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A woman with brown hair is shown in profile, sitting and meditating. She is wearing a red button-down shirt and a colorful floral shawl. Her eyes are closed, and she has a peaceful expression. The background is a soft-focus natural setting with trees and sunlight filtering through. The text 'Rest. Breathe. Renew.' is overlaid on the left side of the image in a green, cursive font.

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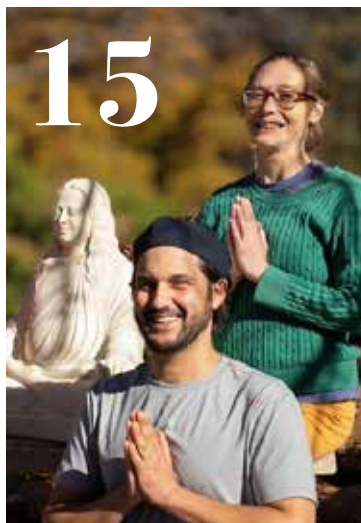
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## Healthy You

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# WELCOME TO THE SEVENTH ISSUE OF HEALTHY YOU!

You know your body better than anyone—the pain, the pleasure, the person. So when you're not feeling your best, no one has to know, but you sure do. You don't feel right. You're searching for answers, but nothing helps. A sane person questions, *is it all in my head?* The hard truth: sometimes yes, and that doesn't make it any less real. *Healthy You* is a gift from Nevada County's local healers and helpers—a collection of resources that reveal how to unlock your body's own healing power. The magazine is a conception of editor Valerie Costa, who wrote in to say, "Healthy You as a whole was my love letter to Nevada County and I really hope you keep it alive." So thanks to Valerie, and to the healthy spirits who keep this magazine thriving.

You don't have to do this alone. Across Nevada County, people are showing up for themselves and each other—through yoga at the library, EFT tapping circles, garden clubs, group singing for the soul. These are the stories of a community choosing to feel better, together.

The story includes where we live. The water we drink. The air we breathe. The products we use. Environmental health is part of the picture—and this issue doesn't shy away from it. From PFAS in local water systems to microbes in our soil and gut, we explore how the world around us impacts the world within us.

In these pages, you'll find gentle guidance on how to support your body's detox outlets, strengthen digestion, and explore the deep connection between

emotional and physical well-being. Experts reveal their mindful meal rituals, ancient abdominal techniques, acupuncture wisdom, and gut-health insights. These local practitioners offer down-to-earth practices that meet you where you are and make healing possible.

We can all take small steps towards a healthier lifestyle. The stories in this magazine are stories of togetherness that will ripple throughout Nevada County to start a trend where everyone in the community is hooked on health and wellness. Friends and groups choosing to dig in, lay down, and make healthy roots, and we, as readers, are pulled in. On the outside looking in, healthy circles look exclusive yet simultaneously inviting. On the inside, it's wildly welcoming. Why not jump in? Bring your personality to the table and have some fun. Make a friend, make a memory! Make the most of the life you live. Show up because someone you haven't met yet might need you there. Maybe next year you'll have a story of your own for the pages of this magazine, and isn't that what life is all about?



Bridget Grant,  
Editor  
bgrant@theunion.com



## ON THE COVER

NATIVE POLLINATORS LOVE CRABAPPLE BLOSSOMS IN THE COTTAGE GARDEN OF THE MASTER GARDENER'S DEMONSTRATION GARDEN AT THE SITE OF THE NEVADA IRRIGATION DISTRICT OFFICES IN GRASS VALLEY, CA.

# THRIVING PARENTS

## *Nevada County Public Health's Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health (MCAH) Program*

**Y**ou watch in wonder as your child's curiosity leads them to a genius discovery, then the next second, you're negotiating with a toddler who believes pants are optional. Between long nights, pick-ups and drop-offs, and the ever-present pile of laundry, making magical family moments sometimes gets put on the back burner. Many parents feel they can't find time to stay up on research-based, best parenting techniques. At Nevada County Public Health's Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health (MCAH) Program, we are dedicated to helping parents thrive and strive to foster well-developed kids. Our team of experienced home visiting nurses is here to support parents every step of the way. That's why we offer education,

free and include so many other awesome resources, like the educational toy checkout or the Montessori learning playroom at our meetings at SNCS, until the nice weather begins, that's when our Parents' Circle starts meeting in the park!"

We provide guidance on early childhood development, outline tips for bonding with your baby, and give you tools to further your education as a parent. Whether you're wondering what is "normal", (spoiler: there is no such thing), we can help, or stressing about how to intervene in unsafe behaviors without losing your cool, we've got your back. At our weekly group meetings, families are welcomed with snacks, toys, and warm, friendly experts offering advice on healthy play,



Experts and specialists meet with parents in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

**Parenting is tough, but you don't have to do it alone. MCAH is here to offer expert guidance, a listening ear, and a whole lot of reassurance that you're doing better than you think.**

**Taking care of yourself is just as important as taking care of your child. We encourage parents to prioritize self-care—and that means you deserve a break. . .**

advice, and practical solutions tailored to your family's needs.

Jessica Ferrer, BSN, RN, Sr. PHN, CLC, & MCAH Director, emphasizes, "It's no secret that all parents need support. That's where our team comes in. Every parent is qualified to have a home visit with a nurse, and everyone is welcome and encouraged to make the most of the programs offered by the county—which are

infant and child care, breastfeeding, and nutrition. We help connect families to local resources for healthcare, housing, food, and transportation. Need some friends with babies and kids to enjoy community events with? We encourage peer social interaction. Want to feel more confident as a parent? Our Parents-As-Teachers curriculum empowers you to be knowledgeable in child development, parent-child bond-

ing, and parenting challenges.

Stress comes with the parenting package, but there are ways to manage it before you find yourself hammering yourself with your last tool in your parenting "toolbelt". Taking care of yourself is just as important as taking care of your child. We encourage parents to prioritize self-care, and that means you deserve a break, even if it's just five minutes of deep breathing or cooking your favorite meal without including a child in the prep. Building a support system, setting realistic expectations, and letting go of that impossible image of "perfect

parenting" can make a world of difference. If you're raising a child with special healthcare needs or behavioral challenges, we're here to connect you with the support and resources you need to lighten the load.

Parenting is tough, but you don't have to do it alone. MCAH is here to offer expert guidance, a listening ear, and a whole lot of reassurance that you're doing better than you think.

For more information on how MCAH can support you, visit our website at Nevada County Public Health's MCAH Program or contact us directly.



# Modern Gut Wisdom from an Ancient Healing Art

*By Darlene J. Weiss, Functional Medicine Practitioner, Clinical Nutritionist, I-ACT & NBCHT Certified Colon Hydrotherapist*

**F**or nearly two decades, I've served Nevada County as an I-ACT certified colon hydrotherapist. Though I originally planned to attend medical school, the transformation I witnessed in clients—relief, clarity, and deep somatic and spiritual shifts—was something I couldn't walk away from. I later pursued a Master's in Human Nutrition and Functional Medicine, aligning my education with what I had already observed in practice: the centrality of the gut, and more specifically the microbiome, to whole-body health.

When I began, few people had heard the word “microbiome.” Now, it's everywhere—on social media, in casual conversations—but despite this surge of interest, microbiome science remains in flux. Definitions evolve. Research methods shift. And discoveries continue to challenge what we thought we knew.

The human microbiome refers to the vast ecosystem of bacteria, fungi, archaea, viruses, and their genomes that inhabit the body. The colon alone houses roughly  $10^{14}$  microbes—compared to  $10^7$  in the small intestine. These populations are shaped by age, diet, geography, genetics, and lifestyle.

Thanks to landmark studies like the Human Microbiome Project and American Gut Project, microbes are no longer viewed solely as threats, but as essential collaborators. What were once feared as “germs” are now recognized as vital to our survival. They support immune function, regulate metabolism, blood sugar, digestion, even influence our mood and behavior. This has given rise to the emerging field of the gut-brain-microbiome axis.

We're at a turning point in how we view our human-microbe relationship. These microbes aren't just passive residents—they perform critical roles that make the gut a complete and responsive organ system. A recent review by Ma and colleagues explores this complexity, examining whether microbes are innate or adaptive, beneficial or competitive, mobile or sedentary.

Relationships vary depending on anatomical location, and when microbes cross into the bloodstream, they may trigger chronic inflammation or even organ failure. Some researchers now refer

to the human body and its microbes as a “meta-host,” where our genetic blueprint is the innate genome, and the microbial genome—far more adaptable—is the adaptive genome and constantly shifts. Interestingly, only 0.1% of our human genome differs from person to person.

Even hygiene practices like tooth brushing, disinfecting, and bathing may be forcing microbes to subservient roles, raising new questions about balance and coexistence.

The gut-brain axis refers to constant, two-way communication between the digestive tract and the central nervous system. This happens through neural pathways like the vagus nerve, and also assists hormones, immune signals, microbes, and their metabolites.

Metabolites called short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs)—such as butyrate, acetate, and propionate—are produced when beneficial gut bacteria ferment dietary fiber. SCFAs play a key role in immunity, intestinal integrity, and neurotransmission. When the microbiota are imbalanced, symptoms may include anxiety, depression, inflammation, leaky gut, or histamine sensitivity.

I practice an ancient healing art in a modern world. Colon hydrotherapy, vagal nerve stimulation, nutrition, lifestyle interventions, prebiotics, probiotics, psychobiotics and emotional regulation all offer promising ways to optimize the host-microbial relationship. While many of these therapies remain under-researched or controversial, sometimes the best evidence is how someone feels.

If you're curious about supporting your gut-brain-microbiome health, book a free discovery call through my website to kick-start your journey. Another great first step? Eat the rainbow of fruits and vegetables. It's simple, it's powerful, and it nourishes your microbiome.

It's time to expand research and rethink wellness—not as the absence of disease, but as the presence of harmony between human and microbe.

# HEALTHY BELLY, HEALTHY BODY

by *Samantha Corsiglia—Integrative Women, Children, and Family Health Specialist*

**I** learned of the Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy, over 25 years ago, as I sought to optimize my own health, and seek treatment for my partner, as we thought he was sterile, and we hoped to have a child, together.

Maya Abdominal Therapy is a non-invasive, external, massage technique. It guides internal abdominal organs into their proper position for optimum health and well being. Maya massage improves organ function by releasing physical and emotional congestion from the abdomen. This massage therapy is effective for both men and women.

The technique applies anatomy, physiology, herbology and naprapathy, (study of the ligaments, joints, and muscles), with Ancient Maya healing techniques to address common female and male complaints. The technique works by relieving congestion and blockages to improve the flow of chi and fluids of the circulatory, lymphatic and nervous systems to prevent the progression of chronic disease symptomology.

My research led me to study in Belize, Central America, with Rosita Arvigo, DN., of whom had been mentored by Don Eljio Panti, a Mayan Traditional Healer.

As I already knew the abdominal organs reign over so much of our overall health, having studied Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Mayan Abdominal Therapy, and philosophy, was able to address the abdominal organs in a unique way, unlike other abdominal techniques I had studied.

I sought out, and studied with Rosita, over the next six years, eventually assisting her in her trainings, and becoming one of her first West Coast Instructors.

All the while, I was not only treating myself, but my husband. And, after a short period of time, we were able to conceive, naturally, and have our healthy daughter, at home. She is now eighteen, and continues to thrive.

My first client, returning from Belize, was my elementary school teacher, who was 50. She had never been pregnant, and wanted a child. She worked with me, and also had a healthy girl, by the age of 51.

In my 25 years of practicing the Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy, I have helped infants with reflux and colic issues, young children with nausea issues in the car, teens with Crohn's disease, menstrual pain, hormonal



Maya Abdominal Therapy guides internal abdominal organs into their proper position for optimum health and well-being.

imbalances, both partners to optimize fertility, digestive issues, keeping pregnant mothers comfortable, turned breech babes, to encouraging labor, and healing in postpartum, to those suffering from prolapse of the uterus and bladder, incontinence issues, prostate issues, and so much more.

This therapy has been pivotal in my 35 year practice. Rarely, will you find practitioners who treat the abdomen, let alone distinguish between the organs.

So, let's delineate what to expect in a treatment, if you are not pregnant:  
You begin, belly up, on the

treatment table, wearing your underpants. Your chest is covered, and I treat between the sternum and pubic bone, moving stagnation, and aligning the organs, (ie: uterus, bladder, etc.). Turning over, I treat from the neck to the sacrum, massaging the area, and aligning the structure, (ie: hips), for optimal circulation, and functionality.

Every aspect of the therapeutic body treatment is meant to increase circulation, break up stagnation, to optimize functionality.

If you are pregnant, you are positioned in a comfortable



Samantha and her daughter.

upright manner, so I can feel the position of the baby. Then, I gently massage the abdomen, and encourage babe into an optimal position, for mama's comfort, and babe to optimize its space in utero. Then, you lay on each side, and I treat from neck to sacrum, massaging, and aligning the structure to support optimal comfort for mama, and position for babe.

Amazingly, this therapy can help encourage labor, from 38 weeks on, and help shorten birth. I like to treat mamas once a week from 38 weeks, until birth, to encourage labor. And, I make house calls to treat mamas, for postpartum healing.

I treat mamas, at home, in bed, with their babes by their side, or at their breast.

The Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy are known to address the following issues:

Most common female (uterine) symptoms relieved by this treatment:

- Painful or irregular periods
- Dark, thick fluids at the beginning & end of menses

- Blood Clots
- No menstruation at all
- Headaches/ Dizziness with menses
- Varicose veins
- Tired legs, numb feet/ sore heels
- Lower back ache
- Infertility
- Endometriosis/Endometritis
- Uterine Polyps
- Painful Intercourse
- PMS, Uterine infections, Frequent urination, Ovarian cysts, Vaginitis, Hormonal imbalances, Difficult Pregnancy & Delivery, Weak newborn infants, Premature deliveries, Difficult Menopause, Cancer of the cervix, uterus, colon or bladder, Painful or irregular, Difficult Pregnancy & Delivery, Weak newborn infants, Premature deliveries, Difficult Menopause, Cancer of the cervix, uterus, colon or bladder

Most common male (prostate) symptoms relieved by this treatment:

Prostate swelling and inflammation, Alleviates varicose veins, Premature ejaculation, Impotency problems, Frequent urination, Cancer of the colon, bladder, prostate.

As we are understanding more about keeping the gut healthy, this therapy is a must for us all to experience and learn about.



I feel it quite important to educate my clients on how they can optimize their health, at home, therefore I teach them self care techniques — to continue their healing between appointments, as well as, them being able to continue a life long practice to maintain optimal health and well being. My hope is to empower you in living healthfully.

Of all of the many therapeutic modalities I fuse together, in my therapeutic treatments, the Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy is one of the most pivotal.

Raised in the Sierra Nevada Foothills — a Fifth Generational Northern Californian — Samantha had the opportunity to follow her passions, travel, studying abroad. She fuses Ancient, Traditional Health Philosophies and modalities, together, to offer her clients Individualized Consultation and Therapeutic Treatment for Healthy Breasts. Healthy Belly. Healthy Body.  
[samanthacorsiglia.com](http://samanthacorsiglia.com)

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# Nourish to Flourish

# Build a Strong Body and Unshakable Mind — How to Fuel Your Physical and Mental Strength from the Inside Out

*By Erin McCarthy and Tiana Rockwell, The Wellness Academy*

**I**n today's fast-paced world, we're constantly reminded to eat well—but rarely are we taught to absorb well. The truth is, that you are what you absorb, not just what you eat. You could be loading your plate with protein bowls, leafy greens, and superfoods, but if your digestion is sluggish or your body is stressed, you may be missing out on the full benefits. We need a back-to-basics approach to nutrition. A mindful 5-minute meal ritual can be all it takes to build a stronger body and a more resilient mind.

The gut-brain connection is a two-way street. We often hear about how the gut influences the brain, but fewer people realize the connection flows both ways. Your gut, often called your “second brain,” is home to over 100 million neurons and produces around 90% of your body’s serotonin—a neurotransmitter responsible for regulating mood, sleep, and stress. When your gut is imbalanced or inflamed, it can send distress signals to your brain, leading to symptoms like anxiety, fatigue, and brain fog.

On the flip side, your mental state directly affects your gut. When you're stressed, your nervous system activates "fight or flight" mode, releasing cortisol and adrenaline. This diverts blood flow away from the digestive system toward the muscles, slowing down digestion and impairing nutrient absorption. For optimal digestion—and better mental clarity—your body needs to be in a relaxed, parasympathetic state, also known as "rest and digest."

Before eating, it's essential to shift out of stress mode and into a calm, receptive state, to our 'rest and digest' mode. This simple shift enhances enzyme production, promotes better nutrient breakdown, and reduces bloating. This is imperative for absorption of nutrients.

Try these tips to activate your parasympathetic nervous system during meals:

- **Try breathing deeply:** Take 3-5 slow, deep breaths before you eat. This signals your body that it's safe to focus on digestion.
- **Relax your shoulders and jaw:** Physical tension tells your nervous system you're still on alert. Releasing it helps your



body soften into parasympathetic mode.

- **Create a calm environment:** Turn off devices, dim harsh lighting, and eliminate distractions. A peaceful setting supports mindful eating.
- **Slow down:** Eating slowly and chewing thoroughly enhances digestive enzyme activity and reduces the chance of bloating or discomfort.
- Protein is often associated with muscle repair, but it's just as essential for mental strength.

We recommend a 5-minute meal ritual to help you eat with intention. In a world of rushed meals and distracted eating, digestion often suffers. Scrolling through social media or answering emails mid-bite sends your body into “fight or flight” mode, impairing the digestive process. The solution? Slow down with a 5-minute meal ritual that encourages mindful eating and enhances nutrient absorption. How to practice it:

- **Pause before eating.** Take three deep breaths to activate your parasympathetic nervous system, which primes your body for digestion.
- **Engage your senses.** Notice the colors, textures, and smells of your food—this signals your brain to start releasing digestive enzymes.
- **Express gratitude.** Reflect on the nourishment your meal is providing. Even a simple “thank you” can shift your mindset into a more mindful state.
- **Chew thoroughly.** Aim for 20-30 chews per bite. This slows down eating and allows your stomach to better break down food.
- **Stay present.** Put down your fork between bites and focus on the flavors and sensations, giving your gut time to process.

Improving your digestion and mental resilience doesn't require complicated diets or biohacks—it's about getting back to the basics.

We work with all of our clients on a personalized plan that considers physical, mental, and emotional well being. Join us to receive compassionate support, expert education, and a holistic approach to reclaiming your health and vitality. We can be found at [thewellnessacademygv.com](http://thewellnessacademygv.com)

# INTERVIEW WITH STAN GOTTFREDSON, ATRAXIA MEDIA, PFAS LIABILITY PARALEGAL

By Atraxia Media

## Explain the Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act.

"It's a lifeline. It protects public water systems from being bankrupted by cleanup costs they didn't cause. Instead, it shifts responsibility where it belongs: to the chemical manufacturers. Without it, local water districts will be forced to raise rates or shut down programs just to afford legal defense. Big Corporations can't 'personal responsibility' their way out of this. There needs to be a systemic fix."

## How does this legislation affect Northern California, especially Nevada County?

"The local military bases in Northern California have been studied for toxic chemical seepage into waterways, all of them have it—the Sierra Army base is alarming, where in a 2018 study, PFAS chemicals are present at 165 parts per trillion. Based on the unanimous data gathered in most areas, it is safe to assume this number has risen. Downstream from PFAS sites are more highly infected. Meanwhile legislature is debating the level at which these chemicals are safe—it's not a matter of if it's safe to have 4.6 parts per trillion—any measurement of PFAS per any measurement of water is not safe. All of this information is readily available online to the public. I am just telling people to be aware, and informing them as to why they should care... The Triple F, Fire Foam Filler, used in emergency fire fighting, is a known PFAS that everyone in

California should be aware of. It's already here, and we need to start discussing cleaning this up, decreasing exposure, and holding big corporations accountable."

## When did PFAS become personal for you?

"The moment we started hearing the same heartbreaking story over and over: parents losing kids to rare cancers,



Some local organizations have begun PFAS contamination mitigation and cleanup.

young people facing lifelong thyroid issues, veterans with unexplained illnesses—and all of them drinking from the same wells, living near the same bases. That's when it stopped being just a policy issue. It became personal because the damage was personal."

## What experience has stayed with you?

"One of our lawyers shared with me a story from a mother in Nevada County who kept a journal of every doctor's visit, every rash, every nosebleed her daughter had since they moved near a contaminated site. I thought of my own chil-

dren. I hold the companies who did this responsible. These companies did reports, studies, and research to find out that the effects of these chemicals were harmful; the point is, they knew, and they did it anyway. I decided I wasn't going to be part of the problem."

## What does justice look like?

"To me, justice would be not just awareness that PFAS



*Stan Gottfredson is the President and Chief Executive Officer at Atraxia Law, based in San Diego, California. The firm is focused on legally representing and guiding victims of toxic exposure.*

have been around for decades, causing all kinds of problems for humans and the Earth, justice would be in creating a world in which we remove PFAS from the water and clean up contaminated areas. Justice would be Veterans having legal grounds to file a claim to receive government-funded resources, like disability based on exposure to toxic work sites. Justice would be readily available drinking water for the generations of humans who come after me and my children. Justice would be creating jobs that address these issues, find better solutions, and clean up the mess."



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# TAP INTO HEALING

*By Noemi Sparks*  
*EFT Practitioner and Life Experience Coach in Grass Valley, CA*

**D**uring a retreat in the forest, I hear deep sighs of relief and yawning. A few people begin to cry softly. There's a stillness in our collective energy... We've finally landed in our heart spaces.

This is what rest can feel like. Not sleep, not zoning out, not escapism. True rest. The kind that brings us fully into our bodies, minds, and spirits. The kind that reminds us we are safe to enjoy ourselves, to feel deeply, and to just be.

We *are* nature. Our bodies mirror the seasons and tides. We bloom, we shed, we cycle. When we understand this, we can move with more compassion for ourselves and each other. Our bodies know how to heal, but they need space and stillness to do it. Healing cannot happen in a state of chronic stress.

Rest, outside of sleep, is a practice. It's presence. It's the courage to be here and now without spiraling into the past or rushing toward the future. In the world we live in, rest is rarely seen this way.

Rest, as we know it, has been co-opted by toxic capitalism. It's sold to us as a reward for hard work, a tool to recharge before diving back into the grind. Under this system, our worth is measured by how busy we are, how much we produce, and how many boxes we check. It's not new. The roots of this mindset trace back to slavery, when human beings were considered capital, and their value was measured by their productivity. Today, this legacy lives on in phrases like "Rise and Grind," "Hustle Culture," "Boss-Bitching," and "Leaning In."

Choosing rest as a foundation for wellness, not as a reward, is radical. Choosing rest in a world that demands our labor but refuses to honor our voices is revolutionary.

I began exploring earth medicine in my early twenties while working overnight shifts and struggling to feel at ease, I was desperate to turn off the voice in my head. For years, cannabis held me. I experimented with every healing tool I could find, like talk therapy, medication, yoga, meditation, and self-help work. Each helped in a way but lacked a lasting impact.

When I realized I needed cannabis to feel like myself, I felt empty. That realization was the invitation to shift my rela-



tionship with it. That shift didn't fully land until I discovered **Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)**, or tapping.

The missing piece in my healing journey was this: I wasn't feeling my feelings. I was analyzing them, managing them, or bypassing them. Tapping changed that.

With EFT, I was able to regulate my nervous system. For the first time in years, I felt like me—even without cannabis. I followed an intuitive pull and enrolled in the most comprehensive Clinical EFT program I could find: EFT Universe, led by Dr. Dawson Church. It was backed by a wealth of clinical research on EFT's effectiveness with PTSD, anxiety, depression, and even fibromyalgia.

Here is a short tapping script on feeling stressed and anxious.

**Crown of the head** (Gov-20) All this stress

**Beginning of the Eyebrow** (Bl-2) All this anxiety

**Side of the Eye** (GB-1)

I know there's a lot going on right now. And it's human of me to feel stressed and anxious



**Under the Eye** (ST-2)

I know I am not the only one feeling this way

**Under the Ear** (TW-17) I am not alone

**Under the Nose** (Gov-26) I know how I feel matters

**Under the Lip** (Con-24) My life is for me

**Under the Collarbone Points** (KI-27) I am not here to be like anyone else

**End of the Collarbone** (LU-1) I am worthy of kindness exactly as I am

**Under the Arm** (SP-21) Nothing needs to change for me to be happy

**Tops of the Ribs** (LV-14) I will not rush through my life

**Wrists together** (H-7) I will enjoy myself now

**Tapping on the side of the hand** (SI-3) Even though I feel anxious, I know right now I am safe. And I accept myself anyway. I know it's human to feel stressed.

The truth is, healing isn't about becoming something new. It's about returning to what's always been whole. The greatest trick capitalism ever played was convincing us that we need fixing, saving, and earning. We don't.

We are already whole. The Earth is already whole. And with rest, just like we saw during the early lockdowns of the pandemic, everything begins to heal again. Let us get out of the way. Let us rest. Let us return. Let us be.



*Noemi Sparks is an EFT Practitioner and Life Experience Coach in Grass Valley, CA*

**I**n traditional Chinese medicine, the Wood element is the driving force behind the seed cracking open and the yearning to grow. The Wood element embodies vision, hope and future possibilities. How can we set change in motion?

The Wood element is associated with the liver and gallbladder organs in traditional Chinese Medicine. The Liver is probably most famously known for its role in helping our bodies detox, which is why big “detox cleanses” focus on liver health. However, instead of doing a big detox once or twice a year, it is best to have gentle, consistent detox support. Detoxing too quickly can often flare up health issues, and in a world full of toxins instead we need slow, gentle, continuous support.

Here are my preferred methods of gentle detox support that you can start to incorporate into your daily or weekly routines this Spring:

- Epsom salt baths are a great way to relax, receive the essential mineral magnesium, open the pores to promote toxin excretion, and receive sulfate. If you don't have a bathtub, you can do foot soaks instead! I personally love the lavender epsom salts found at Briar Patch Coop or local company Belly of the Sun's ghee epsom salt bath formula.
- Castor oil packs on the liver support this crucial organ's optimal functioning so it can best process and neutralize toxins, enhancing the body's elimination capacity. You can place castor oil directly on the skin over your liver (and/or the abdomen, if digestion is off), then cover with a cloth and use a heating pad. Be careful because castor oil can stain! If you prefer a premade castor oil pack, you can find them at Levity Health Market in Nevada City.
- Dry Brushing is a simple way to stimulate the lymphatic system and promote the flow of lymph, which carries toxins, out of the body. It's best done before you shower. You can

# NEW BEGINNINGS GENTLE DETOX

*By Danielle Boucher*



Danielle Boucher LAc helps clients support detox pathways through acupuncture.

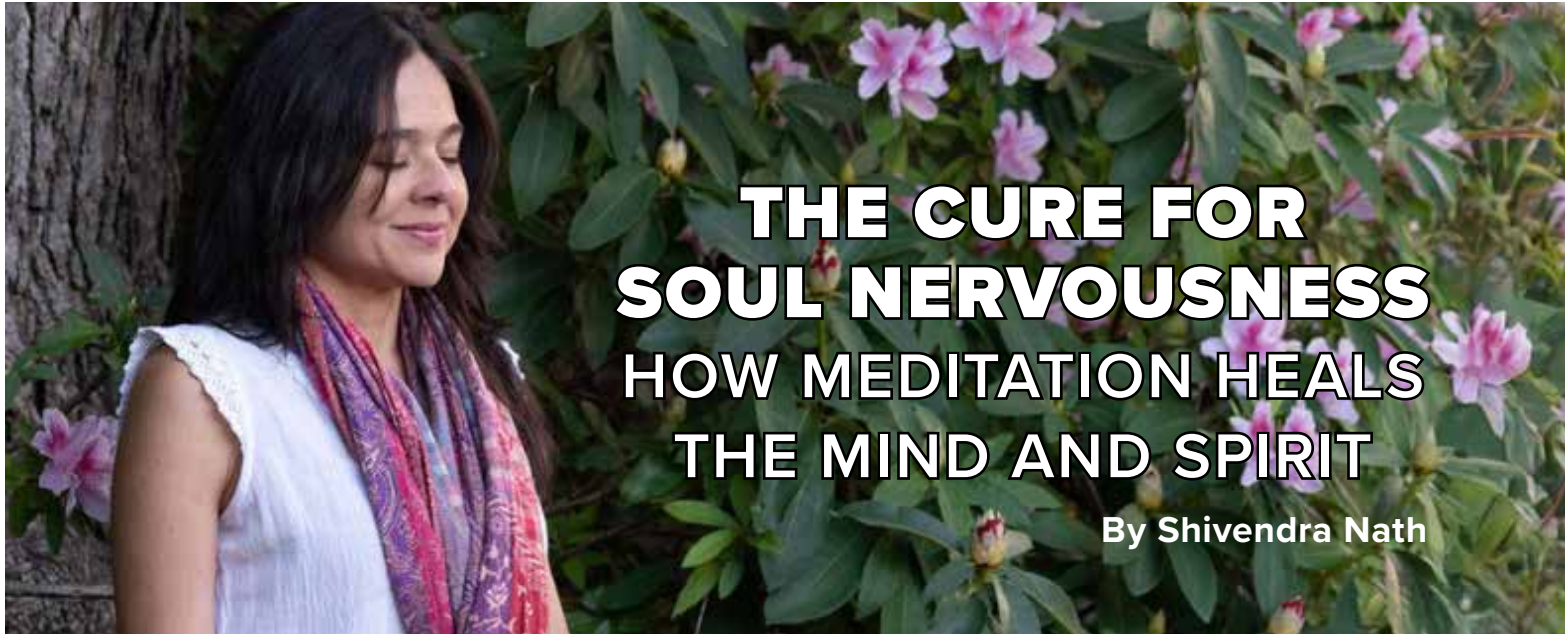
find short tutorial videos online on how to dry brush, as proper technique is important to ensure you're helping to usher toxins out through the drainage pathways. Shop local and pick up a dry brush at Levity Health Market.

- Sweat in the sauna to facilitate the release of waste products and toxins. Heat also activates the lymphatic system and improves circulation, thus supporting the function of our organs for optimal detoxification capacity. You can find saunas in local establishments such as the South Yuba Club, Vela Massage Retreat and Revival Float & Wellness.
- Acupuncture supports improved circulation, the enhanced function of the organs and bodily systems tasked with detoxification, as well as the reduction of chronic stress and pain that can hinder detox.

As the seasons change and we usher in Spring, you can use these suggestions for supporting mind, body and spirit.



*Danielle Boucher LAc is an acupuncturist and owner of The Acupuncture Spot in Nevada City (which is honored to have made the Union's Best of Nevada County three years in a row). Licensed for over ten years, Danielle's practice focuses on treatment and integrative medicine, uniquely addressing each one of her patients by using acupuncture, supplements, herbal medicine, nutrition, lifestyle changes, stress management therapies, and specialty lab testing when necessary.*



# THE CURE FOR SOUL NERVOUSNESS HOW MEDITATION HEALS THE MIND AND SPIRIT

By Shivendra Nath

**N**ow, take a breath. Let it be a deep one. Hold it in for a moment, then let it go, and relax.

Nervousness, often seen as a minor ailment, has deeper roots and broader effects than we might expect. Nearly a century ago, Paramhansa Yogananda called it the “world’s disease”—re-

**“Nervousness, which is the opposite of calmness, appears to be a simple ailment. But in reality, it has far-reaching consequences. Today, nervousness seems to be the world’s disease.”**

—Paramhansa Yogananda, father of yoga in the west and author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*

ferring to a chronic depletion of the nervous system worn down by fear, overwork, restlessness, and negative emotions. This kind of stress fogs the mind, weakens the body, and leaves us spiritually unanchored. While modern solutions like productivity hacks or wellness perks offer temporary relief, they rarely address the root cause.

Meditation offers a deeper solution. Yogananda taught that our deepest anxiety comes from forgetting our true soul nature. When we over-identify with the body, achievements, or external roles, we become reactive and easily drained.

Meditation helps us shift that focus. It brings us back to our center—a place of peace, clarity, and strength. Far from escapism, meditation is a practical, powerful tool to navigate life’s challenges. It doesn’t remove difficulty but changes how

**“Multitasking is of the ego. When you are completely immersed in one thing, you rise above time.”**

—Nayaswami Devi

we meet it—from a calm, grounded space rather than fear or frenzy.

Inner calm isn’t a luxury—it’s essential. Without it, decisions become reactive and scattered. With it, we gain insight, focus, and resilience. Instead of asking, “What more can I do today?” consider, “What can I remove?” Just like dough stretched too thin, we break under too much pressure. Learn to say no without guilt. Protect your peace—it’s your greatest asset.

Do one thing at a time. If nervousness is a symptom, multitasking is one of its biggest causes. Juggling tasks splits our focus and drains energy. We may feel productive, but the quality of our attention suffers.

Carry peace into activity. Meditation isn’t just for quiet moments—it’s meant to influence your entire day. Incorporate stillness in your routine mindfully. Even simple tasks like walking or preparing breakfast can become sacred transitions.

As you practice, busy moments can become spiritual ones. The awareness of a higher presence brings calm and joy, even in chaos.

Surrender the outcome. One major source of anxiety is the belief that everything depends on us. This need to control creates internal tension. Meditation helps us see a deeper truth: we’re not alone in this.



The Expanding Light Retreat welcomes everyone of diverse backgrounds to meditate on freedom and peace.

Yogananda encouraged surrender—not as weakness, but as freedom. Do your best, then release attachment to the results. A helpful evening practice: mentally offer your day—its wins, mistakes, and worries—into a bonfire of peace. You’ll sleep better and live lighter.

**The Mind as Healer.** Modern science is beginning to confirm what ancient wisdom has long taught: our thoughts directly affect our health. Chronic stress, fear, or anger can suppress immunity and disturb brain chemistry. Meanwhile, positive emotions like peace, joy, and love support healing and balance.

Meditation cultivates uplifting mental states. It shifts us from survival mode to a state of clarity and well-being. Over time, it strengthens emotional resilience and even improves physical health.

**Illness is a Wake-Up Call.** Challenges, especially health-related ones, often carry hidden gifts. Painful as they are, they can force us to re-evaluate our choices and reconnect with what truly matters.

Rather than resisting difficulty, we can ask: “What is this teaching me?” Illness can become an opportunity for growth when we face it with courage and introspection.

Start small, stay steady. You don’t need hours of meditation to see results. Just 5–10 minutes a day can be transformative. The key is consistency.

Ideal times are early morning or before bed, but truly, anytime is the right time if you’re intentional. A simple technique to begin with is Hong Sau, an ancient practice taught by Yogananda that uses the breath to draw the mind inward and quiet the thoughts. Ananda Sangha offers resources and guided sessions to help you get started.

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**“Live quietly in the moment and see the beauty of all before you. The future will take care of itself”**

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—Paramhansa Yogananda

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In closing, your power lies within. True healing doesn’t come from doing more—it comes from doing less, with awareness. Meditation isn’t just a stress-relief tool; it’s a path back to yourself. It helps you live with greater clarity, joy, and purpose.

In a world where nervousness is increasingly common, meditation offers a timeless solution: return to who you are.

Ready to recenter and recharge? Step away from the noise, reconnect with your center, and experience the healing power of meditation in a deeply supportive spiritual environment. The Expanding Light Retreat at Ananda Village—just 20 minutes outside Nevada City—offers a peaceful haven to step back from daily pressures and realign with your inner calm.

Whether you’re ready for an immersive retreat or just beginning your journey, the Ananda Course in Meditation is also available online at [Ananda.org](http://Ananda.org)—an accessible way to establish a daily practice that brings calm, clarity, and inner strength.

**How wonderful would it feel to finally still your mind and experience peace? Take the next step on your meditation journey.** Learn more at [ExpandingLight.org](http://ExpandingLight.org).



The beloved tulips at Ananda remind us to pause and savor the moment of the season.

# BREATHE AND FLOW QIGONG, YOGA AND MORE OFFER COMMUNITY CONNECTION AT THE LIBRARY

By Lisa Renner

**S**urrounded by shelves of books, in front of a striking arched window looking out to trees, Sue Steger leads up to 40 people in a free qigong class Thursday mornings.

The class is held at Madelyn Helling Library in Nevada City in the midst of the library's ordinary business. It's an unusual location but Steger's students say they appreciate the atmosphere.

"They get a benefit of beautiful facility to work in where they feel safe, they feel comfortable, they build social connections," Steger said.



Qigong in Madelyn Helling Library.

It's one of many free programs offered in the Nevada County Library system that facilitate community connection while promoting wellness. Others include yoga classes, children's story-time sessions and game meet-ups.

Molly Szparza, a library technician, said the programs support the library's mission of life-long learning and well-being. "They also support the library's evolution in our changing world as a community center/ gathering place," she said. "More and more, the library is acting as multi-use space for more than just books to our patrons."

The library's front desk receives many compliments from library patrons attending qigong, yoga classes and other programs. "Ordinarily, classes like this could cost upwards of \$20 a session at yoga studios or nice gyms," Szparza said. "Not to mention, Sue and (yoga teachers) Grace Kendrick and Jennifer Vierra are outstanding, experienced teachers, and always bring with them a palpable sense of calm, love and positivity for their work and students. We're super grateful to have such amazing teachers in our community!"

Jon Fox, who attends the qigong class, said only about three students attended when the class kicked off a year ago, but interest has been steadily building. Fox finds the class invaluable. "It's basic stretching, getting every muscle, every joint," he said. "She goes through every possible thing to move the body." Any person of any age or physical ability can participate safely in the qigong class and experience the joy of movement, build strength and balance, reduce stress and tension in the body and reduce the risk of falling, Steger said.

The yoga class is on hiatus after a successful run from October through March; there are plans to bring it back in the fall. Grace Kendrick, the lead teacher, said she loved the experience.

"Having the class in the library is so inviting for everyone in the community," she said. "I love talking about the creativity, intelligence and wisdom that surrounds us in all the books on the shelves. The local art adds beauty to the room, and the great big window invites nature that reminds us of why so many of us chose Nevada County."

The students are very supportive of each other. Kendrick said that one day, after a traumatic event, students formed a circle

and sent love and light to the community. “I had someone in the class later tell me that connecting in that way brought tears to her eyes.”

Another student shared with Kendrick that she had been homeless for two years and was just getting back on her feet. “Yoga and mindfulness have been pillars of strength and recovery for her throughout that experience,” Kendrick said.

Harmony Rose, who attended Kendrick’s class, said the yoga class is excellent for people of all skill levels and abilities. “If you’re older, it’s not intimidating,” she said. “You could have a chair.”

Claudia Orlando, who also attended the class, said she always felt well-stretched after the class and more in touch with how her body felt. A side benefit was getting to know the library better. She now goes to the library more and is exploring more of its offerings. “The library is amazing,” she said. “You can check out telescopes, snow park passes, state park passes.”

Read on to learn about just a few of the free programs at the Nevada County Library. Learn more at [www.NevadaCountyCa.gov/Library](http://www.NevadaCountyCa.gov/Library).

## Movement

- **Qigong**, Thursdays, 10-11 a.m., Madelyn Helling Library, 980 Helling Way, Nevada City. Use breathing techniques, gentle movement, and meditation to cleanse, strengthen, and circulate your life energy (qi), Qigong promotes health and vitality and a tranquil state called a “Qigong state of mind.” These sessions provide a practical, easy-to-follow, daily ritual to self-healing, presented by Connecting Point & Nevada County Library.
- **Yoga**. On hiatus; but plans to re-start in fall.

## Baby and family storytimes

- **Baby storytime**, Tuesdays, 10:30- 10:45 a.m., Grass Valley Library, 207 Mill St. This short story time is filled with rhymes, songs, and stories for the youngest children and their caregivers.
- **Baby storytime**, Tuesdays, 10:30-11:30 a.m., Penn Valley Library, 11252 Pleasant Valley Road. Miss Betsey leads a program of story and song.
- **Sign-Me-a Story-ASL storytime**, Tuesdays, 3:45-4 p.m., Madelyn Helling Library, 980 Helling Way, Nevada City. Stories are read aloud in English and interpreted in American Sign Language.
- **Toddler storytime**, Thursdays, 10:15-10:45 a.m., Bear River Library, 11010 Combie Road, Auburn. Stories, songs, and rhymes for babies, toddlers, and little learners ages 0 - 4.

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## “They get a benefit of beautiful facility to work in where they feel safe, they feel comfortable, they build social connections”

—Sue Steger, Yoga Teacher

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- **Preschool storytime**, Thursdays, 10:30-11:30 a.m., Truckee Library, 10031 Levon Ave. This program includes stories, songs and rhymes.
- **Storytime**, Fridays, 10-10:30 a.m., Madelyn Helling Library, 980 Helling Way, Nevada City. Children of all ages (with a favorite adult) have fun with engaging books, songs and activities as they build their early literacy skills.
- **Bilingual family storytime**, second Saturday of the month, 10:30 a.m. Grass Valley Library, 207 Mill St. This Spanish program is held in the backyard weather permitting.

## Music

- **Ukulele for the People**, Mondays, 3-4 p.m., CTC Classroom, Madelyn Helling Library, 980 Helling Way, Nevada City. Local Ukulele legend Dan Scanlan invites adult learners (16+) to learn the ukulele for Strum Bums shows around the town!
- **Music Explorers**, Every other Wednesday, April 9 -May 21, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Grass Valley Library, 207 Mill St. For grades TK-4. Students build fundamental music skills through listening, singing, and moving to songs from all over the world.
- **Open Slow Jam**, every fourth Friday, 1-3 p.m., Gene Albaugh Community Room, Madelyn Helling Library, 980 Helling Way, Nevada City. Musicians of all kinds and skill levels are welcome to come jam at their own pace with the community.

## Community Connection

- **Sudoku for Seniors**, Mondays, 2:30-4 p.m., Gene Albaugh Community Room, Madelyn Helling Library, 980 Helling Way, Nevada City. Join others to play this logic-based number puzzle game.
- **Adventurer’s Guild: Dungeons and Dragons Club**, Thursdays, 4-6 p.m., Gene Albaugh Community Room, Madelyn Helling Library, 980 Helling Way, Nevada City. Come level up your cooperative skills, share your creativity, and forge lifelong friendships through the power of play. All ages and experience levels welcome.
- **Wild about Wool**, Wednesdays, 1-3 p.m., Truckee Library Workspace, 10879 Donner Pass Road. Learn how fun and easy felting can be.

# DIG IN: COMMUNITY GARDEN CONNECTIONS

By Ann Wright, UC Master Gardener of Nevada County

California's native pipe vine: Dutchman's Pipe.

**A**dvice to grow by...Ask Us!" is one of the catchphrases the University of California Master Gardeners of Nevada County use to describe some of what we do. Master Gardeners offer community outreach

## "Advice to grow by... Ask Us!"

—One of the catch phrases of  
UC Master Gardeners of Nevada County.

and public education to inspire foothill home gardeners to embrace research-based, sustainable gardening practices so our community and environment thrive. In exchange for the UC training on research-based home gardening, pest management, composting, and other sustainable landscape practices, the volunteers who become UC Master Gardeners dedicate their time to sharing their knowledge and making our county look healthy and beautiful!

The Master Gardeners are responsible for the daffodil and poppy seed planting, gardening workshops, winter garden tours, and booths and displays at the Nevada County Fair, as well as the first garden-related publication released in 1983. *The Western Nevada County Gardening Guide* was first published as a booklet focusing on growing vegetables in our area. Over the years,

the publication has been revised and our latest edition, *The Western Sierra Foothills Garden Guide* now features over 20 sections devoted to helping local foothill gardeners with sustainable gardening methods. Our book is available for purchase at several nurseries in the area as well as at our events and workshops.

In 1983, Nevada County residents Steve Cole and Gracie Worley joined some folks from Placer County to attend the Master Gardeners training which was held in Sacramento. These two were the pioneers of the program, becoming the first UC Master Gardeners in Nevada County. The following year, a team of eight volunteers established the official UC Master Gardener program in Nevada County. This group included Carolyn Bunyan, later known as Carolyn Singer, a well-known local gardener and author. By 1985, there were 8 original active members plus an additional 33 new members were

District and the UC Master Gardeners of Nevada County entered into a long-term agreement where an open area of about 1.4 acres on the NID business grounds was allotted to UC Master Gardeners for a Demonstration Garden. NID officials said the partnership would provide valuable gardening education to the community while encouraging efficient use of irrigation and water management. Since then, collaboration with NID has enabled the UC Master Gardeners to establish areas within the garden highlighting the efficient use of water while establishing beautiful landscapes.

Currently, the garden boasts a Foothill Mediterranean Garden, featuring plants that thrive in Mediterranean climates, which is what we have: hot, dry summers and wet winters. The Demonstration Garden also houses a

## Master Gardeners offer community outreach and public education to inspire foothill home gardeners to embrace research-based, sustainable gardening practices so our community and environment thrive.

inducted into the group. Over the years, the roster of volunteers in Nevada County has grown to over 100, with a new 2026 training class on the horizon.

In the fall of 1990, the Nevada Irrigation

fenced raised bed area, a hoop house and propagation bench which is the home for many perennials we use in the garden and at our plant sales. Other areas of the garden also provide on-site education such as the orchard with

fruit trees pruned for the health of the tree and increased fruit yield. Berries are trellised for easier access and management of the vines.

Visitors may be drawn to our Cottage Garden by the lovely mural painted on the side of the Cottage, hand-painted by one of our UC Master Gardeners. It depicts a bright sunflower and popular pollinators. The Cottage Garden is the site of more formal flowering orna-

during NID business hours; special tours may be arranged through the Master Gardeners office by calling our Hotline at (530) 273-0919. Questions about gardening or any of our events may also be entered in the "Got Questions" link on our public website at <https://ucanr.edu/site/uc-master-gardeners-nevada-county>.

It is very satisfying to live in such a supportive community in which gardening and other healthy lifestyles are recognized.

**In the fall of 1990, the Nevada Irrigation District and the UC Cooperative Extension, the Master Gardeners entered into a long-term agreement where an open area of about 1.4 acres on the NID business grounds was allotted to UC Master Gardeners for a Demonstration Garden.**

mentals, flowering shrubs, whimsical bird houses and garden art. A fairly new addition over the gate arbor is a California Dutchman's pipevine (*Aristolochia californica*), a native vine, which in the spring is laden with numerous pipe-shaped flowers. The Dutchman's pipevine is the host plant for the striking blue, pipevine swallowtail butterfly. As foliage develops later in spring into summer the caterpillar of the maturing butterflies can be seen making a meal of the pipevine leaves. Last year we spotted a number of pipevine swallow tail butterflies flitting around the garden.

Our compost area is well utilized and offers one of our many interpretive signs which helps visitors learn about a particular area. The Native Plant area and Oak Habitat hold wonderful displays of plants native to our area, and how they look during each season. Most plants are labeled with the common and botanical name and the special needs of each plant.

The Demonstration Garden has become a true destination garden for visitors to see and learn via self-guided walks

Whether we garden on our own property or space, at school, or we access gardens within the community itself, we are surrounded by opportunities to reap the benefits of gardening. The UC Master Gardeners of Nevada County are happy to be able to reach out to our community through our workshops, events such as the Nevada County Fair, the Grass Valley Grower's Market, our seed library at the Madelyn Helling Library, and at many schools through our Youth Program. The annual Children's Festival at Pioneer Park was a huge success last October where UC Master Gardeners of Nevada County had a booth where we helped children craft vine head wreaths. We look forward to this event again in 2025.

Our Master Gardeners Live Radio Program can be listened to every weekend on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on KNCO (look for 830 on the AM dial, or stream on iHeart Radio). We have different volunteer hosts each week, and we encourage listeners to call in with home gardening questions or comments about their gardens. **The listener call line at KNCO is (530) 477-5626**, or the text line is (530) 913-4685. In addition to our website, look for UC Master Gardeners of Nevada County on Facebook and Instagram.



Master Gardeners and friends enjoy the pear orchard in early Spring.



Smelling the pear orchard tree.



Educational and regenerative, the compost system at the Demonstration Garden informs and supplies gardeners with compost all over Nevada County as well as being a self sustaining operation.

# All the Pluses of Minuses

By Yatska Sokuleva

**D**ivorce statistics vary from country to country, but the overall trend is clear — people are getting divorced more and more often. A new term is entering everyday language: multi-monogamy. This is when a couple changes partners while remaining a couple, just with someone new.

However, divorce is never easy. Regardless of the circumstances, it's a traumatic experience for everyone involved.

But there is good news! A modern, more flexible understanding of family allows couples to separate without the old stigma, giving them a chance to start a new life and build meaningful, fulfilling relationships without judgment from today's society.

My divorce happened suddenly, almost ten years ago. Suddenly — for me. Needless to say, it felt like the ground disappeared from under my feet. That period was probably the hardest in my life, apart from losing my parents.

But this harsh lesson allowed me to stop and reflect on who I really am — and brought me closer to myself than ever before. That new awareness of my own boundaries helped me understand not only the shape of my own personality, but also the shape of the partner I was looking for, and even the shape of my entire environment. It's

like when the puzzle pieces click into place.

I immediately started actively going on dates. At first, it was an attempt to chase away the pain of divorce with a new infatuation. But later, I became more intentional, looking for a strong, long-term relationship. I had to kiss a lot of frogs!

**...this harsh lesson [divorce] allowed me to stop and reflect on who I really am — and brought me closer to myself than ever before.**

But in the end, I found my person — the one who became my husband.

Each date came with its own life lessons. That period, in terms of emotional intensity, was a real rollercoaster — a good dose of stress that most of us go through at least once in life. An unforgettable mix of mistakes, failures, oddities, and surprises. So unforgettable, in fact, that I decided to document it in a two-volume comic book *From Dating to Wedding*, where I collected most of my dates — each ending differently... until I met the man who would become my husband.

Today, I'd like to share with you one of those "different" dates. A date with Mr. D. The full story of my dating



journey and marriage is told in the two-volume set *From Dating to Wedding*, available on Amazon. It includes not only true stories from my dating life but also an online dating guide where I share all the mistakes, lessons, and insights that helped me find a life partner — and eventually marry him.

Thank you for reading!



Yatska Sokuleva is an Author, comic book artist, and member of the Lake Wildwood community

# The Healing Power of Music: A Personal Journey

By Kimberly Bass

Music has been my constant companion from concert stages to hospital rooms, from hospice settings to memorial services—a bridge between the physical and the spiritual. Over the years, I've learned to face my fears and find my voice, not just as a performer but as a believer in the healing potential of sound. My theory is simple: music is medicine. It reaches into the places words can't touch, gently unlocking what's been held too tightly and reminding us we're not alone.

One of my earliest memories is of secretly borrowing a tape recorder, singing into it, and then playing it back so I could harmonize with myself. I didn't know then how significant that moment was—or that my brother had saved the tape. On my 16th birthday, he surprised me and our family by playing it back for everyone to hear: my six-year-old self softly singing "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing." I wanted to disappear from embarrassment, but deep down, I was proud.

I reached out to two of my dear friends in the Nevada County music scene to ask them to share their own stories about the transformative power of song.

One of those people is Pamela Meek, who's been a part of the Annual Foundry Sings at the Miners Foundry. Pamela believes "there's healing in harmony and that singing builds

health and community." She explains how she once heard jazz legend Ella Fitzgerald say, "The only thing better than singing is more singing." She never forgot it.

Over two decades ago, Meek had a front-row seat to something extraordinary. She joined her mother, who had Parkinson's disease, at a special singing event at a veterans' home in San Diego, California. The performers? A group of Parkinson's patients who called themselves *The Tremble Clefs*. Their motto—"Fighting Parkinson's One Song at a Time"—captured more than just clever wordplay; it was a mission.

"The connection with health and singing became crystal clear for me that day," Meek reflects. "The program provided therapeutic singing, movement, and socializing." Since then, the Tremble Clefs have inspired similar groups nationwide, and choirs for dementia patients have also grown in number. "The joy of singing among these groups is inspirational," she adds.

Meek didn't just witness this magic—she brought it home. In 2018, she helped launch *Foundry Sings*, a community sing-along series hosted at the Miners Foundry Cultural Center in Nevada City, California.

"The board was looking for regular community-building events, and I volunteered," Meek explains. She was



Kimberly does sound bath healing at The Foundry in Nevada City.

inspired by the viral videos of CHOIR!CHOIR!CHOIR!, a Canadian pub sing-along series that brought strangers together in powerful, spontaneous harmony. "I knew we could do it!"

With the talents of Rod Baggett, then the Nevada Union Choral Director, leading the sessions and Jonathan Meredith accompanying on guitar, *Foundry Sings* struck a chord.

"My favorite part at the end of each singalong is hearing how much joy participants experience by coming together to sing," Meek says with a smile. And there's science to back her up. Group singing releases endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. It lowers stress, boosts immunity, and fosters social connection—things we could all use a little more of.

Meek puts it simply: "Joy produces endorphins, which result

in feelings of calm, well-being, and happiness. I'm a believer that, along with the apple a day, singing can also keep the doctor away."

When I asked Rod Baggett, choir director of The Foundry Sings, what continues to inspire him to bring people together through song, his answer came from a place of deep passion and belief: "I've always felt that music — especially singing — is tremendously therapeutic. Our voice is the one instrument we all have. All of us can learn to sing."



Learn more about Kimberly's music healing at [kimberlybass.com](http://kimberlybass.com)

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