

contributed to his life, he's always been aware of its broader impact on the world. "Planet Earth is a musical world," he said. "Whales, birds, frogs sing. Insects. Yeah, they sing. And every culture of humanity has some music. It was always a collective way for the community to bring people together. And if you weren't making the music, you were sharing the experience, clapping, singing, dancing, or participating just by being there."

Steve and Pam share a passion for bringing people together through their craft. For Steve, it's rhythm and swing and improvisation. For Pam, it's the art of



Pam and Steve vacationing on top of a volcano after Steve's gig at the Maui Jazz Festival

preparing food - the flavors and textures, and the opportunity to provide a catalyst for gathering and conversing. "It's a special thing to get to know each other eating and sharing and listening to music," she said. "It's a very important part of humanity. And it doesn't matter who you are, or what your profession is. In the end, it's about the person and what you give to the world, and to each other. Because we're here for a reason. And everybody has something to offer." ■

Do you know a neighbor who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at cweiner@bestversionmedia.com.

HEALTH

Winter Wellness: Centering the Art of Rest

CONTRIBUTED BY LESLIE KEOUGH

WITH THE ENERGETIC FLURRY of the holidays behind us and a string of cold dark weeks ahead, it's helpful to have a winter wellness plan in place to keep spirits buoyed and bodies healthy. Since local, national, and global circumstances over the last two years have depleted our collective adrenals (in turn upsetting our parasympathetic nervous system responsible for rest and digest functions), it's more vital than ever to manage stress. Humans were not built to withstand chronic stress yet many of us live in an allostatic (flight or flight) state most of the time; our nervous systems were designed to run from the occasional bear not battle a global pandemic years on end. Yet, by our own design, the modern world has conditioned us to live with chronic stress. The everquest to achieve, advance, and acquire comes at a price: our health. Some of us have the tools and the disposition to deal; most do not, which is why so many are living with chronic conditions. The good news is we can always improve health outcomes and live better.



LeslieKeough

The following is a list of accessible winter wellbeing rituals to mitigate stress and return to homeostasis. My take on wellbeing draws from experience using modern western science to heal and ancient eastern modalities to live well. Elements of Chinese dualism, represented by the black and white yin/yang symbol signifying



Winter wonderland view from our Poconos house

the two natural, complementary, and contradictory energies present in all forces in the universe - including ourselves, guide my winter wellness routine. When we understand the forces governing a particular season, it makes for a more harmonious way of being when we align our internal energies with the external. Winter in the northeast is a distinctly yin season with following

attributes: Unknown, Night, Passive, Dark, Soft, Negative Charge, Feminine, The Moon, Indirect, Intuition, Quiet, Rounded, Wetness, Flexibility and the like. While weekly decompression activities are necessary for stress reduction year-round, shifting to introspective yin activities in the winter can be especially harmonious and healing. When yin and yang properties are not balanced we burn out or burn up. Winter is an organic opportunity to restore and rebalance. The following rituals can help preserve resources and nourish yin energy:

First, give yourself permission to slow down and turn inside. Use this hibernation season to create and actualize a well-life vision that includes productive rest like baths, meditation, breathing exercises, reading, restorative yoga, journaling, sleeping, eating warm foods, and listening to soothing nature sounds, singing bowls, and gongs. You don't have to go anywhere exotic. You don't have to do anything extreme. Embrace this season of stillness as you are, where you are.

Second, if you choose to practice the rituals below, be totally present. Anchor your awareness on only the task at hand. What do you notice? How does it feel to slow down? How are you breathing? What mind-objects come up? Since we spend most of our day in an 'unconscious autopilot' mode, it's imperative that we schedule mindful minutes and activities to reclaim our attention.

WINTER WELLNESS RITUALS:

- Start your day mindfully by taking some deep breaths, stretching, and setting an intention for the day before leaving bed. Then drink a mug of warm water before consuming anything. (Jumpstarts digestion, melts Ayurvedic "ama" or toxins in the body, and begins the day health focused.)

- Replace your cardio with stretching, restorative yoga, or a meditative walk focusing on the sensations of deep breaths to

keep the mental chatter at bay.

- Ditch the salad and eat warm meals instead. (Think soups, stews, cooked veggies, etc.)

- Pause and be grateful for something each time you feel the sun.

- Read up on a new idea or learn a new skill to stimulate fresh synaptic connections.

- Say NO to invites and prioritize naps or sleeping in on the weekends.

Improve sleep hygiene by reducing alcohol and coffee throughout the day while increasing water, teas, and juices (replacing espresso with MUDWTR 2 years ago has been a game changer for me); replacing screen-time an hour before bed with a bath or book (superb bathing ritual treats at Dolly Moo); and consciously releasing stressful scenarios from the day before falling asleep ("Your brain is like Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positive ones - even though most of your experiences are probably neutral or positive." Rick Hanson PH.D. & Richard Mendius MD, Buddha's Brain (Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2009) Ask someone to support you in your winter wellness goals and celebrate the wins together.

Montclair treasure Teddy McKee once told me, "you can't rush results. Ideas need time to percolate." This winter, practice self compassion and give yourself permission to percolate. Allow your body, mind, and spirit to rest so the environment may nurture you. Namaste ■



Winter walk in Englewood Reserve in Dayton, OH over winter break



Zach Zembower in a private restorative yoga session with Leslie

Leslie Keough, Wellness Leader and Meditate Montclair founder has lived in Montclair Center with her two kids Enzo, 10, and Stella, 5, since 2015. Leslie has worked in the wellness space, instructing and consulting nationally since 2003. In 2020, she took her company online and is now completing her NBHWC Wellness Coaching certification.

RICHARD S. BEAM

CPA, P.C. | Accounting & Financial Services

SECURITIES AND INVESTMENT ADVISORY SERVICES OFFERED THROUGH WOODBURY FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC. AND RICHARD S. BEAM CPA, P.C. ARE UNAFFILIATED

Combining Tax Services and Financial Planning

15 Bloomfield Avenue / Verona, New Jersey 07044
Tel: 973-239-5140 / www.beamcpa.com