All the things that truly matter, beauty, love, creativity, joy and inner peace arise from beyond the mind.

— Eckhart Tolle
Dear Readers,

At this time of year, I find that I have so much to be grateful for. Often as I take my morning walk, I think about my many blessings.

My life has not been a panacea by any means. There have been troubles and tribulations of various sorts over the years and some of them seemed like they would never resolve — yet they did. As I look at my life, both past and present, I find that I have been graced with a wonderful life. And, one full of adventure, with many interests and much to challenge me. I could not ask for more.

I also realize that I have been, and still am, very privileged — privileged to share love and sorrow, life and death, deep tears and joy. I have known many friends, both the two legged and four legged variety as well as in the green world of trees and plants. My life is rich and I am deeply grateful.

I am also grateful for the amazing journey that Energy Magazine has led me on and for its wonderful authors and subscribers. The November/December 2018 issue marks our one hundredth issue. We started as really a small newsletter for the Healing Touch Community in 2006 and have grown into a robust online magazine with thousands of subscribers. When I look back I find myself in awe of the number of amazing people I have met on this journey.

Some authors, such as Cyndi Dale, have been with us since our inception. Others have repeatedly committed to writing and helping us meet the needs of our subscribers and making the magazine what it is today. Others of you are writing for the first time. What wonderful gifts each of you has given us.
I want to thank each of you — authors, subscribers, advertisers — for your participation and dedication. Again, I count my blessings for each one of you.

In the spirit of gratitude, we are gifting you with a Gratitude Journal that we created. (Find the link to download your copy on page 14.) I hope you find it useful in expressing your gratitude. Pass it along to others as you see fit.

May each of you have a wonderful and blessed holiday season.

Margaret

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Nancy Hausauer has been practicing energy healing for 25 years. She maintains a private practice in Tacoma, Washington, helping people access transformative processes of healing, spiritual expansion and reclaiming inborn gifts. She is passionate about making energy healing widely accessible and also publishes an informational website that reaches 45,000 visitors per month. She is the author of *Chakra Care: Do-It-Yourself Energy Healing For A More Joyful, Loving, Fruitful Life*. Learn more at [www.The-Energy-Healing-Site.com](http://www.The-Energy-Healing-Site.com).

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Melanie Smith is a Doctor of Oriental Medicine who is passionate about helping people experience the healing power of Energy Medicine. She integrates a unique fusion of Energy Medicine, sound healing, acupuncture, oriental medicine and nutrition to meet the individual needs of her clients. Dr. Melanie has a private practice in St. Petersburg, Florida and also works with clients via Skype in over 40 countries. She teaches worldwide and now has Online Educational Programs. Go to [www.WellWithin.net](http://www.WellWithin.net).
1. **We perform ceremonies to mark important events and celebrate holidays** — yet our modern approach to ceremony only scratches the surface of its true potential. With *The Book of Ceremony*, shamanic teacher Sandra Ingerman presents a rich and practical resource for creating ceremonies filled with joy, purpose and magic. “We are hungry to connect with more than what we experience with our ordinary senses in the material world,” writes Sandra. “By performing ceremonies, you will find yourself stepping into a beautiful and creative power you might never have imagined.” In this practical guidebook, Ingerman shares essential instruction for ceremonies that combine the power of your intention, the support of family and community and the aid of the spirit world. When you invoke the sacred power of ceremony, you tap into one of the oldest and most effective tools for transforming both yourself and the world.

2. The effects of spiritual practices are now being investigated scientifically as never before, and many studies have shown that religious and spiritual practices generally make people happier and healthier. In this pioneering book, Rupert Sheldrake shows how science helps validate seven practices on which many religions are built, and which are part of our common human heritage: meditation, gratitude, connecting with nature, relating to plants, rituals, singing and chanting, and pilgrimage and holy places. Sheldrake argues that by opening ourselves to the spiritual dimension, we may find the strength to live more fulfilling lives.

3. Heidi Light, a family counselor and certified hypnotherapist, asserts that we are in desperate need of guidance and standards so that we can approach the world of intuition, energy and mysticism from a healthy and respectful place. Drawing from her more than forty years as a medical intuitive, empath and energy tracker Light offers practical, simple solutions to the alarming lack of boundaries in the fields of intuition and Energy Medicine. This book explains the traditional psychological model of ethics and outlines an ethical energetics model as a framework for moving through the process of accessing intuitive information and working with energy.

4. In 52 beautifully illustrated cards, beloved spiritual teacher and author Toshia Silver uses her accessible, slightly quirky style to convey her key teaching messages of Surrender and Offering to Divine Will. These messages are, at their essence, about releasing attachment to ego-defined outcomes. Each card addresses a particular situation—Aging, Ambition, Money, Regrets, Solitude, Travel, Truth—with a comment or invocation that encourages you to offer your pain around this situation to the Divine, and to call in Divine Will for the highest outcome.

**For more information or to purchase click on the title’s image.**
5] Referring to a cutting-edge scientific theory of synchronicity, Sky Nelson-Isaacs presents a model for living “in the flow” — whether at home or at work — which allows for a more flexible relationship with daily experiences. The world wraps itself around our choices; and working with synchronicity gives us an idea of what to do next. When we align with circumstance, circumstance aligns with us. Sky tells us how our choices create meaning. If we understand how the responsivity of the cosmos works, then we can develop an informed relationship to meaning-making and purposefulness in our lives.

6] We are a generation trying to make sense of the world and find our purpose. At the same time, we are constantly battling an age that drowns us with information, in a society that has become conditioned to be mistrusting and cynical. Despite this, our hearts still yearn to connect more deeply and feel like we belong to a world that is compassionate and loving. Within each of us is an untapped power to create the change we desire in our lives. This change not only benefits us personally, but everyone around us. The key to unlocking our true selves starts by accepting the responsibility of this power and using it to look within.

7] Brother John is the true story of a meaningful encounter between a man going through a mid-life crisis, and an umbrella-wielding Trappist monk. This magical encounter on Christmas Eve eventually leads the author, and us all, to the redemptive power of an authentically purposeful life. Uplifting, deeply moving, Brother John is dramatically brought to life by over twenty full color paintings by Glenn Harrington, a multiple award-winning artist. Brother John’s inspirational message takes place at Christmastime, and its inspirational message and rich illustrations are sure to bring the reader back again and again throughout the year.
Healing and Grocery Shopping: More Alike Than Not

I do not know about you, but I have amazing grocery shopping fantasies. Before arriving at the store, I review all exotic purchasing possibilities, from kumquats to gherkins. I imagine the flavors I could add to my basic stew with freshly picked basil or a pinch of cumin and how impressive I would appear if I baked an entire dish inside the unexpected, say, a coconut shell.

Of course, the numbers of meals I could concoct is theoretical. In the end, no matter how creative my musings, I buy the same items every shopping trip. Given that I skip breakfast this means that I eat the same two basic dishes every day.

It is not that I am totally uninspired. Once in a while, well, at Christmas, I serve a pretty complex meal. The fact that it includes lutefisk and lefse makes me a true culinary hero. But short of employing my speed-dial healthy Chinese take-out app, I pretty much make the same two repasts. And you know what? Despite the tips and techniques I learned over the decades, my energy healing sessions also reduce to two main approaches.

In short, I either help clients figure out why they feel disconnected or how to know themselves as connected. If everything is going great, we might accomplish both.

Baseline — all presenting issues and their symptoms reduce to the failure to know oneself as not only worthy of connection, but already connected. That statement applies to the relationship with aspects of the self, others, nature and Spirit.

Think about it. If a client believes themselves separated from an aspect of themselves, such as an inner wounded child, that aspect of them will be bereft, lonely and hard to reach. If thinking of themselves as distinct from others, they will not allow assistance. If supposing that they are detached from nature, medicines might not work. And if they consider Spirit to be non-existent or non-caring, they certainly will not believe in energetic power, making your job as an energy healer all the more difficult.

Hence, the first of the two main functions to perform when serving a client is to figure out how to fill in this blank statement for them:

“Thinking themselves disconnected, my client believes themselves. . .”

There are dozens of negative beliefs that could be plugged in. A sampling of a few, along with their specific meanings, follows.

- **Unworthy**: A distortion of perfectionism that makes people shy away from receiving available goodness.
- **Undeserving**: The sense of being so despicable that intimacy and bonding are outside of the realm of possibility.
- **Lacking in value**: Occurs when self-esteem is so low that the inner self, overly fragile, can be easily wounded.
- **Not enough**: An imprisoning comparison issue that convinces an individual that success is only possible by faking it.
- **Bad or evil**: The inability to embrace the shadow-self, which contains emotions undealt with, thoughts, events or desires. Without a love of — and forgiveness for — the shadow, the self gets labeled as bad.
- **Unlovable**: The result of abandonment that leaves the victim so lonely that they do not know how to bond.
- **Powerless**: The leftover feelings if control and basic rights have been stripped away. Under pressure, an individual will either collapse or act over-responsibly.
- **Defective**: We are all different. The belief in being defective results from a combination of loneliness and the
thought of being so unusual or wounded that one cannot possibly be accepted.

- *Entitled:* Occurs when prior difficulties and life events result in believing oneself so special that it is okay to engage in behaviors, or make demands of others, that are socially unacceptable.

No matter how many of these negative thought forms show up, it is important to know that all blocks are congested light. This means that once addressed, which can be accomplished through talking, energetic healing, regression work and any other number of activities, what remains but power. This pure energy — this light — is now available for connection. At this point, we show the client that they are and actually have always been bonded within themselves, with the better aspects of others, with the beauty of nature and with the loving presence of Spirit.

Sometimes a client can make the leap to connectivity without probing their areas of disconnect. This is lovely. Other times, pointing out unity makes the areas of separation rise. When we attend to beliefs such as those being outlined, they can be attended to. No matter what, the truth of wholeness that must be brought into the client’s awareness.

I find it comforting that healing does not require the unusual, outlandish and bizarre, any more than our most nourishing meals do. It all reduces — and uplifts — to connection.

Cyndi Dale is the author of *The Subtle Body: An Encyclopedia of Your Energetic Anatomy,* and eight other bestselling books on energy healing. She has worked with over 30,000 clients in the past 20 years. To learn more about Cyndi, her work, books and products please visit: [www.CyndiDale.com](http://www.CyndiDale.com).

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Purpose: This phase is the power of the mirror that reflects accurately.

Stimulus: Is this mirror truly reflecting what my initial goals were? Did I wander off course? Did I pile up things that are not working?

Metal phase is the time of cutting to the core. What you endeavored and what sits created before you — does any of that need pruning? Metal is the manifestation of integrity of the spirit and clarity of the soul. This is the phase where we ask ourselves, “Do I have a sense of a job well done? Do I have the resolve to shift course if necessary? What is working? What is not?”

Truth: I am able to discern — differentiate what I need and what I do not need.

Best of Metal energy: Cool, Focused, Full of Grace

Hardest of Metal energy: Detached, Arrogant, Nitpicky

Greatest Virtue: Appreciation and Acceptance

Greatest Talent: Integrity — being true to your own values

Acupoints to hold to for common Metal issue phases.

Large Intestine 4 — Traditional name is Joining of the Valley. Large Intestine 4 is the strongest point on the Large Intestine meridian to clear and expel the mind, body and spirit of toxins, negative thoughts and resentments. This point is also called the Great Eliminator and will bring calmness and renewal through emotional release. This point is considered a purifier of mind, body and spirit. This point is considered a forbidden point when pregnant.

Lung 2 — Traditional name is Cloud Gate. Cloud Gate connects with Heavenly Qi — Heavenly Qi is defined as inspiration and the power of awe. This point helps one see through the clouds of negativity and restores self-esteem and a knowing that one can succeed. This point enhances the breath and brings fresh air to the body or circumstance.

Exercises that help Metals process excess chi: yoga and any exercise that specifically focuses on breath. Any aerobic movement, such as running or walking, that practices rhythmic breathing can be considered an excellent Metal exercise. Rhythmic Breathing is inhaling for three-foot...
Dr. Sara has studied all things energy for over 35 years. She has a private energy practice in Asheville, NC. Dr. Sara has taught energy techniques and modalities to thousands of students all over the world. She has authored over 30 papers and is the author of the class *Money Matters: Energy Solutions for Correcting and Creating a Consistent Flow of Money*. Her personal aspiration is to instill in her students the expectation of prosperity in an energy science practice. It is her vision that when the Energy Medicine practitioner is equitably compensated, and can depend on career longevity, the world will begin to embrace these essential health-giving skills that have thrived for 1000’s of year in droves. Learn more at GoodForYouEnterprises.com or contact@drsaraallen.com.

In five lines here is what we have studied together this year:

**Water**: Imagine what you want.

**Wood**: Create an environment that moves you forward.

**Fire**: Do not forget to stop and enjoy the fireworks of your creation.

**Earth**: Relax and fall into the rhythm of your daily routine.

**Metal**: Reflect and let go of what is not working to make space for something better.

Congratulations on a job well done.

As is true to the Five Elements — Metal Element is considered the end of a cycle — and this Metal column brings us to the end of this series.
Abundance

“To give, to do, to love, to serve, out of a sense of abundance” is our lasting purpose motto at Life University and this sentiment guides many of us not only in our professional lives but personally as well. The last quarter of the year is a time when we typically gather with family and friends to give thanks. Whether we share dinner, go to parties or just get together casually, our focus shifts to acknowledging others and their impact on our lives. We make time to reach out to old friends and purchase gifts to remind others of what they mean to us. Expressing gratitude and sharing with others is the traditional experience that we have come to expect and to anticipate joyfully.

While festivities overflow, introspection can creep up on us. Nothing gives us pause to think as poignantly as the contrasting feeling between what we have, what we want and the vast chasm between ourselves and those in constant need. For every dollar spent on token or useless gifts, there are those that will never have enough. The reality is that many mothers put their children to bed hungry and face the fact that they cannot provide daily. Many a dark night is faced by lonely souls yearning for human contact. This season, I challenge everyone to operate from the sense of abundance that they may have and reach out to make a difference.

At Life University, lasting purpose is operationalized with standards of employee behavior that we are all urged to model in and out of the classroom, on and off campus. It begins with the attitude of helpfulness where we strive for our actions to help our common purpose, all while maintaining an appreciative attitude. Giving, serving and doing are three discrete acts of engagement that can bring about healing to the giver as well as to the receiver. There is an unlimited abundance of universal energy that is there for everyone to tap into; it is there to flow through us and to give away. When we choose to share energy, we heal. Healers know this.

As discussed in the last issue, food and love are integrally intertwined. Sharing food both heals hunger and often allows the giver to give love. Below are some ideas for engagement with others that can help to nourish a body and a soul. These three ideas relate to the notions of giving, doing and serving.

1. GIVE: Donate food or money to an organization whose mission is to feed the hungry. Be specific. Would you like to help feed children, seniors, immigrants or the homeless? Supporting animals may be your thing. There are many of Earth’s creatures who can benefit from equitable distribution of good and services.

2. DO: Invite a senior citizen to share a meal. An interesting article found that interpersonal sensitivity and social support satisfaction uniquely predicted quality of life among rural older adults. What this tells us is that older folks gain more from a shared meal than just the food. Do something! If you do not have an older relative or friend, find a senior center with game night. Show up with a plate of homemade cookies and play scrabble. Your heart will sing with joy when you spread joy to others.

3. SERVE: Volunteer in a congregate feeding facility or for Meals-on-Wheels. Research shows that volunteers feel a sense of altruism. Sustainability of charitable feeding operations depends on both resources and volunteers. Charities depend on donors and donating feels good! This is a win-win. If you are skeptical of shysters, then do your homework. There are honest organizations and honest people who will appreciate your work. Willingness to serve the community and fellow man are as important as any of your other pursuits. Life University recognizes that each individual has been given certain gifts and as a citizen in the world community, it is the duty to give, to
do, to love and to serve out of our own abundance. Please consider your abundance when choosing to share with others this season.

Denise Pickett-Bernard PhD, RDN, LDN  
Currently, Dr. Dee is completing an advanced training certificate program, Integrative and Functional Medical Nutrition Therapy (IF-MNT), in order to provide the most innovative and scientifically up to date techniques for health restoration and healing. She believes that there can be organic, psychological and spiritual impediments to vibrancy and seeks to discover the root cause of a client’s complaints while providing a variety of healing modalities.  

www.DrDeeNutrition.com

References
SEEN BETTER

Love grants us:
Realities past sight —
Seeing “implausibility” as a worthy challenge,
A game worth creating. . .

Love grants us:
A sacred space,
Connections and talents,
Powers past rejection.

Energies that smile,
Knowing “Impossible” — Is just a moment,
A Deficiency of Dreamers.

Hearts that see — Looking past the Wall,
Window makers — Never fearing failure,
Wielding eyes and minds,
Willing to deconstruct — Old ideas of Now . .

Willing to see,
Tumors fall away . .

Willing to witness,
The hopeless story stand.
A testimony to love — A proof of Hope.

Seen because they look,
Seen because they live,
Seen because they love.

– Richard E. Palmquist, DVM, GDVCHM, ACCHVM

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Gratitude is a self-care practice that will enhance your life. The simple act of being grateful can reduce stress, free you from anxiety, block negative emotions, help you sleep better, improve your physical health, offer hope and help you understand what it truly matters to you. The Gratitude Journal pages are designed to offer a place to explore and write.

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During the holidays, I love baking and sharing baked goods with family and friends. In my family, we celebrated “St. Nick’s Day” — December 6. I am not sure of the origin of this tradition although I was told it comes from my German heritage. We always received small, practical gifts on this day as well as cookies and fruit. I still celebrate this tradition and ship cookies, Christmas bread, applesauce, homemade jams and a small practical gift to my siblings. Each year I purchase practical items that I think a family member can use — socks, gloves, towels, a beautiful mug. Every year I start baking in time to have a fragrant package delivered by December 6th. I love each step that goes in the process.

I have my mother’s recipes — the ones she lovingly baked for years. She is long gone now, but each year as I bake she watches over my shoulder. And each year as my siblings open their goodies, they write how the smells and taste bring back wonderful memories. I would like share a couple of the simple cookie recipes that have brought us such pleasure over the years. — Margaret Nies

**CHRISTMAS TREE COOKIES** *(for press)*

Ingredients:
- 1 cup shortening (butter preferred)
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 1/4 cups sifted flour
- 1/8 teas salt
- 1/4 teas baking powder
- 1 teas almond extract
- Decorations – colored or powdered sugar

1. Cream shortening adding sugar gradually
2. Sift dry ingredients together
3. Add unbeaten egg, sifted dry ingredients and flavoring – mix well

Place on ungreased sheets
Oven temp 350
Time 10 –12 minutes

**CHRISTMAS COOKIES** *(for cookie cutters)*

Ingredients:
- 1 cup butter
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teas vanilla
- 1 1/2 cup nuts - chopped (hazel nuts or walnuts)
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 2 teas baking powder
- 1 teas cinnamon
- Decorations or icing as desired

1. Cream shortening adding sugar gradually
2. Beat eggs and add
3. Add dry ingredients and flavoring
4. Roll out dough and cut cookies

Use greased sheets
Oven temp 350
Time 10 minutes
Nature Connection — The Pathway to Rediscovering Our True Nature

Ian Banyard

Nature gives rise to all life, including our own. Our bodies and minds originated in the natural world and are made up of nature’s elements. We are nature and part of something much greater than ourselves.

On a warm and fresh spring day in 2014 I went for a long wander in nature looking for answers to the question — How can I bring the ‘me’ I am in nature back into my day-to-day life?

I was approaching my 53rd birthday. I had remarried four years earlier after finding love again. For the first time in my life I had financial security and the freedom to live my life my way. But what was my way? I had no idea.

For years I had been living a life based on the expectations of others. I had been a dutiful son, an older brother, a loving husband, a responsible father, an efficient employee, a good friend, a helpful neighbour and many more roles that forced me to be the person others needed and wanted me to be.

That spring morning in 2014 I was feeling lost, unfulfilled, stressed, irritable and disillusioned. My wife suggested I go for a long walk in nature, with no destination in mind, offering to come and pick me up when I had walked-off my mood. She knows that when I immerse myself in nature, it not only helps me recharge my energy levels, but also enables me to tap into what we refer to as ‘Cosmic Google.’

Connecting with nature is like having my smart phone constantly plugged into a power source with full bars of superfast WiFi on tap. I am at my best. My body is energised and my mind is sharp. I get all my best ideas when I am walking in nature. It is as if I can plug into Cosmic Google and download brilliant ideas and solutions to improve my life. Have you noticed how smart phones are not very ‘smart’ when they have low battery life and no WiFi signal? Many people in today’s busy world seem to be operating on less than 10% battery-life and poor or no WiFi signal.

When I am in nature I am the me I want to be.

Most of my earliest memories are of being outdoors playing in the natural world. I have never felt vulnerable or afraid in the wilderness. For me, being lost in the woods or immersed in nature feels very natural. After leaving school, like most people, I was encouraged to get a job and earn money. I got married and we bought a house. We both worked hard to pay our bills. We had a baby boy, then a baby girl and then another baby girl. So, we moved to a bigger house. We got a larger mortgage. We worked harder, sacrificing our needs for the needs of our growing family.
The next ten years ticked by and I had grown numb. I rarely enjoyed time in nature unless it was with the family. Even when we did pack a picnic and go, we would also pack all the stresses, strains and worries with us too.

All through my early life nature had been my sanctuary. It gave me the clarity, balance and the connection that I often felt was missing from my life. I always felt better and re-energised after a spell in the wilderness. As an adult I had lost sight of this. I had also lost touch with my true self — the intuitive and instinctive parts of my nature. I had been programmed like many people to live in a manufactured world and look for logical and rational solutions for emotional and psychological life problems.

The combination of walking with mindfulness in a natural environment gives me a clarity of thought with which to contemplate the most important questions in my life. On a nature walk I frequently receive insights and guidance in the form of metaphorical life-lessons. These life-lessons in nature are all around us and become more apparent the more present and in tune with nature we become.

Indigenous people know, and many of us in Western culture intuitively sense, that nature is good for us. We should not need scientific evidence to prove it. However, in the modern world, where so many of us are disconnected from the natural world, it is refreshing to find science backing up the importance of nature connection and its positive effects on our modern lifestyle. Science is now helping to confirm what generations of humans have sensed for thousands of years — that forests and natural landscapes heal us. Over the last 10 to 15 years scientists, mainly in Japan and South Korea, have been accumulating data that reveals some amazing health benefits associated with nature connection. There is now clear evidence suggesting that people who appreciate nature and make the effort to invest time in it are happier, healthier and more creative.

Nature Is a Powerful Antidepressant — Studies show that walking in nature helps to balance levels of feel-good brain chemicals. Levels of oxygen in the brain are connected to levels of serotonin, the neurotransmitter that affects mood. Too much serotonin makes us irritable and tense; too little serotonin makes us feel depressed. Do you remember a parent saying “chin up” when they caught you feeling down? Or recall a sports coach encouraging players to lift their heads up when they felt they were losing the game? Well new scientific evidence is proving there was something in this notion of raising the head and face. When we are out in a forest and lift our heads and chins up toward the light and cathedral-like canopy of green trees above us, mood-enhancing brain chemicals are released. An opportunity is missed when we have our heads down looking at our phones. Recent research has also identified a link between forest soil and levels of serotonin. New research has also discovered harmless bacteria in woodland soil that act as a natural antidepressant too. So, it looks like getting soil on our hands and faces might cheer us up too.

Nature Can Prevent Heart Disease, Diabetes and Obesity — Walking is one of the healthiest activities around. A couple of hours walking mindfully in nature can burn over 500 calories. It is also much easier on our bodies than running, which puts a lot of pressure on the joints. Walking has been proven to reduce blood pressure and build up levels of fitness, helping to prevent cardio-vascular disease, strengthening our
core, improving stability and aiding weight loss.\(^5,6\)

**Nature Helps Us Recover More Quickly and Feel Less Pain** – Looking at nature out of your window can have a beneficial effect on well-being too. A study in Pennsylvania was conducted on patients recovering from a surgical procedure. Some were given a room that looked out onto the wall of a building, while others had a view of nature. The patients looking at nature recovered more quickly and used less painkillers than those looking at a wall.\(^7,8\)

**Nature Gives the Brain Downtime to Recharge**\(^9\) – Our brains use about 20% of all the energy the body produces. This figure can increase by another 10% when we are trying to solve problems. Even when we think we are resting, quite often our minds are consumed by thoughts that worry or annoy us. Our brains need downtime. How often do you find yourself struggling to get to sleep or find yourself waking up in the early hours? Studies show that over 50% of adults in the UK struggle to get sleep and fail to get enough sleep.\(^10\) Brain science has discovered that in a ‘daydream state,’ when our minds are free to wander, the brain can rest and recharge. The brain settles into a default mode where the day-to-day mind chatter switches off. Have you ever caught yourself having driven a familiar route and arriving at your destination with no memory of driving there? This is quite a common condition experienced by all of us at some point in life. Sometimes, the brain needs to switch into this autopilot mode to recharge and recover from long periods of overuse. I suggest that rather than daydream while you are driving, you access this mindful state, wandering in nature.

**Nature can lower blood pressure and reduce stress** – Stress and stress-related disease costs the UK economy nearly £6.5b each year, with people taking 10.4 million days off work through stress-related illness. Studies have been carried out in Japan since the 1990s monitoring the effects of a practice I regularly refer to on my Natural Mindfulness walks called Shinrin-yoku, known in the west as Forest Bathing. Field experiments were carried out in 24 forests across Japan, with 280 participants in total. In each experiment, the scientists would send one half of the participants into the woods and the other half into a city. The next day, those who spent time in the woods would be sent to a city and vice versa. Scientists found that those who spent their day in forests had lower concentrations of the stress hormone cortisol, lower pulse rate and lower blood pressure. In other words, participants were decidedly less stressed when they were in nature as opposed to an urban environment. Further studies have indicated that when participants were mindful of the health benefits of what they were doing, results would increase by up to 25%.

**Nature Can Boost Our Immune System**\(^11-13\) – It is not only our minds that benefit from time in the woods, but also our bodies. There is widespread evidence that chemicals emitted by plants, known as phytoncides, essential wood oils, can help strengthen the immune systems of humans who are exposed to them. Plants emit phytoncides to protect themselves from insects and rotting. A study from the Nippon Medical School in Tokyo found when humans breathe in these chemicals it increases the number of natural kill cells, a type of white blood cell, in our bodies. Natural kill cells are vital to our immune systems as they hunt and kill tumours or infected cells. Again, adding the element of mindful awareness of the benefits resulted in further increases.

**Nature Stimulates Our Intuition and Creativity** – Our minds become sharper and more inventive after spending time in nature. One of the most detrimental aspects of modern society is that we spend far too much time on our phones and digital devices. A study from researchers at the University of Kansas and University of Utah revealed that spending time in the great outdoors and away from all the technological distractions makes us more intuitive and creative.\(^14\) The researchers sent 56 participants on hiking excursions ranging from four to six days in the wildernesses. During this time, the participants were not allowed to use any electronic devices. Ultimately, the researchers found the participants showed a 50% increase in creativity, overall attention and problem-
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solving abilities after several days in the wilderness, away from technology. Whether this was a direct consequence of exposure to nature or less technology requires further research for more conclusive evidence. However, this still suggests natural environments stimulate the brain in ways civilisation cannot, improving our cognitive abilities and igniting our imaginations. Many of history’s greatest pieces of art, literature and music were produced by those who appreciated nature and invested their time in it.

**Nature Improves Memory** – Several studies show that being out in nature and moving naturally has memory-promoting effects. In a study by the University of Michigan, students were given a brief memory test, then divided into two groups. One group took a walk around an arboretum and the other took a walk down a city street. When the participants returned and did the test again, those who had walked among trees showed an improvement of almost 20% better than the first time.

**Nature Can Make Us Less Afraid and Anxious** – When we are afraid we often say, “I feel nervous.” We are referring to our sympathetic nervous system which controls the fight-or-flight response all animals have to a perceived danger. There is another part of our autonomic nervous system called the parasympathetic nervous system, which is a much more chilled ‘default’ state of being, sometimes referred to as the digest and rest response. An American study discovered that loud noises trigger our sympathetic nervous system flooding our body with a stress hormone called cortisol. Recent studies discovered that this can happen even when participants are sleeping, creating cortisol spikes. The good news is that the study also revealed that sounds found in nature like birdsong and the running water, can stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system. This can even have a relaxing and calming effect on us when the sounds are recorded. You will notice these sounds are regularly used in guided meditation, mindfulness practice and other well-being activities such as yoga.

We all live in an ever-changing, fast-paced, busy world. Over half the population now lives in cities where the noise, pressure, stress and anxiety can overwhelm us. Fewer and fewer of us can find an opportunity to pause, breath, still our overburdened minds and take a moment. It is beginning to look like a combination of nature and mindfulness may hold the key to living healthier, happier and moreciously connected lives. Re-discovering our instinctive and intuitive connection with nature can inspire us all to not only change the way we interact with our natural environment, but to also rediscover a simple way to discover, heal, know and release our own true nature.

On that warm and fresh spring day in 2014 I went for a long wander in nature looking for answers to the question — How can I bring the ‘me’ I am in nature back into my day-to-day life?

It is now almost five years since I wandered and pondered that question. My life-journey has brought me to the realisation that nature gives rise to all life, including our own. Our bodies and minds originated in the natural world and are made up of nature’s elements. We are nature and part of something much greater than ourselves — a wonderful awe-inspiring web of life.

Today it may seem that many of us have forgotten this undeniable truth. However, interest in the links between nature and well-being is rapidly growing worldwide. There is a longing for more Nature

**People from all over the world are creating ways to reconnect with nature, to build nurturing communities and create more sustainable ways to live.**
Connection. An awakening to a need for belonging. People from all over the world are creating ways to reconnect with nature, to build nurturing communities and create more sustainable ways to live in today’s world. Nature Therapy, Forest Therapy, Shinrin-Yoku, Forest Bathing, Ecotherapy, Rewilding and Natural Mindfulness are just a few of the many ways people are being encouraged to form a new relationship with the natural world and their own true nature.

I believe it is time to bring our awareness back to the natural world. Firstly, because experiencing nature can make us happier and healthier. Secondly, practising mindfulness in nature can make us more aware and therefore wiser. The natural world holds one of life’s greatest truths — that our well-being is intimately linked with that of the rest of nature, so what we do to nature we ultimately do to ourselves. Thirdly, people protect what they love and a true love of nature will inspire solutions to the creation of a more sustainable world.

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References

Practitioners Can Stay Healthy During Life’s Challenges

Melanie Smith

We all experience life challenges. Whether it is a divorce, supporting aging parents, loss due to death, changing jobs, illness or relocating, it is inevitable that we will all experience significant changes as we move through life. Sometimes we struggle with our day-to-day life experiences such as supporting a family, managing finances or handling the constant barrage of information from various media sources.

The important questions are: What is our perspective of these difficult life events and circumstances? How well do we manage challenges that come our way? Are we able to stay healthy during life’s challenges and continue to work with our clients effectively?

What is your perspective of life’s events and stressors?

According to the American Institute of Stress, as many as 75 to 90 percent of all visits to primary care physicians result from stress-related disorders. In our modern world, the body’s stress response encompasses more than fourteen hundred known physical and chemical reactions and over thirty different hormones and neurotransmitters. The two key physiological systems that coordinate the body’s response to stress are the autonomic nervous system, which reacts almost immediately, and the hormonal system, from which reactions occur and persist over a longer time.

But many of the other organs also pour out hormones to accomplish the body’s vast response to stress.

When we experience stress, our bodies quickly react by releasing the hormone adrenaline into the bloodstream. Adrenaline elevates our heart rate and blood pressure, tenses up our muscles and speeds our breathing, preparing us to confront the threat or run for our lives.

People respond very differently to stress. Some view life’s difficult events and circumstances as opportunities to grow and expand. These individuals understand that all things in life are impermanent and will change. With this perspective, they do not hold on to fixed ideas about how things should be or how they were in the past. It does not mean that they do not experience emotions about the event, but it does mean that they do not get stuck in the emotion. Instead, they feel the emotion and release it as it arises. They reach out for support and treatment and remain open to healing. They try to stay present with the current circumstance and focus on what needs to be done in the present moment, rather than worrying and catastrophizing what might happen in the future.

Another common perspective is viewing these life challenges as a personal burden in one’s life. Individuals with this viewpoint see challenges as impositions...
rather than natural occurrences in life. They can be angry and frustrated that the stressor is happening to them and may have little insight into the larger picture. They can be very absorbed in the stressor and allow it to become all-consuming, which ultimately causes additional stress in other areas of their lives. They can be reluctant to let go of the stressor as it has become “their story,” which often masks other emotional issues that need to be addressed. While it is important to have support with stress, if it is chronically reviewed and repeated, it can create a negative feedback loop that makes it more difficult for the individual to see the situation clearly.

My experience has been that most people hold some combination of both perspectives described above.

It is important as energy practitioners to understand what our own perspective is for handling life’s challenges. Is it a healthy perspective that serves you well? Or do you feel drained by life’s challenges and have less resilience as you age to cope with stress? If you believe that life is a series of stressful events to be endured, then that is what life will offer you. If you believe that life is full of opportunities to grow and expand, that is what life will offer you. As practitioners, we sometimes consciously and unconsciously pass on our personal perspective while working on our client’s via energy, so we must energetically be clear about what that perspective is to keep healthy energetic boundaries. Once we are clear about our own perspective toward difficult life events, it is helpful to take an inventory of our current life stressors. Sometimes we are moving through life so fast we do not even realize the degree to which we are stressed. And, it is helpful to look at what you are doing to take care of your stress.

Personally, I have found it easier to handle life stressors when I am committed to a daily energy practice of self-care. As healers, we can easily spend too much time taking care of others and not enough time taking care of ourselves. But we have to remember that because everything is energy, our work is most effective when we are healthy and balanced.

Below are some of my favorite Energy Medicine self-care practices:

1. **Spending Time in Nature** – take time to get outside and find your happy place. Find a place in nature that resonates with you. For me, I immediately feel better when I am at the beach enjoying the calm of the waves and feeling energetically recharged by the sun. How much time are you spending connecting with nature? And what type of nature experience do you most resonate with?

2. **Grounding** – expanding on #1, try walking barefoot in the grass and bury your feet in the dirt or sand as you invite Mother Nature to absorb your stressors. Grounding is about nourishing our Yin energy and connecting to a vortex that comes up from the earth through the bottom of our feet. It feels even more calming and relaxing when you can put your entire body flat on the grass or the sand. This is what I call “earthing” the old-fashioned way . . . no grounding sheets or copper rods required. I also enjoy leaning my back against a tree. The Urinary Bladder meridian governs your nervous system and runs up and over your brain and along your entire backside. It is beneficial to periodically clear this electromagnetic static charge naturally from our energy field to calm our nervous system.

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Energy Routine designed to keep your energies humming for optimal health and wellness.¹ This includes a series of basic energy exercises that can easily be used for daily self-care.

The Daily Energy Routine can be the foundation of a committed self-care practice. Many of you may be familiar with some or all of these exercises. If not, the 4 Thumps is a great place to start by tapping K27 (the last point on the Kidney Meridian) below the collar bone, in the middle of the upper breastbone directly over the thymus gland, between the breasts at The Sea of Qi and below the breasts for Spleen Neurolymphatic Points.¹, ², ³

There are many resources for the Daily Energy Routine and other tips at the end of this article in both video and written format.¹, ², ³ If you have not already, I encourage you to make a commitment to doing the Daily Energy Routine. Begin with a few of the exercises and increase slowly to avoid overwhelm. Soon you will begin to feel comfortable modifying your routine by adding additional exercises based on your own unique health concerns.

4. Stress Relief Techniques – My favorite Energy Medicine stress relief exercises are: holding the Front and Back Neurovascular Points by placing one palm on your forehead and the other behind your head while focusing on the stress; using the Thymus Thump (see #3 above); or tapping TW3, the Gamut Point, on the back of either hand between the bones of the fourth and fifth fingers.⁸

Do each of these exercises as soon as you feel stressed. While focusing on the stress, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Stay with the stressor in your mind’s eye until the emotional charge begins to dissipate.

5. Get Support – It is helpful to surround yourself with supportive people. I really cannot emphasize enough how important it is as practitioners to receive energy and emotional work (Eden Energy Medicine, Touch for Health, Healing Touch, Reiki, acupuncture, chiropractic, massage, psychotherapy, EFT, etc.). Since we are constantly “giving” and “serving,” I am frequently amazed at how many Energy Medicine practitioners I meet who are not receiving regular sessions for themselves. Receiving energy work is about maintaining a healthy energy balance and energy exchange.

Even though I do many things on a daily basis for self-care, I take time out to receive some combination of energy healing at least 3-4 times a month. If I have something significant going on with my health causing me to be in a state of stress, then I absolutely want to get out of my own way and receive the healing and guidance from another practitioner who is in a more stable energetic place.

A few years ago, I had a fall and injured my wrist while traveling. I was able to begin immediate self-care with rest, ice, elevation and tracing lots of Figure 8’s on my wrist. You might be wondering why a Figure 8 pattern is so powerful for healing. While you may already be familiar with the concept that energies cross over from each hemisphere of the brain to the opposite side of the body, according to Donna Eden, a Figure 8 — or infinity sign — extends throughout our body supporting our energy to cross over from head to toe. These intertwining energies get even smaller, eventually weaving their primordial pattern at

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The cellular level. If you recall from biology, a double helix strand of DNA is a large chain that looks like Figure 8’s, therefore, our body innately resonates with this natural healing pattern.

With my trusty Energy Medicine travel kit, I was able to apply a compression bandage, use acupuncture needles, Energy Medicine pain relief techniques like chakra clearing, magnets and trace Lotus Blossoms (figure 8’s in four directions) with a selenite wand. It was also important to reduce the stress and clear the emotions around ruining my vacation. The next thing I did after returning home was to cancel my clients for several days and schedule a variety of healing treatments so I could relax and receive versus having to do all of the work on myself. Receiving support right away meant I was quickly back at work and feeling great.

Many of the clients I work with in-office and via Skype are Energy Medicine Practitioners. I applaud them for receiving regular energy healing sessions and mentoring to support their personal Energy Medicine practice. Take a moment to consider the last time you received a full energy healing session. If it has been awhile, you may want to consider finding a practitioner to support you.

6. Do not Over Commit – Do not add more to your schedule than you can energetically support. This is another big one for me to pay attention to as it ends up leading to adrenal exhaustion. It is not uncommon for those of us in the healing profession to naturally want to give and serve others and they can often find it difficult to say no and to take time out for yourself. Take an inventory of your work and life balance. How many clients do you see in a day? How much time do you spend with each client? Are you constantly late or running behind in your schedule? How many days a week are you working? What are you doing for fun? Hopefully, amongst these questions you will uncover the clarity you need to make supportive changes.

If you are over-committed and notice emotions or stressors are coming up for you, then I recommend you try using one of the stress relief techniques mentioned in #4 above to shift your energy.

If you are feeling burned out or exhausted, you may find this easy energy exercise for adrenal support to be helpful. Begin by placing your thumb and middle finger of one hand in the hollow found in the middle of your eyebrow or at the outer edges of each brow. With your other hand, go one inch above your navel and one each out to each side as you use your thumb and middle finger to hold the Adrenal Gateway Points. Focus on your breath as you hold them for 3-5 minutes. Repeat with the Cortisol Points, which are one inch below and out from your navel. You can harmonize them together with the Hormone Hara Balancer (see the video link below).

7. Joy, Happiness and Fun – Part of self-care is also working your positive, happy manifestation energies too. When you spend time in places you enjoy with people you love, doing things that make you happy, then you also activate your Radiant Circuits, as Donna Eden calls them, or from Oriental Medicine — your Strange Flows. Take a moment and close your eyes as you begin to think about something or someone that brings joy to your heart and a smile to your face. Now with either hand, gently tap your Third Eye Joy Point (YinTang) between your eyebrows. Continue tap-
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As you bring your focus to something you desire to manifest in your health, your personal life or your business. Notice how good your entire body is feeling. Now bring both hands over your heart chakra (middle of chest above the breasts) as you tune in and listen to your own wisdom and intuition. If you are noticing pain or dealing with a health concern, gently slide your hands to that area as you fill it with healthy, positive, happy and joy-filled energy.

I had stressful challenges in my life before I had access to Energy Medicine tools and these challenges were actually the catalyst for me to make a career change — really a life change toward health and wellness. Now I am grateful for these gifts and appreciate all they have taught me on my path. Stress has an energy all its own. It can sweep us off our feet in an instant. It can stop us in our tracks and it can put us down for the count. By working with your own energy systems to change patterns, habits and limiting beliefs, you can take back your power and your health.

As Energy Medicine Practitioners, it is imperative to stay grounded, centered and balanced on a daily basis to more easily maneuver the ebb and flow of our lives. In 400 BC Hippocrates (the Father of Medicine) said, “The natural healing force within us is the greatest force in getting well.” Donna Eden would say “Energy Medicine has been called the medicine of the future, but it also empowers you to adapt to the challenges of the 21st century and to thrive within them.” Now, more than ever, is the time to connect into your own natural healing force and be well within.

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Music as Healer

Karen Drucker

I looked out on the audience that night — at people holding each other, strangers putting their hand on the shoulder of someone crying, people with their eyes closed — just feeling and singing together. This was a group of people brought together at a church in Santa Rosa, California, for an evening of healing through music after the terrible fires that destroyed homes and lives in this community. The Northern California wildfires, also known as the Northern California Firestorm, was a series of 250 wildfires that started burning across the state of California in October 2017. Sonoma County and Napa County had the most devastation with thousands of homes and acres burned.

When I became aware of the fires and began hearing from friends about the devastation, I was stunned. I knew many people who had lost everything in that fire. What could I do? What could I possibly give?

I had been on the schedule to speak at the Center for Spiritual Living Santa Rosa church on the Sunday following the fires for quite a while. This was a church where I had been the music director many years ago, so it was very special to me to come back in the role of guest speaker and musician. They have three services each Sunday of about 500 per service and on this particular Sunday, they would all be coming to have their hearts healed. I called the minister who I was to substitute for and asked if I should be the one to speak that day — what could I possibly say? The well-rehearsed talk I was planning to give was now obsolete. He said just show up, open your heart and let the words and music flow through you.

So I did — and it was healing both for the congregants and for me.

After that Sunday I felt the need to do more, so I decided to offer an evening of music — of people coming together to sing. Just sing. To lift their voices together and heal, cry and sometimes laugh, but mainly to be together in community.

Because that is what music does. It brings us together.

Look back to the main events in your life and see if there is a song that comes to mind. Most likely you have had songs that have played a part in the memories of your life — the good times, the bad breakups, the times you needed a little inspiration. Somehow a song would be there to capture exactly what you were feeling.
In all my years of being a professional musician, I have sung thousands of songs in every style imaginable. When I played at weddings or played in nightclubs I would select the right upbeat song to get people dancing or something romantic to get them to cuddle up. It was not until I started writing my own positive message healing songs that I really felt the true healing power of music. When my mother was diagnosed with cancer I felt so helpless. But when she told me that her daily affirmation was “I am healed, whole and healthy,” I had an epiphany — I realized I could combine different styles of music with positive messages to create a song. When she would go in for her weekly chemo infusions, my positive message music was playing in her ears with me singing, “I am healed whole and healthy.” I could literally see the effects that pairing affirmations with upbeat or soothing music had on her. The chemo may have been infusing her body, but at the same time the music was infusing her mind with a message of hope and healing.

And now, today, I am seeing once again the power of this music.

I am sitting in the little cottage of a close friend who is in the final days, maybe weeks, of being in her body after a long dance with cancer. She has assembled a group of her ten closest friends to help her in this phase of her journey and we are all doing our parts, taking turns showing up daily to attend to her physical and spiritual needs. While I have learned in a very humbling way that my talents do not include nursing skills or cooking, I was able to redeem myself when she spontaneously started to sing one of my songs. All of a sudden four of us surrounded her bed and began a 20-minute medley of some of my healing songs that she knew all the words to. The gift for me in all of this was that when we were done she said her pain, which had been at a level 4 before we started singing, was now at 0! I learned in that moment the true meaning of the word healing. It is not necessarily a curing, but rather a shift in consciousness within your heart — that healing can occur even in the midst of dying.

Later in the day the ultimate gift to her happened. Her young adult son, who has had a difficult time processing all of this, brought his guitar and I brought in my portable keyboard. We serenaded his mother with blues jams and old Beatles songs, and as she listened she looked like a kid again. She even moved what she could of her body doing a little dance to “Twist and Shout” in her bed. Hans Christian Anderson said, “Where words fail, music speaks” and today the emotion that was happening in this room was expressed by simply playing and singing together — a sweet bonding that happened with music as the facilitator.

This may seem like a dramatic story, but I want to illustrate the power of music and encourage you to incorporate music as one of the tools you use to give yourself the permission to feel — to feel the joy, pain, sadness, gratitude, anger or whatever is below the surface that is wanting to be expressed. There have been times in my life when I was upset but the tears were just not coming. I have learned that all I need to do is listen to “Puff the Magic Dragon” and the floodgates will open and the tears will come out! Or when I am feeling great I can put on Pharrell Williams “Happy” and dance around like I am five! I listen and sing along with many positive message musicians whose music affirms my highest good so that I can remember that I am worthy and loved.

When a parent writes to me that their child walks around the house singing my chant “I am a blessing to the world” or that my music has replaced Barney in their car CD player, I am thrilled. I feel humbled and grateful when cancer patients tell me that in the middle of the night, when the fear creeps in, they can listen to one of my songs and it calms them down and turns off that worry voice. And now, with my sweet friend about to pass, she is telling me that it is my music that is calming her fears and helping her to let go. These are demonstrations of the power of music.

Music can heal. Music can inspire. Music is essential to our well-being. I invite you to listen to and sing positive message songs every day, and see what changes happen in your life.
Electricity is basic to all life as we know it, and we continue to discover roles for electricity and magnetism in healing. The idea of using electric currents and magnets for healing has ancient roots; in China approximately 2000 years ago, “magnetic stones” were advocated to correct health imbalances, and in Europe, Scribonius Largus, court physician to the Roman emperor Claudius, recorded in his *Compositiones Medicae* of 46 AD the use of torpedo fish for treatment of headaches and gout and pain, by standing upon the fish at the seashore. In the 16th Century, the famous Swiss physician and alchemist, Paracelsus (1493-1543) declared that, “The magnet is the king of all secrets” and used it to treat a variety of conditions including headache and rheumatic problems.

Into the 20th century, Burr and Northrup studied the role of bioelectric signals in embryonic development and regeneration, and in the 1940s, Marsh and Beams made the remarkable discovery that applying electric fields of different polarities to flatworms (planaria) could change the direction of regeneration. Significant steps forward were also made by Robert Becker, who mapped the bioelectric potentials associated with growth and repair processes and found that regeneration could be enhanced by applying electricity to wound sites at the wound when there was a negative potential outside the amputation stub. Robert Becker popularized these and other advances in our understanding of the role of electric and magnetic fields in healing and regeneration in the 1985 publication in of *The Body Electric*. In the 1970s, it was found that electromagnetic fields (EMFs) could promote bone repair, and later, a seminal series or research by Colin McCaig showed that electric potentials naturally arising in wounds were critical for healing and regeneration, and a variety of therapeutic uses of EMFs have been developed, including bone and soft tissue repair.

Today, Michael Levin and colleagues at Tufts University are continuing to forward the exploration of bioelectromagnetics and physiology by demonstrating that patterns in the electrical activity of biological cells act as key regulators of a variety of critical processes such as embryogenesis, regeneration, tumorigenesis and metastatic transformation, and that electrical patterning plays key roles in regenerative processes such as limb regeneration in salamanders, eye induction, craniofacial patterning and head-tail polarity in planaria. Levin has shown that patterns of bioelectric signaling constitute “...an autonomous layer of control not reducible to a biochemical or genetic account of cell state.” In a recent review dedicated to Robert Becker, Kelly McLaughlin and Michael Levin point towards the future, noting that, “The ability of bioelectric signaling to direct cell behavior has been
There is increasing evidence that light itself plays a role in how the cells in our bodies communicate with one another.

described in the literature for over a century, yet only recently are we gaining sufficient insight about mechanisms and global dynamics to enable biomedicine to unlock this valuable information.\textsuperscript{14}

This exciting chapter in today’s science is bringing new understanding of bioelectricity as a basic element of life. The modern biofield viewpoint that is emerging from this work — of an informational field-based view of life — has striking parallels in ancient viewpoints such as the Tibetan, Vedic and Jain medical traditions, where concepts of energy and information patterns are fundamental. For example, Jain teachings describe the interaction of the soul’s consciousness with the karmic field, producing emanations known as adhyavasāya, which interact with a subtle body called the tejas sarīr (“fiery body”), which supports mental and physical health, and are described in a manner resembling modern descriptions of electromagnetic fields.\textsuperscript{15} Similarly, the Vedic concept of the energetic body known as prānamayakosa, and the Tibetan Buddhist description of a subtle body known as the “vajra body” (Sanskrit: vajradeha; Tibetan: sku rdorje or rdo rje lus) refers to a network of invisible energy channels that guide bodily functions.\textsuperscript{15}

A fascinating aspect of bioelectromagnetics are biophoton emissions, which are the spectrum of light emitted naturally by all living things. Much weaker than the bioluminescence found in fireflies and many marine animals, biophoton emissions occur over a very broad range of frequencies, spanning the infrared, visible and ultraviolet ranges.\textsuperscript{16, 17} These “ultra-weak” biophoton emissions are too faint to see with the naked eye, even in complete darkness, but can be detected with modern equipment and have been increasingly studied in recent years.\textsuperscript{17}

Ultra-weak biophoton emissions, most commonly produced during oxidative metabolic or stress processes in the body, have been suggested as non-invasive, low cost diagnostic and testing methods in agriculture, food chemistry and biomedicine.\textsuperscript{17} This ‘body of light’ has been shown to reflect a variety of different states of health and disease, and for example, Fritz-Albert Popp observed in 2009 that as living cells become more crowded in a cell culture dish, cancer cells exhibit increased biophoton emissions, while normal cells do not.\textsuperscript{18} A systematic review from John Ives and colleagues on the diagnostic use of biophotons concluded that the peer reviewed literature is “surprisingly large,” with the majority of studies of “good to high” quality.\textsuperscript{19} The authors recommended that randomized controlled clinical trials should be performed to determine if biophoton techniques could be used for non-invasively evaluating the specific inflammatory state of the individual and providing a general measure of overall health.\textsuperscript{19}

A growing body of research suggests that ultra-weak biophoton emissions can also play roles in how cells and tissues in the body grow, repair and divide. The first report in 1923 of ultraviolet (UV) light emission during cell division was from Alexander Gurwitsch,\textsuperscript{20} who subsequently found that UV light could stimulate cell division in onion roots, and posited the existence of “mitogenic rays” governing basic processes of growth and repair.\textsuperscript{21} The early observations of Gurwitsch were further developed in the 1980’s and 1990’s by Fritz-Albert Popp and L.V. Belousov, who elucidated many of the basic properties of ultra-weak biophoton emissions.\textsuperscript{21, 22} Since that time, biophotons have been reported to be involved in a variety of biological functions,\textsuperscript{23} including secretion of regulatory neurotransmitters,\textsuperscript{24} respiratory activity in white blood cells,\textsuperscript{25} seed germination,\textsuperscript{26} yeast growth,\textsuperscript{27, 28} algae growth\textsuperscript{29} and interactions between fish eggs and embryos.\textsuperscript{30}

While it may not be surprising that biophoton emis-
sions reflect biochemical activity, there is increasing evidence that light itself plays a role in how the cells in our bodies communicate with one another.\textsuperscript{31} Two seminal studies from Gunther Albrecht-Buehler in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA\textsuperscript{32, 33} reported long-range interactions between cells due to infrared light, concluding that “The results suggest that near-infrared light scattering by the cells mediate a long-range attraction between them, which does not require physical contact and enables them to detect each other’s presence.”\textsuperscript{33}

And a remarkable study by Daniel Fels in 2009 reported that cells can influence one another using non-molecular signals, most probably photons.\textsuperscript{34} Fels looked at interactions between two groups of single-celled organisms (\textit{paramecium caudatum}) chemically isolated from each other in clear containers. In a series of experiments, Fels reported that information regulating cell division and energy uptake passed through a quartz window between the cells but was blocked by one made of glass. Since quartz easily transmits UV light, whereas glass does not, Fels suggested that the long-range effect was mediated by photons in the UV range. Since 2009, Fels has continued with this research, in 2016 reporting interactions between two different species of microorganisms, \textit{Paramecium caudatum}, and \textit{Euglena viridis}.\textsuperscript{35, 36} Fels also conducted experiments in which the groups of microorganisms were shielded from each other against EMFs in the optical spectrum. He found that some effects were blocked by EMF shielding, suggesting that an electromagnetic interaction was involved.

These modern observations of ultra-weak biophoton emissions are reminiscent of ancient concepts where the gross physical body and mind are connected through a ‘body of light,’ an intermediate subtle body that is described in energetic terms.\textsuperscript{37} For example, the Jain concept of the \textit{kārman sarîr}, describes a subtle body that surrounds the soul, interacting with consciousness emanating from the soul (Figure 1). Jain teachings describe the interaction of the soul's consciousness with the karmic field, producing emanations termed \textit{adhyavasāya}. Adhyavasāya are described as 2 types: psychical and physiological.

These \textit{adhyavasāya} are thought to be energetic in nature and are described in a manner that bears strong resemblance to modern descriptions of electromagnetic fields.\textsuperscript{37} Ancient viewpoints such as these are reflected in an emerging biofield paradigm describing a complex dynamic informational field essential to all life.\textsuperscript{38} This shift from a purely mechanical, chemistry-based viewpoint to an information-based view is reflected in advances in closely-related fields that once seemed disconnected: biophysics, biology, psychology and the developing fields of mind-body research such as psychoneuroimmunology and psychosocial genomics.\textsuperscript{38} These results have helped substantially to form a foundation for an expanded integrative medical model and hold promise for a better understanding of health, healing and a better science of life.\textsuperscript{38}

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The Body Electric: A Brief History of Healing and Regeneration with Electric and Magnetic Fields

References

February 1 – 3, 2019
San Diego, California

OFFERING CE CONTACT HOURS

This Year’s Keynote Speakers

Cyndi Dale
My goal is help you open your “essential energy,” the powers and perspectives unique to you.

Zelda Lockhart
Zelda gives us an unflinching view of the human spirit surviving adversity, confronting despair with stubborn
determination.

Sky Nelson
I believe that each person can bring harmony and success into their life by aligning with circumstances.

Music and Song
Karen Drucker will lead us, through music and song to the core of ourselves. She will help us take the “healing bridge” we create back out into the world, our healing work and our practices.

Space is limited - register early.

Yes, I Want to REGISTER
Did you know that your potential clients are much more likely to hire you if they see you as an expert? Unfortunately, most of us grow up being told to be humble, modest and not to brag. And then we do our spiritual work and we authentically want to be humble. Yet when it comes time to share about your work and the power your work has to change people’s lives, the beliefs we carry about what is the opposite of modesty can get in the way when it comes to attracting clients.

When I (Jesse) first started my business, my “be modest, hide your greatness, do not take yourself too seriously” beliefs did not work so well. I struggled to get clients. Honestly, I could not even almost get a client. Why? Nobody was taking me seriously because I was not taking myself seriously. And so, after a year of trying, I gave up.

It was not until later that I realized I was missing a very important skill. Had I mastered this skill, my potential clients would have taken me seriously and I would have had a full and thriving business.

What is this skill? It is the skill of “Positioning Yourself” as an expert.

Even though we wish it were different, whenever we meet someone new, they judge us and put us in a category — or a “position” in their mind. The human brain does this automatically to avoid information overload.

What are the categories we might be put into?
They are:
- Potential mentor
- Potential friend
- Potential client
- Even a potential date!

While it may seem unfortunate that you could be subject to the whim of their judgment, you do have some say about what category they put you in. If you say something that positions you as an expert within the first couple minutes of the conversation, this person is more likely to either hire you or refer people to you for your healing work. But if you fail to position yourself as an expert within the first couple minutes of the conversation, it is unlikely they will view you as someone they can trust their deep healing work with.

You may be thinking, “But I am not an expert.”

It is easy to fail to see yourself as an expert when you
likely know many other people who do the same kind of work you do. However, most of the people you meet are not experienced healers and practitioners. Most people do not feel energy as deeply as you do and they certainly have not had the level of training you have had. We may think that if we share our greatness, we will diminish the greatness in others. Instead, sharing our greatness might have the opposite effect. Here is how this works: If you are trying to help someone get to the top of a mountain, would you rather get underneath them and push them up? Or stand above them and pull them up? It is much easier to stand above them and pull them up to your level.

When you share your greatness and then acknowledge the greatness in your potential client, your acknowledgment goes in more deeply because they are being acknowledged by someone they have categorized as an expert. If, on the other hand, you withhold sharing something impressive about yourself and even share things that “de-position” you, they will not see you as a potential mentor and it is unlikely they will hire you. Are you willing to claim your expertise? If your answer is yes, it is time to understand how you can do so without sounding arrogant. To position yourself without sounding arrogant, we recommend you share both your expertise and your compassion in the conversation.

Here is a short template you can use to position yourself as an expert without sounding arrogant:

Even though I __________ (share something impressive about yourself), I still feel ____________ (share a vulnerable insecurity you have).

Here is an example from our own lives — “Even though we have led over 250 weekend workshops, I still get nervous sometimes before I first walk on stage.”

You may be wondering what to say about yourself that would position yourself as an expert. Here are a few ideas for you to try on:

Your own personal journey to healing
Your own story about how you overcame a struggle through the work you do can be very inspiring for your potential clients. This can show them that it is possible for them to have the healing they desire.

How long you have been doing this work or the number of sessions you have given

If you have been working in your practice for more than five years or you have given more than 100 sessions, you might consider sharing this with potential clients as a way to establish your expertise.

A client success story

Share a short story about a client who was struggling and how through the work you did together — they were able to turn around their struggle. This shows your potential client that you are an expert and someone to consider working with.

(You can ask your clients’ permission to share their story with their name or you can share anonymously, as long as you are sure the person you are sharing with will not be able to figure out who the story is about.)

When you position yourself as an expert, you may notice that people relate to you differently. We invite you to try positioning yourself using the template above. You might even get some new clients after you start positioning yourself!

Authors Jesse Koren and Sharla Jacobs can be found at www.Thrive-Academy.com.
Cherish

Cherish the love, cherish the life.
“Cherish the thought
of always having you here by my side (oh baby I)
cherish the joy
you keep bringing it into my life (I’m always singing it)
cherish your strength
You got the power to make me feel good
(And baby I)
Perish the thought
Of ever leaving. I never would.”
– Madonna Ciccone and Patrick Leonard

These are the words I woke up to. They played inside my head all morning as I grappled with the unexpected death of my dear sweet cousin last night. The stroke struck while she was on a holiday at her favorite place on the earth, surrounded by beauty and family. She always had exquisite taste and found the best place for her grand adieu.

She lived a life filled with much joy and abundance while focused on the things that matter: stories brimming from a lifetime based in the heart, family ties, beauty and giving deeply by sharing her therapy dog with those in need. She was always offering a smile and a hug to those around her. She delivered the right remark when it was required, striving for the best in herself and others. I will miss her very much, as she was among my sweet tapestry of powerful women who showed me how to create a loving family. We were able to stay engaged with the deep wisdom that comes from long-standing connections.

I only regret that I did not see her last month when I nearly had the chance. There was no opportunity to thank her and tell her how much she meant to me one last time. But deep down she knew, for every time we greeted and departed over the many decades, we would always share a hug and a kiss, or more than one, as we would extend our goodbyes over many tens of minutes. She always told me how much I used to resemble one of her daughters who moved away, and then she would hold me by the chin and drink in the love in my eyes as a way of being closer to me and her daughter whom she missed.

Her love for family was nearly eclipsed by her love of her garden. That was clear when I recently visited her house and saw the colorful marvel she created. She took me on a tour, sharing stories of every plant, itemizing what they needed, how they thrived and what she planned next for each of them. She poured her heart into her garden.

It does not surprise me then, when I reflect on the experience I had with trees in Muir Woods, an ancient redwood forest on the coast of northern California,
that the woods would prepare me for her departure. I knew she was facing the end of her life, but we were still hoping for a miracle as she clung to life in the hospital far from where I was in the woods.

It was a cool and cloudy morning, still quiet when departing from the main trail to hike deeper away from the crowd. Winding up the hill, I stopped in front of one giant redwood next to the path, soaring many stories above my head. I decided to enter its silent embrace, as I placed my hand on its rough bark. Closing my eyes, I offered my exhale as its inhale, took its exhale with my inhale, melded with it and shared visions and stories from the places I have traveled in the world, opening my heart to its ancient wisdom.

Oftentimes I receive a message back from the trees when I open a channel of contact with them. This one did not disappoint, as I felt the energy racing towards me from the top of the tree, like a freight train of light and energy cascading down in a freefall of urgency to meet me. The message was delivered. In order to decipher its mystery, my body relaxed and fell into the rhythms and sensations of the communication. I rarely understand the messages through my mind, but my body knows how to read and receive every morsel. This one was grand and loving and very intense, like I was being held slightly off the ground in a bubble of a rubberized buoyant, bouncy and springy substance. It coursed through my being and settled deeply into my heart. I felt an infiltration of love, scanning and protection seep into all the cells of my heart and around my back, soaking completely into the surrounding skin. My heart was encased in a protective energy and was cleansed. I heard the message that the tree would be there for me while I experience many deep losses. Anytime I need to, I could return to the safety and love of this tree that has stood by and watched humanity and life over hundreds of years. I was to expect to see many people leave, and like the tree, I would bear witness to their lives and departures.

The communication abruptly ended and I felt the urge to “get on with it.” “Enjoy the day,” was the message. Do not linger on the sadness, loss or things that are soon to be. Just move along and know that I will have what I need when I need it.

It was only a few minutes later during the hike that I came across another message from the trees. This time it was a circle of seven clustered in a tight embrace. Redwoods are generous in their movement to reproduce and connect. One main tree sends out shoots in the nearby earth so that others can grow in a circle of life, stretching toward the sky as a unit. This one had tall sisters occupying only a few feet of earth, trunk-to-trunk nearly touching, as they stood together sharing the same light, soil, bugs and air. A bright sun shined through the circle from above and the needles of the trees dispersed the light into columns of sparkling effervescence, reaching from sky to earth, through air and wood.

I captured a photo of the enchantment and received the next message that we are never alone. Though we may feel like individuals, and we should celebrate our beauty and uniqueness as each tree in the circle is different and beautiful in its own way, in truth we are all connected, living on top of one another in a tangled embrace of life force. The tall trunks stand on their own, each seemingly independent of her neighbor. But peek below the surface and you will find the other truth. All the roots bend, stretch, grow over and under each other in a nest of interconnection. It becomes a oneness made up of the individual experience. It is a unit of love, just like life, and just like death. You are never apart from, but are a part of, the whole.
The message continued; enjoy the circle of life. Your cousin is dying now, as will others soon enough, but know you are always part of the circle. Keep your heart open despite the pain that happens and enjoy the sunshine, the intimacy and the embrace of life.

As the hike went on, more messages were revealed, about being called into service even when others perceive your actions as departing from their expectations and approval. The idea surfaced of the need to pay attention to more than just your own calling, while being respectful to the needs of others. Another message focused on the importance of staying grounded while reaching for high aspirations to strengthen the outcome. A tender moment was shared with a boulder, perfect for sky gazing, as I rested my spine on its smooth surface and I heard and saw the beauty of learning to relax, allowing the earth to have your back and not needing to direct every move. The four-part harmony resounded in the message to trust, let go, close your eyes and open your heart.

And, finally, the message came to know when it is time to go home. Recognize when you have had enough and accept that it is okay to call it a day. Sometimes it is better to leave than to stay. By staying, you could create more harm than good by manufacturing additional suffering.

And that is the recent lesson I have learned from my sweet cousin. She knew when it was time to move on, knowing she had her time well spent, enjoyed, cherished and it was better to leave now than linger in the decay and pain she would have faced by staying. How fitting for her to pass away during the Full Strawberry Moon — a gardener’s delight. She was always exquisite in her taste and timing.

I came home from my trip to the Muir woods, finding a gift from above. One Cooper’s hawk feather was lying alone on the grass in the yard under the shade of the bountiful pine tree. I had not seen such a feather in the yard before. There was no sign of a struggle, broken branches, feather down or mangled bodies nearby. There was no sign of disruption or intrusion. Just the one feather lying there by itself. It was six inches long and had five bands of dark brown stripes, sandwiched with four beige stripes on either side — a perfect offering. Was it from the heavens? Could it be a message from Spirit offered on the day of the departure for my dear cousin, scheduled unbeknownst to all, to take place before nightfall? Maybe it was just a gentle shedding from an errant bird passing overhead on its journey elsewhere.

Who knows? But what I felt and received was that it could be a special spiritual gift for me to discover. It could link me with my cousin and the message of the Cooper’s Hawk: You are what you eat. Cooper’s Hawks feed on other birds. This helps them balance life in ways we are not always expecting. We may not be familiar with the notion of eating our own kind, but without them, there would be overpopulation and we would be without their beauty.

Food, nurturance and health were parts of life I shared with my cousin. We acted as if there was always another chance to eat together for a celebration, reunion or shared sadness with loss. We were very aware of how food creates life and good or bad health. We knew that the thoughts and feelings we create are part of our spiritual nutrition. Mostly we were in touch with love and how food brings people together — a part of my love of nature and a remembrance of my dear cousin.

Author Lori Chortkoff Hops can be found at www.DrLoriHops.com.
Growing up I was constantly told, “You are being too sensitive!” and at an early age I assumed that this quality was a hindrance rather than a gift. Like most intuitive people who are taught that their sensitivity is a negative trait, I began molding myself to fit into my environment like a chameleon changes color. Drudgingly I learned to toughen up, stow away my feelings and hide who I really was from the world, believing that something was wrong with me. This limiting belief system set in motion an energetic pattern that took over 30 years to change.

In 2009 my healing journey took a significant leap when I decided to take some classes to fulfill the Continuing Education Units (CEU’s) needed to maintain my license as a massage therapist. One day I was thumbing through a bodywork magazine and an advertisement for the John F. Barnes Myofascial Release caught my eye. It met my continuing education requirements, so I decided to take a chance and sign up. It had been two years since I graduated college and I was eager to learn something new. What I did not know was how this one class was going to change my perception of the entire world.

My boyfriend at the time agreed to meet me in Philadelphia on the second day of the seminar. When he arrived and asked me how class was, I froze, not knowing how to answer. It certainly was not a straightforward explanation of Myofascial Release (MFR) and not something one would expect from a continuing education class. All day I witnessed strong emotional releases from my classmates who volunteered to be the demonstration models for John Barnes. I had no words to explain this phenomenon along with the awakening happening deep within my core as I witnessed it. I knew in my heart that my boyfriend would not understand, so I just looked him in the eye and said, “It was lovely. Thank you.” Since he thoroughly enjoyed talking about himself, that was the last discussion about MFR for the evening. We went to dinner that night and as I held his hand I knew it would not be long before I would have to tell him goodbye. My journey was going to go deeper on an emotional level and I desired a partner who would be able to connect with me on that level. He was emotionally shallow, which was a good fit for me when we first met. But now I could feel in every cell of my being that I needed to change; my authentic self was screaming to be heard.

After a lifetime of packing away heartache, disappointment and trauma it was normal for me to be in a constant state of disconnection from my feelings and my body. “Soldier on” had become my motto in life and at 30 years old I just accepted this was the way life was. Never once did I believe that my
Finding Authenticity: A Story of Sensitivity and Innate Wisdom

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who treated me the same way my family did? Two months later we broke up and I had a major sense of relief. I now had the opportunity to live authentically, understand my worth, surround myself with people who valued and loved me and more importantly — learn how to love myself.

I decided to find an MFR therapist near my home with whom I could get treatment from on a regular basis. This would be my first time privately experiencing a modality that integrates structural bodywork with subtle energy healing. The therapist I chose felt safe to me; I could sense that she held no judgment and provided a loving and kind space. Her practice was a 45-minute drive from my house, but I felt comfortable with her and that was all that mattered. The first few sessions I showed up in my natural guarded state, pushing down the feelings that were coming up during treatment. She patiently continued gently nudging me, assuring me that it was safe to let these feelings flow. There was no talking during our bodywork sessions. I did not have to tell my story and in fact, the story did not matter. All I had to do was feel the feelings that were naturally coming up — the ones that had been haunting me for years.

My therapist ultimately provided me with a safe space to feel. I was allowed to be angry, I was allowed to hit the table and I was allowed to scream as loud as I needed to! I did not have to hold back anymore! It was now safe to let out these uncomfortable feelings that were consuming my life and paralyzing me. I had no clue how enraged I really felt until I found myself letting out gut-wrenching screams during two years of sessions. Those sessions helped me release many limiting beliefs I was still holding on to and also opened my heart to receiving love like it never had before. As time passed the anger was gone, my unwinding started to change and I began to go deeper, releasing what was beneath all that anger — the sadness of feeling disconnected from the world.

In the last nine years miraculous changes have occurred in my life that would not have been possible without MFR. The fact that I can have real connections with others and myself without being paralyzed by fear is by far the greatest blessing in my life. Before 2009 I had years of talk therapy along with self-help books and programs, which were helpful, but I was still unable to go within and let innate wisdom lead the way. Finally, after fully relinquishing what no longer served me, there was enough space for life-changing growth and love. When I was younger I had always searched for an endpoint to healing, because reaching it would mean I was fixed. My experience taught me that there is never an end; there are only opportunities to go deeper and connect with our spirit on a more profound level.

As for my professional life, which now includes practicing MFR, I am filled with immeasurable amounts of gratitude for the amazing shifts this work has made in my practice. What a wonderful gift it is to not only support others through their healing process, but to also love what I do for a living. The connection I have with my clients gets deeper and more meaningful every year that goes by. As my own healing process goes deeper, I can facilitate on a deeper level. It is amazing to watch this beautiful cascade of healing shifts. The experiences I have had with MFR helping me reconnect with my authentic self has ignited my passion for helping others connect with their true essence. Holding a loving and compassionate space for others has added great meaning to my career while fulfilling my soul’s devotion to helping others. For me, Myofascial Release combines my love for science and spirituality — the mind, body and spirit.

Author Marisa Chadbourne can be found at www.TouchOfHealthNY.com.
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Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of moment-to-moment experience. We train in mindfulness by establishing an embodied presence and learning to see clearly and feel fully the changing flow of sensations, feelings (pleasantness and unpleasantness), emotions and sounds.

Mindfulness meditation groups are a wonderful way of connecting with others to share and deepen your meditation practice. These groups come in many shapes and sizes and provide community, accountability and a supportive space to connect with others while steadying and enriching your practice.

Who, Where, When, How
Meditation groups frequently start off with a handful of interested friends meeting in one person’s home (or alternating homes) to practice. As attendance increases — or even from the very beginning — groups might meet in a room or hall in a church, library or other building. Online groups can provide much needed support and connection for those who have limited access to “in-person” resources due to geography, health or scheduling limitations.

There is no required minimum number of participants. Groups have functioned successfully for years with only two or three members. Some people actually prefer the intimacy of a small group while others feel more supported by the stronger collective energy of larger groups. Online groups may be smaller (6-8 members) to allow adequate time and space in the event of technical difficulties (see “Technical Guidelines for Online Groups” below).

The size of the group may depend upon whether you choose to have an open or closed group format. In an open group, drop-ins are encouraged and new members are welcome at any time. Closed groups typically set a number of spaces that feels comfortable and stop adding new members once that limit has been reached. They will then add new members from time to time as space opens up. This is an important choice and will affect the makeup of your group. Open groups tend to be larger and are often in a state of flux, providing ongoing opportunities to meet new people and make new connections. Smaller closed groups allow members to bond and get to know each other over time. Which of these you choose will be unique to your group and what feels best to your members.

Similarly, there is no one “right” schedule. The frequency and length of each meeting will largely depend upon the activities planned for the group. You might meet weekly, every two weeks or even once a month, depending on the desires of the participants.
How to Start a Mindfulness Meditation Group

Meetings might be an hour or may stretch out over an entire evening if your group gathers to share a meal or listen to a talk and engage in mindful discussion afterward. Online groups will need to consider time zone in setting a meeting schedule.

Groups often find it helpful to establish basic guidelines regarding the purpose of the meetings and, from time to time, review and revise them as needed. Basic guidelines provide a structure for the group meetings and help orient new members as they join an existing group. These might include a description of the group format, time and frequency of meetings, whether the group will be open or closed and the group’s primary sources of inspiration or direction (if any).

**Group Format**

Your group’s time together may consist of any number of activities. It could be as bare-bones as a simple sitting meditation — guided, silent or some of each — and a friendly greeting before starting and re-entering your daily life. Some groups like to include a reading, guided meditation or talk (live or recorded) and more in-depth sharing time. Others might be drawn to chanting, walking meditation or enjoying a meal together in mindfulness. Some groups develop around applying mindfulness to a common interest or theme, e.g., addiction, parenting, mental health professionals, etc.

One popular format for many groups is to begin with a guided or silent sitting meditation, followed by a short check-in from each member and open time for sharing joys, difficulties and questions about their meditation practice and how it is working (or not) in their daily lives. The group then closes with a short sitting or loving-kindness meditation as a way to foster a greater sense of connection to each other and to the world.

The sharing period gives participants the opportunity to listen deeply to one another while also paying attention to what arises in themselves. Some groups like to choose specific topics to focus the sharing (such as forgiveness, mindfulness at work, dealing with conflict or working with anxiety,) while others prefer a more open-ended discussion format. The confidentiality of the group creates a safe and supportive refuge where each individual is nourished as they share freely from real lives and hearts. Below, you will find more information about mindful sharing and how it creates trust and safety in the group setting.

**Facilitating**

Depending on the preferences of your group, you might have a designated facilitator. This responsibility could belong to the same person for all meetings or could rotate from one meeting to the next. Many groups have co-facilitators at some or all meetings. Whatever the format each group chooses, facilitating a mindfulness meditation group provides many opportunities for growth in your own meditation practice.

The facilitator’s role does not necessarily have to be to lead or to teach. In addition to looking after the overall arrangements for meeting (place, time, notifications), keeping time and making sure necessary elements for the practice session (such as chairs, bell, clock, recordings) are in place, the group facilitator strives to promote a safe, stable atmosphere for people to meditate and engage with one another. While all participants share the responsibility for the overall functioning of the group, the facilitator helps by skillfully guiding the discussion (see “Mindful Sharing” below) and keeping the group on track with its defined purpose and intention.

Facilitating a meditation group is incredibly rewarding and, like anything else in life, can be quite challenging.
How to Start a Mindfulness Meditation Group

All groups are likely to go through rough patches and have growing pains from time to time. Each meeting is a learning experience and it is important for facilitators to be open to feedback from other members and willing to make adjustments as the group forms and settles. The effort will be well worth it.

Mindful Sharing
For many who participate in meditation groups, a rich part of the gathering is having the opportunity to share experiences with each other. The following guidelines can help to create a safe and supportive container for mindful sharing.

• As part of forming the meditation group, come to an agreement about key elements of the mindful sharing period. This might include a discussion about the responsibilities of the facilitator, how long the sharing period will be, the confidential nature of the group, etc.
• Start with a short check-in around the circle where each person introduces themselves and says a few words about how they are doing. Then open the floor for spontaneous sharing.
• Appropriate themes include the joys, difficulties and insights experienced in meditation practice and the multitude of ways to bring mindfulness alive in relationships, work and daily life.
• Members should feel free to share at any time, but should never be obligated to do so.
• The group might choose some kind of signal for members to use to let the group know when they have something to share and when they have finished sharing. This might be a bow, a hand raise or passing a talking stick...whatever method works best to minimize accidental interrupting or talking over one another.
• Let there be a pause between shares. Slowing down the process promotes awareness of what is arising within.
• Speak about what is alive for you in this moment, from your heart and your own direct experience. Refrain from intellectual/philosophical discussion or long storytelling.
• Be lean of expression — it helps everyone who is listening and leaves time for others to be heard.

Getting the Word Out
There are many ways to let prospective members know about your group or to find an existing group you may like to join. Here are some you might consider:

• Making flyers, leaflets or postcards and distributing them at community centers, hospitals, doctor’s offices, alternative health care clinics, yoga studios, health food stores, libraries, kiosks, etc.;
• Listing your group on websites such as the Buddhist Insight Network or Meetup;
• Local news sources;
• Advertising on your own website or social media pages;
• Encouraging group members and friends to spread the word.

As your group grows, you might organize daylong or weekend retreats to provide additional opportunities for members and new friends to integrate mindfulness practice more fully into their lives. You can arrange for an experienced teacher to guide the activities or lead them yourself with the support of the above resources. You might find it useful to establish an email list for getting announcements out.

Technical Guidelines for Online Groups

• Identify an online platform. There are many free options. Most groups use either Google+ Hangouts or Skype.
• The group facilitator sends out instructions to each new group member and should ideally have one individual meeting with each member to work out tech glitches.
• The group facilitator initiates the online meeting invitation on the chosen platform at the agreed
upon time of the meeting. Members simply log into the platform (e.g., Google+ Hangouts or Skype) and accept the invitation. Members are asked not to initiate an invitation.

- To facilitate online communication and connection, some groups set up a closed Facebook page or a Google+ closed Community to post talks and reflections or to offer updates or support between meetings.
- Ask participants to:
  - Enter on time, because entries make a noise that will be distracting in a meditation period.
  - Please keep microphones on mute to minimize background noise, unless they are speaking or during a period of open dialogue.
  - Check to be sure the camera is “on” if you want others to be able to see you.
  - Please refrain from using “Chat” for side conversations in order to keep all energy focused on the group space and maintain deep listening and presence. Reserve Chat usage for any technical difficulties that require an alternate form of communication with the group.
  - Please do not use the “Capture” function (which takes photos) during meetings in order to preserve confidentiality.

The most important thing? Enjoy! It is a wonderful service to yourself, your fellow group members and your community to make this support available for cultivating the awakened heart in us all. Take it step by step; let it be organic, creative and fun!

Author Tara Brach can be found at www.TaraBrach.com.

RESOURCES
Here are some resources that can support you in starting a group practice:


Recorded guided meditations and talks:
Audio and video talks – www.tarabrach.com/talks-audio-video (site is searchable – click magnifying-glass icon on upper-right corner)
Guided meditations – www.tarabrach.com/guided-meditation-basic-meditations
Dharma Seed – www.dharmaseed.org/talks – talks in Western insight meditation tradition

Information and assistance for setting up a Buddhist meditation group:
Insight Meditation Community of Washington spiritual friends groups – www.imcw.org/Programs/Spiritual-Friends-KM
Spirit Rock Kalyana Mitta – www.spiritrock.org/kalyana-mitta

Virtual communities, tools, and support for practice:
Insight Timer – www.insighttimer.com – meditate online with a worldwide community at any time
Telesangha – www.telesangha.com – create a daily meditation habit; live coach and group support in the comfort of your home
Plumline – www.plumline.org – supports online meditation practice communities in the Plum Village tradition; worldwide listing provided
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FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THIS COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE

Chronic pain is at epidemic proportions. A 2011 Institute of Medicine report, *Relieving Pain in America*, estimates that chronic pain affects a mind-boggling 116 million — nearly 47% of American adults. With those numbers, it is probably not just a statistic to you. It is likely you or someone you love suffers from chronic pain.

When we live with pain it is part of our internal landscape. We feel intimately familiar with it. But is it what we think it is?

Science has made huge strides in understanding this wild, mysterious and sometimes stubborn beast we call pain. Unfortunately, these new insights have not always filtered down into general public awareness, or sometimes even into general medical practices.

Let us have a look at what those new scientific views are and how they can be applied in our energy healing work with clients, family and friends.

**Chronic Pain: The Old Scientific View**
From the 1600s until a couple of decades ago, pain was thought to be a relatively straightforward physical phenomenon caused by tissue injury, with pain happening in the tissue and intensity proportional to the amount of damage. In that view, the peripheral nerves generated and sent a pain signal to the brain. The old theory of pain holds up pretty well for acute pain. You hit your thumb with a hammer and the tissue is smashed — it hurts. The pain goes away when the tissue heals. With acute pain, the sensations seem to correlate with the damage.

But this model breaks down with chronic pain, defined (in contrast to acute pain) by the International Association for the Study of Pain as “pain without apparent biological value that has persisted beyond the normal tissue healing time (usually taken to be 3 months).” It exists without an obvious cause in the tissue, demonstrating that pain is not just a straightforward damage-equals-pain equation.

**Chronic Pain: The Current Scientific View**
In the last few decades, pain scientists have been busy unraveling mysteries and updating old theories. The bottom line: it is complicated.

Contemporary science resoundingly sees pain as a phenomenon of the brain, rather than of the peripheral tissues. If you cut your finger, the nerves in your finger do not send pain signals to your brain. They send information. The brain decides whether to interpret this input as pain, based on its assessment of the level of actual or threatened damage. That assessment may or may not be proportional to the damage — or even correct at all.
Scientists now consider pain to be much more than a mere physical event. For example, a fascinating 2004 study showed that the brain activity of people hypnotized to believe they were experiencing pain was similar to that of people actually having a pain experience. This is not to suggest that pain that is disproportionate to tissue damage is not real. Pain is pain, and no matter what is happening in the tissues, it is real, as anyone who suffers from chronic pain can tell you. But again — it is complicated.

Scientists now consider pain to be much more than a mere physical event, corroborating most people’s lived experiences. Partially processed in the brain’s limbic system, which mediates the brain’s emotional responses, pain is powerfully integrated with our emotions. This is a two-way dynamic, in which the experience of pain both affects our emotions and is affected by them. Chronic pain continues to be puzzling, but current science now views it as a dysfunction of the central nervous system. It is thought that the pain-processing system becomes over-sensitized and begins to assess tissue threat and damage, and therefore to create experiences of pain, even though there is actually little or no danger present. Like a malfunctioning car alarm, it has become hypersensitive to even minimally noxious stimuli. Eminent pain researcher Lorimer Moseley has called this “the dark side of neuroplasticity.”

Applying Insights from Pain Science to Our Practices

Given that many of these and other new theories and insights are not yet well integrated into public understanding or sometimes even into general medical application, it is no wonder that individuals who suffer from fibromyalgia, migraine, arthritis, neuralgia, long-term musculoskeletal issues, autoimmune disease and other chronic pain pathologies often turn to complementary medicine, including energy healing. Energy healing has a decent track record in dealing with pain, but are there ways we could improve? Let us look at some of the insights and applications we can derive from contemporary science.

Take a Holistic Approach

Current science is clear that chronic pain is complex and multi-faceted with causes and effects that go beyond the physical body. It can be intertwined with depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, exhaustion and “brain fog.” It often brings on financial or job stress and grief.

A major take-away from this is that there is not likely to be a single, straight-ahead “cure.” You should definitely use your most effective local techniques for pain, but do not stop there. Treat the whole person — the whole energy system. Be creative, be holistic, approach from multiple angles and remember that your therapeutic impact is always more than the sum of your techniques.

Calm the Nervous System

Since chronic pain is thought to be a disease characterized by an over-sensitized nervous system, it makes sense that giving clients a breather from this relentless, exhausting backdrop of physiological stress should be a top priority. Fortunately, energy healing excels at calming the nervous system. Use your best soothing and calming techniques. Also consider:

- The experience of pain is lessened when we feel safe, so aim to amplify your client’s sense of security.
  - Present a reassuring persona and environment. Do a quick check of yourself and your treatment space, keeping in mind what makes you feel comfortable and secure.
  - Try working with the first chakra, the energy center at the base of the spine that is associ-
strategies for chronic pain inspired by contemporary science

- Ground your client during the session and also teach grounding for self-care.
- Consider incorporating belly breathing into your treatment. Breath, a bridge between physical and subtle energy, is a powerful tool for relaxing the nervous system.
  - Introduce it when your client is on the table, or after as a self-care practice. I usually suggest five minutes twice a day, plus whenever feeling particularly stressed. My instructions are included on page 57.
  - Work with the third chakra (between the navel and bottom of the sternum), associated with how we manage stress.
  - Working with the feet can also be a good way to quiet the nervous system. The Kidney 1 acupuncture point (on the sole of the foot in the depression that forms when the toes are curled) is particularly calming and grounding for many people.

Incorporate Gentle Touch

Touch, another good way to calm the nervous system, can also temporarily reduce pain. That is why we instinctively rub a bumped noggin. This may be because of a phenomenon called “The Gate Theory of Pain,” which posits that the central nervous system limits the amount of information sent to the brain. Sensations from gentle touch (as well as other things) can temporarily “close the gate” to sensations of pain.

- If it is within your scope of practice and your client is okay with it, include touch-based techniques in your session. Nothing fancy is needed. A 2008 Annals of Internal Medicine paper reported that both professional massage and simple touch decreased pain.

Work with the Emotional Aspects of Pain

Since pain is so intertwined with emotion — worsened by fear and stress and often relieved by positive feelings — another good holistic strategy is to balance your client’s emotional state. You probably already have your own preferred tools and methods for this. Here are some additional ideas:

- Engage your client’s intellect. Employing “higher cognition” seems to help balance the exacerbating emotional components of pain.
- Try body-mind techniques that bring in observation and mindfulness. For example, invite your client to bring awareness to the area that hurts. Ask them to describe obvious characteristics such as pain intensity, location, frequency and duration. Also encourage them to describe more imaginative characteristics like size, shape, color and sound. Often during this process clients realize that the pain, which felt all encompassing, is more localized and less threatening than it seemed.
- Work with the second chakra (between pubic bone and navel) to help modulate emotions and the sixth chakra (at the forehead) to foster perspective.
- Try this Energy Medicine technique. Place your fingertips on your client’s temples and your thumbs on their “forehead bumps,” the slight bulges that most people have on either side of their foreheads about two thirds of the way up. (Hand placement is reversed if you are teaching it for home-care.) Hold for minute or so. Encourage belly breathing as it is being done.

Nurture Optimism

The other side of the pain-emotion connection is that positive emotions such as hope and confidence have a beneficial effect. Studies have shown that a chronic pain sufferer’s expectations about their prognosis is the main determinant of outcome.

What are some ways we can foster realistic optimism?

- Explore your client’s current expectations. Within informed, realistic bounds (Do your homework!), discourage catastrophic thinking and whenever possible, within your scope of practice, encourage confidence about the possibility of improvement on some level.
- Acquaint clients with research that shows the power of expectation on the outcome of pain and encourage them not to let their
Strategies for Chronic Pain Inspired by Contemporary Science

x-rays define their destiny.\textsuperscript{15} It is not that simple, and in that potential lays hope.

- Keep session notes and draw attention to any positive changes over time.
- Make sure that your speech supports healing and avoids even subtly negative terms. Energy healing recipients often go into deep relaxation, a highly impressionable state in which our words can have an outsized impact. Affirm your client’s endless ability to balance and heal and avoid even commonly used but negative terms about energy such as “stagnant” or “congested.”
- Work with the fourth (heart) chakra to support optimism and help clients “take heart.”

Promote Empowerment
Chronic pain can make people feel powerless and out of control,\textsuperscript{16} which can trigger depression and anxiety. Depression and anxiety, in turn, can worsen pain.\textsuperscript{7} Our approach should be to increase a sense of empowerment and agency. Some ideas:

- Many chronic pain sufferers have had their experiences discounted and invalidated. Neutralize this by listening deeply and showing unconditional regard and respect.
- Engage people in their own treatment and teach energy healing self-care techniques as forms of empowerment. (You may also want to share this excellent Institute for Chronic Pain page with motivated clients: \url{www.instituteforchronicpain.org/resources/educational-links}).
- Work with the third chakra, associated with personal efficacy and power as well as with how we manage stress.
- Help clients re-establish control over how they interpret their situations. Energy healing itself is a powerful reframing of conventional concepts of illness and healing. You can also:
  - Introduce the idea that pain may be providing information about something beyond the physical body, with clients who are open to it. For example, offering insights about disharmony or a need for re-balancing in some area of their lives.
  - Try working with the sixth chakra to promote insight, clarity and mental flexibility, or the seventh chakra to encourage a sense of higher meaning about the situation. Meaning and context are powerful modulators of the pain experience.\textsuperscript{17}
  - If a client seems to have issues with depression or anxiety, refer them to a mental health professional.

A Few Final Words
A final suggestion is that, given how complex and stubborn chronic pain can be, it is particularly important to be realistic about results and to observe the often-given advice to remain non-attached to specific outcomes. For example, look for signs of improvement rather than complete cessation. If someone’s regularly at an 8/10 level of pain and they decrease to 3/10, that is a huge improvement in quality of life.

Watch for change or growth on all levels, not just the physical. If you have helped someone learn to reframe their way of looking at a hardship, manage their own stress, shift their internal emotional landscape or increase their sense of empowerment, you have given them an invaluable life skill.

Lastly, science can point us in useful directions and suggest particular areas of emphasis, but in the end we must show up with open hearts and open minds, following the energy where it leads.

Author Nancy Hausauer can be found at \url{www.The-Energy-Healing-Site.com}.
The exercise below will show you how to breathe optimally. “Belly breathing” like this will help you relax, communicating directly with your central nervous system to turn off the stress response. The exercise goes on to shows you how to supercharge the relaxation response — which will help you manage and reduce pain.

1. Sit or lie down comfortably. Inhale in through your nose and out through your mouth for a while. Consciously slow your breath down a bit.

2. Inhale deeply (but comfortably) — all the way into the lower third of your lungs. Your belly should expand when you inhale and return to normal when you exhale. This is diaphragmatic breathing. (This should be a gentle, slow, natural movement. Do not try to fill your lungs until they practically pop!)
   - Place your hands flat on your belly, watching them rise and fall, to make sure that your abdomen expands as you inhale and contracts as you exhale.
   - Breathe like this for a while, until it feels comfortable and natural. Consciously see if you can slow it down a little more.

3. At this point, if your breathing is not already smooth and even, consciously even it out to a nice, smooth rhythm. Smoothing it out relaxes you and helps you feel grounded.
   - You can count to help you keep the rhythm even. (Unless it makes you tense to count — in that case, just estimate.)

4. After you have got the rhythm nice and even, slow down the exhale in comparison to the inhale, to super-charge the relaxation response.
   - Inhale for a certain number of counts, say six (or whatever is comfortable for you), then exhale for approximately twice as many counts. Do this for a minute or so. (As before, if it makes you tense up to count, then just estimate.)
   - By now you should be starting to feel more relaxed. Continue like this for as long as you wish.

5. If at any time you start to feel dizzy or faint, you can either return to your normal breathing for a while, slow down your exhale or lengthen the natural pause between your inhale and your exhale.

Watch out for “paradoxical” breathing the first few times you do this exercise. When first trying to belly breathe, some people suck their bellies in when they inhale and stick their bellies out when they exhale. That is exactly opposite of how it should be.
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