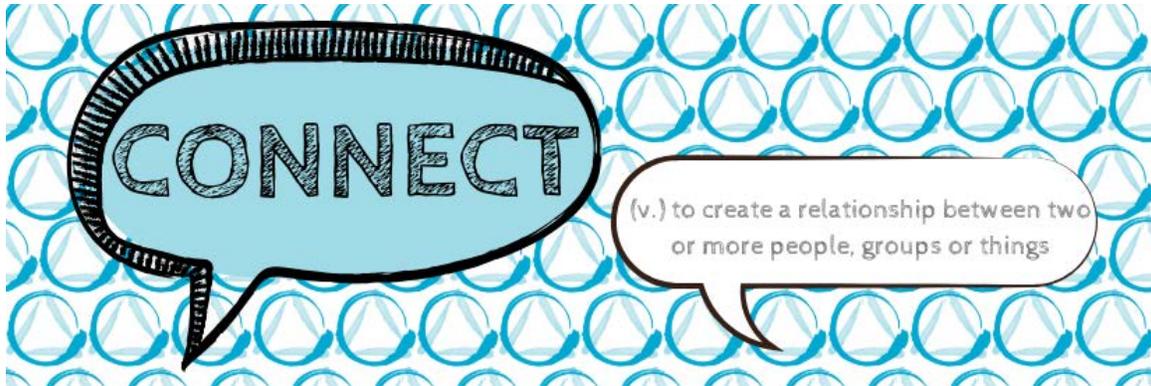


CONNECT - Smith Center Community Newsletter

1 message

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

Wed, May 12, 2021 at 9:32 AM



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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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 April's question & responses below:

[What has been your pandemic silver lining\(s\)?](#)

Personally, the most brilliant silver lining has been my ability to prioritize and create time for cycling, hiking, and walking my dogs. I have seen a huge improvement in my health and wellbeing. I have also really valued the time with my husband, son, and dogs and the shared gratitude that we have remained healthy during this difficult time. Professionally, the biggest shiniest silver lining has been the ability to stay connected to our community in truly inspiring, meaningful, and joyful ways.

By spending the great majority of time in the house, it's been amazing how many webinars and political volunteer activities one can schedule very close together. And to "do" this all over the country.

I learned to slow down and take care of myself. I learned that I was hanging out with some folks because of proximity rather than connection. I learned what an amazing being my dog is (well, even more so!)

Getting deeper into my spiritual practices. I've been amazed that I don't feel lonely despite the isolation. Zoom helps, but so does meditation.

Appreciate all the "beauty" in every day life

I'm a painter, my art is reality based. Recognizing images that become successful paintings is much like treasure hunting, relying upon real-world experiences for inspiration. The restrictions necessarily imposed upon us during the lockdown recalibrated the nature of those real-world experiences for me, severely limiting my access to the random beauty of the day-to-day world. Or so I thought.



"Orlando, Wilfredo and Dave", oil on canvas, 42"x 52", 2021.

A fine example of a silver lining? The routine hiring of contractors to paint and repair my studio building took on new meaning during lockdown. The work that they had to do was complicated, noisy and disruptive, something I would have normally considered an annoying inconvenience. But this time when they showed up, after so much isolation, all I saw was a rich source of inspiration.

Best silver lining for me so far is that our far-flung family (spanning the North American continent, have spent more time together in our now bi-weekly zoom call. We've seen and learned so much more about each other. We are learning to talk respectfully across some pretty profound political differences. There is hope!

Best, best part has been welcoming Riley, my nephew's baby daughter, the newest member this past year.

On January 1, 2020 (pre-Covid-19), I decided to start cooking 100% plant based meals for myself; to explore new grains, vegetables, and fruits; to eliminate all processed sugar, flour, and excess oil; and to eat 3 regular meals a day. I had been dining out 10+ meals a week (no typo). My credit card bill and I were busting out all over. Covid-19 made it easy to eliminate all visits to restaurants, carry-outs, and convenience stores. I lost 30 pounds in 3 months. By June 2020 my internist reported that I had "perfect lab results." I had no comprehension of what he meant, as I'd never heard such a report before. My health has continued to stabilize and improve and weight has stayed off because I continue those protocols with encouragement from friends and family. I maintain friendships and contacts via phone, Zoom, email, and writing letters and cards. I have learned to be at peace with myself during these past 16 months. It's a sweet place to live. I do look forward to rejoining friends and family at events and meetings this year, and to finding ways to share time with them where food is not the point of our activity together.

I actually love not having to run from one place to another! I've stayed socially connected on Zoom and have even "seen" more friends for virtual happy hours, exercise classes, etc., from all over the country and world, thanks to technology and our less hectic schedules! :)

Being outdoors in fresh air, in nature, watching and smelling spring unfold!

My adorable and inquisitive baby/toddler.

My pandemic silver lining has been virtual streaming exercise classes. I always had trouble committing to more than a daily walk, but now I do exercise classes 4-5 times a week and still walk 3-4 times a week. I'm in much better condition than I'd be without these.

Lots of loving cuddles throughout the days with my partner; turning inward and having more time to relax and confront trauma; growing our bookshelves and blowing through more books than we've read in years combined!

Spending more time with family.

The pandemic's silver lining for me is giving me the opportunity to participate in events via Zoom that I might not attend in person. The Zoom communities I've participated in have kept me from feeling isolated and alone.

1. Reconnecting with three of my oldest friends for monthly Zoom. (all four of us hadn't been together in years!)
2. Unconditional love of Taz (my dog) is the best medicine. Taz teaches me every day that the present is all that matters - belly rubs and dog kisses make everything better!
3. I've been practicing more gratitude!



May is Mental Health Awareness month, and this year Mental Health America (MHA) has published a very helpful [Tools 2 Thrive kit](#), which "everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency regardless of the situations they are dealing with."

It provides information on such topics as adapting after trauma and stress, dealing with anger and frustration, getting out of "thinking traps," processing big changes, taking time for yourself, and radical acceptance. The toolkit's core message is about the need to "reduce the stigma around mental health struggles, because that stigma often prevents individuals from seeking help."

[Click here to download the Tools 2 Thrive kit.](#)

[Click here to read more about Mental Health Month from Mental Health America.](#)



words of wisdom



PC: Manshen Lo

For several weeks, when asked how I was doing, I would say that I'm "okay, but feeling blah. Tired and out of sorts, kind of sad but also happy at times." I didn't know what to make of it. I kept thinking I would snap out of it, but it wasn't going away. One day, I saw this headline on Twitter - "There's A Name for the Blah You're Feeling: It's Called Languishing" and I jumped to read it. The article captured how I was feeling and it gave me some hope. I was so heartened to read the article that I shared it with my friends and my colleagues at SC. We thought it was so important that we are sharing it with you - our beloved SC community.

If you are languishing too - know that you are not alone. Let me know what you think of the article @ lisa@smithcenter.org.

[Click here to read *There's a Name for the Blah You're Feeling: It's Called Languishing* by Adam Grant for The New York Times.](#)

Lisa Simms Booth, Executive Director, Smith Center

movement & meditation

We understand that the nervous system has a biological imperative to be changeable, adaptable and malleable to ensure our survival. The brain can literally change its structure and function in relation to those needs. Anytime we learn or experience something new, we're working with that process of neuroplasticity.

Damaged nerves, whether from chemotherapy or structural injury heal slowly. The good news is that something interesting happens when we use movement to improve and build on lost movement abilities.

"The Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education uses gentle movement and directed attention to help people learn new and more effective ways of living the life they want. You can increase your ease and range of motion, improve your flexibility and coordination, and rediscover your innate capacity for graceful, efficient movement." Check out the resources on their website, including a long list of classes, to discover a simple and effective movement practice.

[Click here to read *Becci Parsons Talks about Reclaiming Her Life from Neuropathy*.](#)

[Click here to read more about the Feldenkrais Method® and the class schedule.](#)



Photography by Rosaline O'Connor

creative beat



*In February 2019 over 100 volunteers delivered 36,000 Soul Boxes to the Oregon State Capitol, one Box for every person killed by gunfire in the US during 2018.
Photo credit: Paul Fardig*



3,000 Soul Boxes on display at Cerimon House, Portland, OR. January 2019. Photo credit: Nathan V. Holden

The [Soul Box Project](#) collects and exhibits thousands of hand-folded origami boxes to raise awareness of the U.S. gunfire epidemic. Each Soul Box holds space for one life lost or injured by gun violence, defense, accident or suicide.

We are honored to be participating in the Soul Box Project as a community effort, alongside some special partners: Smith Center for Healing and the Arts, Friends of Oxon Run, Smith Center's Artist-in-Residence Program, the Joan Hisaoka Healing Arts Gallery, and the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund.

Help us reach our goal of folding 500 Soul Boxes by this fall, and participate in one of our upcoming Virtual Soul Box-Making events. **Give yourself an hour to do something beautiful. Something creative. Something caring.** Bring your latest Soul Boxes to show. Newcomers and experienced Soul Box-makers are welcome!

[Click here to participate in a Virtual Soul Box-Making session on May 18th from 1-2pm ET.](#)
[Click here to download our Soul Box flyer, to share with anyone who may be interested in participating.](#)



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.

How each of us carry chronic stress and trauma is as individual as how we heal. One of the most common responses includes feeling numb and disconnected from ourselves and others. TO withdrawing from social situations and personal relationships, aches and pains that have no explanation, and chronic health problems due to stress. In this video, I'll show you how to use a simple breath technique -- a sigh of relief -- to bring more awareness into what's happening in your body and mind and to begin to practice letting go of tension.



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



community stories

In this weekend's Come Write with Us: Embracing Light and All That's Blooming with Poetry workshop with Kathleen O'Toole, seven women came together for a beautiful morning of poetry.

It only takes a few minute pause to connect with nature. On Saturday morning we listened to delightful poetry that brought us together as a group, took us closer to the blissful simplicity that is right in front of us, and allowed us to express some of what we enjoy each Spring. Here are the Haikus that I wrote during our off-screen writing time. Thank you Kathleen and to all of the women that joined us this Saturday. What a special morning together!



Blue Heron rises
Flies above morning mist
I pause and glide too

Underneath our canopy
Every shade of green
A hidden gem

Green stalks
Bloom yellow and white
Kitchen table vase

Kiersten Gallagher



tasty & healthy

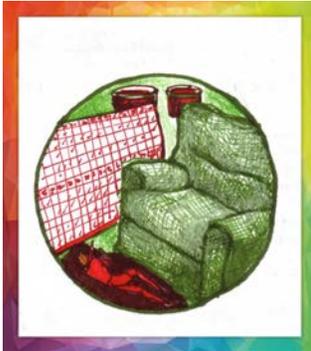
Today's recipes for Veggie-Loaded Tofu Scramble and Shiitake Bacon are brought to us by Chef Kara Garrett.

Add some protein to your mornings with Chef Kara's fun tofu scramble, and snack on the delicious shiitake bacon any time of the day!

[Click here to download the recipes for Veggie-Loaded Tofu Scramble and Shiitake Bacon.](#)



shared ideas



If you do nothing else for your wellbeing today, do the “three good things” exercise: Write down three things that have gone well in your day, big or small.

Instructions for Personal Use:

- Write three things that went well today, big or small
- Reflect on what about you or the situation made you able to appreciate it
- Repeat 3-6 times per week
- You can add what you feel good about in the world, in your community, in your relationships

[Click here to read more about The Three Good Things exercise from Creative Wellbeing Workshops.](#)

When the pandemic hit, [Project Knitwell](#) (PK) had to stop its in-person knitting instruction in its dozen-plus partner sites around the Washington, D.C. region.

For more than 10 years, Project Knitwell has successfully offered knitting instruction as a wellness tool for people in the DC area going through stressful situations.

[Click here to read *Pandemic Knitting Benefiting Patients, Others in Stressful Situations.*](#)



PK offers one-on-one knitting instruction via Zoom.



PK program participant Bettina models the cowling she knitted



People have become concerned about their local neighborhoods in a way they were not before. "The findings were very clear: a majority of people thought that each of their local facilities – from access to fresh air and good local shops through to transport services – had become more important to them because of the pandemic."

[Click here to read *How Hybrid Work Can Make Our Cities Better.*](#)
[Click here to read *The 15-Minute City Is Having a Moment.*](#)

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



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