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November/December 2023

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When was the last time you were out of your mind? Not with the help of outside influences, but on your own accord. Completely and utterly absent from thought, rumination and responsibility.

Our minds never seem to stop thinking, planning and problem solving, especially during this vibrant time of year.

Busy brain has its benefits, doesn't it? We stay on top of things, feel accomplished, on the ball. We stay ahead of guilt that can accompany falling behind. All our French hens are in a tidy little row.

But it can also be exhausting. Life passes too quickly. We often look back and wonder where the time went.

Taking moments throughout our day to *just be*, to pause our thoughts, clear our minds and open our eyes to really see what's around us can actually slow the stopwatch.

This simple act takes conscious effort, but the results may surprise you and may leave you wanting more. The world tends to look different. Your clear head allows space for your uninhibited heart to take a step forward. You have feelings for your visual field and may even smile to yourself with awe and wonder. It can feel as if time has stopped.

It's not only our view that can change. Taking a break from mental chatter calms us within and puts our entire body at ease. Even momentary pauses can have significant benefits in easing stress, anxiety, low mood and high blood pressure. We come back a little lighter.

Sounds crazy, but if you want to make memories that last, stop, take a moment and *feel* them. Put your thoughts and to-do lists aside and *Just Be*. The benefits will last much longer than those check marks, and Father Time may even stop to tip his hat.



She didn't speak until she was four; today, she lectures around the world. She didn't read until she was eight and has now authored more than 15 books and 60 scientific papers. In her youth, she had difficulty working with others, then went on to revolutionize an entire industry. School was challenging, yet she earned both masters and doctoral degrees. She suffered extreme anxiety in her youth and built a calming device that is now widely used by others.

Dr. Temple Grandin has autism and is considered one of the first to verbally share "the way she sees it." Her writings and presentations offer parents, clinicians and educators a glimpse into how brains can be different - different, not less as her supportive mother coined. *Time* Magazine named her one of the "100 Most Influential People in the World" and she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

On November 17, 7:30 p.m. at the Palm Springs Cultural Center, Dr. Grandin will share her story as part of the Palm Springs Speaks series. The *New York Times* best-selling author is presenting her latest

book, *Visual Thinking: The Hidden Gifts of People Who Think in Pictures, Patterns and Abstractions*. Her talk is entitled "The Way I See It: A Personal Look at Autism & Asperger's," and Grandin will discuss the real issues of autism, the ones parents, teachers and individuals on the spectrum face every day. She will offer helpful dos and don'ts, practical strategies and try-it-now tips, all based on her "insider" perspective and substantial research.

In the realms of autism and animal welfare, Grandin, now 76, is considered an unparalleled champion. She describes her autistic senses and emotions as very similar to those of animals, which gives her the unique ability to analyze situations using sensory-based data instead of language. Her designs for humane livestock handling systems, based on her observations of their behaviors, have greatly improved animal welfare and quality standards in the meat packing and livestock industries.

In college, her observations of how clamped cattle chutes instilled calm in the animals inspired her to create a similar system for her own anxiety she called

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Cultivating Self-Care

Summer winds have subsided, clear skies have returned and the holidays are looking bright. Welcome home to all our seasonal friends!

How can I summarize all the splendor to be found within these pages? I am still reeling from the opportunity to interview Temple Grandin who I've admired for decades (p.1). All are encouraged to attend her presentation November 17 as part of Palm Springs Speaks, or to at least watch the award-winning movie of her incredible life. With an exceptional support system, she learned how to open doors which her work has done for many others who think differently - different, but not less.

We are so proud of Coachella Valley High School, named one of the Healthiest Schools in America (p.3). They are supporting students with a safe, calming space and teaching tools to help them manage stress at The Wellness Center. Hats off to educator and health coach Jason Tate who was integral in establishing this program, now being recognized nationally. May all schools follow their lead.

To educate and teach self-care to the next generation, we need to practice ourselves. It is one of the greatest benefits of living in our beloved desert community. We can hike in November and swim in December; easily find a yoga, meditation or breathwork class (p.3); hear from doctors on improving wellbeing (p.25), or explore something new like a floating sound bath (p.24).

Enjoy this festive time of year, but remember, it's all about balance. In the name of good health and happiness, take time to Just Be.

Wishing you all the treasures this season can bring ~

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Finding Peace During the Holiday Hustle

By Jennifer Yockey

The holiday season is a time of joy, celebration and togetherness, but it can also bring a fair share of stress and anxiety. From the hustle and bustle of shopping for gifts to the pressures of hosting family gatherings, it's easy to become overwhelmed. However, there are ancient practices that can help you navigate this season with more ease and mindfulness.



Simple practices can help you manage stress during the busy holiday season.

Yoga and meditation, when incorporated into your holiday routine, can provide you with valuable tools to manage stress, cultivate gratitude and find moments of peace amid the chaos.

Stress reduction. The holidays often come with a long list of tasks and commitments. Yoga and meditation can help you manage stress by promoting relaxation and reducing the production of stress hormones. A few minutes of deep breathing or a gentle yoga session can do wonders for calming your nerves and keeping you grounded and centered.

Mindful presence. One of the gifts of yoga and meditation is the practice of being present in the moment. Amid the whirlwind of holiday preparations, the conscious effort of taking a moment to be fully present with loved ones can enhance your connections and bring more meaning to your celebrations.

Emotional balance. The holiday season can evoke a wide range of emotions, from joy and excitement to sadness or loneliness. Meditation can help you acknowledge and process these emotions, providing a healthy outlet for expression and preventing emotional overwhelm.

Improved sleep. A good night's sleep is essential for maintaining your physical and emotional well-being. Yoga and meditation can help improve sleep quality by relaxing the body and calming the mind, making it easier to drift into a restful slumber.

Gratitude practice. The spirit of gratitude is central to the holiday season. Meditation encourages you to focus on the things for which you are thankful, fostering a sense of contentment and appreciation for the people and experiences in your life.

Setting intentions. As you approach the new year, yoga and meditation can assist you in setting positive intentions for the months ahead. Reflecting on your goals and aspirations during this time can be a powerful way to begin the year with purpose and clarity.

Mindful eating. The holiday season often involves indulgent feasts. Yoga can help you stay in tune with your body's hunger cues, while meditation can encourage mindful

Continued on page 7

CV High Honored as one of America's Healthiest Schools

Coachella Valley High School (CVHS) recently received the distinct honor as one of America's Healthiest Schools, a recognition awarded to only 781 schools nationwide for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Presented by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, the distinction celebrates the key role schools play in advancing the health and well-being of students, staff, families and their communities. Awardees are recognized for implementing best practices in up to nine areas including cultivating staff well-being, improving nutrition and food access, bolstering physical education and activity, and promoting tobacco-free environments.

On a national level, CVHS stands apart from all others for meeting the highest standards in the category of "implementing local school wellness policy." In the face of numerous challenges that schools encounter today, such as learning disruptions, declining youth mental health, post-pandemic effects, school shootings, vaping and curriculum changes, CVHS has consistently prioritized and promoted good health within its community:

- Multiple classroom visitations and large audience presentations on the subject of mental, physical and emotional health and well-being are held.
- Students have the opportunity to join small group workshops with 10 or less classmates who meet once a week on topics like healthy relationships, time and stress management, and healthy coping skills for stress, anxiety and depression.
- Creation of The Wellness Center, relaxing space featuring calming colors, soothing music, pleasant aromas with an essential oil diffuser, and multiple stations to talk one-on-one, engage in art therapy or meet in small groups.

Educator, functional health coach and wellness specialist Jason Tate was instrumental in developing and launching The Wellness Center at CVHS. "As a classroom teacher for 17 years, I knew students were struggling and needed a place like The Wellness Center. Last year, I made the leap from a neighboring district to CVHS to open and lead one of the first organized wellness centers in the Coachella Valley. I am honored to have the opportunity to play a part in something truly remarkable and what I believe is necessary for all schools across the country."

Recognizing the need for mental health support, and dedicated staff to help meet those needs, the Coachella Valley Unified School District now has wellness centers in all of their high schools and middle schools.

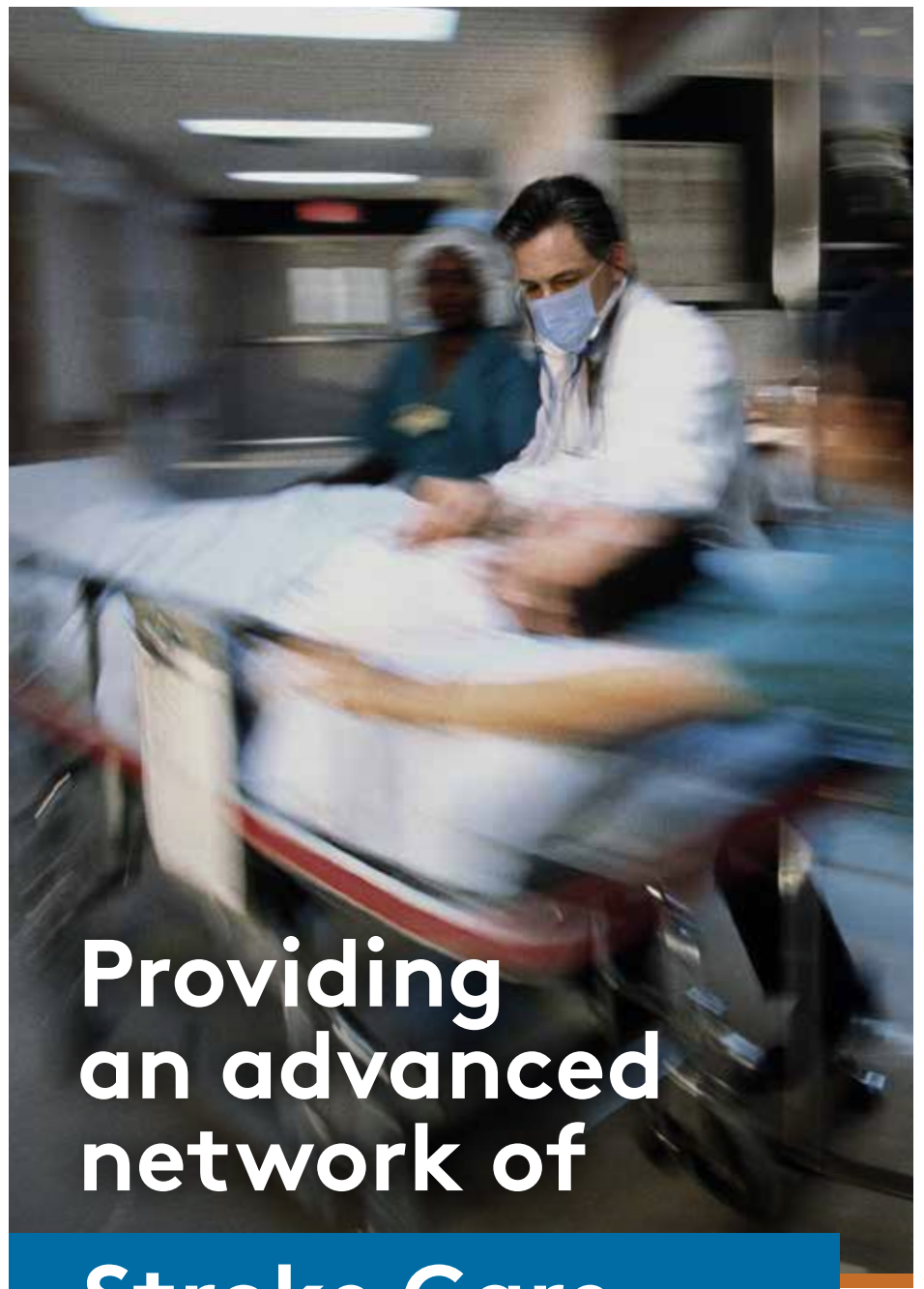
"We are deeply honored to receive national recognition for our unwavering commitment to fostering an environment where all members of our school community can learn and thrive," CVHS Principal Socorro Sanchez proudly expressed.

"Our wellness centers have been transformative in nurturing a healthier and more empowered student community," added Superintendent Luis Valentino, Ed.D. "The heartfelt testimonials from our students reaffirm the positive impact of these centers in promoting emotional well-being, resilience and personal growth. We are dedicated to continuing our mission of fostering a supportive environment where every student can thrive academically and emotionally."

Desert Health congratulates CVHS and their entire faculty, staff and student body on this outstanding honor. For more information and a list of all schools honored, visit www.HealthierGeneration.org.



CVHS students pose in front of the newly arrived award banner. (Photo by Jason Tate)



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Unlocking the Future: AI in Health Care Part 2: Current Use and Future Promise

By Tammy Porter, DNP, MLS, RN-BSN, CPHQ, CCM

With the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI), the health care industry is witnessing a revolution like no other. AI has already begun to reshape the health care landscape, from diagnosis and treatment to patient empowerment. In this second of a three-part series, I'll explore how AI is currently used in health care, its future potential and how it can empower patients and families to advocate for better care.

Current AI Use:

Personalized treatment plans. AI can analyze your medical data and assist your health care team in creating personalized treatment plans; ask your doctor how they might be doing this now—and if not now, when. By considering your genetic makeup, medical history and lifestyle, AI can recommend the most effective therapies and medications, minimizing side effects and improving outcomes.

Therapy robots. "Tess" is a mental health chatbot that you can instant message via Facebook Messenger or text a phone number for help with panic attacks or depression. If you are a caregiver for a loved one, Tess is also designed to work with those who may need support but aren't asking for help.

Personal health assistants. AI-driven personal health assistants such as "Renee" (www.renee.com) can remind patients of medication schedules, track their progress and provide guidance on managing chronic conditions.

Remote monitoring. Wearable devices and sensors connected to AI platforms continuously monitor patients' vital signs and send real-time alerts to health care providers if abnormalities are detected, enabling early interventions. "Smartwatches" now have fall alerts and abnormal heart rhythm detectors, among other health alerts.

The potential applications of AI in health care are boundless, promising a future where medicine is not just curative but truly preventive! Here are a few glimpses into the future:

Future AI Use:

Detect and diagnose Alzheimer's. Using chatbots that analyze speech and text will enable earlier disease detection and treatment within the next 3-4 years.

Diagnosing heart valve disease by EKG. Yale School of Medicine has already developed a computer program (algorithm) to detect the narrowing of a heart valve from just an echocardiogram (EKG).

Beyond its technical capabilities, AI holds immense potential in empowering patients and their families to advocate for better care. By providing patients with understandable information to make informed decisions and predicting health risks to take preventive measures, patients and their families are able to effectively partner with their health care providers for a proactive approach.

The integration of AI into health care is transforming the industry in ways previously unimaginable. As with any new approach, there are risks and benefits. In my final article for the next edition, read about what you will need to be aware of with AI in health care and how to protect yourself and your family.

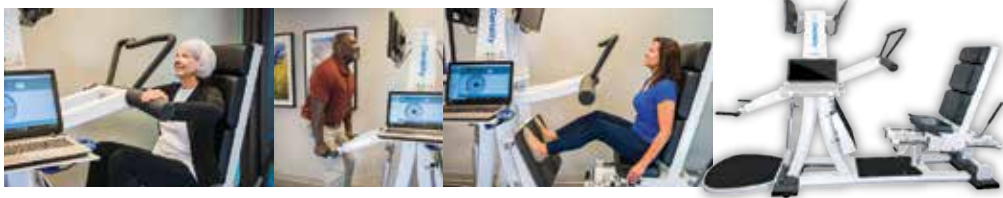
Dr. Porter is CEO and founder of MyHealth.MyAdvocate and advocates for patients, families, and caregivers. Immediate assistance is available by calling (760) 851.4116. www.myhealthmyadvocate.com.

Sources available upon request.



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Core Leadership Skills: Setting Priorities and Managing Time

By Susan Murphy, PhD and Edward Baker, MD, MPH

This article first appeared in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* (Sept/Oct 2023) and has been edited for length.

Health care practitioners are navigating a time of significant change and uncertainty. Many feel burned out and exhausted after surviving the pandemic and are seeking help to set priorities and manage time more effectively.

Get up on the balcony!

Practitioners may benefit from taking a step back from day-to-day demands and “get up on the balcony” to reflect on fundamental questions:

- As I reflect on my recent past, what am I proudest of?
- When I'm at my best, what am I thinking and doing?
- What gives me the most positive energy?
- How am I contributing to the growth and development of myself and others?
- What are the key success indicators of my job?

Busy professionals may feel that they do not have time for this, but doing so can set the stage for determining what is most important. This exercise may save time by focusing on top priority areas and reducing time spent on less important activities.

The priority-setting mindset: must do, good to do, nice to do and not to do

Central to the process is to establish a mindset that “everything is not equally important.” Leaders should select a few priorities (typically no more than 3-4 items) that constitute a “must do”. These top priorities should connect with your underlying goals, job description and your unique talents. Consider:

- Which activities contribute to accomplishing your organizational goals?
- Which activities “fuel your fire” and provide you with positive energy?
- Which activities focus your energies on what you do when you are at your best?

By considering these questions, you can begin to formulate a set of three to four top priorities. If appropriate, review with colleagues. Identify specific tasks for each top priority. Characterize tasks as “must do,” “good to do,” “nice to do” or “not to do.”

Linking priority setting to time management

Once priorities are established, compare them with how you manage time. One tactic is to end each day listing the three most important “must do” tasks for tomorrow. Start the next day by reviewing that list and comparing the “must do” list with the ways in which time is spent during the day.

Next, begin to refine ways to focus on the “must do tasks” and less on the “good to do,” “nice to do” and certainly not on the “not to do” tasks. Practice new ways to say “no” or “not now” to new requests or even to existing commitments. Asking the right questions will help:

1. Is this something that I should be doing in view of my core strengths and goals?
2. How important is a new request in relation to my current “must do's”?
3. Can this request be deferred to a later time?
4. What will happen if I don't agree to take this on?
5. If I say “yes,” how do I reduce my existing workload?

By adopting techniques for linking priorities to time management, you create a framework. To establish these new practices, commit to adopting these new processes over several months. By celebrating successes and sharing with coworkers, you can form a “community of practice” to provide mutual support and insights in setting priorities.

Time management tactics

Next, consider concrete tactics to manage time.

- Once you have analyzed where your time is spent in 15-minute increments, cut out nonproductive activities ASAP.
- Become a “meeting expert”. Have an agenda, invite only people needed, stay on track, learn how to deal with run-on discussions, interruptions. Distribute minutes within 24 hours.
- Learn how to handle drop-in visitors. Stand when they enter your office, stay standing while you talk with them. “I can chat for four minutes and then I need to focus on the project. How may I help you today?”
- Manage phone calls and drop-in visitors—quickly get to the purpose of the call; others may be taking your time so they can take a break.
- Unsubscribe from useless mailing lists, subscriptions.

Setting priorities and managing time can provide many benefits. Setting clear boundaries and saying “no” may lead to improved work-life balance. You may rediscover the joy that you once experienced. By clarifying what is important, anxiety over “not doing enough” may be mitigated. Ideally, the process of better priority setting may lead to a clearer sense of purpose and fulfillment at work.

In summary, begin the process by reflecting on your core strengths for insight into “critical success factors.” Then, adopt a vocabulary of “must do,” “good to do,” “nice to do” and “not to do” to examine how you spend time during the workday. At the end each day, identify the three to four top priorities (the “must do's”) for the coming day. At the start of that next day, begin by revisiting these three priorities to set the stage for the day's activity. By reviewing the daily calendar and categorizing each block of time as a “must do,” “good to do” or “nice to do,” you can gain further insights that may assist in the process of better time management. In doing so, your important work can become more productive and fulfilling in service to the health of the public.

Dr. Murphy is a best-selling author, business consultant and speaker specializing in relationships, conflict, leadership and goal-achievement. Dr. Edward Baker is a former Assistant Surgeon General in the US Public Health Service and former Director of CDC's Public Health Practice Program Office. He currently serves as Adjunct Professor at School of Public Health, Chapel Hill, North Carolina and Harvard University's T. H. Chan School of Public Health.



Categorizing tasks on a daily basis is an effective time management strategy.



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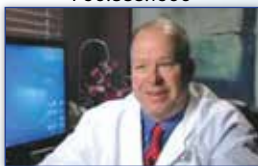
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HEAL Meets CERT

By Student Valeria Cabiedes-Vazquez

At Cathedral City High School, students in the Health and Environmental Health Academy of Learning (HEAL) are taking part in a course that prepares them to be ready and helpful when their community faces disasters. This course is called Community Emergency Response Teams or CERT.

In CERT, students cover seven units:

- 1. Disaster Preparedness:** Where students should be able to identify roles and responsibilities for community preparedness, describe types of hazards that can affect a community, and undertake personal and organizational preparedness actions.
- 2. Fire Safety and Utility Controls:** Where students learn keys to effective fire suppression, CERT sizeup and fire sizeup considerations, classes of fire, types of fire extinguishers and how to identify hazardous materials.
- 3. Disaster Medical Operations:** Students identify three "killers," apply techniques for opening the airway, controlling bleeding, treating for shock, conducting head-to-toe assessments and establishing treatment areas.
- 4. Light Search and Rescue Operations:** Students should know how to perform search and rescue sizeup, the objectives of interior and exterior search and rescue and how to decide whether to attempt rescue.
- 5. CERT Organization:** Where students learn how to do Command Post documents and track situation status, how to document and communicate information to all CERT levels and provide Command Post with ongoing information about damage assessment.
- 6. Disaster Psychology:** Students learn four emotional phases of a disaster, psychological and physiological symptoms of trauma, and how to be an empathetic listener.
- 7. Terrorism and CERT:** Students learn to follow simple guidelines: do not touch, move away from an object or area and report it to authorities immediately.

During this course firefighters came to the school to teach some units and conducted hands-on activities like teaching students how to move a patient with a blanket.

On October 14, HEAL students completed their CERT training and reviewed everything they learned. Students went over four stations that were essential for their final test: lifting and maneuvering victims, triage, fire suppression, and leveraging and cribbing. For the final test, students had to simulate the aftermath of an actual disaster. They would perform triage on victims depending on their injuries and take them to a safe environment where they would get help.

During this course, students learned valuable skills such as leadership and teamwork. They've learned how to be ready for any kind of disaster and are ready to help when they can. We will never know when the next big disaster will happen, but at least we have some people in our community who are ready and prepared to help.

Valeria Cabiedes-Vazquez is a junior at Cathedral City High School. For more information on OneFuture programs, contact Kim McNulty at kim@onefuturecv.org.



Student author Valeria Cabiedes-Vazquez



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Sarah A. Khoshniyati, DDS
("Dr. Sarah")

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Pregnancy and Oral Health

By Sarah A. Khoshniyati, DDS

Expecting mothers commonly wonder if dental treatment is possible during their pregnancy. Annual exams and preventative dental cleanings are safe while pregnant and recommended.

Oral health care plays an important role in prenatal care, as poor oral health during pregnancy may lead to poor health outcomes for the mother and baby. Physiological changes, such as a rise in pregnancy hormones – estrogen and progesterone, may result in changes such as dental caries (infections), pregnancy gingivitis and periodontitis. Dental caries can occur due to changes in one's diet such as an increase in appetite or snacking due to cravings, poor oral hygiene and/or an increase in acidity due to nausea and vomiting. Gingivitis and periodontitis can occur because of hormonal changes that may increase the response to bacteria in the mouth. If proper oral hygiene care is not followed during pregnancy, gingivitis can advance to periodontitis. Tooth erosion can occur if one has experienced vomiting from morning sickness.

Some pregnant women may notice lumps that form on their gums, usually between the teeth, that appear red and bleed easily. These can be caused by having a large accumulation of plaque and are known as pyogenic granuloma's, also called pregnancy tumors, although these tumors are not cancer. The lesions usually resolve after giving birth and are not something to worry about.

It is important for health care providers to review these changes that can occur to the teeth and gums during pregnancy, emphasize the importance of proper oral hygiene habits, as well as educate patients on what dental treatments are safe while pregnant. Preventative dental care such as routine examinations, cleanings, dental X-rays (with a lead apron for proper protection of the abdomen and thyroid) and the use of local anesthesia such as lidocaine with or without epinephrine are all safe during pregnancy. It is recommended to avoid the use of nitrous oxide throughout pregnancy.

One may decide to postpone elective treatment that does not require immediate attention. However, conditions such as a tooth abscess, oral infection and extensive decay are encouraged to be treated sooner rather than later to prevent further health issues. It is generally recommended that elective cosmetic or optional dental treatment be postponed until after birth and necessary treatment be done before the third trimester, preferably the second trimester. Due to the increased risk of oral health conditions during pregnancy, it is crucial to practice proper hygiene at home and continue to have routine dental check ups and cleanings.

If you are due for a dental checkup or cleaning, have questions about oral health related to pregnancy or have noticeable changes in the mouth, call your dentist to schedule an appointment.

Sarah Khoshniyati ("Dr. Sarah") is a dentist with Palm Desert Smiles and can be reached at (760) 568.3602. Visit www.PalmDesertSmiles.com.

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Too Sick of Toxic People?

How to break free and flourish

By Amy Austin, PSYD, LMFT

Relationships are hard to navigate even in the best of times. We bring with us a myriad of life experiences that can enhance or detract from what once seemed like a blissful union. As time marches on, we can settle into a place of comfortability with an unconscious, invisible permission slip that says, "Because I love you and you love me, I can treat you any way I please." Tensions rise leaving individuals unhappy and unfulfilled. We start to tell ourselves little white lies to avoid accountability and conflict like, "It's not that bad, some have it worse," or "It's just verbal abuse. I'd leave if it got physical."

My response? That's like selling your soul to the devil and saying, "Well, at least I don't have to pay rent."

My mantra has always been, "You're either going to be it - or marry it - unless you explore it." Face it, human beings do what's familiar, even when behaviors are unhealthy and toxic. That wounded little child inside of you who's not feeling heard or feels emotionally unsafe can enter a challenging adult situation in an instant and turn it upside down. This creates havoc, utilizing emotionally debilitating behaviors that may be subtle, cunning and baffling. Below are some toxic behaviors that can create and perpetuate toxicity in relationships:

Passive aggression. Stephanie Sarkis, author of *Healing from Toxic Relationships* says, "This is when someone says, 'Hey, I'm upset with you' without actually verbalizing it." Examples might be giving someone the silent treatment or when you're sitting at the breakfast table and one of you says, "Go on babe, I'm listening" while continuing to read the newspaper. "Many people, particularly women, develop passive aggressive habits at a young age to cope with internalized anger or frustration," says Lisa Marie Bobby, PhD, founder of Growing Self Counseling & Coaching in Denver. We learn to stuff our feelings early when taught not to talk, share or feel.

Gaslighting. Gaslighting got honors for the 2022 Webster's Dictionary Word of the Year. It is a form of psychological manipulation where the gaslighter attempts to convince you that you are misremembering, misconstruing or misunderstanding situations. This then creates doubt in your mind about who you are, what you believe and the authenticity of your reality. "You're so sensitive, why can't you take a joke?" or, "You're crazy, I never said that!"

Narcissism. This is another term used quite frequently: "He's such a narcissist! Everything's always about him!" When behaviors cross the line and you serve as the emotional dumping ground for someone who has no sense of "other" and who is entitled and lacks empathy, you are in unhealthy and emotionally exhausting territory. It's the "me, me, me" show and you're only there to reflect back my essence to me.

The first step towards recovery from toxic people? When a challenging situation arises ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?" Once you identify your feelings (angry, fear, sad, lonely, pain, shame, guilt, confused, frustrated), then ask yourself, "What do I need to do to take care of myself right now in the present moment?" Check in with yourself frequently and gift yourself an empowering voice.

One last suggestion...Make sure you are not the culprit. Be interested, curious and set healthy boundaries for more optimal self-care. Communicate more effectively by listening, really hearing what another person is saying. Healthy relationships have reciprocity.

Emotional freedom is right at your fingertips. Remember, change takes time and can at first seem arduous, but I promise, the result is worth the time and effort.

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.

Finding Peace During the Holiday Hustle

Continued from page 3

eating, preventing overindulgence and promoting a healthier relationship with food.

Self-care. Amid the flurry of holiday obligations, it's crucial not to forget about self-care. Yoga and meditation provide you with tools to nurture your own well-being, ensuring that you have the energy and emotional resilience to fully enjoy the festivities.

Incorporating yoga and meditation into your holiday routine doesn't have to be time-consuming. Even just a few minutes of daily practice can make a significant difference in how you experience the season. Consider starting your day with a short meditation to set a positive tone, or take a break during a busy day with some gentle yoga stretches to rejuvenate your body and mind.

As you navigate the holiday season, remember that the most important gift you can give yourself is the gift of self-care and presence. By embracing the practices of yoga and meditation, you can approach this special time of year with a greater sense of calm, gratitude and inner peace, ensuring that your holidays are truly joyful and meaningful.

Jennifer Yockey is owner of Gather Yoga & Wellness. She is an E-RYT yoga/meditation teacher and wellness coach and can be reached at (760) 219.7953, jennifer@gatherlaquinta.com. For more information visit www.gatherlaquinta.com.

CONGRATULATIONS

Desert Health would like to congratulate "Gluten-Free with Tiffany" columnist

TIFFANY CAPOBIANCO

on her acceptance to Yale School of Medicine's Physician Assistant program.

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Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) is a nonprofit health care center with clinics in both Indio and Palm Springs. Relying solely on financial support from individuals, community organizations and foundations, VIM provides primary care and limited specialty care, as well as various health care services such as case management, health education, behavioral health assistance, social services and homeless medical outreach. Services are provided free of charge to qualified patients who meet eligibility requirements for residency in the Coachella Valley or greater Morongo Basin and have household incomes no greater than 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines.



A volunteer doctor and resident working together at Volunteers in Medicine

Nearly 30,000 adults in the Coachella Valley go without primary health care services because they don't have health insurance and can't afford to pay privately for care. With no insurance, these individuals forgo preventive care, such as vaccinations and health screenings, and routine medical care, when most chronic illnesses are detected. They don't receive the education, medication and support needed to manage a chronic illness, such as diabetes or hypertension, and they often don't know where to get the community resources needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

At VIM, care is provided by volunteer medical providers - physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners - and assisted by volunteer nurses, medical assistants and others, who give their time and expertise. The common feeling among all these volunteers is how much they enjoy caring for patients in an environment where the priority is on quality patient care, not a patient or revenue quota. The "joy of practicing medicine" is what our volunteer medical providers say they get from volunteering at VIM. The pressure or expectation of generating revenue is removed, and providers are encouraged to get to know their patients, understand their limitations and engage them in their care plan. Many of VIM's medical providers share how refreshing it is to provide the care, time and attention they envisioned providing when they first decided to go into medicine; they talk about returning to the joy of medicine.

If you are a health care practitioner in the Coachella Valley, please consider donating even a small amount of your time to Volunteers in Medicine. Get back to *caring*. Get back to the *joy of medicine*.

To learn more, visit www.cvvm.org or reach out to Kristina Banda at (760) 625.0763 or kristina.banda@cvvim.org.

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- Stroke

In the coming year, we pledge to keep doing our best to **be the best**, delivering compassionate, high-quality, leading edge care to the Coachella Valley. Thank you, one and all. You are, and always will be, our inspiration to reach new heights.



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Palmer's Brain Energy

A Review by Joseph E. Scherger MD, MPH

This is a groundbreaking book that unifies mental health problems with physical health problems. Harvard psychiatrist Christopher Palmer presents a new way of thinking about mental health conditions as metabolic diseases rather than behavioral or brain chemistry disorders. His arguments are compelling, backed by solid science and put mental health in line with the most common health problems today including diabetes and the diseases of insulin resistance.

Ever since Freud and others described the origins of mental illness, these disorders have been considered problems of emotions or thinking, and more recently brain chemistry. The brain is an electrochemical grid of great complexity and mental health disorders have been thought of as disorders of this unique organ.

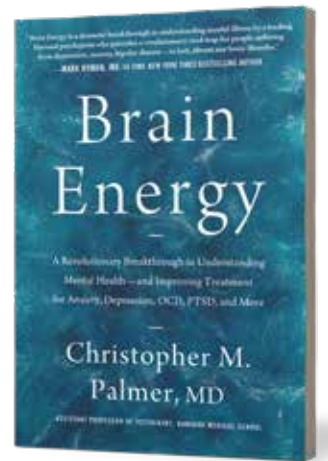
Such thinking contains some truth, of course, but Dr. Palmer explains how mental health problems are largely disorders of mitochondria, the energy packets in each of our cells. Mitochondrial function largely depends on what nourishment we feed the cell; excess sugar and processed carbohydrates lead to mitochondrial dysfunction.

After explaining the process of brain energy and the energy imbalance around mental disorders, Palmer offers a list of causes that consider genetics and epigenetics, chemical imbalances, neurotransmitters, medications, hormones, inflammation, sleep problems, food and the microbiome, mind-altering drugs and alcohol. He then discusses solutions including the benefits of fasting, physical

activity, love and other emotions, and offers a metabolic treatment plan for the brain consistent with the known healthy foods of nature. Psychiatric Daniel Amen has offered similar food lists in his books.

As a functional medicine-oriented physician, I am excited to learn of a new and internationally growing subspecialty of nutritional psychiatrists. I previously reviewed a book by Drew Ramsey, MD, *Eat to Beat Depression and Anxiety* (May/June 2021). Patients find it very helpful along with certain supplements such as SAME, saffron and ashwagandha.

Brain Energy is written for general consumers and easy to read. Physician leaders in nutrition and health who have shown their support include Mark Hyman, MD, David Perlmutter, MD, Jason Fung, MD and Robert Lustig, MD. These endorsements welcome and praise Palmer for bringing mental health into whole body wellness and the functional medicine spectrum.



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

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Ever Need Cataract Surgery Twice?

By Keith G. Tokuhara, MD

With over 3 million operations performed annually in the U.S., cataract surgery is extremely common. But does it ever need to be performed twice?

Once a cataract is removed, it does not grow back. That being said, there are rare instances when patients may need another surgery months or years after their initial cataract surgery to replace or repair a lens implant. In this article, we'll cover these scenarios.

The most common reason patients say their 'cataract grew back' is posterior capsule opacification. This is not a regrowth of a new cataract, but a clouding of the natural capsule behind the lens implant. Because it has similar symptoms as cataracts, such as glare, halos and decreased vision, a capsule opacification is colloquially referred to as a "secondary cataract." Fortunately, a posterior capsule opacification is easily corrected with a simple office treatment called YAG laser capsulotomy.

The next scenario is one of the common reasons patients call for a second opinion consultation, and that is when there is an unexpected visual outcome after routine cataract surgery. Either the initial lens may have been the wrong power or the visual side effects of a multifocal lens implant are intolerable to the patient. In both cases, a lens implant exchange is warranted.

In an era with surgical time outs and electronic medical records, it is extremely uncommon that a wrong lens power is implanted during cataract surgery. However, factors in pre-operative measurements and planning such as prior corneal refractive surgery like LASIK, can confound computer formulas cataract surgeons rely on to select an appropriate lens power. If a cataract lens implant needs to be exchanged, it is best to perform the operation in the early post-operative period of the initial surgery. Rule of thumb is that if a lens needs to be exchanged, make the decision quickly and return to the operating room within the first few weeks of the initial surgery. The earlier a lens is exchanged, the lower the risk of complications.

The final scenario of having to perform a cataract surgery twice is when the initial lens implant dislocates. This can happen after trauma or in specific disorders like pseudoexfoliation syndrome (50% of all cases), Marfans' syndrome, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, retinitis pigmentosa and prior vitreoretinal surgery. A lens dislocation can cause symptoms of oscillopsia (jiggling vision), rapid changes in focus, light sensitivity and glare. Some patients even report seeing the edge of the lens implant.

Fortunately, there have been major advances in surgical techniques that make lens replacement and repair surgery much easier now than ever before. Twenty years ago, it would take surgeons nearly five hours to perform lens repositioning surgery using the older techniques with large dissections and multiple stitches. Today, with modern techniques such as the Yamane, we can usually perform these complex surgeries in under an hour, often without the need for sutures. This means less surgery time and faster recovery for patients.

Dr. Tokuhara is a cataract surgeon with Desert Vision Center in Rancho Mirage and a member of Desert Doctors. He can be reached at (760) 340.4700. For more information visit www.desertvisioncenter.com or www.desertdoctors.org.

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Dr. Temple Grandin

Continued from page 1

the Squeeze Box. The device mimics the human hugs many autistic people cannot endure and is commercially distributed throughout the world.

In her new book, Grandin discusses the need for society to recognize, honor and nourish the vast spectrum of thought processes and patterns, not only to maximize individual potential, but also to bolster innovation and ensure a strong future for American manufacturing.

“Many aspects of our society are not set up to allow visual thinkers – which so many of us neurodivergent folks are – to thrive,” she said in a recent *New York Times* interview. “In fact, many aspects of our society seem set up specifically so we will fail. Schools force students into a one-size-fits-all curriculum. The workplace relies too much on résumés and GPAs to assess candidates’ worth. This must change not only because neurodivergent people, and all visual thinkers, deserve better, but also because without a major shift in how we think about how we learn, American innovation will be stifled.”

If we want our students to be well rounded, she says, we should make sure the education we provide is too. She is a big proponent for the return of hands-on classes in school such as art, music, sewing, woodworking, cooking, theater, auto mechanics and welding, as these classes expose kids – especially neurodivergent students – to skills that could become a career.

As an animal enthusiast, I have admired Grandin’s work for decades and was honored to interview her last month in anticipation of her appearance.

LD: Your mother was such an important influence on you...

“She was always pushing me to do things. I was really good at art, so she would push me to be less fixated on horse heads and get me to draw other things. She was always getting me out doing things.

Also, in my generation, manners were taught in a much more structured way; that is not happening today. Kids were taught to shake hands, to say please and thank you. Grandparents, who have good jobs, share [with me] that they discovered they were autistic when their kids got diagnosed. It is a relief for them, as it helped them [finally] understand their relationship with others.

What I see today are kids who are being held back by the diagnosis and not learning work - and life - skills that could get them good jobs.”

LD: You didn’t read until you were eight...

“And mother taught me with phonics. I already knew my ABC song and that has half the sounds. She just started reading to me out loud, very interesting books like *The Wizard of Oz*. She would stop at an exciting part and I would sound out a few words, and I learned very quickly. We did this 3-4 times a week and by the end of one semester, I went from no reading to sixth-grade level reading.”

Her mother is now 97 and still lectures on autism.

LD: The Grandin Papers revolutionized the livestock industry. What impact would you like to see with *Visual Thinking*?

“We don’t have enough young people going into skilled labor. I was in a meat packing plant yesterday observing a piece of new equipment that I designed over 30 years ago. There is now only one plant [in America] that can build them and the price was a bit too high.

There is a connection there. The people that I worked with to build things years ago, visual thinkers - and some of them were autistic, are not being replaced. There is a link between the kid in the basement playing video games and the exorbitant cost of that [manufacturing] equipment today.

It all comes back to the educational system. Today, Italy and Holland make a lot of that equipment, and those countries have a lot more respect for technology. In ninth grade, kids can select their path to university or tech.”

LD: I’ve heard you compare “bottom up” (practical) thinking to how AI works...

“Yes, you train AI with huge data sets. It makes concepts by putting things into categories, whereas with “top down” (conceptual) thinking, you might have a big concept, but how do you apply that concept?”

Let’s take the concept of having a more inclusive classroom which comes up all the time when speaking of autism. And I will say, here are the things we need to do in that classroom: we’ve got to get bullying under control; some individuals are bothered by LED lights flickering, so fix them; some of the things that people who think differently need are written instructions versus long stents of verbal instruction. So, these are three specific things that can be done to make the classroom more inclusive. This is an example of bottom up thinking.”

LD: Your brain never seems to stop. What do you do to relax?

“I like solving problems. I find it very engaging. When I just need to just chill, I sit down and read.”

LD: But from what I’ve ascertained, those books are all very intricate and analytical...

“Well, for instance, this morning I sat down and read *The Wall Street Journal* and they were talking about safety systems at airports. You better believe that got read.

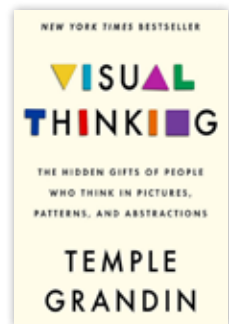
LD [following laughter]: What do you consider your greatest accomplishment?

“A simple system I designed for assessing animal welfare in pork and beef packing plants. In 1999, I taught McDonald’s, Wendy’s and Burger King how to use it. When you have a big buyer like McDonald’s, who buys from all the big companies, inspecting and setting standards, that brings about big change. And it did.”

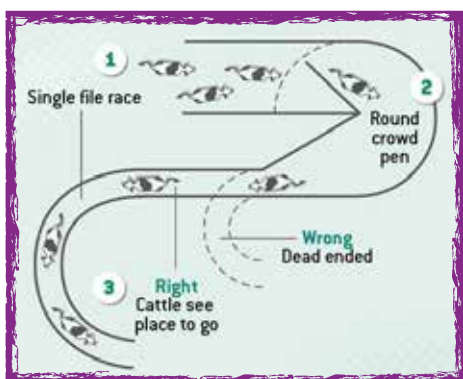
LD: You are very good at public speaking and seem fearless...

“When I did my first talk, I panicked and walked out. You get better with practice. And fearless? Well, sometimes it’s true and sometimes it isn’t.”

LD: Just like the rest of us.



Grandin’s inspiration for her Squeeze Box was the calm she saw cow’s experience while in cattle chutes.



Grandin’s design for moving cattle minimizes stress by mimicking their natural movement.

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Holiday Mindfulness

Balancing celebration and cellular health

By Candice Nicole

I love this time of year. As November draws near, I start thinking about my holiday menus, invite lists and the flurry of activity and travel that are sure to ensue. It's time for cooking, entertaining and all the merrymaking of the season.

But with that also comes the temptation of veering off course from our standard lifestyle routines. Workouts give way to busy schedules and groggy mornings, and heavy caloric, high carb crowd pleasers tend to appear everywhere we turn. Remaining mindful is key to staying healthy and strong through it all.

As we make uncharacteristic choices to please our palate in the name of holiday cheer, we cannot forget to also detoxify and nourish our cells to minimize the inflammation many of those celebratory choices can ignite. As we know, science now identifies chronic inflammation as the basis for many of today's common diseases like Alzheimer's, diabetes, cancer, arthritis and more. So, what can we do to try and balance the good with the bad this festive season?

Minimize stress. Stress and the holidays seem to be synonymous, so be mindful to maintain your stress reducing practices like meditation, yoga or simple conscious breathing. As mentioned in this issue's lead feature, take time each day to "just be."

Workout. Exercise is one of the best things you can do to detoxify your body down to the cellular level. Regardless of your busy schedule or how you feel, keep your exercise regime going to help maintain energy levels and to cleanse from unhealthy toxins.

Eat organic. As often as possible, make sensible choices including lots of greens, veggies and clean protein for meat eaters.

Fill your plate with high antioxidant foods. Many seasonal foods like fresh berries, carrots, potatoes and spinach are all high in antioxidants, as are artichokes, asparagus, avocados, sweet potatoes, squash, pumpkin, collard greens and kale.

Savor seasonal spices. Many holiday spices have high antioxidant values with clove at the top of the list, followed by peppermint, allspice, cinnamon, oregano, thyme, sage, rosemary and saffron to name a few.

Supplement with nutrients for cellular aid. Humates, humic and fulvic acid minerals, are nature's most powerful antioxidants. They are naturally occurring in the earth, where we come from, and our cells require these nutrients to thrive and survive.

Life is all about balance. Family, friends and celebratory times should be enjoyed to the fullest, but be mindful to provide your body and cells what they need to keep you healthy and joy-filled into the New Year and beyond!

Candice Nicole is a health advocate and founder of HUmIneral food derived mineral nutrients. She can be reached at info@HUmIneral.com or (818) 400.7657. For more information visit www.HUmIneral.com.



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The Intricate Connection Between Gut Health and Hormones

By Stacey Michele Blackwell, CHC

In the vast world of health and wellness, the gut is recognized as a substantial component in influencing our overall well-being, from our immune system to our mental health. One less talked about, but equally significant, connection is the relationship between gut health and hormones in both women and men. This bond offers a deeper understanding of how food and gut microbiome can significantly influence hormonal balance.

Before diving into the hormone-gut connection, let's first consider gut health. A healthy gut consists of diverse bacteria, viruses, fungi and other microorganisms that make up our microbiome. These microscopic entities play pivotal roles in digestion, nutrient absorption and the production of various essential compounds.

One of many reasons to maintain a healthy gut is due to its direct or indirect influence on the following hormones:

Serotonin. Often labeled as the 'feel good' hormone, about 90% of serotonin is produced in the gut. Serotonin is crucial for our mood regulation, sleep and appetite. A balanced gut microbiome promotes optimal serotonin production, influencing emotional well-being.

Cortisol. Chronic stress affects our gut, leading to a compromised gut lining and inflammation, further influencing the production and release of cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone. Elevated cortisol levels will disrupt our gut health, creating a vicious cycle.

Insulin. Gut bacteria play a role in modulating insulin sensitivity. Dysbiosis, which is just another name for an imbalance in your gut bacteria, can contribute to insulin resistance, a precursor to type 2 diabetes.

Estrogen. Our gut microbiomes regulate estrobolome, a collection of bacteria metabolizing estrogens. An imbalanced estrobolome can lead to either an excess or deficiency of estrogen, and both are associated with health concerns.

Ghrelin and Leptin. Ghrelin, the hunger hormone, and leptin, the satiety hormone, are both influenced by the gut. An unhealthy gut can disrupt their balance leading to overeating and obesity.

The gut-hormone feedback loop

The relationship between our gut and our hormones is not simply one sided. While our gut affects hormone levels, hormones can, in turn, influence the gut. For instance, elevated cortisol due to stress can impair our gut lining, making it more permeable and leading to what is commonly referred to as "leaky gut." Similarly, hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle can impact gut motility, explaining some individuals' digestive issues during specific phases.

Gut health disruptions can manifest in various hormonal imbalances and can display a range of symptoms:

- Mood swings, depression, or anxiety (linked to serotonin)
- Chronic fatigue or insomnia (potentially tied to cortisol and serotonin)
- Weight gain, especially around the abdomen (often related to insulin and cortisol)
- Hot flashes, heavy periods or polycystic ovary syndrome (linked to estrogen)

Recognizing these symptoms is crucial in guiding our health care interventions to restore our gut and hormonal balances.

Continued on page 21

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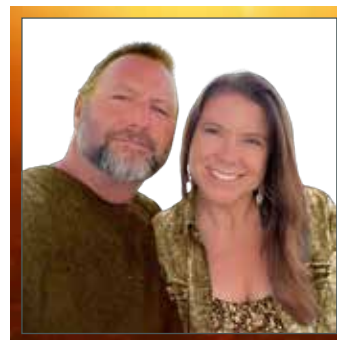
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The Power of the Pivot

The art of pivoting is an act of shifting performed in most sports and throughout our daily life. When we pivot effectively, it opens the opportunity to change direction and pursue a beneficial forward trajectory.

I grew up ice skating competitively. There is a fond memory of the elegant practice of a pivot creating the ability to lodge the toe of your blade into the ice while the other foot circles, expanding and widening the rotation. The pivot allows additional skill of balance to execute technical feats.

In another seasonal sport, basketball, we are drawn to the dynamic aspects of shooting, dribbling and passing. It is the nuanced skill of pivoting that allows the entire game to materialize before our eyes. These pivots are a necessary tool to avoid pressure and prevent turnovers.

In life, a pivot can be a strategic turning point on our path where everything shifts. It becomes an essential technique allowing us to head in a new direction deliberately. The more we perfect this wise practice, the more resilient we become.

If we take the time to look back at our past, we can see periods when we should have turned in a different direction. We may see a result or consequence from where we did not pivot or should have. These shifts allow our brains to bank crucial cognition that we can tap into every time the need to pivot emerges.

There was a recent experience when life presented an adversarial discomfort, and in a moment of a week, I was exposed to many twists and turns. A realization came over me to slow down and become consciously aware of each pivot related to my thoughts, words and actions. These were my three most powerful allies. Sometimes a crisis spurs a pivot, and other times, it requires time to change and go down a new path. When the going gets tough, pause, pivot and then progress carefully.

One can also practice positive pivoting towards health. We are all moving fast, yet time can be taken to acknowledge the moment, slow down and pivot towards radiant health. This pivoting fuels our body wisely and begins moving this gift of a body that has been afforded to us. The little pivots taken every day add up over time and impact our lives. Powerful pivoting ultimately includes our thoughts and emotions. This shifts love towards ourselves and others.

What a wonderful world it would be in this very moment if we all pivoted towards each other with open awareness, acceptance and joy.

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



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Nature's Medicine All Around Us

*A look at **Fouquieria splendens***

By *Shari Jainuddin, NMD, BDB*

In the July/August edition of *Desert Health*, I wrote about one of the impressive plants native to the Southwestern United States, *Larrea tridentata* (aka creosote bush). In this edition, I'm going to discuss yet another plant that is not only native to the South-Southwest, but also exclusive to it.

Fouquieria splendens (aka ocotillo) is a unique plant integrated into landscaping designs of the valley and can be easily seen in the wild while driving Route 74. Although it's technically a shrub, it isn't how you'd standardly picture shrub with each of its stems shooting up from one singular base. It does not branch, has no trunk and can reach heights recorded up to 30 feet. Each stem is covered with sharp spines, which are technically modified leaves (fun fact). After rain, the stems are covered from top to bottom with small green leaves just long enough to camouflage its sharp spines which are only a few centimeters long. The straight, tall stems with spines have been used traditionally as living fences or walls. The stems have also been used for fiber and building material. It prefers rocky, arid, well-drained soil and their typical lifespan is around 60 years.



The desert-centric ocotillo has many medicinal benefits.

March to June is when ocotillo blooms vibrant scarlet red flowers on the tip of each branch. It may also bloom after rain. Because of this presentation, it is also called desert candlewood, flaming sword, wolf's candle and candle flower. Ocotillo actually means "little torch" in Spanish.

This unique plant provides shelter for spiders and insects and nectar for hummingbirds and bees. While it is not a major food source for desert animals, it is found in areas grazed by mule, white-tail deer and desert bighorn sheep.

Medicinally, ocotillo has significant value. Historically, it has been used to treat wounds and swelling from injuries and the tea of its flower for cough medicine. Modern day herbalists use it as a lymphagogue, a compound that works to support the lymphatic system. What is unique about ocotillo is that it has a specificity to lymph in the pelvic region. It can aid in clearing pelvic lymph congestion and stagnation and has been used in conditions of the pelvis, such as urinary tract infections, cystitis, pelvic inflammatory disease and benign prostate. However, scientific research is limited at this time.

Ocotillo is a slow-growing shrub found only sparsely throughout the Southwest. As inhabitants of this area, it is our responsibility to make sure it is protected, whether in our landscaping or in the wild. As with most substances, improper use of plants can cause ill effects. It is my hope that the next time you see ocotillo shooting up from the earth, you will see it in new light and wonderment, appreciating it for all it provides and all we have yet to learn.

Dr. Shari Jainuddin is a naturopathic primary care doctor at One Life Naturopathic and also offers biofeedback training and craniosacral therapy. This article is intended to be informative and raise appreciation of the medicine that surrounds us and is not provided as medical advice. For more information, call (442) 256.5963 or visit www.onelifenaturopathic.org.

Sources available upon request.




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Holiday Dreams: Who's In Your Party?

By Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos

If our dreams are a microcosm of our waking world, is it any wonder we dream of living and deceased loved ones during the holidays? Dreams of people, parties and gatherings - whether soothing or stressful - can have many meanings and messages filled with hope and love.

An email in my inbox read: Why am I having recurrent vivid dreams of my car filled with noisy deceased family members stalling on the way to a holiday party? I wake up in tears.

This time of year, stress levels tend to go through the roof as we shop, cook, wrap, decorate and party-plan ourselves into a tizzy. Despite the fun holiday hyper-life, our nightly dreams often reenact daily stress.

Here are six helpful tips for avoiding stress-inducing holiday dreams and nightmares:

Travel sleep patterns. Stress increases rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, the precursor to dreams, which can lead to weird, vivid dreams. Time zones and environmental factors that accompany travel can further affect sleep and dreams. Meditate before sleep to reduce stress and re-center your being.

The winter blues. Working before sun rise and leaving after dark can throw off our biological clock's circadian rhythms - the body's responses to natural light. Therapeutic light boxes or dawn simulators mimic the sun's gradual rise to keep winter biorhythms in sync.

Shop 'til you drop. When shopping stresses you out, take a break. Light a candle or create a therapeutic holiday aroma to evoke pleasant memories. I heat five drops of pine oil and two drops of cinnamon oil in four ounces of water for dreamy holiday cheer.

Retail madness. Colors, lights, shiny objects and background music distract our shopping decisions and can further stimulate our stress hormones. Lift the fog of confusion with a shopping list or product printout with prices. Enjoy the madness without the stress.

Loss in the family. Plan ahead. Create a list of things or people to help you cope with sadness during parties or dinners so you do not feel lost when a sensitive topic arises.

Family feuds. Set boundaries. Gatherings become stressful when our hopes of pleasing everyone fail. Be honest about limitations such as not wanting to host all of the extended family. Another stress-reducer is to take a break. Step outside and take some deep breaths when dreamy gatherings become a nightmare.

So, is it any wonder our seasonal lifestyle is reflected in dreams that can shift into confusing nightmares? When our dream car, filled with deceased and live family members on their way to a party, stalls, what is our dreaming-self telling us about our waking world? Look for the dream's play on words. The questions "Who is in your car?" and "What is in your party?" may be a duality or double entendre. In dreams, a car is our mobile body traveling through life. The dream message of a stalled car may be, "I'm bogged down with emotions." Use the list above to kick stress out of your car.

And remember, we are never alone. During our darkest hour of the holiday season, we have a car full of love because, while people may pass, love never dies.

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

Journey to Naturopathic Residency

From cancer patient to naturopathic doctor

By Sonja Fung, ND and Annissa Ceja, ND

As we celebrate our 15th anniversary, Live Well Clinic is proud to support the growth of the naturopathic profession by providing medical residencies. This year, we welcome our second active resident, Dr. Annissa Ceja, a graduate of the National College of Natural Medicine (NUNM) in Portland, Oregon. We would like to share Dr. Ceja's unique path to naturopathic medicine through her own story:

As a recent graduate of naturopathic medicine and a new resident at Live Well Clinic, I feel fortunate to be able to embark on a journey that weaves together the threads of my own life experiences, a passion for healing and a commitment to naturopathic oncology.

My voyage into natural medicine began with my encounter with cancer. As a 20-year-old nursing student, I received a diagnosis that abruptly illuminated my mortality and unveiled the intricate tapestry of holistic health. Growing up with the conventional medical system, it took enduring chemotherapy to truly appreciate the healing power of nature. This newfound appreciation was the most significant gift cancer provided me. Beyond the confines of conventional medicine, I discovered the significance of emotional, mental and spiritual facets of well-being in the healing process.

A central aspect of my path to naturopathic medicine is my cultural connection to natural medicine. As a Spanish-speaking Mexican American (Chicana), I was fortunate to have a Mexican mother who carried the ancient practices of natural healing with her. Her unwavering belief in natural medicine made her my biggest advocate, even when the oncologist advised us otherwise. Her innate wisdom and my healthy skepticism and research became anchors in navigating the complexities of cancer care.

Amidst my pursuit of healing, I saw a disconnect: the array of therapies beyond the standard of care often remained out of reach for many, including myself. Even when I witnessed the benefits firsthand and found evidence supporting the use, my oncologist discouraged using natural therapies despite his limited awareness of their potential. With my then limited knowledge, I had to make difficult decisions about what would be effective and safe during my treatment. This revelation ignited a fire within me—a desire to become a naturopathic physician and advocate for integrative oncology, making it more accessible and inclusive.

Now, as a naturopathic doctor, I've chosen to specialize in naturopathic oncology—a realm where I can provide the support I yearned for during my cancer journey.

My dedication to this path transcends the walls of the clinic. I aim to embody the principles of wellness in my life; with constant effort, I strive to eat nourishing food, engage in invigorating movement, and find serenity amidst life's storms by

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Natural therapies spawning from her family's heritage inspired Dr. Ceja to pursue naturopathic medicine.

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Creativity Lives in the Now

By Reverend David Flint

It is true that change is the eternal constant. The average human body is replacing over 3.8 million cells a second, approximately 140 million babies are born every day and 275 million stars are born every year. And each moment of our lives is completely and uniquely different than any other moment that ever was or will be; always in constant movement as each moment creates the next in a seemingly infinite process called "the now."

We truly only live in this creative moment, and that's the only time we have ever lived. But most of us spend the majority of our time in our heads. Our focus is only marginally in the now because we are always trying to manage the moment, focusing on the desires in the future.

Most of us, to some degree, are lost in the trance of attachment to thought and like to consider our opinions to be true, because after all, that's what we think. And what we think about, what's happening in the moment, is what shapes our reality, not what's actually happening in the moment.

However, most people will claim it's the conditions in the moment that are responsible for our experience. We rarely realize we create the experience, our story, by our thoughts about it; the process is so ingrained that we are generally unaware that we were thinking at all. Our thinking is quite automatic, entirely created from all our past conditioning, our experiences, beliefs, opinions, social, cultural and religious backgrounds, etc. And we rely on this conditioned mind, which is entirely made up of the past, to inform and guide us into the future. So, we often end up in a future that looks, not surprisingly, a lot like a continuation of the past, our well ingrained story, until eventually an experience comes along that disrupts that pattern.

All too often, for many of us, unfortunately, it takes a disruption in our life, often painful, that fundamentally challenges our story and breaks our pattern. The experience of these disruptions can move us beyond the familiar conditioned thinking and into the present moment because that's where the pain resides, taking us to a place beyond the limited patterns of the past and into a new potential for change, into a "liminal space."

The word "liminal" comes from the Latin word "limen," meaning threshold. The state of being that is liminal space is outside of the old pattern of "business as usual." It is often defined as "relating to a transition," between two states of consciousness, like sleeping and waking. It refers to a state of consciousness that is "on the precipice of something new," having left the old behind, yet the new has not materialized, so we must live with the uncertainty of what it might be.

To exist in the space of liminality is to be open and available in the present moment to the creative inspiration it holds within, while also being receptive and allowing for the uncertainty of the moment to bring unknown possibility into reality - potentially leading to authentic transformation. If our attention starts looking for certainty, we stand to miss the transcendent potential of the moment, because we are then back into our story, trying to control the moment.

I have been fortunate to know, more than once, the immeasurable transcendent possibility of the liminal now in my life. The first time I really got it came as a surprise. I had the stark realization that my thoughts of a failed relationship were creating most of my suffering. There seemed to be no way out of my constant mental story of loss, continually reliving the feelings that I would never be loved nor ever love like that again, so I went in. I focused inward, allowing the pain completely in without resistance, and there I felt intensely present within myself in a quiet stillness and energized state, absent of all the mental-emotional influence. I felt like I had somehow moved beyond the agonizing pain I was just suffering moments

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Our Local Mushroom Farm

Gourmet goodness grows at Canyon Creek

By Lauren Del Sarto

Gourmet mushrooms are certainly enjoying their glory days. These superfood superstars are showing up everywhere, from our coffee to the main course, as consumers and chefs realize their nutritional value, adaptability, texture and taste.

Growers across the country are jumping on the shroom boom bringing the Pennsylvania natives to boutique farms in city and suburbs nationwide.

Jim and Stacy Shaffer started growing their bounty for personal consumption in a spare bedroom of their Yucca Valley home. Friends and family started making requests, and the operation grew to their backyard barn. When restaurants began calling, the couple knew they had something special, so they moved to the valley and Canyon Creek Gourmet Mushrooms was born.

They now serve around 1,000 pounds of product weekly to 40-50 restaurants valley wide including Workshop Kitchen + Bar, Wildest Restaurant and Mr. Lyons. Their store front offers freshly grown product, homemade jerky, powders, and more, and their team of nine is always happy to offer tours.

When I walked through the doors of their Palm Desert facility, the first thing I noticed was the smell - or, should I say, the lack thereof. Having lived near Morgan Hill (CA), formerly known as the "mushroom capital of the world," I associate harvesting mushrooms with manure and can immediately recognize the pungent whiff. I would soon learn that today's gourmet mushrooms - lion's mane, king trumpet, oyster, pioppino and chestnut - naturally grow on trees with no fertilizer involved. "Farming" simply includes wood pellets, soy husks, temperature control, humidity and time.

Canyon Creek recreates the "tree" via blocks of clean hard wood pellets with soy husk pellets providing a nitrogen boost. On my tour, Shaffer explained that the blend of the two creates what they call the substrate for the mycelium to grow and produce their

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Wood pellet blocks simulate trees.



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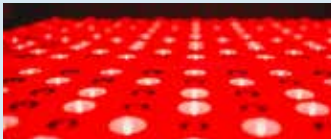
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Prescribing Vegetables

How to get started in your practice

By Suzanne Duvald'Adrian

Many health practitioners find themselves excited by something relatively simple these days - vegetables. For decades, we've been told that a prescription is the easiest and fastest way to control a medical condition. But, every day it seems another study is released that supports using food and lifestyle as a treatment for many of the most common chronic diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and even some cancers. This has led to a dramatic rise in the number of practitioners who prefer a more natural approach to helping patients achieve their best health.



The move towards lifestyle medicine is growing

So how can health practitioners effectively talk with patients and show them that there's a different way? More importantly, how can they inspire individuals to change their daily activity and the foods they're putting on their plate?

In short, it's all about engaging patients in the learning process and putting smart tools in place to deliver and reinforce the education. As practitioners identify (or develop) their preferred tools, following a few key guidelines will facilitate success:

Create a system of support. Keep in mind that while you may be excited, this is likely a big change for your patients. They need to feel like their practitioner is their partner, always standing with them. Consider a newsletter where helpful tips and encouragement are regularly delivered to their inbox; Forks Over Knives is a great model example. Group programs can also be extremely beneficial, allowing a patient to interact with other patients, or even their provider outside the traditional office setting; Walk with a Doc has proven to be a tremendous resource. Social media groups are slightly more complex to develop and maintain, however many patients find them especially helpful, as long as they remain HIPAA-compliant and private. No matter what support tools are put in place, the main objective is to let patients know that their practitioner is there for them and available to assist with expert guidance when needed.

Offer a path forward based on their unique needs. While some individuals hear the message and are ready to start right away, others may need a slightly gentler approach. For those who are all-in, jumpstart programs like the 15-day program offered by Rochester Lifestyle Medicine Institute or the Plantstrong Retreat provide a fantastic option. Otherwise, direct patients towards programs like Meatless Mondays or simply encourage them to pick a new recipe and try it each week. For these individuals, there's no shame in slowly replacing meat and dairy options with plant-nutritious alternatives.

Help them learn at their own pace. Many lifestyle medicine and nutrition-focused websites have resource pages with endless lists of websites, documentaries, research studies and the like. Dr. Michael Klaper's site is great and so is the list from Healthy City. Consider consolidating some of these resource options to create a collection that's personalized to what your patients will tap into. Then, share it with them either by having copies around your office or emailing it to them via PDF; WFPB+ME has a great two-sided model format.

Provide a complete educational resource. It's not enough to just tell patients that you recommend these types of changes. Show them why it's so important, what benefits they'll experience and then make it easy to get started. The Plantrician Project offers an amazing QuickStart Guide that's easily sharable (with a pediatric version, too!). Organizations like the American College of Lifestyle Medicine have also amassed a large collection of educational resources - all free for practitioners to use with their patients.

Keep the conversation going. Throughout the patient's journey, their needs will change. Listening (and responding) to their feedback is critical in their success - and the ability to help them put more vegetables on their plate with every meal!

Suzanne Duvald'Adrian is a partner and director of marketing with Enrich Creative, a marketing strategy and branding firm that helps organizations engage, educate and empower their audiences. Enrich serves clients with a focus on plant-based, lifestyle medicine, healthy food and community. She can be reached at suzanne@enrichcreative.com or (314) 553.9500.

PRESCRIBING VEGETABLES

Resources to help you get started

Walk with a Doc Program
www.walkwithadoc.org

Rochester Lifestyle Medicine Institute
www.rochesterlifestylemedicine.org

Plantstrong
www.plantstrong.com

Meatless Mondays
www.mondaycampaigns.org/meatless-monday

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www.doctorklaper.com

Healthy City
www.ourhealthycity.com

WFPB+ME
www.wfpbandme.com

Plantrician Project
www.plantricianproject.org

ACLM patient
www.lifestylemedicine.org

Dr. Temple Grandin

Continued from page 10

Grandin's inspiring life can be seen in the made-for-television movie of the same name. Starring Claire Danes, the 2010 film was nominated for 14 Emmys and took home five, including best actress for Danes. Grandin was very involved in making the film and said she loved the way it accurately portrayed the way she thinks. Executive producer Emily Gerson Saines has a son who is autistic and wanted the movie to be right. "They did a beautiful job." Grandin attended the Emmys which happened to be on her birthday.

LD: Do you enjoy watching movies?

"Yes, very much. I recently saw Oppenheimer and while I was there I thought, well, I've got to watch Barbie, too."

LD: Just like the rest of us.

All educators, those touched by autism and anyone intrigued by her work in animal behavior are encouraged to attend Dr. Grandin's one-hour presentation. It will be followed by a short Q&A session and books will be offered for sale. Tickets range from \$35 - \$125.

For tickets and more information, visit www.palmspringsspeaks.org.





Expanding Consciousness to Counter Fears

By Peter Canova

Fear is the greatest impediment to our health and well-being, not illness, pollution, GMO food tampering or war. Fear casts a shadow over our lives from the day we are born to the day we pass on. It's the root cause of all the things mentioned above, affecting our mental, emotional and physical health. Hopefully, this article can help inspire, enhance or orient you onto a path to counter your fears.



Higher consciousness and deeper knowledge are antidotes to fear.

Life indeed appears uncertain, and uncertainty causes fear. Yet, a way exists to manage or even master this condition. It helps us intuit when we have a silent illness, sense when people or situations may be harmful and guides us to making better decisions. What I'm describing is attuning to a higher consciousness to understand how the world operates and the role we as human beings play in the grand scheme of things. The good news is that this force of consciousness is not separate from us, it's within us.

The path to this awareness is different for each individual. For me, it came with a series of very vivid and unexpected psychic or spiritual experiences. Here's a tip to help guide your spiritual or consciousness journey— look to connect the dots. You can create a roadmap of consciousness for yourself. Any roadmap needs more than one coordinate like north and south or latitude and longitude to get on the right track. For example, I studied the ancient Judeo-Christian mystical texts of sages called the Gnostics. That led me to quantum physics, not so odd because both essentially deal with the nature of the light, matter and energy that make up our physical world.

What became apparent was that the spiritual myths employed by the ancient sages described every major theory of modern quantum physics, from parallel universes and the Big Bang to the nature of particles and the conversion of energy to matter as in Einstein's famous E=mc² formula.

Many scientists are now leaning toward the ancient spiritual truth that a single consciousness is the basis of all reality, and our personal consciousness is part of the entire creation process. Spiritual mysticism and science are the coordinates that got me started. Soon, other "dots" fell into place like understanding the role of archetypes and synchronicities in our lives from the field of psychology. When you start accumulating these connections, they cloak you with a sense of understanding that is healing at many levels.

Higher consciousness is an antidote to fear. Some people employ faith, but knowledge is of a higher order because it can help your rational mind to release your intuitive nature. However you are guided, life is like a jigsaw puzzle. It's our task to put the pieces together. Look for how the jagged edges of the puzzle pieces interconnect to form a pattern of information. We live in a multiverse so take a multi-dimensional approach to improve your quality of life.

Peter Canova of Rancho Mirage is a multi-award-winning author and international businessman. His latest book, *Quantum Spirituality*, is a highly acclaimed work connecting centuries of spiritual wisdom with modern science. For more information, visit www.petercanova.com.

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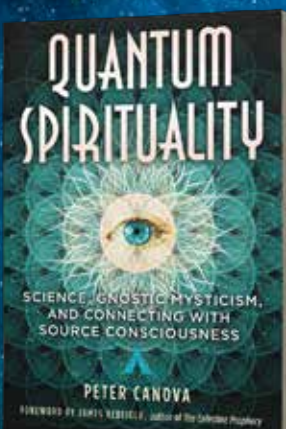
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From Plate to Face

The intersection of diet, skincare and beauty

By Brook Dougherty

At the Farmers' Market, we shop for the ingredients our bodies need. At Sephora or Ulta, we shop for those ingredients we think our skin needs. With a little knowledge, our shopping missions can complement one another, and we can achieve total glow from the inside to the outside rather than finding the odd vegetable or product decomposing in the medicine cabinet or the vegetable bin because we can't remember why we bought them in the first place.

What to look for in the market and on your skincare labels

Almonds (vitamin E). Almonds are a rich source of vitamin E, which protects the skin from UV damage and supports skin repair. Chomping a few almonds daily can help maintain youthful skin, while almond oil is beneficial in serums and creams to hydrate and soften.

Avocado (healthy fats). Avocado is rich in healthy monounsaturated fats, which help maintain the skin's natural lipid barrier. Mashed avocado can serve as a nourishing face mask, providing essential fatty acids to the skin. If you see avocado oil on a skincare label, that's a good thing.

Blueberries (antioxidants). Blueberries are a powerhouse of antioxidants that help protect the skin from free radical damage caused by UV radiation and environmental pollutants. Blueberry oil on a beauty product label is right up there with raspberry oil and lets you know the product will help maintain skin's elasticity and prevent premature aging. You can create a homemade face mask by mashing a handful of blueberries and applying them to your skin. Leave it on for a short time and rinse with lukewarm water.



Blueberries are one of many foods good for skin from the inside out and when applied topically.

Citrus Fruits (vitamin C). Oranges, lemons and grapefruits are packed with vitamin C, which is known for its antioxidant properties. When consumed, vitamin C helps protect the skin from free radical damage. In skincare, topical vitamin C serums can brighten the complexion, reduce the appearance of dark spots and boost collagen production. Easy DIY Face Masque: mix fresh citrus juice with yogurt or honey for a refreshing treatment. Apply the mask to your face, leave on for 15-20 minutes, and rinse with lukewarm water. Kind of goopy, but kind of great.

Coconut Oil (moisturizing). Coconut oil is a natural moisturizer, both when consumed and applied topically. It helps lock in moisture, making it an effective moisturizer for dry and mature skin and a soothing treatment for conditions like eczema. Pina colodas may finally have found a place in your skincare routine. Yay.

Green Tea (polyphenols). Green tea is a rich source of polyphenols that combat skin aging. Drinking green tea provides antioxidant protection, and later, when the tea is gone, try applying the cooled tea bags as eye compresses to reduce puffiness and dark circles.



Oats (anti-inflammatory). Oats contain compounds that soothe irritated skin. In skincare, oat-based products like oatmeal masks or bath soaks can help relieve conditions like eczema and dry, itchy skin. When included in the diet, oats' anti-inflammatory properties contribute to a calmer complexion. Be happy if you see oat oil on a label. For a face mask, mix ground oats with water to form a paste. Apply, leave for 15 minutes and rinse with lukewarm water for a soothing experience.

Papaya (enzymes). Papaya contains enzymes like papain, which exfoliate dead skin cells when used as a face mask. If you look, you will find papaya on labels that claim cell turnover. Eating papaya supplies vitamins A, C and E, promoting collagen production and skin repair.



Papaya provides vitamin support when consumed and enzymatic benefits when applied to the face.

Peptides. Peptides are short chains of amino acids, the building blocks of proteins. They play a crucial role in skincare due to their ability to support collagen production, which is essential for maintaining skin's firmness and elasticity. In skincare, peptides can help reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. We find them in our diet through protein like lean meats, fish, eggs, and dairy products. Note, it is never a good idea to make a masque of lean meats or fish.

Turmeric (anti-inflammatory). Turmeric has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. When used in skincare, it can reduce redness and inflammation. You may notice it on a label for a mist or a masque. As a spice in cooking, it supports overall skin health by reducing inflammation internally.

Resveratrol (found in red grapes and berries). When consumed, resveratrol can help combat oxidative stress in the body, which can lead to premature aging. In skincare, you will see resveratrol in serums and creams often cohabitating with retinol or other heavy hitters. It's a classic beauty builder and yes, it is found in red wine.

Shop with purpose

In the pursuit of timeless beauty and a healthy body, it's helpful to enter both the market and the beauty aisle armed with a list. It's so easy to fall prey to marketing promises, but when you shop intentionally, you have a better chance of coming out with what you went in for rather than what some marketing guru thinks they can sell you this month. Complement your dietary choices with topical skincare products containing ingredients you recognize, and you'll be on your way to authentic glow even with all the challenges our desert weather presents.

Brook Dougherty of Indio is the 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.



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Pamela Gossman
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Journey to Naturopathic Residency

Continued from page 13

connecting to the present moment. I have personally confronted the challenges of leading a healthy life and often need to remotivate myself. Thankfully, in my personal and professional practice, I am constantly reminded of the importance of the foundations of health, particularly for those who want to thrive after cancer.

I am not just a practitioner; I am living testament to the profound transformation holistic healing can bring. My goal is to empower individuals to find their motivation for health, offering them the wisdom and guidance that I receive from my esteemed residency director, Dr. Fung, who has dedicated over 15 years to supporting healing in those with cancer.

Naturopathic doctors (NDs) are trained at four-year, post-graduate, accredited medical institutions. In addition to a standard medical curriculum, NDs are required to complete four years of training in holistic and nontoxic approaches to treatment with a strong emphasis on disease prevention, such as nutrition and lifestyle modifications, and in-depth lab testing and diagnosis. After licensure, NDs can choose to apply for the small number of residency positions available, typically, a 1-3-year family medicine training at an approved out-patient clinic or hospital residency sites. However, due to the lack of funding, there is a lack of available residency positions for all students.

Through a partnership with Institute for Natural Medicine (INM) Residency Consortium under The Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges (AANMC), Live Well Clinic was approved as a residency site and started accepting resident doctors in 2018. Because naturopathic residencies are not funded by Medicare/Medicaid dollars like conventional medical residencies, this limits the availability of these positions, as many small clinics are not able to afford the cost associated with training and paying a resident.

We are so blessed to nurture the next generation of naturopathic doctors through residency opportunities made possible through the support of our strong, health-minded community. Live Well Clinic is honored to be the first ND residency site in the Coachella Valley, giving new medical students the opportunity to further their training as integrative primary care doctors to serve our community.

Dr. Fung is a primary care naturopathic doctor with a focus on integrative cancer care and PRP regenerative joint injections at Live Well Clinic in La Quinta. Now accepting new patients. For more information, call (760) 771.5970 or visit www.livewellclinic.org.

Sources: 1) <https://aanmc.org/naturopathic-residencies/>; 2) <https://www.naturemedpro.org/project-2>; 3) www.naturopathic.org; 4) www.calnd.org; 5) <https://cnme.org>; 6) https://www.huffpost.com/entry/who-pays-for-resident-sal_b_12967008



2024 Beauty Trends Embrace Individuality

By Michele McDonough

In the ever-changing landscape of beauty, staying on top of the latest trends is essential and hopefully achievable. As 2023 unfolds and we enter 2024, new beauty trends are emerging, redefining conventional standards and encouraging individuality. From innovative skincare routines to bold makeup choices, this year is all about celebrating diversity and embracing one's unique features and individuality. Here are a few beauty trends that are taking the world by storm...

Skinimalism: less is more

The "less is more" mantra has taken over the beauty industry. Skinimalism focuses on embracing your natural beauty and simplifying your skincare routines. Instead of piling on multiple products, people are focusing on effective, minimalist skincare. This trend emphasizes healthy, radiant skin over heavy makeup, encouraging a more authentic and confident look.

Sustainable beauty: be kind to your skin and the planet

Sustainability is not just a buzzword; it's a way of life, and this year eco-conscious beauty products are gaining momentum. Consumers are opting for brands that prioritize sustainable packaging, ethically sourced ingredients and eco-friendly practices. From recyclable packaging to zero-waste products, the beauty industry is making significant strides towards a greener future.

Gender-inclusive beauty: breaking stereotypes

The beauty industry is becoming more inclusive, blurring the lines of traditional gender norms. Makeup and skincare are no longer limited to specific genders, now we are embracing everyone. Brands are releasing products tailored to all skin types and tones, celebrating diversity and individuality. This trend marks a significant step toward a more accepting and open-minded society.



The beauty industry is becoming more inclusive and blurring the lines of traditional gender norms.

Tech-driven skincare: the rise of smart beauty

Advancements in technology have paved the way for innovative skincare solutions. Smart beauty devices, apps and personalized skincare routines are becoming increasingly popular. With the help of artificial intelligence and augmented reality, individuals can analyze their skin conditions and receive customized recommendations. This blend of technology and beauty is revolutionizing self-care routines.

Expressive makeup: bold colors and artistic freedom

In 2023, makeup is all about self-expression. Vibrant eyeshadows, graphic liners and bold lip colors dominate the scene. People are experimenting with artistic and unconventional makeup looks, embracing their creativity without limitations. This trend encourages individuals to view their face as a canvas, allowing them to express

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their personality and emotion through makeup.

Wellness-infused beauty: holistic approach to self-care

Beauty is not just skin deep; it starts from within. The focus is shifting towards holistic wellness, with an emphasis on the connection between physical and mental well-being. Beauty products infused with adaptogens, CBD and other natural ingredients are gaining huge popularity. The products not only enhance your appearance, but also promote relaxation, stress relief and overall balance and serenity.



The move toward holistic wellness includes product infusions that relax body and mind.

In conclusion, as we move forward into 2024, the beauty industry continues to evolve, embracing diversity, sustainability and individuality. From minimalist skincare routines to bold makeup choices, these trends are reshaping the way we perceive beauty. By staying informed and adopting these trends, individuals can celebrate their uniqueness and express themselves authentically in the world of beauty. Remember, beauty is not about conformity, but about confidence, creativity and self-love!

Michele McDonough is a strategic consultant and executive recruiter in the field of health and beauty. She is also co-founder of Women's Power Circle and can be reached at mmcdon4946@aol.com.

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Seniors: Go Low and Slow When Trying Cannabis

By Lewis Lustman

During our five years of helping seniors better understand the benefits of medical and recreational cannabis, Senior-High has maintained one consistent stipulation: when first using cannabis with THC, go “low and slow.”



Today's medicinal marijuana is much different than what some seniors used to know.

We strongly suggest that first-time users who may have tried cannabis years ago approach today's gummies, vapes, pre-rolls and tinctures cautiously. Only buy from legal cannabis dispensaries. Read the label and understand how the ratios of CBD to THC and different strains may affect you. Take a small amount to see how your body will react before taking a full dose.

After allowing sufficient time for the products to be effective, then take an additional amount following the same premise...low and slow. Doing so will lead to greater success and comfort. It will also keep you from having to visit the emergency room, a situation that is continuously climbing among seniors who didn't realize two critical issues:

#1 Today's cannabis is a lot stronger

Cannabis is more potent than when we were young. Pot's new legal status in many states along with the growing popularity of recreational products has led to the development of new variants with higher THC concentrations up to 99%.¹ Additionally, the “entourage effect” (the theory that the full spectrum of the cannabis plant works best together) can produce an even stronger psychoactive experience that lasts longer.

#2 Our bodies are less resilient

As we age, our immune system doesn't work as well. Our bodies simply are not as capable of easily handling drugs - including alcohol and cannabis. A little can go a long way.

What do we recommend for seniors?

Vaping. New users may want to try vape products that contain less than 40% THC with CBD at 60%. Take one puff and see how you feel after 20 minutes. One hit may be all you need. If not, try another puff and wait another 20 minutes. Low and slow. Experienced users may enjoy a ratio of 1:1 (CBD to THC)

Gummies. These are a favorite among seniors who have problems falling asleep and/or staying asleep. Many trying gummies for the first time may make two serious mistakes: taking too strong a dosage and not waiting long enough for the gummy to kick in.

We recommend a maximum of 5mg of THC in a gummy, brownie, cookie or other edible for experienced users, and half (2.5 mg) for new users. However, many brands have 10mg to 30mg or more of THC. Read the label, then cut up the gummies accordingly to find the lowest dose that works for you.

The reason many seniors “green out” is that they consume a gummy and expect it to work quickly. So, they take another. The first one hits, then the second one comes on. That's a lot of THC and panic attacks may arise.

Remember, edibles pass through your stomach and kidneys before they reach your bloodstream. It can take as long as 90 minutes before you feel anything, the effect won't peak until 2-3 hours later, and it lasts longer than inhalation.

Tinctures. We're big fans! They are absorbed quickly (place a few drops under your tongue and swallow after a minute). Still, be cautious: use tinctures that contain less than 40% THC. Start low and slow with 1-2 drops at a time until you reach your preferred dose. Those who have used tinctures for a while may be comfortable with a ratio of 1:1.

We prefer products that contain three cannabinoids: THC, CBD and either CBG or CBN. Our experience is that such products are dosed properly and use the entourage effective to relieve aches, pains and sleeplessness.

Remember...low and slow!

Lustman is chief marketing officer with Senior-High which offers education and resources on medicinal marijuana via private consultations and complimentary seminars to communities. He can be reached at (760) 459.4593 or visit www.senior-high.com.

1) <https://www.thefreedomcenter.com/is-marijuana-stronger-now-than-ever-before/#:~:text=The%20answer%20is%20yes...approximately%20tripled%20in%20that%20period.>

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Holiday Tips for Loved Ones with Dementia

Compliments of Alzheimers Coachella Valley

While, for most, the holidays are a joyful season spent together with loved ones, this time of year can create confusion and fear for people with dementia. Being adaptable and building an inclusive environment are key to creating dementia-friendly holidays and celebrations. Families caring for someone with dementia should consider the following steps to help make gatherings safe and dementia-friendly during this festive time.

Adapt past favorite traditions or create new ones. Build on old traditions where you can, such as enjoying favorite music or movies. Start new ones around things your loved one likes to do such as touring neighborhood holiday lights. Whenever possible, involve the person by asking what traditions are important to them as this will help you to prioritize and plan.

Create a safe and calm space. Persons with dementia may experience changes in judgment. Avoid fragile decorations that can shatter and create sharp fragments as well as ones that could be mistaken for edible treats. Reduce clutter to avoid potential tripping hazards. Place Christmas trees close to the wall to avoid falls, and use battery-powered candles to reduce fire hazards. With people coming in and out of the home, identify someone to be responsible to monitor the person with dementia to avoid wandering.

Prepare your loved one. Help build familiarity and comfort by showing him/her photos of the guests or arrange a phone call/video chat with the visitors beforehand. Plan for all gatherings to be at a time of day that is most beneficial for the person with dementia, like the middle of the day when they are not tired.

Be open with guests. Consider sharing beneficial information with guests beforehand, such as ways they can communicate with the person, what they respond well to and what may upset them. In addition, provide updates on any changes to memory, behavior or physical appearance that have occurred since their last visit. "Remind guests to enter the room slowly and introduce themselves and their relationship to the person. Do not ask, 'Do you know who I am?' or correct, interrupt or criticize their memory," suggests Pat Kaplan, instructor of the "Meaningful Conversations" program at Alzheimers Coachella Valley.

Take care of yourself, too. One of the most essential parts of care giving is taking care of yourself. If you are not getting enough rest, exercising or not eating well, it is important to take time for yourself so you can be the best version of you that you can be.

Holidays can be a meaningful time for friends and family to reconnect with one another over special traditions and rituals. Special celebrations that honor the past can be especially reassuring for those with dementia. However, crowds and overstimulation can make the holiday season feel overwhelming and confusing, particularly for those with memory disorders.

Remember, the holidays are opportunities to share time with people you love. Try to make these celebrations easy on yourself and for the person with dementia so that you may concentrate on enjoying your time together.

Editorial by Patricia Riley, board member of Alzheimers Coachella Valley, a community resource for dementia support and education. For more information, call (760) 776-3100 or visit www.cvalzheimers.org.

The Intricate Connection Between Gut Health and Hormones

Continued from page 11

Promoting gut health for hormonal happiness

So what are the key factors that contribute to a healthy gut and in turn, healthy and balanced hormones?

Diet. Eating a diverse range of whole foods rich in fibers and fermented products like yogurt, kefir and sauerkraut to support healthy gut microbiome.

Limiting stress. Practice stress-reducing activities such as meditation, yoga and deep breathing exercises. Chronic stress disrupts hormonal balance and wreaks havoc on your gut health.

Exercise. Getting regular physical activity can boost our gut diversity and promote hormonal balance.

Avoiding overuse of antibiotics. Antibiotics will reduce your gut bacterial diversity. Using antibiotics only when absolutely necessary is essential.

Probiotics and prebiotics. These supplements can be extremely helpful to restore our gut health, especially after disruptions like illnesses or antibiotics.

The interconnected relationship between the health of our guts and our hormones sheds light on the holistic nature of the human body. It's not just about one system or a single hormone; everything is interwoven, reflecting the intricate balance that maintains our health. When we understand these connections, we can take a comprehensive approach to health and well-being, where the gut is central.

As research continues, the depth of this connection will only become more evident, emphasizing the need to prioritize gut health in our journey to hormonal balance and overall wellness.

Stacey Michele Blackwell is a certified health coach with Barefoot Balance Holistic Health and can be reached at (760) 401.1568 or stacey@barefootbalance.com.

Creativity Lives in the Now

Continued from page 14

before and into a place of peace where I could imagine a way through this.

After this liminal moment, I was never again visited by the ferocity of anxiety that was so present before. I have since come to know this liminal experience of the present moment as a portal to new creative inspiration, through a peaceful still mind, bringing about a more expansive life.

Of course, our conditioned mind (our ego) has its part to play in our functional lives; in fact, we couldn't live without it very well, but it should never take complete control over our lives. And becoming fully present in the liminal now doesn't always require a difficult challenge to precede it; we may find this transcendent moment in our love of beauty or nature and each other, and with a little applied intention, in many other areas of life; that's the way I would prefer it.

To ensure our creative aliveness, it is important that we balance our world with the creative potential within the stillness of the present moment by learning to be fully in it; to enter it often with full intention and attention to know its limitless possibilities.

David Flint is a minister at the Spiritual Center of the Desert, a non-denominational center which practices the Science of Mind Philosophy. For more information, visit www.pdspiritualcenter.org.



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Snow-capped Sweet Treats

From Barbara Rogers' *It's a No Grainer*

Need something simple to throw together for a holiday party? These guiltless little pleasures take less than 15 minutes and are sure to steal the show at any holiday gathering.

Rogers' raw "brownie" bites are gluten-free, naturally sweetened and sprinkled with unsweetened coconut flakes to add that seasonal sentiment.

Makes 20-24 tasty morsels.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups chopped walnuts
- 1 cup fresh dates, pitted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- Pinch of sea salt
- Water

Directions:

Add the walnuts and salt to a blender or food processor. Mix until the walnuts are chopped.

Add the dates, vanilla and cocoa powder to the blender and mix well until everything is combined.

With the blender still running, add a couple drops of water at a time to make the mixture stick together in a thick dough.

Transfer the mixture into a bowl, and using a spatula, form it into a big ball.

Use your hands to shape round bites by rolling them in your palms and placing them directly onto your serving dish.

Sprinkle with unsweetened coconut flakes and lightly roll balls around in it, leaving some on the plate for that dusting-of-snow appearance.

Bites will last in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Rogers' and her cookbook, *It's A No Grainer*, will be featured at the Coachella Health Festival on November 18. Come join us at this free event taking place at the Spotlight 29 Showroom from 10a-4p. Learn more at www.CoachellaHealthFest.com.



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King Oyster Mushroom Scallops

Recipe compliments of Wildest Restaurant's Chef Trilby

This vegan delicacy, made with mushrooms disguised as scallops, will surprise and delight! It is easy to make at home or visit Wildest Restaurant + Bar where Chef Trilby will gladly prepare her gourmet version for you.

Ingredients:

1/2 pound king oyster mushroom cut into scallop shaped rings and caps. Specialty mushrooms are available from Canyon Creek Mushroom Farm in Palm Desert.

- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 ounces Korean gochujang paste
- 2 ounces tamari (gluten-free soy sauce)
- 2 ounces sweet mae ploy (sweet chili sauce)

Directions:

Mix all wet ingredients and the brown sugar together in a bowl and whisk until emulsified.

Preheat a skillet until oil is lightly smoking and then drop in the mushrooms until they are browned.

Add sauce to taste and serve with your favorite vegetable, rice, quinoa or beans for an excellent vegan dinner entrée.



Our Local Mushroom Farm

Continued from page 14



Owner Jim Shaffer with his beautiful bounty

mushrooms. The pellets are placed in polypropylene bags which protect the growing process, just as bark would in nature. Water is added, blocks are sterilized, mycelium spores are added and the growing cycle is approximately 30 days.

"Our incubation area allows the colonies of mycelium to grow and multiply," explains Shaffer. Seventy-five degrees mimics summer in the forest and keeps the mycelium happily munching away on its energy source. When the time is right, the bags are transported to the fruiting chamber where they are opened and manmade "fog" sets in. "The cooler

temperature and high humidity in the fruiting chamber triggers the mycelium to produce the mushrooms."

Around 2017, videos about commercial growth of mushrooms started showing up, he says. Prior to that, growers used actual trees which requires more space and is seasonal based on the region. The craze soon took hold and now, "almost every town has a guy or girl like me growing mushrooms on the side."

What's all the wonder? These little fungi are power-packed with healthy benefits. All varieties are fat, cholesterol and gluten-free, and low in calories and sodium. Canyon Creek has a one-sheet that summarizes their products:

- Oyster mushrooms are high in protein, fiber, iron, zinc, potassium, phosphorous, selenium, calcium, folic acid and vitamins B1, B3, B12, C and D
- King trumpets are high in protein, fiber, iron, zinc, thiamin, magnesium, vitamin B6, riboflavin and niacin, delivering anti-inflammatory benefits
- Pioppino are high in copper, fiber, iron, potassium, biotin, selenium, folate and vitamins B2, B3 and B5
- Chestnut mushrooms are rich in polysaccharides, a primary source of energy for our bodies, and have been shown to have antibacterial and anti-tumor properties
- Lion's mane is the star of the show as it has been reported to enhance memory, brain function and immunity, and reduce anxiety and depression

Shaffer explained that their homegrown products can be up to three-times more beneficial than store bought items, similar to straight-from-the-farm organic produce. While standard mushrooms lose nutritional potency when cooked, he adds, gourmet mushrooms actually increase in potency.

I left with a bundle of things to try and my favorite, fresh loin's mane, to sauté for the family that evening. When cut in 1" slices, lightly browned in butter and seasoned with a little salt and pepper, it takes on the texture and taste of a soft white meat. I compare it to succulent lobster; others thought it tasted like tender chicken and couldn't believe it was a mushroom.

Try it for yourself! Support local and take a trip to Canyon Creek Mushrooms.

Canyon Creek is located at 77917 Wildcat Drive in Palm Desert and open Monday - Saturday 10a-4p. You will also see them at most valley farmer's markets. For more information, visit www.canyoncreekmushrooms.com or call (760) 577.4920.



Lion's mane (top) and pink oyster mushrooms



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It's a tepid desert evening as the sky fades from sunset to dusk. Small floating lights sway on a crystal blue pool surrounded by hundreds of flickering candles. Soothing music and the scent of lavender fill the air. You take a deep breath and snuggle into your plush blanket and pillow as your floating vessel softly moves across the water. The stars shine above as sound bath practitioners began playing their beautiful vibrational bowls.



Guests have called the floating sound bath "a top 10 life experience."

You have nowhere to be, but in the moment.

Transporting people from their daily routines into an immersive sensory experience is the inspiration for Good Vibes Sound Bath, co-founded by *Desert Health* Publisher Lauren Del Sarto and Social Media Manager Michelle Steadman.



Guests can come early to enjoy the one-acre Oasis and soak in the healing mineral waters.

"With so much stress in the world, we all know we need to take a break and check out, but most of us don't take the time to do so," says Del Sarto. "We wanted to create a calming experience which could excite, yet transform guests from busy brain to unadulterated relaxation."

"When you're comfortably floating on water, you have nowhere to be, and it's not long before your mind settles into the moment," adds Steadman. "It's incredible to see and to hear how powerful the experience is for our guests."

The duo are taking Good Vibes Sound Bath to country clubs and private estates throughout the valley, offering up to 30 on water experiences and additional "on land" opportunities via lounge chairs and yoga mats. They have also partnered with Azure Palm Hot Springs featuring California's largest mineral spring pool to offer ticketed events for the community. "We love this refined resort allowing guests the opportunity to come early and enjoy their soaking tubs, reflexology stream, sauna, bucket plunge and more," says Steadman. "It is the ultimate afternoon for relaxation and rejuvenation." Guests can also add overnight accommodations which standardly sell out through season.



"We're saving your space," says Good Vibes Co-founder and *Desert Health* Publisher Lauren Del Sarto. (Photo by Lani Garfield)

"It's truly an immersive experience," concludes Del Sarto. "Our greatest joy is seeing busy people taking time for themselves and the change we see as they slowly depart with pure joy on their face."

For information on scheduled events, visit www.goodvibessoundbath.com. For booking, contact michelle@goodvibessoundbath.com or call (760) 238.0245.

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Women Leaders Forum Let's Interact: Women Who Shape Public Service

Engage with trailblazing women in public service as Coachella Valley's mayors share their inspiring stories and insights. Discover how you can get involved and make a meaningful impact in your community at this empowering event celebrating women's leadership. Sponsored by JP Morgan Chase & Co. Classic Club 5:30-7:50p. Tickets include dinner and a glass of wine. Members: \$45/Non-members: \$65
www.WLFDesert.org



NOVEMBER 4

36th Annual Hoedown in Paradise benefiting YMCA of the Desert

Round up your posse, boots and beach wear for this annual celebration of passion and purpose supporting the Y's many community programs. Enjoy camaraderie and cocktails for a good cause at the newly rebranded Tommy Bahama Miramonte Resort & Spa. 5-9p. www.ymcaofthedesert.org/hoedown-in-paradise.



NOVEMBER 8

Living Well Speaker Series: Reversing and Preventing Cognitive Decline

Functional medicine physician and Bredesen Protocol certified practitioner Jeralyn Brossfield, MD will discuss major factors that harm the brain along with the latest therapies to protect and promote optimal brain health. Complimentary and open to all. Held at Restore Hyper Wellness in Palm Desert. 5-7p. Space is limited and RSVP is required: (760) 505.3000.



NOVEMBER 11

Feel Good Festival

Come enjoy a free day of health and wellness activities, inspiring workshops, artisan-made goods, vintage shopping, delectable food and live music. This inaugural event celebrates sustainability and all things "feeling good." Take part in meditation and yoga classes, enjoy farm-to-table culinary delights and soulful melodies from local musicians. Cabot's Pueblo Museum, Desert Hot Springs 10a-4p. www.desertfeelgoodfestival.com.



NOVEMBER 18

Coachella Health Festival by Marlo Productions

Come enjoy an array of wellness practitioners, fitness professionals, medical experts and holistic solutions alongside wholesome tastings from wellness-focused chefs and winemakers. Wellness screenings and local physicians presenting "Doc Talks." 10a-4p at Spotlight 29 Showroom. Tasting Adventure Zone from 11a-3p. Tickets: www.coachellahealthfest.com

NOVEMBER 19

Good Vibes Floating Sound Bath

Come drift away with us...Start your holiday week with "Self-care Sunday." Enjoy soothing sounds, scents and candlelight for the ultimate relaxation with our floating sound bath. Come early to soak in Azure Palm Hot Springs healing mineral waters before boarding your raft for a transformative experience like no other. 5-7p (Oasis Pass 3-5p). Tickets and info: www.goodvibessoundbath.com.



DECEMBER 6

Living Well Speaker Series: Early Detection of Cognitive Decline

Board Certified Neuroradiologist Christopher Hancock, MD will discuss cutting edge technology available to detect cognitive decline in its early stages. Complimentary and open to all. Held at Restore Hyper Wellness in Palm Desert. 5-7p. Space is limited and RSVP is required: (760) 505.3000.



DECEMBER 7

Women Leaders Forum Let's Interact: You Are What You Eat

Come discover the benefits of choosing and supporting locally grown food and hear from industry leaders including Growing Coachella Valley's Executive Director Janell Percy, The Packhouse at Aziz Farm's Nicole Tadros and Jan DeLyser, formerly with the Avocado Commission. Sponsored by Prime Time International. Classic Club 5:30-7:30p. Tickets include dinner and a glass of wine. Members: \$45/Non-members: \$65
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All events are 5:30-7:30 pm at Classic Club and include dinner and a glass of wine. Members: \$45/\$55 after deadline • Non-Members: \$65 For tickets and information, visit wlfdesert.org

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- November 12: FIND Food Bank with YWL
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The Good, the Bad and the Unexpected

The cycle of life is an incredible journey through good times, bad times and unexpected events. Preparing for one's financial lifecycle is often miscalculated, leaving a person or family financially strapped or in dire straits.

Many life events bring us joy: a wedding, the birth of a child, a graduation and so on. But when a good event happens, such as the birth of a child, unexpected expenses may arise. For example, the baby may need extra care or need to be in intensive care for a while. Although insurance helps, there are many out-of-pocket expenses for which the parents will be responsible. Additionally, if the mother was planning to nurse and can't, the cost of formula could strain the pocketbook. Not to mention, the impulse buying of all the cute little clothes for the infant.

If one is expecting a child, a separate "baby fund" is a way to mitigate the unexpected. If it's not needed, that fund could be set aside for future funding of the child's needs or wants such as piano lessons or gymnastics. In addition, it could be added to your regular emergency fund or invested in the child's future education.

No one wants to prepare for the bad, such as the death of a loved one. We may have planned and prepaid for some of the arrangements, but if the event comes sooner than expected, one is stuck scrambling and may be at the mercy of the funeral home to help make arrangements. This emotional event can lead to overpaying for plots, funeral services, flowers, transportation and carrying out the wishes of the deceased.

Even when simple arrangements for burial or cremation have been prepaid, other costs may have been overlooked, such as celebration of life expenses (venue, food and drinks, helping out-of-town relatives with accommodations, etc.) which can quickly deplete any savings or emergency fund. This is a tough situation to navigate. Going in debt for this situation may leave family members bitter and unwilling to help, therefore jeopardizing current relationships. If possible, keep it simple. Your loved one would not want to see you suffer financially to provide them a grand sendoff nor severe family relationships over it. If you are inclined to use a credit card for the event, then tackle that debt as soon as possible. Use it as a learning experience and beef up your savings or set up a separate savings for your services and final wishes.

The addition and passing of loved ones should be expected, but can often come with unexpected circumstances. Proper financial planning can help ensure the most positive outcomes.

In honor of my first-born grandson Mykolas, and in memory of my dear aunt Marie. Michele Sarna is a certified financial planner™ with Beacon Pointe Advisors and can be reached at (760) 932.0930 or msarna@beaconpointe.com.

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