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Spirituality & Health

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PAIN'S MESSAGE

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BY STEPHEN KIESLING

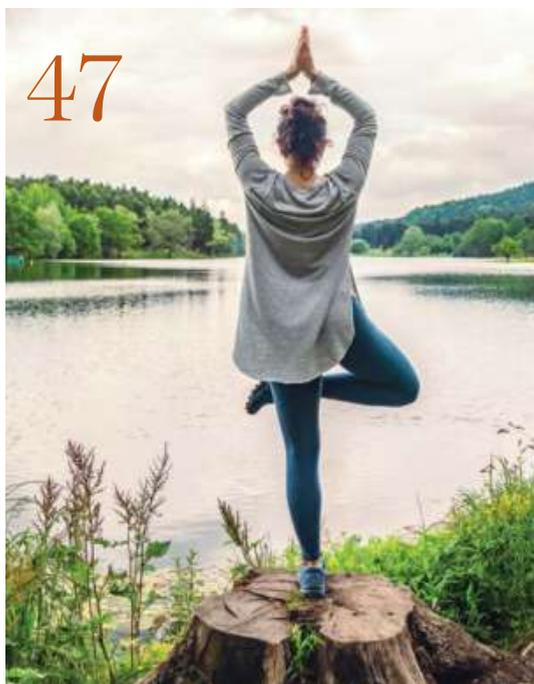
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Radical. Originally the word meant root. A radical change was a change that returned to the root, the most important things.

What's striking about the seven people profiled in our spiritual radicals section (p. 38) is how root-focused they are. Returning to the basics can require pushing at the boundaries. If you are progressive enough, you get back to where you started.

Emily Qureshi-Hurst reconnects strands of inquiry that separated long ago. Jes Kast returns to the words of her tradition's scripture. Kameelah Rashad reminds us that a spiritual journey can only get so far without physical wellbeing and basic security. It's radical only in that it's obvious, but sometimes we forget the obvious things. Rabbi Wayne Dosick restores vibrancy to old rituals. And on and on.

I see a theme of returning to basics in other parts of this issue, too.

Kevin Anderson (p. 12) describes how compassion starts with self-compassion, an idea that is somehow both revolutionary and self-evident. Julie Peters (p. 20) writes about the Stages of Change theory, which is a modern spin on an intuitive idea: Change is hard, and sometimes we move backwards as part of overall progress.



BEATRICE NUSSBAUM

If there's a theme in this issue, it's about freeing ourselves from a kind of mental pollution, emerging from a fog of confusion. Putting away distractions and rationalizations to focus on what's core.

And while we're at it, maybe we should push away the dinner plate, too. Dr. Andreas Michalsen (p. 32) makes a compelling argument that eating less frequently—returning to an older way of partaking of food—can be spiritually enlightening and physically lightening.

More metaphorically, Nikki Giovanni (p. 70) tells *S&H* that “we know that water is the beginning of life, and that nothing will grow without it. I love that, because water changes. ... Ultimately, I want to be a cloud. And when I become a cloud, I become rain again. That's what's going to keep us all alive.”

After the heaviness of the holidays, it's time to dissipate a little, evaporate. Spend more time forgetting what you know. Lighten the load. Be radical—focus on roots.

—BEN NUSSBAUM

Spirituality & Health

volume 24, number 1

Celebrating our third decade as the body-mind-spirit wellness expert.

We draw from the wisdom of many traditions and cultures with an emphasis on sharing practices. We look to science to help provide a context for the spiritual quest. We acknowledge that in our language, the words “whole,” “health,” and “holy” share a common root.

Please contact us with any comments or inquiries at the email addresses listed below.

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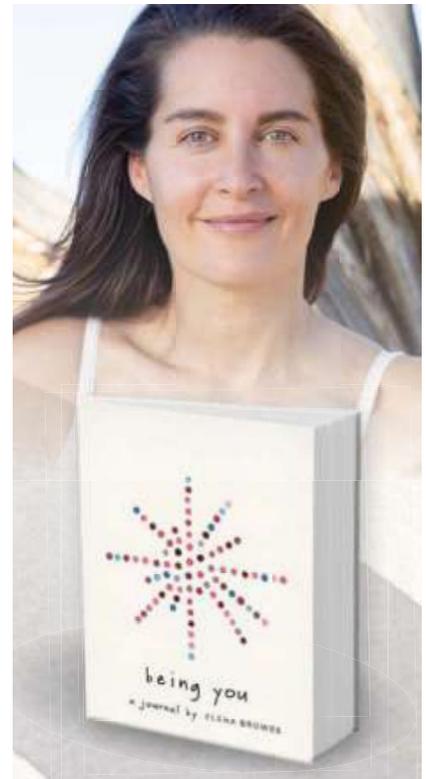
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A journal from yoga luminary and artist Elena Brower to open you to self-discovery, joy, and healing.

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“Artistry as a way to cultivate liberative distinction and healing.”
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“Let her designs inspire you to turn inward.”
GABRIELLE BERNSTEIN



Carmen García Gordillo

With an assist from Google Translate, *S&H* editor Ben Nussbaum and Spanish artist Carmen García Gordillo discussed dreams, snakes, yoga, and much more.

How long have you been an illustrator? What led you to this career?

Carmen: Painting has been my job for over 30 years. Mostly I have done large-format paintings on canvas or paper, and only occasionally some illustration work, usually book covers. With the economic crisis (of 2008), I continued painting but mostly in smaller formats. I started drawing with colored pencils,

gouache, using collage. Later I began drawing with the iPad, which is what I use the most today. One thing led to another ... and so illustration became my main activity, and painting took a back seat.

Your images like the one with the angel projecting light from her hand (see facing page)—do you have a story in your mind and then create an image to match the story?

Well, it depends. Sometimes the image comes first and sometimes it is the story or the feeling that you want to convey that appears first. This illustration is part of a series about winged beings and represents dream and inspiration. Dreams have always been important to me. I dream a lot and sometimes I have more permanent memories of dreams than of real experiences.

You have a whole series of women doing yoga. What does yoga mean to you?

I have practiced yoga, tai chi, and meditation for years. These practices are a very important part of my day, to get to know myself and find meaning.

Illustrating these themes allows me to somehow unite these two aspects of my life. I intend to translate into images what I feel internally—what is silence, calm, energy for me. I do not know if I succeed but I assure you that I try.





« *Dream*

Carmen García Gordillo
carmengarciagordillo.com

a matter of balance, and even with red tones you could transmit a warm and cozy tranquility.

Do things like snakes, stars, and cats mean something specific to you? Or are they symbols that can mean different things depending on the image?

In the same way that the female figure is very present in my work, I also feel myself very inclined to introduce animals and plants. Snakes, in addition to having some mystery, have a sinuous shape that works for me. Really, in my daily life I've been surrounded mainly by dogs and cats. There are symbols that have accompanied me for years—moons, stars, eyes, palm trees, all kinds of animals, all these are elements related to mystery, to the hidden. Sometimes I look for exactly the symbol I need to use, but sometimes I just use something because of its shape.

In your work I see women who appear to be from so many different places—Japanese women, Chinese women, blondes, and so forth. Can you tell me about this?

I can't tell you exactly why, but I've always been interested in different cultures. I have friends from many parts of the world. I like to travel and discover new landscapes, and I like to experiment with food recipes from other countries. Arabic, Japanese, or Korean are as common in my kitchen as paella. I suppose all that is reflected in my work. **S&H**

A few years ago I did a master's degree in meditation, relaxation, and mindfulness at the University of Barcelona. My final work was on the relationship between art and meditation. On one side art can be used as a meditative anchor and on the other side meditation helps the artist focus his work.

Right now I am illustrating a book on chakras and occasionally I illustrate articles for a yoga magazine on philosophy related to yoga, which has led me to learn about very interesting topics that I knew very little about, such as sankalpa, duality, doshas, impermanence, and so on.

I love your colors. Do you choose certain colors to convey certain moods?

Color is a very important part of my work. With color, sensations are transmitted that cannot be communicated in any other way.

Color has its balance and I try to find it. Now it is easier, there are even programs that generate color palettes, but for me it has been always something intuitive. You have an idea and you combine colors until you feel that everything fits and then you get a calm feeling. It is also true that color has its own language. If you want to convey quietness it is difficult to do it with a red color. But I think that above all it is

Winter Homes

My goldfish are finding
winter homes under slabs
in the pond

Mother goldfish birthed
and hid four babies
this summer

they were not eaten
by birds
or their fathers

the heater is on

it's my contribution
to mother nature

I have aired my quilts
and washed my blankets

I will cuddle
with my dog
a good book and with any luck
a cup
of Frontier Soup

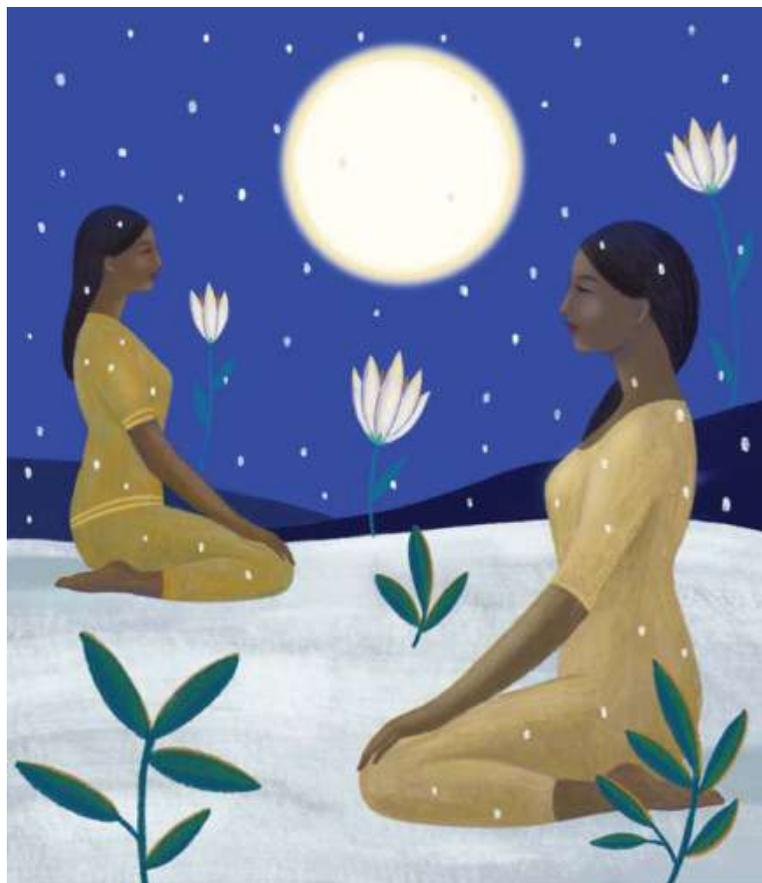
finding
my winter home

—*Nikki Giovanni*

Excerpted from the book *Make Me Rain* by Nikki Giovanni. Copyright © 2020 by Nikki Giovanni. From *William Morrow*, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Reprinted by permission.



There is nothing as warm and wonderful as winter. Good books. A friendly dog. Homemade soup. How could I not love the idea of the coming season? Winter is our season of love. Spring is when we go out and plant flowers and put our seeds in the ground so that our basil and rosemary and tarragon will grow. Sometimes there is even a good crop of okra. But winter is the time of being at home together with the people we love and the little animals who love us. —**NIKKI GIOVANNI**



Snow Moon Meditation 
Carmen García Gordillo
carmengarciagordillo.com

LEARN HOW TO *Cultivate Healthy Lifelong* RELATIONSHIPS

Psychologist Kelly Flanagan shows how each of us can enjoy the deeply satisfying, transformational love of companionship. With self-knowledge and an understanding of our own loneliness and emotional defenses leading the way, we can make the choice to love more vulnerably.



Kelly Flanagan is a practicing clinical psychologist and a popular blogger and speaker on topics related to marriage, parenting, and spiritual formation. The author of *The Marriage Manifesto* and *Loveable*, he has appeared on the *TODAY Show* and has written for publications such as *Reader's Digest*, and *Huffington Post*.



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For over a half century **RABBI RAMI** has been devoted to a single teaching: *Alles iz Gott*, "Everything is God." To learn more, visit his website rabbirami.com.

Religion and Politics

Q It seems to me that religion and politics are inextricably intertwined. So much so, in fact, that I think religion is simply politics by another name. Was this always the case or is this something new?

Rabbi Rami: Religion and politics have been intertwined from the beginning. While some argue religion is about ethics and politics is about power, I would say both are about power. For example, every religion, albeit each in its own way, affirms the ethic of "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31), yet every religion defines "neighbor" in such a way so as to restrict love to those people the politically powerful find useful. This is religious ethics in service to political power, at which point the difference between religion and politics is moot.

I'm not religious but I do believe in God. My son asked me to define what I mean when I say "God." When I said I couldn't, he challenged me to stop using words I couldn't define. Do you think he's right?

Yes. While I understand that many people find the word "God" comforting in and of itself without needing to define it, I suggest you avoid using words that you cannot define. When I use the word "God," I am speaking of *Chiut*, the Hebrew word for "aliveness." For me God is the Aliveness happening in, with, and as all existence. This is similar to St. Paul's definition of God as "that in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Either learn to articulate what you mean when you use the word "God" or use another word you can define.

I have a friend who is deeply engaged with QAnon. He literally believes liberals are pedophiles who drink the blood of children in the name of Satan. As a liberal Catholic I'm horrified by this and have told him so. He says my Church has trafficked in children for decades and I drink the blood of God. How do I combat this madness?

If you are talking about the madness of priestly pedophilia, I suggest radical transparency on the part of the Church, a willingness to immediately turn pedophiles over to law enforcement, and the swift ordination of women priests. If you

FOR ME GOD IS THE ALIVENESS HAPPENING IN, WITH, AND AS ALL EXISTENCE.

are talking about the madness of QAnon, I suggest you can do very little. QAnon is a cult and cults are rarely taken down from the outside. Either they collapse from within due to the corrupt nature of their leadership and/or the violent behavior of their adherents, or they evolve into an established religion by growing in numbers, dollars, and political influence. As you wait to see which path QAnon follows, I suggest you distance yourself from your friend.

The God I love is Jesus. My fiancé loves Krishna. She loves her god no less than I love mine, but there can't be more than one God. I love this woman, but I am troubled by her loving her god.

Any suggestions?

Let me offer you three suggestions: First, stop referring to your fiancé's God as "god" and recognize that Jesus and Krishna are both doorways to the Ineffable. Second, make time to read and discuss two books with your fiancé: Eknath Easwaran's *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living* and Ravi Ravindra's *Christ the Yogi: A Hindu Reflection on the Gospel of John*. Third, postpone your wedding until you can fear Krishna less and love your fiancé more.

I asked a friend who is an imam about Hell and who goes there. He said that Hell is God's business and we should stay out of it. What do you think?

I agree with the imam: Hell is God's business. My question is this: Why worship a God whose business is Hell? Religions that believe in Hell do so for at least three reasons: 1) Hell promotes

religious conformity; 2) Hell provides people with a perverse sense of self-righteousness knowing that people who disagree with them will burn; and 3) Hell offers solace to those who live in countries that outlaw religious persecution in this life by allowing them to fantasize about religious persecution in the next life. Any God who is in the Hell business is a God I would seriously avoid.

There are so many holy books: Torah, Gospels, Koran, Bhagavad Gita, Book of Mormon, Course in Miracles—can they all be true? And, if not, how do I determine which among them is true?

First you have to define what is Truth. For me Truth is the four-fold teaching of Perennial Wisdom: 1) All reality is a manifesting of God called by many names: Aliveness, God, Nature, Allah, Mother, Brahman, Tao, etc.; 2) Every person has the capacity to know God directly; 3) Knowing God leads to acting godly in

accordance with the Golden Rule; and 4) Knowing God and acting godly is your highest calling as a human being. When a book reflects this Truth, it is true; when it doesn't, it is false. "Holy" is beside the point.

I hold my Protestant faith responsible for white supremacy, anti-Semitism, racism, and genocide against indigenous peoples. This isn't what Jesus taught. How did my religion become the fountain-head of evil?

It didn't, because it isn't. Genocide, slavery, supremacy, and suppression of the "other" is common to almost every religion. This is because religions are often more concerned with their self-preservation than with people's Self-realization. Self-preservation demands a zero-sum worldview of "us against them" while Self-realization cultivates a non-zero worldview of "all of us together." If your religion is about self-preservation rather than Self-realization you might consider finding a healthier religion. **S&H**

My friends and I, both Jews and Christians, are finding it harder and harder to pray the triumphalist liturgy of our respective faiths: We're chosen, they're saved. What should I do?

I suggest you and your friends go as a group to your respective houses of worship and listen carefully to the liturgies celebrated there. Talk about your experiences afterward and explore what thoughts and

feelings these prayers trigger in you. Some people can reframe the liturgy to be more loving and inclusive. Others can't. Bottom line: Pray what you mean and mean what you pray. Or don't pray at all. This isn't complicated, but it does take courage.



Put Your Self-Compassion on First, Then Assist Others

I am a good, kind, and ethical person, but I feel that I sometimes lack compassion. Maybe that's because in the family I grew up in we were not taught to think of others. I would like to know how I can become a more compassionate person.

Kevin: Your question made me think of a safety instruction anyone who flies has heard many times: “In case of a loss of pressure on the plane, put your oxygen mask on first, then assist others.” If you try to be a hero to the people around you without first ensuring your own oxygen flow, you will quickly pass out. Then you’ll be in real trouble and unavailable to help others.

What does this have to do with becoming more compassionate? Growing up I was taught that the highest ethical guide is *love your neighbor as yourself*. The emphasis was always on expanding our perception of who’s our neighbor. We were to be sources of love, and presumably compassion, for every other human being. As important as that is, though, no one taught me how to put my self-compassion mask on first. Self-compassion was never discussed because we were supposed to be other-centered, not self-centered.

In his book *Compassion*, the late Jesuit Henri Nouwen said he knew few people interested in becoming more compassionate. He said this was because becoming capable of suffering with others requires that we have stood in the fire of our own suffering. There aren’t lots of people lining up to suffer so they can be better at helping others who suffer. We may think that being a “positive person” who does not dwell on current or past suffering is more important than letting our suffering transform into compassion.

We don’t have to go looking for dramatic new experiences of suffering to become

more compassionate human beings. “Compassion” comes from two Latin roots: *passio* (suffering, as in the passion of Christ) and *com* (with). *Pati*, the root word of *passio*, means to endure, undergo, or experience. So even if we’re not sure we’ve gone through anything we would call intense suffering, it’s likely we’ve all endured, undergone, or experienced something challenging in life.

Becoming more compassionate begins with looking deeply into our acquaintance with suffering at each stage of life. One of my training supervisors said, “No one gets out of childhood without some wounds.” The same is true of marriage, parenting, and even friendship. Each of us can ask ourselves how we relate to our experience of suffering. Do we compare or minimize it? Were we taught to “suck it up,” to not be weak? Do we ruminate on it, perhaps heaping on repeated doses of self-judgment and criticism? Do we convert a certainty that we’re beyond weakness into judgment of others who struggle with sexuality, mental health problems, self-doubt, or other problems? Or maybe we have learned to accept that suffering can “ferment and season you as few human or divine ingredients can” (Hafiz, as translated by Daniel Ladinsky).

Mahatma Gandhi was asked once about his three most challenging

Send your questions to DrKevin@spiritualityhealth.com. Questions may be edited for clarity or length. Dr. Anderson cannot respond to all letters. Sending a letter, whether answered in this column or not, does not create a doctor-patient relationship. Information in this column is for general psychoeducational purposes and is not a substitute for assessment and care provided in person by a medical or mental health professional.



enemies. He responded that the British empire was the easiest of the three and the Indian people were second-most challenging. “My most formidable opponent,” he said, “is a man named Mohandas K. Gandhi—with him I seem to have very little influence.” His toughest challenge was with himself, and the same is true for each of us. If we want to be more compassionate with others, the hardest work is to increase our compassion for ourselves.

If we have learned to tap into a source of compassion larger than our small selves—call it Compassion, Love, Source, God—that abundant energy wants to fill us and spill over to others. This allows us to give compassionate presence not from depletion or self-sacrifice but from continual replenishment. We become not just the mask, but the oxygen tank too.

Compassion is like any other great virtue: If we announce that we’re going to share our abundant supply of it with others, we’ve already lost it. Every genuine virtue that flows through our lives is grounded in humility. So how do we know if we are growing in our capacity for compassion? As we practice self-compassion, we might ask less, “Am I becoming more compassionate?” and focus more on noticing a waning of self-judgment, which results in a reduced tendency to judge others. Most people judge themselves more harshly than anyone else on the planet, so working on increasing self-compassion is much the same as decreasing self-judgment.

I don’t think we ever get past the need to practice self-compassion any more than we ever get beyond the need to breathe. Without the constant inspiration of self-compassion, the soul begins turning blue! I hope you’ll

Bring your sorrows to mind.

Bring your sorrows to mind-fulness. Breathe.

Bring your sorrows to mind-fulness. Breathe in compassion for yourself and everyone.

Bring your sorrows to mind-fulness. Breathe in compassion for yourself, and every one of your heartaches is held so tenderly by Love.

From *Now is Where God Lives* © 2018 by Kevin Anderson

try the ideas below as a start to a daily practice of self-compassion.

...

For practice:

- Sit quietly in childlike awe of your breath. Pretend you’re breathing self-compassion from an infinite source. Let it go to every cell of your body and every corner of your mind and spirit.
- Put your hands in the prayer position centered over your chest. Imagine they are not your hands, but the very hands of Love and Compassion. Then criss-cross them over your heart. Breathe slowly and gently as you receive the loving embrace of unconditional Compassion. Try making a “shhh ...” sound as you exhale, as a loving parent might do for a distressed child.

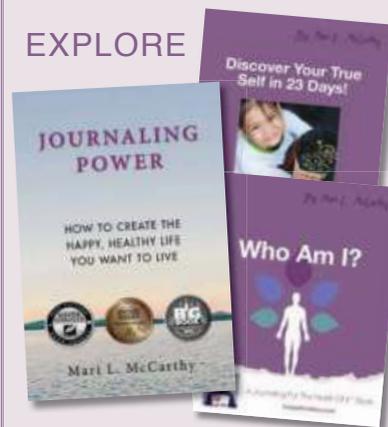
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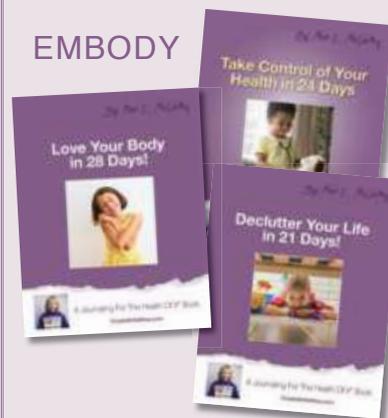
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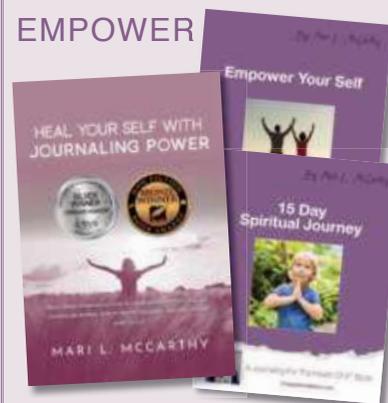
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Dr. Karen Gedney

MARIA OKORN tells the story of a medical doctor who found her calling behind bars.

DR. KAREN GEDNEY always aspired to be a healer. She never imagined that she would spend 30 years in a prison in Carson City, Nevada.

After a four-year assignment for the National Health Corps, working with the incarcerated became a lifelong vocation for the internal medicine specialist. “I always wanted to work and help people who were the underdog,” Gedney recalls. Prison “is not oriented for healing or medical care; in fact, it’s the exact opposite. It’s oriented to shame and punish and make people miserable.”

Conversations and interactions with inmates affirmed her notion that destructive behavior stems from a root problem in need of care. She wanted to discern these causes: “I have a high curiosity gene and a low judgmental gene. Instead of ignoring what they did, I was curious as to why. To me, if you don’t understand why someone has a certain behavior, how as a society can we ever impact a potential change?”

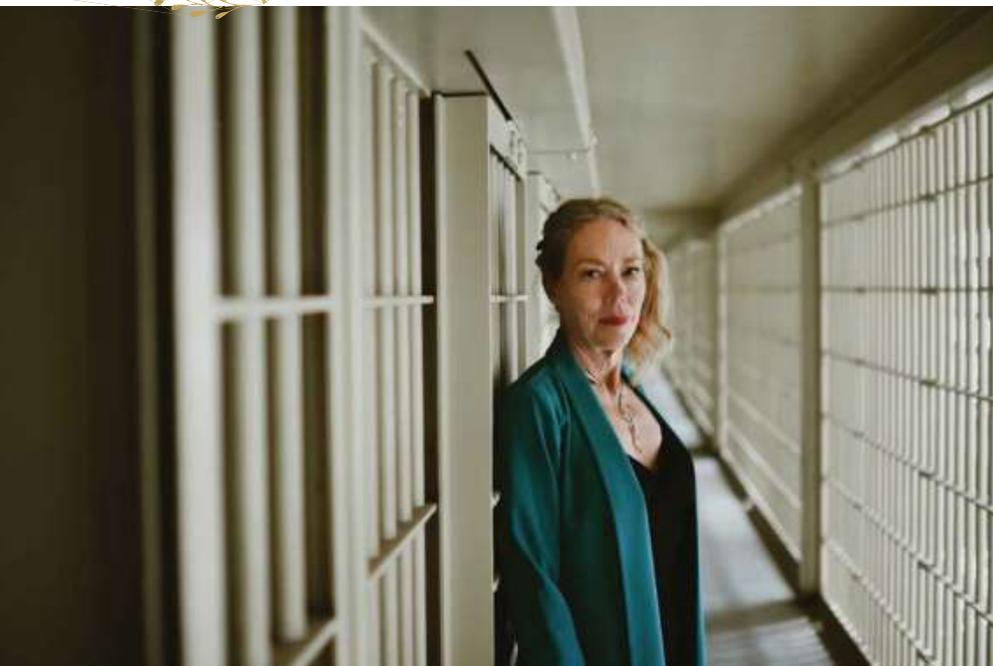
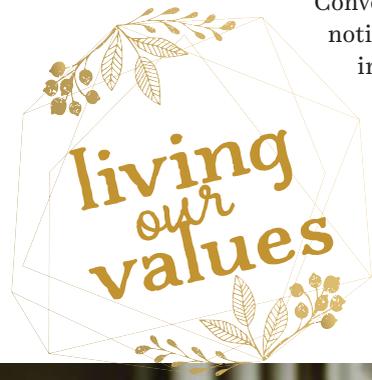
Far from enervating her, the work with this difficult population energized her. “A lot of people are lost

spiritually because they don’t have a purpose. You really feel fulfilled when you actually can help someone, and then if you see where it makes a significant impact on their life, it changes what you think is important. That’s purpose—to actually be part of the system that works to make things better,” she says.

Delving into the depths of her patients’ lives galvanized the internist to be a conduit of change. “It gave me the whole sense that society has thrown away this large group of individuals, but they still have qualities that we appreciate,” Gedney maintains. “What if we valued and supported those qualities instead of constantly shaming and punishing these people? Would we be better off as a society when we opened up the door?”

As a child in Germany during World War II, Gedney’s mother experienced starvation and captivity in Russian POW camps. Her mother’s recollections from that dire period resonated deeply with Gedney: “There was something about people in power positions that abused instead of protected that was really ingrained in my psyche. And I saw that in the prison system. In the prison system, if you have a captor and captive, unless you really have people who are watching and are holding people accountable, very bad things can happen.”

“I was in an odd position of power as a doctor,” she recalls, and she did her best to use that power for good. She faced tremendous impediments. In one horrifying incident, she was





“If you really want to do something, the front end of preventing the kids at risk from ending up in the criminal justice system—that’s where the greatest bang for the buck is.”

—DR. KAREN GEDNEY

Do you know a Community Champion? Write to us at editors@spiritualityhealth.com.

raped and held hostage. “My German mother instilled in us growing up that if it gets tough, you just get tougher ...

you never complain, you just survive.” Gedney’s friend Pam Pech says: “It is one thing to do a job. It is another thing to forgive, become an advocate for those who don’t always have advocacy, and even more to walk your talk.”

One of the ways that she valued and supported prisoners was by teaching life-skills classes on her own time, including inviting guest speakers, offering study materials, and leading discussion groups. Now retired, Gedney still works tirelessly towards individual and systemic reform. She

maintains that prevention is imperative to keep individuals out of the system. She has volunteered for decades with

the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. “If you really want to do something, the front end of preventing the kids at risk from ending up in the criminal justice system—that’s where the greatest bang for the buck is.”

She underscores that the public must be aware of the hurdles that previously incarcerated individuals have when integrating back into mainstream society. She asserts, “The community has to realize that if you make it harder for these individuals to truly have a chance, they have very limited options. You are then less

secure if they become desperate. The people who can truly succeed and be an asset again, you want to make that happen.”

Gedney recently wrote a memoir recounting her experiences, *Thirty Years Behind Bars*. She is confident it will increase awareness among readers about the need for “more holistic prison reform.”

“I really hope that the reader reads it and experiences a very different perspective of prison,” she declares. “I wanted the public to see it through different eyes, and what it would look like if you were oriented to prevent, heal, and support versus punish, harm, and get revenge.”

To learn more about Dr. Karen Gedney, visit discoverdrg.com. **S&H**

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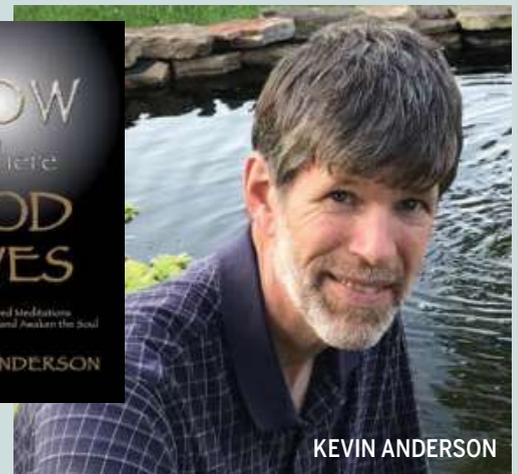
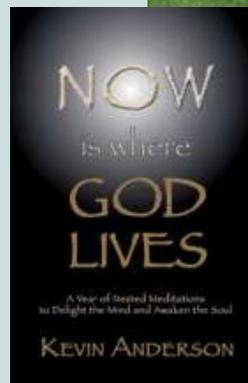
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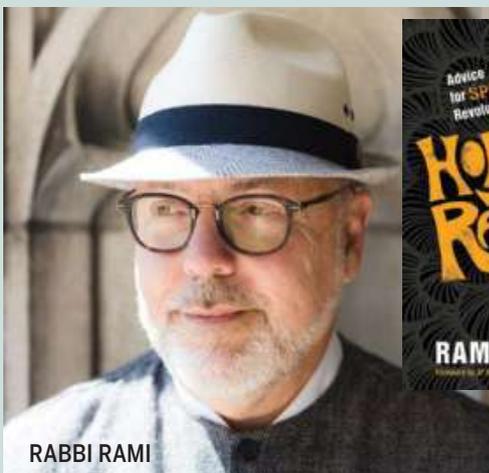


KEVIN ANDERSON

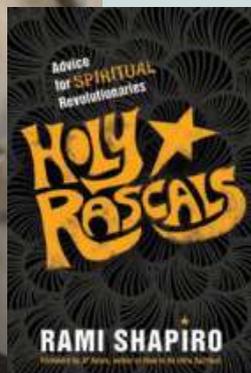
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MAKING THE MIND LEAP

Writer, painter, and Zen Buddhist **NATALIE GOLDBERG** searches for the heart of haiku.

ALLEN GINSBERG, the poet, first introduced me to haiku. “There are four great Japanese haiku writers,” he declared, holding up a finger for each one as he named them, in front of the class in summer 1976. We were at Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. “Basho, Buson, Issa, and Shiki.”

No women? I thought. Okay, I’d take the boys on and learn what I could from them, sure there were some women hidden in history.

He also told us that the formal five syllables, then seven, then five, often taught in Western schools, does not necessarily work in English. In Japanese each syllable counts. They don’t have *the, an, that*, those articles of speech, so he encouraged us not to worry about the count if we write or translate haiku. Only make sure the three lines make the mind leap.

“The only real measure of a haiku,” Allen told us that one hot July afternoon, “is upon hearing one, your mind experiences a small sensation of space”—he paused; I leaned in, breathless—“which is nothing less than God.”

Now, on the cusp of age 66, I am about to search for a grave near the foothills of Mount Hiei: Buson’s. The eighteenth-century painter and haiku master. I found Buson to be the least accessible in translation of the four named by Ginsberg. Only one or two books of his work have been translated into English.

Buson, who was born three years after Basho died, was deeply inspired by him. Buson considered Basho his haiku master.

The temple I plan to visit on the outskirts of Kyoto, where Buson is buried, is also famous for Basho’s hut, though it is not clear if Basho, with his walking stick, actually slept at that precise place on his wanderings while he circumambulated Mount Hiei, “shading the dust from his eyes”—the Zen way of saying “seeing clearly.”

But when Buson visited the hut years later, the grass room was only a pile of dirt. Buson engaged friends to rebuild it with him. He was a social man, though

he, like Basho, had spent time—five years—practicing in Buddhist temples as a lay priest. But he did not seem to have the desire for purification that drove Basho. Buson had a wife and daughter, and in his 60s, through the success of his paintings, was able to own a house in Kyoto.

After rebuilding Basho’s hut, Buson and his friends, as a way to honor Basho’s art, all vowed to meet there without fail twice a year to write haiku together and drink sake.

Before Basho, *hokku*, which later became the basis for the independent structure of haiku, was the starting verse of *renga*, a Japanese linked collaborative poetic form of at least two stanzas used for humorous entertainment at parties, to flirt with a courtesan, to display one’s cleverness. Basho took that first verse seriously, connected it to life and death, to a spiritual path, piercing through the blinding activities of daily life in the regimented society of sixteenth-century Japan to express the true muscle of a person’s being.

What is the way of haiku? Bare attention, no distractions, pure awareness, noticing only what is in the moment. Being connected to seasons, unconnected to self-clinging. And then, out of that, composing your experience in three lines that go beyond logic, that make the mind leap. In the center, a taste of emptiness. A frog, a crow, a turnip—the ordinary right in front of you is the realm of awakening. Pure Zen but not Zen.

“If you write five haiku in a lifetime, you are a haiku writer. If you write ten, you are a master,” Basho said. He didn’t mean don’t practice, don’t try, but he was saying

What is the way of haiku? Bare attention, no distractions, pure awareness, noticing only what is in the moment.

the stakes were high. In writing a real one, the world drops away, mind and body shatter, and the only thing left is the crow cawing. You’ve dropped the old yellow coat of yourself, your sorrow, desire, indifference—the world has stepped forward and you have stepped back, another way of coming home. To put this experience down in three lines is to transmit a taste of what is possible and pass it on. Great generosity. You penetrate down through the generations.



PURCHASE, MARY AND JAMES G. WALLACH FOUNDATION GIFT, 2013

The Thirty-six Immortals of Haikai Verse 
Yosa Buson
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Even Basho
right up to death
longed for a haiku
N.G.

Though Basho and Buson studied in monasteries, they never became monks; they took their lives outside the cloistered walls into the immense world of nature. Both brought their understanding into poems that were passed down, but the haiku poems were not always immediately understandable. I contemplated Basho's most famous one for a long time:

Frog jumps
in old pond
water sound

I've seen different translations—
for instance:

Old pond
frog jumps in
plop!

Ancient pond—
frog jumps in
sound of the water

I've also seen this haiku made fun of maybe because it's simple yet painfully elusive. You know there is something there, but what? I feel the frustration:

Old poet jumps in
Frog jumps out

Was it morning, as I was munching toast outside? Or turning a corner in the car? Or glancing at my watch, about to go to an appointment? Yes, that was it—reaching for the knob, the door casing, the single window in the green-painted wood, I stepped over the threshold—his mind was empty, that's all there was, sitting or standing by the water—the flash movement of the frog, then the sound, the sound, the sound, filling his ears, his mind and heart. Nothing else in the whole world.

The realization poured through me like a waterfall, rushing to the bottom.

It might have been a dentist appointment. Piles of *People* magazines, two stray *New Yorkers*, a white paper cup of half-drunk tea on a table, the round impression of another one on the glass surface, hum of a drill in a room beyond the waiting room. I was no longer waiting. I had arrived in the middle of a famous haiku, no longer left out, outside, wanting in. No in or out. No nothing. Something. The old pond of the mind finally quiet.

Here's another translation:

At the ancient pond
A frog plunges
Water sound

Here Basho is that frog.

Natalie Goldberg is the author of fifteen books, including the classic bestseller *Writing Down the Bones*. She has taught writing as a practice for the past 45 years nationally and internationally.

RESOLUTION SOLUTION

New Year's resolutions never seem to stick.

JULIE PETERS explores a holistic approach to change.

2020 WAS A HELL OF A YEAR, and many of us have been looking forward to a new beginning—one that might involve better overall wellbeing. Want to meditate more in 2021 or spend more time in nature?

Traditional resolutions almost never stick. Why do we so often fail at making change?

One theory that might provide an answer is the Transtheoretical Model of Change—or, less pretentiously, the Stages of Change theory. This idea was developed by psychologists in the 1970s and 1980s. The idea is that change doesn't happen all at once. Instead, it needs careful contemplation and preparation. The stages are as follows:



- 1 PRECONTEMPLATION:** Not ready to admit something might need to change.
- 2 CONTEMPLATION:** Considering that something might need to change, but not ready to really do anything about it.
- 3 PREPARATION:** Getting ready to change by, for example, implementing supports and doing research.
- 4 ACTION:** Making the actual change.
- 5 MAINTENANCE:** Keeping the change going for at least six months.

Lapse and relapse are often included here as valid additional stages that cycle between action and maintenance. A lapse is a momentary slip, while a relapse is going right back to whatever the old habit or lifestyle was. It's normal to slip back into old behaviors from time to time, but that doesn't mean all is lost. Lapse and relapse can be really important learning moments that actually solidify real long-term change.

If something's not quite right in our lives, there's a reason we haven't changed. Our bad habits give us some benefit, and we have to be willing to let that benefit go if we want to change. The first three stages of this change

« *Pink Birds*
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It's normal to slip back into old behaviors from time to time, but that doesn't mean all is lost. Lapse and relapse can be really important learning moments that actually solidify real long-term change.

structure require that we come to terms with what we are losing when we decide to change.

Embracing the Stages of Change theory may be just what you need, but here are some other intentional ways to approach New Year's Resolutions this year.

Think further ahead. Many of us make New Year's resolutions around fitness, diet, or money management. It's usually a reaction to the holiday season, when we spend a lot of money and eat a little too much pumpkin pie. Think bigger.

What are your real goals for the next year—or even five years? How do these goals balance around physical, spiritual, intellectual, and social wellness? Don't go on a diet. Instead, change the way you eat forever. Don't commit to anything you don't really want to do in the long term.

Try a decisional balance sheet. A decisional balance sheet is basically a list of pros and cons, but a little amped up. Phrase the choices this way: What are the pros and cons of changing? On a separate sheet, what are the pros and cons of staying the same? This sheet will help you understand why you haven't changed yet and what kind of support you might need if you do want to change.

Honor the losses. Change almost always comes with a loss. It might be a small loss or a big one, and even the most positive changes come with some

measure of letting go. Your decisional balance sheet will help you understand how your "bad" habit or lifestyle has benefited you. Perhaps it comforts you or helps you fit in, but it comes with a higher cost than you're willing to pay now. Choosing to change will have an impact on your identity in some ways. Acknowledging that you might miss your old habit is important.

If it feels right, you might want to offer a small ritual to thank the old habit and let it go. This could be as simple as lighting a candle and mindfully throwing something out that represents the old habit, for example, or writing a letter to the old habit to thank it and let it know why you're ready to move on now.

Focus on values. Your values represent who you are at a core level. These are the concepts and beliefs that are most important to who you are in the world. Naturally, these values can change as we get older, and 2020 might have been a real challenge to your values. This might be a time to let through a new identity, a new self-concept that focuses on what's really important to you. If you want to make a change, it's likely that you want to do so because your old self is no longer in alignment with who you are now and who you want to be in the future. Take some time to meditate, journal, or talk with someone you trust about how this change might help you shift more deeply into who you are in a new year. **S&H**



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LABYRINTH 2021

LAVONNE LEONG explores the past, present, and future of the winding path.

THE FIRST TIME I WALKED a labyrinth, I didn't know what I was getting into. My head was full of Greek mythology, medieval history, and the confusions that come with being in your early 20s.

Back and forth, always turning before I could get my bearings, almost reaching the center and then veering away, never knowing exactly where I was in the process—I was disoriented, frustrated, intrigued. But I kept putting one foot in front of the other, even if it seemed it was never going to end, and suddenly, without realizing how close I had been, I had arrived in the center. On the way back out, I thought, *This is just like my life*. I was hooked.

Since then, I've walked many labyrinths. They've seen me through seasons of delight and seasons of upheaval, through two children and moves to three continents—they're a reset button for my soul.

But I never thought much about them beyond that. But with everything that's happening in the world, I wanted to know more. I reached out to Lauren Artress, the woman indirectly responsible for the existence of the first labyrinth I walked and for many of the labyrinths I have walked since. In 1991, times were tough in San Francisco, and Artress was a canon pastor at the city's Grace Cathedral. "We were deluged with the AIDS epidemic," says Artress. "We needed something we could do in silence, and together, in that very demanding time."

In the early 1990s, labyrinths in North America were few and far between. Those in Eurasia went, for the most part, unused.

Artress attended a workshop where attendees walked a Chartres-style labyrinth printed on canvas. She came away intrigued enough to make a journey to France, to Chartres Cathedral itself, where the original 13th-century pattern had been built into the cathedral floor as a symbol of pilgrimage. When her group arrived, says Artress, the famous Chartres labyrinth "was under chairs and had been closed for about 250 years, at that point." Having written earlier for permission, they moved the chairs, then walked the original Chartres pattern. A movement was born.

Artress decided that a labyrinth was needed at Grace Cathedral, and not just there. "The nature of the labyrinth



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is that it needs to be shared, and it needs to be everywhere," she says. "We have ballparks and family parks available for people in our communities. The labyrinth needs to be among them."

Artress now heads the nonprofit organization Veriditas, which was founded with a mission of "peppering the planet with labyrinths." To date, Veriditas has trained over 7,000 walk facilitators, and its Labyrinth Locator database of publicly available sites contains hundreds of labyrinths in almost 100 countries and all 50 U.S. states. They're in gardens and parking lots, meeting centers and playgrounds, at remote locations and in the hearts of cities.

Labyrinths appeared independently in places as diverse as India, indigenous North America, Tibet, and Crete. Labyrinth designs are as diverse as the creators and cultures from which they come, but they all feature a journey that is much larger within than without: bounded on the outside, seemingly infinite on the interior.

"Those who have done a lot of study in the history of labyrinths have found there are dormancy periods, periods of time where you don't see labyrinths in the society at all," says preeminent labyrinth designer Lisa Moriarty. "And then there are times where suddenly it becomes an important symbol for people."

Labyrinth scholar Jeff Saward has connected labyrinth revivals not only to social upheavals, but to leaps forward in technology, which can help spread ideas and skills

but also cause overwhelming change. The most recent labyrinth revival before the current one happened during the Industrial Revolution, when mass production caused the migration of labor into cities, emptying out the countryside and upending

communities. Nearly all church labyrinths in England date from Victorian times.

"The labyrinth urges action," says Artress. "It calms people in the throes of life. It helps them with transitions, and helps them see their lives in the context of a path, a pilgrimage."

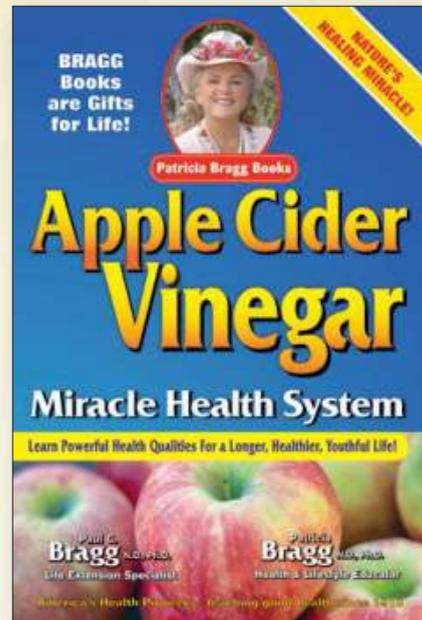
The Chartres-style labyrinth "has a beautiful way of calming the nervous system because it has an equal number of left-hand and right-hand turns," says Kathryn Bikle, a licensed therapist and depth psychologist who uses



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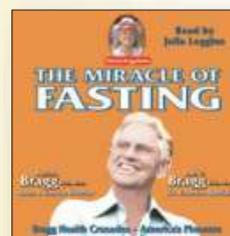
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continued from page 23

labyrinth work with her clients. “In terms of what’s happening psychologically as you walk the labyrinth, it throws you off with regard to where you are in physical space, yet you still know where you are in physical space, because you can see both the entrance and the center. Your nervous system is calm but aroused at the same time, and it unmoors you from your rational brain. By the time you get to the center, your rational brain is wonky, and your right brain says, ‘Oh, there’s room for me!’”

“It’s a form of walking meditation,” says John Rhodes, an educator and researcher who surveyed 1,250 labyrinth walkers over the course of 13 years and 128 events. “I think focusing on a relatively narrow path has a way of focusing the mind and allowing the intuitive part of the mind to come forth. I think by being able to walk this path, it gives the body something to do.”

Labyrinths have long been seen as metaphors themselves, mirrors for spiritual and physical processes. David Greenwood, a professor of education at Lakehead University in Ontario, makes a labyrinth on his frozen pond every winter, even though he knows that come spring it will melt away. He is now spearheading the construction of a permanent labyrinth on the Lakehead campus. Greenwood says a friend “talks about the labyrinth processing people like the



digestive tract processes food. That’s what happens in the labyrinth. You don’t even really have to surrender, you just have to let yourself be processed.” Greenwood’s graduate student and partner in the Lakehead labyrinth project, Gavin Shields, compares it to a centrifuge: “All this stuff is getting thrown in and spun out, and there’s more clarity from that process.” More importantly, it makes him wonder: “What can be shed?”

Kay Sandor, a retired nurse and educator, used to lead labyrinth walks for nursing students to give them time to process all they had just experienced. “At the 7 a.m. change of shift, nurses would come out and walk during their breaks before work or after work,” she says.

Labyrinth designer Lisa Moriarty has seen a steep rise in requests from hospitals and health care centers. Many of them are or were in COVID hotspots, “places where people are minute-by-minute on high alert, constantly worrying, constantly being challenged by things that feel out of control,” she says. “Being able to take a 15-minute break, to step into a quiet space where nothing else is happening, they’re free from all interruptions, and they can bring their worries, their questions, and their breathing. That can be so healing.”

Lately, labyrinth walkers are surrendering to the fact that many indoor labyrinths are closed. Fortunately, there are alternative ways to experience a labyrinth.

Consult the Labyrinth Locator for a solo walk. Googling “Labyrinth Locator” will take you to Veriditas’s database of labyrinths around the world. If your local labyrinth is shut, it’s not unlikely that there’s another one nearby—even if you’re in Taiwan, Fiji, or Nova Scotia. The modern labyrinth movement started in the English-speaking world, though, and the highest concentration of labyrinths occurs there.

Trace a finger labyrinth. Finger labyrinths are small, portable labyrinths that are traced with a finger or stylus.

JOIN THE PROCESSIONAL

Processional labyrinths, which have a different path out than in, are a natural choice for social distancing.

The Baltic wheel, a design that appears across Northern Europe in former fishing and hunting settlements, is one such pattern. It’s particularly good for people who want their walk out to be much shorter than their walk in.

Most labyrinths are circular, but the triple spiral labyrinth is based on the triskelion, a tripartite Celtic symbol of cycles and change that represent life/death/rebirth, past/present/future, earth/water/sky, or any number of other multivalent triads. The triple spiral is most popular in Ireland, but expect to see them come to North America as another type of processional labyrinth.



A triple spiral labyrinth pattern based on the triskelion

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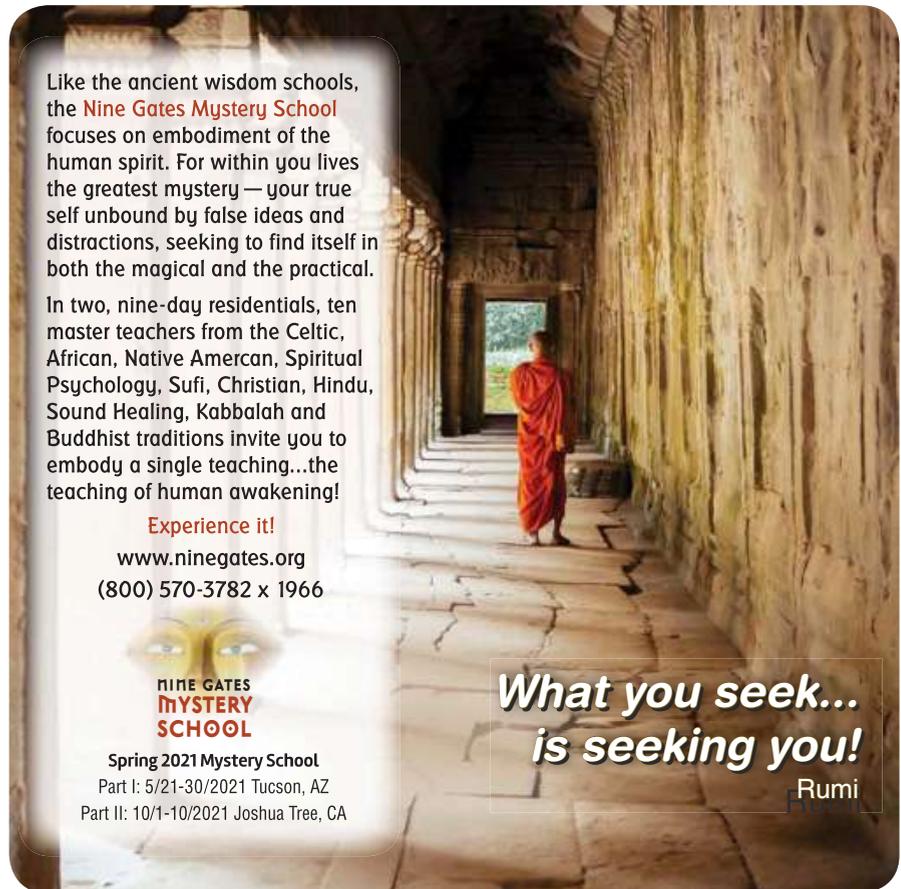
You can make one, purchase one, or even download and print one out. Try tracing the finger labyrinth with your non-dominant hand, or even tracing two simultaneously, one with each hand. Those wanting a group experience can have one via Zoom. Veriditas has hosted online finger labyrinth sessions with up to 400 participants from across the globe.

Get the app. Want one in your pocket or purse? The fun app Labyrinth Journeys offers a simple digital finger labyrinth whose path lights up as you trace it. This one works best on larger phones or tablets.

Make your own. I don't mean build a labyrinth in your garden, though you can do that, too. Art facilitator Sadelle Wiltshire leads both "self-serve" and synchronous online workshops for finger labyrinth creation that have used techniques as various as drawing, painting, collage, and even Zentangle.

Use your city or town as a labyrinth. Winter says "if you put your phone away and take the time to pay attention, you can make anywhere you are into a labyrinth experience." To relinquish some control, introduce an element of chance to your walk, says Winter: "Start in a direction, and every time you get to an intersection, flip a coin, so you aren't in control. Or roll a die. Follow transportation lines or train tracks. Anything that can randomize your choices is a great way to do it." She also suggests taking themed routes: "I'm going to walk across every bridge in my city."

Become a Randonaut. The Randonaut movement is made up of folks who pick a random set of coordinates, go there, and report what they find: a drum in the woods, an abandoned farmhouse, a shoe, a cemetery. Randonaut experiences come with a built-in sense of predestination and a strange feeling of intimacy with the landscape. And of course there's now an app for that, Randonautica, released in April 2020 and now downloaded more than 10 million times. **S&H**



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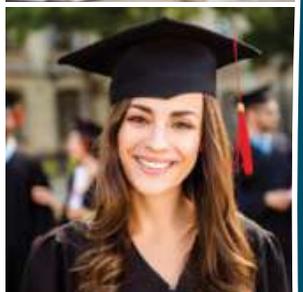
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TALK, HEAR, DOUBT YOUR DOUBTS

Loved ones who have passed away can still whisper wisdom to you. **JULIA CAMERON** explains how she learned to connect with the world beyond.

I SPEAK TO PEOPLE who have passed on as a daily practice. As I reach out, they hear me and respond. The first is a spirit named Jane Cecil, a close friend and advisor during her lifetime. I spoke to her daily and was grateful for her wise counsel.

“Can I hear from Jane?” I ask. I hear back promptly. “Julia, I am right at your side.” She continues, “You are led carefully and well. There is no error in your path.”

Having greeted me and set me at ease, Jane is ready to be more specific. She turns her attention to the issue at hand. “Your book is going well,” she tells me. “Keep a steady pace. Do not second-guess yourself.”

Jane’s messages are brief and direct. They are soothing, having the uncanny knack of addressing precisely my current concerns. Sometimes they pinpoint a concern before I have identified it. Jane may say, “You’re clean and sober. You’ll continue to be firm in your sobriety.” Until Jane spoke, I was not consciously aware of my nagging worry about drinking. But there it was. Jane’s wisdom surpassed my own.

After “talking” to Jane, I turn my attention to another friend, Elberta Honstein, a breeder of championship Morgan horses. Elberta’s communiqés retain the flavor of the horse show ring. “Julia, you are a champion,” she may tell me. “No obstacle is too much for you. You are strong. I give you stamina and grace.”

Like Jane’s, Elberta’s messages are

reassuring. They tackle what I think of as my “hidden concerns.” I worry that I am not enough, but Elberta assures me that I am plenty.

Elberta, like Jane, urges me to trust the reality of our ongoing bond. “You reach to me and I reach to you,” Elberta reassures me. “You talk to me and I talk to you,” she asserts. “We are as we always were,” she pronounces. “Our bond is eternal.”

Faced with such reassurances, I find myself trusting. When I write out what I “hear,” I find myself thinking that more people should try my simple tool.

I worry that I am not enough, but Elberta assures me that I am plenty.



ROBERT STIVERS

Ask to “hear” and then listen. It was need that triggered my reaching out to my friends. In life, we talked daily. In death, the habit continued. There were topics I could only raise with Jane, topics I could only raise with Elberta. My need for continued contact—and advice—led me to listening. I would pose the question “Can I hear from Jane about X?” and then I would listen as if she were right in the room with me. I found that she was with me. Pen in hand, I took dictation, writing from Jane “about X.”

It was the same with Elberta. In her lifetime, I frequently asked her to pray for me. Nervous about teaching, I would call her. “Stick me in the prayer pot,” I would request. Elberta’s prayers gave me confidence. I could feel their steadying impact. When she died—suddenly, unexpectedly—I posed my request to the ethers. “Elberta, please help me.” Pen in hand, I would listen for her response. “You will do very well,” promised Elberta from the ethers. “I give you wisdom, stamina, and grace.” Writing down what I “heard,” I found myself marveling at Elberta’s poise and dignity—the same in death as in life.

Both Jane and Elberta retained their characteristics. They were recognizably the “same.” When I reached to them, they reached back to me, displaying a heartening eagerness to connect. Their messages were always encouraging. I came away from our



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contact feeling seen. It was as though I had enjoyed a happy visit during their lifetime. I had the sense that they were not really gone. For some time, I kept my visitations to myself. Our contact felt real to me, and I didn't want to experience doubt or skepticism from another. Over time, my conviction that we were actually in contact grew, not lessened. I found myself confiding to a few select friends our ongoing bond. "Jane said," I would say, or "Elberta mentioned ..." To my relief, my friends did not scoff at my revelation. I had feared that I would sound too woo-woo. When I confessed this fear, I was greeted with understanding. As one friend remarked, "Julia, woo-woo is where it's at."

"You're lucky to have direct contact," my close friend Scottie Pierce tells me. But I feel luck has little to

do with it. Open-mindedness does. If more people would experiment with making contact, communication with deceased loved ones would be commonplace.

"But, Julia, what if your responses from the afterlife are just wishful thinking?"

If so, my "wishful thinking" leads me in a positive direction. There can be no harm in the positive. The contact bolsters our self-worth. As we strive to be worthy of our messages, we become better, stronger people. Our "wishful thinking" leads us forward.

It has been three years since Jane passed on, and two years for Elberta. I began writing to them promptly and I now have several years' worth of messages. Leafing back through my journals, I find that their messages stay essentially the same. They

are upbeat and reassuring. They urge me to have faith, to trust that I am on track, well and carefully led. I find no dire warnings. Perhaps their guidance keeps trouble at bay.

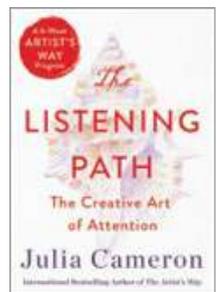
"Julia," I hear from Elberta, "your creativity is intact." "Julia," Jane echoes her, "you are as strong as ever."

What matters here is our clear expectation that we can and will hear the voices of our beloveds. Our pure yearning for contact builds our bridge to the beyond. We pray to hear, and we do hear our loved ones answering our call. Their messages are reassuring. "Do not doubt our bond," we are told.

And so we must learn to doubt our doubts. We must trust, as words form in our consciousness, that the words forming come to us from beyond. We listen and take down what we "hear." Our loved ones speak to us fondly and calmly. Unlike us, they do not doubt our connection. Rather, they welcome it—and us. Their words come to us with clarity. We take down their messages and find ourselves comforted. Their loving intent is palpable. A sense of well-being comes to us. As we reach to the ethers to our loved ones, they in turn reach back to us. We are loved, and we can feel that love even after they have crossed "through the veil."

"Can I hear from X?" we query, and it is as though we have placed a phone call. X answers us. "You are in my custody, safe and protected," we are told. Pen to page, taking dictation as we listen, the loving message unspools through the written word. There it is in black and white: contact!

From *The Listening Path: The Creative Art of Attention*, by Julia Cameron. © 2021 by the author, reprinted with permission of St. Martin's Publishing Group.



LISTEN: HEAL YOUR PAIN

Your body is sending you a message—in the unfortunate language of pain. **JULIE PETERS** helps you with the translation.

THE MOST POWERFUL WAY that the body knows how to speak—especially when we haven't been listening particularly well—is through pain. Each of our bodies has its own unique pain language.

It can often feel like our bodies are working against us. They aren't! Our bodies are always trying to help us, always trying to communicate what they need. They don't always do it very well or conveniently, but when we get better at listening we can help ourselves return to balance. When we have some tools to understand the meaning of our pain, our treatments, whether they are prescription, holistic, or both, work more effectively.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Chinese medicine holds that emotions are held in the body. When there is an imbalance in a certain organ, that can cause an emotional response—and vice-versa. In general the organs are paired with emotions in this way:

- Liver: Anger
- Heart: Joy
- Spleen: Anxiety
- Lungs: Sadness
- Kidneys: Fear
- Gall bladder: Confusion/insecurity

The organs are intimately related to our emotional body, not to mention to each other and to everything else in the body. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) doctors know how to read a patient's body to detect an imbalance, sometimes even before an illness blooms. But this knowledge can also give us a clue. If we are having health issues with a particular organ, what might that be telling us

about how we are processing these emotions in our lives?

Here's an example. Imagine that when someone is heartbroken, he feels intensely drawn to cigarettes. His lungs seem to want to be filled with something (even something poisonous), to help him feel and express his sadness. Understanding that relationship from a TCM standpoint can help him put the cigarettes down and take some deep breaths to acknowledge grief instead.

CHAKRA THEORY

Chakra theory is a very old and very popular way of thinking about the energy body. The basic idea is that we have seven energy centers in our bodies that correspond to certain



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emotions and states. When we have an imbalance in one of these areas of the body, it might be corresponding to an imbalance with the corresponding energy center.

- **ROOT CHAKRA:** Pelvic floor, legs, and feet. Sense of home, rootedness, feeling safe, financial security.
- **SACRAL CHAKRA:** Pelvis, hips, low belly, sexual organs, large intestine. Sense of vitality, sexual energy, ability to connect deeply with others, reproductive health, creativity, passion for life.
- **SOLAR PLEXUS CHAKRA:** Stomach, liver, gall bladder, small intestine, kidney, and adrenal glands. Sense of self, ability to stand up for oneself, make a statement, make a decision, take a chance, self-confidence (notice the similarity here with TCM).
- **HEART CHAKRA:** Heart and lung area. Grief, joy, sense of connection to family and community, hope (again, the lung-sadness connection remains from TCM).
- **THROAT CHAKRA:** Throat, tongue, jaw. Ability to express and communicate thoughts, feelings, and desires. Ability to create art, to reveal it to the world. Ability to articulate internal feelings, thoughts, and desires.
- **THIRD EYE CHAKRA:** The eyes and mind. Intuition, clear thinking, clear seeing both physically and metaphorically.
- **CROWN CHAKRA:** Slightly above the head. Related to spirituality and connection with the divine.

The general concept with chakras is that they are energy centers that can get blocked, much like the lines of energy that can get blocked in TCM. Balancing the chakras requires a range of different actions, like physical exercise, breathwork, meditation, changing diet, and even changing our relationships.

Again, we can explore the sensations of our bodies and compare them to these emotional maps. What resonates? For example, if the jaw is chronically tight, we know that's related to the throat chakra. So what are we not saying that's getting stuck in the throat? What is unprocessed or unarticulated? What do we need to say, and to whom?

MODERN SCIENCE

In 2013, a Finnish study mapped common emotions in the body, analyzing surveys with about 700 volunteers from Finland, Sweden, and Taiwan. The study found that most emotions are felt similarly in the body, even when those people came from different cultures.



Balancing the chakras requires a range of different actions, like physical exercise, breathwork, meditation, changing diet, and even changing our relationships.

Anger tended to be felt in the top half of the body: the chest, head, and shoulders. Sadness was felt around the heart. Anxiety was felt mostly in the stomach (the solar plexus chakra or kidney region in TCM) and happiness was felt all over the body.

This study shows that we can start to learn the language of our bodies through the sensations of our emotions—they are, after all, called feelings because we feel them.

The idea that our bodies manifest our emotional pain is well-established. In the 1990s, Kaiser Permanente joined up with the Centers for Disease Control for a major study on adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs. They found that when children are exposed to certain adverse events in childhood, health outcomes later in life are drastically affected.

continued on page 30

The ACEs the study focused on are exposure to violence, neglect, or abuse; divorce; a family member attempting suicide or dying by suicide; and having a parent in prison. The more of these that children were exposed to, the likelier they were to experience not just mental health problems but also heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Further, when children were exposed to a lot of stress during their developmental years, the proper functioning of the nervous system and the immune system was often compromised.

It's long been understood in forms of alternative medicine that a history of trauma can show up in the body, and now scientific studies are beginning to show the truth of this. Adults recovering from ACEs greatly benefit from modalities that address the nervous system, such as yoga and therapy, alongside medication and other health interventions.

THE BODY AS METAPHOR

Many authors have explored how to understand the symptoms in the body through metaphor. The idea is that our body is essentially a manifestation of our unconscious mind. Especially when we don't appropriately express our emotions, we have no choice but to sublimate them into the body.

Dr. Gabor Maté has written several books on this topic, including one called *When the Body Says No*, which is all about how trauma shows up as physical symptoms that metaphorically express the unspoken emotion. For example, a patient of Maté's suffered from a condition called scleroderma, in which the skin and connective tissue in the body thicken and harden, making movement difficult and, in some cases, affecting internal organs. For this patient, there was a history of feeling trapped, stuck inside herself, unable to speak up about what she wanted to say.

In her book *Your Body Speaks Your Mind*, Deb Shapiro goes over a long list of symptoms and issues and explores how to understand them metaphorically. A sprained ankle, for example, might indicate that you feel conflicted or unsure about the direction you are going in your life (and connects to the idea of the root chakra, since issues in the lower body indicate issues around safety and home). A literal limp might be trying to help you metaphorically slow down so that you can consider where you really want to go. Even if you don't believe a whit of body-as-metaphor, the practice of listening to your pain rather than ignoring it can be a deeply self-loving practice.

Even if you don't believe a whit of body-as-metaphor, the practice of listening to your pain rather than ignoring it can be a deeply self-loving practice.



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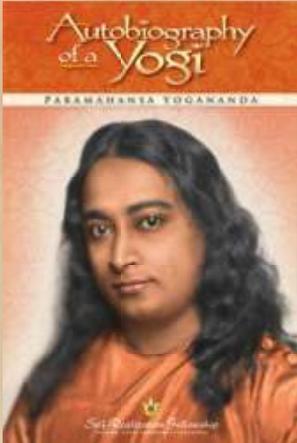
SELF-INQUIRY

When we have pain or illness in our bodies, we can ask ourselves a few questions that might help us understand what the body is trying to tell us. Journaling on these questions might give us some insight into where the dis-ease is coming from so that we can learn to heal ourselves (with the help of whatever medical practitioners we trust).

- When did this condition start? What was my emotional state at the time?
- When did I get the signal that something was feeling wrong in my body? How did I respond to that signal?
- What does this condition allow me to do or avoid doing?
- What is the purpose of the part of my body that is affected? Is it digesting? Protecting me from harm? Allowing me to move and walk? Giving me sexual pleasure? Allowing me to think? To express myself?
- How does the condition present itself? For example, is it forcing me to lie down? Are the runny nose and teary eyes of a cold giving me a chance to physiologically cry without actually facing my sadness?

Looking at our physical symptoms this way certainly doesn't replace the need for evidence-based medicine, but our pain may very well have useful messages for us. When we can begin to see our pain and illness not as annoying inconveniences but as major signals from our body that something is going on, we can slow down and find a new way to listen to ourselves.

So the next time you have a cold, instead of taking a bunch of medicine and forcing yourself to push through, what if you paused and honored your body's deep request for rest? You may learn something very interesting about yourself as you listen to the wisdom of that runny nose. **S&H**



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IS NOW THE Best Time to Fast?

«THE DOCTOR SAYS YES!»

Andreas Michalsen, MD, PhD, is the director of a hospital in Berlin with beds for 90 patients. Typically 90 percent of those patients are fasting. Why? Because he believes the diseases these patients present—osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, early stages of dementia, Crohn’s disease, irritable bowel disease—are all an indication for fasting. When Dr. Michalsen does rounds, sometimes his younger doctors say, “Isn’t this a little bit exaggerated? Surely, everything can’t be cured by fasting.” Dr. Michalsen replies, “Fasting is not a miracle, and not all diseases are cured. But fasting is how you start the way back to health.” It’s also the classic start of a spiritual journey.

AN INTERVIEW
WITH
**ANDREAS
MICHALSEN, MD**

BY
**STEPHEN
KIESLING**





By fasting, you take away the material stuff of buying and cooking and eating, and your senses become very clear. The monks knew that. Every religious tradition figured that out.

change.” And I remembered what I knew about a plant-based diet and relaxation. It worked, and I got healthy again.

You've said that everything we eat is a foreign body. I've never really thought about food that way. I typically think about food as fuel.

Everything that we ingest is an attack in the first moment. The immune system has to first regard any food as an enemy—and then to specify and to differentiate: Okay, this is fine. This is a tomato. And

maybe this is not fine: This is poison. When we regard food from a molecule perspective, in the first moment, all digestion is a kind of inflammation.

What we eat is an enormous immunological burden for the whole gastrointestinal tract. The microbiome is so very complex because the task of digestion is so complex. Sometimes I think it's a miracle that it works so well. A lot of people can eat awful things for years, and yet they're still here.

So, when I look at a banquet table and start to salivate, to my mind that's really exciting. But my body is gearing up for a lot of work.

It is a lot of work. And therefore, it is very important to ease into that work. I really like the American businessman Horace Fletcher, who worked with Doctor Kellogg from the cereal company. Fletcher was not a doctor, but realized a long time ago that we should chew extensively because chewing prepares the digestion. By chewing we give attention to the process of digestion. We now call it mindful eating. We should be mindful that digestion is a very complex process, and we should support our body as well as we can. Taking digestion for granted is one reason we see so many people today with food allergies or intolerances.

You write that every religious tradition includes fasting. And that shamanic practices often begin with fasting. Now that makes sense to me in a new way. If every food is actually a foreign entity entering the body, the first step for a shamanic practice is get rid of foreign entities. Is that essentially what you're saying?

Yes. This is an historical or archetypal view. Maybe a semantic view. But let me paraphrase it like this: In every religion, in every spiritual context, there are fasting rituals and they prepare the body and mind for something higher or for something special.

When you fast, two things come to the front of your perception. One is time: You don't have to spend time buying



ANDREAS MICHALSEN, MD

ANJA LEHMANN | IMMANUEL KRANKENHAUS BERLIN

In your latest book, *The Fasting Fix*, you write that you first had to accept your own family medicine.

Yes. I'm from a family of MDs, but they were all natural doctors. My grandpa was a natural doctor. My father was a natural doctor. So, I was a bit bored as a child because it was always about herbs and nutrition and water. Then about age 16—when you are against everything your father is doing—I started to eat junk food and to smoke. When I started studying medicine, I was still smoking and eating junk food. I loved cardiology and intensive care, and I thought what my father was doing was not real medicine.

Then it happened—as it must happen. I had an examination from the hospital, and my blood pressure was high and my cholesterol was over 200. I thought, “Oh my God! I'm only 29 years old. This is really not good news.” Two years later, my lifestyle still was very bad. I worked the nightshift, eating cakes and sausage and coffee and smoking, and the results were worse. That's when I said, “Okay, stop. I have to

Be sure to consult with your doctor before making drastic changes to your diet.

food, preparing food, eating food. Your digestion also decelerates, so you are less burdened with the material intake. All that is gone. Instead of shopping and cooking and eating and digesting, one sip of water is what I'm doing now. So, fasting creates free time, an expansive sense of time, and a lighter sense of being. Wow, I have no material stuff and I'm living.

The second effect is that your senses become sharper and clearer. I think this is an evolutionary trick because if you're a caveman and food is scarce, it would not be a good idea then to say, "Oh, I'm very sleepy. I have no time for the search for food." If food is scarce, you have to be alert, your senses have to work.

So, all this comes together.

So a fast is a way of getting back in touch with oneself?

Yes, exactly. As a researcher, I focus on the molecular aspects of fasting. And that's very important. But when you're actually fasting, what strikes everybody is this feeling of awareness. I saw two or three patients today that were at the sixth day of fasting, and one of them had already lost five kilograms. So, I said it was time to stop. But he wanted to continue fasting because he felt so great. So, we made a deal. I said, "Okay, two more days, but then you have to stop." He was a little bit maniac about fasting.

I've read and written about sugar and salt as being unhealthy, but I'd never thought about using sugar to disguise poisons. You point out that without the sugar, a lot of the packaged foods we eat would make us nauseous.

That's right. I have nothing against sugar in a good environment. If you have a delicious handmade whole-grain vegan cake, the sugar is very nice. Or some berries with a little extra sugar, and you eat them mindfully—this is excellent. But what happens in the supermarket is a lot of cheap stuff that's disguised with a lot of sugar, salt, and cheap fat. It's a catastrophe. And the people don't know it. They buy it because it's addictive. Without the added sugar, people wouldn't touch it.

You write that fruit is the easiest thing to digest.

Yes. Fruit *wants* to be eaten. The plant wants to spread its seed. What's interesting is that a lot of people are concerned about fructose, the sugar of fruits. When you add fructose artificially to a food item, a lot of people suffer from intolerance, but there's a nice study showing even when people eat over 20 pieces of whole fruit a day, you can digest it. As a whole, fruit is perfectly designed by nature.

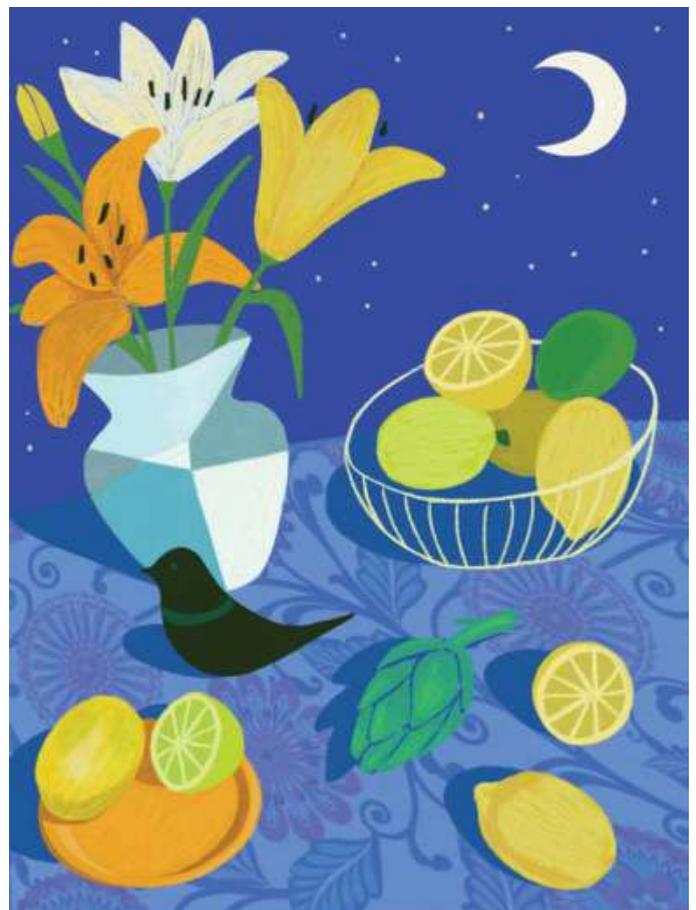
The other extreme is meat. I hadn't realized the enormous amount of work that goes into digesting meat.

I think meat is a very sad story. We use animals like machines. It takes an enormous amount of time and energy to produce meat from plants. Then we eat the animals, and it takes an enormous amount of time and work to fragment the meat again. I think it's a little bit crazy.

A fast is basically allowing your body to rest and recover from all that work.

Yeah, exactly. It's kind of reset button that's especially good for people who have bad eating habits or an unhealthy lifestyle. These people feel the most impressive improvements in vitality and wellbeing when they start fasting. For example, we have patients with diabetes, obese people, and they have enlarged livers. After four or five days of fasting, the liver starts to shrink. The liver normalizes, and it happens very fast. Intermittent fasting is also nice. I like it too. But the longer fast is much stronger.

« As a whole, fruit is perfectly designed by nature. »



Lemons and Flowers »
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How often should you fast?

In religious traditions, there is typically one fasting period in the year, mostly in the spring. Spring is a good time for fasting. But we know from our patients that under our current lifestyle, it's better to have at least two periods of fasting a year. It depends on the individual. Theoretically, you could benefit from four or five fasts each year, but you have to find out if this fits with your family life and work life.

What the ideal length of time?

I think the ideal first fasting experience is five days. When you fast for the second time or the third or the fourth time, you can go for seven or eight days. Water fasting is not ideal. We know quite well that water fasting causes muscle loss. So, I recommend a little bit of food, 300 to 500 calories a day.

The main thing is to control the number of calories?

The most important rule is not to go over 500 calories. Those calories also have to be vegan, and they should not have additive sugar. Natural sugar from juice is fine. Staying vegan is very important because any animal protein really disrupts the fasting process. The rest is up to the individual. Some people dislike vegetable juices, so it would not be a good idea to tell them to drink carrot or beetroot juice. Choose calories you want.

You write about the difference between fasting and dieting—that fasting is the only way to lose weight if that's what you want to do.

Yes. Diets just don't work. It's a story of failure. As I wrote in a scientific paper ten years ago, there is no single diet that has a sustainable effect. Diets give you the illusion that you can do something different for a defined period of time and lose weight, but you end up with your old lifestyle—and it gets worse.

The fasting experience changes your mind. You start eating better, and that's why there is no weight-cycling effect with fasting. You have this experience and then people start to eat differently. And that's why fasting is not a fad or a diet. It's a game-changer.

You use fasting for so many diseases. I'm curious about the relationship between fasting and the placebo response.

That's a fascinating question. Fasting has distinct molecule effects. Medical effects. There's no doubt about it. But fasting also has mental and emotional effects that you find in placebo research. What's a tragedy of medicine is that the placebo response was branded as something negative.

The placebo response is our self-healing capacity. It's the meaning response. When something has meaning for me, my body starts to do what it is capable of doing to heal itself. The very best you can do as a doctor is to maximize any form of self-healing.

Fasting increases a sense of self-efficacy, and that is the most important part of the placebo response. People are



Sankalpa 

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empowered. They think, wow, I can do this. I can *not* eat for five days or for seven days.

As well as long fasts, you also recommend compressing the amount of time in a day that you spend eating.

Why is that so important?

That goes back to the beginning of our discussion. It's because digestion is such a complex task. It's so much work. We have to give the body a break. For example, hormone systems like the insulin system need a rest. If we snack all the time, the insulin system gets no rest, and eventually goes into resistance—what we call Type 2 diabetes.

Another important hormone is melatonin. Melatonin is very important for sleep and restoration, but it disturbs metabolic pathways. So that's why we should not eat in the first hour after we awake, because the melatonin is still high. And that's also why we should not eat three hours before going to sleep. Our body has a rhythm: Three hours before we usually go to bed, melatonin increases.

RELIGIONS AND FASTING

Many religious texts mention intermittent fasting. For example, Luke 18:12 in the Bible reads: "I fast twice a week." Originally, fasting or partial fasting in Christian culture was done twice a week, in addition to Lent. Wednesday commemorated the betrayal of Jesus, and Friday the crucifixion. But this kind of remembrance and rite of humility disappeared almost completely over the course of the centuries. At my house, however, it was at least partly preserved—on Fridays our family did not eat meat. Instead, we ate only vegetarian dishes or fish (and nothing sweet).

Intermittent fasting is practiced during Ramadan, the fasting month of Islam. Followers of Islam will fast from sunrise to sunset, and can eat and drink only before sunrise and after sundown. But people sometimes overindulge when they're not fasting. This seems to be a contributing factor to why Ramadan fasting, for

example, isn't as medically successful as other forms of intermittent fasting in many studies.

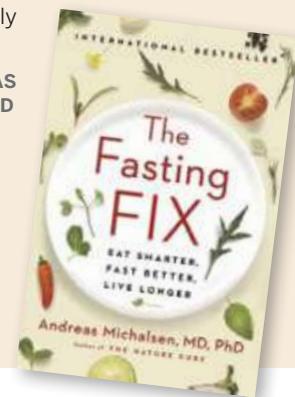
But overall, fasting during Ramadan does show health benefits. On average, body weight drops slightly, and blood lipid values and cholesterol levels improve. Nevertheless, it's difficult to examine Ramadan fasting scientifically because depending on the geographical location and the time of year, the daily fasting period can vary between nine and twenty hours. In our facility we conducted research into a religious type of fast quite similar to Ramadan fasting, the fasting of the Baha'i religion, which has its origins in Iran. Under the direction of my colleague Daniela Liebscher, we made some interesting discoveries: There was a significant improvement in mood as well as a shift of the circadian rhythm of almost an hour and a half. In other words, fasting can help

readjust disrupted circadian rhythms

Seventh-Day Adventists in Loma Linda, California, form one of the Blue Zones. On average, they live seven to ten years longer than other Americans who don't belong to this church. The excellent health of the Adventists is mainly due to their vegetarian diet and their healthy lifestyle, but interestingly most of them have their last meal for the day in the afternoon. This essentially means that they practice TRE (time-restricted eating) with a prolonged night fast. Within the scope of the Adventist Health Study, data on this factor was unfortunately not gathered, but it's possible that it contributes to the significantly longer life span.

—ANDREAS
MICHALSEN, MD, PHD

From *The Fasting Fix: Eat Smarter, Fast Better, Live Longer* by Andreas Michalsen, MD, PhD, with Suzann Kirschner-Brouns. Published in 2021 by Penguin Life.



« Fasting can help readjust disrupted circadian rhythms. »

The melatonin cycle is the first principle of compression: We should not eat for an hour in the morning and three hours before we go to bed. Then we can try to lengthen that period of rest. The more we compress our eating, the more we allow our body to rest and recover. The benefits are significant with 13 hours or 14 hours of rest, 16 hours is better. There's another process called autophagy. This is the cellular detox, or self-cleansing program, which starts after 12 hours of rest.

So constant eating means your body is always working—and never recovering.

Exactly. The benefits also show up in sports. When you fast overnight and go running or cycling before breakfast, you have a better training effect.

Why is it helpful to eat a wide variety of foods?

There is a natural principle called hormesis that most people—including scientists—don't pay much attention to. But it's very important. When you have a small dose of a compound, it's healthy. But when you go much over that dose, it gets toxic.

When you have two cups of coffee, it's good. A glass of wine is good. But liters of coffee or wine is toxic. Overall, there are many secondary plant substances we call polyphenols and flavonoids that are bioactive and very healthy in small amounts. But when you ingest them in a large amounts, they get toxic. So if you eat a broad range of foodstuff, with different nutrients, different polyphenols, different vitamins, and different proteins, you do the best for your health because then you'll get everything in a more optimum dosage.

So no matter how healthy any food is, if you eat too much, you have made it unhealthy.

Exactly. This is a law of nature. Most people don't realize that even radioactivity—in a very small dosage—is healthy. It's better to have a tiny amount of radioactivity than to have no radioactivity at all. It's also good to have sunlight, but it's not good to have six hours of sunlight. It's very good to exercise. But it's not good to do a marathon. Everything gets toxic. And everything needs to rest.

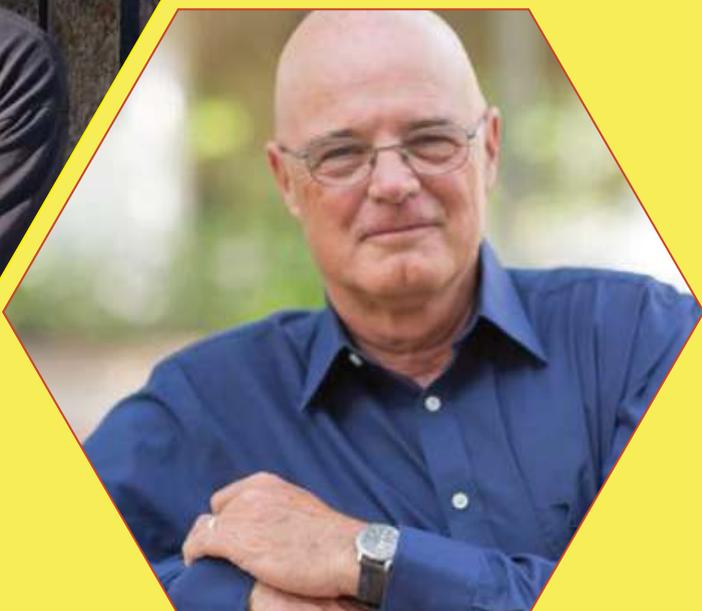
Stephen Kiesling is editor at large of *S&H*





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“

For me, spirituality is about honoring my dignity and always honoring the dignity of those around me. Honoring of dignity is a radical thing right now. And the fact that all people have dignity and then, in my tradition, all people are invited to take in the table, the sacrament of God. That's radical. There's a belonging for everybody. For a lot of my practice, personally, and in my leadership, there's a lot about human dignity, and the honoring of the sacred earth dignity as well. That's pretty radical. ...

When I look at my scripture, the love of God, the love of neighbor, the love of earth. And every day we have an opportunity to practice that. Am I loving myself today? Am I loving my neighbor today? Am I loving God how I understand God? We are always practicing that and love, true love is revolutionary.

”

STUDIO ONE BY WILLIAM AMES

REVEREND JES KAST

JES KAST FELT CALLED to be a minister from the time she was just five years old. “I did not see a woman being a minister leading me in a church service until I was in seminary. So that was 23 years of my life. I never saw a woman leading me, but I kept at it. I did not let the dream inside me die.”

Kast's sexual orientation adds another degree of difficulty. She is married to a woman. “I had to deal with my own internalized homophobia and my own inner voices of religious traditions that I was taught. And I had to

deconstruct them,” she says.

“I think anybody who feels like an outsider at any time has two paths in front of them,” Kast says. “Two big choices:

FINDING AN
AUTHENTIC
FAITH

RABBI WAYNE DOSICK

“I GREW UP IN THE Jewish suburban synagogues of the late forties, the fifties, and the early sixties. Everything was hunky dory. Peachy keen. The synagogues were jammed full and the Hebrew schools were jammed full. It was the social center of the community,” says Rabbi Wayne Dosick. “But it began to fall apart.”

Dosick says part of the problem is that Jewish communities were caught up in the postwar boom years, which meant “building community and building buildings and building institutions,” instead of encouraging vibrant spirituality. “The goal of religion should be and has to be enhancing your spirituality. That’s why so many kids went to the Buddhists and the meditation centers and even yoga and all the kinds of spiritual activities.”

Dosick has spent decades finding ways to bring a rich spirituality into modern Judaism, embracing the past without being hindered by it. As part of that work, he founded the Elijah Minyan in San Diego, which describes itself as “a group of Jewish seekers.” “The old programming was very nice to create community and to be together, and it’s all very, very important. But how do we create? How do we reframe? Reframe the rituals, the practices, in order to make them God centered?”

As an example, Dosick points to the tradition of lighting candles on Friday night to begin the Sabbath. “It’s a wonderful touchstone,” he says. “But it can be much more than that.”

“I teach people the following: What was the very first act of creation? God said, Let there be light. And so if we stare into that candle flame for 15 or 30 or 60 seconds, that’s all it takes. Very possibly we can get in touch with that primordial

to leave it, which is okay, and that needs to be blessed, or to dig into it more. And I chose to dig into it more.”

Kast is currently the pastor at Faith United Church of Christ in College Station, Pennsylvania, but she credits two other states with molding her. “Michigan raised me and New York formed me,” Kast explains. “Michigan taught me about the value of caring for your neighbor, showing up with a casserole, checking in and watering your neighbor’s garden when they’re out of town. Michigan taught me so much about the joy of sitting around a campfire and talking and just being together. Michigan taught me about a slower spirituality that I value a lot.”

“New York gave me so much, gave me the space to come out, gave me the courage in my spirituality. New York reinforced the chutzpah that I’ve always had in my life. It was almost like a sanctuary for me of 8.4 million interreligious



LESLIE GOLDMAN

OLD RITUALS,
NEW POWER

moment of creation. And if we can get in touch with the moment of creation, we may be able to get in touch with the primordial creator, God.

So we take a ritual that’s been brought to us for millennia and reframe it to help us get closer to that intimate relationship with God.”

His latest book, available in April, is *Radical Loving: One God, One World, One People*. “We need each one of us to create a deep, personal, intimate, loving relationship and to turn our faith into action, and to create a deep sense of responsibility within our community. We have to go beyond. This is what I call love beyond love.” —MALLORY CORBIN

people constantly in dialogue in this great cosmopolitan city. New York was, is, and continues to be such a spiritual place for me.”

For Kast, being a spiritual radical is about authentic faith. “People would claim their faith or religion and I know I would pause and think, Does it matter? Does it really change how you live? Show me that faith and spirituality and religion matters. Does it change your life in a way that brings about more justice? That brings about more goodness, that brings about more love?”

She is drawn to other people with an authentic faith even if they are from a different tradition. “The other spiritual radicals are the people that I’m most interested in, even if our religions are different. I say this often. It’s my Jewish and Muslim friends that actually inspire me to be a better Christian.” —MALLORY CORBIN



“

Some people would think that I would try to continue to bring more LGBT folks into the church, to transform it. I am not about that. The struggle still lies in the fact that the church itself has to radically change before it is ready to welcome the LGBT community. We can't just say that we welcome folks and then expect them to behave in a certain way according to our expectations.

”

REVEREND ALINE SILVA

“I'M A YOUNG WOMAN OF COLOR, specifically of African and indigenous descent, and I also identify as pansexual,” says Aline Silva. In becoming an ordained Baptist pastor, she explains, “Everything about who I am feels othering within Christianity. It feels radical because a lot of us have been taught that diversity and fluidity within an identity or welcoming one's ingenuity was not a part of what it meant to be Christian.”

Silva is a co-director of Creature Kind, a nonprofit based in Colorado that engages churches in an effort to bring faith principles to the welfare of farmed animals. Silva explains, “It also means that I am caring for folks who are working on farms, who are harvesting the plant-based foods that I am trying to eat. We know

WORKING
FOR “LOVING
CONDITIONS FOR
ALL BEINGS”

that a peach that is organic but was locally harvested by slave labor is not creature kind. It's not radical love.”

“I go straight to Jesus as a radical and revolutionary, who, within his context, was a person who fought against the injustices of an empire that oppressed peoples, the environment, animals, and the earth itself,” Silva says.

She adds: “We often talk about the good news of God, but we don't talk about the fact that if in fact it is good news, it has to be good news for everybody.”

For Silva, faith in action means working to “dismantle and redeem the systems that dominate our lives [and] that means questioning and holding to accountability the things today that stifle loving conditions for all beings on earth.” —MALLORY CORBIN

BRIAN MCLAREN

A PROLIFIC AUTHOR, speaker, activist, and public theologian, Brian McLaren is a former church founder and pastor and is a leader in what is being called “Emergence Christianity.” It’s a post-colonial, postmodern Christianity. His numerous books include *Faith After Doubt* (reviewed in this issue), *The Great Spiritual Migration, A New Kind of Christian*, and the upcoming *Do I Stay Christian?*

McLaren grew up in a fundamentalist setting. He observes, “Fundamentalist Christians, while rigid in theology, are actually flexible in their methodology”—take, for example, the churches filled with people in jeans singing rock and roll Christian songs. When he moved into the Protestant world, he ran into theological flexibility but methodological rigidity. “They weren’t afraid of critical Biblical scholarship. They weren’t afraid of asking questions about sexuality and

science and so on, but you couldn’t mess with the committee structure or tamper very much with the liturgy.”

He urges Christians to embark on “a radical rethinking of both our methodology and our theology.”

One goal of the new sort of Christianity McLaren envisions is to welcome practices that enhance spirituality that are outside the Christian tradition. “Many Christians discover real spiritual help in yoga; they can make a connection between the practice of

yoga and their Christian identity. But then they go and sit through an hour of liturgy where they never move their body except to kneel, and they think, “Why do we have to pretend for this hour that yoga doesn’t exist?” —KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER

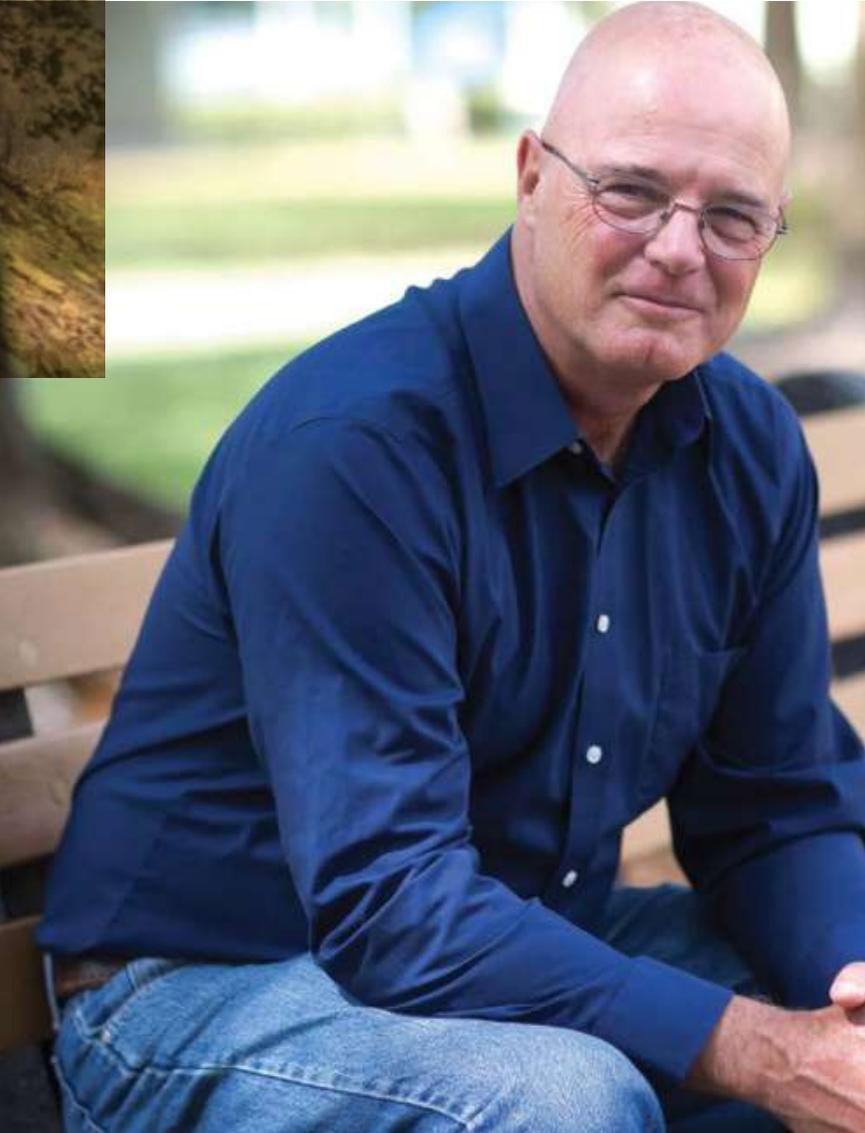
CALLING FOR
A NEW KIND OF
CHRISTIANITY

HANNAH DAVIS

“

What has become increasingly clear to me is whatever else you want to say about Jesus, he led a movement. Jesus is a movement leader and what he was starting was not a new religion, it was a spiritual movement within his own religion. What seems to have happened is we turned it into a religion and lost the movement. When you look at Jesus as a movement leader you see what a radical he was; he was arguing for a completely different view of the world. A different set of values. A completely different way we should treat each other, a different way we should look at money. How we look at leadership and authority. Those to me are the most interesting things about Jesus. ... We have every right to look at what Jesus actually said and did and what was he trying to change.”

”





HALA KHOURI

“I ALWAYS SAY that I come to this work by way of Beirut, Lebanon, which is where I was born, in 1973. In 1975 civil war broke out,” says Hala Khouri. Coming from the Middle East to the United States at a young age “is probably the most formative thing that brought me to where I am.”

Trauma is a very deep well from which to draw. Our past informs our present. Says Khouri, “I think that our roots are in our trauma, and I use the word trauma to describe any life experiences that push us. They can make us grow, they can break us, and everything in between.”

Khouri felt a need to understand herself and the world to lessen her own anxiety. “Being married to a Black Jewish man, having children who are Arab, Christian, Jewish, white, black,” only made that more imperative.

Her journey took her first to yoga, and then to counseling and community psychology. But her training, ironically, pushed her away from authentic existence in the world. “I started to use my yoga practice, my spiritual beliefs, and my psychological beliefs to continue to insulate myself more and more from anything that corrupted that [perspective] or didn’t fit into it.”

Living in Los Angeles, “I got into my own little bubble. And I could afford access to healthy food, and then I would only go to places that serve healthy foods, only be exposed to people who could afford healthy food, so my world got really

EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF AWARENESS

small, and I had the privilege to make it small.”

Leaving that insulated space was a process. It really took off in 2007, when she co-founded Off The Mat, Into the World. Khouri and the other co-founders were mainly working with “affluent white women. They had extra time, extra money, extra energy, and they were wanting to then go out and serve.”

Khouri recalls, “A lot of harm was happening when people were going outside of their own communities trying to help.” The organization began training its volunteers in self-awareness, helping them understand their own motivations. After training hundreds of people a year, “We realized we had to do some really important work on recognizing power, oppression, racism, able-ism; these larger structures of oppression,” she says.

There was this next level kind of schooling that we all got,” she says. “Mostly from people who were generous enough to give us the time to say ‘Hey, this is where you’re really screwing up.’ ... We don’t know what we don’t know. It’s true for everybody.” —KALIA KELMENSEN

“

It’s one thing to say to folks “You wanna go out and serve, you have to know yourself, otherwise you could do harm.” And then there’s the next layer of , ‘You want to go ahead and serve? What’s your analysis of the problem? Are you just looking at symptoms of the problem?’

For example, people are homeless. We need to get them homes and beds. Are you stepping back to ask *why* it is like this? And who are the people that are dealing with this the most, with housing insecurity? What are the larger structures at play here?

”

KAMEELAH RASHAD

“SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ACTIVISM is at the core of how I understand my faith,” Kameelah Rashad says. “There’s a duty and a trust that we have as those who in some ways may be more privileged. There’s a tradition that says you cannot go to sleep with a full belly if your neighbor is hungry. These are the traditions that certainly were highlighted in my home.”

She is the founder of the Black Muslim Psychology Conference. “What I’ve come to in terms of my own growth, as a black woman born and raised Muslim, is to think about the necessity of creating affinity spaces for black Muslims,” she explains, “to just have the space to talk about, ‘What does it mean to experience that kind of double marginalization?’”

“There were reactions to creating that space,” Rashad says. “Oh, this is divisive, you’re segregating or excluding yourself. And I’m like, the exclusion already happened. That’s not something that I’m creating. To really be able to articulate the need for rest from harm that people are really craving, refuge from harm. I think that’s something radical.”

Rashad explains, “There’s absolutely an emphasis on wherever a Muslim is, that their presence and their impact should be one that people remember. The good that is done right, and that there was progress, there was change, there was growth as a result of the presence of that person. For me, I could not conceptualize a faith that did not require me to also work towards justice.”

“For a spiritual radical, it means that you have to understand your individual influence, and what it means to then live that. I would want someone to say, ‘What I experienced of Kameelah as a Muslim was what she did. It was her actions. It was how she treated people.’ They can learn about

Islam in a book. But if they want to learn about how I live my faith, they can witness that, witness good work, witness sincerity, witness generosity. That goes such a long way.”

She is also the founder of Muslim Wellness Foundation. “My bridge between faith and activism and mental health is we’re thinking about alleviating suffering.”

“It’s advocating for the whole person,” she says, “not just the psychological dimension. Does this person have their basic needs met? If they do not, it’s going to be very difficult for them to engage in a process that might be insight oriented, or to ask them to imagine and envision what their life could be when the reality is so challenging.” —MALLORY CORBIN

**BRINGING
MENTAL
WELLNESS TO
BLACK
MUSLIMS**



ZAMANIFEELINGS PHOTOGRAPHY



“

There might be certain religious claims that don't fit with science, and there might be certain scientific theories that don't fit with particular interpretations of religion, but science and religion don't need to be in conflict.

”

EMILY QURESHI-HURST

IMAGINE A GLASS BOTTLE on the beach. It breaks into a few pieces and can easily be put back together. But then the pieces are swept up in the waves. Over time the pieces become smaller and smaller and distributed over a wider area.

The disciplines within academia are like the glass bottle that has been rolled in the tides, says Emily Qureshi-Hurst, an Oxford PhD student. Everything from mathematics to meta-physics stems from the same basic inquiry—the same original glass bottle. “As the edges of the sea-glass become smooth,” she says, “so too do the boundaries of theology and science. What once fit easily together now seems like

it never could have been part of the same larger whole.”

“I'm not any closer to having a faith myself,” Qureshi-Hurst comments, but working at the intersection of spirituality and science has brought her a new appreciation for faith. “When I came to study religion when I was 18, I was very much in the kind of camp with Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris,” she says, “and those people who think that religion is this massive force for evil in society, and it's crushing the scientific spirit.”

As she continued her work, she discovered that “as long as you don't hold a fundamentalist religious worldview or a fundamentalist scientific

worldview, or you think that science can answer all of the questions that humans could ever ask, then you can see that there's no need for conflict between science and religion.”

In one recent paper, Qureshi-Hurst collaborates with a physicist to explore what she calls “dependent salvation,” the idea that salvation occurs only in the human mind. The paper explores the philosophical and theological implications of cutting-edge findings from quantum mechanics.

“I hope there will always be those of us who walk along the beach picking up and reuniting that which the years have torn asunder,” Qureshi-Hurst says. “After all, how else could we come to know the rich and complex reality in which we live?” —MALLORY CORBIN

ENABLING
CONVERSATIONS

2021

retreat guide

“Especially during this time of isolation, there is a need to shed anxiety, to take a break from screens.”
page 48

Retreating in 2021

FIRST TIME? HOW TO
CHOOSE THE RIGHT RETREAT

SAFETY FIRST: HOW
RETREATS HAVE ADJUSTED

GO VIRTUAL: HOW TO PREP
FOR A DIGITAL RETREAT

Spirituality
& Health



WHEN YOU FINALLY GO ON A RETREAT ...

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND—AND
WHAT TO STEER CLEAR FROM

BY MARY BEMIS

Retreats have been an honorable American tradition since Henry David Thoreau went off to Walden Pond. “I love Nature partly because she is not man, but a retreat from him,” wrote Thoreau.

By the time I was growing up in New England, it was well understood that poetry and art, as well as nature, were part of spiritual questing. I attended my first retreat as a preteen, along with my family, through our Unitarian church. Off we went for a weekend in the woods of Vermont, where my father would teach a jazz workshop and my mother a painting workshop. Retreat-goers of all ages enjoyed the fresh air and the camaraderie, shared values and the communal kitchen, and learned new ways to be and to see.

A good retreat teaches (or refines) the skills you need to be a better person, to live a better life. A good retreat offers physical, emotional, and spiritual nourishment in a safe environment with trusted teachers. It offers camaraderie or silence, depending on what you seek. It offers a chance to reconnect with nature or with yourself. Nowadays, a retreat can mean building a straw-bale house, a stone wall, or a permaculture garden.

Especially during this time of isolation, there is a need to shed anxiety, to take a break from screens. Retreats offer a chance for voluntary solitude as opposed to pandemic-induced solitude. In today’s world, it has become increasingly important to take good care of ourselves, so we in turn can take good care of others (and our planet). In my three decades of writing about wellbeing, I’ve never witnessed



such a hunger for what we now call self-care—both inside and out.

So, if you feel ready for a retreat, there's good reasons why. Take the time to quietly sit with yourself and make a list. What are you yearning for? Is there something specific you are going through that needs guidance? What do you need to work on? How much time do you want to, or can you, dedicate to a retreat? What do you hope to gain by attending? What is a realistic budget?

THREE THINGS TO LOOK FOR

1 The setting. Think about what kind of an environment makes you feel safe. Going to a place without cell service, phone, or Internet can be liberating—or just anxiety-making. What works for you? Do you prefer a women-only or men-only retreat? Do you need a single room or cabin? How flexible are you willing to be—that's the edge. You may be much happier with much less than you think. Or not. How open can you be? Maybe you need TLC instead of a spartan getaway.

2 The activities. A good retreat is most often a well-marked path. You should know where you're going and what you're getting into. That may mean that nothing is happening at all—but you should know that in advance.

3 The intentions. Most retreats come into existence because of a founder's personal passion—does that passion resonate with you? There are retreats founded by billionaires, there are retreats founded by penniless monks—and everything in between!

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THREE RED FLAGS

1 Fishy founders. If you're not familiar with the founder or teachers, do your homework! Make sure the leader (and teachers) of the retreat are the real deal. Do they have the qualifications needed to be leading the retreat? The rules and expectations of the retreat should be clear and readily available and not subject to the whims of a potential nut case. Sadly, pretty much anyone can create a "retreat" and gladly take your money.

2 Lack of planning. Look for well-planned itineraries and detailed agendas. Is there an easy-to-navigate website and a telephone number with a live voice at the other end? A good retreat may not be easy to reach immediately; staffs are often small and take their own retreating seriously. That said, a good retreat should feel accessible and welcoming.

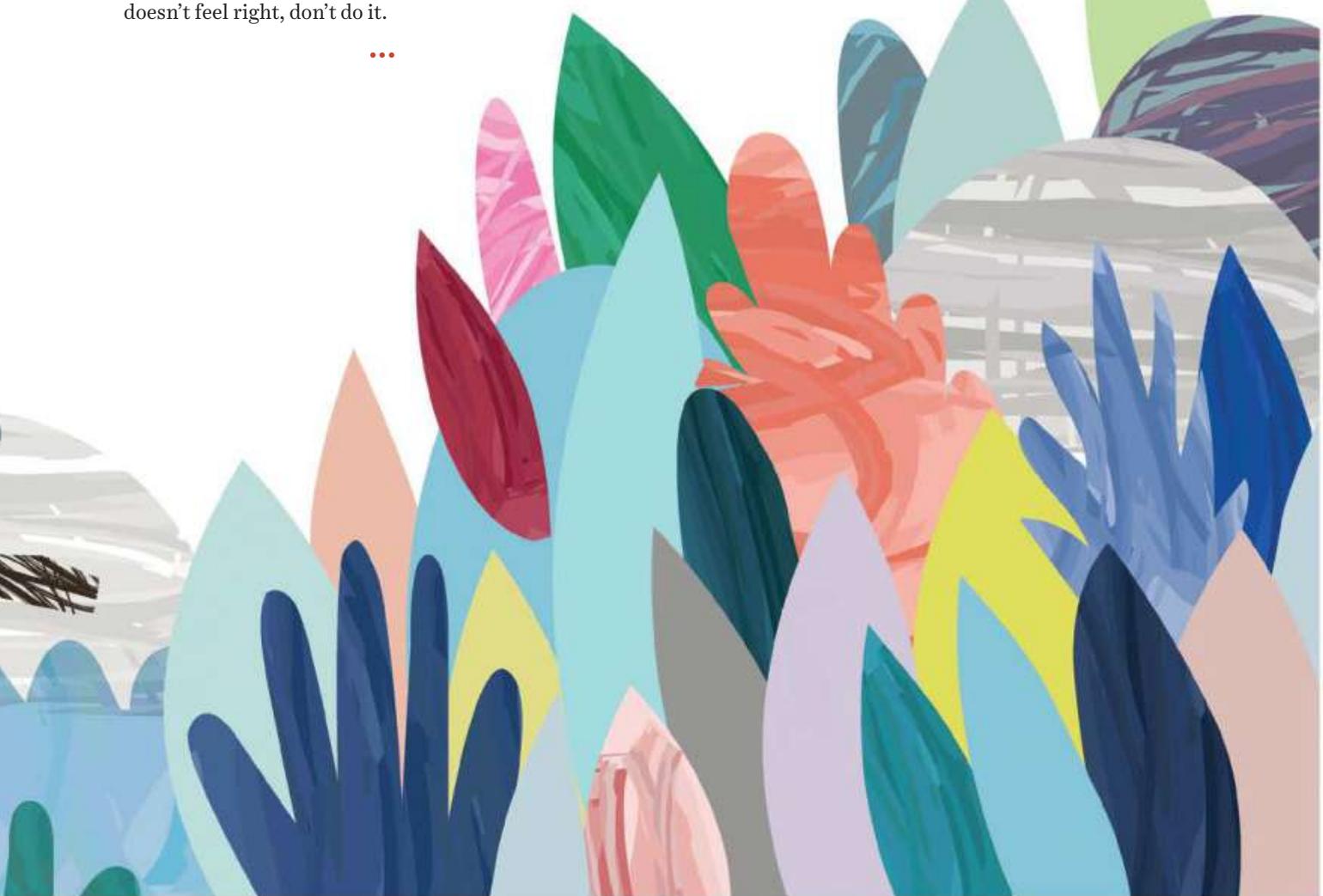
3 Extreme experiences. No one should have ever been cooked in a plastic-tarped sweat lodge—as occurred in James Arthur Ray's infamous Sedona retreat. But crazy things still happen in the name of self-improvement. Don't check your good sense at the door. If something doesn't feel right, don't do it.

...

"Life itself becomes one long retreat, if you are open to seeing it that way," Jon Kabat-Zinn shared with me during an interview a few years back. "I love looking at life that way, whatever unfolds is the curriculum of the retreat, and the challenge always is: How are you going to be wise in relationship with whatever arises, be that wanted or unwanted?"

Mary Bemis is a pioneering spa and wellness journalist who has spent decades reviewing retreats. She is the Editorial Director of InsidersGuideToSpas.com.

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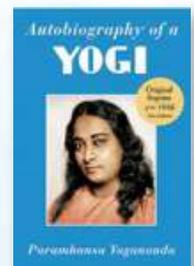
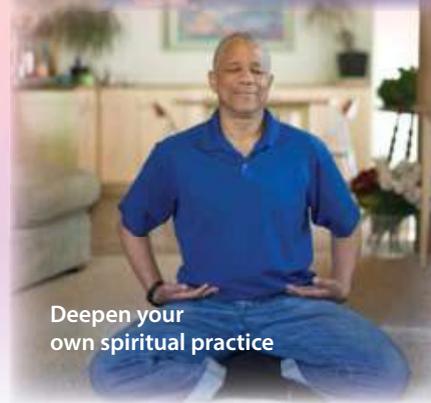
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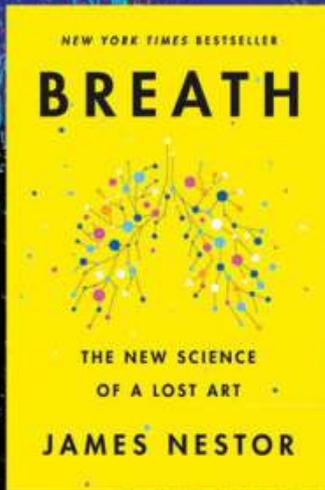
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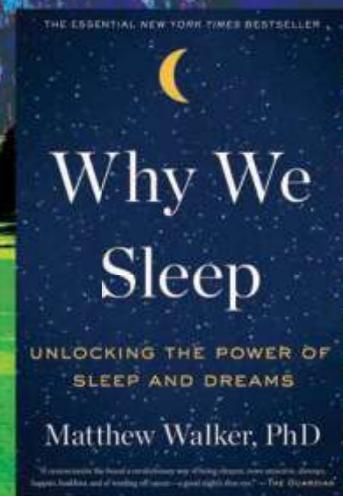
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REDOING RETREATS

BY BRANDI-ANN UYEMURA

A weeklong escape to the woods might seem fantastical right now. A retreat, in every definition of the word, may be unattainable in your corner of the world. But retreat centers are anticipating your visit in 2021.

A handful of years ago I went on a mother's pilgrimage. The type you take when you're overflowing with babies and need a break. When I think of that time now—yoga with a dozen or so people and open buffet dining with 30 other guests—it's easy to believe that way of life is extinct. But Gary Palisch, the **Sedona Mago Center's** marketing advisor, reminds me that there are parts of the country remote enough that partaking in a normal retreat experience is possible.

"We're 12 miles out in the desert," he says.

The center, located in northern Arizona, is on 173 acres of land. Currently it's allowing 30 people on the grounds at a time. "The rooms are pretty well spaced out, so we literally

have no chance of you running into someone," Palisch says.

The Sedona Mago Center has had to quickly adapt. Temporarily closing the center, cutting pay, and declining large, profitable group bookings are some examples. "It's a challenge financially. ... The key was how do we maintain a safe environment for people? Because we are out in the desert, so a lot of our teachers, trainers, and operational staff live out there. How do we make sure they're all safe?"

The center has implemented social distancing and masks in common areas. Only couples are allowed to share rooms. Gone are buffets. Hand sanitizer is plentiful. Teachers are heard from at least six feet away through speakers. The good news, Palisch says, is "most of your time at Mago is spent outside."

Low occupancy makes the retreat feel like a private getaway. "[It] allows the opportunity for people to go on really deep-dive personal retreats," says Palisch. Another change is the length of stay. More people are opting for longer stays that can make lasting change in their life. "Mago really is a place that can help people who are asking, 'What's the next phase of my life going to look like?'"



Canyon Ranch, a luxury wellness resort with four locations, is attempting to meet the need for human connection while staying safe. The retreat has a medical facility and employs, among others, Richard Carmona, a former surgeon general. Under the guidance of its experts, it has been able to offer in-person spa services like massage. The resort is actively working on offering group experiences for corporations and social and wellness travel groups.

In the virtual space, Canyon Ranch offers videos, articles, and online coaching, and it gives guests the opportunity to continue working with health professionals they've seen in the past. Jim Eastburn, the resort's director of transformational experiences, says, "I think it will be an



COURTESY OF CANYON RANCH

ongoing extension of our brand to help people stay connected through life and wellness coaching and looking at elements of telemedicine."

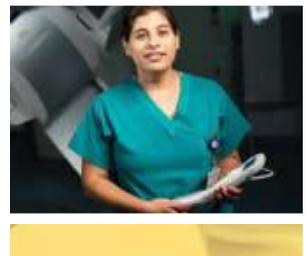
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In addition to the pandemic, the **Ratna Ling Retreat Center**, located in Cazadero, California, has had to endure the California wildfires. While the center was not directly impacted, its codirector, Rosalyn White, says the challenges have taught her patience. “I need to have patience and by that, I mean just to face the reality as it is. Not how you wish it could be or used to be, but how it is now and what we can do to help.” This has trickled down into the center’s programs.

“We’ve actually been planning to move more in a spiritual direction in our teaching. Our founder is a Tibetan Buddhist master. Most of us are long-term students and teachers who have this grounding in the Buddhist practices. We’ve been more of a yoga retreat center and we’ve been moving more toward our roots in Buddhist practice. It seems like it’s what the world needs right now.”

White says the center is working on developing programs that “go beyond Shavasana,” and the five or ten minutes of relaxing that it brings. Instead, it is hoping to introduce a deeper spiritual practice that will bring greater joy and make a difference in people’s lives. “We are going to create this hybrid something that feels good like yoga does but also helps you feel better on more an emotional level.”

Ratna Ling is planning ways to invite people back to the center safely. An option is offering personal retreats for individuals who would stay in one of 14 guest cottages and

may choose to bring their own food or have meals brought to them. Classes may take place via Zoom and guests can receive directions on how to do their own self-guided nature walks.

The center is also hoping to return to its camping roots. “One thing we’re looking at resurrecting is a camping option. We used to have really nice platforms tents and yurts. We’re looking at making those available again. It will offer different price points and be a little more affordable. We already have permission to do that in the summer months.”

Before the pandemic and its consequent financial burdens, the **Shambhala Mountain Center** in Colorado was already dealing with reported sexual misconduct by its clergy. Add in the movements in society to bring more awareness to racial and gender inequity, and the center felt called to move in a different direction. Executive director Michael Gayner says it is “focusing on community development, bringing together meditative practice and community life.”

The center, which had to be evacuated in the summer due to forest fires, has also been working on building “resilient and healthy forests. ... Any further development that we do will be anchored in good ecological and environmental standards and net zero construction, providing energy to the grid rather than taking from it.”



RATNA LING
RETREAT CENTER

COURTESY OF RATNA LING

Another part of the center's plan is strengthening its online presence to reach a more diverse audience. "One of the things COVID accelerated for us is developing good online programs. Some programs will be online purely and we're also looking to develop hybrid programs with some number of students on land and other people who could be joining elsewhere. That would also make it more affordable if people are experiencing economic challenges."

Traditionally, the center has offered a significant number of Buddhist programs from different traditions. It has expanded that to include yoga, running, hiking, and writing retreats. All programs have a contemplative meditative element. These are held over a day, a weekend, or even a month.

What you don't get in luxury spa offerings, he says you gain in 600 acres of nature. "The only traffic jam we have is when there's a bunch of deer on the road. You have those kinds of intimate experiences. It's more about being up in an



COURTESY OF SHAMBALA MOUNTAIN CENTER / COREY RUFFNER

incredibly beautiful, potent space exploring nature."

Gayner is excited about the changes the center is undergoing. "When part of your livelihood is to host people ... there's a yearning for guests and friends." **S&H**

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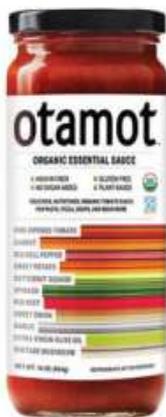


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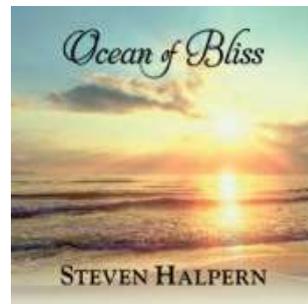
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STAYING IN FOR A VIRTUAL RETREAT?

HERE'S WHAT TO DO BEFOREHAND

BY KALIA KELMENSON

One of the best parts of a retreat getaway is the actual getting away. Away from the demands of everyday life, away from the dishes, the laundry, the chores that call to you from your home. These days, so much of our lives are spent in our homes that the idea of a retreat feels like a dream, the elusive, foggy type we can't quite wrap our mind around.

A retreat offers a powerful container for growth and change. It's a place ripe with intention, where there is space to focus wholeheartedly. So, in this time of physical

distancing, we can still cozy up in community virtually. It just requires some pivoting.

Just as you would do for any retreat, there are preparatory steps to take so your experience will be satisfying rather than frustrating. Try these ideas to enhance your virtual retreat.

Create a sacred space. Be sure to clear any clutter or piles of unfinished chores or work. Set it all aside so you can relax fully in the present. Let the people around you know that you are taking some space or invite them to join you if it feels appropriate. If you live in a noisy place, consider using a white noise machine to limit intrusive sounds.

Set the intention for the room. If you have enough ventilation, you may want to smudge the room with sage, light a scented candle, or diffuse your favorite essential oils into the

Let the people around you know that you are taking some space or invite them to join you if it feels appropriate.

air. You could also have a face mist on hand to use throughout the retreat. Clearing the energy and igniting inspiration through your sense of smell can help to create a shift in your awareness.

Gather what you need to feel fully cared for. Be sure to plan ahead so you have what you need on hand. You may want a yoga mat, a cozy sweater or throw, a journal and beautiful pen to write with, an eye pillow, or a mug of your favorite tea and some snacks. You will be well-served by not having to run out of the room to grab these things mid-retreat. Your retreat organizer will most likely provide a list of suggestions, so be sure to look for it in your welcome packet.

Prepare your technology. Set yourself up with the appropriate ways to engage with the retreat. Connect speakers to your computer and adjust the sound so you will easily be able to hear what is being shared. Update any programs you are using, and although it might be tempting to slide in last minute, log on five to ten minutes early so you can be sure

that all of your technology is working. Figure out beforehand how to get support from the retreat team if something goes awry while you are trying to connect.

Find a way to transition. In ordinary circumstances, retreats involve a fair amount of travel, often over great distances. This allows space for adjustment, anticipation, and preparation. Give yourself this time to transition both as you prepare for your retreat with the above steps and also when the retreat is over. Don't just jump back into the chores of your life. Plan on drawing a bath or engaging in something creative. Go on a walk or let yourself lay down and rest in order to process the information you have just taken in. Give yourself this gift by identifying and recognizing what it is that you need the most in order to transition.

Retreats are ultimately about self-care. You are choosing to participate in a way that is meant to nourish you on a deep level. With some planning and clear intention, your virtual retreat can offer potent benefits. **S&H**



She: The Divine Feminine Rising
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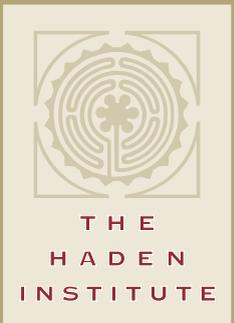
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Toe the Line

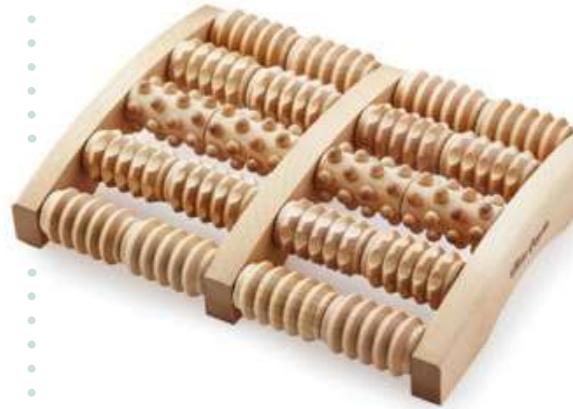
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FROM THE PANTRY

Got cold feet (literally or metaphorically)? A **ginger**-infused foot bath can promote circulation, and a steaming cup of lemon ginger tea can increase serotonin levels in the brain.

Add a few tablespoons of **baking soda** to a foot bath. It helps alleviate odors and soften skin. Following your soak, use a pumice stone to remove dead skin and follow up with moisturizer. You could use **coconut oil** as a moisturizer if you want to stick to products from the pantry.

Sugar can be used for an exfoliating foot scrub. Simply combine sugar (brown or white) with oil until you have a texture that works for you. Integrate your favorite essential oils to the recipe or add **vanilla extract** so that your feet will smell like fresh-baked cookies.

REVIEWS

books // music // film

A RETURN TO WHOLENESS

Free yourself from the illusion of separation with these selections from S&H.

This One Wild and Precious Life

The Path Back to Connection in a Fractured World

By Sarah Wilson
DEY STREET

IN HER NEW BOOK, *This One Wild and Precious Life: The Path Back to Connection in a Fractured World*, Australian writer Sarah Wilson uses the echo of the Mary Oliver poem “The Summer Day” to

invite her readers to live on the edge—that place where things aren’t necessarily easy but “where the truly big, noble, creative and meaningful stuff in life tends to happen for humans.”

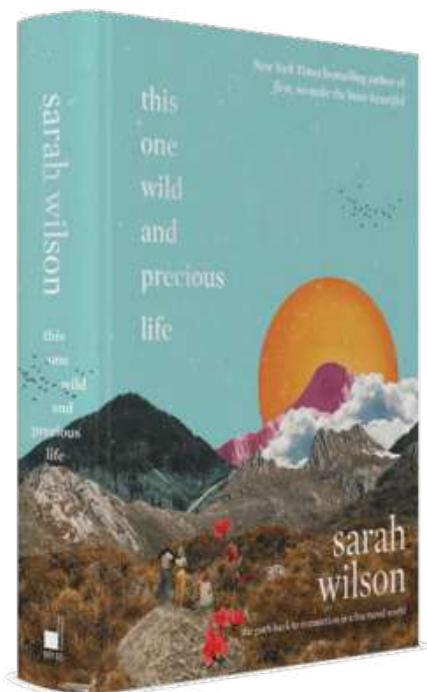
Why might we do this? We’re in times that demand it, Wilson notes, and we’re all feeling the chaos in hearts, minds, bodies, spirits. We each face a choice: We can rise to the occasion and confront what’s real, which can be decidedly uncomfortable, or turn away and seek to be soothed.

“We need to step up from our comfortable lull—our acedia—go to our edge and serve,” she urges.

The book blends memoir, poetry, and essay to describe this process of stepping up, tracing its joyful contours as well as its painful ones. Wilson uses her own experiences of waking up to truth to highlight that the path to connection isn’t a side trip, but the point, the human groove from which we’ve gotten derailed. She offers some concrete ideas for cultivating what she calls “anti-fragility”—that quality that allows us to face discomfort, even suffering, with resilience: Delay gratification. Meditate. Be bored. Consume less. Try a dopamine fast by taking a break from media, junk food, and texting.

But mostly Wilson explores why it’s worth it to take the risk and move past the comfortable, assuring her readers that doing this is how we find meaning—and hope.

“In the final wash, coming back to this one wild and precious life has to be more charming than destroying it,” she says. “Once we feel into or exist in beauty, love and hope rush in.” —KATE MADDEN YEE



“Once we feel into or exist in beauty, love and hope rush in.” —SARAH WILSON

Faith After Doubt

Why Your Beliefs
Stopped Working and
What to Do About It
By Brian D. McLaren
ST. MARTIN'S
ESSENTIALS

BRIAN MCLAREN WAS A PASTOR for 24 years. He recalls once standing in front of a mirror in the men's room before he had to go preach and thinking, "I'm going bald. ... And I'm not sure if there really is a God." McLaren is the author of multiple books, a speaker, activist, and public theologian who is one of the best-known voices in progressive Christianity. His latest book, *Faith After Doubt*, is deeply reassuring to anyone who questions their faith or the existence of God.

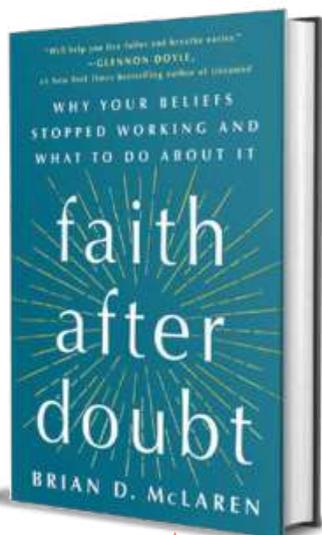
McLaren grew up in a fundamentalist Christian religion, and shares his own path along doubt and discovery, as well as stories of people he's met over the years who are struggling to reconcile their beliefs. Maybe they're turned off by their church's emphasis on money, or its hostility to LGBTQ+ persons. Sixty-five million adults in the U.S. have already dropped out of active religious attendance, for myriad reasons. But doubt, McLaren counsels, is nothing to be ashamed of. It's a "blessed unrest" and an important companion.

He discusses the neurological and cultural reasons why doubt feels so painful—we are herd animals, desiring to belong to a group. McLaren was at the 2017 Charlottesville "Unite the Right" demonstration as a counter-protestor to the hate groups. Humans, he warns, can easily shift a religious identity into "quasi-secular religions like racism, nationalism, fascism and classism."

But he also talks about how religious communities still hold a vital place in the world.

His book teaches us not to fear doubt and how to embody faith after doubt, with suggestions for reflection and action. "God is not a destination," he writes. "Like a river, like a road, God takes us somewhere."

—KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER



Humans, he warns, can easily shift a religious identity into "quasi-secular religions like racism, nationalism, fascism and classism."

What's Missing From Medicine

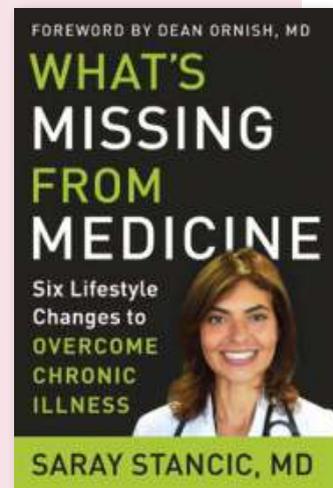
Six Lifestyle Changes to Overcome Chronic Illness
Saray Stancic, MD
HIEROPHANT PUBLISHING

Lifestyle Medicine is an evidence-based, clinical discipline that promotes healthy lifestyle behaviors in order to prevent, treat, and even reverse chronic diseases. According to Dr. Saray Stancic, who has been practicing medicine for over 25 years and is board certified in infectious disease and internal medicine, this new approach is not in opposition to mainstream medicine, it's simply what it's been lacking.

Though trained as a physician, it wasn't until she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis at the age of 28 that Stancic began to really think about the way chronic disease is commonly treated. Her *aha* moment came when she happened upon an old study in an obscure medical journal. "In my own medical training, I had never even heard of the long-established links between diet and MS, let alone how nutrition might affect other diseases," she writes.

While this might seem shocking, Stancic writes that looking back on her ten years of training, she "couldn't think of a single time that [her] professors had conveyed the message." Only about a quarter of medical schools offer the recommended 25 hours of nutrition education, she points out, even though numerous studies show the effectiveness of dietary interventions. She became "disappointed by a health-care system that functions more like a *sick-care* system, treating symptoms without focusing on underlying causes," and her frustration led her to the questions that now guide her life and work.

Written in an accessible and engaging style, this is the perfect read for those who are struggling to lead healthier lives. After a brief, scientific overview of how and why chronic diseases are so prevalent in the industrialized world, Stancic outlines six major areas where making simple changes can have a dramatic effect: nutrition, physical activity, stress management, sleep hygiene, use of substances, and social connections. These "six spokes of the wheel" are all equally important; if one spoke breaks, the wheel won't turn. Those who are new to the path of taking responsibility for their health will find the self-assessment worksheets and templates especially helpful. —ANDREA PERKINS



more books >>

The Beauty of What Remains

How Our Greatest Fear Becomes

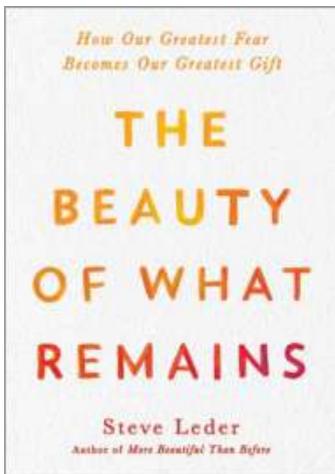
Our Greatest Gift

By Steve Leder

AVERY

ON THE EVE OF Yom Kippur 2017, Los Angeles-based rabbi Steve Leder delivered what would become his best-loved sermon: a distillation of the things he has learned about death from sitting with hundreds of dying people. Exactly one year after Leder gave that sermon, the burial of his father caused him to rethink his perspective on death and dying. “This book is my apology—a setting the record straight for the ways in which that most popular sermon was shy of the deepest truth,” he offers in the prologue to his fourth book. “I want people to know the deepest truth about what death teaches us of life.”

Leder, named one of America’s 10 most influential rabbis by *Newsweek* magazine, addresses the reader in the same direct, unpatronizing tone that he advises us to take with those who are dying. He warns us not to expect the imminent death of a loved one to magically fix a dysfunctional relationship, and he urges us not to take on new roles in the presence of a dying person. “If you are a hugger, hug,” he writes. “If you are a feeder, feed. If you are a joker, joke.



If you are a gossip, dish away. Be with someone in death as you were in life.”

As well as providing insight on how to hold space for a dying person, *The Beauty of What Remains* guides us through the nuances of preparing a will, eulogizing, dealing with grief, and teaching children about death. Leder also tackles the complex issue of whether it is right or wrong to hasten the death of someone who is suffering badly. Interspersed throughout are nuggets of wisdom, such as the late musician Warren Zevon’s summary of what his impending death had taught him: “I know how much you’re supposed to enjoy every sandwich.” —DAMON ORION

Winter Is for Lovers

Ben Harper

ANTI-RECORDS



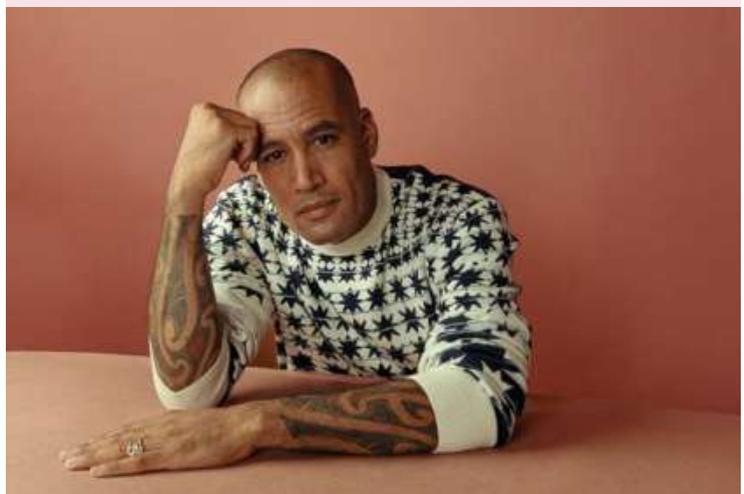
With his latest project, folk/blues musician Ben Harper has taken the idea of a solo album to its logical extreme. Gone are Harper’s vocals, as is his usual backup band The Innocent Criminals. *Winter Is for Lovers* consists entirely of sounds emanating from a Monteleone lap steel guitar. The textural sparseness creates an atmosphere simultaneously warm and barren, perfectly suited to the album’s title.

Harper recorded *Winter* at his grandparents’ instrument shop, The Folk Music Store. While working in that shop as a child, he met luminaries like Leonard Cohen, Ry Cooder, Jackson Browne, and Taj Mahal, the last of whom taught him to play fingerstyle guitar. Along with blues guitarists like Mahal, this album pays tribute to the classical, flamenco, Hawaiian, Indian, and so-called “American primitive” players who furthered Harper’s musical development.

As opposed to songs, these 15 pieces are intended to be experienced as movements in a symphony. Each section is named after a part of the world that provided musical inspiration for this project. For example, “London” is a nod to British guitarists like Jimmy Page, Richard Thompson, and John Martyn, while “Inland Empire” is an homage to the area in Southern California where Harper grew up, both as a person and as a musician.

On the whole, Harper’s playing on this album emphasizes hummable melodies over technical muscle. The album does have its pleasantly flashy passages, though—most notably, the agile fingerpicking and hammer-ons in “Bizanet” and the deft slides at the end of the album’s last track, “Paris.”

Winter makes up in stylistic diversity what it might lack in timbral variety. Consider it a sampler platter of musical flavors from all over the globe, presented in a style unique to its maker. —DAMON ORION



JACOB BOLL

Nocturne: Music for the Native American Flute

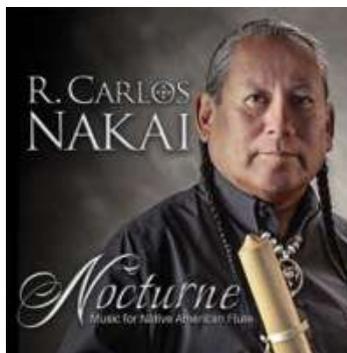
R. Carlos Nakai
CANYON RECORDS

NOCTURNE is R. Carlos Nakai's first solo album since 2008. These 12 melodies in four movements are deeply soothing and performed on Native American flute in the traditional style that Nakai has been committed to preserving since his first album *Changes* in 1983.

"The instrument was actually invented by the Plains people for meditation and, as we say, to sing how we feel about being in the world," Nakai told *S&H*.

R. Carlos Nakai has collaborated with many musicians including Philip Glass, Peter Kater, and Paul Horn. He's released 40 albums and received 11 Grammy nominations.

A Dine' (Navajo) and Ute native, Nakai grew up participating in ceremonies with various Native American tribes. He told *S&H* that *Nocturne* represents, "The journey of becoming human and becoming of service." He explains, "The songs deal with discovering how to be in the world, learning how to communicate. And how one's self belongs to one or more cultural heritages and then we follow our own road. We learn about becoming enlightened and centered within ourselves. And finally, *this is what I want to do in*



JOHN RUNNING

the world. That's the whole premise of indigenous, Native American, thought: How will I become of service to others? In *Nocturne* it's in the sound."

Nocturne was designed to be heard in continuous play mode and the album takes us on a meditative journey of long tones, percussive accents, and smooth melodic arpeggios. "Here I am now, becoming an elder," reflects Nakai. "When I finally go through that doorway, I'll still be learning. It's sort of an adventure, to me, to be in the world."

—JOHN MALKIN

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Foreword by Chuck DeGroat

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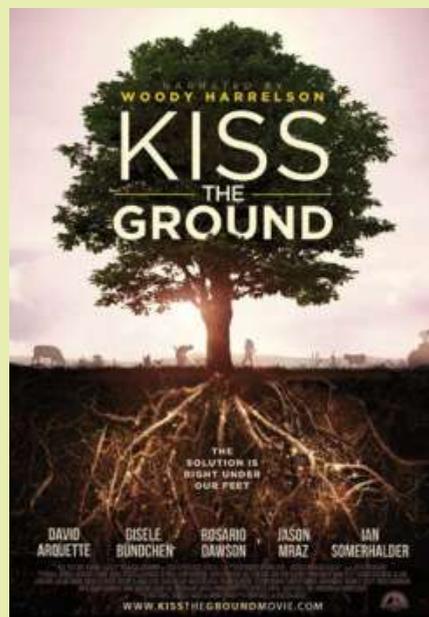
Kiss the Ground

Directed by Joshua Tickell
and Rebecca Harrell Tickell
BIG PICTURE RANCH/NETFLIX

WHAT IF THE SOLUTION to the climate crisis was right under our feet all along? Narrated by Woody Harrelson, Joshua Tickell and Rebecca Harrell Tickell's *Kiss the Ground* makes an eloquent case for the key role soil might play in humanity's ongoing efforts to combat climate change. It's a process called regenerative agriculture, and it's built around the ability of plants to absorb carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

The standard practice of tilling the soil in between crops degrades the earth and can lead to desertification, which not only makes the land unusable but also prevents it from being able to absorb carbon. Instead, planting year-round, with an eye towards plants that can help renourish the earth, can keep the soil healthy and better able to help reduce CO2 in the atmosphere. This can not only help us stop climate change, but, more importantly, it can help reverse its effects.

The film follows different individuals working towards this effort—from soil scientists to farmers. (Some of these are unlikely sources—cattle ranchers who graze their herds in ways that can enhance regeneration of the soil, for example.) It's not an easy endeavor, of course, requiring many American farmers to start doing things differently than they have for



Regenerative agriculture seems like the most obvious solution in the world.

decades, even though, ironically, regenerative agriculture apparently leads to greater profits as well.

This is a fascinating film, but more importantly, it's a convincing one. By the time it's done, regenerative agriculture seems like the most obvious solution in the world. The result is something quite rare: a documentary about the climate crisis that offers something resembling hope for our planet's future. —**BILGE EBIRI**



Woody Harrelson: Actor, soil advocate



Jason Mraz: Singer/songwriter, agroforestry farmer

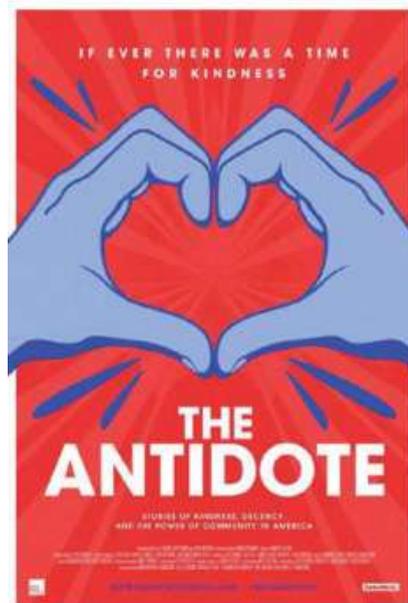
COURTESY KISS THE GROUND (2)

The Antidote

Directed by Kahane Cooperman,
John Hoffman
CINETIC/BRAND NEW STORY

The subtitle of *The Antidote* is “Stories of Kindness, Decency and the Power of Community in America,” which sounds somewhat vague. The filmmakers claim that it was made “in response to the times we are living in,” which also makes the film sound like it will be topical. The truth is that the documentary is an intriguing patchwork of mostly unconnected stories, each of which might make an interesting short film. If there is a theme that runs through all of the stories, it is that of their subjects’ humanity, though they don’t necessarily present a cohesive portrait of America today. In truth, the film doesn’t offer much about “the times we are living in,” perhaps because it’s trying to steer clear of politics. Still, it all begs the question: What is this so-called “antidote” for?

Nevertheless, it can be heartwarming to see these stories, which range from an African-American community



organizer starting up community bike shops with the kids in his neighborhood, to a refugee resettlement organization in Anchorage, Alaska, to a center in Portland, Oregon that brings elders in need of care, adoptive families, and foster kids all under one roof. The pitch itself is not a remarkable one, though the film-making—which is immersive, and often features long, elegant shots taking us through these spaces,

as well as moving interviews with the subjects—is elegant and occasionally powerful. *The Antidote*’s vision of ordinary people helping out their fellow humans in sometimes predictable, sometimes surprising ways isn’t all that remarkable. What’s remarkable is the fact that a film like this was needed at all. —BILGE EBIRI

LISTENING TO THE *truths* OUR BODIES TELL

Can we still be whole when our bodies suffer? Speaking from her own experience with chronic pain, Liuan Huska helps us redefine what it means to find healing and wholeness, even in the midst of ongoing pain. As chronic illness forces us to pay attention to our bodies’ vulnerability, we realize that healing is not an escape from the limits of the body, but becoming whole as souls in bodies and bodies with souls.



LIUAN HUSKA is a freelance writer and speaker focusing on topics of embodiment and spirituality.



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NIKKI GIOVANNI

QUARANTINED AT HER HOME in Christiansburg, Virginia, Nikki Giovanni listens to Dizzy Gillespie and chats on the phone over her morning coffee and grits “like grandmother used to make.” The poet is always “trying to get a little work done.” This October she published her 28th book, *Make Me Rain*. It’s the latest offering in a career that took off in the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and has included cowriting a book with James Baldwin and earning a Grammy nomination for best spoken word album.

Giovanni brings a voice of discernment and solidity to our disquiet times. She sees the pandemic as carving out a spiritual space within us: “We are Zooming each other. We are talking to each other more. People are writing who haven’t written before. I think a lot of this is moving toward the spiritual, a being-in-touch with each other. This virus that is making us stay in has brought out another part of our hearts.”

While her heart has grown, it also hurts, thinking about “the governor of Michigan being stalked by extremist militia and black men getting shot in the back by police.” She remembers teaching her son to drive: “Put your hands on the wheel. The policeman’s name is ‘Sir.’ Leave your hands on the wheel. I can pay for a ticket but I can’t buy a new son.”

And she looks to the Black mothers who have buried their children: “I can’t imagine how Mary stood at the bottom of the cross with the beloved disciple John. And as Jesus transitioned, she cut him down, cleaned him, and put him in the tomb. Can you imagine how Mary felt?” After they put him to rest, “John was so wise. He took Mary to Turkey and cared for her.” She sees this act as in tune with Black Lives Matter organizers who have taken in



DEBORAH FENGOLD

families suffering from police violence. “They have told the story ... and their story has gone around the world. Mr. *Divine*,” she says, drawing out the word, “standing on the neck of George Floyd thought, ‘No one will remember this man,’ but now the whole world does. As the old Aretha Franklin song says, ‘Let’s call this song exactly like it is’—jealousy and cowardice.”

In this period of racial reckoning, Giovanni believes we should look toward what people are doing right, especially Black folks. She finds hope in education and poetry. Having written 13 books for children, she shares a script for parents and teachers: “What we need to do, starting with kindergarten, is teach our children that if anybody asks you who you

“

As Jesus transitioned,
she cut him down, cleaned him,
and put him in the tomb.
Can you imagine how Mary felt?

”

are, you tell them, ‘I’m a child of God.’ You’re a child of this Earth. Be proud of that, instead of afraid of difference.”

Giovanni believes poetry leads to “a path that looks at where we are and where we are going.” She sees her work as part of that light, a way of guidance. “Poetry has evolved for Americans” she continues, “from the spirituals on up to rhythm and blues, to jazz, and now, to rap. My generation opened the door so that today rappers and poets could use their words as they wanted to.”

“All poets are in love. So the first poem in my new collection, *Make Me Rain*, is a love poem. We know that water

is the beginning of life and that nothing will grow without it. I love that, because water changes. In that poem I say, ‘let me be ice on your tongue, let me come in.’ I think it’s so wonderful, because that’s what love is. Ultimately, I want to be a cloud. And when I become a cloud, I become rain again. That’s what’s going to keep us all alive.”

—NATHAN ERWIN

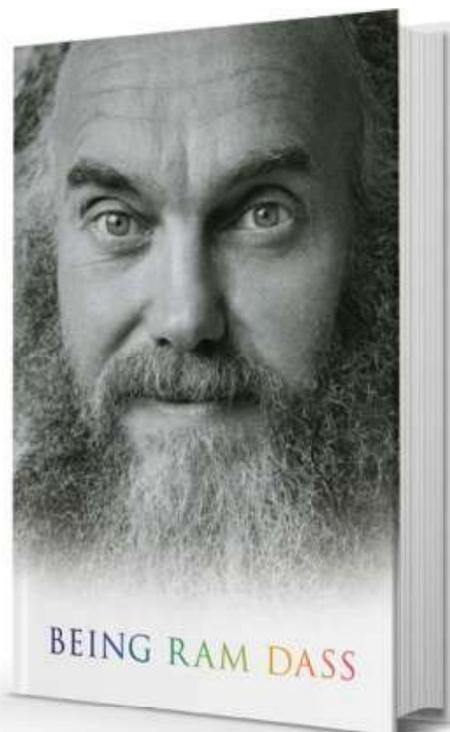
READ “WINTER HOMES” BY NIKKI GIOVANNI ON PAGE 8.

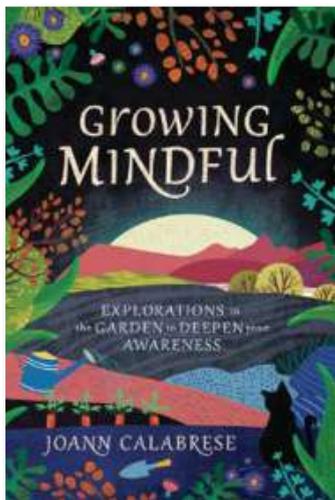
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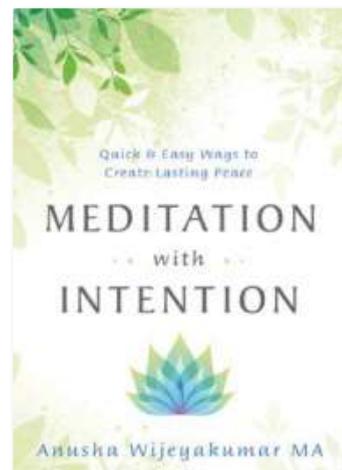


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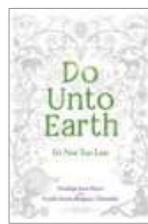
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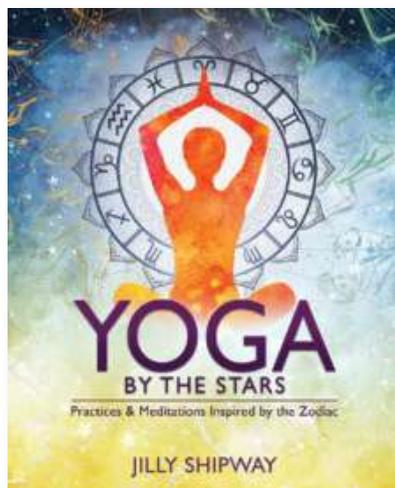
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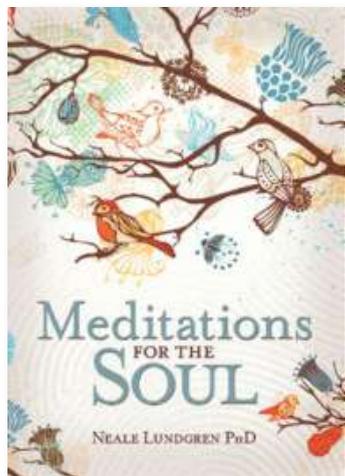


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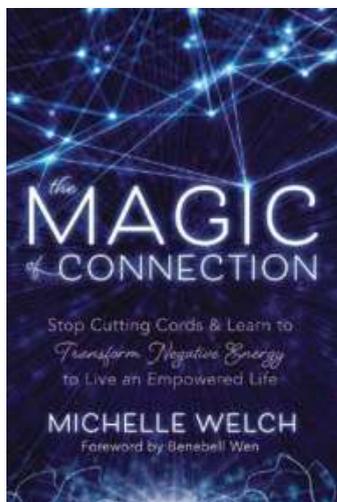


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LIVING WITH A TERMINAL ILLNESS

THE SECOND BUCKET LIST

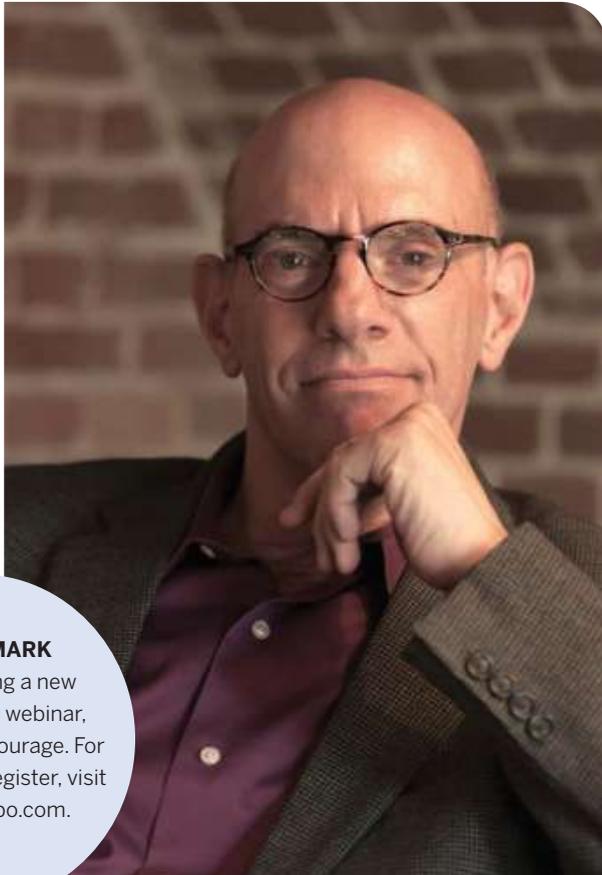
The Second Bucket List is a poignant and uplifting story about the physical, emotional, and spiritual journey of a forty-nine year old woman diagnosed with ALS. The novel is . . . "as much an act of devotion and healing as a work of fiction." —BookLife Prize, 2020

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The Fire of Aliveness

THERE ARE TWO FIRES that we have to encounter daily. The first is the fire of life, which reduces us to joy by burning away all that is false and not essential. This is *the fire of aliveness* that needs to be fed, no matter where we are or what we do. This is the light of the soul that must be kept burning. The second is the fire in the world, which can burn us up, which can wound us and damage us. This is *the fire of circumstance* that needs to be put out. How do we know the difference between these two fires? I honestly don't know. I have been reduced to what is essential by the one and wounded by the flames of the other, more than once. Nevertheless, we need each other to know which fire

to feed and which to douse. To continually know the difference is part of the practice of being human. And helping each other know the difference is part of the work of love.

Though we feel the rip and pull of everything taken away from us, being stripped of what covers us helps us grow: by lightening our load and making us more raw and naked, so we can be touched and transformed by the elements of life. This seems to be the promise of the inner world: that if we stay open to life, we'll be cleansed of dead weight, worn of coverings that have served their purpose, and pruned of the tangle of falseness that grows like vines about everything.

Inevitably, we move through the first half of life gathering, only to enter the second half of life compelled to empty much of what we carry. Along the way, we gather knowledge, achieve a great deal, and save what we can. But under all our coverings, we long for the naked freedom of a star. Under all our accomplishments is a simple soul eager to build, not caring what it is we might build. And stripped of what we save and hoard, we grow immediate. This cycle continues: Gather, build, grow covered by what we build, then burn away all that is not essential, so we can grow immediate, ready to build again.

By gathering, we *discover* who we are, and by emptying, we get to throw off the world and *be* who we are. From such bareness of being, we enter a simple and substantial experience of life. In these essential moments, we're left with a life that has to live now, eager as a fish gulping for food at the surface.

This brings us to a more compelling definition of destiny. Destiny is not a

A Question to Walk With

In your journal, begin to trace your own history and evolution as a listener, describing three key experiences that have shaped what listening has meant to you and what you have heard along the way.

particular dream coming true over time for an individual, but the force of Spirit emanating into the world through all things including us. The emanation of Spirit is the counterpart to gravity. Like flowers that break ground in order to blossom, human beings are destined to bring their souls into the world. And despite the thousand things that can deter us, this can happen in a thousand and one ways.

Our ordinary destiny, then, is to accept the friction of being worn open by the world, so our soul can show itself and join with everything. The sensation of our soul showing itself

and joining with everything is another name for joy.

Still, living between the fire of aliveness and the fire of circumstance lands us in the middle of another paradox. While no one can live your life for you, we're woefully deficient of the wisdom necessary to live, if left to our experience alone. Just as we can't see unless our eyes are open, we need the experience and company of others to open our deeper mind, though we're left to do the seeing for ourselves.

If too open, we can become wounded and burdened. If too closed, we can become removed and untouchable.

Most of the time, we tumble in the space in between. This is where we live, risking our way into authentic engagement, not watching life go by, but not burning up in the fire of circumstance either. This is the tension that everyone faces sooner or later: how to be touched by life without being consumed by its fire.

It's humbling but true: We live between the kindling of dream and the fire of life. Confused, we often think the dream is where we're going, and so miss the majesty of what the dream ignites. Just how do we make good use of our heart and get strength from what we know? This is a lifelong practice. As Keats advised, we need beauty and truth to make it through life. And I would add love. Truth helps us douse the fire of circumstance, while beauty helps us keep the fire of aliveness lit. And Love helps us discern between the two. **S&H**

This excerpt is from Mark's latest book, *The Book of Soul: 52 Paths to Living What Matters* (St. Martin's Essentials, 2020).

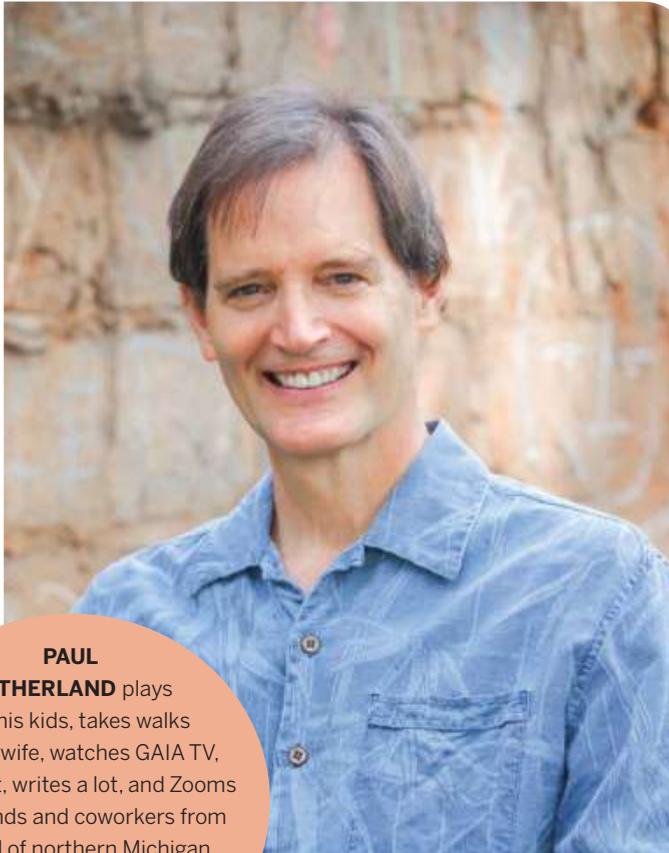
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SUTHERLAND plays

with his kids, takes walks with his wife, watches GAIA TV, reads a bit, writes a lot, and Zooms with friends and coworkers from the cold of northern Michigan.

He can be reached at paul@paulhsutherland.com.

Mindfulness Can Get You There

POLITICS AND CURRENT EVENTS ASIDE, I have come to a conclusion. Until our world gets to a point of empathetic mindfulness, which is the cause of loving friendliness, we are simply doomed to repeat the silly patterns of the past.

We humans love our ignorance. Our ignorance allows us to have lazy brains that relish the patterns we learned in childhood. We are adults now, responsible for our lives, our actions, our movements, our beliefs, and our ability to love. We have the power to change our path. All the power to change our path is in our actions.

We often let our life story be based on the stories we heard from others. If our parents, peers, and teachers were filled with anger, ignorance, laziness, a belief in scarcity, pessimism, hate, greed, indifference, and just a “life sucks and then we die” attitude, we adopt that mindset as reality. The reality is we can be magnificent, happy, virtuous, successful people. We can be born again.

We can be in control of our life. But we must first realize it’s complicated. Being complicated for most is an excuse to procrastinate. Saying with exhaustion, “This is just too hard,” allows our lazy brain to replay all our childhood and reactive programming that traps us in a cycle. It tells us to give up before we start.

We need to examine our life. G.I. Gurdjieff taught: “Conscious faith is freedom. Emotional faith is slavery. Mechanical faith is foolishness.” It takes courage to let go of habits and beliefs championed by our parents and those we respect, but we must if we are to ever get close to a mindfulness practice.

Sometimes I think people just want to stay on the quick-fix path of searching for the “esoteric alchemy” to magically blossom their life into the life they think they want. That alchemy exists, but it requires us to live a spiritual life. It calls us to take responsibility for our own lives, and to cast off our past patterns and make choices that feed our souls, allow us to thrive, and are in harmony with living a life of mindful loving friendliness. That begins with motivation, desire, affirmation, intention, and commitment.

If your days are boring, make them meaningful with mindful purpose and enthusiasm.

We need to know what we want. Then we need to work towards that. So we need a vision of what we want: For example we might place as our intention: “I want to be happy, flourish, thrive, and be an example of loving friendliness so that I am a blessing to all that I meet.” Then we say to ourselves, “Okay, now how do I get there?”

...

*Paul Sutherland suggests for guidance on intention and breaking free of the past, **Emmanuel's Prayer**. On goal setting and financial guidance, **Virtue of Wealth**. Both are available as flip books free at paulhsutherland.com. **Mindfulness in Plain English** is available everywhere and is free online at Vipassana.com.*

...

Professor Anders Ericsson studied the causes of what leads to “objectively reproducible performance” in very successful chess masters, musicians, surgeons, runners, ballerinas, and others. His goal was to tease out the alchemy of their reaching success. He declared it came from what he called “deliberate practice,” which requires intention, focus, introspection, or a feedback loop to know how you are doing.

Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers* oversimplified his finding to basically say you need 10,000 hours of practice to achieve mastery. You need a lot more than time. You need a teacher, introspection, a way to measure advancement, and a commitment to getting somewhere.

When I teach meditation, I explain the need for guidance and a teacher with the Zen proverb, “You can milk a cow's horn with great diligence and no matter how hard you try you will

not get milk.” A lot of meditators will spend hours sitting but get little benefit because they are in effect not advancing.

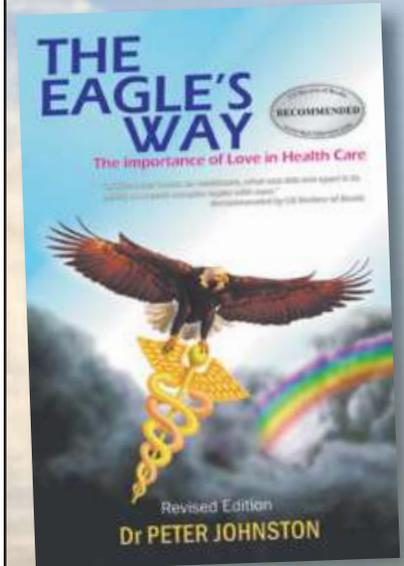
I once taught a tortured version of Vipassana meditation. In each class I explained Vipassana mindfulness was about all-day mindfulness. The goal was getting the student to a place where they were not bounced around in the world of: *This is good. This is bad. This is neutral*. In other words, not bouncing from avoiding suffering to seeking happy events or craving happy experiences. We often live between those two extremes and most of our life is in the mundane living we do, and that is where mindfulness comes in.

We need to find it interesting to feel the breath as we breathe in the smell of the bathroom, or the garbage we take out, or the guy next to us on the bus. We need to say it is interesting and kind of humorous, maybe, how annoyed we can get when our children fight.

Life is lived in the seemingly mundane chatter of a silly conversation, minor annoyances, and boring activities that we strive to avoid. I do believe a contemplation practice like Gurdjieff's, combined with meditation and mindfulness training, are key components to getting on the spiritual path and living a happy life where we are flourishing and infinitely resilient.

I know it sounds complicated. It is complicated, but really at this exact moment it is simply about asking yourself, *How am I going to choose to live the next moment of my life?* Your answer needs to come from a place of what you want your life to be. Mindfulness can get you there.

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Sarah

Bowen is an animal chaplain and author of the forthcoming *Sacred Sendoffs* (Monkfish Publishing), a book about surviving animal loss, making life meaningful, and trying to heal the planet.

Visioning a Re-new-able Year

FLASHBACK: It's December 31, 1999. Flushed from dancing, I'm perched on the steps of the Hilton Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, filled with anxiety about Y2K and the chaotic world around me.

Although my eyes peer out of the glittery zeros in 2000-shaped glasses, a local tells me it is 1992. Bent on educating me gently, he further informs me it's not even the new year—those festivities happened two months ago.

I was 28 years old and full of myself. Courtesy of Prince & The Revolution, I had been waiting since 1982 to “party like it’s 1999.” I was clueless about the impact of the Council of Chalcedon or the Gregorian Calendar. And I had certainly never considered that on this night, not everyone was celebrating the entrance into a new millennium.

Admittedly, advancing numbers help us mark time. Calendarizing is a construct that humans use to make sense of the progression of our lives. Yet, there remains something magical about the start of a new cycle. Indeed, for over 4,000 years, our species has been making New Year’s resolutions.

For over a decade, I resolved I would quit drinking. Then smoking. As I got healthier, I resolved to hit my yoga mat every day. To lose 10 pounds and find my abs! To stop eating processed sugar. Some of these resolutions stuck (#soberlife) and others, well, let’s just say I’m a work in progress.

As a self-identified spiritual rebel, I follow an odd liturgical cycle: a mash-up of practices, holy days, and sacred texts from around the globe. And yet, this *ungapatchka* of traditions provides an opportunity for expanding—like the universe itself—with unrelenting curiosity.

This year I turn to the first known resolution makers—the ancient Babylonians—for inspiration. At the start of a yearly cycle, Babylonians paid debts, returned anything they had borrowed, planted crops for the coming year, and pledged loyalty to their king (or crowned a new one).

It occurs to me that the first two activities help restore balance, while

the latter two encourage sustenance and dedication. Combining and adapting all four creates a much-needed vision for restoration after a year filled with pandemics and politics.

Paying debts: 2020 pummeled many of us with financial insecurity, fear, and increasing monetary debts. It's important to have some gentleness with ourselves around this. Debting can bring up feelings of failure, frustration, or that other F-word. Set up a repayment plan, and then engage in some self-forgiveness. Living in a pandemic is messy.

Next, consider debts beyond hard cash (and slippery plastic). Think back on your year. Where might you owe a debt of kindness? A debt of gratitude? Or perhaps a debt of encouragement? While we may be tight on funds right now, these debts can be repaid from our hearts. Make a list of the people that pulled you out of dark thoughts, lifted your spirits, and smoothly guided you to do the next right thing. Meditate on those moments. Ask your highest Self or spiritual guides for ideas to repay kind acts of spirited humanity.

Returning what we've borrowed: There's a sweater that needs to go back to Amy, a book belonging to Topaz, and I'm pretty sure that salad bowl shoved in the back of the cabinet is Lakisha's.

Semi-enforced winter hibernation is a judicious time for giving back. And considering our most critical restoration: Since 1970, we have taken from the Earth more than it is capable of regenerating. In 2020, our demand for natural resources, food, and cool stuff we saw on our Instagram feeds created an Earth Overshoot Day of August 22. Everything from August 23 onward has us—and the world's other beings—living on borrowed time.

Renewing Earth means we must act two-fold: Conserve what we use and revolutionize our mindset. Because we are way past reduce, reuse, and recycle, friends. Set aside an hour on

the first day of every month this year for New Month Day. During that time, research how to use something more sustainably, replace it with something more planet-friendly, or cut it completely out of your lifestyle.

Planting seeds: Organically—pun intended—last year taught us about the issues within our indefensible food system. Millions of farm animals were gassed, shot, or drowned when the supply chain broke. These horrors for the more-than-human world were compounded by emotional stress on farmworkers who had to carry out these gruesome acts. Shortages of toilet paper and sanitizer led to hoarding, while fear of food insecurity brought forth pandemic gardening as more of us turned to increasingly plant-powered lifestyles.

Doctors, sustainability experts, eco-warriors, and animal lovers agree: We must reduce the amount of our calories that come from animals. Plant seeds, munch on more things that come from plants, and eat less food that has faces. It's a win for the Earth as well for human health, slaughterhouse workers, and other sentient beings.

Pledging loyalty: If 2020 taught us anything, it's that pledging our loyalties to one side or the other creates division and a failure to acknowledge the complexity of the human experience. Instead, for 2021, what if we pledge our commitment to what truly sustains us? As spiritual seekers, we call that by many different names. And while we express our devotion in distinctive ways, my path reminds me that at the heart of our dedication lie three shared values: peace, compassionate service, and love for all creation. Renewing our loyalty means committing to uphold all three.

While the jury is still out on whether humanity can U-turn enough to stop our catastrophic trajectory, 2020 proved we can revolutionize the way we live when we have to. This new year let's choose to go even further. **S&H**

To change
one's life, start
immediately,
do it flamboyantly,
no exceptions.

WILLIAM JAMES



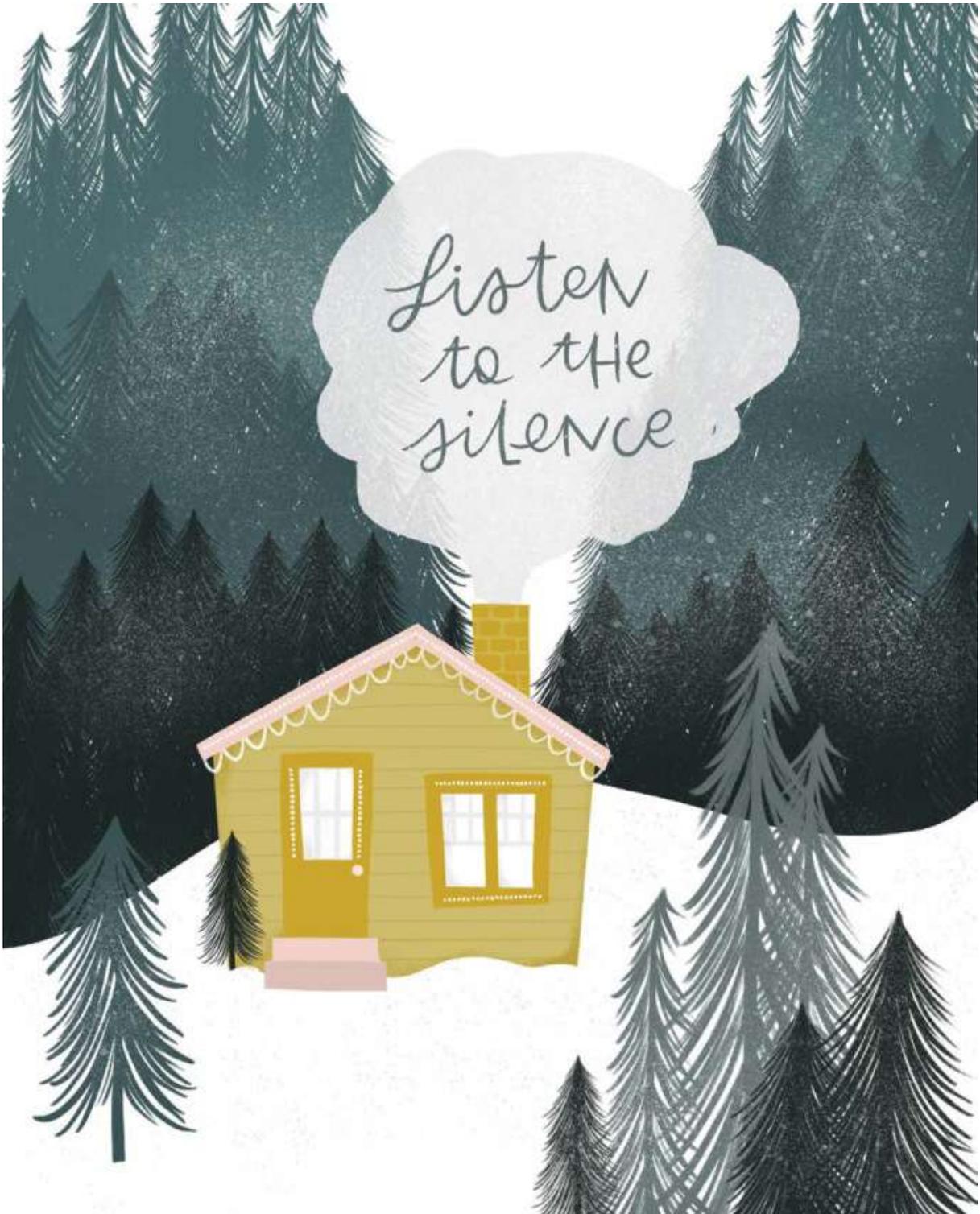
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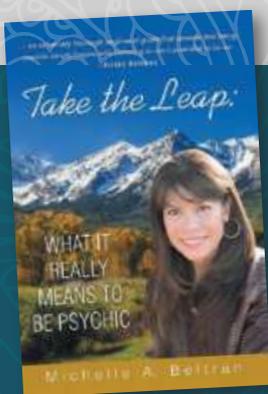
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