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March/April 2026

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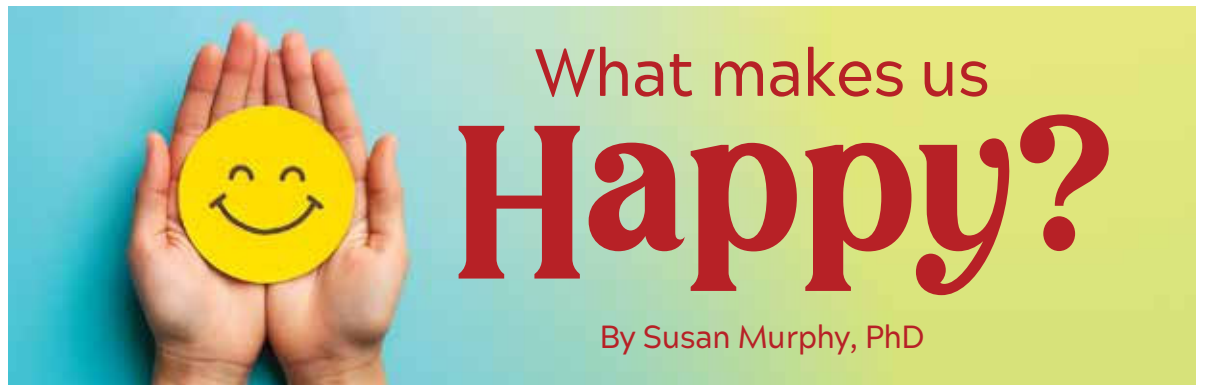
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Every year, the World Happiness Report (WHR) offers a global snapshot of how people feel about their lives, and why. The report is released annually on March 20, which the United Nations designated the International Day of Happiness (2012) to recognize happiness as a fundamental human goal and right.

Before the release of this year's report, we wanted to share the themes of the 2025 edition which take a particularly human turn, spotlighting the profound impact of *caring, sharing and social connection*. It's a reminder that happiness isn't just a personal pursuit; it's a collective one.

The WHR report isn't meant to be a scoreboard; it's a blueprint. It shows that happiness grows from connection, autonomy, trust, generosity and health—all things we can cultivate intentionally. The real lesson is that happiness is built, not found.

The central theme of the 2025 report is the "twice blessed" nature of caring, the idea that kindness

benefits both the giver and the receiver. The data shows that when we care for others, we elevate ourselves—a beautifully reciprocal truth.

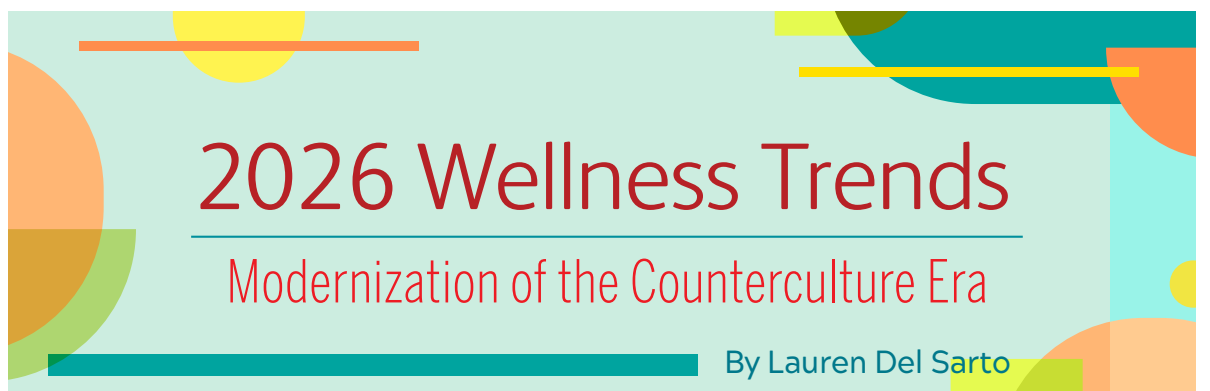
The rankings are based on factors like healthy life expectancy, social support, freedom, generosity, GDP per capita and perceptions of corruption. For the eighth consecutive year, Finland claimed the title of the world's happiest country in 2025, while the USA ranked 24 out of 147 countries.

Key findings that stand out

Last year's report explores how sharing meals, living with others, trusting people and engaging in prosocial behavior shape our emotional landscape:

Kindness is more common—and more powerful—than we think. One of the most striking insights: people are *much kinder* than we expect. Belief in the kindness of others is strongly linked to happiness, even more than traditional markers such as wealth or health.

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Each spring, we review the annual wellness trends forecasted by the Global Wellness Summit (GWS). Over the years, we've been introduced to fascinating concepts and technology, while also witnessing a return to the simpler things in life. This year is no exception but leans toward the latter as an emerging theme in The Future of Wellness 2026 Trends Report is "The Revenge of the Human."

"Never before has health been so measurable, and never before has it felt so psychologically demanding," the report states. "Sleep is scored, glucose is graphed, aging is tracked, and wellbeing has shifted from something we feel to something we perform correctly." Consumers are growing tired of pushing for perfection, leading to **Trend #2: An Over-Optimization Backlash**, a shift towards experiences that embrace what humans really are: imperfect, emotional and hardwired to seek pleasure and joy.



The Festivalization of Wellness is being fueled by the innate human need for joy, self-expression and community. (Photo by Retreat Yourself)

Wellness seekers are pursuing emotional repair and holistic care over performance, and offerings are "pivoting from statistical measurement to meaningful experiences, from clinical data to cathartic releases, from self-surveillance to self-expression. Scream circles and somatic release classes, low-stimulation retreats and nervous system regulation wearables suggest that wellness is no longer about optimizing harder—it's about feeling safer, more connected and more alive."

As I reviewed the trends and their encapsulating themes, I couldn't help but compare them to the counterculture era of the 60s and 70s: hippies, harmony, revolts against inequality, gurus and health awareness campaigns. (I've placed my thoughts in parentheses throughout this article).

Nowhere is the movement toward self-expression more apparent than in **Trend #7: The Festivalization of Wellness**. In response to widespread economic

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Follow Your Heart

Life is a journey, and if you remain open to all the universe has planned for you, that journey can be a wild and wonderful ride.

As many of you know, I am a lifetime equestrian. My passion for horses began at a very young age, and I started riding at eight. Throughout my life, I have stepped away, but am always drawn back to my very first love.

For four years, I was honored to be paired with a "unicorn" named Tristan. However, in 2023, my trainer moved away, taking Tristan with her, and opening a window just large enough for the universe to present a new opportunity, and Good Vibes Sound Bath was born. Michelle Steadman and I never could have imagined the impact our floating sound bath business would have, and it has been an incredible adventure.

This year, we passed Good Vibes on to gracious new owners who will take the immersive experience to the next level, allowing us both to take a breath (p.21). For me, it is time to follow my heart back to horses.

This picture is one of my favorites. Greek Week freshman year of college. The items on the sorority scavenger hunt competition included a horse. I had admired this little guy not far from campus in a pasture of black cows, and saw this as an opportunity to meet him. I grabbed my chaps and ran, bravely knocking on a door answered by a priest who said, "If you can catch him, you can take him." We galloped back and won the competition. Riding him around campus made for one of the best days of my life. My heart was so very happy.

I still get that feeling every time I have the honor to connect with a horse.

This Year of the Fire Horse represents freedom and passion and is expected to bring fast-paced energy and bold opportunities for growth (p.8). I encourage you to remain open to all the universe has planned for you. Listen, learn and follow your heart. It just may lead you on a wild and wonderful ride.

May you find your Fire Horse ~

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La Quinta High School's Medical Health Academy Offers College Curriculum

By Tesla Roos

La Quinta High School's Medical Health Academy (MHA) has long been a cornerstone of student leadership and community impact in the Coachella Valley. For years, the academy has been recognized for its life-saving partnership with LifeStream Blood Bank, coordinating dozens of successful blood drives that have collected nearly a thousand pints of blood and touched thousands of lives.

While these efforts continue to flourish, the program has recently entered a new chapter, bringing the college experience directly to the high school campus.

In a significant move to bridge the gap between high school and professional medical careers, Desert Sands Unified School District has partnered with College of the Desert (COD) to offer dual enrollment courses at La Quinta High. This means that instead of waiting for graduation to begin their higher education, juniors and seniors are now sitting in classrooms on their own campus instructed by actual college professors.

The development is a game-changer for students pursuing a career in medicine. This year, the academy is hosting a rigorous lineup of COD courses including Your Living Body, Intro to Medical Dosage Calculation, General Psychology and General Nutrition. These aren't just elective samplers; they are foundational courses that provide a head start on the long road to becoming a health care professional.

By the time these students walk across the stage at graduation, many will have already earned 12 or more college credits. This significantly reduces the time and financial burden of their future degrees, allowing them to enter the workforce or advanced medical programs much sooner than their peers.

While the academic side of the academy is reaching new heights, the heart of the program remains rooted in hands-on service. MHA students still lead the charge in recruiting donors and managing the logistics of campus blood drives. They learn professionalism and empathy from the LifeStream staff as they assist with setting up recovery areas and monitoring for post-donation dizziness.

These dual roles as college students and community leaders ensure that La Quinta's Medical Health Academy graduates are more than just book-smart. They leave with a unique blend of high-level academic training and real-world clinical experience. The academy remains a vital asset to the Coachella Valley, not only by maintaining the local blood supply, but also by cultivating the next generation of college-ready medical professionals.

Tesla Roos is the career technical education enrichment and intervention coordinator at LQHS. For more information on the valley's high school medical academies, contact Kim McNulty with OneFuture Coachella Valley at kim@onefuturecv.org.



Dual-enrollment partnership with COD allows students at LQHS's Medical Health Academy to earn college credits.



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The Future of Wellness

Continued from page 1

stress, social division and digital overload, "there is a rising wave of healthy, cathartic raves and gatherings, where music, dance and creative expression mean wild, collective and emotional release redefining health as belonging, connection and sustainable joy." (Think Woodstock, Haight Ashbury).

A second emerging theme is the "Year of Women." In fact, **Trend #1 is Women Get Their Own Lane in Longevity** with "focus on the ovaries functioning as 'command central' for women's health, and menopause accelerating systemic aging, creating a cascade of conditions from immune disorders to dementia to osteoporosis."

"Slowing/stopping ovarian decline will be the next big biotech breakthrough and the wellness market will now move beyond managing menopause symptoms to tackling ovarian aging. The new longevity paradigm: ovarian aging tests becoming the new vital sign, hormone replacement therapy boomeranging back and lifestyle interventions that best preserve ovarian reserve—with strength training reframed as a non-negotiable for women's longevity." (I am woman, hear me roar in numbers too big to ignore 🎵)



A backlash is emerging that prioritizes regulation over results and internal coherence over external validation. (Photo by Open Meditation)

A memorable quote from the GWS report launch event was that stress is no longer a symptom; it's the background. **Trend #3: The Rise of Neurowellness**, predicts that regulating the nervous system is the next frontier of human health. "Neurowellness is moving from niche to mainstream as people realize one of their biggest health bottlenecks isn't willpower, it's nervous system overload."



Wearables that enhance sleep by pairing EEG sensing with adaptive AI are part of the neurowellness movement. (Photo by Elemind)

"Many suffer with fragmented sleep, anxiety, inflammation, brain fog, hormonal disruption and burnout due to an autonomic nervous system stuck in low-grade fight-or-flight. 'Hard-care' consumer-friendly neurotech includes [applied] vagus nerve stimulation devices, EEG-guided sleep tools and at-home neuromodulation devices. While long-standing 'soft-care' wellness - breathwork, touch therapy, yoga and Feldenkrais - is being re-framed as nervous-system medicine for its measurable effects, making them more mainstream, more repeatable and, in some cases, even prescribed." (The Beatles, Maharishi Mehes Yogi, transcendental meditation).

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Light Therapy: The Science Looks Bright

By India Braemer and Joseph Scherger, MD

It seems like every week there's another revolutionary treatment that surfs the waves of the World Wide Web to reach your Facebook feed. Some promise game-changing instant results, while others propose a permanent placement in your daily routine. By the same time next week, many of these fads fade into the endless sea of suggestions leaving you wondering how best to support your ongoing wellness journey.

Following the science may be the best place to start. Light therapy, properly known as photobiomodulation (PBM), may have started as an accidental discovery by NASA in the 90s during research on plant growth in space, but it has led to positive results in many areas of wellness. Over the years, studies have strengthened the evidence on how red and near-infrared LED light exposure supports physical and mental health. While red light can improve skin surface, near-infrared light penetrates deeper, giving the combined use of both even more significant impact.

Red and near-infrared lights work to stimulate the mitochondria,¹ which power cell function and provide energy to the body. Exposure to light therapy has been shown in studies to positively impact cognitive function, skin and hair, inflammation and sleep patterns.^{2,3} While research continues, this therapy is becoming more accessible, allowing more people to incorporate it into their wellness routine.

With current technology available, there are several methods for delivering this non-invasive treatment. From canopy panels to transcranial PBM helmets, results are best achieved with consistent, timed exposure. Because many of these options are now available for home use, visiting a business that specializes in this therapy is the best way to begin your journey and learn how to customize it to your needs.

A standard recommendation for light therapy is two sessions per week. A session can last 15 minutes or more depending on the intensity of the red and near-infrared lights, how long you're exposed to them and how many pieces of equipment are used. In addition to consistency, remaining hydrated is also important.

As exciting and promising as PBM may be, the future only looks (pardon the pun) brighter. Studies are currently underway to explore how red light therapy can transform specific conditions, including eye health. According to the National Library of Medicine, the use of red light "has shown remarkable, multi-faceted effects in ophthalmology: slowing myopia progression, protecting retinal cells in glaucoma, reducing inflammation in AMD, and relieving symptoms of dry eye disease."⁴

With many new products on the market, it's important to verify the science behind what you read and consider trying new approaches to take your wellness into your own hands.

India Braemer and Joseph Scherger, MD, are with Restore Health Disease Reversal in Indian Wells and can be reached at (760) 898.9663.

References: 1) <https://www.mdanderson.org/cancerwise/what-is-red-light-therapy.h00-159701490.html>; 2) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3499892/>; 3) <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/22114-red-light-therapy>; 4) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40105942/>



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- Establishing a network of Health Centers across the valley for primary and specialty care
- Investing in state-of-the-art technology in robotic surgery, imaging, and more
- Developing a Graduate Medical Education program to train expert physicians for the future
- Continually expanding services in key areas like cardiovascular, cancer, orthopedics, and behavioral health

When it comes to caring for the Coachella Valley, we're all in.
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Blue Zones Project Ambassadors: The Human Infrastructure of Well-Being

By Mihai Patru

When I talk about well-being in Palm Springs, I'm not talking about a program. I'm talking about people. Always people.

Yes, at Blue Zones Project Palm Springs we discuss policy, environment, data, metrics—all the things that make spreadsheets happy. Those matter. But after my first six months in this role (and years before that working alongside under-resourced entrepreneurs across this region), I've learned something that no dashboard can capture: impact doesn't become irreversible because it's well-designed; it becomes irreversible because it's personally owned.

Well-being isn't delivered. It's lived. Palm Springs didn't need another initiative parachuting in with a logo and a timeline. What we needed was alignment—between research and reality, between resources and residents, between intention and everyday life.

That's where our Ambassadors come in. They are our translators, truth-tellers, connectors and gentle reality-checkers. They'll tell us when an idea sounds great in a meeting but would never work on a Tuesday afternoon in the real world. They open doors into neighborhoods, small businesses, faith communities, walking groups and living rooms where real life happens. They don't implement our plan; they shape it with us.

Listening is our first intervention. Palm Springs is beautifully complex—and I mean that in the best way. We are retirees and young families. Artists and accountants. Hospitality workers, entrepreneurs, dreamers, skeptics and newcomers still figuring out which grocery store line moves fastest. A one-size-fits-all approach to well-being here would fail instantly.

Our Ambassadors make sure we listen before we act. They ground our People, Places and Policy strategies in lived experience instead of assumptions made from behind a desk or inside a

conference room with good lighting and bad acoustics.

Momentum is loud. Permanence is quiet. Momentum is easy to spot. It looks like ribbon cuttings, full event rooms, and new partnerships announced with celebratory photos. Permanence is quieter, and far more powerful. It looks like a walking group that keeps meeting even when no one from our team is there. It looks like a restaurant keeping healthy options on the menu because customers now expect them. It looks like a workplace prioritizing connection because culture—not policy—shifted. It looks like prevention becoming normal instead of aspirational.

Ambassadors create that permanence. They model the Core 4—Move Naturally, Eat Wisely, Connect, Right Outlook—not because anyone told them to, but because they believe in it. They form Moais (activity groups). They invite neighbors. They show up again and again.

And repeated actions? Those are what change norms. Changed norms? That's what makes impact stick.

Your invitation (Yes, I mean You). If you felt even a small spark while reading this—curiosity, excitement, a quiet “hmm”—that might be your invitation. You can start simple:

- Attend a Blue Zones Project Palm Springs event
- Join (or start) a Moai
- Sit in on a People, Places or Policy committee
- Become an Ambassador and join an orientation
- Or just reach out: bzppalmsprings@bluezones.com

Palm Springs doesn't need more spectators. It needs co-creators because well-being becomes irreversible the moment it belongs to the community. And that usually begins when one neighbor says, “Yes—I'm in.”

Blue Zones Project Coachella Holds Community Kick-Off Event

By Angela Zepeda

January 24 marked an exciting milestone as the City of Coachella celebrated their Blue Zones Project official launch. After months of anticipation, the day arrived with momentum, excitement and a deep sense of pride from locals of all ages. Under clear blue skies at the city's Veterans Park, more than 700 community members came together to celebrate connection, learn about the Power 9, and experience what it means to make healthy choices easier as a community.

Local organizations, community leaders, and the Blue Zones Project Coachella team worked side by side to bring the Power 9 to life at each of the curated booths dotting the park. Attendees learned how to “downshift,” explored purpose-driven living and were invited to sign up for Moais.

The strong support from the Coachella Valley High School student volunteers was remarkable. From early morning setup to the final wrap-up, their energy and dedication lifted the entire event. Hidden Harvest Food Bank also demonstrated strong support, generously contributing a beautiful assortment of fresh produce. Families were able to take home full bags, and participate in cooking demonstrations.

Adding to the excitement was a memorable moment of friendly competition as Blue Zones Project

co-founder Nick Buettner, Executive Director Angela Zepeda, and sponsor Dr. Shunling Tsang from RUHS-Public Health competed in a potato sack race.

“What a beautiful, fun-filled day we spent together in Coachella,” Dr. Tsang said. “This wasn't just a Blue Zones Project event, it was a reminder of what a vibrant, resilient, connected community feels like!”

We are energized by what lies ahead and confident in the meaningful impact Blue Zones Project will continue to have in the City of Coachella over the next two years.

Take the next steps. Join us for one of the many activities offered. Attend our Art & Talk Moai every Tuesday from 8:15-9:15 a.m. in front of the Coachella Library, attend a cooking demo, support a planting day or take part in community cleanups supporting tobacco-free initiatives.

Want to make a bigger impact? Become a Blue Zones Project volunteer or step up as a Community Ambassador to help lead and inspire others.

Coachella's well-being movement starts with you!

For ways to get involved and to sign the Blue Zones Personal Pledge, visit www.bluezonesprojectpalmsprings.com and www.bluezonesprojectcoachella.com. Follow on social @bzppalmsprings and @bzpcoachella.



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Parkinson's Event Elevates Local Efforts

By Eileen Lynch

Last month, over 300 people with Parkinson's and their caregivers gathered in Palm Desert for the second annual Parkinson's Today Symposium, a collaboration between Parkinson's Resource Organization (PRO) and The Michael J. Fox Foundation (MJFF).

Parkinson's Resource Organization (PRO) has served Coachella Valley and Southern California for 35 years, providing free emotional and practical support for people with Parkinson's and caregivers. In addition to their print and online resources, PRO offers in-person support groups in Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Yucca Valley, and Los Angeles. PRO's event partner, The Michael J. Fox Foundation (MJFF) is dedicated to finding a cure for Parkinson's through research.

A primary goal of PRO is to remove barriers to high-quality, expert-led education through thoughtful collaborations with leaders in the Parkinson's world. This symposium is a force-multiplier for Coachella Valley, which faces a serious shortage in expert Parkinson's care. It is estimated that 5-10,000 people are living with Parkinson's in the Coachella Valley, with only one movement disorder specialist to treat them.

The free, half-day event covered topics like advanced Parkinson's care, building a care team, effective patient-doctor communication, and Parkinson's research and policy. Panelists included movement disorder specialist John Legge, MD, of Eisenhower Medical Center and Jessica Shields, MD, of Desert Care Network, the valley's only neurosurgeon specializing in surgical Parkinson's interventions.

Together, they walked attendees through options and priorities for advanced Parkinson's care. Dr. Shields detailed the complex technical process of deep brain

stimulation, a surgical procedure that implants a pacemaker-like device to deliver electrical impulses to the brain and treat the movement disorder.

Dr. Legge underscored the importance of a holistic approach to Parkinson's. "Keeping Parkinson's in the back seat is the goal," he said. "So, it's about quality of life, diet and exercise, taking your medications, staying involved in the community and staying active."

Attendees also heard from people living with Parkinson's. Steph and Madge DeSales shared their experience navigating the diagnosis and juggling treatments. "I go out and do my walking and scream to the world that I didn't sign up for all of this," said Madge, "but it's okay."

The day concluded with an overview of Parkinson's research and policy from MJFF representatives. "Genetics provides us with an incredible tool for how we can apply biological research to ask questions," said Bradford Casey, PhD, who guides aspects of MJFF's research, including coordination with the Global Parkinson's Genetics Program. "It allows us to start understanding how different systems work together in our body; how they may go wrong in disease."

Casey explained that genetics currently accounts for 15% of Parkinson's cases, a number that may increase as researchers learn more about the genetic profiles of Parkinson's patients. Aside from causing Parkinson's, genetics could yield information about how certain treatments work within the Parkinson's brain, ultimately leading researchers towards effective therapies.

The 2026 Parkinson's Today Symposium event was recorded and will be made available at no cost on PRO's website and on PRO's YouTube channel @ParkinsonsResourceOrg. Eileen Lynch is the executive director of Parkinson's Resource Organization. For more information, visit www.parkinsonsresource.org.



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Autism and the Power of Nutrition

April is World Autism Acceptance Month, a time to raise awareness, celebrate neurodiversity, and promote understanding and acceptance. One area gaining increasing attention is the role of nutrition in autism. While diet is not a cure, a healthy, well-balanced approach to food can be a valuable tool in promoting overall health, supporting development and improving quality of life for individuals with autism and their families.

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects communication, behavior, sensory processing and social interaction. It presents differently in every individual, which is why support strategies must always be personalized. In recent years, growing research and clinical experience have suggested that nutrition can play a meaningful role in helping manage certain symptoms and supporting both physical and mental health.

Many individuals with autism experience gastrointestinal (GI) issues such as constipation, diarrhea, bloating or abdominal discomfort.¹ Food sensitivities, selective eating and nutritional deficiencies are also common, often linked to sensory sensitivities around taste, texture, smell or appearance.² Over time, these challenges can impact energy levels, mood, focus, immune function and overall wellbeing. A thoughtfully planned, nutrient-rich diet tailored to individual needs can help address some of these challenges.

My top five foods to help alleviate symptoms

Omega-3 fatty acids. Found in fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel and sardines, as well as walnuts, chia seeds and flaxseeds, omega-3 fatty acids are essential for brain health and development. Research suggests these healthy fats may support cognitive function, improve social interaction and communication, and help reduce inflammation, which is sometimes elevated in individuals with autism.³

Fermented foods. Gut health is increasingly recognized as closely linked to brain health through the gut-brain axis. Fermented foods such as yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi and miso contain beneficial probiotics that help support a healthy gut microbiome. Improving gut health may reduce digestive discomfort and, in some cases, positively influence mood and behavior.

Whole foods. A diet rich in whole foods, including fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, provides essential vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Whole foods also reduce exposure to artificial additives, colors and preservatives, which may exacerbate symptoms such as hyperactivity or irritability in some individuals on the spectrum.⁴

Gluten-free and casein-free options. The gluten-free, casein-free (GFCF) diet is widely used within the autism community due to sensitivities to gluten (found in wheat, barley and rye) and casein (a protein in dairy). While not everyone benefits from removing these foods, some individuals experience improvements in digestion, focus,

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Reclaiming Intimacy (Part 3 of 3) Rise and shine! Effective treatments for ED

By Maya Kato, MD

As we've discussed in this *Desert Health* series, approximately 1 out of 3 men will experience some form of erectile dysfunction (ED) in their lifetime. In this edition, I'd like to discuss existing therapies that can provide effective short-term symptom relief and the importance of addressing underlying medical, psychological and lifestyle issues for long-term benefits and overall wellbeing.

Current treatments. First-line therapy typically involves phosphodiesterase type 5 (PDE5) inhibitors such as sildenafil and tadalafil. These oral medications improve blood flow by enhancing nitric oxide signaling and can be highly effective. Common adverse effects include headache, flushing, nasal congestion, indigestion and dizziness. Rare complications include priapism (prolonged erection requiring emergency treatment) and sudden hearing or vision loss. PDE5 inhibitors are contraindicated in men taking nitrates due to the risk of severe hypotension, and in patients with significant cardiovascular disease.

Another medication is Trimix, an injectable containing alprostadil, papaverine and phentolamine that is administered into the penis before sexual activity. It has a >80% success rate, but penile injections can be difficult to self-administer. Adverse effects include pain, fibrosis, bruising and prolonged erections.

Vacuum erection devices and penile implants are also options, but while these approaches can restore function, they do not reverse vascular damage or metabolic disease.

Emerging regenerative therapies. Natural, regenerative treatments have grown in popularity for a variety of conditions. Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) therapy uses concentrated platelets and growth factors from a patient's own blood to stimulate penile tissue repair and vascular improvement. The procedure is typically done as a series of injections in a physician's office. Early research suggests potential benefit in mild to moderate ED, but long-term data remain limited.

Radiofrequency (RF) and other energy-based therapies aim to improve tissue remodeling and increase blood flow through controlled thermal stimulation. The treatment is quick, painless and non-invasive. Patients usually receive several weekly treatment sessions. Preliminary findings are promising and gaining academic interest; however, patients should understand that these novel treatments still require long-term study analysis.

Treatment of underlying disease and lifestyle modification matter most. As previously mentioned, ED frequently serves as an early marker of other medical diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Any systemic disease processes need to be investigated and treated.

Alcohol is a commonly overlooked contributor to ED. In the short term, alcohol depresses the central nervous system and disrupts the nerve signaling required

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"A comprehensive strategy that prioritizes overall health and uses medical therapy when appropriate offers the most sustainable path to improved ED and overall well-being."
– Maya Kato, MD

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Coaching Versus Therapy

Different paths, shared purpose

By Alison Mullins

As conversations around mental health and personal well-being expand, many people are exploring different forms of support beyond traditional models. Two approaches often mentioned together, yet fundamentally distinct, are therapy and health or life coaching. Understanding the differences between them can help individuals choose the right type of guidance and recognize how these paths can work together to support meaningful change.

Therapy is a clinical process facilitated by licensed mental health professionals trained to diagnose and treat psychological conditions. It provides a structured space for individuals to explore emotional patterns, process past experiences and heal from challenges such as anxiety, depression, trauma and grief. Therapy often involves looking inward and backward, helping people understand how their history influences their current thoughts, behaviors and relationships. For many, this work forms an essential foundation offering safety, insight and tools for emotional regulation and healing.

Coaching, by contrast, is future-focused and collaborative. Rather than diagnosing or treating mental health concerns, a health or life coach works alongside clients to clarify goals, cultivate self-awareness and create practical steps toward growth. Coaching tends to ask, "Where do you want to go from here?" and supports individuals in aligning daily actions with deeper values and aspirations.

One helpful way to understand the distinction is to imagine two different forms of guidance. Therapy can help illuminate and navigate the terrain that has shaped us, helping us understand our internal landscape and heal what may still be unresolved. Coaching, meanwhile, acts more like a lighthouse: steady, grounded and forward-facing. It does not steer the ship or dictate the journey, but provides clarity and orientation, allowing individuals to navigate with greater confidence and self-trust.

Importantly, therapy and coaching are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they often complement each other. Therapy may help individuals process emotions and build insight, while coaching can support the integration of those insights into daily life through accountability, habit-building, and intentional action. Together, they can create a balanced approach that honors both healing and forward momentum.

Coaching is often sought during periods of transition or growth, when someone feels ready to move forward, refine lifestyle choices, deepen purpose or bring greater alignment to areas such as physical health, relationships or personal direction. It assumes that individuals are capable and resourceful, and that sustainable change comes not from being fixed, but from becoming more connected to one's own inner compass.

Choosing between therapy and coaching depends on individual needs. In summary, those experiencing significant emotional distress or mental health concerns should seek licensed therapeutic support; those seeking clarity, accountability and forward-focused growth may find coaching to be a powerful complement.

Ultimately, both therapy and coaching share a common aim: helping individuals live with greater awareness, resilience and authenticity. When we understand the role each can play, we gain access to a more complete support system, one that honors both where we have been and where we are called to go next.

Alison Mullins is a certified holistic health coach and yoga therapist. She is the founder of Coppermoon and the owner of the Sacred Woman Collective Coachella Valley Branch and can be reached at alison@coppermoonrising.com. For more information, visit www.coppermoonrising.com.

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Are Your Dreams Horsing Around?

By Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos

The Year of the Fire Horse officially began February 17, according to the Chinese zodiac cycle, and was ironically ushered in by a "ring of fire" lunar eclipse on that very same day. Although visible from only a few places worldwide, this cosmic irony is considered extremely rare, as the Fire Horse year only occurs every 60 years.

As we are moved by the earth and the stars, and our dreams are a microcosm of our waking world, don't be surprised to find your dreams horsing around with you this year. How might dreams of fire and horseplay serve as signs or warnings in our lives?



The Fire Horse may fly through your dreams with high energy and independence.

With this new year, we transition from the Brown Wood Snake's symbolic shedding of skin and rebirth, to the drive, energy and magnetism of the Fire Horse. The horse is associated with royalty, loyalty, warriors, knights and hard work, and the Fire Horse is associated with high energy, independence, and significant, often turbulent, life changes.

In dreams, the horse is a vital force, a bearer of important messages filled with energy, passion and independence. Horse dreams often represent strong, untamed emotions with a desire for freedom. As horses are known to recognize emotions in others, dream horse spiritual guides can also help us embrace our intuition.

Like the five elements of wood, earth, metal, water and fire, horse dreams come in many colors, and each color has a specific meaning that may have a play on words. A brown horse may carry a message of grounding, the white horse purity, and a red horse fire energy. A red horse dream may also be an intuitive spiritual and or medical call to move forward in your waking world with speed, confidence and freedom. Cleansing fire may represent emotional and physical healing with a message to release what no longer serves you: people, emotions, thoughts and physical things that drag you down under the heavy burden of memory or guilt. A dream of powerful, fiery release may ignite healthy personal growth.

As modern science and dream research has shown, dreams are not superstitions or random brain activity during sleep; they are intentional internal personal messages with meaning. So, if you dream of flying through the air on a horse with its vermilion mane ablaze, enjoy it and let it help you discover your personal path, healing and love messages for 2026. Don't horse around with your equestrian dreams. Embrace them and be empowered.

Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos of Rancho Mirage is a survivor, author, dream expert, speaker, TV/radio host/producer and has been featured on *Dr. Oz*, *The Doctors*, and *The UnXplained*. Her new book *Dreams That Can Save Your Life* is available now. For more information, visit www.KathleenOkeefeKanavos.com.



Living Wellness

with Jennifer Di Francesco



A New Path for News Exhaustion

We live in an era defined by a polarizing news environment, leaving many in our society feeling deeply exhausted. In response to this inundation, many turn to a "news detox," setting strict consumption limits or attempting to disassociate entirely. Technology apps such as Freedom and News Detox offer a much-needed hiatus from the deluge, promising mental recharge.

However, we must examine whether this intention to unplug is enough. Current marketing frequently frames "self-care" as superficial soothing: bubble baths and aromatherapy that offer only temporary relief. This approach often mirrors the act of stepping away from pressing global issues just to feel better. Yet psychological studies suggest a healthier way to combat apathy: resting in "agentive behavior" rather than inaction.

Agentive behavior turns you from a passive observer into an active participant through three key pillars:

1. **Intentionality:** choosing your actions deliberately.
2. **Responsibility:** viewing yourself as a cause of change, not just an effect of the environment.
3. **Belief in influence:** knowing that your specific actions shape outcomes.

The Persian poet Rumi famously observed, "You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop." With this perspective, we can stay engaged with the world in a healthy, sustainable manner. Throughout history, individuals have reclaimed their power through small yet potent actions that improve outcomes for both individuals and society.

True self-care in this moment can be found through active engagement:

Artistic creation. Use your voice. During the French Revolution, romantic poetry became a "moral megaphone," and during the Vietnam War, folk music served as a powerful cultural connector. Creating anything, whether a song, a poem or a painting, restores your sense of agency.

Meaningful volunteering. Action is transformative. Whether it is providing "street medicine" to marginalized populations or working at a local food bank, community work heals the helper as much as those helped.

The T.H.I.N.K. Method. Before reacting to or sharing any news, pause and ask: Is it True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary and Kind? This intentional pause fosters both self-care and healthier relationships.

The next time you feel disenchanted by the state of the world, try leaning in rather than pulling away. By finding purposeful ways to engage, you increase your own receptivity and resilience. The world doesn't just need your attention—it needs your involvement.

Jennifer Di Francesco is a wellness explorer and desert adventurer and can be reached at www.coachellabellaboho.com.

Autism and the Power of Nutrition

Continued from page 6

sleep patterns and behavior. Any elimination diet should be undertaken carefully and ideally with professional guidance to ensure nutritional adequacy.

Vitamin and mineral-rich foods. Certain vitamins and minerals play a particularly important role in supporting individuals with autism. Magnesium may help reduce anxiety and improve sleep quality and can be found in dark leafy greens, nuts, seeds, and legumes. Zinc supports immune function and may help with attention and hyperactivity; good sources include red meat, fish and seafood. Vitamin D, found in fortified foods, oily fish and egg yolks, supports brain function, mood regulation and immune health.

Recommended foods to limit or avoid

Artificial additives. Food dyes, preservatives and artificial sweeteners have been linked to increased hyperactivity or irritability in some individuals. Reducing processed foods where possible can be beneficial.

Sugar. Excessive sugar intake can cause energy spikes and crashes, negatively affecting mood, focus and behavior. Limiting sugary snacks and drinks can help promote more stable energy levels.

Highly processed foods. Highly processed foods are often high in unhealthy fats, sugar and salt while lacking essential nutrients. They may also contain additives that can be problematic for individuals with autism and should be limited in favour of whole, nutrient-dense foods.

Tips for implementing dietary changes

- **Individualized approach:** Every person with autism is unique, so dietary changes should always reflect individual needs, sensitivities and preferences.
- **Gradual changes:** Introducing new foods slowly can help reduce resistance and avoid overwhelming sensory sensitivities.
- **Involvement:** Involving individuals in meal planning and preparation can increase interest in food, encourage independence and foster positive experiences around eating.

Ultimately, nutrition is one part of a broader, holistic approach to supporting individuals with autism.

Readers' Corner Question



From Owen in La Quinta:

I struggle with sleep and often wake up feeling exhausted. Can nutrition really make a difference to me?

Foods rich in magnesium, like leafy greens, nuts, and seeds, can help you relax at night. Eating a meal with protein and complex carbohydrates will stabilize your energy and help you wake up feeling more refreshed.

Monica Price is a nutritional therapist and a European health expert. She is a television and radio presenter for numerous media outlets and host of "The Monica Price Show." Monica invites your questions and can be reached at monica@monica-price.co.uk. www.monica-price.co.uk.

References available upon request

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Beauty from the Inside Out

Celebrity hairstylists find purpose in Palm Springs

By Lauren Del Sarto

There are many reasons people are drawn to Palm Springs. Ted Gibson and Jason Backe seem to encompass them all. The creative and colorful souls were called to trade the spotlight for inner light and the fast track for a path to wellness that led them here.

As life and business partners for over 30 years, these beauty industry leaders pour passion into everything they do. During their illustrious careers, they have introduced cutting-edge salons in New York and Los Angeles, starred on multiple reality TV shows, launched top beauty product lines and continue to manage a clientele list that has included Angelina Jolie, Anne Hathaway and Renée Zellweger. Backe is also an award-winning hair colorist and past educator for global beauty brands.



Ted Gibson (left) and Jason Backe

But throughout their travels, no place has held the special connection they feel to Palm Springs, and the celebrity hairdressers are here to stay.

"When we came to Palm Springs, it was an immediate love affair," says Backe. "The inspiration we feel here has just been incredible." They bought in 2018 and, in 2024, decided to call Palm Springs home. Driven by their newfound dedication to wellness, they are already making an impact in our community. Last year, they introduced Ascension, a functional mushroom blend additive available in neighborhood shops and online (try the Ted Gibson® Cloud 9 at Coffeeism), and began clinical trials on Hyper Shroom Complex, a groundbreaking wellness hair care line. This year, they are also launching the Convergence Beauty Wellness Science Summit at the Renaissance Hotel Palm Springs in May.



Gibson and Backe's first wellness passion project is Ascension, a mushroom blend additive.

Their wellness inspiration

Ten years ago, Gibson's beloved mother developed dementia. As they considered her care, they began to contemplate their own longevity. Through research, they discovered the cognitive benefits of lion's mane mushrooms, incorporating a daily dose into their morning routine. Impressed by the results, they further researched chaga mushrooms for immunity, reishi for beauty, tremella for skin care, and then blue-green algae for both brain and beauty. All these adaptogens make up the superfood powder blend of Ascension, which can be added to coffee, smoothies – even baking. Backe, also a talented cook, adds it to his zucchini bread.

They both start their day with the product. "Our morning wellness practices and rituals have become such an important part of our lives," he says. "Experiencing the impact these adaptogens were having led us to Ascension."

"The fans and followers we have built over the last 30 years together would expect us to launch a shampoo or styling product," adds Gibson, "but we really wanted them to know that we are now taking our health, our community's health and our world's health seriously. It is a big part of our lifestyle now."

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What Makes Us Happy?

Continued from page 1

Sharing meals strengthens happiness. Sharing meals with others is shown to boost social connection and emotional wellbeing. It's not just about food, it's about belonging.

Living with others matters. Household size and family bonds play a significant role in happiness. Living with others, whether family, friends or partners, tends to increase life satisfaction.

Social trust is a critical predictor of wellbeing. Trusting others and feeling trusted in return are major drivers of happiness. Low trust correlates with higher levels of unhappiness.

Helping others reduces "deaths of despair." Prosocial behavior—volunteering, supporting others, showing compassion—is linked to lower rates of depression, addiction and suicide. Caring literally saves lives.

Practical ways to increase your own happiness

The beauty of the 2025 findings is that they translate into simple, actionable steps you can incorporate into your daily life. Here's how to apply the science of happiness to your own world:

Strengthen your social connections. Invite someone to share a meal, even a simple coffee counts. Reconnect with a friend you haven't spoken to in a while. Join a club, class or community group where you can meet people regularly.

Practice small acts of kindness. Kindness doesn't need to be grand. These micro moments of generosity accumulate into measurable boosts in wellbeing. Hold the door for someone. Send a supportive message to a lonely neighbor. Offer help before someone asks.

Build trust in your relationships. The WHR shows that trust is a happiness multiplier; it deepens relationships and reduces stress. Trust grows through consistency, so keep your promises, be reliable in small ways and communicate openly.

Create a supportive living environment. Spend more time with the people you live with. Establish shared rituals: weekly dinners, movie nights or morning walks. If you live alone, intentionally schedule social time to balance solitude with connection.

Engage in prosocial behavior. Giving your time or attention is often more impactful than giving money. Helping others is one of the most powerful happiness strategies. Volunteer locally. Support a cause you care about. Offer mentorship.

Prioritize shared experiences over material things. The WHR reinforces that experiences, especially shared ones, create lasting happiness. Plan outings with friends or family. Try new activities together. Celebrate small milestones.

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When Insight Isn't Enough

An introduction to dialectical behavior therapy

By Linda Olson, PsyD, MSW

Have you ever wondered why you react the way you do, and still find yourself reacting anyway? You know the pattern. You've reflected on it. You can explain it clearly. And yet, in the moment, your body tightens, your thoughts race, or everything goes quiet before you can intervene.

This isn't a lack of insight; it's a nervous system doing exactly what it learned to do: protect you. That is where dialectical behavior therapy becomes transformative.

Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) was developed in the late 1980s by psychologist Marsha Linehan to help people manage intense emotions, reduce reactivity and improve quality of life. While DBT originated as a clinical treatment model, its core principles—particularly dialectical thinking and skills for emotional regulation—translate powerfully into skills-based coaching and group settings when used ethically and appropriately.

At the heart of DBT is one deceptively simple idea: dialectical thinking, the ability to hold two truths at the same time.

Instead of thinking: *I'm strong or I'm failing; I'm calm or I'm out of control; I can't speak or I'll lose connection*, DBT teaches: *I'm hurting and I'm capable; I feel overwhelmed and I can choose my next step; I can protect myself and stay grounded*.

This shift alone often reduces shame and restores internal stability.

Why insight alone doesn't create change

Many people seeking support today are already deeply self-aware, particularly those who grew up in emotionally unsafe, invalidating or high-stress environments. They understand their history, their triggers and their patterns.

But understanding is not the same as regulation. When the nervous system is dysregulated, logic goes offline, skills are hard to access, and emotions feel urgent and absolute. In those moments, people don't need more insight; they need physiological support. This is why DBT works. It begins where real change actually happens, in the nervous system.

DBT as a nervous-system framework

DBT teaches practical, real-world skills in four core areas:

- Mindfulness: noticing without judgment
- Distress tolerance: surviving moments without making them worse
- Emotion regulation: understanding and working with emotions
- Interpersonal effectiveness: setting boundaries without self-erasure

These skills help people pause instead of reacting, feel without collapsing and respond with greater effectiveness. But skills only stick when the body feels safe enough to learn.

I often hear people say, "I know exactly what I should do. I just can't do it when it matters." What they're describing isn't resistance or failure; it's a nervous system still operating in survival mode. DBT slows the moment down, creating just enough space between impulse and action for choice to return. That space is where change begins.

Therapy versus DBT-informed coaching

It's important to be clear about how DBT is used. Psychotherapy focuses on diagnosis, treatment and clinical processing. (I provide psychotherapy separately through my licensed clinical practice.) DBT-informed coaching, on the other hand, is educational and skills-based. It supports people in regulating their nervous systems, applying DBT tools in daily life and navigating relationships and grief with greater steadiness. It may be offered in individual or group settings.

DBT doesn't promise that emotions will disappear; it teaches people how to stay present when emotions arrive. For many, DBT is the first time they realize: *I'm not failing. My nervous system just needs support*. And that realization is often the beginning of lasting change.

Dr. Olson is a licensed clinical psychologist (in CT and GA) and a trauma-informed therapist and coach for emotional abuse, coercive control and childhood domestic violence. She is the wellness director of Desert Integrative Wellness and can be reached at (760) 349.1248. For more information, visit www.drlindaolson.com.

Reclaiming Intimacy (Part 3 of 3)

Continued from page 7

for erection. It also interferes with nitric oxide release, limiting blood flow. Chronic intake can lower testosterone, damage nerves, raise blood pressure, and contribute to liver disease—all factors associated with erectile dysfunction. Even moderate use may reduce erectile quality, and reducing alcohol consumption often improves outcomes.

Regular aerobic exercise improves endothelial function and nitric oxide availability. Weight loss enhances insulin sensitivity and testosterone levels. A heart-healthy diet supports vascular integrity. Smoking cessation restores blood vessel function. Stress management and adequate sleep improve hormonal and psychological health.

Unlike medications or procedures, lifestyle interventions carry minimal risk and provide broad health benefits. A comprehensive strategy that prioritizes overall health and uses medical therapy when appropriate offers the most sustainable path to improved erectile function and overall well-being.

Dr. Maya Kato is the founder of Aesthetic Art and can be reached at (760) 592.7310. For more information visit www.drmayakato.com.

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What Makes Us Happy?

Continued from page 10

Cultivate a habit of noticing kindness. This shifts your mindset toward gratitude and optimism. Belief in the kindness of others is strongly tied to happiness. Keep a "kindness journal." Reflect on moments when others helped you. Acknowledge your own acts of caring.

The 2025 World Happiness Report offers a hopeful message: happiness is not solely determined by wealth or material success. Instead, it flourishes in environments where people care for one another, share experiences and build trust. Finland's continued success underscores the power of strong social systems, while the global data highlights a universal truth—kindness is a cornerstone of human happiness.

On March 20, let's celebrate the International Day of Happiness together. We eagerly await the 2026 report and the data that continues to support the fact that, at the heart of who we are, we all strive to be happy.

*Dr. Susan Murphy is a best-selling author, business consultant and speaker on relationships, conflict, leadership and goal-achievement. Her 13th book, *Leading Successful Teams* (used at Harvard, Stanford and the Mayo Clinic), is available online. www.DrSusanMurphy.com. For more information visit www.worldhappiness.report.*



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Energy's Ability to Heal
Technology driving growing wellness trend

By Lauren Del Sarto

Throughout history, many physicians have emphasized the importance of energy and frequencies in healing. In his book, *The Body Electric*, Nobel-nominated researcher Robert O. Becker, MD, states that "healing is fundamentally an electrical and energetic process at the cellular level." Harvard-trained integrative pioneer Andrew Weil, MD, co-authored the book *Self-Healing with Energy Medicine*.

These theories are driving the rapid growth of energy-based wellness technology worldwide. While science supports the role of energy in healing, the science behind these emerging technologies has not yet caught up.

So, what is driving the trend? The consumer experience, as thousands report increased energy, inner calm, mental clarity, symptom relief and even disease reversal.

One of the companies leading the way is The Light System (TLS) which can now be found in wellness clinics throughout the world. Their technology uses proprietary software, polychromatic light, biophotonic light and a strong scalar field to "recharge the body at the cellular level."



Del Sarto relaxes into a TLS session.

According to the company, the therapy is intended to support internal systems rather than impose physiological change. They make no medical claims. "The technology does not do any healing at all," TLS President Jarrod Barakett told Biohack Yourself Media in a recent interview. "What we do is put the body in a better position to be able to do what it knows how to do and what it wants to do, and that is-*heal itself.*"

This energy-based wellness technology is now available locally at Desert Integrative Wellness in Indian Wells. Owner Linda Olson, PsyD, MSW, was introduced by her son and co-owner, Andrew Jacobs, who found lasting relief from a chronic neck condition after a series of TLS sessions. As a trauma psychologist, Dr. Olson was also hearing success from peers combining guided techniques with TLS.

"As a trauma psychologist, we know that until you can regulate the central nervous system, insight and learning skills are very limited." At their clinic, Olson uses TLS with wellness coaching for both individual and group clients; there is no diagnosis or psychotherapy. "After an hour or two using the technology, people are calmer and more open and receptive to learning and insight. It is helping people heal in less time."

Unlike red light therapy, which delivers direct wavelengths into the body's tissue, Jacobs explains that the lights positioned on opposite sides create a dynamic energetic collision and ensuing energetic field that the body absorbs at a cellular level. Your "fully charged" system can then operate more efficiently, supporting the body where it's needed most.

Jacob's father, Steven Jacobs, MD, PhD, is a neurosurgeon who researched the technology after examining his son's improved imaging. While skeptical at first, he was "pleasantly surprised" by the effects of just one session. "I felt immediately energized and a wonderful sense of calm," he told us. "It's been several weeks now, and after a long, sometimes stressful day in the operating room, I am still able to completely relax and fall asleep easily, which I have never experienced before."

What about electromagnetic fields (EMFs)? The company claims the system is engineered to ensure opposing electromagnetic components cancel out, leaving a coherent field with no EMF emissions.

Of course, I had to try it, settling into a reclining chair wrapped in a blanket with an optional eye mask. Soft music plays as the screens around you silently scroll a variety of colors which appear to make no sense, but, I'm told, are placed purposefully. After a short time, you feel your body begin to buzz from the inside out.

The entire experience is very relaxing. It is easy to see how anyone taking an hour or two out of their day to relax in this state could benefit. However, I was also pleasantly surprised by what followed. Hours later, I felt enhanced energy and noticeable mental clarity. The next day, my energy level was so high that I almost felt anxious until I went for a run. I was inspired to run the next day as well (unusual for me), and a week later, still feel a sense of energized clarity. Did this experience indeed "recharge my batteries?"

This year's Global Wellness Trends Report (p.1) predicts that regulating the nervous system before breakdown occurs is wellness's next frontier. Therapies like these exemplify that movement.

Lauren Del Sarto, founder and publisher of Desert Health, was offered a complimentary introductory session to try the TLS therapy (\$75 value). For more information, visit www.desertintegrativewellness.com or www.thelightsystems.com.

Source: 1) <https://lawire.com/inside-the-light-system-a-growing-wellness-movement-that-says-the-body-already-knows-how-to-heal/>



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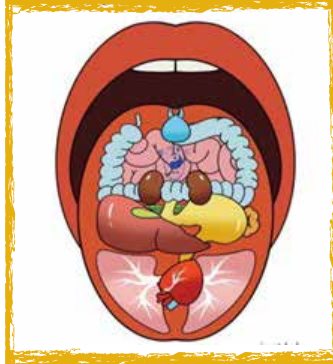
An inner compass to map proactive health

By Yani Lu, MD, PhD

In an era where health care often focuses on treating illness after it appears, a growing movement seeks a more proactive path. People are looking for ways to understand their body's unique language, to spot imbalances before they become problems, and to guide their journey toward sustained vitality. This is where an ancient practice, revolutionized by modern insight, offers a remarkable tool: modern tongue diagnostics (MTD). Evolving from the foundational wisdom of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), MTD transforms the tongue into a precise, holographic map of your entire well-being, making preventive, personalized health not just a concept, but a visible, actionable reality.

From ancient observation to a precise holographic map

For thousands of years, TCM practitioners have viewed the tongue as a mirror to the body's internal state. Pioneered by innovators like Hongchun Yin, MD, DAOM, MTD has elevated this art into a detailed science. It reveals a "tongue somatotopy"—a complete holographic map where specific areas of the tongue correspond to specific organs and systems. The tip reflects the head and neck, while the upper third corresponds to the lungs and heart. The center maps the digestive tract from the stomach to the intestines; the sides correspond to the liver, gallbladder, and limbs, and the root gives insight into kidney and pelvic health. This means a localized change—such as a dark, purplish spot on the side of the tongue—is no longer a vague sign. It can directly indicate a specific issue like blood stagnation (the sluggish movement, pooling or obstruction of blood flow) in a corresponding area, allowing for exceptionally targeted intervention.



Tongue roadmap as depicted in Dr. Yin's "A Brief Discussion on the Principle of Using Herbal Medicine Based on Modern Tongue Diagnostics."

Your body's dynamic dashboard: assessment, prevention and recovery

The true power of MTD lies in its role as a dynamic monitoring system, offering three critical layers of insight for proactive health management:

1. A clear assessment of your current state. An MTD analysis provides a comprehensive snapshot of your internal landscape. A pale, puffy tongue may suggest digestive fatigue or nutrient absorption issues, while a red tip may indicate elevated stress or inflammation. This allows for health strategies tailored to your body's exact current needs, moving beyond generic advice.

2. A proactive lens on future risk. The most transformative aspect is prevention. Subtle, early changes on the tongue—like a slight thickening of coating in a specific zone or the appearance of minor cracks—can signal a trend toward imbalance long before physical symptoms manifest. This early-warning system empowers you to make supportive adjustments with acupuncture, herbal therapy or lifestyle shifts, preventing minor disruptions from evolving into major health concerns.

3. An objective tool to monitor healing. For those managing a condition or recovering from an illness, the tongue provides unambiguous feedback. As treatment takes effect, positive changes—such as clearing of a thick coating or a purple hue returning to healthy pink—serve as visual, objective confirmation of healing. This allows both practitioner and patient to track progress and adjust care plans with confidence.

A complementary path to integrated wellness

Modern tongue diagnostics does not replace conventional medicine; it powerfully complements it. While standard tests excel at diagnosing diseases, MTD excels at revealing the underlying functional patterns and energetic imbalances that precede them. It provides a missing piece in holistic health: a non-invasive, deeply personal gauge of your body's unique narrative. By understanding this story, you can make informed choices to not only address current concerns, but to navigate a clearer, more resilient path toward lifelong wellness.

Dr. Yani Lu is an integrative doctor and medical director of East West Medicine in Rancho Mirage. She can be reached at 760.674.7178. For more information, visit www.dryanilu.com.

Source: 1) Hongchun Yin, MD, DAOM: "A Brief Discussion on the Principle of Using Herbal Medicine Based on Modern Tongue Diagnostics."

The Future of Wellness

Continued from page 3

Another interesting theme is how "Wellness Tackles Major Environmental and Human Crises." The report surmises that in our age of multiple crises - from terrifying climate events to a barrage of bad news - crisis management becomes a pillar of wellness. **Trend #5: Ready Is the New Well** suggests that, "just as preventive medicine once transformed health care, disaster readiness is becoming the next evolution of everyday resilience, where having a disaster plan is as essential as having a fitness plan."

Trend #9: Tackling Microplastics as a Human Health Issue. Science has proven that microplastics are present throughout the human body and increasingly linked to serious health issues, including inflammation, hormonal disruption, cardiovascular disease and potential cognitive effects. We've now grasped the severity of this crisis, and this year is about action. "In London, private clinics are already offering costly treatments claiming to reduce microplastic loads in the body, while consumer innovations such as plastic-free underwear are also emerging. Looking ahead, microplastics may become a routinely measured health marker—tracked alongside cholesterol or inflammation. The challenge now is not awareness, but whether society acts quickly enough to reduce exposure at the source, before the smallest pollutants create the largest health legacy." (Warning labels added to cigarette packs; a single tear from American Indian on the side of a polluted highway).



Invisible yet omnipresent, microplastics have quietly infiltrated every corner of our lives.

While trends shift year to year, one fact remains: more and more people are seeking ways to relieve stress and live well. Hopefully, those who have "been there before" can pass comfort onto the next generation. Maybe over a warm cup of coffee or tea. That practice never gets old.

Lauren Del Sarto is founder and publisher of Desert Health. Gratitude to GWS's Beth McGroarty and her team of talented writers and reporters. For more information, visit www.globalwellnesssummit.com/2026trends.



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Hormone Health for Life

By Joseph E. Scherger, MD, MPH

Hormone health is a major pillar of functional medicine. Without healthy hormones, your overall health will be compromised. Let's take a look at hormones that should be monitored and how each contributes to overall well-being.

The thyroid runs our overall "motor" and autoimmune hypothyroidism (Hashimoto's) is the most common of all autoimmune diseases. I have had that since the age of 57. Thyroid replacement to healthy blood levels is the treatment of choice. Recently, red light and near-infrared light therapy have been shown to help reverse this problem. I will share more on this in my next article.

Cortisol is produced by the adrenal glands and increases with stress. Managing stress is the key to healthy cortisol levels. Mental health therapists and/or integrative health practitioners can help by advising on stress-reduction practices and appropriate supplementation.

More commonly referenced are the sex hormones: estrogen for women and testosterone for men.

I recommend all women read *Estrogen Matters: Why Taking Hormones in Menopause Can Improve and Lengthen Women's Lives - Without Raising the Risk of Breast Cancer* by breast cancer oncologist Avrum Bluming, MD, and psychologist Carol Tavris, PhD. Originally published in 2018 and updated in 2024, this book addresses the important benefits of estrogen in aging women and new information for breast cancer survivors. Keep in mind, however, that the type of breast cancer may determine whether taking estrogen hormone after treatment is the best option for you. While the book presents an innovative change in thinking, hormone replacement therapy for estrogen receptor-positive breast cancer is not generally recommended, so explore your options with your doctors.

A similar book for men is *Testosterone for Life: Recharge Your Vitality, Sex Drive, Muscle Mass and Overall Health* by Harvard urologist Abraham Morgentaler, MD (2008). Dr. Morgentaler believes that all men should have normal levels of testosterone for their age, even if they have had prostate cancer. Testosterone levels drop with age, from 650-800 in our 30s to 300-400 in our 70s and 80s. Below 300 is regarded as hypogonadism. About 25% of senior men fall into those low levels and should be offered replacement to normal levels for their age, not treated to higher (age 30) levels, as often happens with some hormone replacement therapies. Morgentaler has performed and cites research to support this claim.

I know these two controversial books will generate a lot of questions and you should discuss them with your integrative health practitioner and or medical team. You are in charge of your overall health and have the power to make these decisions.

There are a lot of nuances around maintaining hormone health. For example, excess body fat will cause your sex hormones to be off balance, and rebalancing them starts with reducing excess fat, especially in the trunk. I strongly encourage this before you start taking hormones, especially testosterone in men.

If all your hormones are in balance, you should be well on your way to healthy longevity.

Dr. Scherger is the founder of Restore Health Disease Reversal in Indian Wells, a clinic dedicated to weight loss and reversing chronic medical conditions. To schedule a consultation, call (760) 898.9663 or visit www.restorehealth.me.

The Benefits and Limitations of "Dr. AI"

By Edith Jones-Poland, MD

Daily discussions about artificial intelligence seem to paint an image of both friend and foe. Given its tremendous power to reshape our world, it is important to understand this tool and its place within an overarching strategy for health and wellness.

Artificial intelligence (AI), and the large language models (LLMs) such as Claude, Chat GPT and Google's Gemini, are able to search, recognize, translate, summarize and generate text responses and images based on large data sets. Using a huge amount of known data, they can synthesize, summarize and generate information based on a user's prompt. This ability to quickly search vast amounts of data makes the technology a potentially useful tool in the health care system and individuals seeking health-related information.

According to a statement from the American Medical Association (AMA), "physicians should be encouraged to educate their patients about the benefits and risks of using AI-based tools, such as LLMs, for information about health care conditions, treatment options or the type of health care professionals who have the education, training and qualifications to treat a particular condition. Patients and physicians should be aware that chatbots powered by LLMs/generative AI could provide inaccurate, misleading or unreliable information and recommendations."¹

First, let's discuss some of the limitations of the current AI LLMs:²

- LLMs capitalize on "known" (or available) information. This opens the potential for corruption based on the bias of information used to create the data set. This means, the model could be flooded with misinformation or turn to unreliable sources.
- LLMs are prone to hallucinations. This means they can fabricate answers or sources that do not exist. These results will be returned to look legitimate, and the user is left to fact-check the AI tool.²
- LLMs lack discernment. Without a specific prompt, they will (not by default) rely on highly trusted resources. Despite well designed research prompts, the LLM can return inaccurate information and provide different responses, even when repeating the same prompt.⁴
- LLMs are prone to the same bias and prejudice inherent in human society.

According to the AMA, these technologies are largely unregulated and there is no current guidance to improve their accuracy or to strip their bias. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has some authority to regulate activities considered to be unfair, deceptive or abusive business practices and can enforce laws for consumer protection. However, these authorities are not specific to AI and the agency is generally under-resourced in this area.¹

While the FDA provides some regulation and guidance for AI tools used by physicians, LLMs used by the public are considered for "educational purposes" only and are not subject to FDA oversight. Without oversight and given the FTC's limited scope, there is a recognized gap that poses a threat to the public.⁵ The goal to prevent disinformation requires more research to improve the accuracy of the LLM's responses to prompts, and guidance on industry-related design that generates safer sources of information.

My research did not produce precise guidance on improving public use of LLMs for medical information search. Using my own experience with these models and review of the literature, here are helpful guidelines to consider:

Continued on page 18



Holy Smoke and Other Challenges

How our skin fares in desert climates

By Brook Dougherty

Have you ever admired a bighorn sheep, perched on the edge of a boulder, coat glowing in the sun, not a care in the world? No eczema. No rashes. No itching. No worries about what last week's wildfire smoke might have done to its complexion.

Our desert wildlife is perfectly adapted, built for heat, wind, dust and sun. Humans, on the other hand, are still catching up. We love desert living, but our human coat can be a bit temperamental, which is why there are more human dermatologists than sheep dermatologists.

Heat isn't just uncomfortable; it's inflammatory

During periods of extreme heat, we sweat more, we lose fluid, and bacteria flourish. We itch, we rub, we fuss, and by the time we finally see the dermatologist, the situation may have already calmed down. Then another heat spike hits, and we're triggered again. For older, thinner skin, these effects are amplified.

Aging skin is bad enough, but when you add heat, dust and smoke, it's quite the challenge – especially now that so many of us are choosing to live here year-round.

Wildfire smoke: the most challenging skincare season

Wildfires are no longer rare disruptions. They've become a recurring part of life in the West. Wildfire smoke contains fine particulate matter that triggers oxidative stress; essentially a chemical assault on the skin's protective systems.

For people with eczema or psoriasis, whose barrier function is already compromised, pollutants penetrate more easily. Even healthy skin can become reactive under repeated exposure.

The Salton Sea: a local environmental skin stressor

Here in the Coachella Valley, we also live with a profoundly local environmental issue: the Salton Sea.

As the sea recedes, it exposes dry lakebed dust containing fine particulates and agricultural residues. When winds pick up, those particles become airborne, contributing to poor air quality across nearby communities.

Most of the conversation focuses, rightly so, on respiratory effects. But skin is also an interface with this environment.

What are we desert dwellers to do?

All the usual recommendations apply: stay hydrated, stay inside, wear a hat, wear sunblock. Nothing new here.

But there are a few things that are easy to do, and easy to forget.

In the morning, wash your face. Yes, even if you're a man. Yes, even if you don't wear makeup. Using an oil cleanser or balm cleanser might seem counterintuitive, but once you've tried it, you may find your skin already feels moisturized by the time you're done. Then comes the mist.

If you like the idea of products that actively care for your skin, morning is the time for vitamin C, green tea, and algae-derived extracts, which may help reduce oxidative stress from pollution exposure. These go *under* sunscreen, never over it.

Whatever your routine, the last thing you reach for is a zinc oxide and titanium dioxide sunscreen. Mineral sunscreens don't just block UV, they create a physical barrier against environmental particles like dust and smoke. In desert conditions, that matters. And if you shave, don't worry: zinc doesn't sting compromised skin.



At night, before you head to bed, wash your face again. Then – at the very least – put something with lipids on your skin. If you get grumpy thinking about spending money on skin care, use Vaseline, olive oil, or whatever you already have on hand. Rub a baby back rib across your cheeks. Whatever. Lipids are the best friend your skin can have in this climate.



Simple steps can help protect your skin from harsh desert stressors.

Remember: Cleanse. Mist. Lipids. Sunblock. It's that easy. It isn't about vanity; it's about spending three minutes taking care of your skin so the only time you see your dermatologist is at a cocktail party or your yearly skin check.

Now you've evolved. You can be one with the bighorn and stand tall on the golf course, on the court, or at the bar knowing you may not be as adaptive as a sheep, but you can read and learn. And that counts for something.

Brook Dougherty of Indio is the co-founder of JustUs Skincare and welcomes your questions. She can be reached at (310) 266.7171 or brook@justusskincare.com. For more information, visit www.justusskincare.com.

Beauty from the Inside Out

Continued from page 10

"We've had two other brands before this, but I feel this one really has a purpose, and that purpose is to help people feel good from the inside out; not just from the outside in," says Gibson. "That purpose was inspired, first by my mother, but also by our appreciation for living well since moving to Palm Springs."



Gibson hard at work with Orson by his side.

They also recognized that there were no premium hair care products using functional mushrooms, so they created Hyper Shroom Complex, a proprietary blend containing chaga, reishi, lion's mane, tremella, and cordyceps with two mushroom-derived peptides that will be the anchor for every hair, skin and body care product they make.

"The blend is designed for hair and skin wellness, repair, softness and shine across all hair textures," says Backe. They plan to introduce their first products later this year.

Converging the wellness and beauty communities
The Convergence Summit in May is designed to reflect a shift in the beauty industry. Their goal is to bring consumers and professionals together for education and conversation that elevate luxury beauty and wellness from both sides of the chair. Featuring longevity doctors, scientists, mycologists and top beauty-industry professionals, they aim to also elevate Greater Palm Springs's beauty and wellness industries.

"For a long time, beauty lived in divided worlds," says Gibson. "There was professional beauty behind the chair and consumer beauty at home. Somewhere along the way, those lines began to blur, not because standards changed, but because curiosity did. Consumers are more educated and invested in their health, and professionals are being called to evolve into leaders in wellness and science. Convergence was created to honor that moment."

They feel Palm Springs is the right place for the summit as the audience here appreciates education and quality. "Like many who move here, we have all done big things, and there is so much we can contribute in an effort to strengthen the community."

"As the valley continues to grow, the clientele is looking for quality, and local professionals here don't necessarily have access to the hands-on education," says Backe. "We will be providing premium education that they can bring back into their salons to elevate their business, and in turn elevate the local beauty industry."

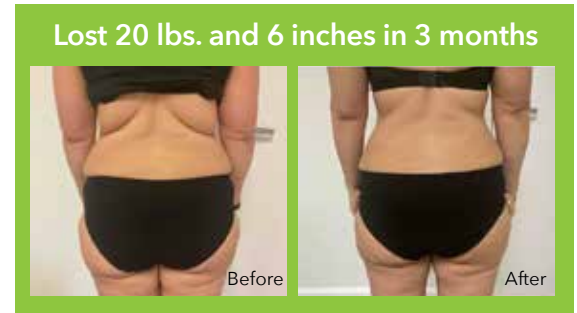


The Palm Springs summit will elevate the local beauty industry.

Lauren Del Sarto is founder and publisher of Desert Health. To learn more, visit www.tedgibson.com. (Photos by Roberto Ligresti)

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Embracing a Hopeful Tomorrow

By Patricia Van Santen, DAOM, LAc

We seem to be living in an unrecognizable world. Many of us wake each day feeling uneasy and unsure of our futures, plaintively looking back on our past. Some feel a need for hyper-awareness, and while recognizing danger and identifying threats are essential to our survival, if we focus only on the negative, we risk being held back by a defensive attitude.

There is a remedy. Neuroscience shows that envisioning a positive future can influence our behavior and well-being. Positivity shapes emotional regulation and decision-making and helps build resilience to adversity. We need hope. Hope helps us imagine a positive future and is a driving force behind profound transformation.

Let me share a true story about a friend. Kimo had saved for years to buy his land in Pahoehoe, Hawaii, and build his dream home. After two years of hard work, his vision was completed. He designed every aspect, added decks and planted his favorite trees and flowers. Two dogs and 7 stray cats joined the family.

In 2018, the Kilauea volcano on the Big Island of Hawaii erupted and unexpectedly began flowing towards Pahoehoe. One morning, Kimo was shaken awake by a 6.9 earthquake and the terrifying scream of emergency sirens. Tremors and lava flow continued for three months. Daily, he felt his joy and future crumbling like the crater walls. He no longer tended his garden, his personal care suffered and he spent anxious hours worrying how he would save his beloved animals. He finally sought counsel from a local Kahuna (a Hawaiian wise man).

"Why should I care about anything when it could all burn tomorrow?" he asked. The Kahuna sat with him in contemplative silence before answering, "It is time to start living pono." He explained that living pono means living with a conscious decision to do right for oneself, for others and for the world at large. "Each day when you wake, prepare yourself, your home and your garden as if you are expecting an honored guest. In this way, you will transform yourself and everyone around."

As Kimo left for home, he noticed something was different. The air, still thick with sulfur, now held the sweetness of plumeria and gardenia, fragrances he had not noticed in months. He slowly began to cultivate his dwelling and land, and to lovingly prepare meals for himself, his neighbors and his animals. He contemplated who his honored guest might be as the trade winds softened and healed his broken heart. He felt hope. Eventually, the lava flow stopped just short of town, averting any crisis.

Did you identify with any elements of this story? The volcano, Kimo, the garden, the Kahuna, the stray cats, living pono? And who, or what, is your honored guest?

May your hopes lead you to profound transformation, and may all beings discover a deep and lasting peace in the world today.

Patty Van Santen is a doctor of acupuncture and oriental medicine with Circe Healthcare Solutions and can be reached at (760) 773.4948.



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Can We Ever Go Back?

By Amy Austin PSYD, LMFT

In the month preceding Yom Kippur, the day of atonement for Jews worldwide, a common phrase heard may be, "If I have hurt or offended you in any way, whether consciously or unconsciously, I am sorry." This sentiment may stem from the lingering sting of a hurtful act by another, and hope, that at some point, internal resolution may be found.

Returning to the center after someone offends you can be another story altogether. A myriad of puzzle pieces come to mind when discerning a proper course towards relationship repair or deciding to let go. An important consideration is whether the offender is a friend, loved one, co-worker, teacher or boss. With friends, even long-term relationships, it can be understandable to surmise, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

Hurtful situations among loved ones are complex and may require a nuanced approach to move beyond negativity and restore family harmony. Here are a few points to contemplate when deciding whether a relationship is worth repairing:

Rate the degree of wrongdoing on a scale of 1-10. If someone forgot your birthday, that might be a 1 or 2. (An 8 if it's a partner or spouse! LOL.) Being gracious and magnanimous about small slights is a helpful course of action that honors your positive sense of self and integrity.

Was the offense a one-time occurrence or does it occur on a consistent basis? If you're setting emotionally healthy boundaries, and the offender continues to react negatively, it might be time to recruit some impartial outside help. Positive self-care is all about reaching out.

Do you want to continue holding a grudge? My father always told me, "When you hate, you have to live with the hate within." Decide how much space in your mind you want to rent to a grudge, hoping someone will someday call with a remorseful apology.

Create a turnaround. Did this offense create an opportunity for introspection, fortitude and motivational growth? When I shared with a loved one that I'd like to one day become a psychotherapist, I was told I would never be able to deal with people's problems. We all know how that turned out.

Feeling betrayed? Just because you feel betrayed doesn't mean you have to live betrayed. Instead of being the victim or martyr, you can claim mastery over your life and navigate a more positive and adaptive course. We give our power away; no one can take it. Empowerment awaits!

Work to make amends. Alcoholics Anonymous advocates make amends when and where warranted and appropriate. When an in-person amendment is not possible, a 'no send' letter can serve as a method of meaningful catharsis.

Talk it through. With respectful communication and effective listening, it's possible to establish an even richer bond in the end.

Deal or no deal? Physical, mental, emotional and/or verbal abuse are all relationship dealbreakers.

Whether rebuilding from betrayal or gently letting go, all we really want to know is that we gave it our best attempt. Lauren Del Sarto, esteemed founder of *Desert Health*, relayed, "Our number one job in life is to evolve to be the best human we can be. Each person and each experience we encounter adds to that evolution; thus, each is a lesson along our journey."

Dr. Amy Austin is a licensed marriage and family therapist (MFC#41252) and doctor of clinical psychology in Rancho Mirage. She can be reached at (760) 774.0047.



Nourishing Body, Mind and Community

Mizell Center programs enable seniors to thrive

By Ector Simpson

Nestled in the heart of Palm Springs, Mizell Center has become a cornerstone of healthy aging, connection and nutritional empowerment for older adults in the wider community. For more than five decades, Mizell has cultivated a mission, not just of sustenance, but of belonging, vitality and well-being.

At its core, Mizell understands that sound nutrition is fundamental to physical health, cognitive vitality and emotional well-being – especially as we age. Every weekday, the dedicated culinary team prepares and serves fresh, nourishing meals to more than 100 older adults who gather in Mizell's dining room. These shared moments of food and connection are as healing as the meals themselves.

But Mizell's impact reaches far beyond its dining room walls. As a Meals on Wheels provider, Mizell prepares and delivers approximately 500 nutritious meals each weekday to homebound adults who might otherwise struggle to access balanced food. Additionally, Mizell provides congregate meals at four additional senior centers throughout the valley, expanding access to both nourishment and community.

Inside Mizell's bustling kitchen, meals are prepared to meet nutritional guidelines that support heart health, diabetes management and overall wellness. Fresh ingredients, careful preparation and attention to dietary needs ensure that each meal does more than satisfy hunger; they help sustain independence.

Delivered with care by trained drivers, these meals also serve as vital daily wellness checks and social touchpoints for individuals living alone or with limited mobility. From Whitewater to the Salton Sea, Mizell's reach fuels dignity and stability across the valley.

Nutrition, however, does not exist in isolation. Mizell embraces a holistic approach to healthy aging by offering programs that keep minds engaged and bodies active, including movement classes, creative workshops and lifelong learning opportunities.

Essential to all of this is Mizell's extraordinary corps of volunteers. Whether assisting in the dining room, packaging meals, greeting visitors or managing Mizell's thrift store, volunteers are the lifeblood of the organization. Their generosity transforms services into relationships and programs into purpose.

As the Coachella Valley's senior population continues to grow, so too does Mizell's vision. The Center remains committed to reducing barriers to healthy aging, combating isolation, and ensuring that every older adult has access to nutritious food and meaningful connections.

In an age when isolation frays the bonds of community, Mizell serves as a beacon of connection and proves that nourishing the body and nourishing the spirit go hand in hand. By providing essential nutrition, creating shared experiences and celebrating the richness of community life, Mizell empowers older adults to thrive, age with dignity and stay deeply connected to the world around them.

For those seeking not just longevity but also well-being, Mizell Center is a testament to what's possible when compassion, nutrition and community converge.

Ector Simpson is the director of operations and programs at Mizell Center and can be reached at ectors@mizell.org. For more information, visit www.mizell.org.



Mizell's dining room provides seniors with both meals and connection.



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Preparing for Final Days

By Patrick Chirwa, MBA, MSN, RN

Desert Health Publisher Lauren Del Sarto recently shared the unimaginable experience of a family unprepared to handle the passing of a loved one at home. She asked that we provide guidance to readers on end-of-life resources, a topic that is understandably rarely discussed.

When a patient is admitted to hospice, families are asked to complete a mortuary agreement. This is a very important step in determining whether a mortuary has been selected. To support families who have not yet done so, hospice provides a list of local options, typically included in the admission binder. Hospice also offers social work assistance to families with limited financial resources, helping them find affordable options.

Family education begins at admission and continues throughout care, focusing on what to expect when a loved one passes away. This is especially important if the choice is made to do so at home. Hospice groups maintain contracts with organizations that provide durable medical equipment, supplies and medications, and hold ongoing in-services and meetings to ensure high quality standards.

As a patient begins actively transitioning, daily visits from the nurse and social worker are provided to ensure comfort and to support loved ones during this critical time.

At the time of death, the family is instructed to contact hospice and an on-call nurse is dispatched to assess the patient, notify the coroner for clearance, contact the selected mortuary, provide post-mortem care, and answer any questions the family may have. Hospice support during the final days and hours is essential for reassuring and guiding loved ones.

Regarding mortuary services, we strongly recommend reputable local mortuaries such as FitzHenry-Wiefels, known for professionalism, strong communication, timely response and maintaining their own dedicated post-mortem removal team. Few realize that there are independent body removal services unassociated with funeral homes that may fall far below the standard of care you would hope and expect for your loved one.

Hospice professionals also conduct spot checks to ensure mortuary teams handle patients with dignity and professionalism. When concerns arise, complaints are filed on behalf of families to maintain high standards of care.

To ease transitions and create a smoother experience for families, FitzHenry-Wiefels conducts mortuary educational services for health care professionals throughout the year. Guided tours of their mortuary facilities help hospice personnel better understand what families experience when planning funeral services, and their goal is to collaborate with as many local health care organizations as possible.

The next educational event will take place at Wiefels & Sons Mortuary, located at 690 S. Vella Road in Palm Springs on August 26 from 6:00-7:00 p.m.

We strongly encourage families to meet with mortuary liaisons prior to making final arrangements to ensure their loved ones are treated with dignity, compassion and respect in their final days and beyond.

Patrick Chirwa is owner of Tranquility Sands Hospice and welcomes your questions. He can be reached at (760) 565.1774 or Patrickc@tranquilitysandshospice.com.



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Over 40 Fitness Mistakes (And How to Fix Them)

In working with hundreds of adults 40+, I see the same recurrent patterns: good people with good intentions making similar mistakes that stall their progress or burn them out until they quit.

The good news? Each one is correctable, and most can be fixed immediately.

You're training like you're still 25. Maybe you were an athlete in college or used to run marathons. So, you jump into a bootcamp class or grab the weights you used to lift and go all out on day one.

Here's the thing. Your body is a different machine at 45 than it was at 25. That's not a motivational problem; it's biology. Your muscle mass has been declining for over a decade. Your joints have more wear. Your recovery system is slower. Your tendons and ligaments aren't as resilient due to a decline in collagen production.

None of this means you can't get into incredible shape; it means you need to be smarter about how you get there. Spend the first two to four weeks building a base with lighter weights and proper movement patterns. Those who start conservatively and progress steadily always outperform those who come in hot and get hurt.

You're avoiding strength training. You walk, bike or swim daily and feel that is enough. Or you've avoided the weight room because it feels intimidating, or you're scared you'll "bulk up."

Cardio is great for your heart. But it does little to address the things that actually change your body composition, protect your joints, strengthen your bones and keep you independent as you age. After 30, you lose three to eight percent of your muscle mass per decade, and only strength training reverses that. Walking 10,000 steps a day is wonderful, but it won't build the muscle that keeps you off the floor if you fall or improve the bone density that prevents a hip fracture.

Add strength training two to three times per week. Focus on compound movements like squats, presses and rows. And don't worry about bulking up. After 40, building excessive muscle is nearly impossible without serious pharmaceutical help.

You're ignoring recovery. You train five or six days a week because "more must be better." Rest days feel lazy. You push through soreness because that's what tough people do.

Recovery is when your body actually builds muscle. Training tears down fibers; rest and nutrition rebuild them. Skip the recovery, and you're just tearing yourself apart without ever rebuilding. If soreness lasts more than three days or your performance declines despite consistent effort, that's a warning sign. Plan one to two rest days per week and listen to your body.

You're skipping mobility work. You skip the warm-up. You never stretch. Mobility work sounds boring and you don't have time for it. But flexibility and mobility decline naturally with age, and the loss is so gradual you don't notice until one day you can't comfortably reach an overhead shelf or get out of your car without stiffness. Five to ten minutes of dynamic warm-up before every workout goes a long way.

You're not eating enough protein. Protein needs actually increase after 40 because your body becomes less efficient at using it. Most adults over 40 who are training should aim for about 0.7 to 1.0 grams per pound of body weight daily. For someone weighing 150 pounds, that's 105 to 150 grams. Most people are eating half that. Try to include 30 to 40 grams at every meal from sources like quality grade chicken, fish, eggs and Greek yogurt.

The bottom line? Fitness after 40 isn't about doing more. It's about doing what actually works for your body now. Get professional guidance, prioritize strength training, eat enough protein, and schedule rest days without guilt. Those who get the best results aren't the ones who train the hardest; they're the ones who train the smartest.

Gerry Washack is the owner of Strong Republic Personal Training with locations in Palm Desert, La Quinta and Palm Springs. Visit strongrepublicpersonaltraining.com.

The Benefits and Limitations of "Dr. AI"

Continued from page 14

First, understand the power of the prompt. Your prompt to the LLM should be specific and provide relevant background information. A person may also suggest that the agent use a "chain of thought" response to enhance accuracy. Instruct the LLM to use peer-reviewed evidence or high-quality medical references such as PubMed. Always ask the agent to provide sources for their response and to verify them; remember that AI is prone to hallucination and may provide inaccurate or fabricated sources.

Lastly, it is always in your best interest to consult with a medical provider, especially in the event of serious medical concerns. Use the LLM to gather helpful information and to formulate questions to ask your physician or medical provider. Having a strong personal relationship with your medical provider will afford you an expert who can help you safely steer away from the misinformation.

There is no doubt that AI has the power to reshape our world and improve access to and understanding of our personal health care needs. By understanding its limitations and following informed guidance, the public can use this tool to delve into the vast body of information and research accumulated over decades of medical research.

Edith Jones-Poland, MD, is an integrative primary care physician and lifestyle coach with Circe Healthcare Solutions. She can be reached at (760) 773.4948. www.circecares.com.

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(A) Provided by Trina Turk for Fashion Week El Paseo (B) Kellee McQueen (DJ Modgirl) by Olga Trehub (C) Desert International Horse Park/Megan Giese Media (D) Bella da Ball by David A. Lee (E) Young Eldorado Polo Players by Kerri Kerley Photography



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Connect with inspiring scholarship recipients and discover how this Women Leaders Forum program has transformed their educational and career paths. Classic Club. 5:30-7:30p. Members/ Guests: \$57 www.wlfdesert.org.

APRIL 2

WLF's Women Who Rule Panel
Join past Women Who Rule honorees as they share their remarkable contributions to our community through an evening of inspiration and insight. Classic Club. 5:30-7:30p. Members/ Guests: \$57 www.wlfdesert.org.

MARCH 13-18

Diamond Wish Fashion Week El Paseo '26
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MARCH 26

Alzheimers Coachella Valley's Endless Possibilities
Enjoy dinner, festivities and live entertainment while honoring philanthropist Sherwyn Turbow. Tommy Bahama Miramonte Resort. 5:30-8:30p. Tickets: \$250. (760) 776.3100 www.cvalzheimers.org. (Read more p.21)



MARCH 28

Good Vibes Sunset Sound Bath at Palm Springs Surf Club
Drift beneath the desert sky wrapped in a cozy blanket on the lazy river or calming pool as sound and buoyancy create a deeply calming, full-body experience unlike any other. Tickets: \$175 (Discount code: SPRINGFLOAT26) www.GoodVibesSoundBath.com.

APRIL 11

ACV's Parkinson's Awareness Expo
Education, resources and presentations from local organizations and practitioners. Eisenhower Health Annenberg Center. 10a-12:30p. Free and open to all. Register: (760) 776.3100

APRIL 12

Good Vibes Floating Sound Bath at Azure Palm Hot Springs
You have nowhere to be but in the moment. Let go and float with this immersive experience like no other. 7-9p. Tickets: \$175 (Discount code: SPRINGFLOAT26) www.GoodVibesSoundBath.com.



MAY 3-4

Convergence Beauty Wellness Science Summit
Pioneering event brings consumers and industry professionals together for discussions and exploration of wellness-driven beauty and the future of the industry from both sides of the chair. Renaissance Hotel Palm Springs. Tickets: \$199+. www.tedgibson.com. (Read more p.10)




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Keeping the Good Vibes Growing

By Lauren Del Sarto

In 2023, Michelle Steadman approached me with a compelling business idea: floating sound baths. I knew the concept was in line with that year's global wellness trends—immersive experiences, sound baths, wellness travel—but we never could have imagined how well received it would be.

Launching the business was fun and seamless (a good sign you are on the right track). Within months, we were producing sold-out events for guests flying in from all over the world. Our social media views quickly grew to over 400 million. We garnered international press and met gracious guests who shared stories that made all the hard work meaningful.

People are seeking impactful self-care experiences and Good Vibes Sound Bath answers that call. Floating sound baths are now offered worldwide, and we take pride in helping to launch an industry that provides a much-needed reprieve. We also take pride in the fact that Greater Palm Springs is home to Good Vibes Sound Bath and see a significant opportunity to expand the experience to a broader local audience.

As such, we have placed Good Vibes in the capable hands of Matthew McLeroy and Kelly Garcia, local professionals deeply invested in the Coachella Valley through leadership and service. McLeroy is chairman of the board for Desert Best Friend's Closet, a board member for Leadership Coachella Valley and the Palm Springs Hospitality Association (PSHA), and president of Indio Sunrise Rotary Club. Garcia is treasurer of the Indio Rotary, commissioner of the Indio Community Service Commission and also on the board of PSHA.

"Good Vibes Sound Bath has truly been a labor of love, built from a place of passion, healing and a commitment to meaningful work in our community," said Steadman. "Watching it grow into an experience that has touched so many lives has been an incredible honor."

Handing the company forward is both emotional and exciting. "We feel confident that Matt and Kelly will nurture its heart while expanding its reach, allowing even more people to experience the healing power of sound and intentional wellness," adds Steadman.

The idea of purchasing the business arose serendipitously for the new business partners, and the decision was underscored by how seamlessly everything came together. "Every conversation, every step in the process, felt aligned," says Garcia. "The ease and clarity around this transition assured us we were stepping into something that was ready to evolve, and we knew we were meant to steward it into its next chapter."

"My interest in owning Good Vibes is rooted in something deeper than business; it's about impact," says McLeroy, who throughout his life and career has been drawn to things that help you reset. "This immersive experience blends science, sound, meditation and community. We are creating an environment where people feel safe, grounded and restored."

The pair plans to grow thoughtfully and sustainably by expanding into additional resort properties and private estates, increasing corporate wellness partnerships, and developing repeatable systems to maintain the premium experience at scale.

"Growth for us is not about volume alone. It's about protecting quality while expanding reach," ensures Garcia. "We want this to be a business that enhances the local wellness ecosystem, not just operates within it."

Michelle and I are eternally grateful to the many businesses and individuals who have supported Good Vibes Sound Bath along the way. It has been an incredible journey, and we beam with pride as it continues to grow as one of Greater Palm Springs's iconic wellness experiences.

Lauren Del Sarto is founder and publisher of Desert Health. For tickets and information, visit www.goodvibessoundbath.com.



Co-founders Michelle Steadman and Lauren Del Sarto at their very first float. (Photo by Isning Gamez)



Co-owner Matthew McLeroy



Co-owner Kelly Garcia

ACV's Endless Possibilities

Celebration, hope and honors abound

Community nonprofits whose funding is dedicated to local programming are invaluable. No organization does that better than Alzheimers Coachella Valley (ACV). Since 2017, the nonprofit has offered innovative programs, services and education for desert residents with cognitive impairment, their families and care partners.

ACV offers more than 25 evidence-based programs including the valley's only no-cost cognitive screening center, social activities such as Club Journey, certified dementia training for health care professionals and lay persons, and numerous support groups. Each month, ACV serves more than 500 people in need of support and all services are free of charge.

On March 26, ACV will celebrate its fifth annual fundraiser, Endless Possibilities. The festive event brings the community together for an evening of cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, dinner, auctions and live entertainment featuring Mark Kopitzke and the Nightcaps. The evening will also honor philanthropist and Alzheimer's advocate Sherwyn Turbow of La Quinta, who will receive the Edie Keller Leadership Award. Mr. Turbow is recognized for his many contributions to community support and research.

"We are thrilled to be able to honor and recognize one of our Valley's leading philanthropists," said Dominick Calvano, president of ACV's Board of Directors. "A champion of ACV and our mission, Sherwyn has taken a 'hands on' approach to supporting not only ACV, but also the Jewish Federation, Desert Cancer Foundation and Planned Parenthood."

Endless Possibilities will be held at the Tommy Bahama Miramonte Resort and Spa in Indian Wells on March 26, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$250 and all monies raised stay in the Valley as ACV is not affiliated with any national nonprofit organizations. The event standardly sells out so secure your ticket today and we hope to see you there!

For sponsorship and ticket information, contact Priscilla at (760) 776.3100 or visit www.cvalzheimers.org.



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6-8pm

April 12 • Sunset Floating Sound Bath
Azure Palm Hot Springs
7-9pm

May 10 • Mothers Day Floating Sound Bath
Azure Palm Hot Springs
7:30-9:30pm

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Blushing Peony Wine Bar & Café

The corner café offering nourishing nosh

By Lauren Del Sarto

Everyone has a favorite neighborhood café—the kind you can count on for a great cup of coffee, a satisfying meal or a festive brunch with friends. Finding one that balances indulgent treats with healthy options, however, can be a challenge. In Indian Wells, that place is the Blushing Peony Wine Bar & Café.

This colorful, eclectic bistro is the vision of farm-to-table chef Katherine Gonzalez, also the talent behind Chula Artisan Eatery in La Quinta. While Chula channels a modern-mex street café in a border beach town, the Blushing Peony offers a more refined experience—plush, polished and perfectly suited to its California Mediterranean menu. Think red sangria at Chula and pink champagne at the Peony.

What unites both restaurants is Gonzalez's unwavering commitment to locally sourced, organic ingredients and bold, memorable flavors. A community-conscious restaurateur, Gonzalez draws inspiration from local farmers, crafting dishes that are as nutritious as they



The café's colorful charm



Gluten-free crab cakes with lemon and dill sweet pepper aioli and truffle deviled eggs



alternatives are available.) In the early afternoon, unwind with a glass of wine or bubbly alongside a hummus plate or orange bacon dates. The Peony also serves my favorite non-alcoholic spirit, Seedlip, artfully garnished with herbs for a refreshing “garden in a glass.”

Encouraged by enthusiastic regulars, Gonzalez recently introduced dinners on Thursdays and Fridays. The thoughtfully curated menu features hearty small plates such as a tomato mezze bowl with charred cherry tomatoes and seasoned yogurt, to-die-for deviled eggs, savory shrimp toast with microgreens, and steak and mushroom crostini. Salads include the shaved root vegetables and a decorated blue cheese wedge, while main dishes offer something for everyone—from wild halibut, pasta and prawns, and grilled mushroom steak to skirt steak with coconut parsnip purée and date jam short ribs.



Date jam short rib with roasted pomegranate carrots and Seedlip Garden mocktail

are delicious. From shaved root vegetables with champagne vinaigrette to date jam short ribs, every plate is designed to make you feel as good as it tastes.

Beyond the Peony's popular breakfast and brunch offerings—such as garden vegetable casserole, the farmers market breakfast

bowl and avocado toast—the café is a welcoming spot to enjoy a cappuccino with a friend. (They proudly brew Joshua Tree Coffee and milk



Wild halibut with olives and capers

alternatives are available.) In the early afternoon, unwind with a glass of wine or bubbly alongside a hummus plate or orange bacon dates. The Peony also serves my favorite non-alcoholic spirit, Seedlip, artfully garnished with herbs for a refreshing “garden in a glass.”



Gonzalez and her team will return to Aziz for their Spring Farm Dinner March 19.

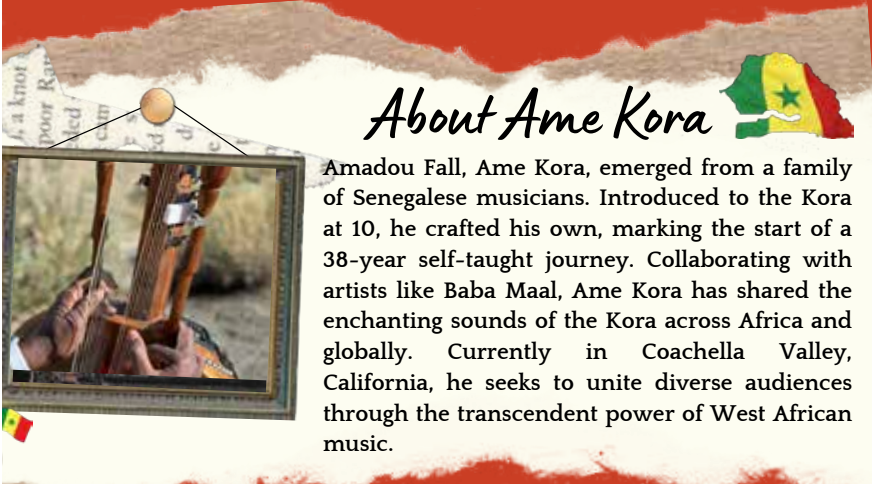
The Blushing Peony Wine Bar & Café is located in the Sprouts Shopping Center at the corner of Highway 111 and Cook Street. They are open Saturdays through Wednesdays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Thursdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. Reservations are recommended online or by calling (760) 580-1653.

Guests enjoyed the tender short ribs at Gonzalez's Fall Farm Dinner featured in our January/February edition. The next collaboration with Mark and Nicole Tadros of Aziz Farms takes place Thursday, March 19. The evening includes a guided tour of the organic farm, a wine and appetizer reception, a family-style dinner and live music. Tickets and additional details are available on the Blushing Peony website.

Be sure to visit this quaint corner café. Whether dining solo at their welcoming counter, relaxing on the sidewalk patio or settling into the cozy interior, you're guaranteed a flavorful experience and a nourishing meal.



The Healing Power of the West African Harp



About Ame Kora

Amadou Fall, Ame Kora, emerged from a family of Senegalese musicians. Introduced to the Kora at 10, he crafted his own, marking the start of a 38-year self-taught journey. Collaborating with artists like Baba Maal, Ame Kora has shared the enchanting sounds of the Kora across Africa and globally. Currently in Coachella Valley, California, he seeks to unite diverse audiences through the transcendent power of West African music.

Bring the restorative beauty of the kora, the 21-string West African harp, to your patients, clients, or community. International artist Ame Kora shares music that has been played for centuries to promote calm, emotional well-being, and cultural connection.

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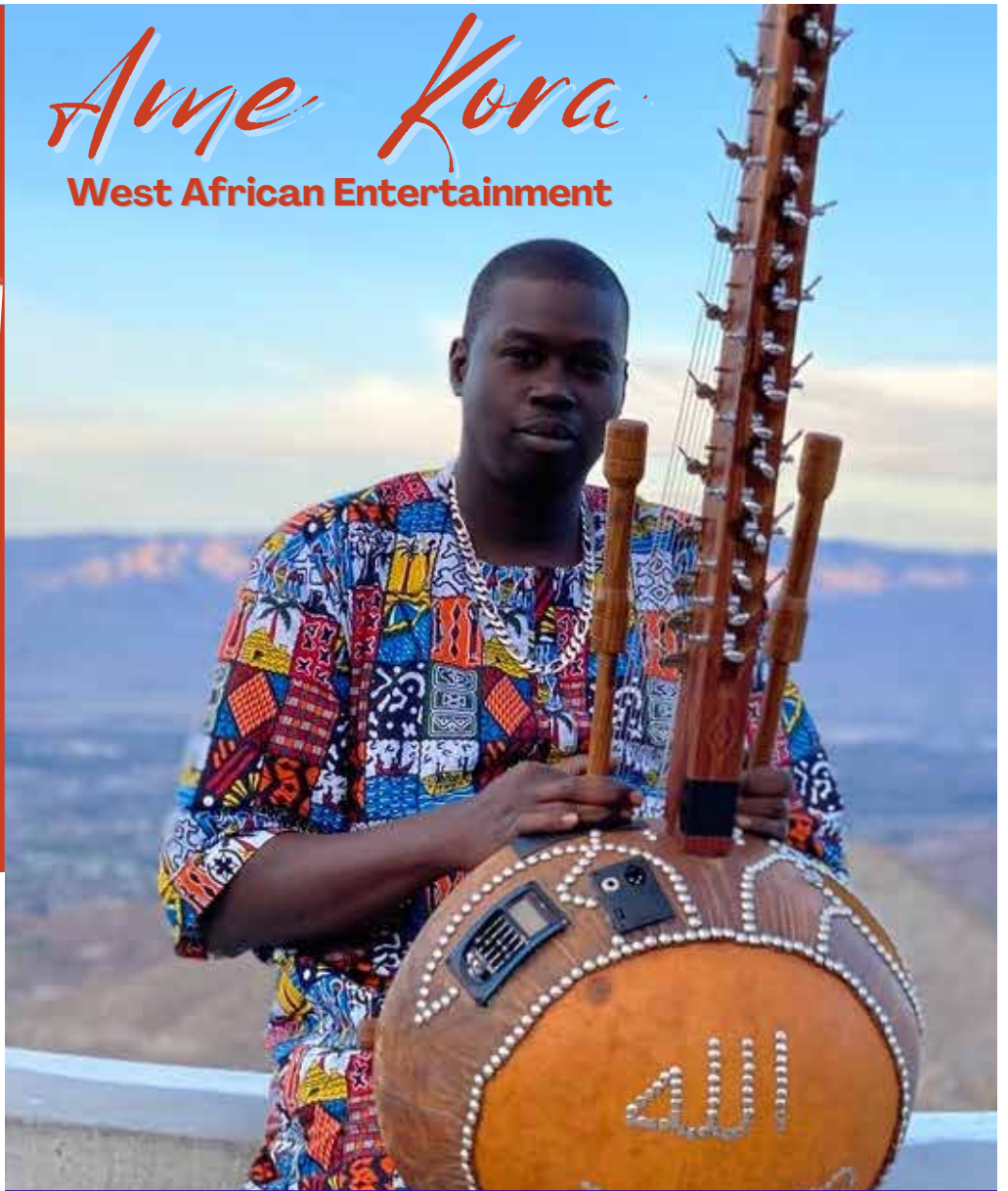
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