



NO. 1
SPRING 2020

**THE ACCIDENTAL
VEGAN: NONNA'S
SICILIAN RECIPES**

**LIFE AFTER
CORONAVIRUS**

**HUMAN MIND AND
ENVIROMENT**

EARTH MOVES


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EDITORIAL

by: Paula Ishtar, editor

Welcome to the first edition of Earth Voices, the magazine born out of Earth Moves.

At Earth Moves, we tackle different issues such as social isolation, healthy eating, and ecological sustainability. We encourage community engagement, linking creative activities such as dance, drumming and film making, with nature immersion and horticulture. Our aim is to enable people to focus on transformation wellbeing and connectivity. We do this through a variety of workshops and events, where we seek to empower people to come together and make positive changes in the local community.

Earth Moves started in 2016, walking the dog through some overgrown and abandoned market gardens near Leasowe Beach on the Wirral. We spotted an industrial size greenhouse through the brambles and weeds. Seeing it forlornly out-of-use made us think of the history of the area, and how once it would have provided fresh food for local markets. This led to a conversation about how so many individuals in the UK now rely on food banks, and often don't have access to fresh fruit and vegetables grown organically.

It was at that moment we came up with the idea for Earth Moves, a community project, based in 'The Greenhouse', reviving its historical use and helping people to eat fresh and learn the skills to 'grow their own' in a sustainable way. We could provide a space for transformation with our arts, dance and wellbeing projects being situated in our year-round garden greenhouse.

So with permission from the owner, we set about repairing the greenhouse structure, clearing weeds and planting. We invited different groups from our community to come and help with the work and learning and sharing skills while doing so. We have held many workshops over the past few years at 'The Greenhouse', based on themes of wellbeing, creativity, ecology, diversity, and community action. Now, we've outgrown this home and are working

with the local council to get a larger more permanent spot, still in the old market gardens, to help Earth Moves deliver even more projects for local people.

As part of our expansion, we wanted to communicate some of the ideas from what we have been doing here at Earth Moves, to a wider audience. Hoping to inspire and educate others who are trying to make positive changes to their lives and communities. That's why we have started 'Earth Voices', a magazine made co-operatively with contributions from a diverse range of people. Each issue will have a focus on a particular area, bringing together people's thoughts, ideas, recommendations and having some fun along the way!

We are so excited to be starting a new chapter in the Earth Moves journey, and to have so many amazing people, to be on that journey with us. 'Earth Voices' will help us reach even more people, promoting the power of diversity, compassion and connectedness. This issue focuses on mental wellbeing, and how we can all do our part to create a happier and healthier society. Our next issue will be a celebration of diversity and biodiversity.

Please get in touch if you would like to subscribe, advertise, contribute or donate.

Visit our website www.earthmoves.org to find out more.



15 Mind and Body Benefits of Belly Dance

By: Paula Ishtar

1: Lots of Physical Benefits Total body movement, such as belly dance, enhances the functions of other body systems, such as circulatory, respiratory, skeletal, and muscular systems. It is one of the few exercise forms that tones up the pelvic floor. In belly dance, we habitually raise the sternum. Realignment of the sternum produces an increase in the capacity of the lungs. More oxygen means more energy.

2: Better Sleep People who take regular exercise such as belly dance sleep better.

3: Improves Muscle Tone in a low impact way. Belly dance provides an increase in core strength, which provides stability in the body and enhances posture. Belly dance can be a great alternative to boring

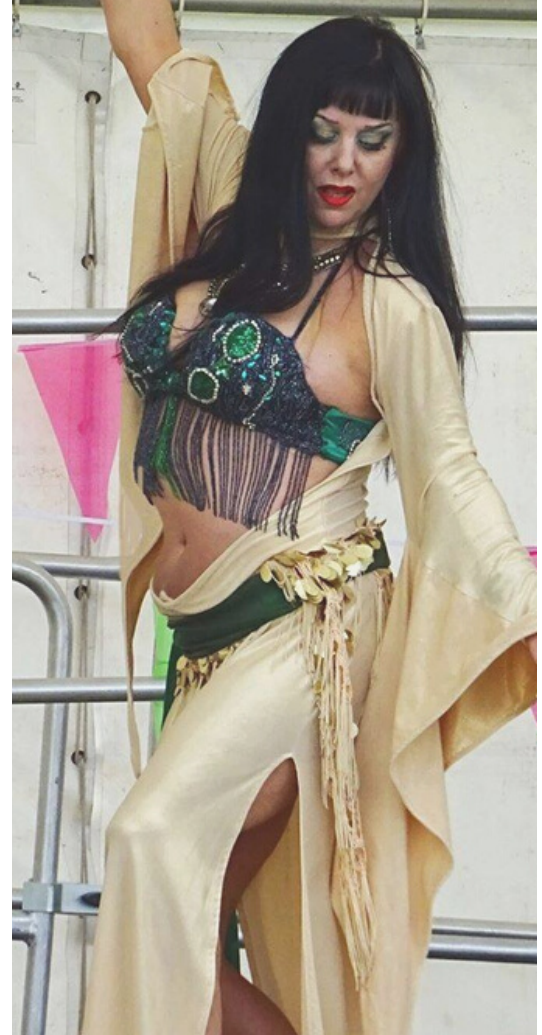
abdominal exercises. As a result of regular practice, tummy muscles are activated, stretched, and toned belly muscles for feminine abs.

4: Improved Body Language The body is the vehicle that stores emotional pain. When body language gives out victim signals, it can trigger abusers and predators. Much research suggests that the way we view our selves is affected by others perceptions of us. People respond to confident, assertive body language by non-verbally communicating the affirmation that the person they are interacting with has good self-esteem.

5: Sacred Dance Belly dance with its circles, spirals and figure-eight configurations

More information
about belly dance
lessons at:
www.ishtar.tv

"Dance is a metaphor for life. Through dance, we can learn to exceed what we think our body can do, yet know its limitations. Belly dance is great for all types, ages and types of people. It has many powerful benefits for mind and body"



describes life at its universal cataclysmic inception. People find that through these creative movements, they can express their unique individuality and personality. The dance frees the spirit and nourishes body and soul.

6: Healing Dance In the Middle East and other parts of the world, dance is practiced with the specific intention of healing all forms of dis-ease. Ceremonies that involve dance often cover a wide range of healing objectives.

7: A Birth Dance belly dance was/is also used to facilitate easy childbirth and recovery.

8: Burns Calories avoiding weight gain can become harder as we get older. Belly dance can burn over 400 calories per hour and it feels like fun!

9: Dancing Helps to Reduce the Risk of Osteoporosis Because the steps and torso moves put a healthy strain on the bones, it helps them to stay healthy and dense. This makes them less prone to osteoarthritis.

10: Beautiful Movement Other skills develop when we learn to dance, especially poise and

grace! A body always looks better if the person has excellent posture; this is a reflection of positive mental and emotional states. Have you noticed how confident people have good posture? Standing better makes the physique look trimmer, the individual look more confident and taller. With regular practice of Belly dance, this becomes the default method of standing.

11: Good for The MindBelly dance is meditative and requires the mind to engage with the body; this gives the dancer a break from thoughts and worries that can sometimes torment us. These effects are similar to the benefits of yoga or Tai Chi.

12: Belly dance is a Powerful De-stressing TechniqueStress can kill, so it is important to have a practice to deal with it. In Western culture; in particular, people are not encouraged to express their emotions freely. For some, expressing feelings through creative movement is more accessible than with words. This creates relaxation. Mind found that 83% of people exercise to reduce stress.

13: Builds FriendshipsBelly dancing tends to be a shared pursuit. Spending time with fri

ends can stimulate the mind and protect against mental decline. Being part of a group, team or community is one of the keys to a happy life. Emotional support and a sense of purpose support good mental health.

14: Exciting and uplifting Belly dance teaches about culture and history, that will expand vision and challenge established beliefs systems. Belly dance encourages the celebration of different traditions and lifestyles, as well as builds understanding and respect of other cultures. This dance is hypnotic and exciting, relaxing, and uplifting.

15: Dance Shows and Performances, Performance is fun! Dressing up in beautiful costumes is something many people enjoy! Performing together builds team spirit, forges friendships and boosts self-esteem.



The world after Coronavirus

Paula Ishtar

As this worldwide virus crisis hits, with the tragic number of cases rising fast we have come to the realisation that our world will never be the same again. The virus affects us all, in sometimes frightening ways, as it indiscriminately infects and is an invisible enemy.

The fact is, this is something all humans across the world are experiencing together, something unprecedented for our times. Everyone waking up this morning will have the same feeling of imbalance, of feeling like we are walking into the unknown.

These are indeed transformational

times, but this can be used as a catalyst for powerful social change. We have seen things that the government said was previously impossible happen with the stroke of a pen; the debt of the health service written off, all homeless people put up in hotels, governments putting medical data online for free so they can work together.

Though there have been some acts of selfishness as people hoarded food they didn't need, others have behaved selflessly for example, half a million people have signed up to volunteer for the NHS. Though we are apart, we are coming together. It's amazing that as a nation we came together organically to clap and cheer for all the workers that keep us safe and fed. And to see children putting up rainbows in their windows to cheer up their neighbours.

The challenge to our own well-being in

this time will make us reflect on the important things in life, our friends, family, health, taking joy in the simple things. Many people have used the opportunity to reconnect with older people over phone or video calls, while groups of friends have organised virtual clubbing or pub sessions. Spiritual groups are also meeting online to share spiritual practice, with online guided meditation and yoga.

More than ever so many people are behaving from a position of solidarity and mutual aid. Physically distancing ourselves prevents contagion, but it brings hope that we are not actually distancing, rather coming together as one community. Many of us are learning now that friends, family and neighbours are vital lifelines in this collective crisis. Everyone is affected in some way. We are learning about our interdependent nature and how humanity can coalesce in a positive way.



The effect on the environment has also been amazing. As factories close, cars stop driving and airplanes are grounded we have seen the world healing quickly from our climate damage. Some cities have seen a 50% drop in air pollution, clouds of smog have dissipated and the Lagoon in Venice is back to an azure blue. A real time experiment is unfolding on how a reduction in human activity can generate environmental healing. It's also shown how governments could actually work together to stop environmental devastation, by banning air flight, and showing our dependence on oil is not actually the centre of humanity's happiness.

With millions of people now stuck in isolation, many are using the opportunity to get creative and are adding new dimensions to their life. Social media users have shared details of their new hobbies, including reading, cooking and art, yoga, gardening and mediation.

This crisis will underscore the value of social justice, the importance of the environment and our need to keep these positive changes and community spirit going, when the crisis is over. We need to change our ways on a collective and on an individual level. These are unprecedented, fascinating and challenging times and I have hope that after the tragedy of the virus has passed, we will have a better starting point for making positive change.

Book review: *The Body Keeps the Score*, by Bessel Van der Kolk

At once both enlightening and disturbing, psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk's best-selling book 'The Body Keeps the Score' demonstrates the lifelong effects of trauma on both the mind and body.

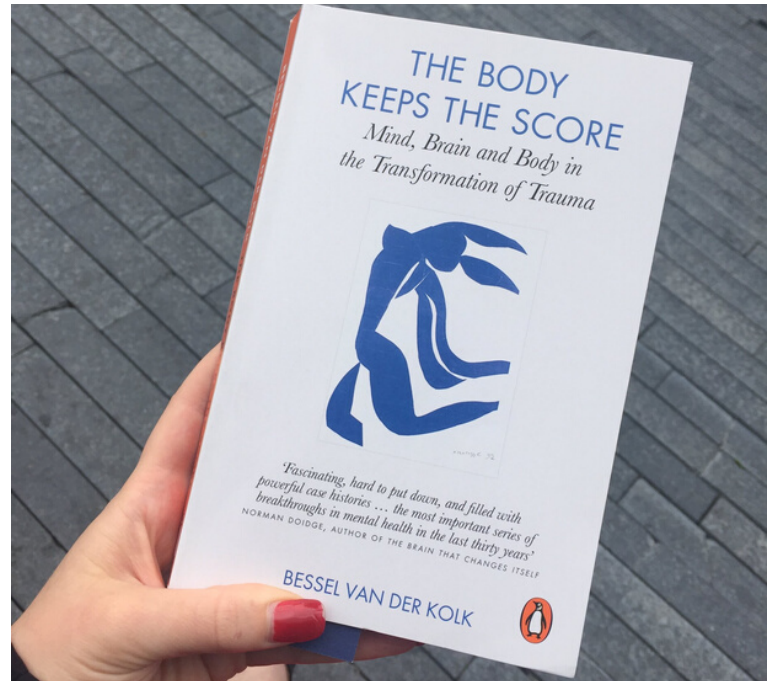
Reviewed by Tara Hudson

Van der Kolk uses his 30 years of clinical experience to show how the effects of trauma are one of the biggest public health crisis facing our society. Evidenced by medical data and case histories, he shows the wide-ranging and life-long effects trauma can have on our society and people. From depression to acts of violence, to changes in body chemistry that predisposes a person to auto-immune disease.

The book proposes a revolutionary approach to treating trauma. Using practices developed by dancers, actors and musicians, Van der Kolk treats his patients using physicality and movement. Treating psychological trauma through the body, not the mind. Van der Kolk says: "The single most important issue for traumatized people is to find a sense of safety in their own bodies. Unfortunately, most psychiatrists pay no attention whatsoever to sensate experiences."

He argues, using case studies and clinical experiments, that the 'body keeps the score' of trauma through visceral sensations. Demonstrating how people who are taught to tolerate and physically move beyond these sensations, can start to process past experiences, release themselves and start to heal.

This astute and sympathetic book reflects on the physical manifestations of trauma, from posture to body language, to 'gut feelings' which are often not registered by the traumatised person, thus, keeping them in a purgatory of suffering from past events. He says: "Because traumatized people often have trouble sensing what is going on in their bodies, they lack a nuanced response to frustration. They either react to stress by becoming "spaced out" or with excessive anger. Whatever their response, they often can't tell what is upsetting them. This failure to be in touch with their bodies contributes to their well-documented lack of self-



protection and high rates of revictimization and also to their remarkable difficulties feeling pleasure, sensuality, pleasure, sensuality, and having a sense of meaning.

"The book offers clear solutions to trauma, at both a societal level, through early years support for parents as well as a multitude of ways traumatised people can begin to heal. He talks through a number of options he uses to treat patients including yoga and dance alongside therapy. In the book he points out: "Trauma victims cannot recover until they become familiar with and befriend the sensations in their bodies. Being frightened means that you live in a body that is always on guard. Angry people live in angry bodies. The bodies of child-abuse victims are tense and defensive until they find a way to relax and feel safe. In order to change, people need to become aware of their sensations and the way that their bodies interact with the world around them. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past."

'The Body Keeps the Score' is a must-read for those interested in recovery, both survivors, families of survivors, clinicians and the general public. It is highly researched, and written in an easy to follow style. The accounts of trauma it offers, the effects, lessons learned and pathways to healing, both on a personal and societal level, make it one of the most powerful books of our time.

Trigger warning, this book contains case studies detailing abuse.



Sanity Survival Strategies for Somebody and Everybody

By: Elsa McShane

"Into the Forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul." ~John Muir

Speaking as 'somebody' with lived experience of mental health, I can't tell you how much I love that quote and how it resonates with my very being and my journey back from depression to wellness.

But do we really have to lose our minds in order to find our souls? I'll let you in on a little secret... I'm not prepared to lose mine again. I intend on keeping and enjoying both my mind and soul and so, with this in mind, I nurture them daily.

Experience has made me realise that it is all about striking the right balance, self respect and self care. I believe my body (body, mind and soul) is a temple and I'm going to revere and treat it as the divine entity it surely is, warts and all. I try to fit in these strategies to enable me to cope with daily life. I practise the art of Gratitude. Be grateful for your life, your family, your friends and your home. Loveenjoy and appreciate all those precious gifts.,

I use positive language. My favourite adjectives are wonderful, and kind. I use them daily chatting, writing and on social media. My life reflects these qualities as a consequence. Why not try it for yourselves?

Concentrate on breathing. I try to practise Mindfulness, Meditation and Yoga on a daily basis. Whenever I can I concentrate on my breath and do a few simple breathing exercises, it calms me, rests my mind and is a very simple way of acknowledging and accepting your own being and life force. I matter, you matter, we matter.

Exercise and use your body to its full potential. Challenge yourself. There are so many ways to exercise, you'll find one that you enjoy. Walking, running and dancing or join a Gym to name but a few options. I am learning to Belly dance. It's good for my soul as well as my body. I also enjoy walking and finding that 'forest.' Being outdoors means a double hit too because you can immerse yourself in Nature.

Eat well. Make sure you follow a sensible balanced diet. Try to buy organic whenever you can. Quit or cut down on sugar. Try to eat more vegetables and fruit. Why not have a go at growing your own food? You'll be amazed at what you can grow in the smallest of spaces, even a kitchen windowsill.

Ground yourself. Go barefoot when you can and when it is safe to do so. Feeling the Earth under your bare feet is good for the soul.

Try to spend some time with your loved ones. Be they family, friends or both. Nobody is too busy not to make the time to do this. I'm blessed to have a loving and supportive family unit. I make time to do things with them as a family group or individually. Likewise my friends. There really is no excuse not to keep in touch now that we live in the digital era.

On the flip side, make sure you make time for yourself. So you can enjoy the things you like and what you are passionate about. Even if it is just to get some time away to be on your own in the company of your very precious self. Solitude is a wonderful companion.



Learn a new skill or hobby. Self development is an ongoing and continuous process. Try to find something that enthuses you, ignites passion in your soul; or do something out of your comfort zone, that scares the living daylights out of you. You will learn to master your fear, if nothing else.

Be interested and curious in the world around you. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Never be frightened to offer your own opinion, as long as it is offered in a respectful way. Listen. Read. Discover. I'm reminded of a much loved teacher who always said: "Only boring people are ever bored." It's simple; be interested and you become interesting to others.

Be creative. Explore the world of the Arts. Make your own Art. Paint a picture, write a poem, sing a song, dance. Keep smiling. The old adage "Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and you cry alone" is an uncomfortable and unfortunate truth.

There are even some who will enjoy your sadness, sorrow and grief. Be mindful of where they are on their journey and whatever difficulties and challenges they are experiencing. While a good conclusion is an important ingredient for newspaper articles, the Try to rise above them, pray for them, forgive them, keep smiling and shine brightly.

These are some of my strategies, I hope you find them useful. No doubt, you have your own. I'd love to hear about them. I've made many friends on my recovery journey and I include the team at Earth Moves. Many of the workshops and events on offer at the Dream of Green Program have helped me in the past and I would recommend them to you. There is something for everybody and more importantly for somebody.



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We are adapting in the face of this global pandemic. Though we are apart, now more than ever we need to come together. Follow us on social media for updates, virtual gatherings and online ways to learn about horticulture, well being and creativity.



The Benefits of Mindfulness in Education

Paula Ishtar

"The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will." William James, Father of American Psychology.

Mindfulness helps you be more aware, trains your attention and makes you focus on what is actually happening rather than worrying about the past or what might happen in the future. Practicing mindfulness has been proven to give both mental and physical benefits such as decreasing anxiety, improving cognition and even increases people's satisfaction in themselves. It is such a crucial life skill, but is sadly missing from school curriculums across the UK.

It is now common for businesses such as law firms and big tech companies like Google to train their staff in this ancient practice. They have seen results as their workforce becomes more collaborative and it has even reduced implicit race and age bias! So why not start earlier and make it mandatory to teach in schools.

Mindfulness training in our education system could be a route to enhance children's emotional well-being and so impact the health and happiness of future society. The development and implementation of mindfulness-based interventions in schools could create

enhanced learning and boost self-esteem, in a cost-effective manner.

Some schools are starting to use mindfulness practices in childhood education, with results showing it encourages the development of self-regulation abilities, essential for academic accomplishment and emotional wellbeing. Some teachers are also being trained to use mindfulness to improve leadership and reduce stress. This is a positive step forward, but it still means not all children across the country are able to access these techniques.

If mindfulness was taught in all schools it would have a profoundly positive effect on society. Teaching a technique which initiates self-knowledge and compassion must be an overall positive move. Mindfulness has the potential to help create future leaders, artists, visionaries, scientists and teachers that have compassion, interconnectedness and better mental health.

It's great to see charities like the *Mindfulness in Schools Project* offering certified resources and training for teachers. It's also exciting to see that the government is taking this seriously, announcing last year that 370 schools in England would be conducting mindfulness lessons until 2021, in one of the biggest mental health trials ever done by the government. Hopefully once the benefits of this trial are realised it will be rolled out across the whole of the UK to benefit all children.

What mindfulness isn't:

- Clearing your mind: Is not about freedom from thinking, but rather freedom with thinking, so you can use your thoughts more skillfully
- Relaxing: It's not about chilling out, rather learning the skill of noticing what is going on in your mind and body, is it anger, happiness, discomfort? Once you notice these things you have the power to choose how you respond
- Praying: Contemplation and silence are important in faith and spirituality, but mindfulness is more about using the space to appreciate the moment and how cool it is to be human!

What mindfulness is:

- Stopping and noticing: Step back from the chatter and busyness of the mind and have a space for clear thinking to help make choices that support your wellbeing
- Training your awareness: Learn to direct your attention to the present, this means we can respond more skilfully to whatever life throws our way!
- Evidence based: From brain imaging scans to population studies, the benefits of mindfulness are scientifically proven. It is also endorsed by the National Health Service, GPs can refer adults to mindfulness courses to help treat depression.

Visit earthmoves.org for information about meditation courses. For some people they are free.





The Human Mind and the Environment

Paula Staunton



Many people get understandably frightened when they read figures concerning mass extinctions. It is difficult to accept that the demise of humanity and the planet is a real possibility.

In psychotherapy 'denial' is a reaction to trauma where it is ignored or suppressed. Unfortunately ignoring our problems and our trauma does not help heal problems and often creates illness and displaced negative behaviour. To heal we have to face the truth. Climate change denial is the same process acted en-masse.

The Extinction Rebellion movement has highlighted many important issues. Despite not emerging from the grassroots or representing all strands of society, they have created a discussion and raised awareness.

XR is a call to stop complacency, yet there is no call to change the system that is causing the problems. It is shocking to consider that the current global ecological catastrophe is debatably analogous in scale and scope to previous mass extinctions. Planetary destruction will not leave any humans immune from misery or death. What prompts this suicidal trajectory? What is the mental process behind decisions which are counterproductive to all life and happiness?

World capitalism creates a hierarchy where some people are perceived as having more value than others. Many traditions people perceive the world in holistic terms they regard the landscape

and ecosystems as having a spirit and an identity. Animistic cultures like this find Western disregard and commodification of nature difficult to understand.

Poet, artist, anarchist and mystic William Blake explains the differences of the perception of nature in people thus, 'The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way.' The tree and the world exist within the individual's mind as a product of the perceptual system. It is the minds of people in particular those living in advanced capitalist cultures that need to change to save our planet and ourselves.

Change is happening and is expressed in many grass roots and big business initiatives. Hopefully, change will come fast enough. World capitalism creates a hierarchy where some people are perceived as having more value than others. Man is at the top and nature is seen as a commodity to be exploited. The economy has created most of the environmental problems.

The economy is generally perceived as having a mystical entity or as a scientific construct. In reality, it is created by people who have agendas. Runaway capitalism has caused the environmental problems we see today. Economic markets are like gardens that must be tended. If the economy is unconstrained by social norms or ethics the process will fail. Many groups are

excluded from decisions that affect the world. Inclusion rather than exclusion will have a positive effect empowering people to have their say and including them in the process. Sadly, greed inspires many human decisions and sociopathic people are often given power positions, even though these people are bad for business, society and the environment.

Constructed norms and pseudo narratives explain the legitimacy of the current system and the reasons why these people end up as decision-makers and leaders. Childhood trauma is often in the background of these people, this can be expressed by sadistic and uncompassionate behaviour to other people and to nature.

To really stop environmental catastrophe we must have new economics and leaders who have done the work on themselves, whose drives include cooperation, environmental concerns, and a compassionate attitude. All we have to do to make this happen is collectively to choose it. We are conditioned to believe inequalities are legitimate and those who create the laws know best.

To stop environmental catastrophe we must have new economics to this, we must change the way we think. Sadly, it seems that those who want to be leaders of others are often motivated by self-interest or elitist ideas and make decisions from this position. Humans are frequently brutalized by societal or familial agencies and this is often worked out by sadistic behaviour to others and ultimately destructive environmental policies.

Environmental policy and social research tend to neglect the inner, experiential

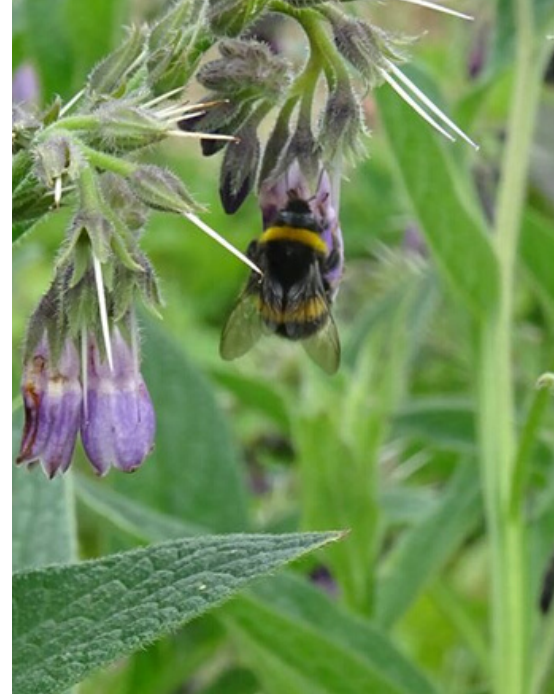
dimensions of human life. The social and physical environment is created by us, but also shapes us. Ecopsychologists view the relationship between humans and nature as deeply bonded and reciprocal.

Denial of this connection is a source of suffering for the environment and the human psyche. An integration of ecology and psychology is useful in both understanding the problems causing environmental catastrophe and beginning to address them. A system based on cognitive representations of a hierarchy of life forms, with humans at the top, forms semantic structures of ascending dominance within the human mind. Indigenous people have remained within the circle of perennial wisdom about human affairs and the human-earth relationship.

Many groups have rituals and practices which honour the land and the beings that populate it. All societies have begun as hunter-gatherers. These societies do not create excess commodities and presumably live in the present moment, feeling part of the natural order. These systems are not based on exploitative systems such as slavery, feudalism or capitalism.

People who live close to the earth have a very different, more integrated, intimate and respectful relationship to the environment, which includes a sense of sacredness for the surroundings. It is possible to hold these ideas and have environmental sensitivity and live with the conveniences of modern clean technology.

However, the mindless consumption of 'shinola' needs to stop. Capitalism needs consumption to function and indoctrination



is used to encourage the purchase of gadgets and fripperies which end up in landfill and don't make people genuinely happy. Deep ecology often posits that the world would be better off without humans. This notion has parallels to some ecofeminist orientated thought.

This holds that all aspects of nature have intrinsic value apart from and outside their worth as commodities and resources. Cultivating an ecological consciousness is a process of education; learning how to be more receptive, to perceive the world holistically. It is characterized by a vision of non-exploitive technology, working co-operatively for all life's ecosystems.

Environmental policy and social research tend to neglect the inner, experiential dimensions of human life. The social and physical environment is created by us, but also shapes us. Ecopsychologists view the relationship between humans and nature as deeply bonded and reciprocal.



Denial of this connection is a source of suffering for the environment and the human psyche. An integration of ecology and psychology is useful in both understanding the problems causing environmental catastrophe and beginning to address them. Vandana Shiva argues that; 'A top-down model for sustainability is not workable.'

She suggests a bottom-up earth democracy based on living communities is the best way to grow food and manage economies. She stresses that recognising the potential for economic transformation requires a paradigm shift. She suggests an economy of living energies, democracies and economies. She believes that we all have the capacity to participate in positive change as we are all channels of energetic creative flow. Shiva stresses that recognising the potential for economic transformation requires a paradigm shift. She suggests an economy of living energies, democracies and economies. She believes that we all have the capacity to participate in positive change as we are all channels of energetic creative flow.

A considerable body of psychological research looks at the mental health benefits of immersion in the natural world. Before industrialisation, most people spent a lot of time outdoors. Many modern Western people no longer engage with the natural environment and many studies show how this disconnection causes problems for the

mental and physical health of the individual. A lack of connection to nature also means it is easy to hurt and exploit her.

We are not set in stone and neither are our social and economic systems. People argue that human nature is naturally aggressive and exploitative. What is human nature? It is a mix of cultural, social and genetic influences. A process called epigenetics shows that our gene expression is mutable, our psychological programming comes from ideological apparatus generated by the system.

We can and must change. Some people do not know how to connect to nature and so are disconnected from the informative and healing aspects. A considerable body of psychological research looks at the mental health benefits of immersion in the natural world. Many Western people no longer engage with the natural environment and many studies show how this disconnection causes problems for the mental and physical health of the individual.

A lack of connection to nature also means it is easy to hurt and exploit her. Many people are currently disconnected from the natural world, more connection would create a change of consciousness in some people and prompt conservation and a more ecological mindset. Most of the research into nature immersion is focused on relaxation and restorative benefits, as well as increased focus.



A valuable subset of this research identifies transpersonal features of the healing qualities of nature. 'Wild Therapy', by Nick Totton, talks of the Wild Mind as a state of awareness which early humans experienced and is possible to find through 'Ecotherapy.'

In this mode, humans will not want or are prepared, to damage the world for our own short-term comfort and convenience. People are encouraged to find happiness through consuming and self-aggrandising on social media. Many studies show that these activities do not make people happy. Social media has been proven to have a negative effect on mental health. Being in a community with shared aims and face to face contact improves mental health. We are taught that greed and competitiveness have created all the developments in culture and technology, this is not true.

Darwinian ideas of the survival of the fittest are not the whole story of people or nature. Our ability to cooperate has created societies and is what enables us to work together. Nurturing instincts are what has kept our species alive and thriving. Current research reveals more and more how the plant world functions cooperatively, indeed nature works through reciprocity, recycles everything and wastes nothing. Somehow humans have become disconcerted from this process. Our work is to find our way back.



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The Magic and Science of Drum Healing

by Krista Schaefer



Everything has rhythm! The Earth is rhythmical in its movement; the moon has rhythm, waxing and waning which affects the ebb and flow of the tidal rhythms. We all have our own rhythm too. Our atoms and molecules are dancing around to their own beat, keeping the rhythm for the life force of the body. Our hearts are beating in rhythm, our lungs are inhaling and exhaling in rhythm, we walk in rhythm, talk, sing, eat in rhythm. So without rhythm we could not exist!

For thousands of years people have been drumming, dancing, singing and using ritual to heal and balance. Drumming with other people quells loneliness. Drum circles are a community and every person is needed and every person plays their own part in the whole. As well as ancient memories, drumming has been scientifically proven to help us heal:

- Drumming can induce a natural high by increasing Alpha brain waves. When the brain changes from Beta waves (concentration) to Alpha waves, it brings on a calm and relaxed feeling which boosts the immune system by releasing endorphins. This endorphin release can help people who suffer from mental illness such as depression and anxiety. The same Alpha activity is associated with meditation and other integrative modes of consciousness.
- Drumming has also been shown to activate the killer T cells in our immune system, which supports the body's power to fight viruses and disease.
- Drumming is a powerful tool that can help retrain the brains of people who have some level of damage or impairment such as Attention Deficit Disorder, or after a stroke as well as those who have neurological diseases such as Parkinson's.
- Drumming also helps us balance the two hemispheres of the brain: the logical left and the creative right, balancing our mind and leaving us in a clearer state to deal with our emotions and our environment.

Because our behaviour is improved, our minds are calmer allowing intuitive information to emerge more easily.

Research has also shown that it is not just the music itself that helps us, rather the active performance, similar to a 'runner's high' after jogging. Ancient shamans utilised this, using the change of consciousness that drumming initiates in their healing practices. When we are drumming we are truly in the present moment. We cannot be caught up in the past or worrying about the future, in fact we do not think about anything but the beat and rhythm which makes us feel good!

Many of us yearn to be healed by natural techniques drumming offers us, helping us connect to a more primal self. Communal drumming also offers us the chance of a safe level of connectedness. A drum is more than a mere object. It becomes alive when the spirit of the drum is fed by the drummer and the power is released. Why not start now? Grab a drum, give it a go and feel healed!





Herb of the season

Mugwort - a Multidimensional herb

There are many varieties of Mugwort, with 400 species across the world. Wild Mugwort or *Artemisia vulgaris*, is found growing across the UK, and has been used by people in Britain since the Iron Age.

The plant has many varied uses from flavoring beer to disinfecting the air, and all parts of the plant have some use. Because of its importance it has many folk names such as sagebrush, Blacksage, St.John's plant, witches herb, Felon herb and Sailor's Tobacco.

It is also sometimes known as the woman's herb for its ability to bring on or regulate a period, and its name *Artemisia* coming from the Greek Goddess Artemis who is associated with the moon.

Mugwort has been a staple for herbalists over the centuries because it helps to heal many conditions and is still used today in Chinese medicine and by folk medicine practices in Europe. Mugwort can be burned as incense, smoked or taken as a tea or tincture and used to flavour food.

Long associated with protection and warding off evil, it purportedly has supernatural qualities. In some magical schools it is associated with divination. The potent chemical present in the plant's essential oil, thujone, is believed to generate its psychedelic effects. It is an ingredient in absinthe and is also used to stimulate vivid dreams. Thujone has a powerful effect on the body. In isolation thujone oil can be toxic, even fatal if sufficient quantities are ingested. However plants containing thujone are generally safe in

their natural form, for non-pregnant healthy adults. It is not recommended to eat large quantities of the fresh or dried herb every day over a long period of time. However, a few cups of tea per week, or some fresh leaves added to food should be safe for most individuals.

Identification

Artemisia can manifest as both short and tall plants. Mugwort has a long (around three feet) central stem. It has purplish leaves that are dark green on the upper surface and covered with soft velvety hairs. The leaves are feathery with acutely separated pinnate leaves. The delicate flowers are small and have reddish or pale yellow hue. They bloom from July to October.

Earth Moves are currently growing common Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*); from this we create our own organically grown tea and smudge sticks. If you come along to one of our events we can help you identify it.

Cultivation

It is possible to purchase seeds and grow Mugwort. You can also take cuttings from those you find in the wild. Mugwort may be growing in your area in abundance, if so, you can pull up a couple of roots and plant them in your garden.

Artemisia vulgaris grows in uncultivated soils, and along waysides and waste lands. Mugwort does very well in pots. The plant thrives in a sunny location but will also grow in a shaded position. It likes a damp, well-drained soil, although dry soils can also produce healthy growth. The plant can survive a wide soil pH range from 4.8 to 8.2. This plant likes to spread when it is in ideal conditions. Here it can become large and robust, and can grow up to about 2 meters tall. It spreads through the roots.

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Harvesting

Cut the top 1/3 of the plant when Mugwort is in flower. The plant should be hung upside down to dry. It can also be chopped into small pieces and spread onto newspaper or on mesh sheets and put in a dry dark area. The plant should be stored away from sunlight.

Uses

- Dreaming: Many users report how the tea seems to initiate vivid and lucid dreaming. Mugwort is also said to open the third eye and enhance precognition and energetic sensitivity. It improves sleep in most people.
- Cleansing your house: Mugwort in a smudge stick can be used to purify the air in your home.
- Medicinal: As a tonic to boost energy, treating stomach conditions like diarrhoea and weak digestion, a sedative and sleeping aid, stabilize heavy and induce regular menstruation, relieve itchiness and burns, ridding the body of worms and parasites.
- Culinary: Flavoring beer without the need for hops, used soups, stews and salads in the same way you would dill or parsley.
- Natural Insecticide: You can grow Mugwort as a companion plant to dissuade aphids and other plant predator insects in the garden. Consider keeping in a pot as this plant can be a vigorous grower and may overwhelm other plants. It grows very well in containers, and can easily attain 2 feet in height.

Make a Mugwort smudge stick

Take off the smaller branches about hand length in size and just over two fingers in width. Lay them down with the flowers at the top and the cut ends at the bottom in a long bunch. For the central part of the smudge stick take some cotton string and wind several times up and down. Make a knot to secure the string in place. Then, continue wrapping the branches together several times around this, and secure it with a knot. Now let the smudge dry—drying will take some time and will depend on conditions.

To Use a Mugwort Smudge, holding the end with the exposed stems, light the end with the flowers. Hold the smudge over an ashtray or shell to collect the ashes, and walk around the room, letting the smoke from the mugwort bring cleansing, healing and uplifting energy. You can reuse the smudge.

Make Mugwort tea

Mugwort's nerve-soothing and health enhancing properties can be brewed into a tea. Place about 1 ounce of dried Mugwort in a teapot with 4 cups of boiling water and let steep, straining after 5-10 minutes.

Reduce/increase quantities for this recipe accordingly. Add honey if you like. We like to mix with Chamomile and occasionally Valerian for a nice deep sleep, full of dreams.

Make Mugwort tincture

Cut off the top 1/3 of flowering Mugwort. The flowers, stems and leaves should be chopped into pieces. The desiccated plant should be slightly packed in a mason jar, which is then filled with an alcohol (I use Brandy). The lid is screwed on and the mixture left to infuse for 6 weeks in a cool, dark place. The mixture should then be strained and preferably stored in coloured glass bottles. The standard dosage is 5-20 drops.

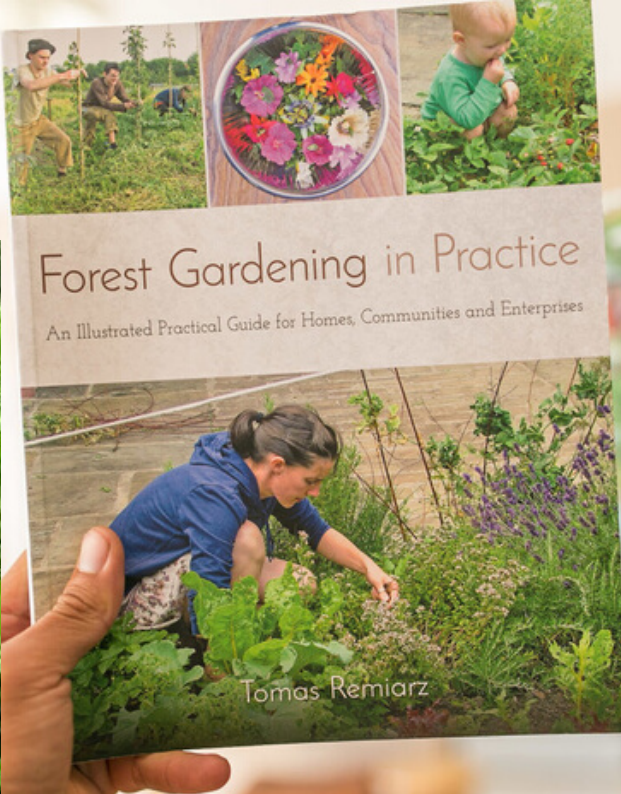
Use with caution

Large amounts and prolonged use of Mugwort can cause nervous and liver damage. While some midwives might use Mugwort to help induce labour, because of its stimulating effect on the uterus, Mugwort is not suitable for pregnant women and should also be avoided by lactating women. Mugwort can trigger hay fever symptoms in those predisposed. Contact dermatitis has also been reported in rare cases.

This content is primarily for entertainment and information. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of a qualified health care worker with any questions you may have concerning any medical condition.



by
Paula Ishtar



Forest Gardening in Practice: An Illustrated Practical Guide for Homes, Communities and Enterprises Paperback – Illustrated, 3 Apr 2017

Forest Gardening In Practice is a book that can assist and inform community groups, gardeners, smallholders and professional horticulturists alike. Helping to introduce people to the principles of forest gardens and how they can be used to increase biodiversity and create a sustainable ecosystem.

The book looks at permaculture design principles, focusing on how ecology, ethics, horticulture and mutual aid come together. It provides excellent case studies of forest gardens in different types of habitats from large to small scale.

Unpretentious and practical guidance is given on how to set up forest gardens of all sizes and types. The material is presented beautifully with digestible chunks of information supported by illustrations.

There is lots of well researched and helpful direction regarding the creation of a forest garden in a community location and the development of community projects.

A forest garden creates a chance for people to engage with nature, bringing people together in a common goal

to create a living, edible and sustainable ecosystem. The process and construction of these spaces is both a valuable and socially cohesive activity and often involves people working together cooperatively. The book suggests how people can work with the natural progressions that unfolds in nature. Of particular interest is an equation of wellbeing, which involves the interaction and cooperation of flora, fauna, people and ecosystems.

This book is very accessible and no former knowledge of ecological theory is needed. Practical advice and examples open up a discussion aimed at everyone, from home gardeners to permaculture enthusiasts as well as urban communities.



CHEF

The accidental vegan: recipes from a Sicilian Grandmother

By Mark Hudson

In the mountains of western Sicily in the late 1940s my grandparents, my nonno e nonna grew up on a diet that was almost entirely plant based. Their families were not what one would describe today as 'eco-warriors' and were certainly not proto-hippies – my illiterate great-grandparents' worldview was informed by an often uneasy marriage of the folk Catholicism of the mezzogiorno and

the modernist preachers of the Italian Communist Party.

The Catholic Church and the Communist Party may have agreed on little in 1940s Italy, but neither were renowned advocates of vegetarianism. My ancestors' largely vegan diet was not born of choice but necessity – they were poor, grindingly poor (my grandfather, Salvatore often jokes that he realised he had married up' 'when he discovered that his



wife's family could afford more than two plates – the children in his family shared one whilst his parents ate off the other).

In post-war western Sicily, meat was a regular luxury afforded only to the small number of families that made up the landowning classes. Indeed, the only time my grandparents ate small amounts of meat was during special occasions such as festa.

In rural western Sicily in the 1940s, most men worked as sharecroppers on the land of wealthy elites, they were required to give up much of their crop as rent but the fertile soil of Sicily meant that the harvest of fruit, vegetables, wheat for pasta and olives for oil was plentiful. With these ingredients, women worked tirelessly to produce daily feasts for their families. In the countryside at least, being poor did not preclude eating well. As children my grandparents feasted on homemade pasta paired with the sweet sauce of local tomatoes, barbecued artichokes dressed in fresh mint and olives christened in Sicily's volcanic soil.

In the 1950s, Italy's governing Christian Democrat Party hoping to contain communism responded to growing demands to more equitably divide agricultural land in the south of Italy and undertook an extensive programme of economic development in the country's poorest regions. By the end of the decade, meat and dairy had become more commonplace in the diets of Sicilians whilst support for the Communist Party on the island went into terminal decline.

However, it was only when my grandparents immigrated with my one-year old mother to take up well-paid factory jobs in 1960s England that meat became a regular feature on their kitchen table. Indicative of this new found prosperity, my mother recalls nonna preparing steak almost three times a week in the 1970s – it was of course my grandmother, as is universal in Sicilian immigrant households who did all the cooking.

In this new world the main course, secondo piatto became synonymous with meat or fish, ironically this was particularly true when hosting other immigrants from Sicily's impoverished countryside – to not serve carne o pesce to a guest would bring dishonour and shame.

Thankfully, my grandmother's beautiful vegetable peasant dishes were not forgotten but simply reinterpreted. Her triple cooked aubergine, fried zucchini flowers and chickpea pasta were transformed from being the stars of the table into side dishes, starters and mid-week suppers, ensuring that the recipes were passed down to her children and grandchildren (my grandmother, Francesca sadly passed away in 2002).

Like my grandparents we again find ourselves in a new world – a lack of affordable meat is no longer a problem facing most of us in the West. An abundance of cheap, fried foods is threatening our society's health particularly its poorest members who are too often forced into purchasing economical but unhealthy foods to ensure there is enough money left at the end of the month to pay their bills. Perhaps the biggest threat the world faces today is climate change, in which the mass consumption of meat plays no small part.

Like many people, I am trying to reduce my consumption of meat in the hope of looking after my body and the planet a little better. In the process I have rediscovered my grandmother's old recipes and have returned the humble vegetable dish to its rightful place as the star of my family's table.



Nonna ChiChi



A complete Sicilian meal includes an antipasta (a light starter before the first course), a primo piatto (the first course - normally a pasta, rice dish or soup) and secondo piatto (the main course, which today in Sicily is typically fish or meat but in 1940s west Sicily would have been a meze of salads and vegetables). The meal would traditionally end with fruit, cakes and coffee.

Each of the below recipes is a delicious, cheap weekday meal in its own right, but if you have guests why not impress them by cooking all three courses followed by fruit, espresso and vegan ice cream.

Antipasta: caponata (sweet and sour aubergine) Serves 4

Ingredients:

2 aubergines

1 white onion

4 celery stalks

150g pitted green olives

100g capers 1 tin of high quality chopped tomatoes

125ml white wine vinegar

1 heaped tablespoon of sugar

Salt

Extra virgin olive oil

Recipe:

Wash the aubergines, remove the green stems and cut into 2cm cubes. Fry the cubes in olive oil until golden brown and sprinkle with salt to taste. Drain the aubergine in paper towels to remove the oil.

Slice your celery stalks and boil them in water for one minute, drain and put to one side.

Finely slice your onion and fry in oil until golden, add the celery and cook for another 60 seconds, then add the olives, capers, tin of tomato, vinegar and sugar. Simmer for five minutes, add the aubergines and simmer for another ten minutes.

Add more salt to taste if necessary. Once the sauce has cooled, cover and put in the fridge for at least 24 hours before serving cold or at room temperature with crusty Italian style bread.

My grandmother's vegan recipes.

Below you will find
three easy,
authentic vegan
sicilian recipes
inspired by cucina
della nonna.

Mark (centre) at local farmers cooperative in his family's town Bivona, Sicily



Primo piatto: pasta e lenticchie (pasta with lentils) Serves 4

Ingredients:

500g penne pasta

1 white onion

2 carrots

2 stalks of celery

4 cloves of garlic

2 tins of tomato

500g of brown lentils

Chilli (to taste)

4 sprigs of rosemary

Handful of fresh parsley

Olive oil

Salt & Black pepper (to taste)

Recipe: Wash and rinse lentils before leaving to soak overnight. Remove the skin from the onion, peel the carrots and remove the heads from the celery before adding to the blender. Blend finely but without turning the mixture into a mush.

Finely slice the garlic and chilli and put to one side. On a medium-high heat fry the onion, carrots and celery in olive oil until golden brown in a large pot. Turn down to a medium heat and add the garlic and chilli. Fry for an additional 3-5 minutes

.Add the tomatoes, two cups of water, salt and rosemary. Drain the lentils and add to the mixture. Stir well then cover the pot. Cook the lentils on a low heat for 1 hour until creamy, adding more liquid when necessary.

Once the lentils are ready, first removing the rosemary stalks add a third of the mixture to the blender, and blend until

completely smooth, adding the mixture back into the pot. This will give the sauce a creamy texture.

Add the pasta directly to the pot along with a cup of boiling water. Cook over a medium heat and frequently stir, add water from the kettle until the pasta is cooked al-dente, but the sauce is still dense not water like a soup (traditionally pasta was cooked in this way when you couldn't afford cheese, as the starch cooks into the sauce to give a naturally creamy flavour).

Serve with a garnish of black pepper, chopped parsley and a drizzle of olive oil

Secondo piatto: contorni e insalata (salad meze) Serves 4

Ingredients: For the courgette salad –

4 courgettes

Chilli (to taste)

2 cloves of garlic

Handful of fresh mint

1 tablespoon of lemon juice

2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil

Salt & Black pepper (to taste)

For the potato salad – 750g baby potatoes

2 garlic cloves

2/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

1/2 cup white wine vinegar

Handful of fresh parsley

Salt & Black pepper (to taste)

For the cucumber salad –

1 large cucumber

2 garlic cloves

1 tablespoon dried oregano

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
Salt & Black pepper (to taste)

For the tomato salad –

6 vine tomatoes

2 garlic cloves

Handful of fresh basil

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

Salt & Black pepper (to taste)

Recipe: For the courgette salad – Slice the courgettes finely and fry for two minutes on each side until golden brown, plate then sprinkle with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Slice the chilli and garlic finely and sprinkle on plate. Tear over a handful of fresh mint and drizzle with the olive oil and lemon.

For the potato salad – Peel the potatoes and boil for 15 minutes. Drain and slice in two. Wash and finely chop the parsley. Peel and finely slice garlic. In a salad bowl mix together the garlic, olive oil, vinegar, parsley, salt, pepper and potatoes. Cover and put in the fridge overnight.

For the cucumber salad – Wash and slice the cucumber. Peel and finely slice garlic. In a salad bowl mix together the garlic, olive oil, vinegar, oregano, salt, pepper and cucumber.

For the tomato salad – Wash and slice each tomato in two. Peel and finely slice garlic and basil. In a salad bowl mix together the garlic, olive oil, vinegar, basil, salt, pepper and tomatoes. Serve the meze with crusty Italian style bread.



Growing is Good for Your Mental Health

Peter Rix



From kitchen window sills to balcony boxes, you don't need much space to start growing your own herbs, veg or fruit. And as well as being tasty and good for your body, fresh food also helps improve your mental health.

For thousands of years humans have been farming. The ancient ritual of planting seeds is calming and relaxing, and instead of worrying about the stresses of life you can immerse yourself in the tasks at hand, be it potting, planting or pruning.

If you are a complete beginner at gardening there is no need to worry, why not try your hand at growing cress to get yourself started. This is also a great activity for getting children into gardening. Here are the steps:

- Get some cress seeds
- Use a shallow tray, you can recycle the plastic trays that things like mushrooms come in from the supermarket
- Line the tray with kitchen towel, wet the towel well, but don't have the tray swimming in water
- Sprinkle the seeds over the surface of the towel
- Place the tray on a window sill
- In 24 hours if you're lucky the seeds will have germinated
- 5-7 days later the cress will be about 2 inches high, this means it's ready to harvest
- Clip the stalks from the base and use in a sandwich or as a nice garnish to finish off a dish

Here are 5 top reasons why growing things at home is good for your mental health:

Taking responsibility

When we are growing things, we have to take responsibility, making sure the plants have enough water and sunlight. Focusing your energy on taking care of something can relieve anxiety and in turn give you a sense of achievement and worth it once you harvest or see the results in a beautiful flower.

Puts you in charge

Sometimes life can go too fast and seem like it's spiralling out of control. With gardening you are in charge, you decide what seeds to plant next, how to space things out in the pot, when other things in life are not going to plan, gardening gives you ownership and order.

Fresh food is good for you

Adding more fruit and veg to your diet boosts your mood and emotional wellbeing as much as landing a new job. Research has found people reported as much as the feeling of landing a new job., more purposeful and less anxious when they ate more fresh fruit and veg.

A plant won't judge you

You don't need to be anxious or paranoid when you are hanging out with plants, they won't judge you or mind, if your hair is greasy! Caring and nurturing plants can be done by all. By keeping the plants healthy you too can keep yourself healthy, calm and improve your self esteem.

Live in the now

When you think about the past too much this can be bad for your mental health. Though traumatic things may have happened in the past, you can use plants to help you live in the now and see that you are safe in the present from these past events. As seasons change and plants grow in their cycles we can feel more connected to the present. We can get excited about our seeds budding or harvesting and enjoying our veggies, letting our senses enjoy the present we are living in through the simple and ancient joy of seeing what we planted grow.



Grow your own safe space and find your power plant

It's important that we have an internal retreat, this can be useful when we are practicing mindfulness and trying to calm ourselves in periods of mental unrest. So why not make this space our own special garden in our mind, where the sun shines and healing plants offer their cures.

In this activity you are invited to imagine and sketch out a beautiful garden. Follow the instructions which will help you grow your own internal space of safety and relaxation.

Make sure you are relaxed and sitting comfortably without distractions. Take a blank piece of paper and some pencils or pens in front of you. Relax your shoulders away from your ears. Take four deep and slow breaths in and out, making sure to keep your tongue on the roof of your mouth.

First imagine the sunshine on your skin, what time of year is it in your garden? Is it bright summer sunshine or a brisk spring morning sunshine chasing away the frost? What can you smell in the garden, freshly mown grass? The sweet smell of wild flowers? Can you hear anything? Is there a serene silence, or are there blackbirds singing? on the roof of your mouth.

Now imagine yourself sitting in the centre of your garden, feel the boundaries of it around you, reach your mind out to the edges of it, what is there, hedgerows teeming with wildlife? Trees? Or is this a secret garden with ivy covered brick walls to keep you safe? Now where are you sitting, are you on a soft lawn, a comfy set of pillows or a laid back wicker chair?

Pick up your pencils, now start to sketch out or free draw shapes and colours, start with where you would sit in the centre of the garden. Use your mind to emanate out from this point going clockwise as you start to turn around in your mind and imagine all the beautiful features that exist there.

Can you hear water bubbling, is there a spring or a fountain? As you move around what beautiful colours and flowers can you see? Are there some small seedlings that will bear fruit later on? Are there some deep rooted trees providing shade and protection? What medicinal plants can you spot offering cures? What edible things exist here to nourish you? If you were to reach out your hand what would you feel, soft petals, grass tickling your hand? Once you have imagined your garden, go through each of the five senses; taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing and see how these are prompted by what's present in your garden.

Remember in all gardens and minds, hard work is needed to pull up weeds like negative self belief and cultivate a beautiful and calm place. Practice this activity as much as you need to.

Uncover your power plant

Plants offer so much to us from medicine to food, and since the beginning of time have been a key part of human ritual. They have developed significance and myth as a way for us to collectively remember their powers, dangers and beauty. But can they also act as a way to guide us and provide insight?

This activity invites you to clear your mind, relax and formulate a question in your head. It could be something like... 'Why are me and my son arguing?'..... 'Is this situation at work going to change?' - After you have your question, relax and take some deep breaths, then look at the cards, the image that draws your eye straight away has a message for you, turn the page to see what it is....





LAVENDER

A strong and distinctive flower and scent, the earliest use of lavender was in Egypt during mummification. Ancient cultures saw it as helping to purify the body and mind. Is there something you need to cleanse? Lavender can also help with sleep, maybe you should sleep on any big decisions putting lavender on your pillow, with an important message coming in your dreams.



MINT

Cooling and refreshing, you need to keep calm about something that is upsetting and irritating you. Imagine transforming this fear, hatred and pain into a beautifully fragrant mint plant. Use mint for a refreshing drink, swallowing any pain you may have felt. Imagine being with friends, sharing that cool, calm and collected self with your nearest and dearest.



SAGE

This plant has protective properties, someone's negative energy, especially from your past is interfering with healing and dealing with issues affecting you in the present. Sage is here to shield you from that negative energy, giving you space to work and reflect on things. Sage can also help you conjure masculine energies that you might need to use in your life right now to help you move forward with a project.



FOXGLOVE

Beautiful and potentially deadly, but when used well can support ailments of the heart. It is used today in prescription drugs to treat heart failure. Maybe a relationship is becoming too much? Is there something you need to sort out? Find a way to communicate better, maybe take some well deserved me time.



ROSEMARY

Long associated with improving memory, in ancient Greece scholars wore it on their head to improve recall in exams! If you are taking a test, why not carry a sprig with you? Also use this to recall happy memories of your past and help these influence your present. Rosemary grown by the front door means a woman rules the roost, it's time to allow feminine energy to rule your home life.



MANDRAKE

A powerful plant that can be used for good or bad. Poisonous berries and the association with death may mean you need to shed a negative aspect, and look at your own part in problems and make a change in yourself. Mandrake is also associated with fertility, in the Bible it is associated with Racheal conceiving a child. Maybe once you have shed an old sense of yourself a new positive one will be reborn.



POPPY

Long associated with pain relief, anything uncomfortable you are going through now will soon be past. In ancient Greece it was associated with Hypnos the god of sleep, who brings prophetic dreams and soothes pain of emotional agony. Picture a poppy as you fall asleep and see what your dreams reveal.



ANGELICA

The flower of Archangel Michael, long associated to ward off plague and as an antidote to poison. Make sure to reach out to your friends and check they are okay. This plant is also associated with the defence of women, maybe a friend needs your help? Use your spare time to support local community work and help a cause close to your heart.



MUGWORT

Used to detox and get rid of parasites and worms in the body! Is there something you are not seeing about a particular person? It might be time for an honest appraisal of a relationship. Also be careful of dependencies on things like alcohol and sweets, it might be time for a self detox focusing on healthy eating that'll make you feel better in the long run.

Air, Earth, Water, Fire and the Wise Ones

By Rowena Swanson

Mother Earth was angry. She had a broken heart. Man was destroying her.

Air pollution was getting worse in the cities and towns. Earth was fed up of being dumped on and cracks were appearing on her surface and there were earthquakes.

Water was tired of being polluted and rain fell down causing flooding as the seas rose. Fire could stand it no longer, her gentle flame turned to a furious furnace causing wildfires.

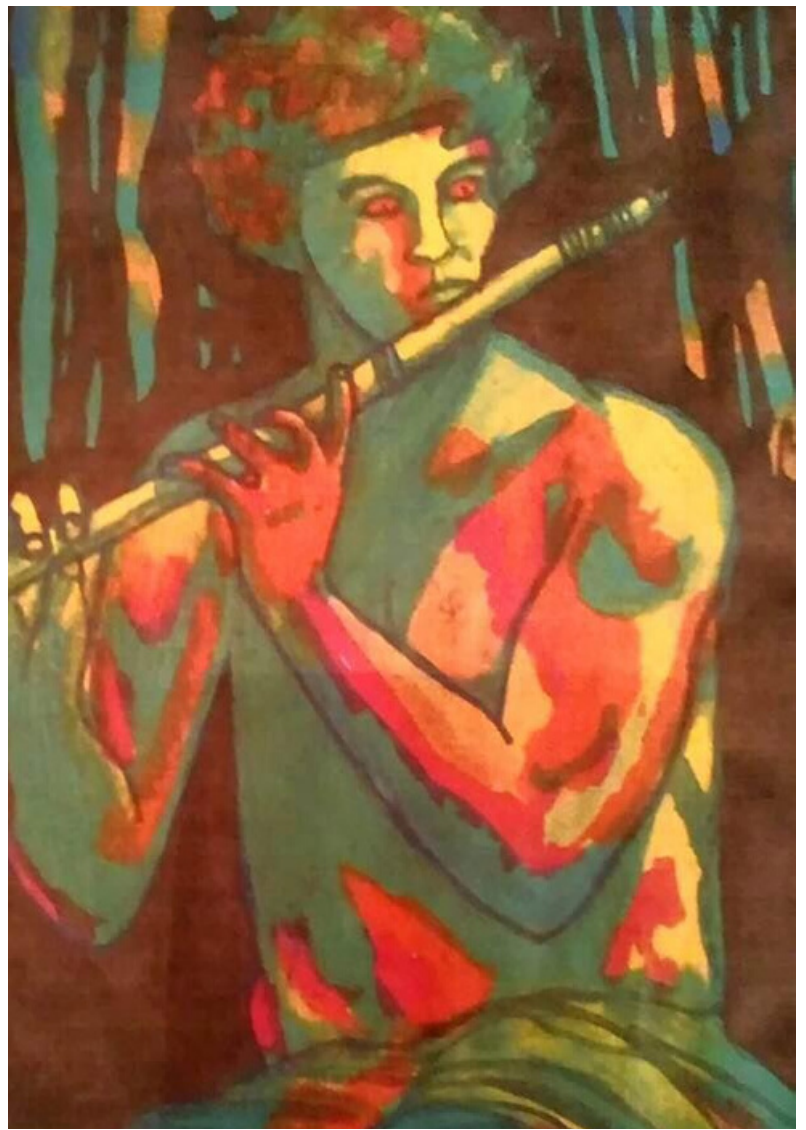
Air, earth, fire and water were so angry they all got together to cause mayhem.

But there were a few people who wanted to change the planet for the better. They were known as the wise ones.

They would look after the earth and respect her.

All this must stop, said the wise ones. We must come together to save the earth. We must convince the others to take care of their rubbish and waste. To recycle and think about their carbon footprint. We must stop global warming and get people to mend their ways.

One man stood up- he was a shaman, a healer and a wise one. "I will tell air to stop blowing on fire if man changes his ways. I will tell water to put out the fire and fire to stop burning the earth." He stood on a mountain and yelled at the top of his voice. "All will be well. The wise ones will come together. Air, earth water fire calm your ways and be peaceful."



Picture: Vanessa Staunton

Man took notice of mother earth's message and never before had there been an insurgence of wise ones. They promised to protect the earth.

Air calmed down and took a deep breath.
Earth was grounded and stayed firm.
Water was calm and still.
Fires fury turned from rage to a flicker.



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