

SEARCH



WINTER 2021

MAGAZINE

#WELLNESS

Mind,

Body,

&

Soul





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#Wellness

I recently hit a milestone birthday, and my husband and I joke that my warranty expired. Like a car that's driven a few too many miles, I hear the creaks and groans of age build up as the indiscretions of youth finally come due. That time I slipped while doing a pull-up and tweaked my back? The knees that complained when I slung my baby around in her carrier? Now is the time to itemize just where I went wrong and look to the future, where little ol' me hopes to hit milestones without feeling like I need to go in for maintenance.

One of the perks of age is that I have also gained perspective. In our *Wellness: Mind, Body, & Soul* issue, we consider more than the physical tribulations suffered by our earthbound selves. Our body shelters our mind and soul so we can achieve our best selves. We refine our personalities so we might share our joys at any age.

In our featured article, Elliot Thorpe recounts learning about his heart condition. Brian and Patricia Dake provide a recipe built around healthy broccolini. Tim Reynolds has a lighter take on the accessories to mindfulness. Michele Roger investigates music as a source of academic improvement, while Kay Tracy extolls the benefits of mineral baths. Lillian Csernica considers the challenges of achieving spiritual enlightenment, particularly when it's difficult to connect with other people, let alone a higher power.

Our articles offer suggestions to take care of your body so it does not distract you from the joys of the mind and the elevation of spirit. Discover the reward of seeking knowledge for the mind and compassion for the heart.

And no, I still don't wish to purchase an extended warranty.

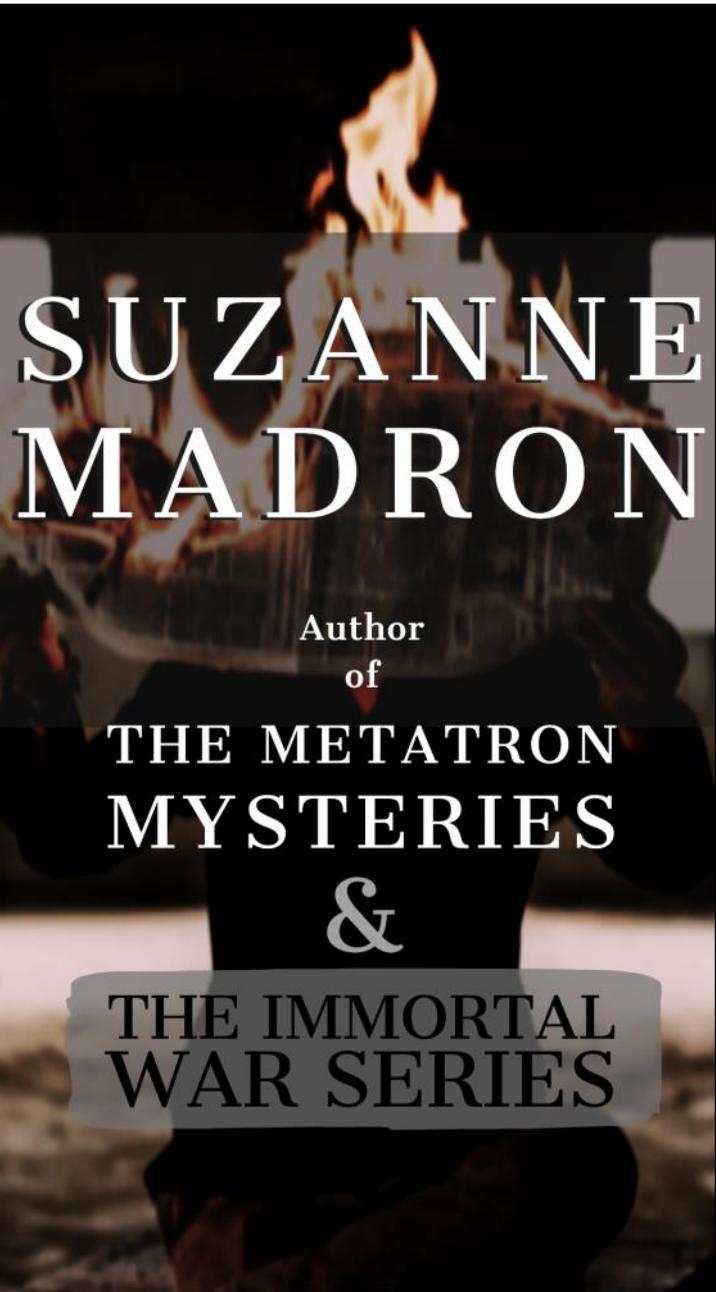
Heather Roulo
Editorial Director



Mind,
Body,
and
Soul



Photo by Shashi Chaturvedula



SUZANNE MADRON

Author
of

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&

THE IMMORTAL WAR SERIES

When the demons are the
good guys, you know the
world has gone to hell.



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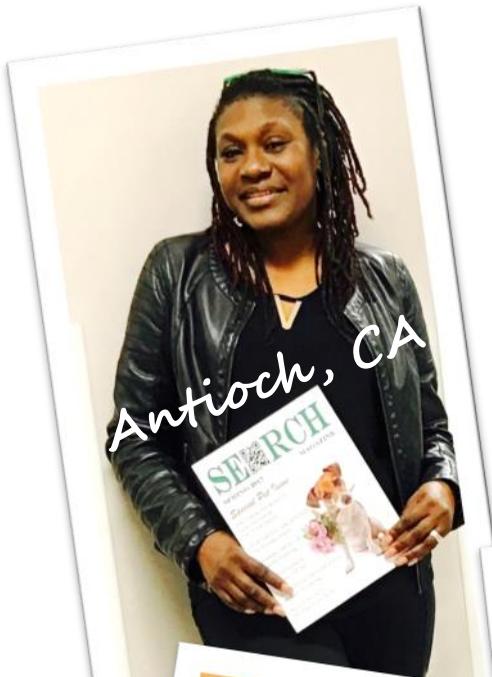
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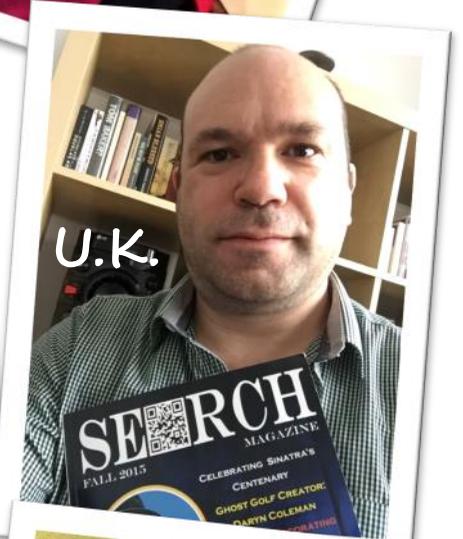
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Photo by Malik Skydsgaard

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#Body

The Heart of the Matter

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Photo by Heidi Kaden

An old phrase you may have heard before is, “Taking the waters.” It involves the use of mineral springs, natural warm water sources, and cold water therapy as a health benefit. Some people will swear that the mineral baths and hot springs have healing properties and result in improved health.

Others hold the belief that this is all wishful thinking and nothing more than hokum, or a line to take your money. While there is certainly a psychological reaction to sitting back in neck-deep warm water and being able to relax, it turns out that science has found it is also physiological as well. Once seen as “alternative” medicine with no grounding in scientific rigor, this viewpoint is changing.

Be aware that there are several categories of hydrotherapy, including cold water, hot water, mineral water

(Either hot or cold, internally or externally), natural hot springs, or your hot tub/bath. If you see the word “balneotherapy,” that refers to water, or mud, laden with minerals.

A good, warm soak can increase circulation and thus promote healing of injured tissues, relax stressed muscles, and contribute to your feeling of well being. Alternately, a session in cold water can reduce swelling of injured areas and alter the levels of a number of chemicals in your body and blood. There are those who insist that the use of both—a hot soak, followed by a cold immersion, either in a tub of cold water, lake, ocean, or shower—are the ultimate path to health.

There is research on the use of aquatic exercise, walking and moving in water that is only waist deep, for help with leg strength and weight loss. Additionally, there is research on the effects of water exercise for people with fibromyalgia and how it can benefit their bodies. I personally enjoy a good soak in the local hot pools after a swim session.

Living in Iceland, I have access to an astonishing number of pools and “hot pots,” all of which are heated with geothermal sources. Many are found in local swimming pools. If you travel the countryside, you can find

some that are truly unique. Some contain flowing algae growing in the pool that leaves your skin feeling like you just had a high-end spa treatment. A small pool, called Krosslaug, is said to be an early holy site where 1000 men were baptized in the pool despite having room for only two or three people. There are pools on private properties or farms where horses and sheep might come by to say hello, and still others near the ocean with stunning vistas.

While I will say if you ever get the chance to travel to Iceland, be sure to visit the pools and hot pots, you don't have to spend a fortune for a plane ticket. There are many places in the world where therapeutic waters can be found.

In California, there are many hot springs and miner-

al baths to pick from, like Calistoga Hot Springs in Northern California, Beverly Hot Springs in Los Angeles, Sycamore Mineral Springs in San Luis Obispo, and Travertine Hot Springs near Bridgeport. A few states away there is the Great Salt Lake in Utah, Olympic Hot Springs in Washington, and Spencer Hot Springs in Nevada.

While many locations are now charging an entry fee as private resorts, a hot spring that is open to the public at no charge is the Hot Springs State Park in Thermopolis, Wyoming. You can thank the Shoshone and Arapaho peoples for the free entry and, while there, explore the fantastic small town.

TIPS

Some notes of caution for you on exploring natural springs:

1. If the pool is unattended, be sure you are not trespassing.
2. Make sure the water is safe for you to enter, and that you can get out.
3. Test the temperature first. Being geothermal, the conditions within the earth mean the temperature can change unexpectedly in a "natural" hot spring.
4. Avoid wearing silver in the water as the minerals in the springs can include sulfur and tarnish your jewelry.
5. Some may or may not have changing rooms or privacy areas, so be aware of what you might need in that regard. Keep a towel or two handy, as you never know when you will need one.

For your own good health I encourage you to look into trying a hot spring. You might find yourself becoming addicted to the relaxing call of the nice, warm, soothing water. Don't forget your towel. ■

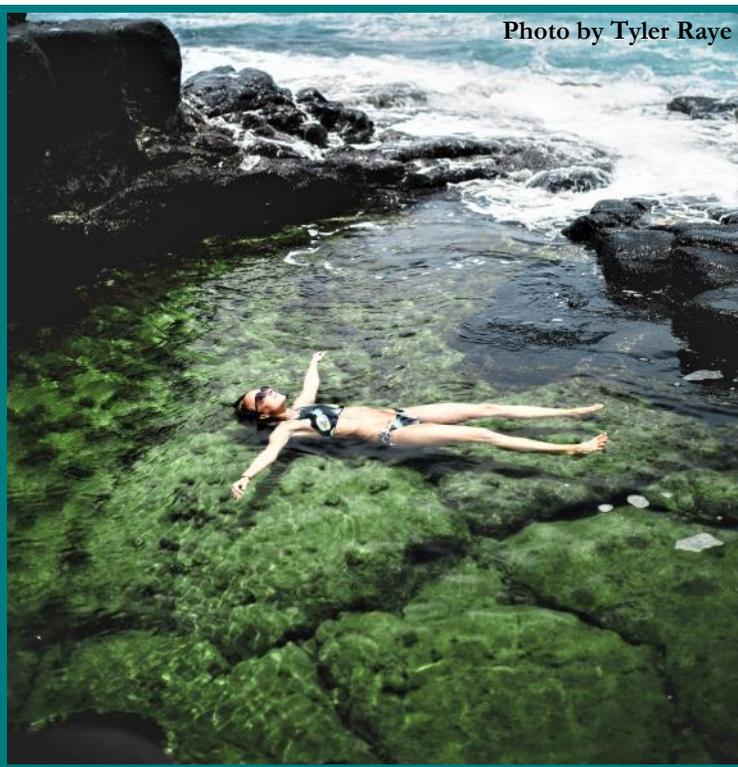
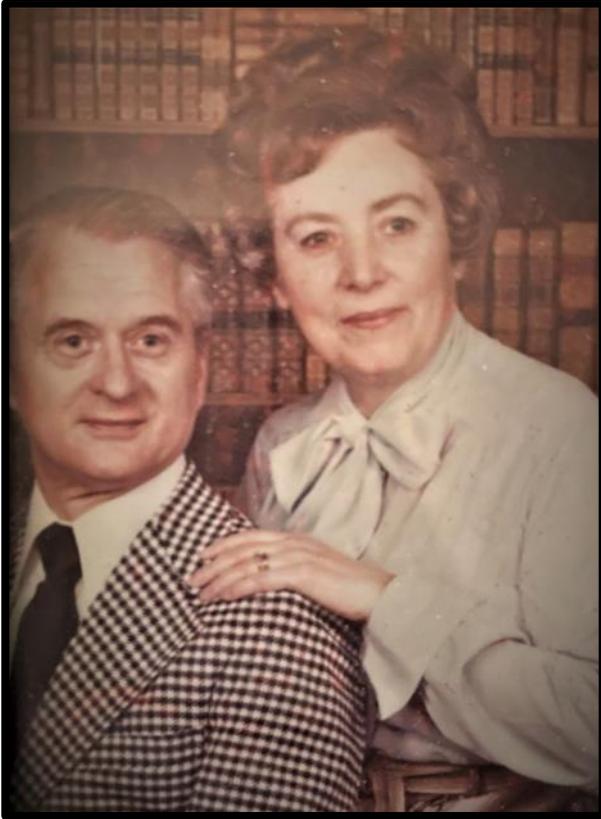


Photo by Tyler Raye

An advertisement for Celebrity X Cruises. The background is a scenic view of a forested lake with mountains in the distance. The text reads: "Wild WONDERS ALASKA CRUISETOURS OFFER SAVE UP TO \$400 PER STATEROOM* + DRINKS. WI-FI. TIPS: Always INCLUDED". The Celebrity X Cruises logo is in the bottom left, and a QR code is in the bottom right.

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After years of hardship from war, my grandparents found each other.

He told the story of the guys in his barrack taking shifts sleeping. Stationed in Africa, the locals—supporters of Rommel—were known for sneaking into American camps and slitting the throats of soldiers. He was thankful to be reassigned to a new post that took him to France.

She told stories of being orphaned by age eleven and raised in a school by nuns. She recalled a time when she hid from a German patrol in a theater with her schoolmates. None of them had eaten or had water for days. Her friends hid in a prop room. There, they stumbled upon a stash of oranges and a barrel of water. They ate oranges until their gums bled and their bodies formed “pockets” of water in their skin, unable to absorb the water they poured into their mouths.

Clarence was an American Machine Specialist soldier from Detroit stationed in France. He played saxophone for the USO club at night. Lucienne was a young, French woman with only a surviving brother and sister to call family. She and her sister worked as waitresses at night at the same USO club. Their tip money paid for

the tiny, one-room apartment above the club that the two sisters rented.

Lucienne and Clarence met at the club and had a whirlwind romance despite the language barrier. When the war ended, he asked her to marry him. She said she would, but only if she received a letter from his mother confirming he was single and that she would be welcomed into the family. She told the story of waiting months for that letter. She wondered if it would ever arrive. Had he changed his mind once he returned home? Was there someone else?

One day, while walking home from church, Lucienne met a fortune teller. Without any prompting, the woman walked over to her in the street and told her to start packing because she was soon going on a trip across the ocean. Two days later, the letter from Clarence’s mother arrived in Lucienne’s mail, just a few days before Christmas.

Lucienne arrived in America the following March, on Clarence’s birthday. The two were married that April in his parent’s house. The wedding march was played on the family piano while Lucienne descended the stairs to her waiting groom. She wore a white suit with a navy blue blouse. In the months and years that followed, she learned to drive, got her first dog, learned to read and write in English, had two children, and traversed the ups and downs of life with Clarence.

Before she passed away, Lucienne attributed her deep faith in love to their youth. She added that, after so much heartache and loss in the war, they were not willing to wait for the perfect time, more money, or stability to make their dreams come true. The war had taught them life is short and the very best thing anyone can do is follow their heart. ■





I'm a big supporter of health and wellness. Really! I have a regular exercise regimen that includes stretching the truth, jumping to conclusions, and running off at the mouth. When I'm feeling extra energetic I even try to jog my memory.

I like my yoga plain, with fresh fruit mixed in, and my “downward dog” is textbook perfect—if you define “downward dog” as napping with my pup, Sedona. I have a coat rack in my living room that looks just like a stationary bike, a tarp hanger in my basement that strongly resembles an \$1100 elliptical machine, and

doorstops that could easily pass for ten-pound dumbbells.

With the supplements I take, when I write my name in the snow it glows, and my burps are reminiscent of a day I spent on an Atlantic fishing boat. I tried increasing my fiber, but my dog got upset when I passed more gas than she did. I still have lazy days, though, when I only play video games in which the character drives everywhere. I had to stop playing *Tomb Raider* because just watching Lara Croft run, swing, swim, climb, and jump exhausted me. I'll stick to *MarioKart*, thank you very much.

I have a beautiful, imported, solid brass singing bowl that plays a wonderful, sonorous, cleansing tone...and holds a surprising number of M&Ms. My chiming, enamel-painted harmony balls are so soothing that my cats hide them under the couch with the sock I thought the dryer ate. I live in a monastery-like environment where eucalyptus incense *almost* masks the scent of cat litter boxes that need to be cleaned more often than they are, and my beautiful brass Chinese gong is the perfect way to signal the next round of shots on Whisky-with-the-Writers Night.

My home spa used to include a hot bath foaming over with Mr. Bubble until I discovered that the full-body allergic rash wasn't part of the cleansing process. I have a Dr. Ho's electric muscle stimulator that works so well that if I turn it up really high I dance the Funky Chicken for days.

My doctor is trying to decide if I'm overweight or under height. My wonderful massage therapist gives me a Shamu discount and has to use a reinforced table.

Of course, *none* of these wellness tools are really necessary because I don't have *any* stress in my world. My fantabulous life is one continuously perfect Zen existence in which my two cats never eat each other's food or cough up hairballs, my dog never pees on the rug or barks savagely at the kids in the playground across the street, my royalty payments from my book sales total much more than \$1.67 every four months, my mortgage pays itself, my car hasn't sat broken for five years, I haven't spent a year-and-a-half wearing masks for far more than eight hours a day, I haven't been tested with a colonoscopy, a cystoscopy, a biopsy, and countless swabs and blood draws like a mystery patient on the show *House*, and my friends are always dropping by to give me hugs and have coffee.

My life is one, big, freaking, Zen-filled *Om Mani Padme Hum... SQUIRREL!* ■




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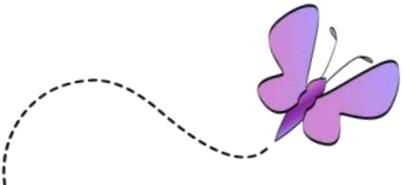
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Photo by Mohammad Metri

As a musician and music teacher, I have a lot of very specific questions about how music affects the brain. Most people wouldn't ponder why piano students, no matter if they're left handed or right handed, always struggle with learning the bass clef. I do. And why is it that kids who are more mathematical are more successful at learning the guitar?

I'm always looking for ways to set my students up for success. After twenty years of teaching, I've also made a few key observations.

Some of my students study music to improve their grades, not necessarily for the beauty of learning an instrument. Studying music improves math scores and cognition in any age group. Other students with attention challenges study music as both a form of discipline in concentration as well as a form of calming meditation.

In the last few years, some of my gifted students began studying with music in the background. They use classical music in the background to ease test anxiety. Some teachers allow the students to take the same playlist into class and play it while taking their tests. This intrigued me and I spent some time researching it. I

came upon a study from China. A few schools conducted an experiment. While teaching Algebra to first-year students, the teachers played certain pieces of music. If they were studying the Distributive Property, they turned on Brahms. If they were solving simple equations for X, they played Debussy. Every specific subject in the syllabus had a corresponding piece of music. The idea behind the experiment was to see if playing the pieces of music would help students with better recall.

That got me thinking. I asked a few of my students if—outside of their regular music lessons with me—they would help me with a theory forming in my head. Five students agreed.

The experiment was simple. For one week, each time they studied a specific subject, they would listen to a certain piece of music that I gave them. They listened to it whenever they were doing their homework on that particular subject. Then, I got a couple of their teachers to agree to play the same piece of music a few times while covering the same subject in class, much like the experiment in China. One student got permission to play the same piece of music in her AirPods while taking the test. Two students had a teacher who agreed to play the piece in a loop as the kids in class were taking the test. The last couple had to take their exams in complete silence.

My students and I waited about a week after the exams to get their grades back. The results were amazing and positive. So much so, I can't figure why schools—particularly ones looking to raise their state test scores—have yet to implement this very simple and cheap method.

The point is that music could be used as a tool for memory for lots of people. Students seem the most obvious of beneficiaries but I would imagine if one set the music for a presentation and practiced with it, the recall of facts and figures might come more smoothly. Could it help patients with head injuries in occupational therapy? Or could it help young children learn basic principles with less stress? See, I told you, I have a lot of questions.

This is the second time I've conducted this experiment. In both attempts to help kids use free resources to attain success, I've learned a couple of key points.

- ◆ Music that has lyrics lowers the test scores on an average in contrast to raising the scores.
- ◆ My very basic experiments seem to help students recall facts like operations in mathematics, history dates, or scientific vocabulary. Music did not seem to have any effect on how students performed in essays or creative writing. Since the grading of essays is more ambiguous, I leave it to you, the reader, to draw your own conclusions as to if it may benefit a thesis.
- ◆ I only used public domain, free classical music in both experiments. I wanted the music to be easily accessible and available to nearly everyone. I have not tried jazz or more modern pieces.

I would love to see schools implement music as a serious studying tool. Nevertheless, why wait for school? Try this simple experiment out for yourself. If you do find success, please share your experience with me at @searchmagsf.■

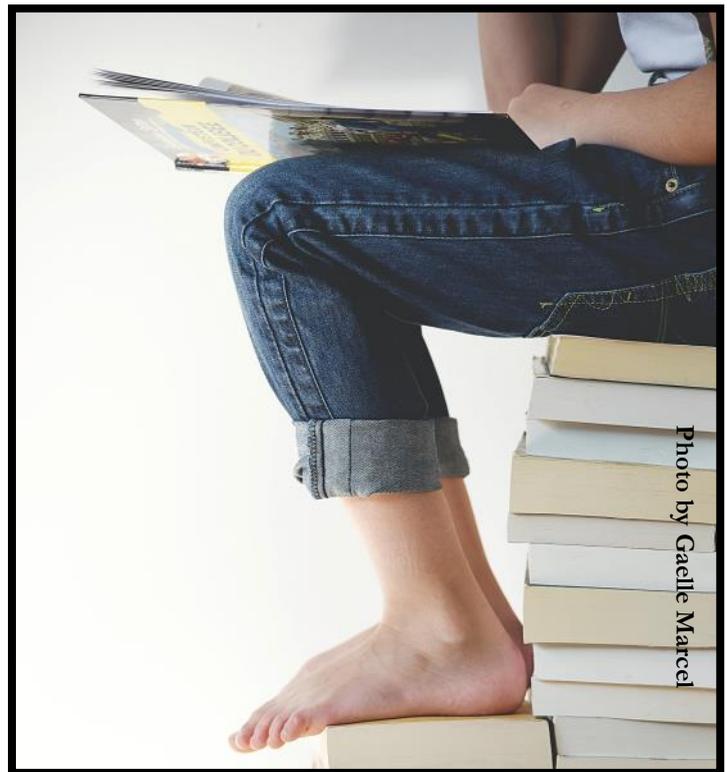


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Location: Spanaway, Washington

Tell us about yourself. Poetry was first introduced to me in my childhood years with Shel Silverstein's, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*. It continued on into my adulthood as I read through the semesters in college. It wasn't until I was in my 20's that I went through one of my most influential transitions of my life where I turned to it for my own therapeutic means. I haven't stopped writing since.

What do you find inspiring about writing poetry? The possibilities with each creation are boundless. If you think about all of the ways one can form a written piece—free verse, spoken word, haiku, etc—it is mind blowing what we can come up with. I truly feel my inner voice shines through my poems without the limitations.

How did you come to write poetry for *SEARCH Magazine*? When I began O_NormandeauPoetry on Instagram, it opened up my life to many new career ventures. One of them being writing for *SEARCH*. The Chief Operations Officer started reading the work I was posting and posed interest in me to work for them.

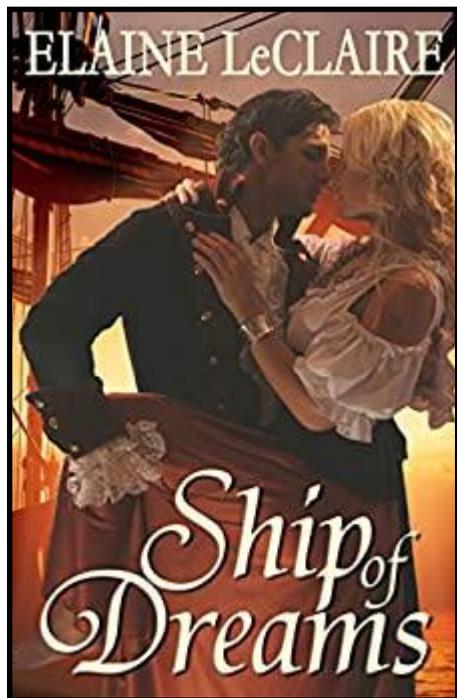
Eventually, she reached out and the relationship flourished from there.

What else do you write, if anything? I mainly stick to poetry but if the inspiration strikes and I venture to other forms of writing, who am I to pass up the opportunity? I try not to limit myself. I also dabble in other areas of creation. I love to paint. I have a store on Etsy where I sell print pictures of my canvas/cardstock work.



Where can readers learn more about you? If you enjoy what you read here, you can find more of my writings on Instagram at @o_normandeapoetry. I also have a Patreon page where people can help support my journey to becoming a published author. To see and purchase my work on Etsy, go to: ONormandeauCreations.

Do you have a hot tip for us? This has absolutely nothing to do with poetry but I recently found a three-barrel curling iron. It has changed my hair game for the best. Quick, easy, and manageable for an *almost Mama of two. ■



Master of his destiny, terror of the Caribbean, the pirate Black Angel is also elegant, charming and seductive.

En route to Jamaica to bring her brother news of their father's death, Lady Rosalind Hanshaw is captured by the Black Angel, a legendary French pirate who targets English shipping.

Torn between her loyalty to her homeland and her growing attraction to the one man she should hate above all others, Rosalind must decide whether the Black Angel is nothing more than a despicable pirate or if he holds the key to both her heart and her future.

Buy *Ship of Dreams* by Elaine LeClaire!





Photo by Malik Skydsgaard

“Hey, let’s go for a run!”

“Do you mind if I just finish this pack of high-saturated-fat-content potato chips first?” I replied, balancing the TV remote on my knee so I didn’t have to stretch for it.

“And my large over-sized tumbler of non-specific branded fizzy pop, filled to the brim with sugars and coloring, will go flat if I don’t drink it all up now.”

Just the thought of both those comestibles gives me a gut ache, let alone the implications of what they could do to my arteries. That said, if I’m honest, the notion of going for a run pretty much fills

me with horror, too. The only positive for me out of the brief scenario above is the idea that I’m watching TV.

I’ve never been the sportiest of people. Even as a kid, I’d much prefer to bury my head in a novel than have to go out and play awful soccer in a muddy field on a chilly, wintry English afternoon. Mom cooked good, proper meals. Dad worked hard to pay for them. We never watched the big game on TV and we never did active stuff like sailing or hiking. We did normal everyday things. Things that most families did. I was never *discouraged* from being sporty. It just wasn’t in our DNA.

But what *is* in my DNA, is a heart condition that didn’t manifest itself until I was thirty-something.

I always enjoyed a good night out, a few beers, and often woke up with a Greek coffee to give me a kick-start.

But I remember that day clearly, almost a good twenty years ago.

I was at work, a manager for a medical repatriation company, and I was hosting a meeting. We were talking to a European airline about using their aircraft as air ambulances. All exciting, liberating stuff. As the host, I made sure the filtered coffee and the biscuits were going around. Standing there, presenting my PowerPoint I thought, “Okay, it’s getting pretty warm in here.” A window was opened, but it was still getting warm. My hands were clammy, my heart was racing. My throat was dry. “Yes, I’ll have some more of that coffee, thank you.”

With the meeting over, I said the thank yous, good-byes, we’ll be in touch soon, safe journeys, etc. Only, going back to my desk, I didn’t quite make it there.

I woke up in a local hospital, with the Chief Medical Officer of the company I worked for gently holding my forearm. He was sitting with me, quietly, while my partner made her frantic journey across country to get to me.

I had collapsed on my way back to my desk. It was fortuitous that my job meant I was always an arm’s length away from medically trained staff. The CMO I mentioned had his desk next to mine. He said he’d caught me on the way down, making sure my head avoided the corner of a filing cabinet.

They were afraid that I’d had a heart attack. Luckily I hadn’t. The copious amounts of coffee I’d consumed that morning had triggered sinus tachycardia, a condition I’d apparently lived with up until then without really knowing what it was, bothering to speak to my own doctor about it, or even knowing I had it. It never incapacitated me before that point. The event had also activated a major atrial flutter, again something that had been lingering quietly within me, with no visible signs.

I was on a saline drip to get the caffeine out and a beta-blocker drip to settle my racing heart which was racing 215 beats per minute when I’d passed out. It was all rather worrying, but it could have been so much worse. I was discharged the following morning and signed off for a few days.

Apparently, I had inherited my mother’s heart condition, one she had inherited from *her* mother. So far, I’m relieved my adult son has not shown any signs.

Over the next few years, my condition developed and I was formally diagnosed with chronic heart disease. I was determined not to live the rest of my life popping pills and ignoring it, but getting to where I am now, rushing to my 50s with a dodgy heart, certainly had its ups and downs. I had acute and painful angina attacks quite regularly and used to pass out when my blood pressure went awry. Unfortunately, I kind of got used to it.

Finding the right balance of medication was tough. The beta-blockers worked just fine but the statins gave

me the most agonizing limb aches. The aspirin silently carried on thinning my blood. The blockers were revised when my metabolism got used to them. A few hits and misses with statins and I was prescribed a dosage that didn’t hurt so much.

I have long since changed jobs and am lucky enough to work from home. I’m now considered ‘clinically vulnerable’ in the world of COVID, so the fact that I can work in isolation is a bonus. I admit that I still don’t take enough exercise as I should—especially with not having to commute to work. That twice-a-day, every-day, morning-and-evening walk along the beachfront immediately disappeared, but I do have a four-year-old daughter who keeps me on my toes. My main ally—and one I still endeavor to keep on my side—is my diet.

This is where I feel I’m keeping the cardiac demons at bay. My regular meds are far less potent than they were and I’m managing to stave off having their dosages increased again as I get older. I know that this method might not work for some, but I was determined to find a healthier less-chemical-driven way to simply make myself feel better.

I loved eating potato chips, pizzas, fast food, and steaks. I knew those were the kind of foods that did everything right for your short-term sanity but were bad for your body. We all know that it’s those kinds of food that slow us all down and make us feel satisfied for all the wrong reasons. So, I changed my eating habits. I started looking at the health labels. Is it low in saturated fats? Is it low in salt? Is it low in sugar? If yes to all these, that was a good thing.



Within a matter of weeks, I felt less weighed down and into a routine, but my palate still craved the salts and sugars. What I was eating was bland, dry, and unappetizing. I found going down the vegetarian route to be something that gave me access to tastier options that were still purportedly to be healthy, but up again went the saturates, salts, and all the bad things that made these ‘healthier’ foodstuffs bind together. Basically, I was being lazy and not looking for fresh ingredients.

I made time to *buy* fresh, to *cook* fresh. No more pre-prepared, pre-packaged purchases. I cut out dairy, replacing cow’s milk with oat milk. I stopped eating eggs. No red meat. Fresh vegetables, legumes, pulses, and lentils were the new order of the day. Lean (no skin) chicken or oily fish such as salmon to go with them. Baking and steaming—no frying here thank you very much. Lots of herbs, spices, and homemade sauces. My love for cooking took on a new lease of life. It also meant

that my family benefitted from a better way to eat.

I can’t admit to having an “active” lifestyle but I have increased my walking again. My daughter and I visit the local swimming pool together. Yes, I still love watching TV and going to the movies. But instead of reaching for those evil potato chips with their moreish flavorings, I grab some healthier popcorn or, better still, fresh fruit. No soft drinks. Sparkling water instead. Maybe even a nice glass of expensive Malbec very, very occasionally with a couple of chunks of dark “plain” chocolate to curb those cravings. I’m not *that* hard on myself!

My approach is, if I know it’s bad for me, I try my hardest to avoid it. I don’t have an addictive personality in that sense, so I can quite easily ignore those pizza commercials or keep driving past McDonald’s. All I need to do now is work out how on earth I’m going to get around to reading all those novels I keep buying. ■



Photo by Jordan Opel

Spooky Writer's Planner

A writer's organization guide.



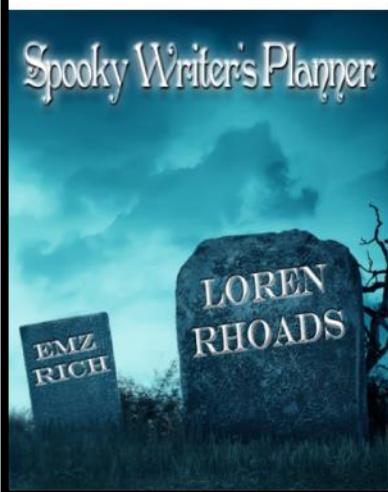
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PLAGUE MASTER: REBEL INFECTION

BY H.E. ROULO



Trevor's return from the zombie infection makes him unique. It also makes him dangerous.

He's a hero on his homeworld, celebrated for finding a vaccine against the zombie virus, but the ruling Founders don't trust him and his low origins. When the revolution comes, Trevor is caught in the middle.

Despite his homeworld's troubles, a message from a Plague Master forces Trevor to seek reinforcements. He hunts for Kristin, the woman he left behind, and an answer to why the vaccine is failing.

He and his friends must fight on space stations and worlds overtaken with infected to discover the terrible truth about his cure.



Photo by Perry Grone

There are many things that happen in life we can't explain and sometimes something happens to take us down an unexpected path. Such a wondrous thing happened to me when I was twenty-one. Admittedly, at that time I was lost. I was at college and I wanted to change majors but didn't know to what.

During this time, I began to think about my ancestry. My mother is Guatemalan and Mayan. Ever since I was little, the Mayan capital of Tikal held great mystery for me. As a young woman, I kept thinking about how, despite our heritage, no one in our family had ever visited the site. The idea of going there kept coming into my thoughts. I got the overwhelming feeling something was waiting for me there. What, I did not know, but the feeling kept getting stronger.

I planned a trip to Guatemala with my mom, with plans to visit Tikal with her and my godmother. To say

I was excited on my way to Tikal would be an understatement. All I kept wondering was, what I was going to find there? After flying to Guatemala, we boarded a small bus that would take us to the site. As soon as I stepped off that bus, onto the earth at Tikal, I felt like I had come home.

Walking along our tour, we passed these amazing Ceiba trees. They have large, white trunks with beautiful pink blooms way up high. Until that day, I'd never seen one.

The trunk symbolizes the realm of man, the roots lead to the underworld, and the canopy top to the Mayan afterlife. I was floored and I still have no explanation for my strong connection to the trees.

We continued on our tour and ended up in the Great Plaza. It was there, among the impressive temples that my heart started beating faster. The guide gave us half an hour to venture out on our own. I told my mother and godmother I was going to hike up one of the temples. I felt like whatever it was that drew me there, that was where I'd find answers. I climbed up to the top and to my great surprise, there was nobody there. I walked around and I found myself a nice, quiet spot to sit and meditate. I lit some copal incense I had brought with me. I closed my eyes and I touched the temple with my finger.

In an instant, everything changed.

I saw a great white mist form in front of my eyes. It slowly cleared and I could see the plaza, but everything looked different. It was cloudy and there were no people around. The temples were white and unfinished. Far below, someone in a white dress laid on an altar at the base of the temple. I was curious to see who the person was, so I moved toward the steps with the intention to get a closer look. I expected to walk down the steps, but instead I flew. Somehow flying felt natural to me. I remember landing on the ground with a bit of a bump from behind. It turned out I wasn't a human. I was a Quetzal, a sacred bird to the Maya. The Quetzal's long, green feathers were used in the elaborate headdresses worn by the priests and nobility. As a bird, I hopped over to the altar. The woman in white sat up when I approached her. She looked at me and smiled a knowing smile. At that moment, a whirlwind encircled her and she disappeared. I flew into the sky.

Once again, a misty cloud formed and absconded my vision. I opened my eyes to find myself exactly

where I had sit to meditate at the top of the temple. A feeling of relief and purpose flooded through me. I felt like I had been reborn. I descended the stairs and re-joined my family. They said I was gone for half an hour. To me, everything happened in an instant and for a little while, time had no meaning.

After visiting the temple, I knew what I wanted. I wanted to study philosophy and religion. I wanted to know more about our connection to ourselves and our relationship to the world around us. The experience taught me to be a critical thinker, to be open-minded, and forgiving. It taught me how to be a better version of myself. It changed how I looked at life, how I wanted to be as a person, and how I thought about everything.

I still can't explain what exactly happened that day. All that matters is that the trip sent me down a path that was the perfect fit for me. Whatever you want to call that experience, I'm grateful and I'm happier for it.■

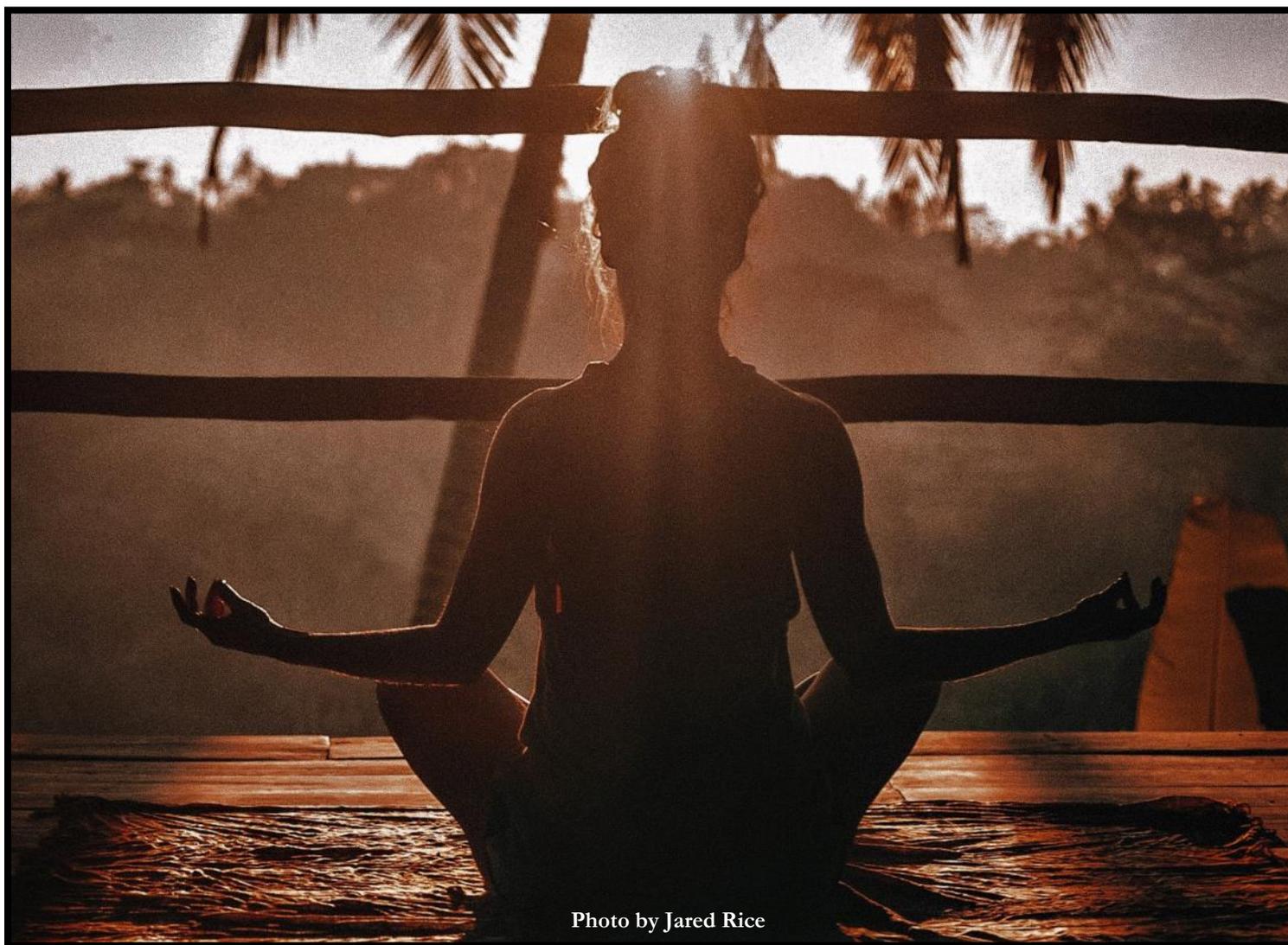


Photo by Jared Rice

Lemon Garlic Broccolini



Winter is a season of heavy foods. Meat and starches abound, which make it difficult to maintain our healthier summer weight. We are always on the look-out for healthy foods available year round.

We love tasty, original vegetable dishes that we can add to holiday meals or just enjoy on their own throughout the colder months. Like many of us, we've started making an effort to find nutrient-rich foods, beneficial to our health. These so-called "superfoods" have become quite popular in recent years. We were delighted to learn that broccolini, a relative newcomer to the mar-

ket, meets that criteria.

Invented by the Sakata Seed Company of Yokohama, Japan in 1993, broccolini was first introduced in the United States three years later under the trademarked name Asparation, but the name didn't really catch on. When the Sakata Seed Company approached Mann Packing—located in California's Salinas Valley—about growing the new vegetable, Mann agreed, but in 1998 it came to be marketed instead as broccolini.

Don't worry, this relatively new, natural hybrid vegetable is *not* a genetically-modified organism. Rather, it is a cross between traditional broccoli and *cai lan* or Chinese kale. Dark-green, it features thin, spear-shaped stalks up to six inches long and small clusters of florets with but a few leaves, all of which are edible. The florets resemble broccoli rabe. Often mistaken as baby broccoli, broccolini is, in fact, full-grown at the time of harvest.



It has a flavor both mild and peppery while possessing a subtle sweetness. What's more, the entire plant is edible, and even better, quite high in vitamin C. The plant was created to be adaptable and heat resistant, so broccolini is now available year-round.

Since it's become one of the fastest-growing vegetables on restaurant menus and is often a bit pricy, we wanted to provide you with an easy and affordable way to enjoy it at home. It cooks quickly and makes a great side dish to both steaks and Italian foods. Or, if vegetable dishes are your preference, you can do like us, and feature it as a main course.

If you can't find it in your local grocery store, you can turn to the internet. In a quick search, we found three sources that deliver fresh broccolini to our area year-round.

To make the dish really special, we like to serve it with sauvignon blanc. The slight spiciness of the varietal pairs well with the pleasing and subtle flavors of this extraordinary, nutrient-rich superfood. When you combine it with lemon, garlic, and grated parmesan cheese as shown in this recipe, it boasts a culinary explosion of fabulous flavor to light up your taste buds.

INGREDIENTS

- * 2 bunches of broccolini
- * 1 lemon
- * 6 cloves garlic
- * 1/2 teaspoon salt
- * 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- * 1/4 cup wine, white
- * 2 teaspoons parmesan cheese, grated

PREPARATION

- * Place broccolini in a large colander and rinse. Allow to drain.
- * Cut 1 inch from the bottom of the broccolini stems and discard.
- * Pull off any of the long leaves that remain on the stems.
- * Using a zesting tool, remove zest from lemon and mince into small pieces producing 2 teaspoons of lemon zest.
- * Cut and remove the ends from garlic cloves and discard dry skin. Slice garlic into 1/6th-inch slices. Mix with 1/2 teaspoon salt.
- * In a small bowl, mix salted garlic, red pepper, and lemon zest.
- * Cut lemon in half.



COOK

- * Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to a large fry pan and place it over high heat on the cook top. Let the oil come up to temperature.
- * Add broccolini to the fry pan. Stir and cook for 6 minutes. Broccolini should be shiny. Its color should be deep to bright green. The florets should be slightly wilted.
- * Add garlic mixture on top of broccolini and stir, cooking for 1 minute.
- * Squeeze the juice from 1/2 a lemon over broccolini and stir, cooking for 1 minute.
- * Add 1/4 cup of white wine to the fry pan and cover.
- * Turn heat to low and cook for 2 minutes.
- * Remove pan cover, stir to mix, and remove from heat.

SERVE

- * Place broccolini on a serving platter and top with remaining garlic from the fry pan.
- * Sprinkle with grated parmesan cheese.
- * Garnish with thin-cut half-moon slices of lemon.■



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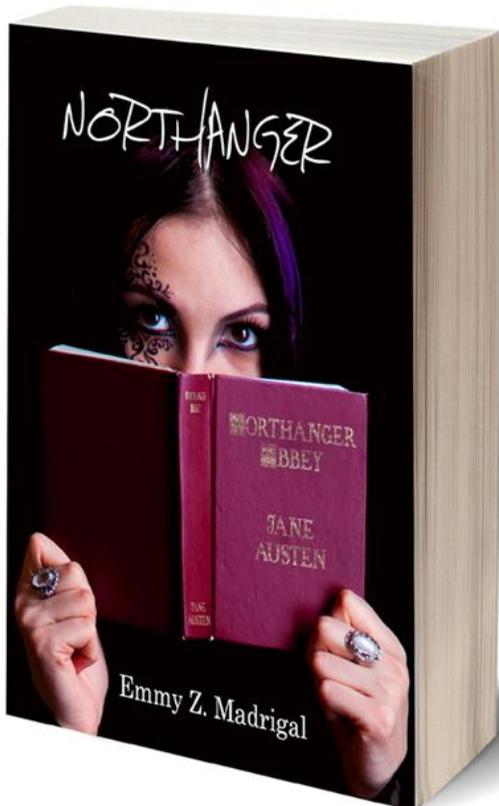
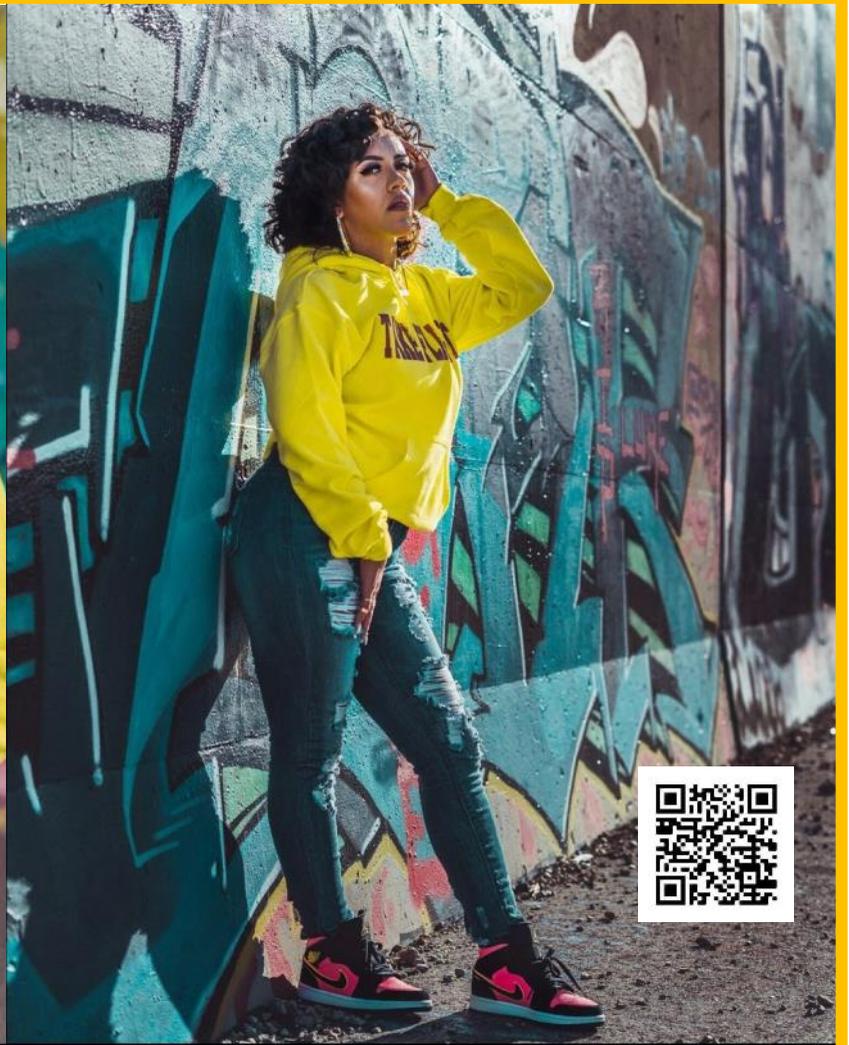
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NORTHANGER

Emmy Z. Madrigal

What if Lydia from *Beetlejuice* was plopped into a *Gossip Girl* episode?
What if her new boyfriend's dad was a suspected murderer?





Photo by Nghia Le

"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience." – Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Although practical matters of everyday life often get in the way, spirituality is yet another component that should also be considered when it comes to quality of life for people who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and may be key in handling stress and increasing neuroplasticity.

In 1943, American psychologist Abraham Maslow published *A Theory of Human Motivation*. Known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which are often depicted as a pyramid, the five categories of human needs include physiological (food, clothing, and shelter), safety (such as financial security), love and belonging, esteem (personal and career achievement), and self-actualization. The highest level of self-actualization is

transcendence or spirituality. Maslow believed each stage of needs had to be met before the person could move on to the next stage. As March of Dimes notes, "Most babies reach certain milestones at similar ages. However, it's not unusual for a healthy, 'normal' baby to fall behind in some areas or race ahead in others." For our purposes, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a useful model for imagining how one person progresses through increasingly abstract stages from sheer survival to what is often encompassed in the term "enlightenment."

In "What is Abstract Reasoning," an article by Kendra Cherry, she says spirituality is an intensely personal matter that requires abstract reasoning and, "...the ability to understand and think with complex concepts that, while real, are not tied to concrete experiences, objects, people, or situations." People who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) tend to be literal-minded. They have difficulty with mentalization. "Experimental evidence shows that the inability to attribute mental states, such as desires and beliefs, to self and others (mentalizing) explains the social and communication

impairments of individuals with autism," notes Uta Frith in an article titled "Mind Blindness and the Brain in Autism." Mentalization helps us learn from our perceptions of what is going on in other people's minds. It also teaches us to better understand how our own minds work. If ASD people struggle with perceiving and comprehending how the minds of other human beings work, how can they approach having a fulfilling relationship with a supreme being?

It can be argued that mentalization and the awareness of the self it provides are essential to developing an individual's spirituality. How do ASD people acquire the cognitive ability to experience their own spirituality?

Marc Potenza is a Professor of Psychiatry, Child Study, and Neuroscience. In the article "How Does Spirituality Change the Brain?" he describes the results of a study done with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Spiritual experiences were associated with lower levels of activity in certain parts of the brain:

- ◆The inferior parietal lobe (IPL), the part of the brain associated with perceptual processing, relating to the concept of self in time and space.

- ◆The thalamus and striatum, the parts of the brain associated with emotional and sensory processing.

This study furthers a growing body of research about spirituality and its connection to brain processing. These findings tell us that spiritual experiences shift perception and can moderate the effects of stress on mental health. This study saw decreased activation in the parts of the

brain responsible for stress and increased activity in the parts of the brain responsible for connection with others.

Experiences that enhance personal spirituality can also help ASD people improve their neuroplasticity, which is the ability to create new synaptic connections and reorganize old ones in response to learning or injury.

Can a person with the challenges of ASD climb this pyramid? The more important question is, how can we as parents help our autistic children discover their options when it comes to exploring spirituality? We need to be flexible in our own thinking. Spirituality can be the goal, or spirituality can be the path that brings us closer to another goal. We now know that spiritual experiences can promote neuroplasticity in the areas of the autistic brain that might benefit from such stimulation. In "Six Ways To Rewire Your Brain," author Crystal Raypole writes, "Experts believe the negative thought patterns that occur with depression, for example, could result from interrupted or impaired neuroplasticity processes. Exercises that promote positive neuroplasticity, then, may help 'rewrite' these patterns to improve well-being." Such exercises can be summed up as, "Try something new." Learn a language. Make music. Paint, dance, or collect pretty pebbles. New interests and activities mean new connections in the brain.

ASD people deserve to get all the way to the top of the pyramid. Whether it's organized religion with plenty of splendor and ceremony, or five minutes of quiet meditation before bedtime, ASD people can find what works for them, what meets their needs and gives them a sense of meaning and purpose.■

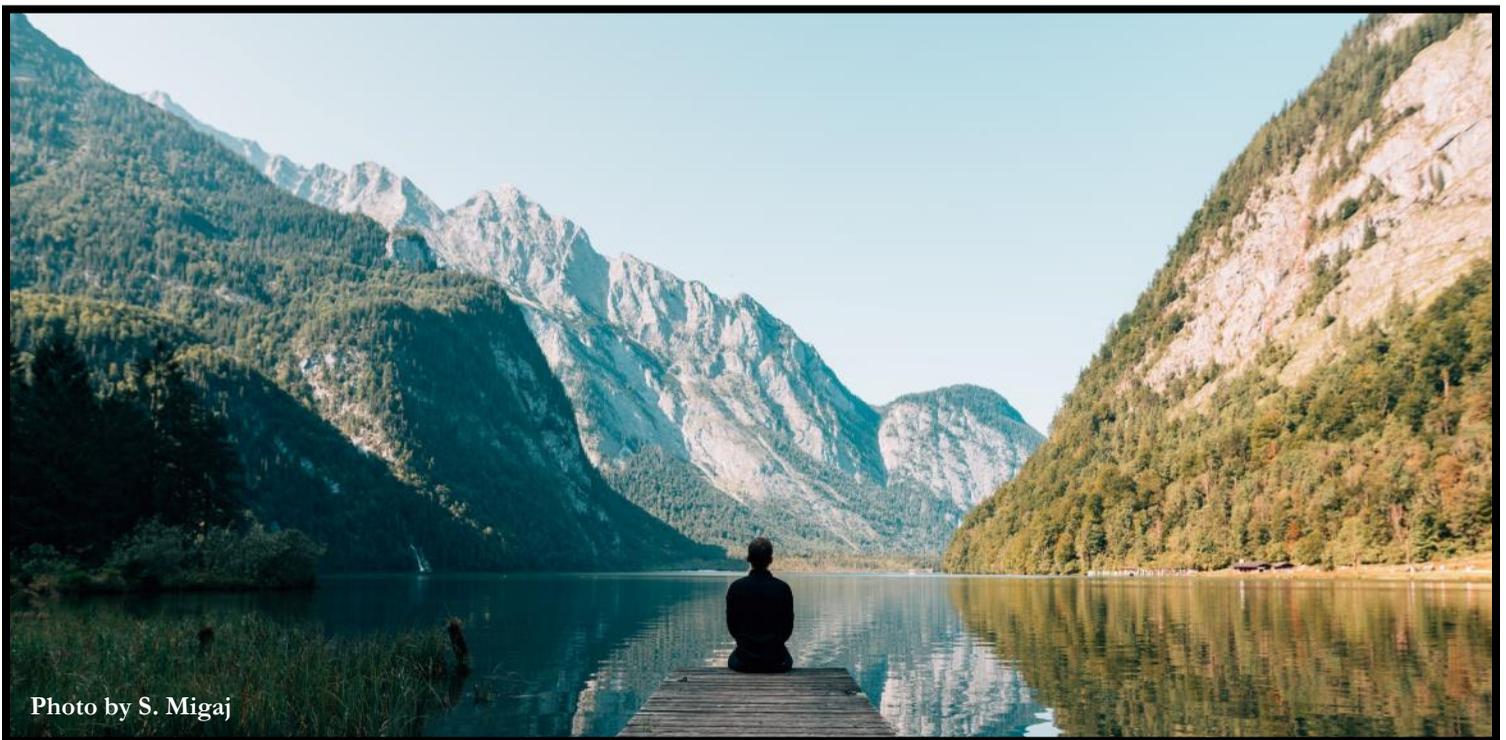


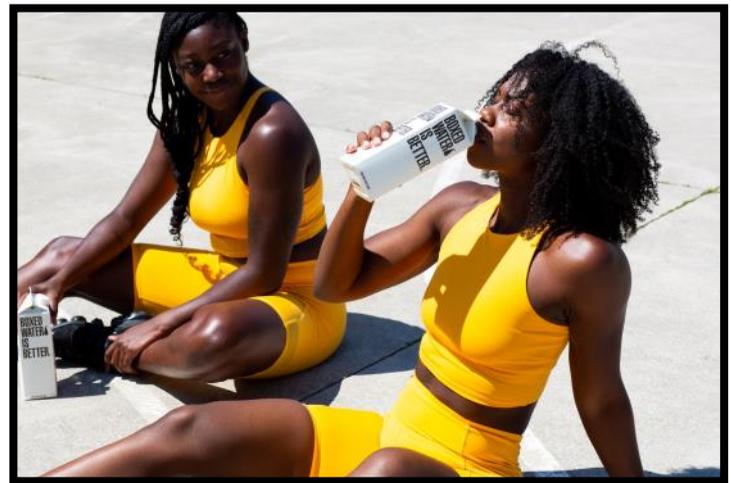
Photo by S. Migaj

Fitness comes in many forms. Like the person who fixes up their house just to sell it, you'll wonder why you didn't make changes sooner:

- **Sleep when you're tired.** Keep a regular sleep schedule, typically 7-9 hours for an adult. If you get tired during the day, take a 15-20 minute nap. You will feel refreshed without causing insomnia at night.
- **Set boundaries.** Sometimes you don't want to go out or work overtime. Your relationships will be healthier if you simply say 'no.' You can be sympathetic, empathetic, and nice while respecting your own needs.
- **Exercise regularly.** Move your body. If you don't, you eventually may not be able to.
- **Quit bad habits.** You probably know what they are. Indulge in too much alcohol? Smoke? Take a look at the thing you're afraid to give up.
- **Be less self-conscious.** Stop worrying whether your mosquito bites show when you wear shorts or who hears you sing. With age, people care less what others think about inconsequential things.
- **Take care of your teeth.** Yes, that means flossing, too.

- **Think about what you put in your body.** From getting enough hydration to eating well-balanced meals, you'll thank yourself in the long run.
- **Think about what you put in your mind.** The world will gladly feed us garbage. Keep the good stuff but cut out toxic friends, vapid social media, and news that is only meant to make you indignant.
- **Share your burdens.** If COVID has proven anything, it's that we're social creatures. Make friends, join Zoom classes, and interact in your everyday life. Go to therapy. It's hard to put a price on peace of mind.

The sooner you start, the sooner you can enjoy the benefits of a healthier you. ■



An advertisement for Melanin Hontea. On the right side, there is a close-up photograph of a Black woman's face with her eyes closed, looking serene. On the left side, there is a product box for 'BROWN SUGAR, Honey, COCOA & GOLD'. The box features the brand name 'melanin Hontea' in a stylized font, a logo of a beehive with a crown, and a QR code. Below the QR code is the website address 'www.melaninhontea.com'. The overall color scheme is warm, with gold and brown tones.



Twenty pounds doesn't seem like much until you look at the photos. It's also hard for me to see that I'm down twenty pounds and know I still have twenty more pounds to go.

For me, it was important to not look at the big picture in my weight loss journey, at least not at first. My weight has been an issue my entire life, either perceived or actual. Middle age hasn't helped my outlook.

Three years ago, I decided that at five feet and two inches tall, carrying 180 pounds was not healthy for me. My joints ached, my back hurt, and I couldn't even think about climbing stairs without getting winded. It was a spiral I had seen my mother travel and I didn't want to follow that path.

I tried cutting out foods I loved at first, but I ended up falling back into old habits. I found that shifting my mindset about food and not denying myself my favorites was the most important part of my weight loss.

Instead of getting rid of my favorites, I put them out of my line of sight, on the top of the fridge and in the cupboard. Fruits and healthier food options that I also enjoyed went in my direct line of sight so they would be the first thing I would reach for when I needed something to eat.

2020 was not a great year for my weight. I gained some back, but I got back on track. While I still go up and down on the scale, the most important aspect of my weight loss journey has been that I keep getting back on the scale. I stay focused, rather than beating myself up over a few pounds here and there. ■

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OREGON DUNES



The Oregon Coast is a well-known destination for anyone living in a western state. Unlike Washington and California, the state of Oregon passed the Oregon Beach Bill in 1967.

The bill ensures beaches along the Pacific Coast remain accessible to the public, making the white sand and basalt outcroppings a perfect place for a family vacation.

Located in the center of the Oregon Coast, Florence is particularly known for America's largest sea cave and the sea lions that come to lounge on the rocks inside. For a fee, visitors can take an elevator down and admire the loud, barking animals. The Sea Lion Caves are privately owned by the same families that started it in 1912. The caves are home to different types of sea lions, including Steller sea lions and California sea lions, who arrive in late summer and spend the winter before heading south in the spring.

In addition to the Sea Lion Caves, Florence boasts the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area. Windy and often mist-shrouded, it's one of the largest expanses of temperate coastal sand dunes in the world and holds many unusual plants and animal species. The portion of

the Siuslaw National Forest—dedicated by Congress in 1972 as a National Recreation Area—offers hiking, camping, and Off-Highway Vehicle riding such as sand boarding and dune buggies. From Florence to Coos Bay, rolling dunes stretch for 40 miles.

Florence itself is a cute town with small shops and riverside dining options. Historically the home of the Siuslaw tribe, it was established as a river port in 1909.

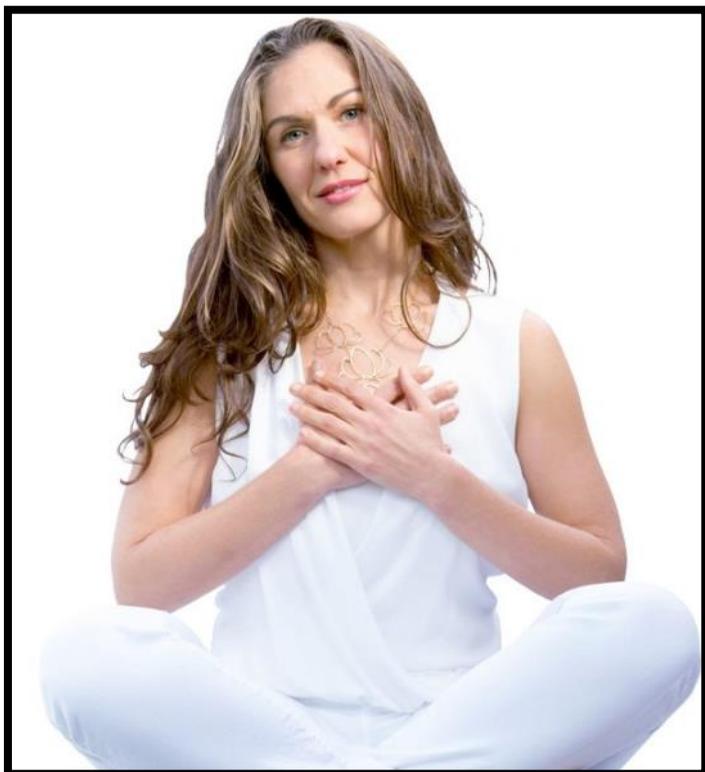


In town, you can shop at antique stores, linger over art galleries, or simply gaze at the Siuslaw River Bridge. ■



Sole Sistahs
STYLISH LOOKS FOR STYLISH SOULS





Tarika Lovegarden is the author of *The Meditations on the Fridge* book, a series of five weekly personalized 1:1 mindful eating meditation sessions, combined with nutritional coaching.

Readers are guided through everyday and challenging food situations so that they can master their food choices and enjoy their bodies, without being influenced by internal and external forces.

What inspired you to write *The Meditations on the Fridge*?

As a recovering ‘food addict’ that used to struggle with anorexic tendencies and obsessive-compulsive exercise habits, desperately trying to control my weight, I’ve tried countless support groups, diets and hired personal weight loss coaches throughout my life. Being a life-long meditator and teacher, I dedicated years to creating meditations to help people maintain their weight mindfully through meditation.

How have the meditations you created helped in your own life?

Since I started creating and practicing specialized guided

meditations to address food and weight issues, it’s no longer a problem. I maintain my weight without dieting, or over-exercising. I still need to be conscious of what I eat, almost everyday. Meditation and nutrition combined, are the most effective—in fact, the only way I’ve found—in overcoming cravings and maintaining my weight.

What triggers cravings?

Cravings are usually a combination of physical, psychological, and emotional impulses. There are many triggers of cravings. In my book, I’ve simplified them by giving you a summary of the common triggers. Identifying what triggers your cravings enables you to find ways to respond to them.

What are the most common triggers?

I’ve discovered and outlined eleven common triggers. It’s different for everyone. For some, it may be a case of unmet needs. For others, foods have emotional associations. It could even be the cultural traditions you were raised with or nutritional imbalances.

How can your meditations help?

The Satisfying Cravings guided meditation guides you, step-by-step through a typical moment of craving, teaching you how to make choices that are right for you. Sometimes you may want to let your craving pass, choose a healthy alternative, or enjoy the foods you’re craving. As you discover what it is you are *really* wanting—which is usually something other than food—you can find more satisfying ways to meet your needs, physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. Your success in how you respond to your cravings will dramatically enhance your ability to stop overeating. One reason it’s easier to make healthy choices in the craving phase, before you start eating, is because the foods we crave are usually addictive. The more we give in to our cravings, the stronger they become. ■

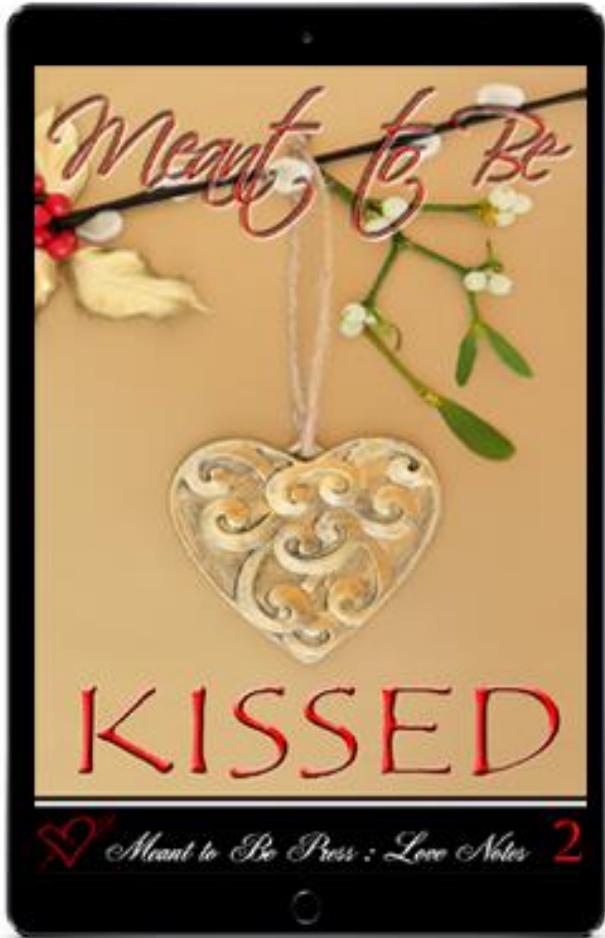
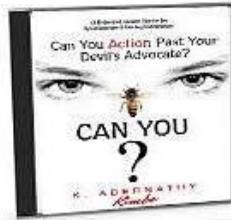


To find out more about Tarika, her book and her guided meditations, go to: <https://lovegardenmeditations.com>

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REGENCY ROMANCE

*just in time
for the Holidays!*



This is a meditation meant to help keep center and remind yourself of your greatness from within.

On this day, I would like to guide you
In some self-affirmations you can say
To remind yourself,
Today is a beautiful day.
And to get you relaxed
For the spoken word coming your way

So stop the stressing,
Relieve the tension.

Place your right hand
over your belly,
Your left hand over
your heart,
And close yours eyes
gently.

Take this time, right
now,
To fully feel yourself in
this present moment.
Hone in on it,
From your head
down to your toes.

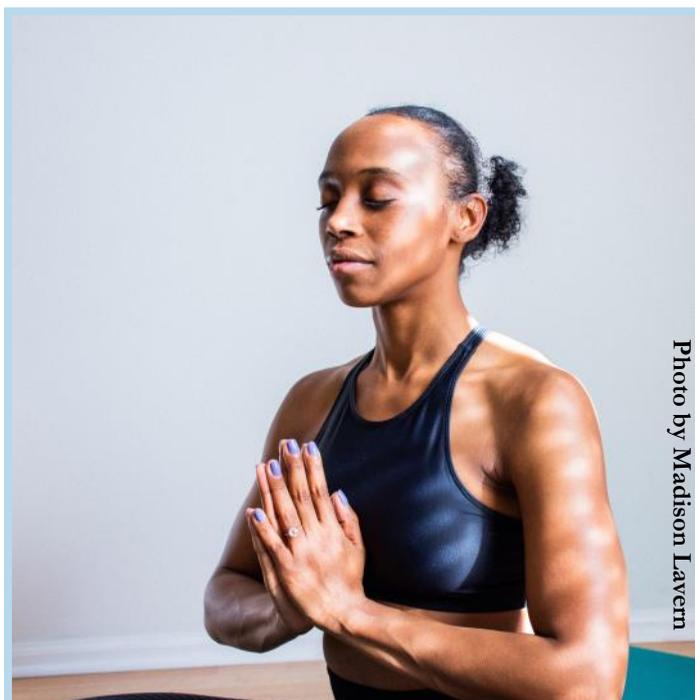


Photo by Madison Lavern

Now, a deep inhalation in through your nose.
Let it circulate through you like this prose
And out through your mouth it goes.

Please, repeat after me,
Either aloud or in your head silently.

I AM light.
I AM love.
I AM truth.
I AM an important part of the sacred divine.

I AM healing from within.
I AM embracing the manifestation of my life.
I AM making positive, sound decisions.
I AM joyful.
I AM worthy.
I AM calm and at peace within my being.

Now, another deep breath in.
Full of these affirmations,
Let them soak into the depths
For just one sec
And exhale out
All the negative energy
hindering your ability
to believe them
wholly.

And again...
In and
Out.

In and
Out.

Last one...
In and
Out.

And slowly, mindfully,
come back to reality.
Bat your eyes open with me
even if they feel heavy.
When you are ready,
Steady.
Let's go from here,
With a mind so clear,
Free of the fear
Of seeing this version of
you in the mirror.

Cheers! ~Oksanna■



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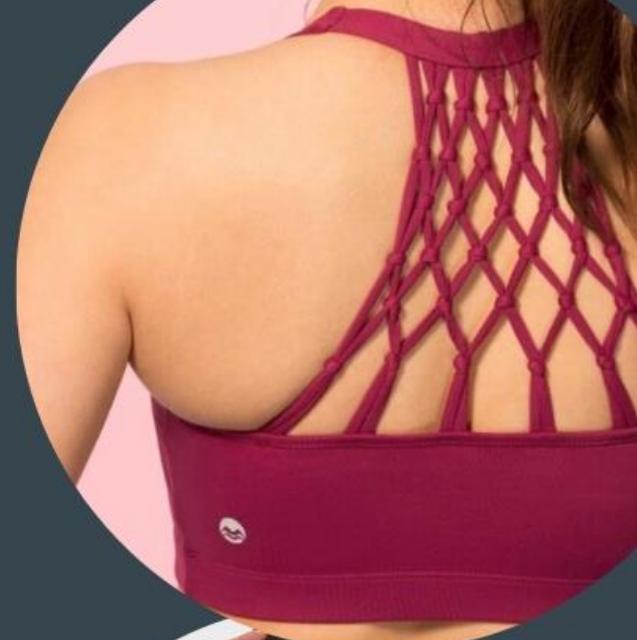
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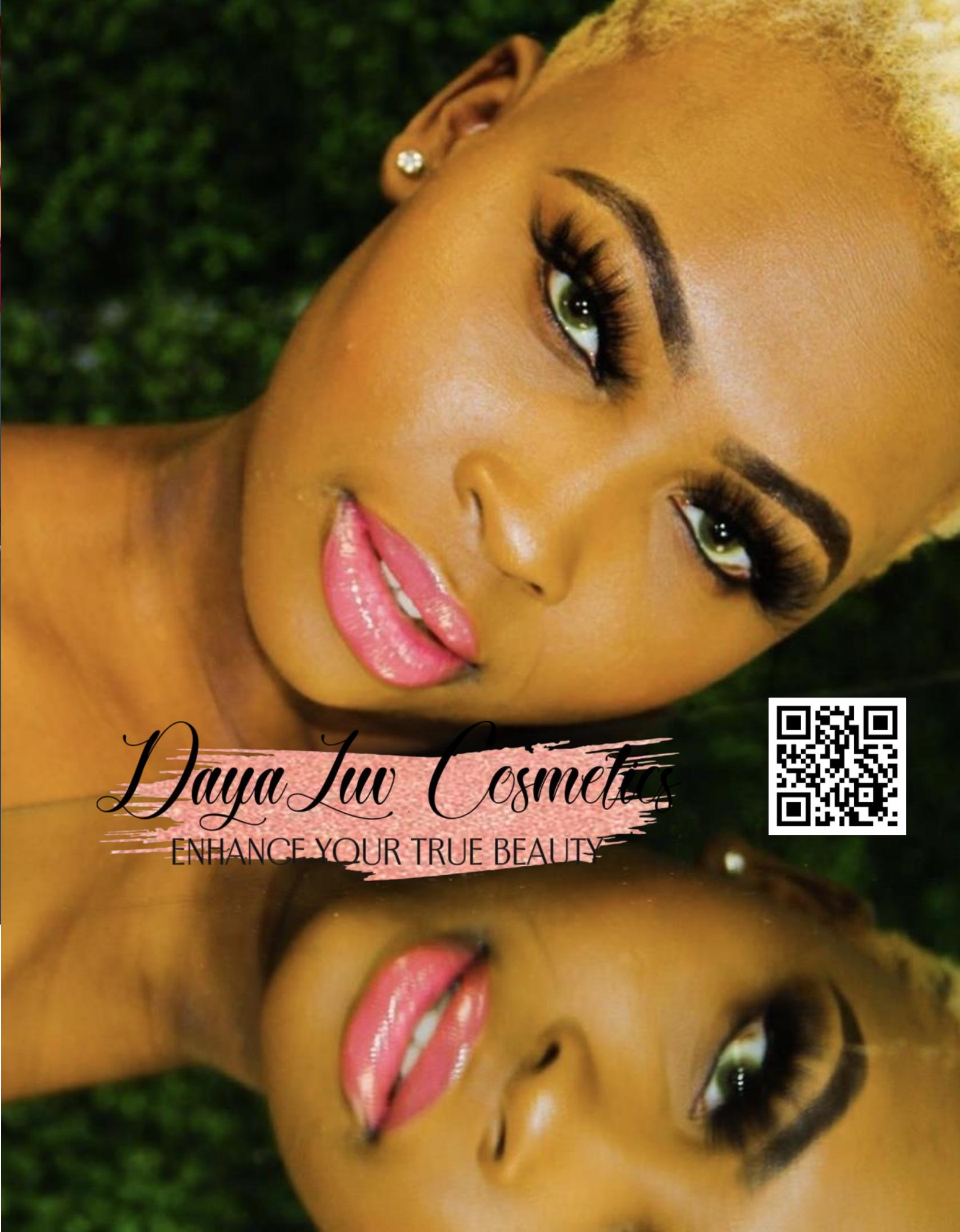


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