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A Fall Full of Healthy Happenings in the Desert!



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Family and Integrative Care Physician

[Learn more on page 15](#)

Choosing health for your future self (there's an AAP for that)

Congratulations! You've just picked up a treasure trove of tips and resources for living long—and living well. Great start!

We know that making healthier choices today for a better tomorrow takes discipline, and isn't always fun. And knowing which choices to make can sometimes feel overwhelming. Eat this, not that. Move more. Stress less. Get enough sleep. Stay connected. Keep learning. The list goes on.

We hope the information in our pages inspires you to find the choices that work best for you. But when the alarm goes off for that morning walk, the dessert menu arrives or the couch looks more inviting than the gym, you may find yourself asking: Is it really worth it?

The answer is a resounding yes. Aging isn't for sissies, and the choices we make today can help pave the way for an easier and more enjoyable tomorrow. Think of it as a gift to your future self—one with more vitality, greater independence and more years to enjoy the people and experiences you love.

Need a little motivation? There's an AAP for that:

Aspirations. You have dreams ahead of you. Places to go, people to see and things to accomplish. A strong body and mind can help you get there.

Appreciation. When you feel good, it is easier to see the good in life. And gratitude, as we know, is nature's happy pill.

Purpose. Remember the reasons you rise each day—the people, passions and pursuits that make life meaningful. They are worth making the healthier choice.

Of course, nobody is perfect. We will wander. We will falter. The "old college try" may down us a time or two. And that's okay. Healthy living isn't about perfection; it's about making choices that honor ourselves and all we have to live for.

So, enjoy these pages. Try something new. Take one small step. Then another. And when you need a little extra motivation to make the healthier choice, remember there's an AAP for that.

Editorial by Lauren Del Sarto

Secrets to a Longer, Healthier Life Aren't Found in Your Phone

By Susan Murphy, PhD



In our March/April (2026) edition, we shared the results of the 2025 World Happiness Report. And because there is no such thing as too many "key to happiness" reminders, we thought we'd share this year's report as well.

For more than a decade, the annual World Happiness Report has examined why some countries consistently rank among the happiest. Its findings repeatedly point to trust, relationships, generosity, health and a sense of purpose. However, the 2025 and 2026 reports reveal fascinating new dimensions: The 2025 report highlighted the remarkable power of kindness and social connection, while the 2026 report examined the modern challenge of how our digital lives can affect happiness and well-being.

Imagine two people living in the same city. One spends evenings sharing dinner with family, laughing with friends, taking a walk and helping a neighbor. The other spends hours scrolling through social media, comparing their life with everyone else's carefully edited images. Who is more likely to feel happier and perhaps even live longer?

The answer emerging from the 2025 and 2026 World Happiness Reports is reassuring: Human

connection is a greater factor for happiness than money, notoriety or perfect circumstances.

A striking finding in the 2025 report involved a simple experiment: lost wallets. Researchers examined how often strangers returned wallets deliberately lost in different countries. Expectations were often pessimistic. Yet wallets were returned far more frequently than people anticipated. The lesson? People may be kinder and more trustworthy than we think! And trust matters. Communities where people help one another, volunteer, share meals and look out for their neighbors tend to report greater life satisfaction.

Now comes the digital dilemma. Yes, technology can bring us closer. A grandparent can watch a grandchild grow up from thousands of miles away. Friends separated by oceans can remain connected. Online communities can provide friendship and support.

But excessive social media use, particularly among young adults, has been linked with greater loneliness, lower life satisfaction, poor sleep and symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Continued on page 9



MAMMO Mondays
Extended Hours



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Fall always makes me think of new beginnings. Maybe it was returning to school or nature's explosion of colorful leaves growing up on the East Coast. To this day, it remains a reflective time, and certainly one filled with gratitude.

I continue to be incredibly grateful for *Desert Health's* success. Uniting our valley's medical and wellness communities while providing a valuable resource for readers is an honor, and we are most grateful for your support.

For 16 years, *Desert Health* has always been free. Advertising and paid mailed subscriptions have been our sole source of revenue. When readers ask how they can support us, I request that they please support our advertisers, as we wouldn't be here without them.

This year, we have experienced significant increases in printing costs and are working hard not to pass them on to our advertisers. Keeping our rates affordable ensures that smaller clinics, companies and practitioners can continue to have a voice in our pages—and helps maintain the diversity that makes *Desert Health* what it is.

So, we've created another way for readers who value what we do to show their appreciation: an opportunity to "throw us a carrot." *Desert Health* will always remain a complimentary publication, but if you enjoy and appreciate what we bring to our community, we invite you to consider supporting our work.

On our website, you'll find a new support button (pictured above), with options for either a direct contribution or a tax-deductible donation through our new fiscal sponsor, the Alternative Newsweekly Foundation, which supports independent publications across the country.

And thank you for continuing to support our advertisers. We choose them carefully, and many have been with us for all 16 years. Just wow.

Desert Health is a labor of love for all of us who write, design, edit, contribute, distribute, promote and print. Your readership is our greatest compliment. Your contribution is the carrot on top.

Here's to your health ~

Lauren

Lauren Del Sarto
Founder/Publisher

Front photo: Locals Valinda Martin, Sharon Glasser, Lisa Schneider and Catharine Phillips enjoy connection, mental stimulation and fun with floating mahjong.



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Valley Prepares for Rising Temps

By Lauren Del Sarto

As record heat rises, many wonder how our desert community will fare.

The City of Palm Springs is taking proactive measures with its first Extreme Heat Summit taking place Friday, Sept. 18, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., at the Palm Springs Convention Center. The event aims to educate government entities, stakeholders, business owners and residents alike on strategies to help communities prepare for hotter days ahead.

Organized by the city's Department of Sustainability in partnership with the Office of Emergency Management, the summit features four primary sessions exploring the challenges we face: the human cost of extreme heat, where people go when systems fail, scaling heat resilience investments, and how to design cool cities and heat-safe places.

Experts will discuss climate resilience, strengthening critical infrastructure, public health, urban planning, emergency preparedness and community engagement. The lineup includes:

- Naomi Soto, mayor, City of Palm Springs
- Diane Morales, public policy lead, Blue Zones Project
- Elizabeth Felter, climate planner, Environmental Science Associates
- Ari Simon, founder, Inner and Outer Engagement
- Shelley Jiang, associate principal, Climate Advisory Services, infrastructure company AECOM
- Christian Rodriguez Ceja, community principal, Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)
- Ladd Keith, PhD, director, Heat Resilience Initiative, University of Arizona
- Jenna LeComte-Hinley, PhD, chief executive officer, Health Assessment and Research for Communities (HARC)
- Anuj Desai, senior advisor, Climate Adaptation and Resilience, Southern California Edison



Diane Morales



Ari Simon, PhD



Ladd Keith, PhD

"I'm delighted that this conference is bringing together different perspectives in a solutions-oriented platform," says Morales, the keynote speaker and a Coachella Valley native. She will address the importance of ensuring that underserved residents, who are often disproportionately impacted by extreme heat, are included in the conversation.

Bringing community and experts together will encourage collaboration to identify and create long-term solutions that can help the Coachella Valley become a more heat-resilient region.

Tickets are \$25 and available on Eventbrite (search "heat Palm Springs"). The City of Palm Springs is also seeking volunteers. Those interested can contact Director of Sustainability Jasmine.Fields@palmspringsca.gov. For more information, visit <https://engagepalmsprings.com>.

Do I Really Need the RSV Vaccine?

By Judi Shor, PharmD, CMC, ACP

Before delving into the RSV vaccine, let's clarify what RSV is—and what it isn't.

RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) is a common virus of the upper respiratory tract that causes mild, cold- and flu-like symptoms, such as nasal congestion and a sore throat. It is a hardy, highly contagious pathogen that is spread through the air and on hard surfaces. An infected individual can continue to spread the disease for up to a month after recovery!

Many think of RSV as primarily a childhood disease. Although it is the leading cause of infant hospitalization, older populations are also vulnerable. In fact, those over age 74 face the highest risk of RSV-associated deaths, and certain underlying conditions place seniors at an enhanced risk of RSV-related respiratory failure and hospitalization. High-risk conditions include immune and neurologic diseases, diabetes, severe obesity and nursing home residency. Chronic disorders of the liver, blood, kidney, heart and lungs also fit the high-risk definition. In vulnerable individuals, a run-of-the-mill RSV "cold" can suddenly invade the lower respiratory tract as unchecked inflammation and multiplying viruses travel down the windpipe into the lungs. Severe blockage of the airways is then triggered, leading to hospitalization, vital organ complications and a diminished quality of life.

When compared with the flu, RSV causes longer hospital stays, higher ICU admission rates and more pneumonia. Unlike the flu, there are no adult-approved anti-RSV medications. It is believed that the incidence of RSV is vastly underestimated, as most outpatient lower respiratory tract illnesses are not identified.

Bluntly stated, RSV is best managed through prevention. The vaccines prevent the virus from penetrating the lower respiratory tract and causing pneumonia, which can be severe in at-risk populations.

RSV vaccines just became available in 2023, and guidelines will continue to evolve as more people become educated and opt in. The three FDA-approved RSV vaccines are all egg-free: Abrysvo, Arexvy and the messenger RNA option, mRESVIA. Side effects include headache, fatigue, and muscle pain.

Both influenza and RSV viruses follow a seasonal pattern of fall through spring, and vaccinations for both are encouraged. Although the Centers for Disease Control has approved both flu and RSV vaccines for safe and effective co-administration in late summer/early fall, temporary post-vaccine aches and fatigue may intensify when taken together. If administered separately, no waiting period is required between vaccines.

In 2025, RSV vaccination advice was updated to recommend a single lifetime dose for high-risk candidates ages 50-74 years, and vaccination for all adults 75 and older. It is covered at no cost for qualified recipients under Medicare Part D and by most commercial insurance plans. Currently, all three RSV vaccines are equally recommended. Although no RSV vaccine can guarantee you will not get RSV, immunization offers the best chance at avoiding hospitalization. As always, check with your healthcare provider for individualized vaccine guidance.

Judi Shor is a board-certified senior care manager with advanced expertise in geriatric medication therapy. She operates a senior care management practice in the Coachella Valley and can be reached at (760) 271.2284 or www.ShorCareSuccessfulAging.com

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Break Free from Codependency

By Amy Austin, PsyD, LMFT

It's been said that when you die, a split-second tape of your entire life plays in your head. There's a joke among codependents that when they die, the tape that plays in their head is someone else's life.

A codependent will sacrifice their thoughts, wants and needs for those of another. They will give and give some more, subconsciously searching for approval and/or validation to fill a void. That emptiness is a sensation of not feeling valued or feeling like they are not enough.

Codependents are addicted to another person (sometimes called "relationship addiction") and believe they cannot function without the relationship. The need to manage, fix, caretake and problem solve becomes paramount in their lives. As harmful as substance abuse, the compulsive nature of codependency can lead one down a dark path of emotional conflict and turmoil, wreaking havoc on a daily basis.

A codependent's sense of self becomes blurred, and it can be almost impossible to discern where they end and the other begins. Last on their list of priorities is self-care.

Codependency, at its core, is not a negative trait. We hopefully seek to extend ourselves beyond the narrow confines of our egocentric selves to find meaning, fulfillment and purpose in performing selfless acts. But for individuals who have grown up with an insecure attachment to their primary caregivers, filling an emotionally empty vessel can become an unresolved lifelong need. Poor boundary setting, people-pleasing and difficulty asserting wants and needs are but a few of the dysfunctional challenges that codependents face.

There is hope in finding the way out. Let's explore a few ways to attain freedom from codependency.

Love your inner child. Codependent behaviors develop to cope with painful, unanswerable questions. Young children cannot think abstractly or outside the box until approximately age 12. After a traumatic experience, they may hold onto feelings of inadequacy or fault that don't go away. It's time to develop a safe, loving relationship with your inner child. Let the child within know they are loved unconditionally and safe from harm. When you champion your inner child, you can allow yourself the gift of finally exploring life through an adult lens.



Codependency can cause emotional conflict within.

Prize and praise yourself. Instead of getting lost in the abyss of another, it's time to acknowledge your own gifts and attributes. There is no one like you, and it's your time to shine!

Read the Codependent Bill of Rights. I encourage you to read the Codependent Bill of Rights, a therapeutic concept promoting self-care, self-worth and the right to emotional safety that has evolved over time within the recovery movement.

Attend CODA meetings. Codependents Anonymous also offers in-person and online meetings. Take advantage of the support, nurturing and understanding these groups can provide.

Isn't it time to come home to yourself? Breaking free may feel challenging, but you won't regret the journey.

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

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Dust Off Your Dancing Shoes

Dance is medicine for the mind

By Shari Jainuddin, NMD, BCB

Activities that promote neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to change and adapt by forming and reorganizing neural connections, are at the forefront of dementia prevention and intervention. Regular exercise is widely known to stimulate neuroplasticity and may play a protective role against dementia, but what is less known is that dancing offers unique benefits.^{1,2,3}

In the early 2000s, researchers examined data collected in a previous study for potential relationships between participation in leisure activities and dementia risk. The first study, The Bronx Aging Study, tracked participation in various leisure activities (six cognitive and 11 physical) and the frequency of participation in adults ages 75-85. Researchers conducted extensive evaluations every 12 to 18 months for up to 21 years. This analysis was published in the New England Journal of Medicine, and the results were surprising.

Regular dance (defined as once a week) was the only physical activity associated with a significantly lower risk of dementia—a staggering 76% lower! Dancing also outperformed all cognitive activities, including crossword puzzles (four times a week or more) by 50% and reading by 100%.⁴

What makes dance so special? Dance stimulates neuroplasticity through "dual-task" activity, simultaneously activating both physical and cognitive areas of the brain. It is more intricate than other activities such as swimming or walking, as it involves bilateral motor skills, balance, advanced coordination, rapid weight change, pattern recognition and memorization, auditory processing and timing and spatial awareness.^{4,5}

Recent research also shows dance as a promising intervention. A 2024 randomized control trial found that a six-month dance program helped preserve cardiorespiratory fitness in older adults with mild cognitive impairment, while such fitness declined in the control (non-dancing) group.⁶ A 2017 study of older adults found that six months of dance training produced greater changes in measures associated with neuroplasticity than a conventional fitness program involving repetitive exercises.⁷ And a 2025 review found that dual-task training (such as dance) improved both attention and speed of processing by up to 14% in people with neurodegenerative disorders.²

Dance is not just physical exercise. It enhances non-verbal communication, supports social and emotional well-being, allows for creative expression and activates systems associated with empathy, emotion and understanding of others. (5) Common symptoms of dementia (anxiety, agitation, and depression) can also be reduced from being in a structured and predictable environment.⁸

The beautifully distinct blend of complex physical, mental and emotional processing that is unique to dance is good for body and mind. This social activity could be considered as part of a holistic approach to health, wellness and longevity. So, dust off those dancing shoes and get out on the dance floor!

Dr. Shari Jainuddin is a naturopathic primary care doctor at One Life Naturopathic and also offers biofeedback training and craniosacral therapy. For more information, call (442) 256.5963 or visit www.onelifenaturopathic.org.

References available upon request.



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Sports Medicine Interns Connect on Bonding Day

By Gloria Camacho-Montoya and Genesis Martinez Aldama

In June, high school students in Palm Springs' sports medicine internship program gathered to get to know each other on a deeper level. Palm Springs High School offers this internship opportunity to juniors and seniors in the Palm Springs Academy of Learning Medicine. In the program, second-year interns mentor first-years as they navigate this new experience.

High school sports launch with the start of the school year, and sports medicine interns must use teamwork and communication to solve daily challenges. That includes helping injured athletes and assisting with recovery at practices and games. The opportunity to connect and bond over the summer makes it easier to collaborate, overcome these challenges and find solutions efficiently.

On our summer Bonding Day, everyone brought potluck items to share. Students introduced themselves and participated in an icebreaker activity. Then the water activities began. Students answered questions in groups, and if they answered incorrectly, they were drenched with water balloons. With leftover balloons, a war broke out; some students even dumped water jugs on one another.

As the day came to a close, students were tested to see who really paid attention. Students gathered in a circle with each stating their name before a volunteer was placed in the middle and challenged to repeat everyone's name, or get drenched again. This game encouraged students to be confident, remember one another's names, and communicate with the group in the future.

This Bonding Day is essential for helping student interns get to know one another and feel comfortable in the unfamiliar sports medicine environment. Those who have participated in the past say the experience helped them ask peers for assistance and to feel more comfortable by seeing familiar faces. One student said, "Bonding Day helped with knowing the majority of everyone's names and being able to talk to them during my work shifts without having any awkwardness."

The impact of Bonding Day is long-lasting, helping students feel more secure in the sports medicine internship environment.

Gloria Camacho-Montoya and Genesis Martinez Aldama are students in the Palm Springs Academy of Learning Medicine program. For more information on the valley's high school medical academies, contact Kim McNulty with OneFuture Coachella Valley at kim@onefuturecv.org.



PSHS sports medicine interns on Bonding Day



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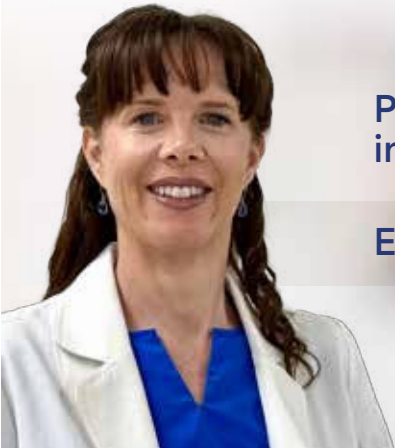
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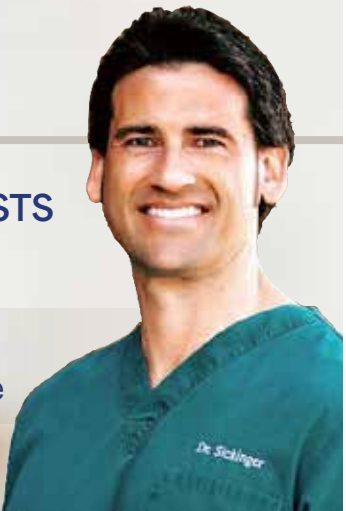


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BLUE ZONES PROJECT
Community News

The True Meaning of 'Good Neighbor'

By Diane Morales, Policy Lead, Blue Zones Project Palm Springs

In August, The LGBTQ Community Center of the Desert's Community Food Bank and Aziz Farms gave our valley a great example of what it means to be a good neighbor. In a newly formed partnership, the food bank purchased fresh produce directly from a Coachella Valley farm, with the shared goal of making these local purchases a monthly commitment.

This partnership brings together two ends of the Coachella Valley to address gaps in access to healthy food while supporting our local economy and agricultural community. Through the collaboration of Blue Zones Project Palm Springs, Aziz Farms, and The Center's Community Food Bank, we are seeing what "good neighbors" truly look like.

One valley, one community. Too often, the Coachella Valley divides itself into the east end and the west end. But hunger doesn't recognize city boundaries, and neither should healthy food. When we come together as one community, we create solutions that benefit us all.

The Center's Community Food Bank serves more than 500 families each week. By providing locally grown, fresh produce, this partnership gives more of our neighbors the opportunity to enjoy healthy food that may not have always been affordable. It also strengthens our local food system by investing in the farmers who grow the food right in our own backyard.

This is what wellbeing looks like in action. The Center has long been committed to providing nutritious food, healthy recipes and a healthy food pantry environment. While this first purchase is something worth celebrating, we hope it marks the beginning of a lasting partnership. The vision is to make locally sourced produce a regular, monthly part of The Center's food distribution efforts, and Blue Zones Project Palm Springs is proud to support and build upon the incredible work they are doing.

Growing a stronger local food system. Our hope is that this partnership inspires other food pantries and organizations in the Coachella Valley to consider purchasing locally whenever possible. When we invest in our local farmers, increase access to fresh, healthy food, and support one another, our entire valley becomes stronger, healthier and more connected. And that is what being a good neighbor is all about.



The Center, Aziz Farms and Blue Zones Project team members celebrate the newly formed partnership.

Wellness Fest Turns Connection into Action

By Cassandra Teran, Marketing and Engagement Lead, BZPC

Blue Zones Project Coachella (BZPC) celebrated August with its Ultimate End of Summer Wellness Festival on Saturday, Aug. 8, at Rancho 51 in Coachella. Over 780 community members and 40 community partners came together for a day of wellness, family fun and valuable resources.

The festival demonstrated an important part of the Blue Zones Project approach: improving community health by building community partnerships that can continue creating impact well beyond the BZPC term.

Families enjoyed water slides and activities, a foam party, yoga, meditation and other opportunities for movement and connection. Guests enjoyed a cooking demonstration by local chef Carlos Duarte, who showed that healthy eating doesn't have to sacrifice flavor.



Families frolic in the foam party at the Ultimate End of Summer Wellness Festival.

Blue Zones-approved foods and healthy refreshments were provided by El Tranvia restaurant, while Hidden Harvest and FIND Food Bank provided fresh fruit, vegetables and food resources. Families also received backpacks, school supplies and clothing.

Beyond the festivities, the event created meaningful connections to health care and social services. Riverside University Health System (RUHS) made 92 connections with individuals and families, provided seven referrals for additional services and collected eight Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS)-related surveys, which measure performance on important dimensions of care and services. Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP) connected with approximately 130 individuals and families and provided eight referrals for additional services.

St. John's Community Health reached 125 individuals and families, resulting in 12 appointments, seven physicals, three vaccinations and two connections to other services. The Autism Booth made 120 connections, with two people registering for services, while Visión y Compromiso reached 125 individuals and families and generated nine mental health service sign-ups.

These outcomes show how community events can turn engagement into action. Connecting residents with physicals, vaccinations, referrals, screenings and follow-up services can also support health care organizations working to improve HEDIS performance, particularly measures focused on preventive care and access to appropriate health services.

"Events like this show what is possible when our community comes together," said BZPC Executive Director Angela Zepeda. "The Ultimate End of Summer Wellness Festival created a place where everyone could have fun, connect with their neighbors, discover wellness resources and experience that healthy living can be enjoyable and accessible."

The festival highlighted BZPC's larger goal of creating sustainable community change by building a network of healthcare providers, nonprofits, businesses, community organizations and residents. Through collaboration, this network can help make the healthy choice the easy choice and create lasting pathways to healthier families.

To get involved in Palm Springs, contact bzppalmsprings@bluezones.com, or in Coachella, bzpccoachella@bluezones.com. Visit www.bluezonesprojectps.com or www.bluezonesprojectcoachella.com.



Targeting Prostate Cancer with Precision

HALO's long-running trial uses imaging to guide therapy

By Lauren Del Sarto

As September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, we thought we'd check in with Bernadette M. Greenwood, RT(R)(MR), (ARRT), PhD(c), chief research officer at HALO Precision Diagnostics in Indian Wells. HALO's team continues to produce cutting-edge research on diagnostics and treatments that deliver improved outcomes for prostate cancer patients.

We first reported on HALO's advanced diagnostics and image-guided treatment program in 2011 as they completed their first year of the Phase II laser focal therapy clinical trial. The study evaluates MRI-guided laser focal therapy for men with localized prostate cancer, using imaging to place and monitor a laser that destroys cancer within the prostate while limiting injury to nearby healthy tissue.

The concept is simple: instead of treating the entire prostate gland, laser focal therapy is designed to treat only the cancerous area plus a safety margin. This targeted approach may help preserve quality of life, especially urinary control and sexual function, while still treating the disease in appropriately selected patients.

Now in its 17th year, the study's published outcomes have been notable: 100% prostate cancer-specific survival, 99% metastasis-free survival, and 98% of patients avoiding whole-gland treatment at 10 years. HALO's published summaries also describe very low rates of major side effects, including less than 1% risk of erectile dysfunction and less than 1% risk of urinary incontinence.¹

These outcomes matter because, while traditional prostate cancer treatments can be effective, many also affect long-term function and recovery. Laser focal therapy is presented as a minimally invasive, outpatient option that avoids surgery and radiation for carefully selected men, while preserving the possibility of other treatments later if needed. You can read more on the study in our May/June 2024 edition at www.DesertHealthNews.com.

Last year, Greenwood received an international speaker award from the American Society of Radiologic Technologists Foundation. The distinction included an invitation to share HALO's work with imaging professionals worldwide at the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists annual conference earlier this year.

"I am honored by this award, which highlights an area of cancer care that many patients do not see directly: the role of advanced imaging in choosing and delivering treatment," Greenwood said. "My presentation topic, 'Imaging in Prostate Cancer: The Role of the Technologist,' reflects how radiologic technologists support the imaging precision needed to identify tumors, guide procedures and help care teams target treatment more accurately."

That precision is central to HALO's work, which tells a broader story about modern prostate cancer care: imaging is no longer only a tool for diagnosis, but a key part of precision treatment itself.



Bernadette M. Greenwood

Continued on page 15

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Why Naturopathic Medicine Resonates with Latino Communities

By Cristal Salcido, ND

For many Latino families, healthcare has traditionally extended beyond the doctor's office. Herbal teas, home remedies, traditional foods, prayer and other healing practices have long been part of family health traditions, and this has been supported by research. In one Southern California study, 90% of Latino patients reported using herbs, while another study found that 63% of Hispanic patients had used at least one form of complementary or alternative medicine.^{1,2} This familiarity with natural approaches creates an opportunity for naturopathic medicine to bridge traditional healing practices with modern healthcare.



For Latino cultures, prevention has always been rooted in nature.

One of the foundational principles of naturopathic medicine is the healing power of nature, which recognizes the body's inherent capacity to heal and uses therapies that support this process. Another is identify and treat the causes, which focuses on understanding and addressing underlying contributors to illness rather than simply managing symptoms.³

This does not mean avoiding conventional medicine. Naturopathic doctors are trained as primary care providers and may use a broad range of therapies, including prescription medications, when appropriate.³ The naturopathic principle of doctor as teacher emphasizes educating patients about their health and treatment options, helping them make informed decisions and understand when conventional medications, diagnostic testing or referral to another provider may be appropriate.³

Naturopathic medicine also emphasizes treating the whole person. Physical health cannot always be separated from emotional and mental well-being. Stress, anxiety, depression and sleep disturbances can influence physical symptoms and overall quality of life. A naturopathic doctor can recognize when mental health support is needed and encourage appropriate counseling or referral. This can be particularly meaningful in communities where stigma, cost and language barriers may make seeking professional mental health care more difficult.^{4,5}

Perhaps most importantly, naturopathic medicine emphasizes prevention. Many chronic diseases are influenced by modifiable factors such as nutrition, physical activity, sleep, tobacco use and alcohol consumption.^{3,6} These are areas where naturopathic medicine places significant emphasis, helping patients develop practical, sustainable habits before illness develops or progresses.

Naturopathic medicine does not ask patients to choose between traditional healing and conventional medicine. Instead, it can create a space where culture, prevention, education and evidence-informed care work together. For Latino communities, this approach can honor familiar traditions while providing a trusted, medically informed pathway toward lifelong health.

Cristal Salcido is a primary care naturopathic doctor with a focus on the gut-brain connection in holistic health at Live Well Clinic in La Quinta. She can be reached at (760) 771-5970 or www.livewellclinic.org. Se habla español!

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Why Women Stay

Even when they see the warning signs

By Linda Olson, PsyD

Many women I meet say some version of the same thing: “I knew something didn’t feel right, and I couldn’t explain it,” or, “I saw the signs, and I still didn’t leave.” If you’ve ever felt this way, you’re not alone, and there is nothing wrong with you.

Unhealthy relationships rarely begin with something obvious. More often, they begin with a feeling; something just seems off. And yet, there are also moments that feel good: connection, hope, reassurance. You might question yourself, and you might try harder to make things work.

Over time, that quiet confusion can turn into self-doubt, and self-doubt can keep you stuck longer than you ever expected.

In my work, I’ve come to understand this pattern differently. I call it “dangerous hope,” when you see the signs but don’t yet fully believe what they mean.

A woman may see it long before she completely grasps it, and in that gap, it becomes easy to minimize what you’re noticing or explain it away.

We’ve been taught that if you see something, you should know, and if you know, you should leave. But in personal relationships, it doesn’t always work that way. Many women see the signs early on, but still can’t fully take in what they mean.

You notice the tension. You walk on eggshells. You notice subtle shifts in control. Yet, at the same time, you hold onto hope; hope that it will get better, that you can fix it, that you’re just misunderstanding.

Both things can be true. You care about the relationship, and something doesn’t feel right. You see the signs, and you still want to believe the best. This isn’t weakness. It’s a common human response.

We are wired for connection, and we want to believe in the people we love. When something doesn’t make sense, it can feel easier to question yourself than to question the relationship.

But learning to trust your own perception is where things begin to shift. That might start with something simple: Pausing when something feels off. Noticing patterns, and not just isolated moments. Allowing yourself to hold two truths at once: *I care about this person, and something doesn’t feel right.*

You don’t need all the answers right away. You don’t have to figure everything out at once. You can begin by trusting what you’re noticing. Because seeing is not the same as believing, and understanding sooner can change everything.

If this resonates with you, you’re not alone. Support can make a difference by helping you rebuild self-trust, understand these patterns and move forward with greater clarity and confidence.

Linda Olson is a psychologist with Desert Integrative Wellness and creator of the Self-Trust Approach™ and Yes And Practice™. She helps women understand why they stay in unhealthy relationships and how to rebuild self-trust and break free. (760) 349.1248.

Secrets to a Longer, Healthier Life Aren’t Found in Your Phone

Continued from page 1

Endless scrolling often encourages unhealthy comparison, making people feel that everyone else is happier, healthier and more successful. This is a troubling trend for the youngest generations.

The solution isn't to throw away the smartphone; it's to make sure technology serves our relationships rather than replaces them. Think about replacing unhealthy screen habits with things that meet the same underlying needs of connection, belonging, stimulation and purpose.

Happiness may do more than lift our spirits; it's part of a healthy lifestyle. Research has associated strong social relationships and positive emotional well-being with healthier blood pressure, better sleep, lower chronic stress and stronger resilience. Optimism and social connection have also been linked to healthier aging with better cardiovascular health.



Technology should serve our relationships, not replace them.

The encouraging news is that happiness doesn't require winning the lottery or taking a dream vacation. The World Happiness Reports suggest it is built through daily habits that almost anyone can practice, and the world's happiest countries offer powerful examples. In 2026, Finland again ranked at the top, followed by Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and Norway. Costa Rica also demonstrates how strong families, community ties and optimism can foster remarkable well-being without relying solely on wealth.

Let’s share more helpful tips for enhancing happiness:

Put people first. Schedule time each week for family, friends or neighbors. Face-to-face conversations nourish emotional health.

Practice one act of kindness every day. Hold a door, write a thank-you note, help a neighbor or volunteer. Kindness benefits both the giver and receiver.

Share meals whenever possible. Eating together strengthens relationships, creates lasting memories—and the food tastes better.

Move your body daily. Walk, garden, dance. Exercising improves mood while supporting heart health and brain function.

Protect your sleep. Seven to nine hours of quality sleep improves emotional resilience, memory and overall well-being. Keep your phone in another room at night.

Put your phone down. Limit social media. Replace some screen time with reading, conversation, hobbies or time in nature. Real-life experiences create deeper satisfaction than endless scrolling.

Practice gratitude. Before going to bed, write down three good things that happened during the day. This simple exercise trains your brain to notice life’s blessings rather than its disappointments.

Ultimately, the 2025 and 2026 reports point toward a timeless truth: The happiest lives aren't necessarily the richest or easiest; they are the most connected. A smartphone can connect us to the world, but it cannot replace a friend's laughter, a family dinner, a walk outdoors or the comforting words, “I'm glad you're here.”

Perhaps the best prescription for a longer, healthier life is something we can’t download or scroll through. It's something we can give: our time, our attention, our kindness and our presence.

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

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Silent Retreat: Wisdom Beneath the Noise

By Christy Curtis

"You're exactly where you need to be." The words were carved into a worn bench that greeted me each morning at 6:55 a.m. as I walked toward the meditation hall during a recent seven-day silent meditation retreat.

No talking. No phone. No reading. No writing. Could you do it? Would you want to? Do you need it? Although this was my fifth silent retreat, I arrived without knowing the answers.

Our days unfolded beneath tall pines, their bark carrying an unexpected scent of butterscotch. The world around me was quiet, but the world within me was not. Without the familiar rhythm of obligations, conversations and constant stimulation, I began noticing parts of myself I had been too busy to hear.

I noticed how easily I move past discomfort, only to replace it with being busy or seeking comfort. I realized how much my body prefers to move slowly, even when my mind tells me to hurry. And how much simple joy can be found in feeling the cool mountain air while looking up at a night sky filled with stars.

We were invited to meet whatever arose with non-judgment, compassion, patience and curiosity. During meditation, we practiced a traditional body scan, slowly bringing awareness to 32 parts of the body. My mind, naturally, had other plans.

Sometimes I fell asleep sitting upright or became completely lost in thought. Then, suddenly, I would notice I was no longer present. That awareness became the invitation to return—to my breath, my body, this present moment.

Although my body has been with me every moment of my life, I realized how rarely I actually inhabit it—live with it, from it and embody it. Our bodies are constantly communicating: tired, hungry, joyful, sad, afraid, irritated, safe. Yet how often do we override these messages? Ignore them? Mistake them for something else?

What might change if we created the conditions to listen instead? Perhaps a different decision, conversation, boundary, behavior, more sleep—or even the direction of a life.

There is a particular kind of wisdom that becomes available when we slow down enough to notice. The body knows things the busy mind can overlook. For me, the retreat was not about becoming someone new; it was about rediscovering someone I had been moving too quickly to hear.

The gift of silence was not what I gained. It was a reminder of what I can leave behind: the constant need to be doing, the pressure to know what comes next, the belief that every thought deserves my attention.

I remembered the simple work of being here, in my body—breathing, walking, feeling, listening and truly living.

I trust that is why the words on the bench stayed with me: "You're exactly where you need to be." Not because everything is figured out. But because the moment we are in is the only place from which we can truly listen.

Sometimes wisdom isn't louder. Sometimes we simply have to become quiet enough to hear it.

Christy Curtis is a transformational health and well-being coach and founder of Grounded Joy Wellness. Through curated experiences, retreats, workshops and coaching, she helps others reconnect with themselves, create sustainable healthy change, and build the awareness and accountability to live healthier, more connected and joyful lives. Learn more at www.groundedjoywellness.org.



Simply breathing, walking, feeling and listening can be truly living.

Dreaming by Numbers

By Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos

You have heard of painting by numbers, but what about dreaming by numbers? What might dream numbers mean?

Although dream interpretation can be very personal, numbers and mathematics are a universal language. Dreams use signs, symbols and numbers to communicate health information. An example of a number dream that saved millions from starvation and illness can be found in the Bible.

Genesis 41:17-36 recounts the Egyptian pharaoh's number dream deciphered by Joseph: a dream in which seven fat, healthy cows are followed by seven thin, sickly cows. To ensure the pharaoh got the message, the dream repeats with seven heads of healthy grain stalks followed by seven sickly stalks. The dream foretold seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. By understanding the numbers in the pharaoh's dream, Joseph managed Egypt's food supply and saved the people from famine-related illness and death.

Although our dreams are abstract, most numbers represent logical concepts. Some numbers have both abstract and concrete meanings. The number eight, for example, may mean eight objects, or when lying on its side, it can symbolize infinity; upright, it may represent infinity standing strong.

Number one can be the loneliest number, reflecting isolation, a new beginning or a message that you are the best (#1). Multiples of the same number can multiply the powerful message. The spiritual number 11:11 may imply strong synchronicity. Zero might symbolize nothingness, completion and the circle of life, depending on the context of the dream.

Here are three tips to help decipher the number messages in your dreams:

1. Keep a dream journal. A recurrent or repeating dream like the pharaoh's can contain an important, missed message. The dream will recur until the message is understood. Elusive dream messages can be revisited in a journal.
2. Decide if the number presented in the context of your dream is part of a problem, solution or both. Problem-solving reduces stress and may promote healing.
3. Underline all the dream's numbers, colors and images and define what they mean to you because the message is always yours.

All dream numbers have powerful messages. Patterns or number sequences in dreams may reflect an analytical or problem-solving left-brain mindset. By combining the abstract dream language of signs and symbols with logical number concepts, dreams can paint a picture that speaks to our current and future health and well-being.

Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos of Rancho Mirage is a dream expert, cancer survivor, author, speaker and TV/radio host/producer. She has been featured on Dr. Oz, The Doctors and The UnXplained. For more information, visit www.KathleenOkeefeKanavos.com.

Sources: 1) Burk, L., and O'Keefe-Kanavos, K. (2018). Dreams That Can Save Your Life: Early Warning Signs of Cancer and Other Diseases; Findhorn Press; 2) The Holy Bible, New International Version, Genesis 41:17-36.



Are You a Conscious Communicator?

How to lead with awareness, respect and curiosity

By Tracy Smith

The energy we bring into conversations has the power to influence, connect and transform. Every interaction carries an emotional tone that can create either openness or resistance, understanding or division. Communication is more than words; it is the exchange of presence, emotion, perspective and intention. Often, how we communicate shapes the outcome of a relationship or conflict more than the words themselves.



Conscious communicators create space to listen deeply.

At the heart of conscious communication is the ability to converse with awareness while maintaining emotional balance, respect and openness. It is the practice of expressing your viewpoint honestly while remaining grounded and receptive to another's perspective. It is not about proving who is right, but about creating understanding, connection and the possibility for growth and collaboration.

A conscious communicator understands that every individual's perspective is shaped by personal experiences, beliefs, emotions and an understanding of the world formed by the life one has lived. Rather than reacting, defending or judging immediately, they intentionally create space to listen deeply. Deep listening goes beyond hearing words; it is the willingness to understand the meaning, emotion and intention behind what someone is expressing. It allows others to feel seen, heard, respected and valued—even when perspectives differ.

This requires emotional mastery. In challenging conversations, discomfort, defensiveness, frustration or fear naturally arise. A conscious leader learns not to suppress these emotions, but to observe and direct them intentionally. They pause before reacting, notice their internal response, and choose communication rooted in clarity, composure and respect rather than impulse or judgment.

Frameworks such as Daniel Friedland, M.D.'s "pause | notice | choose" support this process. By pausing, we create space between stimulus and response. By noticing, we become aware of our thoughts, emotions, assumptions and energetic state. By choosing, we respond intentionally rather than unconsciously reacting. This strengthens emotional regulation, self-awareness and the ability to remain grounded even in disagreement or uncertainty.

Curiosity is another essential part of conscious communication. Curiosity keeps us mentally and emotionally open to perspectives different from our own. Instead of asking, "How do I defend my position?" the conscious leader asks:

- What can I learn here?
- What is important to this person?
- Is there a possibility of multiple perspectives?
- Is there a possibility beyond either means of thinking?
- How can this conversation create greater understanding or collaboration?

Continued on page 15

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Should We Return to Full-fat Dairy?

A book review of ‘The Longevity Nutrient’

By Joseph E. Scherger, MD, MPH

Pentadecanoic acid, also known as C15, is a recently recognized saturated fatty acid found primarily in dairy products. Mounting evidence suggests C15 has numerous health benefits that support a return to consuming full-fat dairy.

Author Stephanie Venn-Watson, DVM, MPH, is a veterinary epidemiologist who studies Navy dolphins in San Diego. She argues that dolphins develop many of the same chronic health problems as humans, such as metabolic syndrome and fatty liver disease, and therefore are a more appropriate lab animal to study for human health than are mice, worms or fruit flies. Dr. Venn-Watson has teamed with scientists at the University of California, San Diego to study the health and longevity benefits of C15.

She documented her findings and theories in her recent book, *The Longevity Nutrient: The Unexpected Fat That Holds the Key to Healthy Aging* (2025). The book's primary strength is that it offers numerous lessons in the biology of fatty acids. Reading it, I felt like I was taking a course in fatty acid biology, and the writing style is clear and engaging. (At times, it's almost too informal, such as when she calls iron a “bully.”) Venn-Watson narrates the Audible version, and I listened to it twice to more fully absorb the material. The written text is full of useful reference material; the cited literature is more than 50 pages. Much of the research on C15 and other fatty acids is done outside the United States.

A fascinating part of this book that reflects the author's epidemiology background is its documentation of how Americans' health declined when marketers began pushing nonfat and low-fat milk in the 1970s.

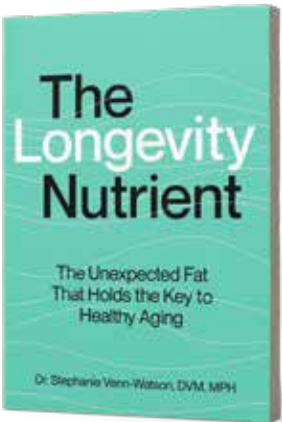
Throughout the book, Venn-Watson argues that C15 meets the criteria of an essential fatty acid because it is required in the diet to meet our basic health needs. Linoleic acid and alpha-linolenic acid are the two traditionally recognized essential fatty acids, meaning they must be obtained through the diet. C15 is not currently included among the essential fatty acids recognized in established U.S. dietary guidance, but Venn-Watson builds the case that it should be. She also argues that C15 is a more promising subject for longevity research than candidates such as metformin or rapamycin (two prescription drugs developed for other purposes that may also have longevity benefits).

C15 is an odd-chain fatty acid, and the book points out its anti-inflammatory benefits. C17, also found in dairy fat, is a close second in its benefits. However, dairy fat also includes even-chain fatty acids C16 and C18, which are proinflammatory and contribute to heart disease and other problems. Hence, dairy fat is a double-edged sword.

If you'd like to understand the current biology of fatty acids, I recommend this book. Afterward, you may find yourself pondering a return to full-fat dairy, butter and cheese for its benefits, or you might consider taking a C15 supplement.

On this point, Venn-Watson has a conflict of interest. She and her husband sell the most available C15 supplement, Fatty 15, and it costs about \$50 a month. They argue that the only way to get the longevity benefits of C15 is by taking a pure supplement

Continued on page 13







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L-Nutra Offers ‘Food as Medicine’ Employer Programs

By Lauren Del Sarto

In our last edition, I wrote about the Fasting-Mimicking Diet (FMD) created by modern longevity expert Valter Longo, PhD.¹ The evidence-based programs from L-Nutra provide nutritional meals that bring your body into a fasting state, leading to cellular reset through ketosis and autophagy.

The health benefits are well documented in peer-reviewed journals via clinical trials with Harvard, Yale, Stanford, UCLA and USC over the past 25 years.² I was so impressed with the results from my first FMD, which the company sent me, that I purchased two more rounds and completed them within the recommended three-month timeframe. From here, I plan to do them quarterly.

Within the last year, L-Nutra’s medical division, L-Nutra Health, started offering its comprehensive program to employers as an employee wellness initiative. It is not a program for a specific condition; rather, anyone can participate to improve metabolic factors, support diabetes remission, or focus on prevention and longevity. Instead of addressing one aspect of health, such as smoking cessation or weight loss, this program promotes lifestyle factors and food as medicine.

Beyond the five-day prepared organic meals, participants receive one-on-one coaching, educational webinars, twice-monthly registered dietitian visits and lab work. Employers receive quarterly outcome reports to track progress.

“Our program specifically incorporates a lifestyle medicine curriculum,” says Ashley Bizzell, RD, LDN, CDCES, L-Nutra’s director of clinical nutrition and global training. “We want to treat the whole person by addressing the foundations of health: nutrition, exercise, sleep, stress management and avoidance of risky substances, while also creating connectivity and purpose.”

The number of companies offering employee wellness programs has increased 107% since the beginning of the pandemic.³ The success of these programs depends largely on the company’s culture, along with the structure and support employees receive.⁴

Bizzell says many programs see a sharp fall-off rate after three months when the initial excitement wears off. However, the average length of stay in L-Nutra Health’s six-month metabolic program is seven months, because most people want to continue. She adds that L-Nutra’s net promoter score (NPS), a global customer loyalty metric, is 85, whereas the global average is 32.⁵ From my experience, I understand why.

“The goal for employers is to reduce healthcare costs by having a healthier workforce,” says L-Nutra’s Vice President of Growth Renee Fitton, MS, RDN. “Our program allows us to effectively measure outcomes through improved biometrics.”

L-Nutra Health offers individualized programs for longevity (3 months), metabolic health (6 months) and diabetes remission (12 months). Employers may choose to offer one or all three programs. Employees then opt to participate and, according to Fitton, appointment retention averages an impressive 95%.

Currently, employers pay for the L-Nutra Health program at a monthly cost of \$149-\$299 per participating employee (if employees discontinue the program, the employer is not charged). This includes all the elements described above, plus one week a month of prepared meals that employees take home. The L-Nutra team handles all implementation, including on-site education by medical professionals.

This year, the company is launching a six-month clinical trial with a large insurer and working toward widespread coverage for the FMD program. Initial outcomes are scheduled to be announced in early 2027.

I love the thought of co-workers taking part in this program together. One of the things I enjoy the most is the educational webinars led by registered dietitians that start each day of the five-day fast. Participants are encouraged to share thoughts, comments and questions, which others answer, creating a strong sense of community, support and inspiration. Identifying your “why” is a motivating part of the program, and the best answer I’ve heard is, “I’m training to be 90.”

The FMD results are very infectious. It’s easy to see how one person’s success can inspire others, building a healthier community at large. Groups, organizations and individuals interested are encouraged to reach out as well.

Lauren Del Sarto is founder/publisher of Desert Health and can be reached at Lauren@DesertHealthNews.com. For more information on the L-Nutra Health employee programs, visit www.l-nutrahealth.com. For more information on the Fasting-Mimicking Diet, visit www.prolonlife.com.

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Should We Return to Full-fat Dairy? Continued from page 12
rather than relying upon the mixed bag of saturated fats from full-fat dairy products. With the number of people taking the C15 supplement growing globally, will this result in a new cohort of super-agers, or just financial success for the author? Since most people cannot afford, or may choose not to take, the supplement, a major weakness of this book is that Venn-Watson fails to provide clear dietary recommendations for achieving healthy C15 levels.

Joseph Scherger is the founder of Restore Health Disease Reversal in Indian Wells, a concierge primary care clinic dedicated to reversing chronic conditions through lifestyle medicine. For more information, call (760) 898.9663 or visit www.restorehealth.me.

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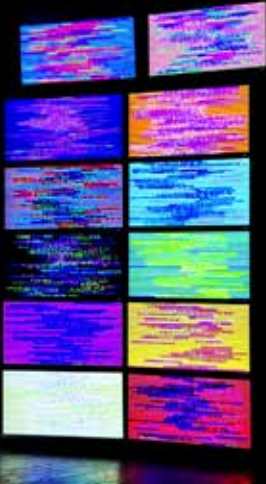
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Living Wellness

with Jennifer Di Francesco



Mindfulness Is Not a Story

At the end of every busy season, I intentionally weave mindfulness back into my life. Usually, this takes the form of a retreat.

This summer, my landing spot was the Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Marin County. Located in the scenic San Geronimo village of Woodacre, the center is built on the traditional land of the Coast Miwok people. At Spirit Rock, retreat and solace are treated with utmost care, and the daily work is meditative silence, watching hummingbirds, turkeys, rabbits, quail and the other natural inhabitants move freely.

At the conclusion of each retreat I take, I realize that some part of living has become overly burdensome, and that the simple act of mindfulness, moment by moment, brings proper perspective back into focus. It's always some deceptively simple message that lands hardest.

On the second day at Spirit Rock, our teacher said, "Mindfulness is not a story." It felt hand-delivered just for me. I'd spent the first day rehearsing stories in my head, my experiences, my wishes for other outcomes, my expectations. All of it fueled my angst. I realized that as long as I stayed wrapped up in the story of the moment, adding to it in my mind, I was swept away.

Stories are the woven threads of our shared human experience. They connect past, present and future into a tapestry of meaning. Writing this is itself a story. My affinity for stories and their beauty has been part of my life. But stories can also harm us. They can build a false narrative and destroy a life. Words shape and shift everything.

Being aware of storytelling's power over the mind is essential to building equanimity, that mind-state of neither pushing away nor pulling toward.

Settling into "right now, it's like this" is a personal proclamation to drop the story. Mindfulness is the moment, just as it presents itself.

Stories are best shared in community, over fire or tea, with those with whom we feel safe. That's where authenticity flourishes. But in silence, alone with ourselves, the mind

will surprisingly take over. With nothing to do, it has to spin a story. Pure mindfulness leads the mind back to neutrality, the way we'd gently lead a child back to safety.

Like the quail moving through the brush, each moment asks us only to be noticed, not narrated.

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



In silence, the mind has a tendency to take over and spin stories.



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Hitting the Pool for Back Pain

By Jessica Super, DPT, CSCS

If you live with low back pain, you know how much it can interrupt your daily life. Sleeping is difficult, chores feel like a burden and even a short walk can be daunting. Moving your body is one of the most reliable ways to reduce back pain over time, and one of the most beginner-friendly places to start moving is in the pool.

Performing guided exercise in warm water with a licensed physical therapist is referred to as aquatic therapy. Many programs take place in chest-deep water, so you don't have to be a swimmer. Aquatic therapy is different from traditional water aerobics as it focuses more on core strength, stability and balance specific to your needs. How does it help?

Buoyancy reduces load on joints and discs. When you're immersed in water, your body "weighs" less because buoyancy offsets gravity. In waist-deep water, you unload about half your body weight; in chest-deep water, about 75%. The lighter load makes it easier to move stiff or painful areas and practice better movement patterns without exacerbating symptoms.

Hydrostatic pressure supports circulation and provides stability. Water exerts a uniform pressure around your body that helps push fluid back toward the heart. This can reduce swelling, improve blood flow and offer a subtle stabilizing "hug" around the trunk. Many people find this makes balance exercises and core activation feel more secure than on land.

Water provides adjustable resistance. If you move slowly, the water resists a little. If you move faster, the water resists more. This makes it easy to adjust effort without weights or machines. Exercises often feel smoother and safer for irritated backs.

Warmth relaxes muscles. Physical therapy pools are usually warmer than lap pools, often in the low 90s F. Warm water helps muscles relax and can make stretching and mobility work more comfortable.

Studies report that when comparing supervised aquatic exercise with standard physical therapy treatments like heat and TENS, water-exercise groups demonstrate greater reductions in pain and disability, with many maintaining those improvements for up to 12 months.



Aquatic exercise can ease the pressure that causes lower back pain.

Aquatic exercises should feel comfortable to moderately challenging, but not painful. You should be able to talk in full sentences while working. A typical session lasts 45-60 minutes and focuses on multiple elements specific to individual needs. For example:

- Warm-up/cardiac endurance:** water walking in different directions.
- Core and lower extremity strength:** standing marches, mini-squats holding the pool rail, hip abduction/adduction and gentle "pull-downs" with a foam noodle to engage core muscles.
- Mobility, range of motion, and stretching:** hamstring and hip flexor stretches at the pool wall, gentle spinal rotations and ankle mobility work.
- Balance:** tandem or single-leg stances.

Who tends to benefit most? Those whose pain worsens with standing or walking and those recovering from a painful flare-up; people with stiffness, low fitness or balance worries; and those who have failed other conservative treatments. Many use the pool to calm pain and restore movement, then transition to land-based therapy.

Aquatic therapy isn't a magic cure, but it is a gentle and often enjoyable way to get meaningful exercise with low back pain. Regular sessions build strength, flexibility and confidence. If low back pain has been keeping you on the sidelines, the pool might be the most comfortable place to start to improve your health.

Jessica Super is a doctor of physical therapy and owner of Dynamic Physical Therapy in Palm Desert. She is a member of Desert Doctors and can be reached at (760) 501.6655. For more information, visit www.desertdoctors.org.

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Targeting Prostate Cancer with Precision

Continued from page 7

Greenwood's leadership role and her international platform highlight the important work of HALO's Indian Wells team; the growing importance of imaging-guided innovation in oncology, and promising new standard-of-care options for those affected by prostate cancer.

Lauren Del Sarto is founder/publisher of Desert Health. For more information on HALO Precision Diagnostics and their work, visit www.halodx.com. Greenwood may be reached at (760) 469.8104, bernadette@halodx.com.

References available upon request.

Are You a Conscious Communicator?

Continued from page 11

Curiosity can transform conflict and opposition into exploration and growth. Rather than seeing differing viewpoints as threats, the conscious communicator recognizes them as opportunities to expand awareness and discover new possibilities.

This mindset also creates flexibility within one's own perspective. Conscious leadership is not rigid attachment to being correct; it is the willingness to remain open while still honoring one's values and truth. Even when viewpoints differ, respectful dialogue and appreciative inquiry can move conversations beyond polarization and toward shared understanding.

Tone, delivery and emotional presence also matter deeply. Respect is communicated not only through words, but through energy, listening, patience, body language and intention. Speaking with calm, kindness and emotional steadiness creates an environment in which meaningful dialogue and resolution can become possible.

Ultimately, conscious communication is the practice of leading conversations—and relationships—with awareness, intentionality, curiosity and respect. In doing so, conversations become more than exchanges of opinion; they become opportunities for connection, collaboration, understanding and transformation.

May we all intentionally choose to communicate consciously, bringing more love, understanding, compassion and curiosity into our beautiful world.

Tracy Smith is an energy medicine practitioner, author and founder of Blissful Release Now and can be reached at tracy.blissfulrelease@gmail.com. www.blissfulreleasenow.com.

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I Wish I Knew a Nine-Year-Old

By Patty Van Santen, DAOM, LAc

Many of my patients and friends tell me they feel so isolated from the technological world around them. QR codes and online health appointments seem beyond their capacity. Without a grandchild or a helpful neighbor to explain things, people can feel helpless to maintain their independence and dignity.

Practicing mindfulness and seeking ways to better navigate and understand this digital universe are important, worthwhile challenges for our aging population. Solutions are always available, though not always apparent. First, we must recognize the issue and shine a light on it.

"I wish I knew a nine-year-old. I'd have brought the lab results from my other doctor," said my patient with resignation.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Apparently, I need to download them from my patient portal. I don't have a computer and couldn't figure it out on my phone. To top it off, they won't give me paper copies unless I make an appointment, and I can't afford another co-pay."

Most of us are uncomfortable with not knowing. We prefer to express confidence and competence even when we have neither. We understood how to "act as if" until enlightenment arrived. However, this strategy is useless in our ever-changing technological universe—especially for the hundreds of millions who grew up with pencils, phonics and the process of elimination as the way to solve problems.

Aging naturally involves a slowing of neurological response time, affecting balance, hand-eye coordination, hearing, vision, memory and countless other functions. Mindfulness invites us to start where we are. We are aging, and it's not for sissies.

Mindfulness starts with anchoring ourselves in the present moment, usually by bringing gentle attention to our inhales, our exhales and the sensations in our body. Developing respect for each moment and each step in a process allows us to defuse future fears of failure. It also helps quiet sabotaging self-talk such as, "I'm too old."

Here are mindful suggestions to help with overwhelming feelings:

1. **Consider: What is my intention in this situation?** Get my lab results, read a document, join a Zoom meeting, etc.
2. **Assess: Is there anyone I can ask?** A friend, child, senior center or doctor's office can walk you through a technological task. Be sure to make an appointment with your helper. Or, try to Google it or ask AI for help.
3. **Write down what you learn, then practice.** Remind yourself that it's okay to not know. Really.
4. **Take a mindful breath often.** Do your best to interrupt frustration before it captivates you. Slow down. Then slow down some more.

Misunderstanding is the necessary prelude to understanding. Seeing no possibilities is the fertile soil from which all possibilities grow. Try smiling with your eyes, and let the corners of your mouth turn upward. You are writing your own travel guide to this brave new world. Be sure to acknowledge each winning step—and each losing step—that eventually brought you here.

The world will continue to evolve, and together we create a clearer path for those who follow. Humans will make mistakes, and from those mistakes, we can learn to love ourselves and each other. Our primary job is to get up every day—and be human.

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

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Age Is Just a Number

By Rita Firestone Seger, DD

"Wow Rita, you look great! How old are you?"
"Sorry, I don't give my age," is always my answer.
The usual response is, "I don't understand," as they tell me how proud I should be. I have to admit there is a little part of my ego that agrees with them, but then again, that's not what is important to me. I'll tell you what is.
There are many things I do to maintain my looks, but what I consider most important is that I *think* young.
And here is why. One day when I was "getting up there," I had a facial and the aesthetician commented on how good my skin looked. I had to agree that it was pretty good for my age, and I told her my age.

With that, she went into a completely different mode, offering to help me down off the table and going on about how much assistance I needed from her. That was my lesson learned. Age is just a number, but when she heard that number, she started treating me differently. In her mind, all people my age needed to be helped. No thank you. I'll let you know if I do.

If I have an ache or pain, I simply tell myself to take care of it and move on. I don't think that because I'm old, it's natural. I think young.

My spirituality is another reason I don't tell my age. My spirituality teaches me that we are all the same, and that we have the same heart. I don't want to be identified by a number that separates me from you.

The mind is a powerful thing, and if I think my age, I am my age. Being young in mind and spirit keeps me from being labeled and put in a box.

I know some will disagree and stick to the pride aspect of aging healthfully, but I can tell you what works for me. Look inside and ponder that. Namaste.

Rita Firestone Seger is a doctor of divinity from American University of Holistic Theology and a published author. She was invited to contribute this editorial after an uplifting conversation with Desert Health Publisher Lauren Del Sarto, and we thank her for her inspiration.



Rita Seger with Desert Health's Lauren Del Sarto

Doing Just Fine (with a Backup Plan)

Lessons from a three-step ladder

By Laurel Fuqua, RN, MSN

I am a registered nurse and geriatric care manager. For years, I have encouraged others to make their homes safer, plan ahead and accept support before a crisis.

Recently, I climbed a three-step ladder while home alone. I fell backward and landed hard on my back. As I lay there taking inventory of what parts of me still moved, a thought floated through my mind: *When am I going to start following my own advice?*

Fortunately, I was able to get up—sore, embarrassed and suddenly much more teachable. The step ladder was promptly moved to the garage, where it now sits out of reach.

A likely cause of my imbalance is the torn meniscus in my knee, and I began to ponder my upcoming surgery. Who will drive me? What will I need at home? Which everyday tasks may be difficult for a while? Who can I call if recovery does not go as expected?

None of this means I am no longer independent. I am fairly healthy, still working and deeply involved in the creative interests and projects I love. And, given the right music, I'm still willing to dance all night.

I am also, apparently, older than I think I am. My mind still assumes I can do everything I did 10 years ago. My body has begun requesting a meeting. The fall gave me new information: The plan that worked for me last year may need a little backup this year.



Changes in our abilities are not verdicts, but simply information.

Independence is not a light switch

We often think of independence as all or nothing. Either we are managing on our own, or we "need help." That leaves out the large and very normal middle ground where many of us live as we age.

You can be capable, active and fully engaged in your life, and still benefit from a grab bar, transportation after a procedure, help with a few household tasks or someone nearby who knows what is going on.

A small change is not a verdict; it is information.

Perhaps you have had a fall or near-fall. Maybe stairs feel harder, recovery takes longer or you have begun avoiding an activity that once felt routine. Perhaps several medications and medical appointments are becoming more difficult to organize, or maybe you live alone and have realized there is no clear backup plan if you become sick or injured.

One change may simply reflect a difficult week. Several changes may suggest that your current plan deserves another look.

The safety device on the dresser

Here is another confession. I own an Apple Watch with fall-detection features. I also have a small emergency-response button designed to look like a pretty necklace. If I press it, I can call for help.

Guess what I was wearing when I fell? Neither one.

My watch was not on my wrist, and the necklace was not around my neck. Both safety devices were resting comfortably somewhere else while I was lying on the floor.

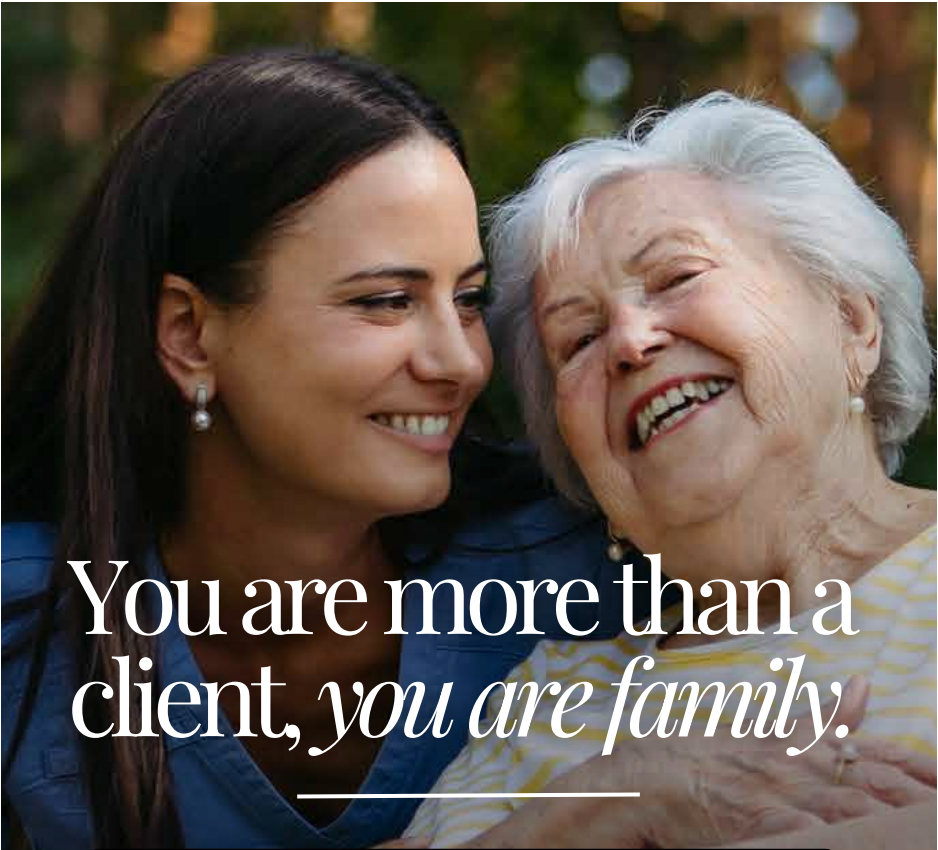
This is not simply a technology problem; it is a very human one.

Why will I rarely leave the house without earrings and lipstick, yet treat a device that could summon help as optional? I brush my teeth every morning without debating whether I am old enough to need toothpaste. Why have I not made putting on my watch

Continued on page 18



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Benefits of Board and Care Homes

By Kendall Forbes

Board and care homes are small, licensed assisted living communities that typically serve a maximum of six residents in a traditional house rather than on a large campus. They provide meals, supervision and personal care in a quieter, more intimate setting. For families unfamiliar with this model, the key distinction is scale: Caregivers are always close by, routines are predictable and the environment feels like a private home instead of a facility.

Because families are increasingly seeking personalized care, these homes are growing in popularity. With fewer residents, caregivers can offer hands-on support, consistent oversight and close monitoring. Most board and care homes operate with one caregiver for every three residents during the day and evening, allowing for strong attention to daily needs. Overnight staffing is typically one caregiver for up to six residents, and what varies is whether the caregiver is awake or asleep. Families should confirm this, especially when placing someone with dementia, fall risk or nighttime needs.

Pricing for board and care homes ranges widely, with basic homes starting around \$3,500 per month while luxury boutique homes can reach \$15,000 monthly. Costs are influenced not only by care level and amenities but also by room type. Shared rooms are more affordable, while private rooms, especially those with private bathrooms, fall at the higher end. Homes with upgraded finishes, larger rooms or enhanced amenities command higher rates.

With over 80 licensed board and care homes in the Coachella Valley, families can choose from a wide variety of environments. Options include pet-friendly homes, faith-based homes, culturally familiar settings, multilingual staff and homes with different caregiver backgrounds. This variety allows families to prioritize what matters most, whether that is a quiet household, a specific cultural connection or simply a warm environment where their loved one feels comfortable.

Board and care homes are ideal for seniors who benefit from close supervision, predictable routines and a calmer setting. They are also well-suited for individuals living with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia, as the smaller environment can reduce overstimulation and make it easier for caregivers to provide safety monitoring, redirection and cueing (a caregiver technique). These homes offer some activities, but not as many as is common at larger assisted living communities. For very active, independent seniors who enjoy outings, events and daily social opportunities, a larger assisted living community may be a better fit. Both models serve important roles; they simply meet different needs.

Many board and care homes support individuals on hospice or those who are bedbound. Not all homes support this level of acuity, but many do, which means residents may not always have peers who are at the same functional level. Families should consider how their loved one will fit into the current resident mix.

Because board and care homes are small and many do not have websites, they can be difficult for families to locate and evaluate on their own. Working with a senior living advisor helps families navigate these differences and match a loved one with the right environment.

Board and care homes play an important role in the Coachella Valley's senior-care landscape. With knowledge and guidance, families can feel confident in choosing a setting that supports safety, dignity and quality of life, whether that is a small, personalized home or a larger assisted living community.

Kendall Forbes is a certified senior care advisor and owner of Assisted Living Locators Greater Palm Springs. He can be reached at (760) 576.3000 or kforbes@assistedlivinglocators.com.



Smaller care homes can feel more personal for residents.

Doing Just Fine (with a Backup Plan)

Continued from page 17

just as automatic? Perhaps it is because we associate emergency buttons and fall detection devices with frailty. Wearing one can feel like admitting that we have crossed some invisible line. But safety devices do not have to represent a loss of independence. They can be part of the routine that protects it.

My new morning checklist may be very simple: brush teeth, apply lipstick, put on earrings...and wear the watch. Not because I am fragile; because I live alone, value my independence and would like to keep dancing.

Of course, any safety device only helps when it is charged, worn and used consistently. Buying it is not the same as building it into daily life.

Meet help before you need help

Many people first think about calling a care manager after a hospitalization, fall or sudden change. By then, everyone is under pressure and decisions must be made quickly. There is another option: establish the relationship earlier.

Care management can begin with a consultation rather than an ongoing commitment. An early visit might include reviewing the home environment, emergency contacts, medications, health care documents, transportation, local resources and plans for an upcoming surgery or change in health.

A care manager may also help arrange a home-safety assessment, identify potential gaps and connect someone with other professionals when a specialized evaluation is needed. Sometimes, one thoughtful assessment and a practical written plan are enough for now. The greater benefit may be knowing whom to call when circumstances change.

Planning ahead does not mean handing over control. It means making decisions while you still have the time, energy and freedom to shape the plan yourself.

A different definition of 'fine'

I still live alone. I still work. I still make art, build new projects and occasionally believe I can do things exactly as I did 10 years ago. But I am paying closer attention now.

I am planning for knee surgery, even though it's not yet scheduled. I am looking at my home with fresher eyes. I am working on making safety devices part of getting dressed rather than something I will wear "when I really need them." Most importantly, I am becoming more comfortable with the idea that asking for a little help early may be one of the best ways to remain independent longer.

I am still fine. I have simply decided that "fine" can include grab bars, a recovery plan, a watch on my wrist—and enough wisdom to leave the ladder in the garage.

Laurel Fuqua, RN, MSN, is a registered nurse and geriatric care manager serving as regional director with About Senior Solutions Coachella Valley. She can be reached at (760) 338.3170 or laurelfuqua@aboutseniorsolutions.com.

Sources: 1) National Institute on Aging. Aging in Place: Growing Older at Home and Home Safety Tips for Older Adults; 2) Aging Life Care Association. What You Need to Know About Aging Life Care.

www.DesertHealthNews.com

September/October 2026



Cardio Versus Strength Training After 40

For decades, we were told cardio was king. Walk more, run more, get your heart rate up, burn calories. Cardio absolutely has its place, but somewhere along the way, most adults over 40 got the message that cardio was enough. It isn't.

Cardio is excellent for your heart, lungs, circulation and mood. A brisk 30-minute walk most days of the week is one of the best things you can do for your health. It also helps with sleep, stress and blood sugar control. If you're doing zero cardio right now, adding some will help you feel better within weeks.

However, cardio does not build muscle. It doesn't protect bone density. It doesn't improve your balance in any meaningful way. It doesn't stop the muscle loss that accelerates in your 40s and beyond. And it doesn't do much for your metabolism once the workout is over.

This is the part that catches people off guard. You can walk five miles a day and still lose muscle, still see bone density decline, still watch your balance quietly get worse. Cardio alone isn't enough to protect the things that matter most as you age.

Strength training builds muscle, which is a significant predictor of independence after 60. It protects bone density, critical for anyone worried about osteoporosis or fractures. It improves balance, which prevents falls. It raises your resting metabolism because muscle burns calories even when you're not using it. And it directly improves your ability to do what real life demands: getting up off the floor, carrying groceries, playing with grandkids, maneuvering a suitcase through the airport.

If you had to pick one over the other, strength training is the answer for most adults over 40. Luckily, you don't have to choose. Cardio and strength training aren't in competition; they do different jobs. Think of it this way: Cardio keeps the engine running; strength training keeps the whole car from falling apart. You want both, and you want them for life.

The ideal routine for most adults over 40 looks something like this: two to three strength sessions a week, 30 to 50 minutes each, plus daily walking, ideally outside, for general activity and cardiovascular health. That's the entire program for the vast majority of people.

If you're already doing cardio and nothing else, adding strength training is the single most impactful change you can make. If you're doing neither, start with walking daily and add strength training two days a week. If you're already doing both, you're ahead of 90% of people your age.

Cardio adds years to your life. Strength training adds life to your years. You want both.

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



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Sweet Potato Pudding

Plantrician-approved recipe by Andréa Dunnam

Orange sweet potatoes are loaded with beta-carotene, a powerful antioxidant that supports immune function, eye health and healthy skin. In this recipe, their natural fiber helps steady blood sugar levels and keeps you satisfied, while the coconut milk adds a silky texture with no dairy required. A touch of maple syrup, warm spices and a sprinkle of toasted pecans turn simple whole-food ingredients into a dish that's cozy, nourishing and just sweet enough. This is one of those recipes that proves comfort food and vibrant health can happily share the same spoon.

Yield: 4 cups

Ingredients:

- 3 Orange sweet potatoes (medium to large)
- 1 can Unsweetened coconut milk
- ¼ cup Pure maple syrup
- 1 tsp. Pure vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. Ground cinnamon
- ⅛ tsp. Nutmeg (optional)
- ¼ cup Toasted pecans, chopped or whole (optional garnish)

Directions:

- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
- Line a baking sheet with a silicone mat, parchment paper or aluminum foil. Place the sweet potatoes on the sheet and bake for one hour until they are very soft.
- After removing them from the oven, allow them to cool and then remove the outer skin. You should have about 2¼ cups of mashed potatoes.
- Place sweet potatoes, coconut milk, maple syrup, vanilla and cinnamon in a blender and blend until silky smooth (a hand mixer works well too).
- Taste and adjust sweetness/spices.
- Transfer to bowls or jars, cover and refrigerate for a minimum of one hour. The pudding will thicken as it cools.
- Garnish with toasted nuts or a dusting of cinnamon.

Notes: Sweet potatoes can be baked, boiled or steamed. Canned sweet potato puree works well too; however, canned sweet potatoes are typically packed in syrup, which makes them less healthy. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to four days.

Andréa Dunnam, director of events for The Plantrician Project, is a passionate plant-based cook known for her simple, approachable recipes. At the annual Power of the Plate medical conference, she helps curate the plant-based meals served throughout the event, bringing the power of lifestyle medicine to life through food. For more information, visit www.poweroftheplate.org.





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Eat, drink and be healthy

Satisfying substitutes | By Lauren Del Sarto

One of the hardest parts of making healthier choices is giving up foods we love. We've got you! In this column, we suggest satisfying substitutes for all your comfort foods: ice cream, chips, pastas, baking flours, even football grub, all available at www.DesertHealthNews.com.

With apple pie season upon us, let's take a look at healthier sugar substitutes. We can all cut back on the sweet stuff, and plenty of options are available these days. Allulose, monk fruit and stevia are three of my favorites, but each shines in different applications.

Allulose is a low-calorie sugar found in tiny amounts in figs, raisins and maple syrup. The body passes most of it out without turning it into energy, so it has little impact on blood glucose. It is great for baking as it can be used at a 1:1 ratio to sugar. It provides bulk, dissolves easily, retains moisture and browns like conventional sugar. However, it isn't as sweet as table sugar, so results can be noticeably less sweet. Adding small amounts of monk fruit is a perfect way to enhance sweetness.

Monk fruit grows on a vine and is native to southern China. In its pure extract form, it contains virtually no calories or carbohydrates and does not appear to affect blood glucose. Because concentrated monk fruit extract can be 100-250 times sweeter than table sugar, manufacturers tend to blend it with other products, so it is important to read labels. Very small amounts are needed to sweeten just about anything—smoothies, sauces, coffee, and, of course, baking recipes to enhance allulose. It is available in both powder form and liquid drops.

Stevia, a naturally sweet leaf, is my favorite. Like monk fruit, it has virtually no carbs or calories and doesn't appear to affect blood glucose. Pure extracts are 200-400 times sweeter than sugar, so it's an excellent choice when bulk isn't important. It comes in both liquid and powder form, which I add to coffee, shakes, teas and as a replacement in recipes calling for small amounts of maple or date syrups. For those who sense a bitter aftertaste with stevia, monk fruit may be a better choice.

This fall, enjoy your sweet baked goods and pumpkin spice lattes “sugar-free” with these satisfying substitutes!

Lauren Del Sarto is founder/publisher of Desert Health. Let us know what comfort foods you'd like us to feature next! Lauren@DesertHealthNews.com.



Monk fruit and stevia are available in powder and liquid form (AI image).



Healthy Happenings

Desert Health® is proud to support these community events.
We look forward to seeing you out and about!

SEPTEMBER 10 • Healthy Desert, Healthy You Summit

The third annual summit shifts focus to healthcare access, behavioral health, workforce development and housing. Omni Rancho Las Palmas, Rancho Mirage. 7:30a-3:30p. Free and open to all. www.healthideserthealthyyou.com. (See p.22)



SEPTEMBER 10 • Women Leaders Forum's Season Opener

Join an evening of celebration, connection and preview of this season's inspirational programming. Classic Club, 5:30-7:30p. Tickets: Members free/Non-members: \$45. www.WLFDesert.org.

SEPTEMBER 18 • Extreme Heat Summit 2026

The City of Palm Springs invites all to an educational day with extreme heat experts sharing systems and services designed for resilience. Palm Springs Convention Center. 9a-5p. Tickets: \$25. <https://extremeheatsummit2026.eventbrite.com>. (See p.3)

OCTOBER 1 • Women Leaders Forum's Let's Interact Series: Her Health

Presented in partnership with Desert Oasis Healthcare. Expert panelists lead a candid, practical conversation about women's health. Classic Club, 5:30-7:30p. Tickets: \$45 Members/\$55 Non-members. www.WLFDesert.org.

OCTOBER 3 • BBBS Walk & Wellness Festival

A festive walk, wellness expo and fitness demonstrations in support of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Desert's mentoring programs. Old Town La Quinta. 9a-12p. Walk tickets: \$35/adults/ \$20/children (under 5 free). www.BBBSDesert.org/events. (See p.22).



OCTOBER 5-6 • Incident Management Summit

Schools and organizations are encouraged to come learn emergency preparedness for incidents ranging from acts of violence to severe weather from public safety and emergency response experts. Wellspring Church, Indian Wells. Tickets: \$350/person and \$500/two guests. www.incidentmanagementsummit.org. (See p.22)

OCTOBER 16-18 • Miracle Hill Spa Association Wellness Weekend

An immersive weekend featuring wellness speakers, activities, classes and spa day passes. Desert Hot Springs. Tickets: \$49-\$149. www.miraclehillspas.com. (See p.23)



NOVEMBER 5 • VIM Awards

Volunteers in Medicine presents an unforgettable evening celebrating community and compassion. Honorees include Frank and Mary Ann Xavier. Wine dinner, auction and entertainment included. The Show at Agua Caliente, Rancho Mirage. 5-9p. Tickets: \$350. www.CVVIM.org.



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Summit to Feature Prominent Public Health Leaders

Two prominent public health leaders will headline the Desert Healthcare District & Foundation's third annual Healthy Desert, Healthy You Summit, bringing decades of experience in health equity, healthcare access and population health to our valley. The event takes place Thursday, Sept. 10, at the Omni Rancho Las Palmas Resort & Spa in Rancho Mirage and registration is free.

Together, the two speakers will help frame this year's focus on addressing the social determinants of health that shape the well-being of Coachella Valley residents, including healthcare access, behavioral and mental health, healthcare workforce development and housing.

Angelica Geter, DrPH, a nationally recognized public health strategist, will open the day's keynote presentations. She served as chief health officer for the City of Atlanta and senior health and equity advisor for 26Health's Atlanta expansion, where she helped expand healthcare access for more than 300,000 residents.

As one of the consultants guiding the Desert Healthcare District & Foundation's new five-year strategic plan, Dr. Geter has spent months meeting with nonprofit organizations, community leaders and residents throughout the valley.

Later, attendees will hear from Takashi Wada, MD, MPH, vice president of population health and CalAIM, California's initiative to improve Medi-Cal services, for the Inland Empire Health Plan. As the summit's "Call to Action" keynote speaker, he will challenge the audience to turn inspiration into action and answer the question: *What can I do to help?*

Local media personalities will serve as panel moderators, including NBC Palm Springs' Thalia Hayden and Olivia Sandusky; KESQ's Katie Boer, Patrick Evans and Laurilie Jackson; KUNA Telemundo's Herán Quintas; *The Palm Springs Post's* Kendall Balchan and *Desert Health's* Lauren Del Sarto.

For more information and registration, visit www.HealthyDesertHealthyYou.com.



Angelica Geter, DrPH



Takashi Wada, MD, MPH

Walk & Wellness Festival Brings Community Together

By Judy Tobin May

The mental health of our children is one of the most important issues facing the Coachella Valley today. While there is no single solution, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Desert believes one powerful part of the answer is simple: connection.

That is why we are hosting our second annual Walk & Wellness Festival on Saturday, Oct. 3, in Old Town La Quinta, from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Designed to bring youth, families and community members together, the event begins with a scenic walk from Main Street to the La Quinta Community Park. The route will feature fun fitness activities such as jump rope, hula hoop challenges, basketball tosses, and other interactive stations that encourage movement while providing a healthy break from screens and video games.

The celebration continues with wellness vendors, health resources and interactive demonstrations of yoga, Pilates and tai chi. Families can also enjoy a Kids Zone with crafts, face painting, games and other activities. Raffle prizes and goodie bags will add to the fun.

Proceeds from the event directly support BBBS's free one-to-one mentoring programs, providing valley youth with support aimed at building confidence, developing healthy relationships and learning to navigate life's challenges. We hope to see you there!

Tickets for the walk are \$35 for adults and \$20 for children (under 5 are free). The wellness festival is free and open to all. For more information and registration, visit www.BBBSdesert.org (see Events) or call (760) 568.3977.



Activities and experiences will encourage movement for all ages.

Incident Management Summit Helps Schools Prepare for Emergencies

Schools face a growing number of emergencies from medical incidents and behavioral health crises to fires, severe weather, hazardous materials and acts of violence. Emergency responders play a vital role, but in the initial minutes of a crisis, those already on campus are often the first to act.

Coachella Valley educators, administrators, school safety personnel and community partners can learn how to better prepare by attending the Incident Management Summit Oct. 5-6 at Wellspring Church in Indian Wells. Hosted by Code-4 Forums: Project, Prepare, Protect and supported by our local high school medical health academies, the event will provide practical, real-world strategies that can be implemented immediately.

Luncheon speakers include Opal Singleton, president and CEO of Million Kids, a Riverside-based nonprofit that works to prevent human trafficking and child exploitation, and an adviser to the Riverside County Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force. She will be joined by Tom Mauser, whose son, Daniel, was killed in the 1999 Columbine High School shooting. Singleton will address the growing dangers facing youth in digital environments, including sextortion, AI-generated deepfakes, chatbots, online exploitation and the use of digital currency to trap and control young victims.

All are invited to attend this event uniting some of the brightest minds in public safety, emergency response, education and administration. Discover cutting-edge strategies, tools and best practices to create safer, more resilient campuses and organizations.

Tickets for the two-day summit are \$350/person or \$500/two guests. Oct. 5-6 at Wellspring Church in Indian Wells. For more information and registration, visit www.incidentmanagementsummit.org.



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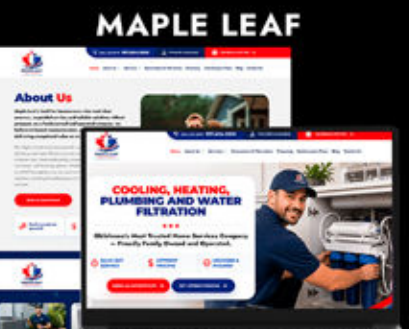
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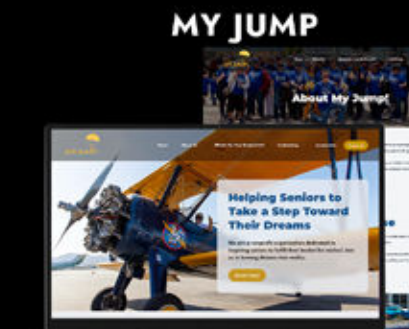
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THE
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CODE