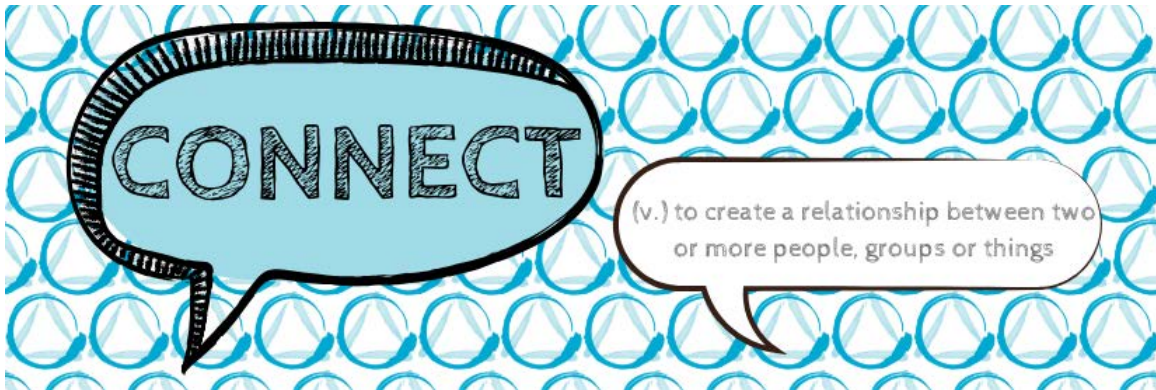


[TEST] CONNECT - Smith Center Community Newsletter

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

Tue, Jun 8, 2021 at 7:28 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](#)

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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 May's question & responses below:

[Is there a person that has always been by your side?
This could be a friend, relative, neighbor, colleague, or professional support person.](#)

My sister

Lynn and I have been friends since we were 12 and started a Beatles fan club. We are older now (a bit) and both of us have had breast cancer twice. We live on opposite sides of the country but visit each year--whenever we can. Lynn is my forever bosom buddy. I can talk to her when I need to remember who I am and what makes me resilient. We laugh and grieve together; we rejoice in our friendship.

My self

There are several people who have been by my side - some still living, some not... however, they have stayed "by my side" to the extent that benign distance is allowed from time to time. "distance is the secret ingredient in intimacy"

I couldn't resist answering the question about a person that has always been by my side! When I was diagnosed with cancer in my 20s, my boyfriend and I had been dating for two years. I had "the talk" with him that most young adults with cancer have with their significant others: "You didn't sign up for this, I understand if you want to leave," etc. Four years after my diagnosis, we are married and starting our family. That guy never left my side for a second. <3

Without a doubt, my mom is the person that is always by my side. We have a sacred connection of friendship, love, trust, and respect. She is the person who is present, available, and right next to me as we navigate the challenges and revel in the celebrations.

My mom, forever and always

My dad (and my dog)

a balanced mind



You may think of Self-Care as something that distracts you from the interesting and creative aspects of your life – time consuming but necessary, like needing to change the oil in your car every 5,000 miles...

The real truth is that Self-Care is a practice that can draw us closer to the sanctity of life. If we do not recognize and value the life in our own selves, how can we learn to value the life in others? Integrity, in its simplest yet most profound form, requires that our intention toward life be coherent and whole and that we each practice being harmless and compassionate – not only toward the life in others but also toward the life that is uniquely our own.

As we close our **Read with Smith Center book club** discussions today on [Kitchen Table Wisdom](#) by Rachel Naomi Remen, it feels right to pass on more of her wisdom to all of you.

[Click here to access some simple, self-care practices from Rachel Naomi Remen.](#)



words of wisdom



Advice from a River

Go with the flow
Slow down and meander
Go around the obstacles
Stay current
The beauty is in the journey

Ilan Shamir



movement & meditation



Joy (Mudita) Meditation
- Jack Kornfield

Let yourself think of someone you care about. Picture them, remember them, see them in your mind's eye or hold them in your heart. Imagine their happiest moment as a child. Then begin to wish them well: "May you be joyful. May you remember that child of spirit that was born in you. May your joy increase. May the causes for happiness and joy grow stronger in your life." Then imagine this person wishing the same for you.



Usually, history is written only by the powerful. When the history of COVID-19 is written, let's make sure that doesn't happen.

The goal of the Pandemic Journaling Project is to make sure that ordinary people struggling through this pandemic have their voices heard, and their experiences remembered.

Make sure what you and your family are living through is not forgotten. Join the Project, and start telling your own story. You don't need a computer, and you don't even need to write anything to participate. All you need is a phone. It's easy, and it will only take as long as you want to spend - as little as 15 minutes a week.

Researchers at the University of Connecticut present an exciting, creative opportunity - especially for those of us who dabble in journaling already. This could even be a mindful 15-minutes each week to take a few deep breaths, think back on your week, and practice gratitude with family or a group of friends.

[Click here to participate in the Pandemic Journaling Project with the University of Connecticut.](#)



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.

Too much of our precious energy is tied up in knots of avoidance: the people, places, emotions, commitments we don't accept as being part and parcel of our lives. When we don't accept our lives and bodies as they currently are, we cut ourselves off from depths of emotion that lead to wholeness and healing. That disconnection is the void of resilience. Using Tara Brach's RAIN of compassion (Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture) we become honest about the suffering avoidance has caused us, and we can take small steps toward freeing up our life force, or even Amor Fati, falling in love with our fate.



Diagnosis: April 2004
Black Pepper Gingerbread*

I was stuck in a robust case of denial. A few symptoms screamed for immediate attention, but I wasn't responding except to try to move up my annual gynecology checkup. I called and left messages, but there was no return call. I was preoccupied with my mother's anticipated visit during my children's upcoming spring vacation from elementary school. My appointment was less than two weeks away. I decided simply to wait.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Grease a 9" square pan.

My gynecologist was enraged upon examining me. "Don't you feel how hard this is? I will make your appointments for you. You'll have a mammogram within the week." She was referring to the hard lump in my right breast where the nipple had retracted. Confirmed: I was in trouble.

¼ pound unsalted butter
½ cup packed dark brown sugar
1 cup dark molasses

I headed down to the screening on a Tuesday dizzy with a swirl of thoughts. I went to a small locker room to undress and lock up my valuables. From there, I proceeded to the closet-sized ante-room to the screening room wearing a blue-paper cover and my sweater. I was told to return to the ante-room after the mammogram. I had just barely sat down after the procedure when a nurse arrived to inform me that they needed to complete further diagnostics. "The team is not ready for another ninety minutes, so you have time to leave the building. There's a Starbucks a block away." I returned to my locker and fumbled my way back into my clothes.

1 teaspoon spicy brown mustard
2 tablespoons instant coffee powder

I needed to go further away than a block, and a cup of coffee was not going to provide the mind alteration I required. I called my husband. He offered to come down, however, I explained there was not much he could do. "Besides," I told him, "I'm a moving target. I'm going to see that show at the Sackler Museum about Buddhism." "You sure? Call me if you change your mind."

The Buddhism exhibit took up three subterranean rooms in the Sackler. I walked through it quickly, impatiently. My simplistic notion of relaxing the mind through osmosis was not panning out. Music played softly in the background including the sounds of the gong on display. That sound helped me take a deep breath. Still, I could think of nothing but what loomed before me at the hospital. I left the exhibit and walked back to the Metro.

Two eggs beaten
Pinch of salt

Now back in the basement of the hospital, I was ushered into a side room and told to lie on what resembled a cafeteria table. I removed my clothes from the waist up – no time for the blue gown. The surface of the table was hard and cold, covered only by a sheet. The room was chaotic with other techs and their patients. A nurse drew the curtain around my bay to prepare for the next step, a needle biopsy. She was clear: it would hurt, but it would be quick. She informed me that the tool they use to retract tissue from the tumor makes a loud punching sound, like a carpenter’s staple gun. She demonstrated this a couple of times so that I wouldn’t flinch during the procedure.

1 teaspoon of ground black pepper

She asked if I wanted the breast surgeon to walk down the hall and hold my hand during the biopsy. I had met the surgeon at prior consultations, my medical file flagged due to family history. “Oh yes, I do!” My thirty-something surgeon with her orangey-red flowing hair arrived promptly, and leaned over the table to grasp my hand as the staple gun was placed next to my rib cage. It too was cold and metallic against the skin. She reassured, gripping my hand a little harder. It was over within seconds.

1 tablespoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground allspice

Three days later on a Friday, my husband and I appeared at the Breast Care Center at the hospital, leaving my elderly mother to watch over our children. We met with the surgeon and her nurse assistant - an older, attentive Danish woman. Sitting across from us at a large, round conference table, they told us that the cancer was invasive, and required an extensive surgery, chemo and radiation. This would entail seven months of active treatment. I would lose all of my hair, including my eye lashes. They reserved an operating room for four days later.

“Do you want to consider breast reconstruction? Now is the time to have everything done at once,” the surgeon pressed. “I can’t decide about these options now. Just get the tumor out.” My thinking, clouded by panic, was based on the experiences of two of my three half-sisters, both of whom had radical mastectomies several years prior. The cancer struck all three of us at the same, peri-menopausal age. Neither half-sister had breast reconstruction, and they cautioned against it.

Once back at home, I broke the news to my mother sitting on the living room couch. My son was on her knee; my daughter on mine. Behind their backs as we jiggled them up and down, she looked at me inquisitively. I shook my head back and forth, and mouthed “bad.” No words were exchanged until the kids were out of the room. My mother departed before the surgery took place, wanting to “clear the decks” for a sibling to come help with the children and other household needs.

2 teaspoons baking soda
2 and ½ cups flour
1 cup very hot water

To the soundtrack of ABBA, the surgeon removed a 5-centimeter tumor and 31 lymph nodes from my right arm, 12 of which were positive. The operation was considered a success because the margins around the tumor were clear of cancer. When I interviewed a radiation doctor, his first words were: “Nice cut,” referring to my surgeon’s handiwork, an 11” scar across the right side of my chest. “Nice to meet you.”

Pour and scrape the batter into the pan and bake for 45 minutes, or until the cake is springy and a tester inserted in the center comes out with just a few crumbs clinging to it. Cool in the pan on a rack for 10 minutes. Makes 9 to 12 servings.

My family and I survived the cancer.

*Recipe from *One-Pot Cakes* by Andrew Schloss with Ken Bookman

Maude Fish, Healing Circle for Lymphedema Facilitator and Program Participant

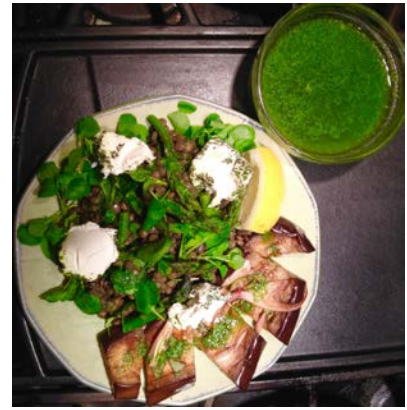


Today's recipe for ***Puy Lentils, Asparagus and Watercress Salad*** is brought to us by Chef Cathryn Pethick.

Summertime- the season of Pitta in Ayurveda, with its heat and humidity- is a time to favor foods with tastes of sweet, bitter and astringent. Think all the sweet fruits- berries, melons, ripe peaches, nectarines- the slight bitter/astringent tastes of most leafy greens, and the inherent astringency of legumes. The sweet, bitter and astringent tastes will help balance the excess heat our body may collect through

the summer months. It's a great time to relax, chill by the sea, the pool, or even barefoot in the morning dew, and keep your cooking projects simple and straightforward. Here's a super-nutritious dish I love right now.

[Click here to download the recipe for Puy Lentils, Asparagus and Watercress Salad.](#)



Black Family Cancer Awareness: Engaging the Generations

WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS
Free Summer Webinar Series

SIO Integrative
Oncology



Marika Green, MD, MEd.



Nandini Srinivasan, MD, FACP



Eleanor M. Walker, MD



Darraghna K. Finkbeiner, PhD

Black Family Cancer Awareness: Engaging the Generations
Wednesday, June 16th, 2021 at 12pm EST

Join the [Society for Integrative Oncology](#) on Wednesday, June 16th at 12pm EST for our first episode of the series. Black families in the US are among the most vulnerable and hardest hit for cancer risk, diagnoses, and poor outcomes and have the highest mortality rate of any racial and ethnic group for all cancers combined and for most major cancers. Death rates for all major causes of death are higher for Black populations than for non-Hispanic whites, contributing in part to a lower life expectancy. Given the staggering inequity, this presentation will discuss the importance of screening, early detection, and prevention/lifestyle modification for Black communities, as well as the important role played by social determinants of health.

[Click here to register for the webinar on June 16th.](#)

[The Brem Foundation](#) maximizes women's chances of finding early, curable breast cancer through education, access and advocacy.

Check out their recent video on why we should make up for any missed cancer screenings that may not have been possible this past year.

[Click the video to watch.](#)

The Death Designer Workshop: A Collective Problem-Solving Series

This is a **participatory** set of human-centered design workshops that is more along the lines of a structured group conversation, as opposed to an educational workshop where the goal is to teach you something.

The **goal** of this workshop is to use our collective knowledge to come up with a set of maps that can hopefully illuminate the end of life space, AND to discuss the set of problems that have been uncovered by or possibly arose because of, the COVID-19 pandemic.

The upcoming workshop on June 12 will focus on **trans and nonbinary deathcare** and problems specific to this community. We invite anyone who is interested to participate, regardless of whether you identify as trans/gender nonconforming or not.



[Click here to register for the June 12th & 26th Death Designer Workshops.](#)

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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