen to the rustle of corn leaves in a light summer breeze. Relish the complex flavor of your garden's herbs. Notice how your body responds before your mind reaches for explanation. It is the body that knows best.

This isn't just garden therapy, though it is good medicine. It is observation, information, and relationship woven together. It is a way of knowing that asks us to slow down, to trust our senses, and to remember we belong to the living systems we tend. It is a way of knowing that has been with us all along, waiting patiently for us to return.

Taylor Logsdon is the owner and operator of Dragonfly Foodscapes, an edible and ecological landscaping business. He can be reached at 667-701-5757. www.dragonflyfoodscapes.com



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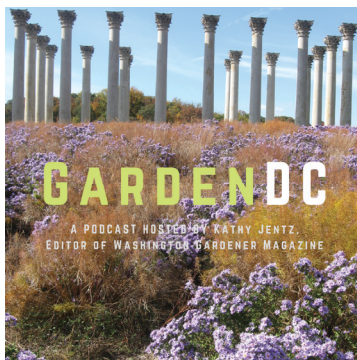
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Invasive Language: How We Label Plants Says More About Us Than Them

BY KATHY JENTZ

Has the language we use around plants that come from elsewhere ever bothered you? It sure has been on my mind in these fraught times with all the tension about “others” in “our country.” For the past few decades, I have been extremely uncomfortable with the terms we use for native versus exotic plants.

This issue goes beyond being politically correct. The language we use defines our world around us and shapes our views of it. If a plant is called a weed, then that is how we see it. If instead of Milkweed, we called it Butterfly Flower, you see how that changes things.

I recently attended a meeting of the North American Invasive Species Management Association (NAISMA) titled, “Rethinking Invasive Species Communication.” It was a fascinating panel of those who work in the field dealing with invasive species along with those who communicate to the general public about them. It explored how the words we use to talk about invasive species can either support or undermine effective management. Presenters shared early findings from a national survey on invasive species language and common names, highlighting how different audiences perceive current terms and where there is support for change.

The term “invasive” itself can be seen as problematic as it assigns to the plant (or insect, etc.) a motive and an agenda. The fact is, we humans brought over most of these to be used in our landscapes or for agriculture; none of these plants got up and walked here.

The more accurate and neutral terms would be “nuisance plant” or “introduced species.” Other alternatives include “naturalized pest” and “introduced nuisance.”



Rethink how “invasive” plants, like English Ivy and Wineberry (pictured), are labeled.

And what do we call a plant that expands beyond its bounds (as we define them) and is a very successful grower? We use that pejorative word “invasive” again. I suggest “aggressive” is a better fit.

Then there is that other word for plants that don’t behave well in our landscapes: thug. For those of you in older age groups, this term sounds neutral and accurate, but please realize it is now seen by younger adults as old-fashioned and racist. Better terms would be “yard bully,” “aggressive spreader,” or “noxious weed.”

I believe clarity of language and being precise in our communications can help us put forward a more positive message about our local landscapes. In the above example of our native Common Milkweed, if we used the correct Botanical Latin name *Asclepias tuberosa* then there is no confusion and none of those negative weed connotations we often associate with our native plants.

Similarly, when referring to an “invasive species such as Asian or Chinese Wisteria”, if we call it by its proper Latin name, *Wisteria*

sinensis, then we know exactly the plant we are discussing. We are neither calling attention to the “otherness” nor implicating a whole culture or ethnic group with “invasive” motives. Further, the use of adjectives like “alien plant” or “foreign species” is misleading and, frankly, xenophobic. The simple descriptor of “non-native” is all that is needed.

Finally, there is the tendency for gardeners to use the language of war when describing our struggles with dealing with both native and non-natives plants that spread aggressively. I’ve certainly been guilty of this myself. Think twice before assigning a bad or evil motive to a “foreign invader” that has entered your landscape. Instead, reframe it as a chance to relocate a plant to a more appropriate home — even if that “home” is in your compost pile or yard waste bin.

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

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.

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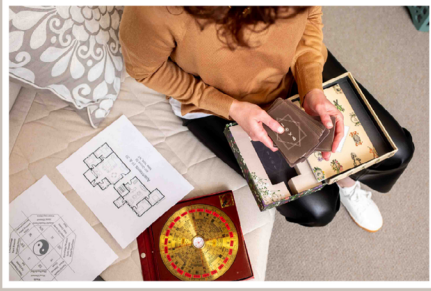
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Voting as Resistance...

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Outreach Coalition is expanding its reach deeper into pockets of the community and wider into the Western North Carolina (WNC) region.

What we've found during this time is that simply talking with low-likelihood voters about voting, while providing straightforward information people need in order to vote, increases the likelihood that they will actually cast a ballot. They've talked with someone who believes their voice matters. They've connected the act of voting to issues that matter to them. And they've gotten helpful info they didn't have before, about voter ID, sample ballots, early voting, mail-in voting, and more.

Why Outreach Matters

Our state's close-election pattern continues. In 2020, state Supreme Court Chief Justice Cheri Beasley lost re-election by only 412 votes statewide. Even with the high turnout that year, there were thousands who didn't cast a vote for that office, and hundreds of thousands who didn't vote at all. Two years later, after many of us had worked so hard against gerrymandering and had finally won fair maps, we ended up with seven Democrats and seven Republicans in Congress, exactly what you'd expect from this purple state. Unfortunately, many voters that year also let slip through two candidates for state Supreme Court who didn't reflect North Carolinians' preference for fair maps. That court immediately proceeded to overturn precedent, determining that partisan gerrymandering was, in fact, just fine under the state constitution. We now have 10 Republicans and four Democrats in Congress. That imbalance is expected to shift to 11 Republicans this year, following a more extreme gerrymander last October.

When voters are informed about issues and candidates, and when even a small number of sporadic voters are mobilized to vote, that difference has the power to shift elections.

Why do eligible voters not vote? All the reasons you'd expect. They don't know who's on the ballot; they haven't heard of some of the candidates; in some cases, they don't even know what some of the races are about. They have mobility problems, or lack transportation. They've heard you have to have a driver's license to vote, and they don't drive any more.

And these days, in our current environment, an increasing number of voters feel it simply doesn't matter. Why should they participate in a system that seems stacked against them? In our state's heavily gerrymandered districts, many voters now don't have fair representation. Their vote hasn't mattered before; why should it now? Besides, there are more pressing things to worry about. It costs too much to pay the bills. Healthcare and food assistance are being snatched away. They're assaulted by a constant stream of misinformation and lies. At a time when it's hard to know who to trust, going to the polls is, understandably, the last thing on many people's minds.

Add to that the fact that some voters are simply too scared to consider voting right now. As ICE continues to brutalize immigrant communities and attack those bearing witness, voting is no longer a fully free act.

The Authoritarian Threat Looming Over This Year's Elections

This year we face even tougher challenges: outright attacks on voting and elections, from the president himself; gerrymandering; voter suppression; investigations and indictments of political opponents; even outright election theft, or simply "canceling" elections. Trump has publicly demanded all of these, and many Republicans in Congress and in state legislatures are following through.

As I write this in early February, here are some of the shocking developments we've witnessed just since the beginning of the year:

- The DOJ has demanded sensitive voter roll data in over 13 states.
- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has demanded that Minnesota turn over voter rolls in exchange for removing ICE agents from their streets.
- Republicans in Congress unveiled a bill called the Make Elections Great Again Act that would impose the most extreme federal voting restrictions in our nation's history.
- In January, on the world stage in Davos, Switzerland, the president of the United States openly declared his intention to abuse the criminal justice system to destroy electoral democracy in our country.
- In a December interview released in early February, Trump called for the Republican party to "take over" voting and "nationalize" elections, stating that he intends to start this with 15 blue states.
- In February the FBI raided a central elections hub in Atlanta, seizing ballots and voter data from the 2020 election; Trump even directed the National Intelligence Director to be present, coordinated her actions with the FBI, and openly congratulated them all on the theft. Days later, MAGA insider Steve Bannon expanded on the threat to take over elections by calling for ICE to patrol pollings sites in November.

Trump has made it clear — he will do anything to subvert this year's elections.

His own party hasn't tempered his lawlessness and overreach, Congress hasn't reined him in, and the U.S. Supreme Court has granted him license to do just about anything, even if it means running roughshod over the Constitution. The only thing holding Donald Trump in check right now is the very real likelihood of significant power shifts in Congress and state governments, even the possibility of a blue wave. And that's something he simply won't allow.

So we need to be realistic about what lies ahead. Empowering voters and increasing turnout is absolutely essential in 2026. We must, each of us, do something. At the same time, we must acknowledge the extremes to which he will go if left unchecked: He has told us what he plans to do — believe him. But most importantly, we cannot let that reality pull us off course.

"The Power of Turnout is Within the Margin of Effort"

I stole this line from commentator Robert Hubbell, and it's become my lodestar for the year. Yes, decisive turnout will be hard, but it can be done.

And it's not just about turnout. The more people who are engaged in the democratic process, even "just" at the level of voting, the louder the collective voice of 'We the People' will become. In our current state of affairs, it's not an exaggeration to say that voting feels more like a form of resistance than a civic duty. And helping to inform and motivate others, helping people believe that their voices matter, is one of the best ways of preserving what John Lewis so aptly called our "sacred right".

Voting matters. Right now it matters more than ever. It is no longer hyperbole to say that *this is the most critical election in our nation's history*. If Trump has his way, it might be the last, at least for a very long time.

Our charge is clear. We are called to defeat voter suppression, to expand the power of the vote, to protect free and fair elections, to hold power accountable, to resist authoritarianism, and to continue the work of rebuilding our democracy.

Brenda Murphree is the founder of Indivisible Asheville/WNC (<https://indivisibleavl.org/>) and remains an active Board member, serving as organizer with the WNC Votes! voter outreach coalition (<https://www.wncvotes.org/>). A writer and semi-retired marketing professional, she lives with her wife and a passel of animals in the country near Asheville, North Carolina.

continued on page 38



— About the 'Cultivating Compassion' Column —

Cam MacQueen, MSW, is the creator and curator of 'Cultivating Compassion.' She is dedicating this year's 4 columns to various forms of activism, resistance, and dissent necessary to save our democracy and progress toward a more perfect union.

Cam encourages 'Cultivating Compassion' readers to jump in now and get involved — there are so many opportunities:

Make sure you're registered and that you vote!! While you still can, register friends, neighbors, family, and coworkers. Join a canvassing team and go door-to-door to register voters, remind them to vote. Volunteer for a candidate. Candidates need canvassers, office support, etc. Signup for phone-banking, which you can usually do from the comfort of your home. Plug in to online organizations such as MoveOn, Democracy Forward, League of Women Voters, Common Cause and many others. Contact your area's Board of Elections and learn how you can work the polls. Your help is sorely needed and most likely, you'll find the experience richly rewarding. Plus, you'll be paid. The more active you are, the more people you meet, the more support you have, and the greater your determination becomes. It's a positive feedback loop.

Tune in to Democracy Now! Co-host Amy Goodman is a great source of trustworthy, independent news. Knowledge is your foundation and your motivator. Apathy is no longer a luxury we can afford.

What's certain: in this critical midterm year, your participation is profoundly crucial to safeguarding our fragile democracy and maintaining our republic. Your civic engagement is greatly appreciated! A huge thank you to those who are already doing the work!

Havethoughts/ideasforcolumntopicsthatpertaintothisyear'stheme? Please send your suggestions to Cam at nmc.advocacy@gmail.com.



Voting as Resistance...

...continued from page 37

Safeguarding Democracy:

What You Can Do To Support Voter Turnout

None of us can do everything. But each of us can do something. Find whatever fits for you — *and do it*.

URGENT ACTION NEEDED RE: THE SAVE ACT

1. If your representative voted for the SAVE America Act, call them out on it, publicly. (Quick tip: Every Republican rep voted in support.)

- Write and call, letting them know that the harm they chose to inflict on voters is unacceptable. Remember, constituent feedback is recorded! Let them know you're watching their actions and holding them accountable.

- Write a letter to the editor in a local news outlet based in your rep's Congressional district. List the harms to millions of American citizens that would result from this bill, specifically calling out your rep for having supported it. Letters to the editor and published opinion pieces are watched closely by members of Congress.

2. Write and call both of your Senators, urging them to **OPPOSE** the SAVE America Act and its blatant attempt at voter suppression. Although it's unlikely to pass the Senate, it failed last year because of widespread public opposition. So make sure your senators hear from you, loudly and often.

3. Stay on top of continued attempts at voter suppression and election interference. Speak up at every opportunity. And double down on your commitment to voter outreach and engagement. Remember, every vote matters. In a democracy, our vote is our voice. Do not be silent. And do not allow them to silence others' votes through any means.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE ELECTIONS:

1. Start small. Start by checking your own voter info — registration status, polling place, dates and locations of upcoming elections, early voting options — and see what's on your ballot. A good place to start is your state board of elections website. You can also find your ballot and candidate info using the lookup tools at VOTE411 (<https://www.vote411.org/>). Then consider taking on one specific project. Here are some suggestions:

- Sign up with your local League of Women Voters or your party precinct to help with voter registration.
- Find out who's doing door-to-door canvassing and give it a try. (Nonpartisan deep canvassing is highly recommended: it's easy, respectful, and leads to authentic and rewarding conversations.)
- Hold "Know Your Ballot" parties for friends and neighbors. Share ballot lookup tools and bring info on candidates and races that voters don't know much about. It's a fun way to share information and get ready to vote.
- Sign up to be an Election Protector. Visit <https://protect-thevote.net/> to learn more.
- Write to voters. While not as effective as in-person conversations, letter-writing and postcarding does make a dif-

ference, and it's easy and fun to do in a group. To learn more and get started, check out Vote Forward (<https://votefwd.org/>) and Reclaim Our Vote (www.centerforcommonground.org/reclaim-our-vote).

- Volunteer for a campaign. Get behind a candidate you believe in and help get them elected.

2. Stand up and speak out. What are your County Board of Elections and state legislatures doing to protect — or undermine — voting rights and free elections? Follow them closely. Write and call your elected reps, at all levels. Stay on top of Congressional activity and call or write often. Use tools like the Five Calls app to track issues and contact your reps (<https://5calls.org/>), or sign up for action alerts from Indivisible (<https://indivisible.org/get-involved/take-action/>).

Continue to take part in public demonstrations and rallies when and where you can. Another No Kings nationwide day of action will be held across the country on March 28, as millions of Americans stand up against ICE's reign of terror, with a flagship event in the Twin Cities. (See www.nokings.org/ to find an event or create your own). Participation in nonviolent, peaceful demonstrations are growing at a phenomenal rate, and we must keep it up. The "3-3.5% rule" for resisting authoritarianism is based on research into 20th century revolutions and nonviolent resistance campaigns, which found that sweeping change can be achieved when only 3.5% or less of the population is engaged in nonviolent grassroots action. Peaceful protests are a critical part of that. Public protests, especially in large numbers, have the power to change policy and sway public opinion.

3. Join a group — or start your own. There really is strength in numbers. (Plus, it helps to have buds.) The obvious route is to connect with an existing group you feel some affinity for, one already active in your community, and see if they've committed to voter engagement this year. If not, offer to start a voter outreach program for them.

If you'd like to start your own group, reach out to people you know, and people those people know, and get started! An easy entry is to start a 'volunteer corps' type of group with no ongoing organizational structure — a group that recruits and organizes voting volunteers for other organizations in your community. In 2024, a large group of people in one Asheville neighborhood organized themselves as a group of volunteers ready to sign up for voter outreach activities organized by existing organizations. They showed up in large numbers for nonpartisan voter registration with two groups, nonpartisan canvassing with our voter outreach coalition, and partisan canvassing and phone-banking with the Democratic party. They didn't have to organize the activities, they just organized themselves and showed up.

You might also consider starting a local group connected with a national organization, such as the Indivisible network (<https://indivisible.org/resource/guide-for-new-groups/>) or Red Wine & Blue (<https://redwine.blue/troublenation/>). National organizations can provide startup help, organizing tools and resources, and ongoing group support.

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NATURAL LIVING EXPO • SPRING 2026 EVENT & VENUE INFO

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 10AM - 6PM



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AN INVITATION FROM OUR PATHWAYS TEAM

Please join us for the premier mind-body-spirit-eco event in the DMV! We love the light and energy at the Hilton McLean in Virginia and look forward to welcoming you back. Several new exhibitors are joining us just as many favorites are returning — come and support these local businesses and services. Enjoy a mini healing or reading, consult with health and wellness practitioners, sample organic health and beauty products, and reserve your next self-care appointment directly with providers. Spend your money and time with purpose and intention to keep resources in the communities where we live and work.

Don't miss the opportunity to attend over 40 workshops, where you can connect directly with the speakers, learn new things, ask questions, seek guidance, and generally interact with other like-minded attendees. It's all included in the price of admission!

There's more! Back by popular demand... The Decompression Den™, a calming, sensory-aware sanctuary returns to offer attendees respite from the hustle of the show. This serene space gives our community a chance to chill and to connect!

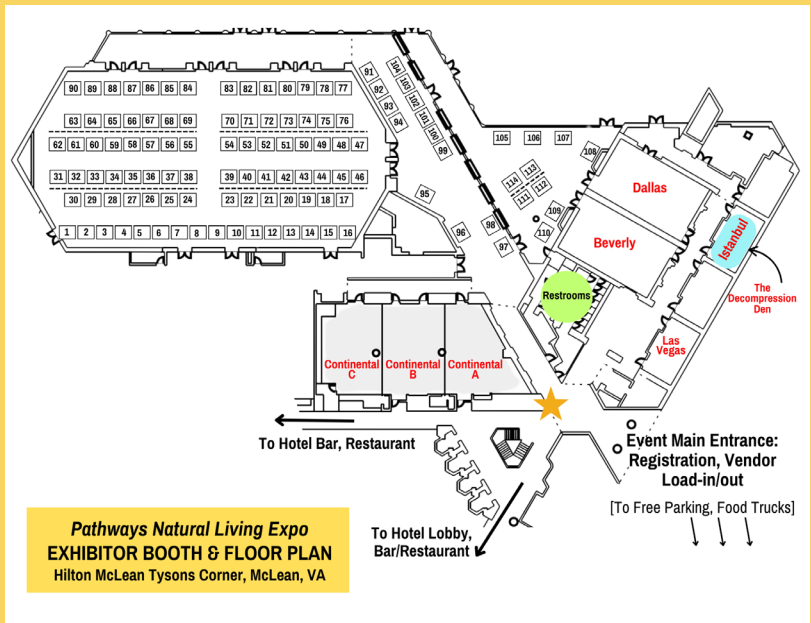
Peruse the preliminary program here and plan your day. **THIS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE!** Bring your friends, and kids — 16 and under are FREE. We look forward to sharing the day with all of you! Thank you for the continued support.

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Admission grants you access to all exhibiting, attendance to all of our workshops, and the full day of activities.




EXPO EXPERT TIP

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FREE PARKING is available... and kids 16 and under are FREE.
 Bring companions, and be mindful of the environment by ride-sharing if possible.




EXPO EXPERT TIP

ARRIVE EARLY!
 Many vendors offer readings, mini healing sessions, massages, demos, and more, many requiring sign-ups. Sign up first-thing — time slots FILL UP FAST!




EXPO EXPERT TIP

Bring your own snacks and refillable water bottle if you plan to spend the day (and we hope you do!).
FOOD TRUCKS will be onsite offering food options. Still...snacks encouraged. :)





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Expo exhibitors offer an amazing variety of mind-body-spirit-eco products and services. The following businesses are participating this Spring. Visit our Spring Expo page online for the final Expo program: www.PathwaysProductions.com.

Note: The [*asterisk] indicates there is an associated Speaker Workshop. See the Workshop Schedule for details.

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www.Angelicwisdom111.com

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the major factor) in the many health problems we face today, learn TWO SIMPLE STEPS for health and how to become insulin sensitive. Learn SIX ways to determine if you are insulin resistant. Product info sheets and nutrient ingredients are available. All products are tuned with 11 harmonic frequencies. becca11vibes@gmail.com | becca2reverseIR@gmail.com

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John Michael Thornton - Psychic & Medical Intuitive*

John Michael Thornton is a psychic and medical intuitive and co-founder of Great Conjunction Spiritual Center with over thirty years experi-

ence honing his natural abilities. An engaging teacher, John has taught at the A.R.E. Victory of Light, Lily Dale Assembly, and spiritual groups across the Northeast. johnmichaelthornton.com

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Rose Crystal Healing

Rose Crystal Healing offers sessions that weave crystals, flower essences,

and Reiki together to strengthen your connection to Spirit and address the stresses we face in these times. I'm a Certified Crystal Practitioner (HMCA) and a Holy Fire III Karuna Reiki Master.

www.rosecrystalhlgccg.com

RUNE + FAE

Rune + Fae is an herbal soap apothecary specializing in aromatherapeutic mystic cleansing body care. We provide intentionally crafted bar, liquid, and cream soaps, scrubs, lotions, anointing oils, perfume, and candles, so you may replenish and renew yourself using only non-synthetic ingredients from nature.

runeandfae.com

Shea Marne Luxury Collection

Shea Marne Luxury Collection empowers women to: be gentle with their body with their relaxing ready-to-wear apparel and accessories; protect their peace of mind with inspirational gifts; and to listen to their soul with their uniquely crafted journals for reflection.

www.sheamarneluxurycollection.com

Sole Healing

We specialize in Corporate Wellness Programs where we bring our relaxation services to *your* business & Trade Shows to be at your exhibitor booth to draw in the crowd & increase your "facetime" with prospects! Stop by to sample a reflexology and/or massage session by one of our on-hand practitioners.

www.solehealingglobal.com

Somatics: Embodied Wellbeing | Leah Landry Consulting*

Explore body-based practices to reduce stress, build resilience, and stay grounded while supporting your community.

www.leahlandryconsulting.com

Souls Talisman Crystals

Soul's Talisman Crystals offers handmade Hanging Crystals, Gemstone Bracelets, Mala necklaces, Gemstone Elixirs, Crystal Grids, and Loose Stones to balance your mind, body, soul, and space. Each beautifully balanced talisman is intuitively selected, designed, and arranged with love, joy, and inspiration. Individual attention is given to each person.

www.soulstalismancrystals.com

NATURAL LIVING EXPO • SPRING 2026 EXHIBITORS

Exploration • Enlightenment • Education • Engagement

Soulz Voice™ Essential Oil Blends

Soulz Voice™ offers premium, plant-extracted essential oil blends designed for holistic wellness. Authentically sourced and research-inspired, our oils support stress relief, emotional balance, better sleep, immunity, and family care. Free from synthetic additives, Soulz Voice™ promotes natural healing, relaxation, and mindful living through pure, intentional botanical aromatherapy for everyday wellness. soulzvoice.com

Spiritual Pathways Holistic Healing

Spiritual Pathways empowers individuals on their journey toward optimal well-being. We specialize in integrative health practices, combining the power of herbal and nutritional therapy to address the root causes of health imbalances. Our approach focuses on healing the body, mind, and spirit, offering personalized care tailored to each client's needs. www.sphh.org

Sukyo Mahikari*

Sukyo Mahikari provides free 10-minute energy sessions. Many find the energy to be relaxing and rejuvenating for the soul, mind, and body. Some achieve better clarity and sense of purpose in their lives.

Susan Lynne's Mediumlink*

Susan Lynne is a gifted psychic & medium with over 30 years of experience. She uses all the clairs, angels, astrology, Tarot, numerology, spirit guides, and dream interpretation. Available for readings, consultations. CDs and other gift items for sale. www.mediumlink.com

Takoma Metaphysical Chapel*

The Takoma Metaphysical Chapel is an Interfaith Spiritual Community where all spiritual paths are supported with love. We support your spiritual growth and development with classes, meditation and prayer calls, workshops and an uplifting, powerful Sunday celebration service. Come get a reading or healing. www.takomachapel.org

The Decompression Den™ | The TiMa Group*

Strategic Softies | Wellness Rebels | Co-Architects of the Decompression Den™. Tiffany and Maria design the kind of workspaces and event experiences they wish they'd had when

they were hanging on by a thread. They believe rest is a radical act. Emotional safety is non-negotiable. And a comfy chair, blanket, and taking a breath might just change your entire event experience. Stop by to learn more! TheTiMaGroup.com

The Four Leaf Clover Project*

The Four Leaf Clover Project redefines health and wellbeing; it's not just physical, but multidimensional. It provides financial assistance for all things not covered by insurance. The Four Leaf Clover Project supports Soul-led living and makes health sovereignty accessible for all beings desiring to live a prosperous life. www.thefourleafcloverproject.com

The Goddess Deck, LLC*

Welcome! Learn to become mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually STRONG! The Goddess Deck is an "interactive healing" guidance deck with 54 illustrated cards that hold powerful messages for you, and a detailed guidebook to teach you how to heal and activate; reclaim your personal power! thegoddessdeck.com

The Gothicary

A modern apothecary with a curated Victorian-gothic aesthetic, offering handcrafted incense, botanical ritual kits, goddess teas, altar tools, and intention candles. Attendees can expect thoughtfully designed items that support reflection, energetic balance, and personal healing within a darkly elegant, historically inspired atmosphere. thegothicary.com

The Lotus Experience*

Many people reach a point where the life they've built no longer feels aligned with their Soul. If you're feeling stuck or disconnected, or are seeking deeper meaning, you're not alone. I offer Soul-centered support through Akashic Records guidance and intuitive energy healing, helping you find your way. www.lotusexperienceil.com

The Pure Incense

We make hand roll incense and related products for Aromatherapy. We carry brass decor and spiritual items for meditation and healing along with sound bowls for aroma and sound healing. thepureincense.com

Tibet Sky Emporium

Hand crafted Tibetan Himalayan cultural items, cotton clothing, whimsical hats and ornaments etc. www.facebook.com/share/1D1auNA5yo/?mibextid=w-wXIfr

Total U

Copper Jewelry, Crystals, Gems and Minerals.

Urantia Book Fellowship Interfaith Committee

Intro to THE URANTIA BOOK, an amazing anthology of the highest concepts of Science, Philosophy, Religion and Spirituality. Urantia is a heavenly name for Earth, meaning "Our Place in the Heavens." Mid-Atlantic Students of The Urantia Book will share tools and resources on the Art of Spiritual Living. www.urantia-book.org

Village Life Wellness: Thai Body Work, Pressure Point and Assisted Stretching

Often described as "having someone do Yoga to you," Anjali uses hands, feet, elbows, and knees to provide compression and stretching around key muscles and energy points. Sessions are performed on a supportive mat on the floor, fully clothed, for deep relaxation. www.villagelifewellness.com

Vlasi / Whole Health

At Vlasi, we help people improve their health, one behavior, one meal, one step at a time. We believe every small change can lead to monumental improvements in your well-being, for long term results. Expect cooking demos, giveaways, biometric screenings, whole health guidance and much more! www.thevlasi.com

Whole Health Center*

Offering a wide range of integrative wellness and medical services designed for holistic care. Our services include weight loss and nutrition management, acupuncture, and medical aesthetics. wholehealthmedicalcenters.com

Wonderful Wellness

As a highly skilled medical medium & clearing practitioner, I can visually see inside your physical body and deep within you to unfold and clear the driving forces that support what's causing issues in your life. During these sessions, I remove and

clear past life imbalances, patterns, trauma, thought forms, entities, and other factors causing known and unknown issues. If you have anxiety, PTSD, or physical illness you are not happy with, I work to clear the driving factors. In the first 25 seconds of the session, I clear your chakras and your fields before going deeper and looking in your physical and soul bodies. When the session is over, I provide specific details about what was discovered and cleared; I share what information came forward specifically to help guide your path forward in addressing issues in your life. This info and clearing is most often life-changing.

Your Path to Self-Discovery through the Akashic Records*

Akashic Records are the vibrational intelligence of every soul and its journey. Through the Records, you can resolve recurring patterns and issues; heal long-standing challenges; and empower future growth and choices! Releasing emotional energy from your past lives can help you connect with your eternal Divine Self. www.myakashichealing.com

Zench

Hand made solid wood premium meditation benches in 3 wood species & 3 sizes. May also be used for stools, or storage or shelving. zench4u.com

Zoetic Workshops*

Zoetic Workshops help adults achieve creating the lives of their hearts' desire; and then they LIVE exactly those lives, bringing the spiritual into the practical. www.ZoeticWorkshops.com



Spring 2026 Workshops

EXPLORATION • ENLIGHTENMENT • EDUCATION • ENGAGEMENT

Pathways Expo Workshops bring mind-body-spirit-eco topics to life! Our speakers represent some of the best and brightest in their fields. This schedule is preliminary as of press time and is subject to change. Visit our Spring Expo page online for the most current information.

10:30 AM



Experience the Light!
Bruce McBarnette

Practitioners from Sukyo Mahikari will discuss how the “light” energy works and provide free 10 minute sessions for the participants. Many find the light to be rejuvenating for the soul, mind, and body.



“They Said I Just Want Attention” (They Were Right)
Julia Flynn Werre

What happens when the thing everyone thinks about you is true — and you’ve spent decades pretending it’s not? A funny, honest talk about anxiety, identity, and why your body quits before you do. For anyone ever called “too much.”



Wellness Without Drugs
Kimberly Hartke

More people than ever before are choosing more holistic approaches to wellness. Kimberly Hartke spent over a decade immersed in the local food movement, promoting the ‘food as medicine’ concept. Now, Kimberly endorses another simple and effective approach to creating radiant health: light therapy patches. Kimberly will explain the science.



5G, The Silent Carcinogen Stealing Your Health
Dr. Tracey Diner

Learn how to counteract the damaging effects of EMFs on our health. Simple solutions to decrease your exposure and protect your electric energy in this high tech world!



Improved Circulatory Health in Just 8 Minutes Twice a Day!
Dr. Rebecca Verna, MS, DVM, CAC, CVA, CVCH, Reiki Master, Advanced DNA ThetaHealer

Circulation Station: How does the right Medical Device change lives dramatically? Discover how enhanced Energy and Optimized Wellness can be achieved with today’s leading PEMF technology. This fun and educational presentation tells how being informed can support Vitality, Recovery, and overall Health!



Meditation on Twin Hearts and Pranic Healing
Raghava Bidathanapalli

Meditation on Twin Hearts is a powerful guided practice developed by Master Choa Kok Sui. It uses the heart and crown chakras to bless the Earth with loving-kindness, peace, and healing. This meditation promotes inner peace, emotional balance, and spiritual growth while also serving as a tool for global healing.



Spring 2026 Workshops

EXPLORATION • ENLIGHTENMENT • EDUCATION • ENGAGEMENT

11:30 AM



Archangels 101 **Cheryl Anne Ganzer**

I will discuss how to connect with The Angelic Realm — Signs, Synchronized Numbers, and a brief description of each Archangel along with Halo color. This motivating, high vibrational lecture will also cover Affirmations, and the importance of gratitude and the power of our words to keep vibes high.



Take Your Power Back **Heather Robbins, Founder,** **The Four Leaf Clover Project**

Redefine your healing, health and wellbeing by taking your life back. No more settling for other's limiting beliefs. Your prosperous life awaits. The decision starts with you. Your health sovereignty begins when you decide to start making choices for yourself and your life based on your own inner guidance.



Divination Unveiled: Tools for Insight and Intuition **Jennie Sikes**

Explore the fascinating world of divination! Learn to work with Tarot, oracle cards, pendulums, astrology, runes, scrying, numerology, tea leaves, playing cards, dowsing rods, automatic writing, music, and even books! This interactive workshop is perfect for all levels, offering tools to deepen intuition and uncover hidden insights.



Meditation with Light and Auras **Mara Berman**

Meet your angels and spiritual guides in an experiential meditation. Learn aura cleansing and chakra clearing. Experience the comfort of nourishing white light and twelve dimensional rings infused with light splashing down on your aura. Feel comfortable in your own energy.



Three Basic Self-Hypnosis Exercises: The Zone, Power Self, and Being **Donald Pelles, PhD,** **Certified Hypnotherapist**

I will introduce THE ZONE, POWER SELF, and BEING, short but powerful self-hypnosis / meditation exercises. Participants who wish will get to experience hypnotic trance for themselves.



The Art of Lasting Health: Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science for Weight Management and Wellness **Rose Hong**

Presented by Rose Hong, M.A., author and founder of the Whole Health Center, an integrative healthcare center. This seminar explores how ancient healing traditions and modern medical science intersect to create sustainable approaches to weight management and wellness. Rose highlights practical strategies that foster balance, vitality, and mindful living for long-term health.



Spring 2026 Workshops

EXPLORATION • ENLIGHTENMENT • EDUCATION • ENGAGEMENT

1:00 PM



Your Journey to Wholeness, Akashic Records & Light Language *Bill Sanda*

Unlock the energetic lessons of your past — cellular memories, past lives, and beyond — through the Akashic Records. Bill Sanda offers clear, compassionate access to this vast vibrational field, helping you release old patterns, heal deep wounds, and align with your Divine Self.



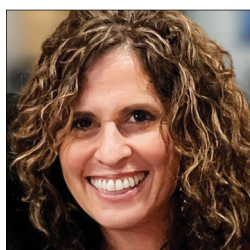
Hidden Powers of Ayurvedic Herbs *Amita Jain*

Ayurveda, an ancient Indian healing system, uses powerful herbs to support overall well-being. In this workshop, discover top Ayurvedic herbs, their health benefits — from mental clarity to radiant skin — and how to safely include them in your daily routine to enhance vitality, balance, and long-term wellness.



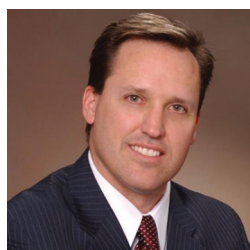
Calibrating Consciousness *Bill Sniffen*

Do you ever wonder how some things you do or say aren't understood by others despite your best efforts? Or how no matter how hard you try you sometimes don't understand what other people do or say? What often gets in the way is the level of consciousness in which you are operating differs from the level of that other person. Are you operating from Love? From Reason? From Fear? These all define different levels of consciousness and can define what causes that break in understanding. Learn about levels of consciousness, how to calibrate them, and how to make use of this training in your day-to-day life.



"If Not Now, When?" Prosperity Principles in Action *Elizabeth Gensler*

Use spiritual laws of the Universe to create abundance! Prosperity speaker and coach, Elizabeth Gensler, used the laws of prosperity to create a successful business...and her husband! Join Elizabeth as she shares the principles and practices that were powerful in her life and empowers others to do the same.



The Hidden Equation: Why Conventional Treatments Fail Chronic Pain *Dr. Coy Roskosky*

This lecture and Q&A will discuss: The "Three Pillars of Pain" - Why You Actually Hurt; Deep Dive: Connecting the 3 Pillars with more understanding of them; The Self-Scan Method: Ways for you to identify and assess your body; Practical and actionable ways to & "turn down the volume" on your pain and symptoms; and Knowing Your Limits: When to transition from self-care to professional care. Ask me anything at the end of the lecture.



Natural Harmony in Dentistry: The Benefits of Metal-Free Ceramic Implants *Dr. Sammy Noubissi*

Discover a natural approach to restoring your smile in this informative and inspiring workshop on ceramic dental implants. Unlike traditional metal implants, ceramic implants are metal-free, safe, and highly biocompatible—designed to support your overall health as well as your teeth. Join us to explore how these advanced implants harmonize with the body, reduce potential sensitivities, and provide a strong, lasting, and beautiful solution for missing teeth. Whether you're seeking a healthier alternative or simply curious about holistic dentistry, this workshop will empower you with knowledge to make choices that align with your well-being.



Spring 2026 Workshops

EXPLORATION • ENLIGHTENMENT • EDUCATION • ENGAGEMENT

2:00 PM



Got Eyes? Got Ancestors? *Amy Gillespie Dougherty*

Come discover the amazing world of your ancestors and how they show up in your life and in your eyes. One of the greatest self-discovery tools has always been within our grasp. Explore the My Eye Origin app — get your free report at the show.



Intuitive Messages Unveiled *John Michael Thornton*

Experience clarity and inspiration with John Michael Thornton in this dynamic gallery reading. Begin with an overview of the group's energy, followed by personalized messages from Spirit or your higher self. Ask your questions and receive uplifting insights in an interactive, heart-centered session filled with guidance, humor, and connection. Bring a question to enhance your experience!



Sacred Sleep: Awakening to the Power of Dreams *Linda Hiller and Cheryl Baker*

Dreams are gateways to deeper awareness and spiritual insights. While we sleep, Soul receives wisdom through experiences, inner guidance and realizations. This workshop invites you to explore practical ways to remember your dreams, listen inwardly, and awaken to the messages shared with you from the dream world.

2:00 PM



Taking Up Space (Without Apologizing): A Whole-Human Conversation On Confidence and Visibility *Tiffany Lee*

Body Language & Visibility Expert Tiffany Lee (of The Decompression Den) guides an honest conversation about confidence, visibility, and what it really means to take up space in life & leadership. Explore why many people hide, shrink, or silence themselves, and how to begin showing up with clarity & self-trust. Engage in guided reflection, embodied confidence practices, and optional posture-based exercises. Reconnect with presence, be seen without performing or burning out.



Meet Your Future Self *Liz Krauthammer*

Meet your future Self in the Akashic Records, and gain practical insight on a current goal or project. Discover what choices led to success, what didn't work, and how to move forward with greater clarity and confidence. Everyone is welcome. No prior experience with the Records required.



Healing from Within: Empower Your Mind, Body & Spirit *Irene Tzamaras*

Explore how true healing begins within. This workshop guides you to reconnect with your authentic Self, reclaim what life's challenges scattered, and open pathways to mind, body, emotional, and spiritual renewal. Learn empowering tools we were never taught, and step into a new possibility for your well-being.



Channeled Messages on Past Lives *Rev. Jim Webb*

It is possible the blocks to your well-being had their origin in unresolved past life trauma that shows up for healing now. This ground-breaking channeled workshop gives you insights into your past lives that affect your current life so you can untangle any blockages. This special session will be channeled by Rev. Jim Webb, one of our most popular presenters. The guidance we receive from the Masters at this pivotal moment can help everyone navigate any life challenge.

3:00 PM



Spring 2026 Workshops

EXPLORATION • ENLIGHTENMENT • EDUCATION • ENGAGEMENT

3:00 PM



**Life is A Dance of Mirrors ~
Lessons from
The Akashic Records
Kelly S. Jones**

You don't have to live in the dark. Ready to see clearly? Let the Akashic Records decode your triggers, activate your power, and teach you mastery. Transition from blame to responsibility, reaction to response, suffering to freedom—in real time. Life mirrors your inner reality. Learn to read yours.



**You Are What You Think —
The Power Of Thought!
Johnnette Armstrong**

We will discuss the power of our thoughts, what prevents us from achieving our goals, and I'll give you some tools to create the life you want!



**Self-Care: The Ultimate
Superpower & Gateway to
Personal Power & Elevation
Sonya Ward**

Self-care is activation. Sonya Ward (founder, Oil of Ru) invites you to redefine self-care as a sacred practice and personal power source. Move beyond surface-level pampering to a daily discipline that restores clarity, strengthens boundaries, and elevates your physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Intentional self-care supports natural intelligence, regulates stress, renews skin, and realigns the nervous system.

**The Urantia Book
Fellowship**



Expanding Spiritual Awareness

**THE URANTIA BOOK, The
Fifth Epochal Revelation:
Transforming the Universe,
One Planet at a Time (video/
panel presentation)
Mid-Atlantic Students of The
Urantia Book**

Are You Interested In: 5 Epochal Revelations; Peace through Global Democratic Government and Enforceable World Law; Jesus on the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man; Government on a Neighboring Planet; and The Art of Spiritual Living - Worship for the Purpose of Service? How can we help now?

3:00 PM



**Miracle of Mind
Nivita Ganesan**

Miracle of Mind meditation is an effort to bring awareness & offer tools to own your day in just 7 minutes! No complicated techniques, no struggle — just a simple practice that brings lasting change. If you've ever wanted to experience meditation in a way that feels natural & effortless, this is it!



**Everyday Spirituality:
Intuition or Coincidence?
Spiritual Medium Rhonda
Rhodes**

Join Spiritual Medium Rhonda and learn how to connect with Spirit, which is not an elusive thing. Discover ways we can connect to Spirit on a daily basis. Hear about Rhonda's own Spiritual journey; learn of the steps she took, and how learned discernment can resonate with others' own experiences.

4:00 PM



**Activate the Answers Within:
Live Your Life Purpose
Abundantly!
Mara Spencer**

Break free of confusion and doubt in this interactive workshop by discovering spiritual resources that will change your life now! Through simple techniques, experience the power of your spiritual energy and your four psychic abilities. Activate your answers within, transforming confusion into clarity, doubt into trust and everyday life into joyful abundance.



**Transform Your Health with
Nature's Rhythm: Ayurvedic
Spring Cleanse
Vinnie La Russa**

Feeling sluggish? Discover ancient Ayurvedic secrets to naturally detoxify, boost energy, and strengthen immunity as seasons change. Learn simple daily practices tailored to your unique body type for lasting vitality. Reset your body the holistic way—join us for this transformative wellness experience!



Spring 2026 Workshops

EXPLORATION • ENLIGHTENMENT • EDUCATION • ENGAGEMENT

4:00 PM

5:00 PM



Sacred Death — Death Cafe Format
Hemali Vora

Come join and talk about death, loss, and grief. Learn about the role of the Death Doula. Learn about burial options and living funerals. Why having your affairs and all paperwork in order is so important.



Nutrition for Stress & Inflammation
Irene Vlasidis

Just as stress can affect nutrition, nutrition can affect stress. Be inspired to learn a way of eating that will work for your lifestyle and goals. Whether it's to improve chronic diseases, help maintain weight loss, improve mental health or overall healthy aging, this workshop is for you.



The Mystery of Our Aura in the Cerebral and Natural Worlds
Rev. Ingrid Jolly-Trayfors

We live in an Electro Magnetic World. All living things emit an electric current; it surrounds the body as electromagnetic fields, the Aura. These fields in motion produce color, and each has its specific rhythm. Thus, our true body is a vast spectrum of light, sustaining & driving our physical form, health and well-being. It also attracts circumstances that could enhance or deplete its energy, affecting physical well-being. Let's find this magical being changing this world.



Embodied Tools for Everyday Resilience
Leah Landry

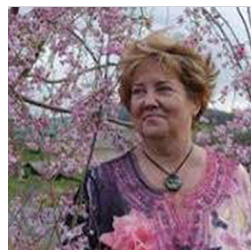
Learn simple somatic practices to regulate your nervous system, manage stress, and increase awareness of your impact in daily life and community.

5:00 PM



Permission to CROWN Yourself: An Initiation into Inner Sovereignty
Nicole Batiste

This experiential workshop introduces the CROWN framework — Conscious Choice, Responsibility, Owning my Energy, Worth without Permission, and No More Self-Abandonment — to help you recognize where you've been overriding your own internal truth and raise a new standard from within. Through guided reflection and a symbolic crowning ritual, you will anchor a deeper level of self-leadership and energetic ownership.



Manifesting With Your Angels and Trusting Your Vibes
Susan Lynne

This informative workshop will show you how to manifest, contact and communicate with your Angels. You will learn to trust your vibes and listen for the messages that are being sent to you. Discover the best ways to communicate with your Angels. Guided meditations will be included.



Sacred Whispers of the Spirit World™: A Guided Practice for Protection
Bhartte Kapoor

Learn to consciously shield, stabilize, and protect your energy in high-stress environments. In this experiential session, Bhartte Kapoor shares protection frameworks from Sacred Whispers of the Spirit World™, integrating guided meditation, breathwork, awareness practices, and Soulz Voice™ aromatherapy. Includes Q&A for emotional resilience, grounded authority and inner strength.



Creating Pure Far Infrared Light
Patricia Scott

Patricia Scott will explain the power and dynamics of the relaxed sauna's far infrared energy, how it works, and how to use it, as well as review the supporting research.

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!

When You Need An Expo Pause, Enter...

The Decompression Den™

A Nervous System Reset Zone

Hosted By The TiMa Group



Overwhelmed?
Overstimulated?
Burned Out?



Breathe
Ground Yourself
Decompress

Step into the Decompression Den™, a sensory-aware sanctuary designed to help you regulate, restore, and return to your day feeling grounded and fully present.



RELAX at the Expo's Decompression Den, designed with intention:

Soothing Environment: Calm lighting, soft textures, gentle soundscapes

Somatic Tools: Sensory and fidget tools, grounding prompts & guided meditation

Live Sound Baths: Three immersive sound healing sessions with Linh Le

Accessible & Connected: A designated reset space that keeps you close to the Expo

Meet Your Den Hosts



Tiffany Lee

Tiffany, co-founder of The TiMa Group, is a Body Language & Visibility Expert who helps you reclaim your confidence and authentic presence, from the bedroom to the boardroom.



Maria Noboa

Maria, co-founder of The TiMa Group, is a Reiki practitioner and Integrative Experience Designer creating spaces where rest is radical, healing is accessible and you feel held and safe to grow.



Linh Le

Linh, founder of Mauna Magic, is a Somatic Practitioner & Sound Healer Guiding you from noise to knowing. Join one of three live Sound Bath experiences throughout the day.

[Learn More: TheTiMaGroup.com](https://www.thetimagroup.com)

Between Who You Were and Who You're Becoming



SOFT PANTS, BIG DREAMS RETREAT

MAR 26-29, 2026

Free Union, VA | Tethys Mountain House

SOMEWHERE IN THE COCOON, THE TRANSFORMATION BEGINS.

IF YOU'RE IN THAT MESSY IN-BETWEEN SPACE, OUTGROWN WHO YOU WERE BUT NOT SURE WHO YOU'RE BECOMING, THIS IS FOR YOU.



REGISTER TODAY

After the retreat there will be 4 group coaching sessions with attendees!

YOUR HOSTS



Maria Noboa

Usui Reiki
Akashic Records
Oracle Cards



Tiffany Lee

Body Language & Visibility Expert
Coaching



Linh Le

Sound Healing
Somatic Practices
Restorative Yoga

UPCOMING

Village Life Wellness Retreats

at Pathways Mountain House
Blue Ridge Mountains, VA



April 23 – 27, 2026

Held Together: Nourishment, Community, and Resilient Action
Self & Collective Care: community building workshops & gentle practices w/ Elyse Preston, Anjali Sunita, and Maureen (Mo) Rosenbloom

April

23

4 DAY



June 4 – 7, 2026

The Subtle Body Retreat

Deep nervous system nourishment through Shiatsu, gentle yoga, Ayurveda, sound meditations and Yoga Nidra with Lassara Hall, Anjali Sunita, and Kathy Souvertjis

June

4

3 DAY



October 5 – 5, 2026

Vibrate Yoga & Ayurveda Retreat

Immerse in gentle yoga and Ayurvedic practices that integrate into daily life with Anjali Sunita

October

1

4 DAY

www.villagelifewellness.com



Village Life Wellness

Program designed & led by Anjali Sunita, ERYT-500, YACEP, Hatha Yoga Instructor, Ayurvedic practitioner, former founder of Baltimore Yoga Village and creator of Village Life Wellness.



Pathways Retreat Center

Located outside Charlottesville, VA, within 2.5 hours driving distance from the DC Metro & surrounding areas. The 34-acre mountainside property boasts spectacular views, trails and streams.

HOME FEATURING:

6 Bedrooms (sleeps up to 16 ppl) + Den
3 Full Bathrooms
Full Kitchen & Dining Room
Living Room w/ Gas Fireplace
Wraparound Deck w/ Outdoor Seating
Finished Lower Level

Outdoor 10-person hot tub & decks overlooking mountain vistas
Fire pit and use of the grounds, area recreational activities
Hi-Speed WiFi

Stay educated, enlightened and engaged with these offerings from the Pathways Community. See these events and more, and submit your own event (\$5/listing), by visiting our interactive ONLINE CALENDAR updated regularly. **Be sure to tell them you saw them in Pathways!**

Have an event to promote? Listings are FREE when you advertise! More info at: www.pathwaysproductions.com/advertising.

MARCH

— 4 —

Reiki Level I Certification, 10am-2pm. Learn to channel Usui Reiki, as taught in the tradition and lineage of Mikao Usui, to activate the natural healing energy processes of your mind, body, and spirit to restore physical and emotional well-being. You will receive a Reiki Level I Attunement and certificate. After this introductory course, you will be able to give Reiki to yourself, family, and friends. No prerequisites to attend. Led and hosted by Annie Larson, in office: 46191 Westlake Drive, Sterling, VA. More info & to book: www.mediumannielarson.com/book-online.

— 7 —

Free Introduction to Creating Evolutionary Groups, 10-11am, ONLINE. Many of us sense a quiet longing for groups to feel more alive, more honest, and more connected — whether as families, work teams, circles, or communities. In this live introductory session, Patricia and Anne will share the framework of Evolutionary Groups and guide participants through a few simple, practical micro-practices you can use immediately. Time for questions and conversation is included. More info: newwaveofgroups.com.

Integrated Energy Therapy-Advanced Level, 11am-4pm. Step into the highest level of IET and activate your soul's purpose. The Advanced Level attunes you to the 5th DNA pair, deepening your angel-

ic connection and expanding your mastery. Learn Soul Star clearing, Energy Wave release work, and Heartbeams to anchor light into the Earth. Perfect for practitioners ready to work at the soul level and serve as lightworkers. Includes Advanced attunement, manual, and official certification. Taught by Uma of The Lotus and The Light, 9256 Mosby Street, Manassas, VA. More info: <https://bit.ly/IET0326>.

Soul Awakening Collective: A Gathering for the Newly Awakened & Those Seeking Soul-Aligned Community, 9am-12pm, Manassas, VA. Hosted by Tina of Destination Tarot & Jennie of Ascending Dawn Doula. This heart-centered circle is for those newly awakening, energetically sensitive, spiritually curious, or seeking connection. No experience needed — openness and a desire to grow together. Each gathering includes grounding, breathwork, a spiritual tool, open sharing (optional), and supportive connection. www.meetup.com/lightworksmanassas/events/312866043/?eventOrigin=group_events_list

— 11 —

Accountability Group for Writers, 7-8:30pm, online. Join a group of passionate writers working together to find a joyful writing rhythm, meet your writing challenges, and stay on target for your creative projects, facilitated by an experienced writer, editor and writing coach. All genres and writing experience levels are welcome. Learn ways to improve your writing process, stick to deadlines, and support each other in a creative community! Monthly meetings with discounts for individual coaching sessions as needed for all members. Email cburbank@storyweaving.com to register or learn more. www.storyweaving.com

— 12 —

Free Introduction to Creating Evolutionary Groups, 12-1pm, ONLINE. Many of us sense a quiet longing for groups to feel more alive, more honest, and more connected — whether as families, work teams, circles, or communities. In this live introductory session, Patricia and Anne will share the framework of Evolutionary Groups and guide participants through a few simple,



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Wednesday, July 29
 to
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 Friday, June 5, 8 am to 6 pm • Registration Fee

AYURVEDA RETREAT
 Saturday, June 6, 8 am to 6 pm • Registration Fee

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 Sunday, June 7, 10 am to 2 pm • Free and Open to All

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For all information about 2026 tour programs, visit karunamayai.in/world-tour-2026 or email WashingtonDC@karunamayai.in



practical micro-practices you can use immediately. Time for questions and conversation is included. More info: newwaveofgroups.com.

Reiki Level II Certification, 10am-2pm. Take your Reiki practice to the next level. Learn powerful symbols and techniques that will help you to open energy channels and connect more deeply with the flow of Reiki energy. Prerequisite Reiki I. Led and hosted by Annie Larson, in office: 46191 Westlake Drive, Sterling, VA. More info & to book: www.mediumannielarson.com/book-online.

— 18 —

Mediumship Development Circle, 6 Weeks via Zoom, 7:30-9:15pm. Come join us for an evening meditation and advance your ability to communicate with the spirit world. It doesn't matter whether you're a beginner or an advanced medium. This circle provides you a safe practice opportunity to help you connect and elevate your connection with the spirits. Each session includes a lesson or discussion, meditation, connection with the spirits, sharing and feedback. Your facilitator, Konstanza Morning Star, is a Certified Medium with over twenty years of experience. Six Wednesday evenings starting 3/18. For more info, call Konstanza: 240-543-9414; visit www.mediumshamandc.com/circle-via-zoom.

The Evolutionary Group in Practice, 11am - 12:30pm, ONLINE. 12-Week Group Facilitator/Participant Course guided by authors and seasoned group leaders, Anne Altvater & Patricia Pfost; apply the essentials of Evolutionary Groups: A New Frontier in Human Connection to family, friends, work teams, spiritual or healing groups. Learn simple practices to foster harmony, meaning, creativity, connection, and attunement to the higher intelligence of the group itself. 8 participants max. More info: newwaveofgroups.com.

— 19 —

3/19-21 **Spring Equinox Mastermind and Retreat**. Hosted by Carla Salteris. This retreat is your portal to reset your frequency, awaken vitality, and align your energy with the expanding light of the new season. Experience deep transformation as you embody your next chapter of

authentic, soul-led success. More info & to register: carlasalteris.com/events-2.

— 21 —

Soul Empowering Hypnosis®: Guided Spirit Connection, 10-11:30am, online. Join us from the comfort of your home for an intimate virtual guided journey to connect with your spirit team - including guides, angels, higher self, loved ones, and Source - for clarity and insight. Begin with grounding and breathwork, move into the SEH journey, then time to journal, reflect, and optionally share. Attendance limited to 15 participants. No experience needed - simply openness and curiosity. Info & registration: heal.me/jenniesikes/events/soulempoweringhypnosis.

— 22 —

Pathways Spring Natural Living Expo, 10am-6pm, Hilton McLean Tysons Corner, McLean, VA.. 100+ exhibitors and 40+ workshops at the longest-running mind-body-spirit-eco event of the DMV. \$10 advance purchase online and day of event with mailing list signup; kids 16 and under are FREE. Free parking, food trucks. All are welcome! www.pathwaysproductions.com

— 25 —

Monthly Poetry Writing Support Group, 7-9pm, online. Gather with fellow poets to work on your craft and be inspired by a supportive group of creatives, facilitated by a published, experienced poet and writing coach dedicated to helping you find your voice, focus your writing process, and move towards mastery and publication. Monthly inspiration with creative exercises/prompts, opportunities to share and learn. Email cburbank@storyweaving.com to register or learn more. www.storyweaving.com

— 26 —

Soft Pants, Big Dreams Retreat, A TiMa Group Experience. Reclaim and rejuvenate your life with this nervous system reset in a women's wellness haven. You're invited to: rest without apology; participate in intimate conversations on a variety of topics; enjoy 1:1 coaching sessions; experience gentle wellness tools such as Reiki, breathwork, guided meditation, and sound healing, and more. Learn more & register: softpantsbigdreams.com.



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- Illuminate Lewes DE**..... May 3
- Illuminate Richmond VA**..... June 7
- Illuminate Annapolis MD**..... July 18
- Illuminate Columbia MD**..... TBD
- Illuminate Naperville IL**..... September 27
- Illuminate Durham NC**..... TBD
- Illuminate Frederick MD**..... October 18
- Illuminate Annapolis MD**..... November 14

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Upcoming Event Offerings:

- Guided Meditation - 1st Wednesdays: Each month (Virtual)
- Psychic Readings - Saturdays: 3/14, 4/11 & 5/9 (Virtual)
- Spring Equinox Service - Sunday: 3/22 (Virtual)

Visit isd-dc.org
for more information on these events
and to register.

BREAK FREE TO BE



**Saturday, March 28, 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm and
Saturday, April 11, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

Comfort Inn University Center Fairfax, 11180 Fairfax Blvd., Fairfax, VA

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- Partner with your spiritual guides for daily insight and success.
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- Activate the healing light you really are.

Visit inspiringbelief.net/events for more information and to register or contact Mara Spencer via email at Mara@InspiringBelief.net

SPRING CALENDAR

— 27 —

3/27-29 Reiki Master Class 3-Day Course. You are eligible for this class 6 months, or more, after you've taken the Level II Reiki class, from any lineage. Friday and Saturday are 10am to 4pm; Sunday is 10am to 3pm; in person at The Expanding Heart Center, 208 W. Patrick St., Frederick, MD. Visit www.mdert.org for more info; contact us at info@mdert.org. There is still time to register. Class is limited to 8.

— 28 —

Winter Farmers and Crafters Market, 9am-1pm, Free Admission! Enjoy shopping from 20 unique local vendors featuring bakery and meat items, soaps, photography, essential oils, spices, jewelry, donkey-inspired t-shirts, and much more. And come meet the Donkeys! Hosted at Campbells Lane Farm, 22862 Dover Bridge Rd Preston, MD 21655. www.campbellslanefarm.com

APRIL

— 7 —

The Evolutionary Group in Practice, ONLINE, 6-7:30pm. 12-Week Group Facilitator/Participant Course guided by authors and seasoned group leaders, Anne Altwater & Patricia Pfof; apply the essentials of Evolutionary Groups: A New Frontier in Human Connection to family, friends, work teams, spiritual or healing groups. Learn simple practices to foster harmony, meaning, creativity, connection, and attunement to the higher intelligence of the group itself. 8 participants max. More info: newwaveofgroups.com.

— 11 —

Reiki Level I Class, also on April 25, 10am to 4:30pm, in person at The Expanding Heart Center, 208 W. Patrick St., Frederick, MD. Reiki I classes introduce you to the grace and power of Reiki. Self Practice is our focus. You are given many ways to bring the peace and joy of Reiki into your own life; to help you rediscover and remember your own beautiful light. You're also taught how to give Reiki to others. We have classes every month. Maryland Center for Reiki Training, www.mdert.org.

Usui/Holy Fire® Reiki Training, 9:30AM-5PM ONLINE. Usui Holy Fire® Reiki I & II classes are usually taught together over two days, but can be taken separately. This training is for anyone interested in learning how to work with the healing energy of Reiki. By the end of the Reiki Level I class you will forever be able to give yourself and others Reiki treatments. Led by Aafiya Reiki; info and registration: www.aafiyareiki.com/classes.

— 17 —

Reiki Level III Certification, 10am-2pm. Unlock your healing potential with Reiki Level III certification class. Learn powerful master symbols to elevate your vibration, open energy centers, and tap into the highest levels of Reiki energy. Prerequisite Reiki I and II. Led and hosted by Annie Larson, in office: 46191 Westlake Drive, Sterling, VA. More info & to book: www.mediumannielarson.com/book-online.

— 18 —

4/18-19 Animal Reiki Level I & II, 10am - 4pm both days. Level 1 on Sat. is in person at The Expanding Heart Center, 208 W. Patrick St., Frederick, MD; and Level II on Sunday has a farm visit to practice what we have learned in class. Animal Reiki class takes you to a new level of understanding the importance of your own self practice and development. Animals are highly sensitive to our inner state of wellness, our bright light. Maryland Center for Reiki Training, www.mdert.org.

— 19 —

Soul Empowering Hypnosis®: Guided Spirit Connection, 10-11:30am, online. Join us from the comfort of your home for an intimate virtual guided journey to connect with your spirit team - including guides, angels, higher self, loved ones, and Source - for clarity and insight. Begin with grounding and breathwork, move into the SEH journey, then time to journal, reflect, and optionally share. Attendance limited to 15 participants. No experience needed - simply openness and curiosity. Info & registration: heal.me/jenniesikes/events/soulempoweringhypnosis.

— 23 —

4/23-27 Held Together Retreat: Nourishment, Community, and Resilient Action. Program designed by Elyse Preston & An-

jali Sunita, lovingly supported by Maureen Rosenbloom. Take part in a transformative immersive experience weaving ancient wellness wisdom with modern collective care practices. This protected time and space will use the tools of Ayurveda, Yoga, and sound healing to sense into our needs and craft a life that keeps us vibrant, and also a time to map out ecosystems of support, learn about community building, and design our next steps. Learn more & register: www.villagelifewellness.com/retreats.

— 26 —

Illuminate Frederick Mind-Body-Spirit-Arts Festival, 10am-5pm, Hilton Garden Inn Frederick, 7226 Corporate Court, Frederick, MD 21703. We offer the BEST in local holistic wellness & arts since 2015! Bodywork, energywork, intuitive readings including Tarot and astrology, handmade jewelry and gifts, luxurious spa products, free workshops and more. Free admission, too! Under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. www.illuminatefestivals.com

— 30 —

4/30 - 5/4 **Rest & Rekindle: A Retreat for Justice-Sensitive People Seeking Respite, Joy & Community**. Facilitated by Melissa Renzi with Anjali Sunita as Retreat Chef. Living with a deep sensitivity to injustice amid constant exposure and vigilance can take a toll, leading to burn out. Set the load down for a few days — to rest, connect, play, and strengthen our courage, together through gentle Yoga, community discussion, quiet time with nature, and creative expression. Learn more & register: www.melissanoelrenzi.com/retreats-and-workshops/virginia-retreat-2026

UPCOMING

6/4-7 **Subtle Body Retreat**, with Anjali Sunita, Lassara Hall and Kathy Souvertjjs. This retreat weaves together Shiatsu, Qigong, Pranayama and breathwork, meditation, and the Peter Hess Method of sound healing paired with Yoga Nidra. Through experiential Ayurvedic nutrition and elemental theory, we'll explore how the forces of nature express themselves within our own bodies — guiding balance, vitality, and self-understanding. Learn more & register: www.villagelifewellness.com/retreats.

10/2-4, **Replenish the Well: A Curated Yoga and Wellness Retreat**, Casa Om Potomac, Martinsburg, VA. Enjoy Yoga, acupuncture, and curated mind-body techniques that bring the body into balance, and help connect with yourself and others. Rest overlooking beautiful views of the Potomac River, enjoy daily plant-based meals, and release suffering held in the body with our experiential practices. Learn more & register: joy-andrews.com/yoga-wellness-retreat

ONGOING

A Course in Miracles Zoom Based 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.

Accountability Group for Writers, 7-8:30pm, online. Join a group of passionate writers working together to find a joyful writing rhythm, meet your writing challenges, and stay on target for your creative projects, facilitated by an experienced writer, editor and writing coach. All genres and writing experience levels are welcome. Learn ways to improve your writing process, stick to deadlines, and support each other in a creative community! Monthly meetings with discounts for individual coaching sessions as needed for all members. Email cburbank@storyweaving.com to register or learn more. www.storyweaving.com

Gather, Ground & Grow Monthly Meetup, 7-9pm. Looking for a space to connect, reflect, and recharge? Join us the first Saturday of every month for an evening of spiritual exploration and healing in a welcoming, judgment-free environment. What to Expect: Group discussions; Astrology insights; Intuitive Guidance; Grounding Exercises; Sound Bath with singing bowls to end the evening in pure bliss. Come as you are, leave feeling rejuvenated, empowered, and deeply connected. Earth Addictions, Occoquan, VA. www.facebook.com/EarthAddictions

Monthly Poetry Writing Support Group, 7-9pm, online. Gather with fellow poets to work on your craft and be inspired by a supportive

Unity of Gaithersburg Presents
Energy Healing Sundays

1-2 pm
in the Education Building

March 22nd
Swami Beyondananda (on Zoom in the Sanctuary)

April 26th
Rev Judi Venturini – Reiki

May 24th
Rose Cooper – Channeled Healing

June 28th
Donna Colombel – Mindfulness Meditation

July 26th
Bill Sanda – Akashic/Light Language Healing

August 23rd
Jim Morgan – JFB-MFR:
Where Science Meets Sensitivity

Sept 27th
Mandy Leith/Patricia Gershanik –
McTaggart Intention Circle

October 25th
Carol Plummer – Eden Energy Healing

November 22nd
Chris Colburn – Healing thru Forgiveness:
ACIM Perspective

December 27th
Rev Judi Venturini – Automatic Writing



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group of creatives, facilitated by a published, experienced poet and writing coach dedicated to helping you find your voice, focus your writing process, and move towards mastery and publication. Monthly inspiration with creative exercises/prompts, opportunities to share and learn. Email cburbank@storyweaving.com to register or learn more. www.storyweaving.com

Psychic Evenings, on the 2nd Saturday of each month. The Institute for Spiritual Development (ISD) offers 4 private 15-minute readings online by gifted mediums. Appointments begin at 7:00 PM. More information at isd-dc.org.

Rediscover Your Divinity! Join us every 2nd Sunday of the month 11am-12pm for a lively spiritual discussion on a different topic, such as "Shaping Your Own Destiny" or "Living Soul's Joy Now." We invite you to meet with a group of like-hearted individuals for a vibrant celebration of Eternal Soul. Sponsored by ECKANKAR, The Path of Spiritual Freedom. At the Northern Virginia ECK Center, Fairfax, VA.

spiritualdiscussions12@gmail.com;
www.eck-va.org.

Spiritualist Services. The Church of Two Worlds offers services every 2nd & 4th Sunday of the month that are a mix of inspiration, meditation, music, and mediumship. 11am-12:15pm at Church of Two Worlds, 3038 Q St., NW, WDC 20007. www.churchoftwoworlds.org

SPOTLIGHT: Spiritual Video Night Online. Every 2nd Wednesday from 7-8pm, join us for an uplifting 30-minute video & group discussion that offers insights about some of the perplexing mysteries of life. Sponsored by ECKANKAR, the Path of Spiritual Freedom. More info: spiritualdiscussions12@gmail.com; www.eck-va.org.

Sunday Services, first Sunday monthly at 12:30pm, in person and via Zoom. Share in the prayers, music, as well as spiritual healings & readings at the Palisades Hub, Institute for Spiritual Development, 5200 Cathedral Ave NW, WDC. ALSO... 11am via Zoom on the 2nd and 5th Sundays monthly. www.isd-dc.org

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 info: www.voiceofthegatekeepers.com



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Kennedy have between them over 85 years experience in T'ai Chi. They both have studied with Robert Smith, Professor Cheng's first Western student, with Benjamin Lo, Professor Cheng's senior student, and with Lenzie Williams, senior student of Mr. Lo.

**New Beginners Weekday Classes start April 14, 2026
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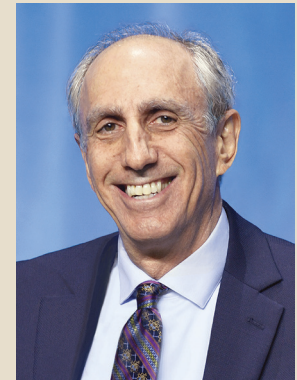
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For more information about Soul Travel Adventures in Virginia, visit eck-va.org



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Update on Virginia Recreational Cannabis Market Than Them

BY LJ DAWSON, THE OUTLAW REPORT

Virginia lawmakers have introduced House Bill 642 in the 2026 legislative session to establish a legal framework for adult-use cannabis retail sales, including a clear earliest possible launch date for the regulated marketplace. Under the bill, retail marijuana sales in the Commonwealth may not occur prior to November 1, 2026, marking a target date for the potential start of lawful commercial cannabis transactions if the legislation is enacted and signed into law.

HB 642 — introduced by Del. Paul Krizek and referred to the House General Laws Committee on January 13, 2026 — would empower the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority to oversee licensing and enforcement for a new adult-use market. The November 1, 2026, date functions as a statutory minimum: retail sales may not begin before then, but actual launch timing depends on the bill's progress through the General Assembly, potential amendments, and final gubernatorial approval.

Efforts to legalize and regulate adult-use cannabis retail have been ongoing since the General Assembly legalized possession and home cultivation in 2021 but left commercial sales unimplemented. Previous bills in 2025 set earlier target dates (such as May 1, 2026) for sales, but those measures were vetoed. In late 2025, a Joint Commission on the Future of Cannabis Sales released a comprehensive retail framework recommending a November 1, 2026, rollout if lawmakers pass and the governor signs enabling legislation.

The General Assembly session began in January 2026, and HB 642 remains under committee review. If the bill clears both chambers and receives gubernatorial assent, November 1, 2026, stands as the earliest

statutory date that licensed cannabis retailers could begin selling adult-use marijuana in Virginia.

On February 4, 2026, a Senate panel approved revisions to SB 542, the Senate corollary to HB 642 aimed at enhancing penalties for participation in the illegal cannabis market. Among other penalty enhancements, if passed, the revisions would impose criminal penalties on cannabis consumers that purchase cannabis from unlicensed cannabis retailers, increase the penalty for underage possession from a \$25 fine and drug education to a misdemeanor, and increase the penalty for a first distribution offense from a Class 2 misdemeanor to a Class 1 misdemeanor. The penalty for Class 1 misdemeanor is up to one year in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

LJ Dawson is a staff writer and editor at The Outlaw Report, an independent, online news outlet that focuses on cannabis news impacting communities & regulated markets in MD, DC and VA. In addition, it covers local developments related to industrial hemp, CBD and other drug policy.

This article first appeared in The Outlaw Report in January 2026, and is reprinted here with the publisher's permission. <https://outlawreport.com>

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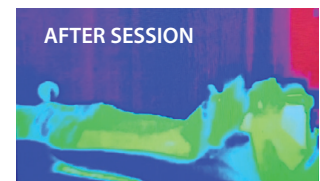
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As a clairvoyant, Brigitte is also able to see people's in/out Etheric fields, adding a useful touch to her great session!



Client's energy field is the thin blue line, seen here along the edge of the leg against the pink background.



Client's body is healing, as seen by the expanded energy field extending upward from the blue line along the leg.

Brigitte Wiss, Certified/Licensed/LLC

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Using AI Awareness Tool...

...continued from page 11

ters less than how you use it. Specific, focused questions generate better responses than vague prompts regardless of which AI you choose.

Step 1: Record the Full Experience

Write everything exactly as you experienced it: the dream, ceremony, Tarot spread, or moment of insight. Skip editing and skip interpretation at this stage; just record what happened. Then you can write what you felt, what symbol showed up, what made no sense at the time, and even a summary.

For dreams, I do this in the morning. I keep my phone next to the bed and write in the notes app before I get up, before the details fade. Writing takes maybe twenty minutes and it forces me to notice details I would otherwise skip. Memory is slippery, and typing captures what thinking alone misses.

Reflective Invitation:

Keep a simple notebook or your phone's notes app near your bed or meditation space. Capture experiences while they're fresh. Details that seem insignificant in the moment often become essential later.

Step 2: Your First Pass: Personal Interpretation

Before touching AI, write what *you* think it means — your gut read. What resonates. What feels important. Where this seems to be pointing.

This step matters because you need to know where your thinking actually lives before you invite other perspectives in. Otherwise, you just latch onto whatever the AI says first. Your interpretation anchors you and gives you something to compare against.

Step 3: Invite External Reflection

Give the AI the raw material and start asking specific questions. Here are queries I've seen work:

For dreams:

- "Help me find details I might have missed in this dream"
- "What archetypal patterns show up here?"
- "What is the central theme across these symbols?"
- "What am I standing too close to see?"
- "Give me a Jungian reading of this dream"

For Tarot or oracle cards:

- "What themes connect across these cards?"
- "Give me both traditional and psychological interpretations"
- "Where do these cards contradict each other, and what does that mean?"
- "What action is this spread pointing me toward?"

For ceremony or meditation experiences:

- "What symbolic meaning exists in [specific image/sensation]?"
- "Help me understand what my body was telling me during this experience"
- "What is the integration work this experience is asking for?"

For stuck interpretation:

- "Challenge my interpretation. What am I missing?"
- "What's the shadow side of this experience?"

continued on page 62



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Using AI Awareness Tool...

...continued from page 61

- "If this experience is trying to teach me something, what is it?"

The more specific your request, the more useful the response. Vague questions get vague answers. Targeted questions open new territory.

Step 4: Let It Run, Create Distance

After you send the material to the AI, take a break. Maybe an hour passes. This gap creates distance. When you come back to read the response, you've shifted slightly. You're less close to the raw experience and can see the AI's interpretation with fresh eyes.

This pause also lets your subconscious keep working. Sometimes you remember additional details during that hour. The space between sending and receiving matters as much as the content itself.

Step 5: Compare and Integrate

Now you have your interpretation and the AI's angles. Look for several things:

- Where do you overlap? That probably signals truth. When your gut read matches what the AI surfaces from symbolic analysis, trust it more.
- Where does the AI see something you completely missed? Those moments feel like a light switching on. Suddenly a detail you glossed over becomes central.
- Where is the AI confidently wrong? This tells you something about your own clarity. When you read the AI's interpretation and feel "No, that's not it," you learn what you do think it means.

- What questions does the AI's reading raise that you need to sit with? Sometimes the interpretation opens doors rather than closing them.

Reflective Invitation:

Notice your emotional reactions to different interpretations. Discomfort, resonance, or resistance often point toward deeper personal meaning. The feeling response is data, too.

Step 6: Refine and Revisit

Usually this process shakes loose more details you had forgotten. Add those to the original narrative. Sometimes those details completely shift the meaning. It could have been a color you barely registered, a phrase someone said, or the quality of light in an image.

Update your raw write-up with anything new, then sometimes run it through the AI again with the added context. The process becomes iterative. It's a conversation between your memory, your interpretation, the AI's angles, and the new details that emerge.

Step 7: Decide What's True

The AI does not get final say. You do. Having that external processing helps you see your own patterns without your ego defending them in real time.

After all the comparison and integration, write a final summary. This becomes the distilled version. This is the interpretation you're working with, the questions you're holding. It's the actions or shifts this experience points you toward.

This summary matters because it's yours. It carries your voice and reflects what actually landed for you after all the angles got considered. The AI helped you get there, but the conclusion belongs to you.

The Role of Reciprocity in Self-Understanding

This reflective process illustrates reciprocity in action. You provide lived experience and emotional depth. External perspective offers distance and structure. Together, you create space for understanding that neither could achieve alone.

The exchange remains balanced. The tool does not direct meaning. You do not remain confined to habitual interpretation. Insight arises through interaction. Over time, patterns across dreams, reflections, and experiences become more visible. Themes that might remain unnoticed in isolation begin to reveal themselves through repetition and



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contrast. The AI tracks these patterns by accessing previous exchanges within the same conversation thread. When you return to an ongoing chat and mention a new dream or card pull, the AI can reference earlier material you shared and notice recurring symbols, themes, or emotional patterns across weeks or months. This happens without the memory fatigue humans experience, where details from last month's dream blur together with this week's meditation insight.

Reciprocity invites humility. It acknowledges that understanding deepens when perspective is shared.

Reflective Invitation:

Choose one meaningful experience each week to explore through this process. Over time, patterns emerge that offer insight into both inner life and lived experience. The practice becomes a rhythm rather than a project.

Your Own Practice

This method works because it combines your intuition with external reflection. You bring the ceremony and the lived experience. The AI brings pattern recognition and questions you would not ask yourself. Together, you see more clearly than either could alone.

The key is to stay in the driver's seat. The AI is a mirror, a thinking partner, a question generator. It helps you see what you may have missed. You decide what's true. You decide what actions to take. You decide how to integrate the insights into your actual life.

Start small. Pick one experience that feels significant: a dream, a Tarot pull, or a moment that felt significant may all serve as starting points. Write it out. Ask the AI for angles. See what shifts. You can build your comfort over time.

Writing invites clarity. Reflection invites depth. External perspective invites space. In the exchange between inner awareness and outward reflection, insight continues to unfold.

The Process at a Glance:

1. Record the full experience - Write everything down immediately without editing. Write what happened
2. Your first pass - Write your own interpretation before touching AI
3. Invite external reflection - Share the raw material and ask specific questions
4. Create distance - Take a break, let your subconscious keep working
5. Compare and integrate - Look for overlap, new angles. Also ask "Does this seem right?"
6. Refine and revisit - Add details that surface, run it through AI again if needed
7. Decide what's true - Write your final summary in your own voice

The AI helps you get there. The wisdom is yours.

Kameron Kurtz is usually writing about wine and hospitality. Now, he is crafting a book that explores how ritual serves him as a therapeutic bridge between mental health struggles and spiritual connection. He also handles the administration side of The Healer Within Collective, which is led by his wife Taniesha, a shamanic spiritualist healer.

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What Am I to Do With My Fear? My Grief? My Anger?

BY THERISIA "TRISH" HALL

Have you ever felt totally out of control — like a cartoon character clinging desperately to a wildly spinning object? Or as if you were possessed by some external force, only to discover the force was actually inside you? At times, emotions can feel like being sucked into a vacuum — one that swirls everything in its path with no regard for what remains standing.

Emotions are powerful. They can cripple or empower. They can paralyze or energize. And during times of upheaval — when what once felt safe and predictable has been overturned — we may forget we hold within us the capacity to redirect that force. We can transmute emotional chaos into purposeful energy. We can pause, ask, *How am I to serve?* — and then listen for what wants to emerge through us.

We humans are fascinating creatures. We work relentlessly to make sense of our world, especially when it stops making sense. When life turns upside down, we fight to restore equilibrium — to reestablish a reality where up is up and down is down. We are meaning-making machines, trying to reason our way through the unreasonable.

Often unconsciously, we construct stories that explain why what feels wrong isn't really wrong — or why it must somehow be justified. We can sustain these narratives for a while. Eventually fatigue sets in. Beneath our explanations we discover fear: fear that life will never return to "normal" (if such a thing ever existed). We grieve the loss of what once anchored us. And for many, anger rises, often directed toward whoever or whatever we believe caused our losses or threatened our sense of safety. Others turn inward, sinking into despair or depression.

This emotional *mélange* describes the inner world of countless people right now.

Yet there is another remarkable quality woven through our fear, grief, and anger: *resilience*. It is our survival instinct — the deep intelligence that keeps us moving forward even when certainty dissolves. Emotions themselves are part of that intelligence. They are not flaws in our system; they *are* the system — internal alerts signaling something is out of balance, that we no longer feel safe or oriented.

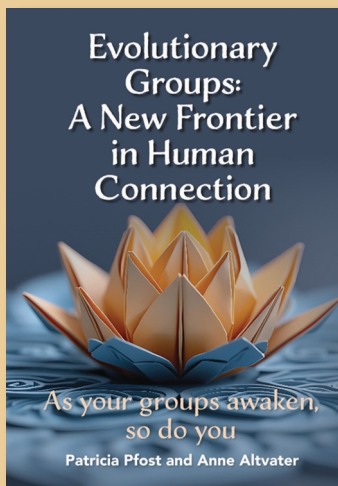
When these alarms sound, our bodies constrict. We feel compelled to defend ourselves and those we love. We cling tightly to the life we once knew, even while doubting whether equilibrium can ever be restored. And yet, paradoxically, it is often in these very moments of instability that our greatest inner strength is revealed. Crisis has a way of calling forth capacities we did not know we possessed.

Many of us were taught to categorize emotions as "good" or "bad." But emotions are neither. They are intelligent signaling mechanisms — information carriers. What matters is not the emotion itself, but how we interpret and use the information it provides.

Emotional data deserves discernment. Our feelings are filtered through personal history, cultural conditioning, and unconscious bias. Five people can witness the same event and experience five entirely different realities. Likewise, our emotions do not always reflect objective truth. Add to this our innate tendency toward confirmation bias — the inclination to notice what confirms what we already believe while filtering out contradictory evidence. It becomes clear why emotions can feel so convincing in spite of lacking accuracy.

Because we assume something to be true, our emotions react in anticipation of that assumption being fulfilled, reinforcing the belief and strengthening the emotional response. This feedback loop can trap us — unless we pause long enough to examine it.

Must reading for building new communities and healing relationships.



Evolutionary Groups is an invitation to bring a new quality of awareness and care to every gathering of two or more. Families, partnerships, teams, friendships, spiritual circles, and healing encounters benefit when we attend to *how* we gather—not only why.

This guide offers a bird's-eye view of familiar habits and reveals new possibilities for connection, meaning, spirit, and creativity when we

participate from a wider, more unitive perspective. Practical applications translate deeper intuitive truths into everyday choices and conversations that make life together feel more safe, kind, and meaningful.

Drawing on decades as teachers and group facilitators in personal transformation, business leadership, and training, Patricia Pfost and Anne Altvater offer language you can use today and practices that mature over time.

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www.newwaveofgroups.com

When we release the habit of labeling emotions as good or bad, a deeper understanding becomes possible. Emotions are energy; and energy can be directed

Anger, for example, can be paralyzing — or it can be a source of immense strength. We can hand our power over to it, allowing it to rage unchecked, or we can harness its energy to challenge systems that no longer align with our values. The difference lies in conscious choice.

So the real questions become: Are we willing to remain victims of our emotions, or are we ready to work with them as allies? Are we frustrated enough with being overwhelmed that we are willing to reclaim our power?

Personal transformation is not for the faint of heart. It requires courage, commitment, and a willingness to step into the unknown. Imagine how different life could feel if you were no longer imprisoned by your emotional reactions. Freedom begins when we learn to redirect emotional energy rather than suppress or discharge it.

Fear, grief, and anger each arise from a perceived loss; and each contains an embedded calling.

Fear emerges when the structures we trust collapse — when our ability to discern what is safe feels shattered, and we believe ourselves powerless against forces beyond our control. Grief surfaces when the loss feels final — when hope dims and helplessness deepens isolation. Anger arises as a demand for change, an eruption of pent-up energy seeking movement and expression. Frustration often speaks through anger, which, when channeled consciously, can be profoundly constructive.

Shifting Emotional Perspective

To uncover the wisdom within these emotions, we must ask a different question: *What would I rather experience?* This shift in perspec-

tive opens a powerful truth: we already possess what we need to change direction. While we cannot control how others respond or whether the world conforms to our desires, one thing is absolute: when we change, our world reorganizes around that change.

This realization is profound. When we declare “enough is enough” and draw upon our inner strength, we discover we are not broken. We are latent potential waiting to be activated. As Mother Teresa reminded us, “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”

Within fear lies the desire to rebuild trust and restore connection. It calls us toward community, collaboration, and service — toward groups that identify needs and work together to meet them.

Within grief lives empathy — the capacity to sense what others are enduring. It invites us to nurture, to accompany, to bring tenderness where there has been harm.

Within anger resides the energy for change. Mobilized anger becomes action: marches, advocacy, prayer circles, meditation gatherings, visible stands for justice and healing. Mobilization simply means movement — transforming frozen rage into purposeful engagement. Healthy anger requires healthy outlets.

Each of these emotions carries transformative potential. Grief can deepen compassion and meaning, allowing sorrow to be felt without drowning in it. Fear can sharpen discernment, draw us into presence, and cultivate trust rooted in clarity rather than denial. Anger can bring focus, agency, and healthy boundaries, helping us identify what must be protected or changed.

The invitation is ours: choose conscious outlets and step into action.

One way to begin is through reflection. Recall people or situations that have brought out your truest self. Who were they? How did they

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What Am I to Do...

...continued from page 65

show up? What about them called to you? These attractions are not accidents. They signal alignment. Something within you recognizes something possible.

Allow images of work, service, or volunteer opportunities embodying these qualities to surface. Compare their attributes with what brings you joy. Then invite the emotional energy that once held you captive to fuel engagement, especially in forms of service that involve giving of yourself.

Research consistently affirms what many of us intuitively know: when we give from the heart, we receive profound benefits. Volunteering is associated with reduced anxiety and depression, increased life satisfaction, greater emotional resilience, enhanced social well-being, and improved overall quality of life. Emerging research even suggests links between consistent community engagement and slower cognitive aging.

Perhaps most importantly, service shifts our orientation from self-absorption to being a beneficial presence.

Our emotions are not obstacles to overcome. They are invitations. When we listen deeply, redirect wisely, and act courageously, fear, grief, and anger become pathways — not prisons — guiding us into lives of meaning, connection, and purpose.

Therisia “Trish” Hall, D.Div., is an insightful international best-selling author, speaker and coach, who blends wisdom, authenticity, humor, and compassion in furtherance of her passion - conscious inclusivity. A renowned educator, facilitator, consultant, mediator and subject matter expert and trainer in government and industry, Trish has been honored to be a two-time (so far) presenter at the Parliament of World Religions. Whether addressing audiences, facilitating communication among diverse populations, working with students or individual clients, she thrives on awakening the unique magnificence within each, empowering all to live their “best yet to be.”



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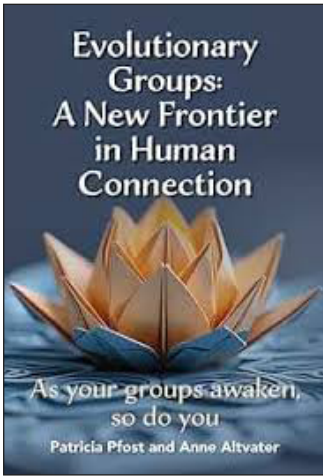
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REVIEW BY DAHLIA ROSE



**Evolutionary Groups:
A New Frontier in Human
Connection - As your groups
awaken, so do you**

By Patricia Pfost and Anne Altvater
2025: Starcast Press
198 pp; \$24.95
ISBN-13: 979-8999985200

The world at large is growing increasingly distant and yet digitally close. Our ability to relate to one another is being fragmented by differing ideologies, belief systems, and socioeconomic divides, and in many ways, we are slowly losing the ability to truly relate to and deeply see one another. It is strange to consider that, as far as we have come as a species, we are now having to consciously reintroduce what connection means. Yet this is precisely what *Evolutionary Groups: A New Frontier in Human Connection* offers.

Authors Patricia Pfost and Anne Altvater breathe life into the essential qualities that have always made us human beings as they also skillfully merge and elevate those connective aspects that have guided the rare but meaningful moments of peace and cohesion through-


out human history. This book invites the reader to consider the living space between themselves and another person. It asks whether we have paused long enough to feel the relational field across a Zoom call or within a shared physical space. In doing so, the work transcends what might be dismissed as “woo-ey” by grounding connection in awareness, presence, and discernment. The result is an invitation into sustainable, higher-minded gatherings, no matter the context.

Pfost and Altvater define groups expansively, ranging from two people to large corporate or organizational structures. This inclusive framing is one of the book’s greatest strengths. The concepts presented are not limited to spiritual circles or conscious communities; they are applicable to every type of group imaginable. The authors guide the reader through various group structures and dynamics, pairing theory with lived examples. They also offer scenarios that illustrate when specific tools may be useful, often including suggested language that can be applied immediately. This practical generosity allows the book to function as both a learning resource and a living reference.

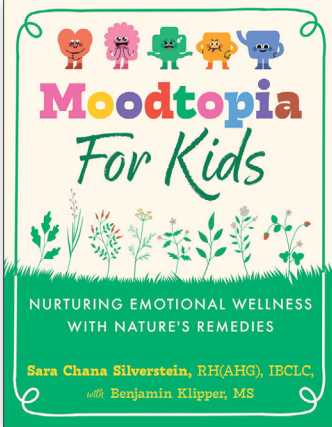
Many modern metaphysical teachings address collective consciousness using broad, abstract strokes while creating separateness and exclusivity within their structures. These perspectives can be inspiring, but they often unintentionally reinforce fragmentation within the lived experience without acknowledgement or repair. *Evolutionary Groups* closes that gap by materializing collective consciousness into something observable, relational, and workable. Rather than categorizing group dynamics as right or wrong, the authors focus on identifying what is present. This neutrality creates space for all participants to feel safe enough to engage honestly, provided the shared intention is unification and expansion rather than control or dominance.

A central question is quietly but persistently asked within challeng-

continued on page 68




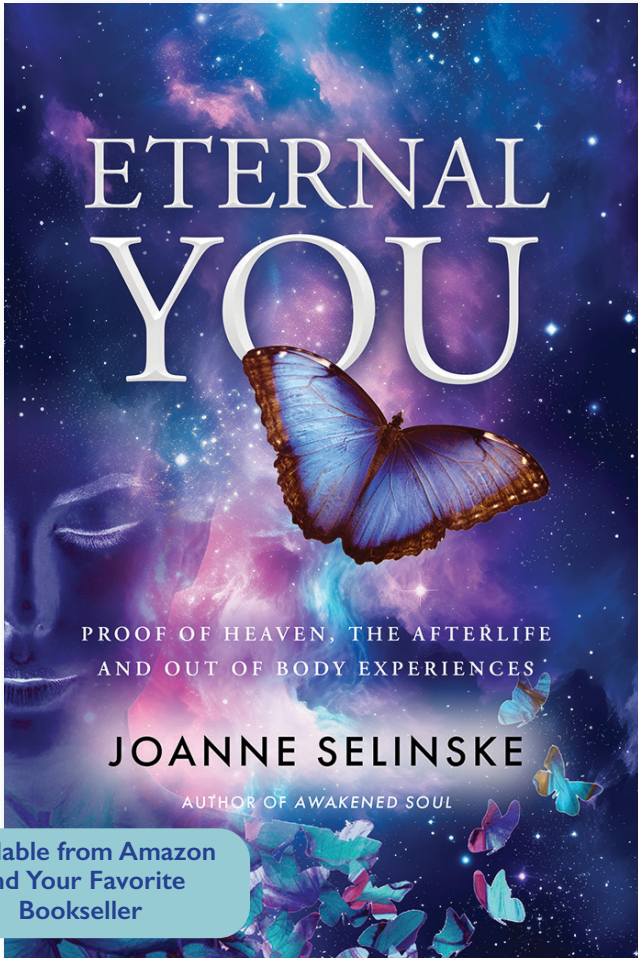
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...continued from page 67

ing times and group dynamics: *What can one person do?* In response, Pfof and Altvater return power to both group members and leaders alike. They remind us that healthy groups are not static. They bend, flex, and evolve. When individuals are supported in staying present within that movement, something remarkable becomes possible. There is a particular kind of intelligence that emerges when a group's frequency is allowed to nurture the growth of its members rather than constrain it. In many ways, the relational skills presented in this book resemble those once taught in early childhood settings: skills of emotional awareness, mutual respect, and self-regulation. These skills have been steadily eroded by the pace and demands of the industrial and digital age.

What makes this book especially impactful is its respect for the body and nervous system. *Evolutionary Groups* gently releases rigid mental structures while creating space for embodied safety. Unlike many "how-to" manuals that subtly reinforce a right-versus-wrong framework, this book keeps the reader attuned to a spectrum of possibilities. Because of this, the tools felt immediately accessible. As someone who facilitates and leads groups, I found myself able to apply the concepts in real time. And for the first time, I experienced personal evolution within the group itself, rather than processing growth only after a gathering had ended. This shift fostered a new sense of trust and courage, complemented by qualities rooted in ancient communal practices the authors honor without modernizing or diluting what is sacred.

In recent years, as reflected by media and global events, mistrust has become a defining feature of modern life. This mistrust often appears external, directed toward systems or other people; the book gently invites the reader to consider how much of that unease may originate internally. By encouraging us to slow down and speak honestly about what is present, Pfof and Altvater offer a grounded path through even the heaviest relational moments. Over time, this practice has the capacity to build genuine confidence that arises not from dominance or certainty, but from presence and coherence.

The authors also demonstrate a thoughtful awareness of different learning styles. Readers are invited to engage intellectually, somatically, and relationally. The book speaks equally to the practical reader seeking immediate application, and to the visionary who prefers to move slowly, allowing insight to integrate over time. Whether one is an active participant, a quiet observer, or a fluid combination of both, the book honors choice and agency. It empowers readers to engage with their groups in ways that feel authentic rather than prescriptive.

The closing sections further extend this accessibility by offering removable lists and reference materials that can be placed in one's environment. These elements serve as gentle reminders of the tools and insights gained, supporting ongoing integration without requiring constant rereading. Like the groups it describes, this book is not meant to be consumed once and set aside. It is designed to be returned to, lived with, and engaged over time.

For readers of *Pathways*, this book arrives at a critical moment. As more individuals awaken to the limitations of solitary healing and the shortcomings of surface-level community, there is a growing need for models of connection that are both conscious and sustainable. *Evolutionary Groups* speaks directly to the ledge of choice that our humanity is teetering on right now. It offers language and structure for those who sense that a key component of humanity's next evolutionary step is relational maturity and depth. In a world marked by fragmentation, this work reminds us that evolution is a collective process, whether we believe so or don't, and it offers a practical and truly critical path to unfold through awareness, responsibility, and shared presence.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Ultimately, *Evolutionary Groups: A New Frontier in Human Connection* invites us to imagine a life in which we understand where we stand within our relationships and can choose, with clarity, where we wish to grow. It asks us to practice seeing and hearing others more fully, while also allowing ourselves to be seen and heard in return. In doing so, it offers not just a vision of better groups, but a blueprint for a more connected and conscious humanity.

Dahlia innovates at the intersection of consciousness, dream rejuvenation, intimacy, and community. Through her programs, writing, and facilitation, she magnetizes individuals and groups toward aligned initiative, cultivating embodied freedom and the strength of meaningful human connection in service of humanity's next evolution. Learn more at her Crystal Cognizance Crystal, Healing, and Meditation Center: <https://crystalcognizance.com>.

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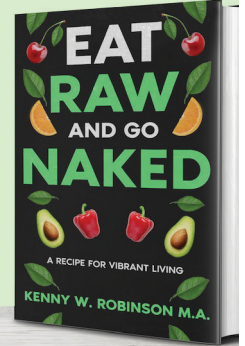
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Yoga Without a Single Beginning...

...continued from page 13

no indication of large-scale violent invasion that led to the decline of this Indus Valley population — no widespread skeletal trauma, no abrupt cultural replacement. Instead, what emerges is a picture of gradual movement: groups of people arriving over centuries, bringing languages and ritual practices that blended, adapted, and coexisted with what was already present. Migration tells a different story than invasion. Migration allows for exchange, intermarriage, and cultural adaptation. Geologists believed that eventually this society died out from changes in climate, as life was connected to land and they were highly dependent upon dried river systems.

In recent decades, a conflicting narrative has gained prominence, often associated with Hindu nationalist ideology. This view rejects earlier invasion models and instead asserts that no significant migrations into the subcontinent occurred, thereby presenting Sanskrit, religious traditions, and cultural forms as entirely indigenous, continuous, and unbroken. This narrative, too, is deeply political. It seeks cultural stability through sameness, frequently downplaying the historical evidence for mobility, exchange, and regional variation, as well as the plurality of vernacular languages — many of which developed in dynamic relationship with Sanskrit rather than directly from it. It also tends to minimize the contributions of diverse religious movements, caste formations, and everyday ways of life that have always shaped South Asia.

Why does this matter? *Because how we tell these stories shapes how we relate to one another.* Invasion narratives can justify hierarchy and exclusion. Purity narratives can erase internal differences and dissent. Migration narratives, while less tidy, leave room for complexity, relationship, and shared becoming.

Yoga lives most honestly within this third space.

A World of Crossings

The Indus Valley was not isolated. Archaeological evidence reveals long-distance trade networks connecting South Asia with Mesopotamia (largely modern-day Iraq), the Arabian Peninsula, and East Africa. Seals, beads, and standardized weights traveled alongside stories, songs, and ways of understanding the world.

Genetic research supports early human movement out of Africa along coastal routes through South Asia and onward toward Southeast Asia and Australia. If bodies moved these paths, it is likely that

ritual sensibilities — relationships to breath, rhythm, trance, and land — moved as well.

This does not mean Yoga was exported or imported as a finished system. It suggests something subtler: that yogic ideas emerged from conditions shaped by long human movement and exchange. The Indus Valley becomes a meeting place.

In recent years, another simplified story has gained traction: the claim that the Yoga we know today originated in ancient Egypt. This narrative often emerges as a corrective to Eurocentric and Brahmanical histories — a way of restoring African presence to global spiritual lineages that were long minimized or erased. The impulse is understandable, and the erasure it responds to is real.

Ancient Egyptian religious culture did include sophisticated ritual technologies: breath regulation, sacred postures, initiatory rites, symbolic cosmologies, and a deep understanding of the body as a vessel for divine order. These practices resonate with yogic sensibilities; but resonance is not the same as origin.

To claim Egypt as the singular source of Yoga replaces one flattening story with another. It risks turning a web of ancient exchanges into a new point of ownership. There is no evidence of a direct, unbroken transmission from Egyptian priesthoods to the yogic systems that later emerged in South Asia. What *can* be traced are shared human strategies that arise wherever humans ask similar questions of the body, mind, spirit, and the cosmos. A world of crossings does not require a single source. It asks us instead to honor relationships and parallel inheritances over centuries, without collapsing differences.

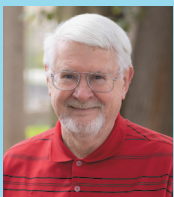
Living With Complexity

Yoga's history does not offer us purity or certainty. Within the subcontinent and over time, Yoga history contains running themes of caste tensions, revelation and suppression, religious conformity and divestment, and a multiplicity of languages, expressions, and meanings preserved orally and textually.

When Yoga is reduced to a single origin story, something essential is lost. What remains is a symbol of identity that lacks dimension, which has become more easily owned and even exported by those who profit from these tellings. But when we allow Yoga's past to remain complex, we create space for belonging, diversity, and genuine inquiry.

And that, too, is a practice.

Anjali Sunita, ERYT-500, YACEP, is a Hatha Yoga Instructor, Ayurvedic practitioner, writer, and creator of Village Life Wellness. In her teaching and writing, she has a dual focus on tradition and accessibility. Learn more about her courses, retreats, and consultations, or contact her at www.villagelifelife.com.



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Five Ways to Integrate Reiki and Astrology

BY ALLY AYALA

“How do we touch the universe?” asked world-renowned Reiki teacher Frans Stiene at the start of an advanced training I recently attended. His words planted a seed of realization that continues to unfold for me: both Reiki and astrology show us we are the universe in motion. We are in constant contact with the universe — inside and out — whether we realize it or not.

It is often taught that something must be done to create connection, when in truth, it is happening all the time. Even the idea that we must ‘connect’ to Reiki suggests separation, when in truth, we are never apart from it. We are always held within its flow. There is no way to step outside of it. Reiki is a realm of unity consciousness and non-dualism.

Just as Reiki reveals the continuous flow of life energy, astrology offers a map of how that same universal intelligence expresses uniquely through each person. At a recent healing arts festival, a woman approached my table and said, “I used to have my birth chart, but I don’t know where I put it.” I smiled, realizing how often we forget that the birth chart, like Reiki, isn’t something we *have*, it’s something we *are*. It is much more than a drawing on a piece of paper, or a list of planets with signs, or an app on the phone. The wisdom of the planets flows into every moment. It is really a matter of awareness.

Astrology and Reiki both explore our relationship to the universe in their own ways. Reiki works with the universal life force energy — the vital essence that animates all living things — while astrology studies the cosmic rhythms that shape our inner and outer worlds. Both remind us everything is energy and we are never separate from the greater flow of life.

The word *Reiki* comes from two Japanese kanji: *Rei*, meaning “spiritual wisdom from Heaven” or “divine guidance,” and *Ki*, meaning “life force.” Reiki teaches that this energy is not something outside of us — it is what we are. It moves through nature, the cosmos, and the breath that sustains every being. In this way, Reiki becomes a bridge between Heaven and Earth, just as our own bodies and breath do.

Astrology mirrors this same principle. The birth chart is another bridge between Heaven and Earth — an energetic map that reveals how cosmic forces express themselves through us. Our thoughts, choices, and actions are the channels through which planetary energies take form. Astrology is not something distant; it lives and breathes through you.

By integrating these two paths, the living dialogue between energy and cosmos awakens more fully. The following five practices invite you to experience this collaboration for yourself.

1. Meditate on Your Birth Chart

Sit in Reiki meditation to connect with the energy of your birth chart. Knowing where the planets reside — in which sign and in which house — will help you to understand the gifts and the challenges that each planet holds for you. Visualize the great bright light of the soul within and around you. Invite Reiki to flow through your awareness as you reflect on your planetary placements and what they reveal about your inner and outer landscape.

2. Explore Aspects and Aspect Patterns

Study the aspects of your birth chart. The aspects are the ways in which the planets relate to each other. You might even consider it a conversation between the planets. For example, if the Sun trines Venus there is a flowing, harmonious connection between the two plan-



ets. If they are squaring each other, the conversation is a little more tense, and they must figure out how to find solutions to this tension. These aspects will oftentimes create aspect patterns and geometrical designs within the chart. In Reiki meditation, visualize the aspect patterns of your birth chart and imagine Reiki flowing through those geometric designs.

3. Send Reiki to Transits in the Past, Present and Future

Planetary transits, their movements through the astrological houses, can bring sweeping change and profound insight, each serving as an initiation into deeper self-realization. When a particular transit is presenting itself in your life, let Reiki flow into the moment and your awareness around what is happening. Channel Reiki to invite understanding and bring healing — easing transitions, balancing emotions, and aligning with the lessons and empowerments each transit offers.

Considering the cyclical nature of transits, as well as the retrograde motions of planets, it becomes clear that moments in time touch other moments in time. Working with *Hon Sha Ze Sho Nen*, the Reiki symbol that transcends time and space, allows healing to ripple through both the past and the future while honoring the present moment. This is a very powerful way to combine Reiki with astrological transits.

4. Align with the Lunar Cycle

The Moon is one of the easiest to study because we see it in the sky each night as it moves through its cycle. Learn the waxing and waning phases of the lunar cycle and work with these phases in your Reiki practice. Begin by honoring the New Moon each month with an intention-setting ritual. Send Reiki to your intentions and watch them grow into full illumination with the Full Moon, a time of culminating energy that supports reflection and relationship. Keep going and follow the lunar cycle all the way to the Balsamic Moon — the final phase — when the energy naturally turns inward for rest, retreat, and renewal. Then

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Integrate Reiki and Astrology...

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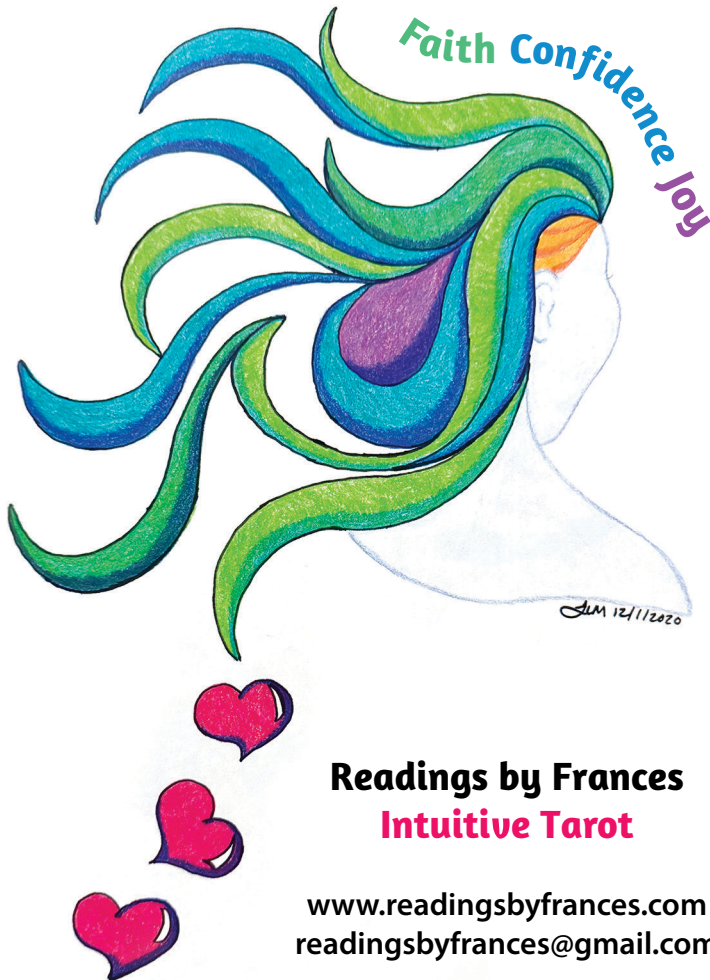
begin again with the New Moon to fully experience the cyclical rhythm of creation, growth, culmination, dissemination, release, and rebirth.

5. Practice Astrology & Reiki as Universal Union

Above all, let Reiki remind you of your oneness with the cosmos. Every breath, every heartbeat, every star is part of the same living energy. In recognizing this unity, both Reiki and astrology become pathways back to harmony with the universe and your place within it.

When woven together, Reiki and astrology invite us into a living dialogue with the cosmos — a reminder we are not separate from the universal flow, but active participants in its unfolding. Both practices encourage awareness, presence, and reverence for the unseen forces that guide and sustain life. As Reiki's healing current meets the language of astrology, the planets become living energies within us. The chart becomes a mirror, the breath a bridge, and awareness the meeting place of Heaven and Earth. In this way, every moment, every planetary movement, and every conscious breath becomes a remembrance: we are already touching the universe, and it is already touching us.

Ally Ayala is a professional astrologer and certified life coach. In her blogs, Ally shares practical insights into how the energies of the universe manifest in everyday life, even in the seemingly small moments that can carry profound significance. Her goal is to make astrology an integral part of our daily awareness. Ally offers private astrology consultations for individuals, couples, and families. For more information visit: <https://starsongreiki.com>.



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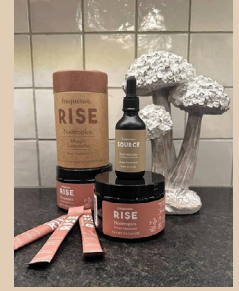
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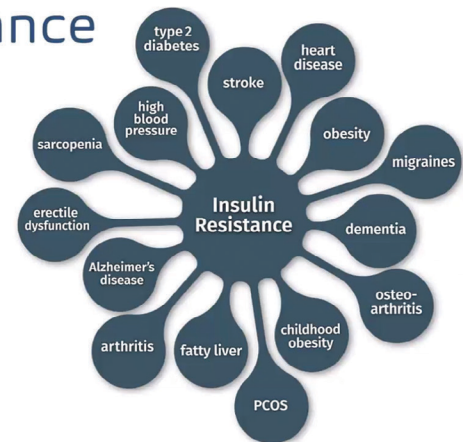
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Have You Forgotten to Remember? Three Reasons Memory Matters

BY CAROL BURBANK

It's a strange time, isn't it? It's as if the whole country is afflicted with a puzzling dementia, marked by confusion, anxiety and fear. Memory itself seems to have become untrustworthy, and as a result we grasp at shadows, finding "certainties" that dissolve even as we tighten our grip.

What is the remedy for forgetting to remember ourselves as whole souls in a complex world? I believe renewed connection to authentic memories can be restorative again, a way out of personal and cultural crisis and back into community. Here are three reasons to actively reconnect with our memories in these stressful times.

Remembering Ourselves Helps Us Find True Healing

"There was a long hard time when I kept far from me the remembrance of what I had thrown away when I was quite ignorant of its worth." — Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

When we lose the complexity of fully-embraced memory, we lose more than our stories. Easily distracted and ungrounded, we neglect our health — spiritually, physically, and socially. We forget to remember who we truly are, and so we cannot authentically create a path forward.

Certainly, memories form the architecture of the psyche, shaping our core stories. But we are in charge of making those stories authentic in our lives. Memories do not need to be enshrined like wounds to

paralyze us, or repressed like dangers we must avoid to survive. Those of us who value the soul, however we define it, also know forgetting to remember disconnects us from the divine spark that brought us here.

A friend of mine, moving through a painful but necessary divorce, often looks back at her marriage and sees the good experiences as well as the difficult ones. Those bittersweet memories help her remember her mantra: the universe has my back and it always has. She connects to her Source even as she connects to memory's truths. It's a liberating process, telling ourselves the truth. And it makes all the difference.

Being present to the past helps us connect with opportunities to heal and make better choices in the present. Inevitably, through transformation and growth, we understand our experiences differently. The stories attached to those memories change and grow, too. When we learn to see remembered events clearly while understanding the lessons they can teach, we become less fearful. We are more alive, loving, curious. We learn to be true to ourselves as whole people on a soul's journey.

Remembering Who We Have Been Helps Us Find Our Purpose

"Failure is instructive. The person who really thinks learns quite as much from his failures as from his successes." — John Dewey

Perhaps it's human to resist change, to push our failures into mem-

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Hemali is a holistic Physical Therapist, Author, Speaker, Intuitive Quantum Energy Healer, Akashic Records Reader, Reiki Master Teacher, Channel, Spiritual Mentor and Death Doula. She is a Life and Death Coach. Hemali Teaches and certifies in Reiki Level 1, 2, Advance, Master and Karuna Reiki. Facilitates International Retreats. Hemali offers one-on-one and group sessions in her studio and virtually.

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Reasons Memory Matters...

...continued from page 73

ory's shadow, and create a story we wish were true instead of acknowledging the very human successes and failures that make us who we are here and now. But it is a dangerous human habit, one that traps us in a tape loop of confusion, denial and nostalgia. Memory should not be a soothing sedative, although it can bring us great joy to remember the heights and pleasures we loved. Even the challenges we faced are part of life's loving lessons that guide us to our deepest calling and gifts.

In our private lives, nostalgia for past stability edits our memory down to a Hallmark movie. Even the blessings of the present feel inadequate in comparison. Like a cheerful Facebook page, selective memory "writes over" the past and heightens paralysis and disappointment. It even seeps into our dreams and aspirations, turning our attention back to "better days" because of the added stress on our everyday lives.

In an effort to comfort ourselves with nostalgia, many of us (me included!) attempt time travel by binge watching old TV series and movies. Our stories grow small and outdated; our energy turns inward. Our ideas become smaller, too. Those who agree with us, or mirror our beliefs about these better times become our new and sometimes only friends. We push away those who disagree or challenge those beliefs, because we forget the civil art of building bridges, preferring to hide behind the comfort of nostalgic certainties.

Like dementia patients, we become increasingly isolated, afraid and vulnerable. We move in and out of clarity, and over time feel less present. As we withdraw from the world, we move away from the purpose that feeds and satisfies our souls. We envy the "brave" ones who understand that all our life experiences polish us like diamonds, connecting us to new friends, paths, and adventures.

When we let go of the myth of glorious high school or college, or some other "perfect" time (culturally or personally!) as all happy all the time, we free ourselves to see experience as a prism, not a frozen photograph. Isn't it possible that the dark passage through a job loss or an illness can bring us into a greater light? What if our complex lives give us complex joys? When we remember our lives fully, we see our true values and answer the call to adventure. Our strengths and gifts shine a light into the world.

Remembering the Past Safeguards the Future

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." — George Santayana

In 1948, Winston Churchill famously revised Santayana's 1905 guideline as, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Whichever version resonates with you, the bottom line is that revisiting and understanding our past challenges helps us create a better world today.

Currently, history is not only being hidden, it is being rewritten in hopes we will remember it differently, no matter what the facts were. In schools, history books are being revised to edit and reframe what we're teaching our children. That very past has multiple versions active in our daily conversations, when we talk about history at all, depending on our political and personal perspectives. And even recent events are hard to see clearly as deep fake AI "memes" and propaganda pop up on social media hours or minutes after they happen.

Remembering what we have learned and what we have experienced helps us pay attention to these strategic attempts to make us forget. The result of forgetting history is we doubt our own memories; and if we give in to the pressure to conform, we forget ourselves. Vaclav Havel wrote, "The real test of a man is not when he plays the role that he wants for himself but when he plays the role destiny has for him."

We need to be accountable, not only for our actions but for our learning and growth. If we build our house on the rock of authentic memory and presence, we can solve the complex challenges we face today. We remember to remember who we truly are.

In this confusing and dissociative time, we must resist false certainties and freeze-dried reconstituted memes, from within or without. Our memories and histories are our own, and shape our health, our choices, our courage, and our futures.

Memories are tools for building freedom and community. They make us human and carry us forward, if we are alive to their lessons. As we affirm the power of memory, we answer these questions at the core of our being:

What beliefs and values have you learned, and how do you understand the role your soul was made to fill?

How can you use that knowledge to heal and grow strong, embracing the call your experiences have prepared you to answer?

What service will help you stand, authentic and whole, fully awake and fully present?

Let renewed memory guide you home to yourself.

Carol Burbank is a writer, educator, and coach, founder of Storyweaving, LLC, offering creative coaching, writing mentoring, and workshops in Maryland. She writes a regular column on leadership and spirituality for Science of Mind Magazine and teaches at Pacifica Graduate Institute. She can be reached at cburbank@storyweaving.com or her website at www.storyweaving.com.

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Pathways Walks With the Monks

BY MICHELLE ALONSO

On February 11, The Walk for Peace — a long-distance initiative by Buddhist monks from the Hrong Đạo Vipassana Bhavana Center in Fort Worth, Texas — ended its nearly 2300-mile pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., at the Lincoln Memorial. The women of Pathways were honored to join the crowds who braved the cold to celebrate the 19 monks who walked for 109 days simply to promote peace, compassion, and nonviolence.

During the concluding ceremony, the Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara, the troupe's leader, delivered closing remarks where he invited everyone to live five seconds of their life everyday with mindfulness, and doing so "can change one person, one family, one community, one nation and the world." He then described what each second represents. It is summarized here to remind us we can choose to spend these five seconds echoing their messages, so The Walk for Peace continues on the path.

FIVE SECONDS...

First second: Loving kindness.

"If each person takes just one second to ask, 'Will this hurt anyone?', the world would already be kinder."

Second second: Compassion.

"Compassion does not mean agreement. It means not adding more pain. A compassionate world does not abandon the weak and does not create more suffering."

Third second: Love.

"Start with truly loving yourself... Love the person in front of you whether you know them or not. That is how we create a more loving world."

Fourth second: Harmony.

"Harmony does not mean sameness, it means respect without agreement and coexistence without fear."

Fifth second: Hope.

"Hope that people can return to morality. Hope that violence is not the final answer. Hope that the world can soften... Hope is a vital light that must never go out."

View the Buddhist monks final 'Walk for Peace' meditation at Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXKibsoF7wPs>.



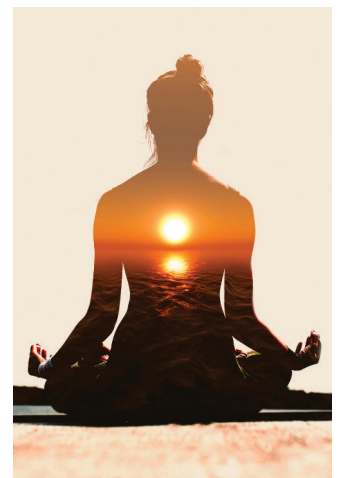
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Welcoming Spring With Ritual and Creativity

BY JAZMINE JENNÉ WILLIAMS

Spring approaches us with eyes half open. Cautiously, it ripples in while the sagacity of Winter remains imprinted. The soil swells with scents of fresh water and undisturbed clay. Life emanates its longing for the sun with new bulbs to greet the surface. Finally, a new season arrives much more attuned than before.

Spring, in its recalibration, is not as deliberate as summer, yet more forgiving than winter. It knows it must take its time in arriving, as it is the midwife, ushering in the wisdom winter has given. Spring Equinox reminds us we can always begin again, and we can do so steadily.

As we welcome the Spring Equinox, let us observe how it arrives in our bodies, using a simple ritual for attunement and creative practices to nurture the energy of this time.

From Root to Sacral

Every season has an impact not only on the earth, but also on our bodies. With or without our acknowledgement, it responds to the tones seeping out from the earth. The body carries an ancient awareness from the waters and soil that reside in it. During energetically potent times such as equinoxes, these are the moments we listen to it most. The body becomes the translator of the Earth's rhythms.

Spring arriving in our bodies can come just as subtly. Warmth flushes back to the skin as we unthaw from what once was. Movement and creative desires begin pulsing us into wakefulness. Our body starts to transition out of the root and into the creative waters of the sacral womb.

A Ritual in Listening

The spirit of Spring invokes a tender stewardship of what is seeking to grow. Like all new growth, it is not to be rushed but rather invited in. Spring Equinox is a threshold for creating ritual around what is becoming.

Starting with a simple practice of putting your hands on your womb and/or the seat of the sacrum, you ask your body what it needs and hold with silence for a response. Next, move your hands to your heart center, and ask your spirit what it needs (in the same way). The responses can come as a faint smell of lavender, a feeling of longing, a hidden ache. There is no right way for the body or the spirit to speak to you; simply open and quiet yourself enough to receive it.

It is the listening that creates the ritual and the silence that initiates its medicine.

Creativity

The energy of spring is the Mother of creativity. After being in colder months centered around introspection and contemplation, it feels good to ease yourself back into the swing of forward momentum. Adopting a creative practice (if you don't have one already) connects you with the most potent aspect of spring. You don't have to consider yourself creative to welcome in a creative practice. This is about following curiosities and giving them space to breathe.

Ideas for a Creative Practice

- **A Wildflower Watercolor Painting.** With this particular practice, try to relinquish control and become a witness to the dance between water and paint.
- **A Collage Embodying Sentiments of the Equinox.** This can include a paper collage, fabric, or even digital. Collages are beautiful metaphors for spring. It involves the process of



creating something new from that which once had another form.

- **Cooking With the Season.** Putting together a seasonal meal can be such a creative process. It evokes all the senses by combining different flavors, colors, and aromas harvested in the spring. Think of bright colors and fresh flavors when creating your spring dishes. If it is within your means, visit your local farmers' market to pick up produce in season, such as strawberries, radishes, asparagus, and rhubarb, to name a few. Let your imagination roam free.

While firmly rooted with the wisdom of winter, we are now sprouting upward into the gentle clasp of spring. Integrating seasonal rituals and practices into our lives is a way of honoring the Equinox while also creating a ceremony around it. Now it is time to embrace how far you have come, and revel in the sacredness of the earth sprouting right before your feet.

Over and over in the butterfly we see the idea of transcendence.

In the forest we see not the inert but the aspiring.

*In the water that departs forever and forever returns,
we experience eternity.*

— Mary Oliver

Jasmine Jenné Williams is an Illustrator, Writer, and Mother based in Washington D.C. She received her bachelor's degree in Complementary and Alternative Health from her studies at San Diego State University and Ashford University in San Diego, California. She writes and creates art pieces that focus on the natural world around us and the complexities of our internal realm. You can find more of her written medicines on Substack at: <https://jazzminejenne.substack.com>.



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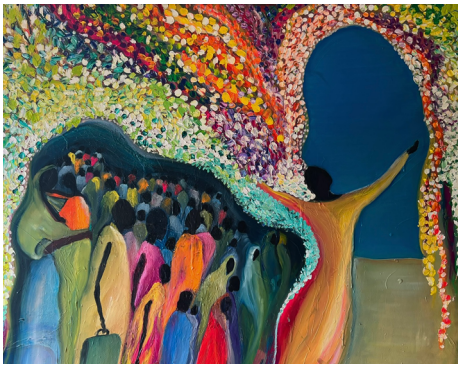
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THE PATH OF PATIENCE

BY MENTWAB EASWARAN (MENTU)



Art Statement:

The Path of Patience (48” x 48”, Oil on Canvas, 2023) is a reflection on the lives of those displaced from their homes, people forced into camps, temporary shelters, and makeshift spaces where time stretches and survival becomes the only certainty. The work speaks to the quiet endurance of those who have lost every-

thing familiar, yet continue to move forward, carrying not only their belongings, but their memories, their grief, and their dignity.

In this painting, the path is not only physical, it is emotional, spiritual, and generational. It represents the long wait that displacement demands, waiting for safety, waiting for answers, waiting for a place to belong again. Yet within this waiting, there is resilience. The figures remain upright, unified, and present. Their movement becomes a shared act of strength, an unspoken agreement to continue, even when the future is unclear.

The vibrant colors are intentional. They challenge the assumption that displaced lives are only defined by sorrow. Even in hardship, there is humanity, identity, community, and hope. The painting honors the resilience of people who refuse to be reduced to victims, and instead stand as witnesses to survival.

The Path of Patience is ultimately a tribute: to those who endure the unbearable, to those who keep walking, and to those who find unity in the simple, powerful decision not to give up.

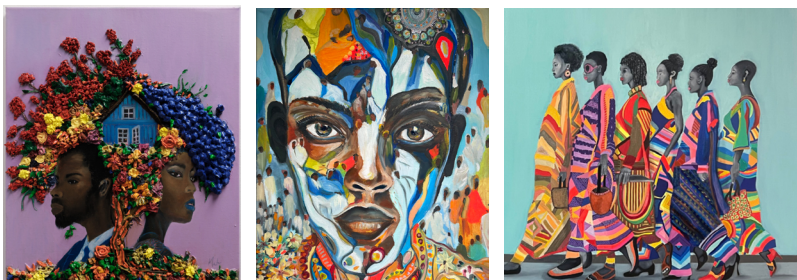
Mentwab Easwaran (Mentu) is an Ethiopian-born visual artist and designer based in the Washington, D.C. area. Immigrating to the United States at the age of 21, she has spent the past 32 years navigating the intersection of culture, identity, and creative expression.

Her artistic journey began in childhood, but upon arriving in the U.S., the necessity of financial stability led her to a career in design. For the past 28 years, she has worked as a designer while continuing to paint, refining her artistic practice and engaging with communities that shape her work.

Mentu’s art is deeply influenced by the resilience of the Ethiopian immigrant community. Her work explores themes of migration, belonging, and perseverance, weaving together personal and collective narratives. Through rich textures, layered symbolism, and evocative storytelling, Mentu captures the experiences of those who challenge boundaries, nurture one another, and redefine the meaning of home.

Committed to fostering dialogue and connection through art, Mentu’s work stands as a testament to the power of creativity in bridging cultures, amplifying unheard voices, and inspiring transformation.

Explore more of Mentu’s work at <https://ethiogallery.com>.



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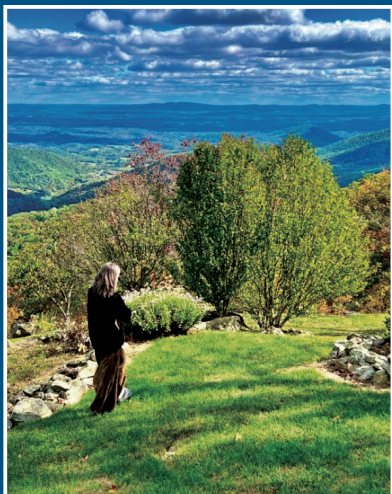
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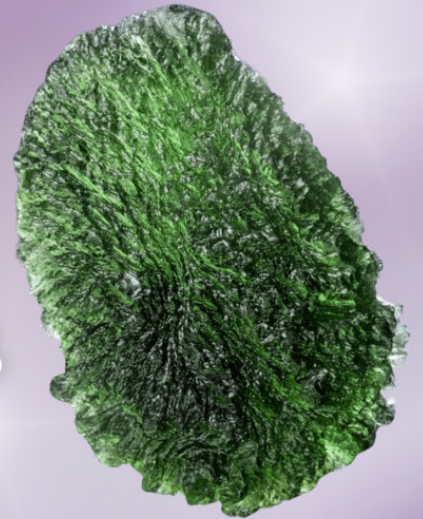


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