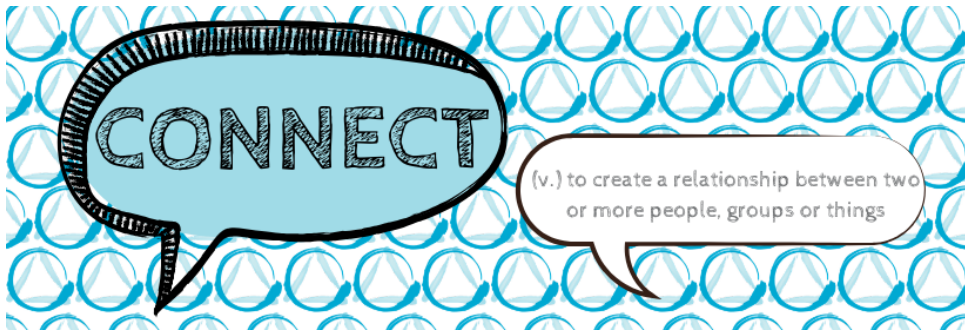




Welcome to **CONNECT**, a community-minded newsletter brought to you by Smith Center for Healing and the Arts.

This project is brought to you by the Smith Center Programs Team, in collaboration with our staff, board, facilitators, volunteers and community members - who all want to share with you!

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Holidays can be stressful, and compounded with COVID-19, this particular season may be difficult. This year it's critical to put YOU at the top of your wish list!

[Click here to read *Stress, depression and the holidays: Tips for coping* from Mayo Clinic.](#)

Alexandra Giza, Smith Center Social Work Intern



Read with Smith Center, our bi-monthly book club, has been reading non-stop through the pandemic. We've covered lots of topics and types of books including death and dying, mindfulness, finding meaning and cancer memoirs. Please enjoy this selection on "living with uncertainty and change" from our current book choice.

An excerpt from [Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change](#) by Pema Chödrön:

"The discomfort associated with groundlessness, with the fundamental ambiguity of being human, comes from our attachment to wanting things to be a certain way. The Tibetan word for attachment is *shenpa*. My teacher Dzigar Kongtrül calls *shenpa* the barometer of ego clinging, a gauge of our self-involvement and self-importance. *Shenpa* has a visceral quality associated with grasping or, conversely, pushing away. This is the feeling of *I like, I want, I need* and *I don't like, I don't want, I don't need, I want it to go away*. I think of *shenpa* as being hooked. It's that stuck feeling, that tightening or closing down or withdrawing we experience when we're uncomfortable with what's going on. *Shenpa* is also the urge to find relief from those feelings by clinging to something that gives us pleasure.

Anything can trigger our clinging, our attachments: someone criticizes our work or looks at us the wrong way; the dog chews our favorite shoes; we spill on our best tie. One minute we're feeling fine, then something happens, and suddenly we're hooked into anger, jealousy, blame, recrimination, or self-doubt. This discomfort, this sense of being triggered because things are not 'right,' because we want them to last longer or to go away, is the felt experience, the visceral experience of the fundamental ambiguity of being human.

For the most part, our attachment, our shenpa, arises involuntarily -- our habitual response to feeling insecure. When we're hooked, we turn to anything to relieve the discomfort -- food, alcohol, sex, shopping, being critical or unkind. But there is something more fruitful we can do when that edgy feeling arises. It's similar to the way we can deal with pain. One popular way to relating to physical pain is mindfulness meditation. It involves directing your full attention to the pain and breathing in and out of the spot that hurts. Instead of trying to avoid the discomfort, you open yourself completely to it. You become receptive to the painful sensation without dwelling on the story your mind has concocted: *It's bad; I shouldn't feel this way; maybe it will never go away.*"



In the spirit of embracing uncertainty, here are two talks by Johnathan Foust, MA, CSA, on exercising a new kind of spiritual practice, and deepening any ritual or other meditative or mind/body practice you may already have. These are each about 45 minutes in length, so if you're not quite up to that task, [here are a few shorter talks and meditations](#) from Johnathan.

[Click here to listen to Not Knowing As A Spiritual Practice.](#)

[Click here to listen to How to Deepen Your Practice.](#)

Carla Stillwagon



Be Your Own Positive Voice

It is easy to compliment others and a little more challenging to recognize and celebrate all the wonderful things about ourselves. Here is a brief exercise that can help you see all the good in you!

Materials:

- Paper of any size
- Markers, crayons, paints, or pastels
- Pen or Pencil
- Some kind of timer

Write your name across the top of your paper - take some time to write it a little bit more fancy than you would usually write your name. Make it colorful and unique, just like you.

Set a timer for 10 minutes.

Then write everything good and positive that you can think of about yourself.

Include special attributes, achievements, talents, and skills.

This is for you only, no one else needs to read it, so go wild and include all those wonderful, exciting things about yourself.

Fold it and keep it in a safe spot so you can pull it out and read it over and over again.

You are special and I don't want you to forget it!

Kiersten Gallagher



Welcome to [Nurturing Resilience!](#) Here, you'll find short somatic practices to help you return to an embodied sense of resilience, a mindset and physical state where you feel connected to your own essence, to loved ones, to nature -- and where hope, creativity, and transformative action with the world around you becomes possible, even during moments of transition and uncertainty. Facilitated by Yael Flusberg, a yoga therapist and coach, who teaches a weekly gentle yoga class for Smith Center.

From Compassion Fatigue to Resilience

Compassion Fatigue particularly afflicts those who work in the helping professions, caregivers and family members. One way of thinking about it is the physical and psychological exhaustion that diminishes one's ability to feel compassion for others. To counteract compassion fatigue, you need to practice self-compassion, which will help you feel and function better. Try these simple tools which bring awareness and acceptance to your experience, and when practiced regularly, compassion.

Yael Flusberg, C-IAYT, E-RYT500, RM/T, MS

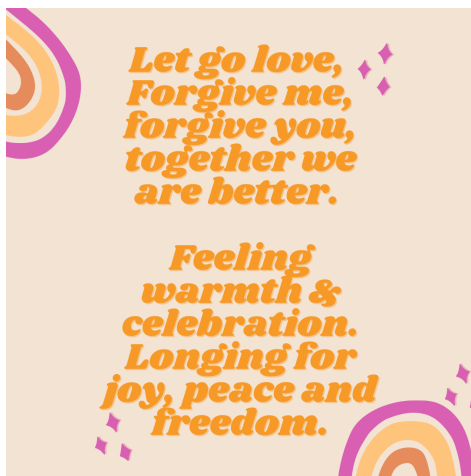


Last night, we had the honor of sharing an hour and a half with the wonderful Melanie Edwards, a singer & songwriter (among many other talents) who led us in a Musical Mending workshop. We sang healing chants, journaled about how music affects us, and shared in a collaborative song-writing activity. Our little song was not only fun to write, but also helped us bond over shared feelings, especially during this pandemic. We also joked about taking our band on tour!

We asked each other: [How is music healing for you?](#) [And, how important is community for your healing?](#)

***Music is one of the most beneficial aspects of my healing.
I am transformed into a state of tranquility, relaxation and peace.***

What a wonderful evening of song, chanting, healing and balm to wounded spirits.



Community Song by Amy, Carla, Edith, Hilary, Kiersten, Laura, Melanie, Rachel, and Suzanne

Community plays an important role in my healing as it removes me from a state of isolation and loneliness. Sharing with others is healing, inspiring and uplifting.

Music has a way of getting into the deepest crevices of my heart and soul, flooding me with soothing and healing warmth.

To be able to connect with others, especially at a time when we must remain in isolation, is so important; it can take us out of the dark and into the light.

My bags are packed and I am ready to go on the road.

Thanks for "listening!"



Today's recipe is brought to us by Kara Garrett, who we can't wait to see back to host cooking classes in 2021.

This salad is one of my favorite recipes that has the perfect fresh, acidic crunch to balance some of the more indulgent foods that sneak onto my plate at this time of year. It is easy to make and keeps well in the fridge for a quick appetizer, or you can serve it over cold noodles for a full meal. Plus, vegetable smashing is wonderful stress relief! I miss gathering around the table with family, friends, and you. Be well and I look forward to seeing you in 2021.

Cheers, Chef Kara



[Click here to download the recipe for Smashed Cucumber Miso Salad.](#)



Kara is a health-supportive chef based in Washington, DC. Following her breast cancer diagnosis in 2013, she embraced the challenge of finding a balance between her foodie lifestyle and eating well with cancer. She has adopted a flexible diet plan that focuses on plant-based, sustainable whole foods, but does not restrict indulgences of things she loves. She is passionate about working with others to encourage healthier food choices that energize the body and the soul.

Kara graduated in August 2017 from the Chef Training Program at Natural Gourmet Institute in NYC and spent one month as the sous chef at The Ananda Ashram Yoga Society of New York in Monroe, NY. She is currently enrolled in the Developing Healthy Communities: Nutrition, Behavior, and Physical Activity graduate program at Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy.



We are all nourished by so many health-supportive things that we take in through our senses: smells, sounds, sights, tastes, touches. Those inputs end up as "ingredients" that your body-mind-spirit converts into health-enhancing substances and wondrous biochemical reactions.

[Click here to read Nourishment for the Holidays in These Unusual Times by Laura Pole on BCCT.](#)

It's been a long, hard year for many parents, and working to make the holidays special for the children may add another layer of stress and anxiety. That's why it's key to acknowledge any sadness one is experiencing.

Ronica O'Hara at [Natural Awakenings](#) reviews the changing nature of gift-giving in a pandemic year, particularly from parents to children.

[Click here to read *Reinvent the Holidays: More Meaning, Less Stuff* from Natural Awakenings.](#)



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