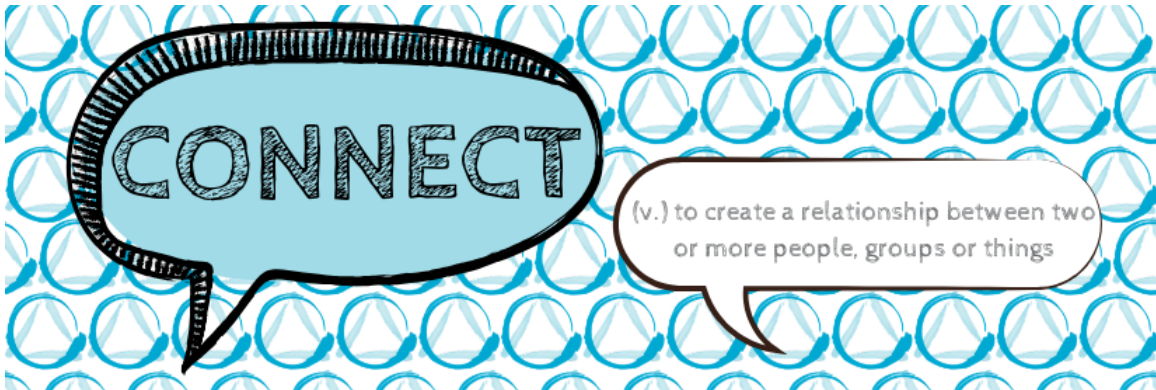

[TEST] CONNECT - Smith Center Community Newsletter

Smith Center Programs Team <smithcenterforhealingthearts@mailman.bloomerang-mail.com>
Reply-To: programs@smithcenter.org
To: Carla Stillwagon <carla@smithcenter.org>

Tue, Mar 9, 2021 at 1:45 PM



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!

[Read previous CONNECT newsletters](#)

[Subscribe to Smith Center mailings](#)

Make sure to click "View Entire Message" at the bottom of your email to see all our content!



THANK YOU to everyone who contributed to CONNECTed Reflections question of the month! We are so grateful for you and your engagement with our community.

Check out February's question & responses below:

[You know when your cheeks hurt from laughing and smiling so much? With whom in your life do you share this kind of laughter? Can you remember and share what was so funny?](#)

I was helping my 90 year old technophobic father to use his new 'senior friendly' computer. We were nearly rolling on the floor with the emails he sent to my siblings, which expressed his frustration. He never got the hang of the computer but we had a great time.

I thought of my mother, my childhood friend, my sister, my students, my dog, my son, and my husband - but really the question makes me sad because that experience of laughing with complete abandon seems so far away from right now

My sisters laugh at the past and sometimes my partner and I laugh because we have the same idea or response at the same time

A few days ago, I was on the phone with a friend I've recently reconnected with after 25 years! I shared with her how crazy my entrepreneurial journey has been especially when it comes to the many meetings I attend. I told my friend about a recent Zoom where a friend of a friend who'd been referred to me, spent about 20 minutes telling me her life story then finally took a breath and asked: "so Gayle. Tell me about the poetry package you've created." Relieved, I said: "well it's for children from grades k-4," at which point she said: "children k-4. I remember when I first started working with that grade..... blah blah blah" and launched back inside the monologue she had begun before interrupting herself.

My lifelong girlfriend and I laughed until our stomachs hurt. The laughter kicked up a notch when we turned it into a skit where she played me and I played Ms. Life Story! Girlfriends, both far and near; those we chat with everyday and those we only speak with every 20 years, are the antidote to the pandemic!

Our eight year old granddaughter tells jokes, the corniest jokes, and they have us crying with laughter especially when she has no idea what they really mean. One of the best - because no one in the family plays golf, " Why did the golfer wear two pairs of pants?" - "In case he got a hole in one."

Then her five year old brother rolls around laughing and so the adults laugh and cry even more.

I am a professional classical musician currently sidelined by the pandemic. I most especially miss making music with my chamber group, a woodwind quintet. We rehearsed every week even if we had no specific performances to prepare for, always building up repertoire and tightening our ensemble. We enjoyed each other's musical company. We also laughed spontaneously at every rehearsal. One of our members, the French Horn player, is a trained laughing yoga instructor. He came to our group late in the game, and fit right in with his ability to pick up on various joke-threads, and then expound. I came to consider his skills in humor, and with people, on the same par as his steady contributions as a highly skilled and professionally experienced musician.

Naturally, all of us had our moments of frustration and disagreement. Our silliness and laughter so often verged on hysteria so unstoppable that it threatened a complete collapse of the rehearsal. We let it happen. We knew the laughter, along with the music, provided the cohesive agents that held us together - tightly - for years.

Can you remember and share what was so funny: One of our members, the flutist, is distinctly a cat person. When carpooling to a concert easily two hours away, she had the entire car "singing" sublime operatic arias using only the word "meow." We meowed for the entire trip. This is how our vehicle came to be known as the "clown car."

It is not unusual for musicians, with their fine-tuned ears, to cultivate accents either from foreign countries, or of celebrities, or a combination of both. One of our members, the oboist, could demolish a rehearsal, putting us all in stitches with the accuracy of his imitation of the flamboyant pianist and showman, Liberace. It was as though he was channeling the entire character with detailed inflections of Liberace's voice and mannerisms. The quintet would play, stop to fix something, and Liberace would appear from behind the oboe. If the mood grabbed him, the oboist frequently made sudden, drastic switches from Liberace to, say, a well-honed rendition of Gollum from "Lord of the Rings." It was mind-blowing, and frequently brought us to a full stop. It's tough to play a wind instrument and laugh uncontrollably at the same time. Our wise clarinetist gently brought us back to task, or myself - the senior stateswoman bassoonist, stupidly thinking that rehearsing was more important than having fun.

A few years ago, while I was recovering from a broken ankle, my stepdad was tasked with shopping for pants that would fit over my cast. There wasn't anything hysterical about his purchases, but when he arrived and presented two pairs of neatly rolled sweatpants to my grandma, who was taking care of me at the time, and me, we laughed til we cried!!!



Finding Balance in Nature

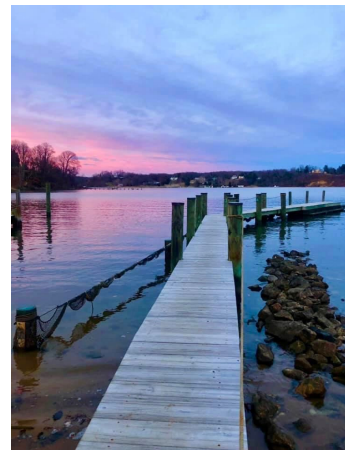
Nature is full of beauty, life, sustenance, foods and medicine, stories; it can provide healing and spiritual renewal. Spending time in nature teaches us to walk gently on this earth, live in harmony with each other, the seasons, the naturally occurring rhythms, the waters and forests, and the animals and plant life of our planet. Being in nature restores us, brings us peace, and connects us with our internal abilities to bring balance to our body, mind, and spirit.

How can we incorporate time spent in nature in our lives?

Nature is always available to us. Whether it's in a forest, a nearby park, along the shores of a lake, river, or ocean, looking out a window, or in our imagination. When we experience or activate all five senses, feeling the wind on our faces, smelling the earthy dirt, leaves, and rain, touching the bark of a tree or the cool water at our feet, looking at the trees and the animal life, hearing the birds chirping, we are connecting to nature, and we notice a calming and connection to something bigger than ourselves.

Explore your favorite places in nature each week or even each day. Go to the forest, the beach, or a park and immerse yourself in time and space that looks, feels, and sounds, different than your day to day routine. Take a day to find a new spot. And don't forget if you can't physically go to nature, bring it to you. Find a guided meditation that incorporates nature, imagine your favorite nature spot, and one of my favorites - close your eyes and think of a phrase(s), like a spring breeze along the river and allow your imagination to take you right along that river, and explore each of your five senses while you are there. The nice thing about this practice is that you can go solo or take anyone with you there.

Spring is close, I can feel it! Enjoy!



Epping Forest, Annapolis, MD

Kiersten Gallagher

words of wisdom



It was early March and, unbeknownst to us, the last time our cancer caregiver support group would meet in person for months to come. We were having our regular check-in with one another. When it came time for Anne (not her real name) to speak, she paused and said, "Maybe now everyone will understand what we have been living with. Welcome to our world!" After a stunned pause, followed by a lot of head nodding, each of us realized the truth of what she had said.

[Click here to read *Coping in the Era of COVID-19: Lessons Learned from Cancer* by Julia Rowland, PhD, for the Society of Behavioral Medicine.](#)

movement & meditation

5 Benefits of Yoga Nidra:

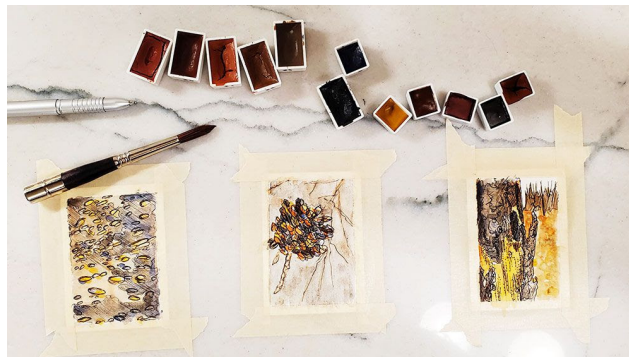
1. Anyone can do yoga nidra.
2. You cannot practice yoga nidra incorrectly.
3. Yoga nidra is easy to incorporate into your daily life.
4. It's a simple way to reduce stress.
5. Yoga nidra offers the opportunity to learn about yourself intimately.

(Credit: [Yoga International](#))

[Click here to read *5 Benefits of Yoga Nidra* from *Yoga International*.](#)

[Click the video to listen to a recording of Cathrine Nelson's guided Yoga Nidra practice for Smith Center.](#)

creative beat



Artist Bethann Merkle, who has worked with scientist Karen Vaughan for two years, used soil pigments created from a burned area to paint scenes of the charred landscape. (Bethann Merkle)

To the uninitiated, the landscape of Wyoming might seem like a monotonous stretch of tan dirt. But that idea is exactly what Vauhgan is trying to change through her art. By explaining to artists and curious laypeople how the myriad hues in soils come to be and sharing them visually through both her own creative works and those by other artists, she hopes to give people the ability to see soil as more than "just dirt."

The intriguing world of soil, just under our feet, has been welcomed into the artistic realm by scientists Karen Vauhgan and Yamina Pressler. Asking lots of questions and allowing themselves the freedom to explore, these women (recently featured

in [Smithsonian Magazine](#)) are bringing new, colorful meaning to an often overlooked wonder of nature.

[Click here to read Using Soil to Make Art from Smithsonian Magazine.](#)

And, check them out on Instagram: [@fortheloveofsoil](#) [@theartofsoil](#) (Karen Vauhan) [@wonderofsoil](#) (Yamina Pressler)

Carla Stillwagon



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.

We are at the tail end of winter -- and perhaps, at the beginning of the end of the pandemic thanks to the vaccine rollout. Still, the air is still chilly (and full of aerosols) -- so we can't let down our guard just yet. Plus, many of us have residual fear -- or awkwardness -- about being around others. Try this sequence to gently open the heart and strengthen the muscles in the upper back to prepare you to re-emerge with radiance and grace. Props needed: a wall and a yoga strap. Poses worked on: Wall mountain, wall chair, chest lifts, scapula push ups (at all or in tabletop) and angel wings.

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



What do you get when you cross a dollhouse with an art gallery, and throw in community sharing? Why, the [Free Little Art Gallery](#), of course!

Ever since the [Washington Post](#) reported on the brainchild of Seattle-based artist, [Stacy Milrany](#), I've been obsessed.



stitched leaf by Corie



"Discovery Park"
by @jane_kreinherder, 6"x 8"
encaustic on panel



watercolor on paper by Anna Alonzo

There is so much to love about the FLAG, as it's called. The tiny gallery looks like a replica of a life-size one—with simple wood floors, plain white walls, wooden shoe molding and a minimalist wooden bench. Depending on the pieces of art on display, little people figures are positioned so that they ponder the art along with you. Moreover, the art pieces at the FLAG are created by artists at all levels and ages, and much of it is outright stunning. Finally, by making the art shareable with its "take a piece, leave a piece" philosophy, the FLAG brings warmth and goodwill to its community while encouraging the artist within everyone.

Below are just some examples of the art that's been displayed at the FLAG. To see more, follow their [Instagram page](#).

All image credit: [Stacey Milrany](#)
Susi Wyss, Smith Center Creativity Facilitator & Program Participant



Today's recipe for Quinoa Salad is brought to us by Chef Laura Pole!

And, if you're missing Chef Laura, join us virtually on Saturday, March 27th from 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM for [One Pot, One Bowl Meals](#).

[Click here to download the recipe for Meal in a Bowl Quinoa Salad.](#)



Join us for this new opportunity to train with one of the oldest yoga and cancer teacher trainings in the country.



The curriculum includes Swami Satchidananda's interpretation of the Yoga Sutras as they apply to dealing with pain and suffering, illness and disease, life and death, and daily challenges... By introducing appropriately adapted Yoga therapy like YCat, people can reduce the severity of distressing side effects from cancer and treatment. We consistently hear, "I feel so much better." YCat teachers are trained to understand underlying concepts and physiological rationales of Yoga and cancer in order to meet their students where they are and individualize their sessions and classes safely and authentically.

[Click here to learn more & enroll in the YCat Level One training.](#)
[Click here to download the flyer for the training.](#)

What does the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund have planned for this year?

We have several plans for this year. The TDJBCF plans to stay the course on mission driven efforts while being more aggressive in the grantmaking and

fundraising area. In that vein, we plan to continue our ongoing partnership efforts with Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center on three grants involving breast cancer survivors while developing other partnerships through grant efforts. The TDJBCF would like to provide greater financial support in the area of utilities (gas, water, electricity, phone bills), thereby developing a Utilities Fund to help defray the cost of utilities during this difficult period. The TDJBCF is really excited about the possibility of conducting breast health awareness classes with the Richard Wright Public Charter School students and has held some positive and encouraging conversations on this proposed effort.

[Click here to read Local Civic Leader Continues Helping Neighbors, Despite the Pandemic in The Southwester.](#)

Local Civic Leader Continues Helping Neighbors, Despite the Pandemic

Exclusive interview on the actions and activism of Thelma D. Jones

By JANE GOODMAN
Thelma D. Jones has been a resident of Southwest since July 1978, and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, she has been helping neighbors and offering support to her neighbors. While active in the community for many years, she is best known for founding the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Support Group in April 2010, which has grown into the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund (TDJBCF) in September 2012 on the same mission.

Jones is also very active with the Southwest Neighborhood Leaders (SNL). She joined the board of SNL in March 2018 as a Vice President and held position in 2019.

Looking up the neighborhood, the Southwester might not be the place and advice on COVID-19 and the country, she is not the person to turn to.

What does the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund have planned for this year?
The fund's annual plans for this year. The TDJBCF plans to raise the money on national breast cancer while being more aggressive in the fundraising and fundraising efforts. In that vein, we plan to continue our ongoing partnership efforts with Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center on three grants involving breast cancer survivors while developing other partnerships through grant efforts.

Looking up the neighborhood, the Southwester might not be the place and advice on COVID-19 and the country, she is not the person to turn to.

What does the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund have planned for this year?
The fund's annual plans for this year. The TDJBCF plans to raise the money on national breast cancer while being more aggressive in the fundraising and fundraising efforts. In that vein, we plan to continue our ongoing partnership efforts with Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center on three grants involving breast cancer survivors while developing other partnerships through grant efforts.

Looking up the neighborhood, the Southwester might not be the place and advice on COVID-19 and the country, she is not the person to turn to.

What does the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund have planned for this year?
The fund's annual plans for this year. The TDJBCF plans to raise the money on national breast cancer while being more aggressive in the fundraising and fundraising efforts. In that vein, we plan to continue our ongoing partnership efforts with Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center on three grants involving breast cancer survivors while developing other partnerships through grant efforts.



Dr. Steven Pergam of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center receiving his first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine on December 29, 2020.
Credit: Image courtesy of Dr. Steven Pergam

Many people being treated for cancer are asking whether they should get one of the COVID-19 vaccines. Steven Pergam, M.D., of the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Division at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, was a co-leader of a committee formed by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) that recently released recommendations on COVID-19 vaccination in cancer patients. In this Q&A, Dr. Pergam discusses some of the questions people with cancer and cancer survivors have about these vaccines.

[Click here to read Coronavirus Vaccines and People with Cancer: A Q&A with Dr. Steven Pergam.](#)

Therapeutic knitting? With the cooperation of [Project Knitwell](#), two oncology nurses at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital (MGUH) conducted a study that concluded that knitting can help reduce compassion fatigue (burnout) among oncology nurses. [The Impact of a Knitting Intervention on Compassion Fatigue in Oncology Nurses](#) was published in the *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing*.

Pictured left is Eve, a nurse at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, with her first project.



[Click here to read Helping Nurses Relieve Stress During Pandemic.](#)

If you enjoy our programs, please consider paying it forward by making a monthly donation to Smith Center. A gift of \$25, \$15, or even \$10 a month helps to sustain us and provide more free and low-cost resources to our community. smithcenter.org/give



Our Contact Information

Smith Center for Healing & the Arts
1632 U Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
202.483.8600
<http://www.smithcenter.org>

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Manage email preferences](#)

Make a Donation to Smith Center