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**WINTER 2014 \\ ISSUE 47** 





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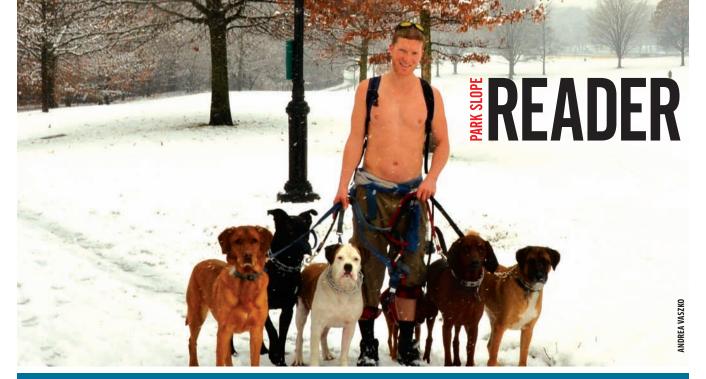
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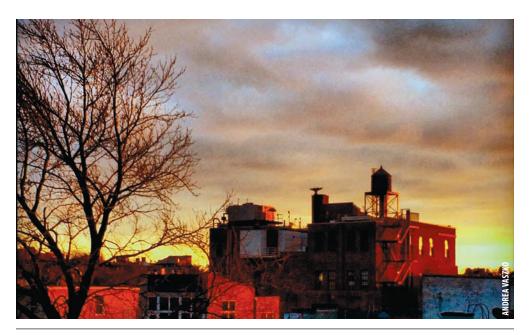
#### YOGA & THE LOWER BACK

by Joan Arnold

Winter weather can do a number on our bodies. In this issue, our resident yoga expert discusses lower back health and how yoga can help.



PICK UP THE READER AT UNION MARKET, THE TEA LOUNGE, AND MANY MORE LOCATIONS



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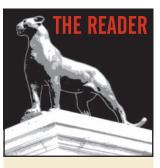












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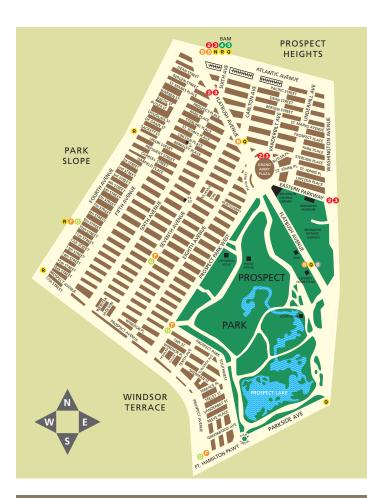
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# A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE THINGS



# **Brooklyn's Winter Wonderland**

It's a new year—get out and try something new! The weather might be brisk, but here are a few things that are worth the braving the chill. Compiled By Florence Wang

## **Sharpen Your Skates**

Lakeside at Prospect Park

The area formerly known as Wollman Rink has received a major facelift over the past few seasons. I have been lamenting the lack of an open-air ice rink, but the renovations are proving worth the wait. The unremarkable skating rink and parking lot area have been transformed into the Lakeside Complex at Prospect Park. The activity center features two new rinks that will be open year-round for ice and roller skating. One enclosed rink will be covered by a green roof which is comprised of soil ranging from six to eighteen inches deep, allowing for shrubs and small trees to take root-adding to the park's green landscape. In addition to skating, the area also provides three additional acres of park space, a new dock for pedal boats, and a terraced

walk overlooking the water. The Parks Department promises that it will offer something for everyone all throughout the year. The new project is intended to harken back to the park's original design, which was disrupted by the skating rink and accompanying parking lot in 1960. It will provide more openness for the borough that so appreciates its green space.

# Park Slope's "Welcome Oasis"

The Bell House - 149 Seventh Street

This past fall the Bell House celebrated its five-year anniversary. This Park Slope premiere venue offers a more indie alternative to the Barclay's Center. They host decidedly NYC-centric events such as Trivia Nights with NY1 Anchor Pat Keirnan, Point Break Live, and NPR's Moth Storyslam. It's also the perfect venue to see indie bands

such as Yo La Tengo, Bob Mould, and Dean Wareham. Their schedule of events is compelling and diverse, and always offers something decidedly unique. Entering the large open bar area that acts as the Bell House entry, you immediate feel welcome by the open space and the friendly staff. Particularly on a cold winter night, it offers home-grown warmth that can only be found in an independent venue. The ticket prices are so reasonable it almost seems silly not to try something new. The fact that it's right around the corner also means you won't have to wait on that cold subway platform during the wee hours of the night in order to get home. Check out their website thebellhouseny.com for a complete listing of upcoming shows and events.

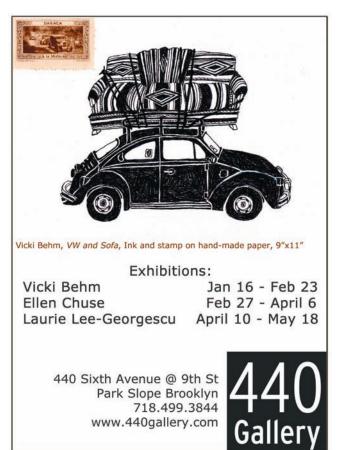


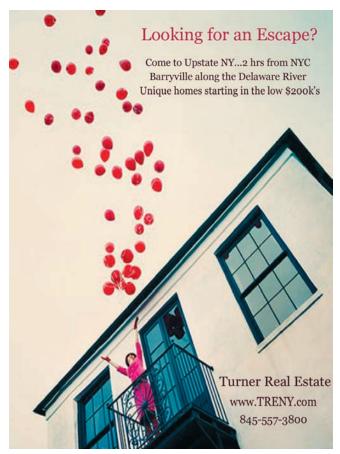
# Warm, Soothing Sounds

The National: Trouble Will Find Me (4AD)

Hailing from Ditmas Park, the Brooklyn band The National released their sixth album. If you're unfamiliar with the band, Trouble Will Find Me is the perfect introduction to their sound. Moody and highly orchestrated music creates the ideal backdrop for Matt Berringer's baritone lyrics of insecurity and longing. It's contemplative music, lyrical and full of poetry. Opening track, "I Should Live in Salt," starts quietly with a pleading that begs to be heard as more than mere background music. The song slowly builds a swell as the entire band comes together finding its full voice. Later in, "Sea Of Love," takes this sound and mixes it with a catchy pop that becomes uplifting. Directly in the middle of the album "Graceless" picks up like a moving freight train. There are no throw away songs on the album. As a whole, Trouble Will Find Me is rich, warm and complex, like a good cup of coffee.







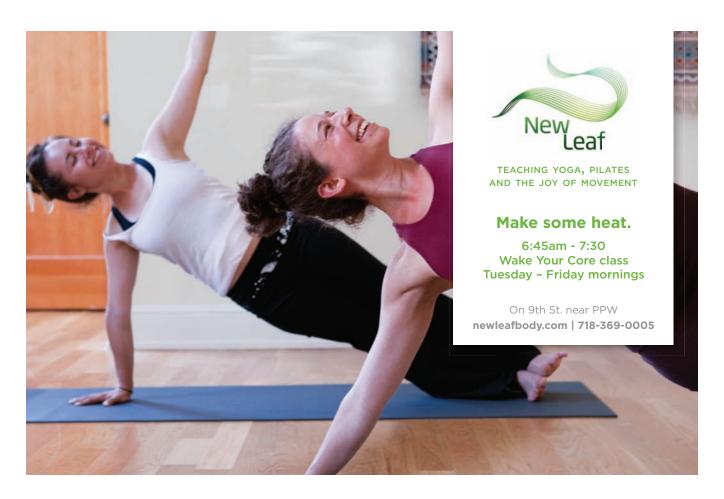


#### **Crossing the Gowanus**

Red Hook, Brooklyn

Our neighbors to the east were hit extremely hard by Hurricane Sandy last year, and some long-standing businesses were forced to shutter for good. The ones that were able to rebuild and reopen did so at enormous cost. It's a true pity, because the neighborhood is ripe with personality and was really coming into its own before the storm. Although Red Hook is on the rebound, this past summer didn't bring the traffic necessary for it to fully bounce back. It's time to rediscover this sweet and eclectic little hamlet. Indulge your sweet tooth with a delicious confection from Baked (359 Van Brunt Street) or with a Steve's Authentic Key Lime Pie (204 Van Dyke Street). Check out what's on display at the Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition (499 Van Brunt Street) and then take in the unrivaled view of the Statue of Liberty from the Fairway parking lot. Warm yourself with a libation at Sunny's Bar (253 Conover Street) and photograph yourself in front the iconic Ye Nautical Garage next door-you can't miss it, it's the one with the fishing tackle displayed on the outside. That short list only scratches the surface; Red Hook is filled with galleries, restaurants, and shops all in a one-of-a-kind setting. There's so much to see and do, and it's all within an easy walk. •







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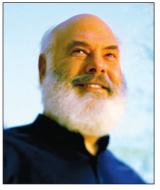
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# Ask Dr. Weil

O: New Year's Resolution: Best Food to Lose? I'm resolved to make the coming year a healthy one. If I should give up one food, what would it be? And alternatively, if I should add one food to my diet, what would you suggest?



A: Congratulations on making such a sensible resolution. My top recommendation for a food you should give up is sweetened drinks of all kinds. Although these beverages are not the only contributor to the obesity epidemic in the United States, they are a major source of the average American intake of an unhealthy amount of sugar, 355 calories per person per day. That amounts to twenty-two teaspoons of sugar daily. A single 12-ounce soda contains about 130 calories and the equivalent of eight teaspoons of sugar. The high glycemic load of these sugary drinks provokes insulin resistance in many people, which underlies much of the obesity in our society and raises risks of Type 2 Diabetes. In addition to soda, I'm concerned about sweetened tea and coffee, energy drinks, and fruit juices.

Recent research also indicates that sugar, rather than saturated fat, is the real culprit in our high rates of cardiovascular disease. An analysis of data from a longrunning study of nearly 43,000 male health professionals ages 40 to 75, found that over 22 years, 3,683 of the men had heart attacks and showed that those who drank sweetened beverages most often were 20 percent more likely to have had a heart attack than the men who drank the fewest sugary drinks. The research team calculated that drinking one sugarsweetened beverage a day was associated with a 19 percent increase in the relative risk of cardiovascular disease.

My suggestion for the one food to add to your diet is olive oil, which has the highest percentage of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat of any edible oil. Quality olive oil also contains abundant antioxidants, substances associated with lower risks of cardiovascular disease and cancer, and a potent

anti-inflammatory component. And, of course, quality olive has a very appealing taste; it has helped many Americans realize that there is no need to sacrifice sensory pleasure in pursuit of healthy eating.

Top quality extra-virgin olive oil (which I believe should be used for all cooking, not just bread-dipping and saladdrizzling) has a natural peppery finish and a deep, "green" aroma of grass and artichoke. Such oils are not cheap, because they rely on careful cultivation that preserves olive oil's legendary taste and health benefits. However, the reward is more than worth it.



When buying olive oil, I suggest choosing small bottles from a reputable company or source. Definitely look for the peppery bite characteristic of high quality products. Certification as organic can also be a sign of quality. If you can find them, choose imported oils with International Olive Oil Council (IOOC) certification on the label. (The California Olive Oil Council [COOC] certifies purity of oil produced in California.)

I wish you well with your year of healthy living. I hope it turns into a lifetime of good health.

Andrew Weil, M.D.

Source Frank B. Hu et al, "Sweetened Beverage Consumption, Incident Coronary Heart Disease and Biomarkers of Risk in Men," Circulation, doi: 10.1161/?CIRCULATIONAHA.111.067017

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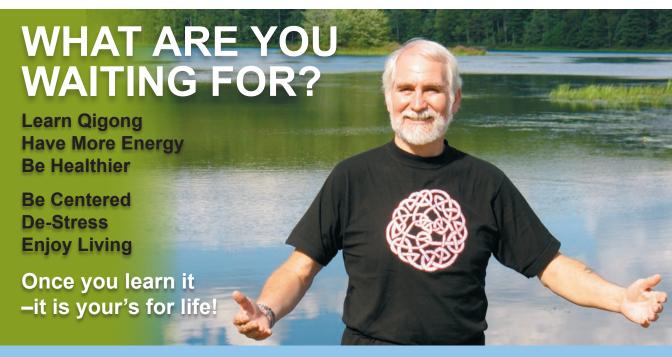
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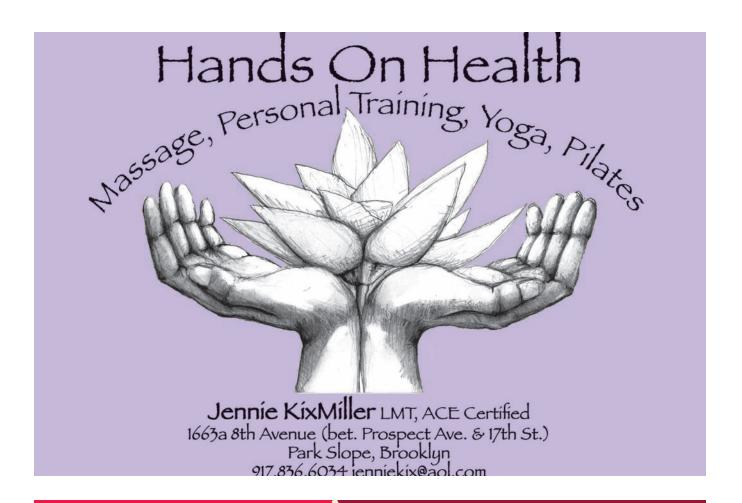




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## READER VOICES

# LET'S NOT SING By Veronica Carnero THE WINTER BLUES

Tf you were to leave New York right now and go to the coun-Ltry, chances are you would not see many animals. The image that comes to mind year after year: A bear climbing into her cave and not coming out for a few months. She falls into a deep, delicious sleep, otherwise known as hibernation.

We are animals, too. These winter months lend themselves to retreating from the world. As much as we would like to curl up and put up our email vacation response from January to March, most of us live our lives during a day in February as we would in April. We would neglect our commitments to work, family, friends, and school if we decided to "check out" for the winter.

Because our natural world is withdrawing, our own natural rhythms can get a bit confused. The trick is finding the balance between slowing down to honor inner hibernation mode and staying active to avoid succumbing to the winter blues.

This time of year is for reflection and turning inwards. Take a day or two to stay home, make a pot of soup, cuddle up with a book, and have your journal handy. Sleep more and allow your body to recuperate from the constant movement of fall and the holiday season. But mind the extreme. After your ministaycation, meet up with friends for a movie or go out dancing. Try not to pull an all-nighter because your body can't handle it—do a bit and then go home. Moderation is key!

Our lives usually don't slow down during this time of year, and a big reason why we get sick is because we are pushing ourselves to (again!) accomplish the same things we did in April. It's colder

and therefore our bodies have a harder time fighting off viruses and our immunity weakens. So maybe the after-work happy hours can be replaced with after-work yoga classes or a trip to the museum. Instead of bottle of wine with dinner, maybe just half.

Set your Kayak.com trip alert to warm places like Mexico or Florida, and if there is a deal you can't pass up, go away for a couple of days and enjoy some good old fashioned sun and vitamin D. Fill up on this essential vitamin to not only combat weakened immunity but lighten your mood.

As New Yorkers, we are forced to interact with the weather elements head on. As the rest of the country defrosts their car windows before they hit the road, we are doing the check list of "gloves, scarf, hat, maybe face mask today???" We incur a lot of stress with our hustle and bustle, especially our commuting reality. When our bodies can't handle stress anymore, we get sick. I like to make an upbeat/hip-hop/disco playlist for the beginning of the day to get me going and a soothing classical playlist for the ride home.

We have opened it up to our Park Slope Reader community by asking, "What is one thing you do to stay healthy in the winter?" My biggest tip: take time for yourself, but don't fall into a routine of isolation. By being around other people, they will usually lift up your spirits. Staying creative is an important remedy the winter blues, and one these 'tricks' may be the missing link to keep you healthy and happy! Enjoy!



lamp up my use of spices and hot sauces. I have no dog-eared scientific study under my arm to back me up, but it makes sense to me to keep the internal body temperature up by using any means available. I also try to go to a sauna once a week and I wear a hat around the house. Oh, and I wash my hands more. And I kiss people less... just a little less. — Melanie H.

AVOID CHILDREN. Just kidding!! Take vitamin D, get exercise, and wash my hands often. — Michael H.



Take apple cider vinegar baths and do wheat grass shots! — Sue K.

Wear lots of layers, wear a hat, take baths, intake lots of good oils for my dry skin, put lots of oil on my dry skin, eat a bit more hearty, enjoy resting/hibernation, take extra vitamin D supplements, try to focus on creative projects and art I can do at home, stretch, be romantic! — Rebecca C.

sleep longer in the winter. Also, humidifier is imperative. And cook with lots of garlic! — Jessy S.





Rooibos tea saves me in the winter. It has about 5 times more antioxidants than green tea. — Diana A.

Since I can not stand running in the cold I take my quest for wellness inside in colder months and practice yoga. My favorite local studio is Bend & Bloom where I take advanced classes to get my heart rate up and build strength or, if I'm not up for a vigorous flow, I return to Basics where they focus on alignment and the foundational poses. For mental health and a burst of energy I also love their Restorative class on Sunday night! Yoga is a great way to keep fit and feel amazing through the creaky, cold months and Park Slope has tons of yoga options. — Brigitte M.



Wear bright warming colors, snuggle a lot, wear hats, avoid raw vegetables. — Meghan K.

Drink lots of homemade broths. — Ronna W.



**Take Echinacea daily.** — Lois A.

I think it's important to exercise even though it's so difficult to get out of the apartment. I can't forget to physically take care of my body because it's so much easier to stay home and stuff my face with food. — Adam S.

Keep my hands clean, lots of vitamin C, flu shot and crossing my fingers for luck! — Donna P.

I purchase and refill liter and a half bottles of water. When it's cold outside, I never feel the urge to drink; having a hottle that shows me my allotted amount for the day gives me the motivation to stay hydrated. — Nicole C.



Large wheat grass shot every day. And plenty of red wine;) Seriously tho: healthy cocktail... Mix SWITCHEL with vodka or tequila, lots of fresh lime juice...voila!... healthy cocktail! — Rachael O.



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# TO YOUR HEALTH

Young children are cute and lovable; they afford you a sense of purpose and meaning in addition to frequent bouts of heart-exploding joy. So I heartily recommend having one, or two, or hell, even three . . . but not if you want to avoid vomit and the runs and snot and fever and sores and other revolting things that I'm too demure to mention in print.

hen I had my first baby, known in these parts as Primo, I was naïve enough to think that good hygiene could ensure good health. The mere recollection of how neurotic I was exhausts me now. No one held newborn Primo without scrubbing up like they were about to enter an OR, and if I heard a sniffle from a visitor, I mandated the use of a surgical mask. That is, by the way, not an exaggeration. Before the baby was born, my cardiologist father equipped me with a handsome supply of surgical masks and gloves, the same kind he and my mother required visitors to wear when I was an infant. That such measures will necessitate therapy later in life is obvious. That they are far from foolproof-that came as a surprise.

To be fair, my germophobic strategy worked as long as I kept it up; Primo sailed through his first nine months without even a hint of congestion. But such hyper-vigilance takes a terrific amount of energy and is nearly

impossible to maintain once a baby becomes mobile. Once Primo started crawling, I realized immediately I was fighting a losing battle.

I'd turn around and see Primo's formerly pristine hands plunged into a mound of "dirt" in the playground—not good, clean country dirt but city dirt, which doesn't contain soil so much as ash peppered liberally with glass shards, cigarette butts, dog feces, and decomposing rat remains—and I'd watch, horrified, as he lifted the handful of hazardous waste to his mouth. Then, of course, there was his predilection for open-mouth kissing; the objects of his affection were invariably toddlers with pendulous globs of snot hanging out of their noses or hacking coughs that promised pertussis.



So, the bubble burst, and the germs flooded in. Thanks to my early neuroses, Primo's immune system was totally unpracticed, having led a life of leisure, eating bonbons on chaise lounges instead of battling bacteria. Consequently, my son got roseola, rotavirus, asthma, allergies, strep throat, ear infections, ER-worthy bouts of croup, and an endless parade of colds and stomach bugs.

The kid even got scarlet fever. I bet you didn't know that was still around. I, for one, thought it had been eradicated shortly after Little Women was written, along with the consumption. Turns out, scarlet fever is still alive and kicking, though significantly less terrifying now that you can treat it with antibiotics. When scarlet fever hit, I realized all my efforts to protect my little one from contagion were laughable.

Which is why with baby number two, Seconda, I gave up my neuroses cold turkey. I wasn't some renegade hygiene hypothesizer—didn'thostchicken

pox parties or anything. I just did away with the surgical masks and abstained from antibacterial gel. It was a good thing, too. Seconda fared considerably better than her Bubble Boy brother had in his early years. She was a hardy little sucker; her immune system wore steel-toed Doc Martens and carried brass knuckles.

Of course, even healthy kids get sick from time to time, particularly during cold and flu season, no matter how diligent you are with your vaccinations and your Flintstone vitamins. My second time around, I accepted this with aplomb. The coughs and colds and mysterious twenty-four-hour fevers, I learned to tolerate. What I could not abide was the Family-Wide Stomach Flu.

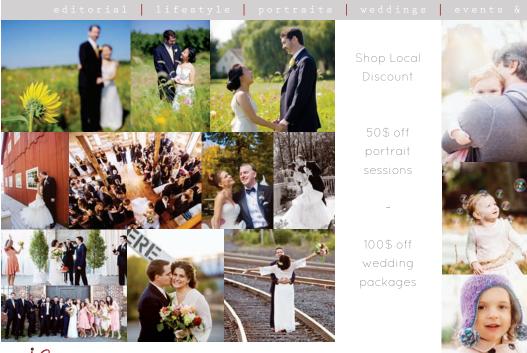
With two kids under three years of age, the stomach bug became



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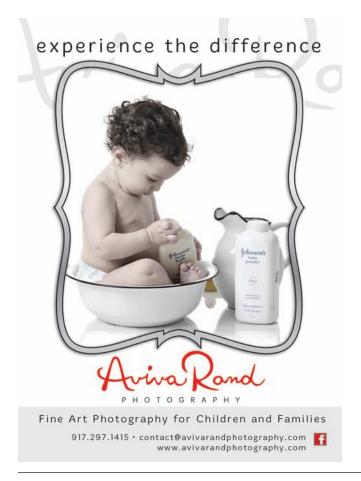
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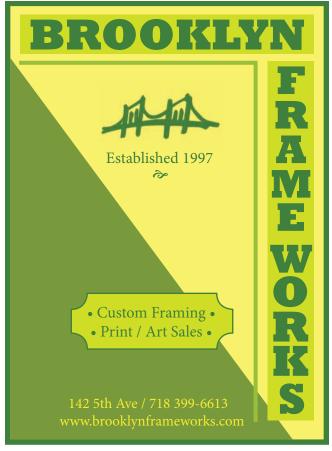




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a frequent visitor in our home, especially between October and March. If we were lucky, the stomach virus that hit would have a long incubation period that prevented us from all getting sick simultaneously. We were not always lucky, though.

Taking care of a kid with the stomach flu is no fun, and taking care of two is even less fun, but the least fun thing is taking care of them while you yourself have the flu. The misery entailed in such an endeavor cannot possibly be described in English (possibly in German, but I don't speak that language). Only those who've experienced it firsthand can understand how unpleasant it is to have one child barfing on the carpet at the exact moment the other one cries out, "Uh oh! I need to change my pants!" while your own stomach begins to have a not-so-great feeling. I have been there, and I can attest that it's a roller coaster that only goes down.

You know how people like to say that having three kids isn't that much harder than having two? This is, clearly, a subject open to debate, but I think it's fairly safe to assert that as far as caring for puking, pants-crapping kids are concerned, three is harder than two. So, when I had my third child, I decided that while I could be laissez-faire and low-key about germs in general—"Sure, you can get in the sandbox!" "Oh, go ahead and eat it; the floor's not that dirty."—protocol would change as soon as someone hurled.

At the first gag, I put the place on lockdown; I dust off the squirt bottle of Purell and break out the medical-grade disinfectant wipes. These, like the surgical masks, were gifted to me by my father and they come in handy when there's a highly contagious virus afoot. Breathing in the fumes emitted by these wipes may knock you unconscious, but they take no germs prisoner.

First, I scour all the surfaces the afflicted child has touched, all the while dousing whoever ambles by with Purell. Then, I turn my attention to making sure the sick-o stay away from the other

"Let's get you tucked in bed, nice and cozy," I purr to my greenishhued progeny.

"But I want to watch TV on the couch," the sick-o protests.

"Oh no, don't wear yourself out on the couch," I reply persuasively, "Here, let me give you the iPad. It'll be all yours."

If the child appears in the kitchen, expressing hunger or thirst, I'll gently take them by the sleeve, averting my face, and guide them back to their warm, cozy, secure convalescence area where all their needs will be attended to. Then I use an industrial-strength wipe to disinfect the doorknob.

In this way, I quarantine my children, in the gentlest possible fashion.

"Mom," my convalescing son observed a few weeks ago when I intercepted a cookie he was trying to hand to his baby sister, "Do you know what you are?"

I didn't, of course, but I was dying to find out.

"You're a sick-ist," he said. Even woozy and nauseous, the kid

"You'll thank me when you don't have to fight your sister for the toilet later," I told him. "And I don't even use the surgical masks anymore. If you ask me, that's progress."

You can read more of Nicole's misadventures in Mommyland, and beyond, in her forthcoming memoir Now I See You (June 2014, St. Martin's Press) and on her blog amomamok.com.



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# KIDS AND THE HARSHER RFALITIFS OF LIFE



#### Dear Hypocrite,

The other day I'm walking down Seventh Avenue with my three-year-old son and I notice there's a panhandler in front of the Citibank. My son stops to talk to everyone so, although it's completely out of our way, I cross the street to avoid the woman sitting on the sidewalk holding a cardboard sign. I don't want to get in a discussion with him about how some people don't have places to live or enough food to eat. I know we'll have to go there eventually, but I want to put it off for as long as possible.

My question is this: When and what do you tell your kid about the harsher realities of life? Our bird Lucky died last week. I told my son that Lucky went to visit her sister in Brazil. I'm thinking you're going to tell me it's wrong to lie but, I thought he'd really lose it if I told him the truth.

Tracey in Gowanus

By Melanie Hoopes | Art by Leah Lin

#### Dear Tracey,

I'm sorry to hear about your bird. It's hard to lose a pet, but you're right, I'm a big fan of talking about death with kids at an early age, so in my opinion you blew an opportunity. You think your son might have "lost it", but he might not have. He might have pondered Lucky's death for a few seconds and then asked to play Fruit Ninja. There will be countless other opportunities to let him in on life's little inevitability, of course. Why not go out and buy a goldfish this afternoon? In a matter of months you'll have another chance to have that conversation you just dodged.

I don't know if you read the last issue of *Park Slope* Reader, but I moved out of the city. One of the things I miss most about living in Brooklyn is being around all different types of people behaving in all different ways. Walking home from the store, my kids and I would see someone or something that would initiate a discussion about why people do the things they do or live the way they live. Here in the suburbs, we still have occasional conversations around social issues, but they are spawned from news heard on the radio or seen on TV. While I don't miss stepping over the dog/human shit on my block, I do miss the intensity and diversity of life that a dense population brings. And yes, I miss the takeout, too.

So to answer your questions: When do you tell your kid about the dark side? My answer is when they ask. And what do you tell them? It depends. I completely get that for a three-year-old the idea of someone being hungry or homeless is very scary. But kids are capable of understanding that bad things happen: Sometimes it rains the whole weekend, sometimes you don't get the donut you want, sometimes your toy breaks the day you got it. The key to addressing the heavy issues is to keep it simple. With my kids, I give a short introduction (topics recently covered: Why people do drugs, sexual abuse, the difference between a Catholic and a Protestant) and then let them ask questions. My son will ask questions rapid fire until he's satisfied. My daughter will ask a few and then, in a day or two, a few more. When all are answered, ask a few of your own. In the case of the woman with the sign, ask your son how he thinks she ended up on the street. Help him create the story. It doesn't have to be realistic-there can be dinosaurs and aliens involved. Then ask him how you both could help the person. You certainly could write a check to New York City Food Bank. Your son can put on the stamp and draw a picture and sign his name. It's really important to teach our kids empathy and compassion. Get started on this as early as you can. I'm telling you, go buy that fish.

When he gets older, you can bring up the real factors that cause someone to have to ask for money on the street. You can discuss the lack of affordable housing, mental illness, unemployment, or healthcare costs. What fun! And then if your kid is so inclined, enable him to act. The two of you can volunteer at a shelter, serve food at CHiPs, or collect coats when the weather



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turns. These activities are the antidote to self-absorption for both kids and adults.

I have a friend named Ben who has a kid and lives in Park Slope. He told me this story recently and I asked him to write it up so I could share it with you.

I was on the F train with my kid. She's eight, and we were on our way to Bryant Park to go iceskating. My kid looked adorable. She was wearing a matching glove and hat set with stripes, and she had the skates she got for Christmas slung over her shoulder. It was early in the morning and she was snuggled up against me. All was good.

And then: "Excuse me Ladies and Gentlemen, pardon for the interruption. I am homeless—" Now, I work in the city so I hear this every day and my kid is a city kid and she's no doubt heard it dozens of times herself. When she was little I'd dig for a couple quarters and let her put them in the cup. Since she's older and we've had some discussions about how it's better to give to organizations than to individuals, this particular day we both gazed downward and waited for the person to pass. But as he passed, we saw that he had no shoes. His feet were in plastic bags with rubber bands to keep them on. My daughter's eyes went from the bags to me and then back to the bags. She then tugged on my sleeve. "Daddy," she said, "give him your wallet."

I did not hand over my wallet. My daughter begged me but I kept my eyes down and told her quietly that after ice skating we would make a donation to New York Cares or somewhere that helps the homeless. But at that moment, it was not enough for my daughter. She insisted that we get off the train and go home. It was unfair that she had three pairs of sneakers, one pair of boots, a pair of dress shoes, and a pair of ice skates while

that man had none. We were going home and collecting all the shoes we didn't need and donating them to a place that would help people like the man on the train.

I am a pretty strict parent. My girls have to practice the piano for a half hour everyday. They have chores and must write thank you notes. But I felt at that moment forcing my daughter to go iceskating was something I just couldn't stomach. She was upset and knew what she could do to make herself feel better, and I thought that if I manipulated her into going skating she might learn to stifle her impulses. I might sound like I had it all figured out, but believe me, this moment was agonizing. The shoeless man was long gone, but my daughter was still hysterical and I was completely flummoxed. At the next stop, I followed her off the train and we boarded the Brooklyn-bound one that had just pulled up.

At home, we went through every closet and came up with six pairs to donate. Then we went to our neighbors and friends that lived close by. We gathered forty-two pairs of shoes that day and dropped them off at Housing Works. We took the children's shoes to the Red Hook Community Center.

That was a couple of weeks ago. Since then, we've talked about volunteering to help others in different ways. I'm not sure what we'll do next, but that man on the train definitely moved us act instead of just think. I'm so thankful I didn't get in my daughter's way that morning. She taught me a lot.

Tracey in Gowanus, get ready. The great, wild world of parenting an older kid awaits you. Just remember, you're not the only one that will be doing the teaching. Stay open to what your kid feels strongly about, and like Ben, you'll be a better parent and person for it.

Wash your hands. Mind your manners. See you next time. •

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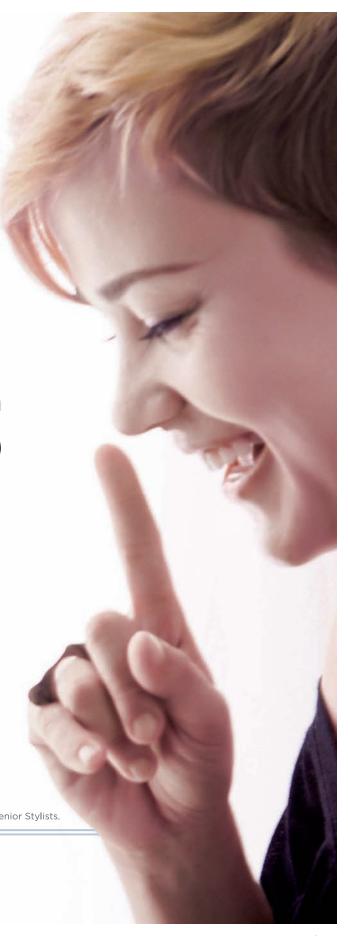


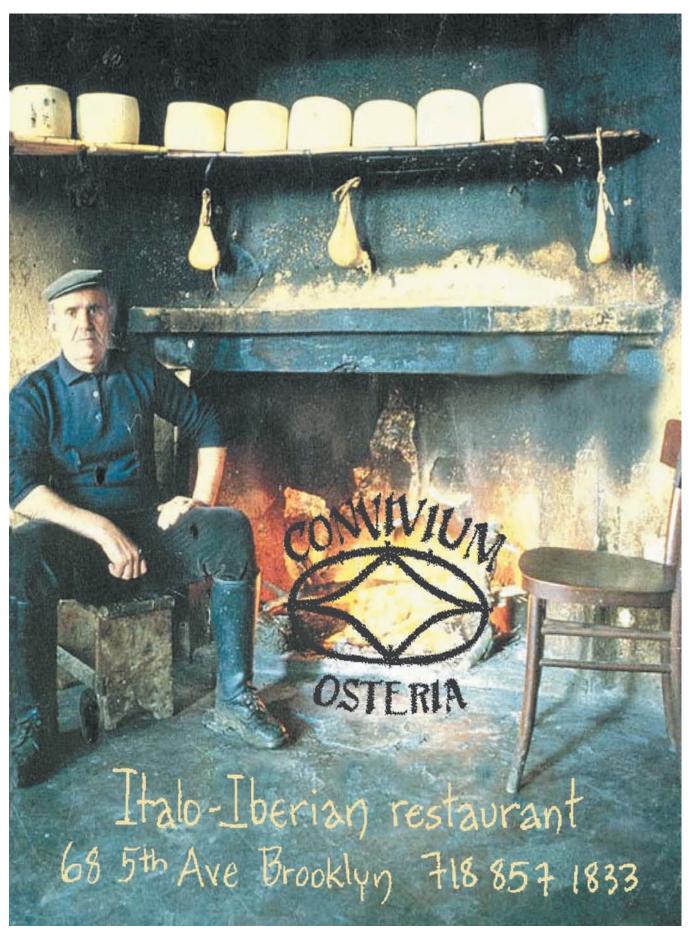
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#### **BACK TO THE URBAN EARTH MOVEMENT**

ecently, the long-awaited Whole Foods finally opened its Gowanus location (214 3rd Street). This behemoth of a store has taken care to honor its new Brooklyn home by stocking its shelves with products sourced locally from around the borough. Highlights include a takeout noodle shop by Smorgasburg fave Yuji Ramen, a rooftop bar serving up local brews and bites, and a rooftop greenhouse which, through a collaboration with New York's premier rooftop greenhouse company Gotham Greens, supplies some of the food found in its produce section. Gotham Greens has been supplying the other Whole Foods locations in the city since opening their flagship farm in Greenpoint in 2011, so they were a natural fit for the rooftop project. Co-founders Viraj Puri and Eric Haley, as well as Greenhouse Director Jennifer Nelkin, created a technologically-advanced controlled environment system that resulted in the ability to provide local, fresh food year-round that will now be applied to the rooftop farm of Whole Foods in Gowanus.

Gotham Green's sophisticated climate control systems create an environment that is not only highly productive, but sustainable and ecologically-friendly too. Sensors throughout the greenhouse monitor factors like temperature, humidity, oxygen, carbon dioxide, and light-levels that then trigger computer-controlled components to create the ideal growing atmosphere, no matter what the weather is like outside. Powered by on-site solar panels, the whole process is surprisingly energy-efficient. They also make use of a closed-loop irrigation system, allowing them to reuse all of the water put into the system and to use twenty times less water, which—when agriculture is the number one use for fresh water—makes a big impact compared to Gotham Green's more traditional counterparts. On top of that, not using chemical pesticides eliminates the risk of run-off to the watershed. With all of this taken into account, Gotham Green's farms have the capability to produce twenty to theiry times greater the harvest per acre than field-based

At the Whole Foods location, the majority of that production will be leafy greens, herbs, and tomatoes. Shoppers can swipe up hyperlocal greens like butter lettuce, spring mix, arugula, and kale, as well as heirloom, cherry, grape, and several other varieties of tomatoes. Of course, all this produce will be organic and GMO-free. While the greenhouse itself will be open to employees only, there will be a viewing area and self-guided tour right outside if you find yourself curious while shopping or drinking over at the bar. If you've heard the recent buzz and have been intrigued by rooftop farming, this will finally be your chance to see it up close and in action.

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#### **AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DISHES**

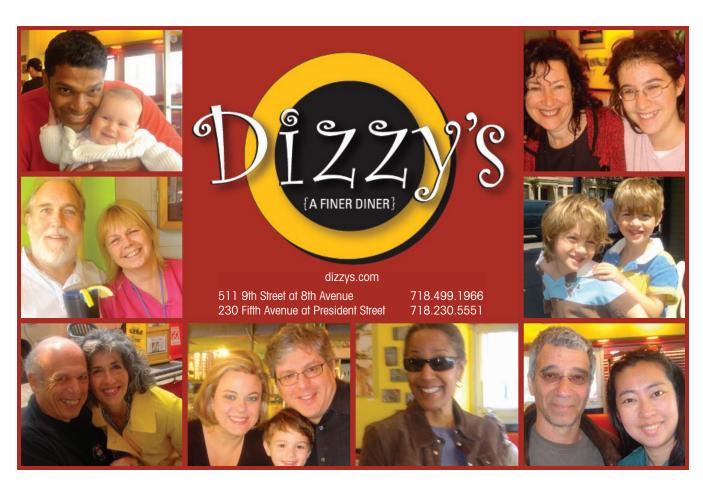
While comitting to a healthier diet may have you turning to your own kitchen more often, sometimes you just need to treat yourself to a night out. Thankfully, Brooklyn has a wide variety of healthy dining options to choose from, and among the most interesting is Prospect Heights newcomer, Mason and Mug (708 Washington Avenue). Opened last November by Itta Werdinger Roth—founder of the popular kosher supper club, The Hester—and Sasha Chack—former Food and Beverage Director of 92Y Tribeca—this kosher pescatarian establishment specializes in small plates inspired by global street food. The cozy, casual space is the perfect neighborhood spot featuring an open kitchen, a few high top wooden tables, a small backyard, chalkboard menus, and a street art-inspired mural displayed on one of the walls. The inviting atmosphere calls out for a quick bite before heading out on the town.

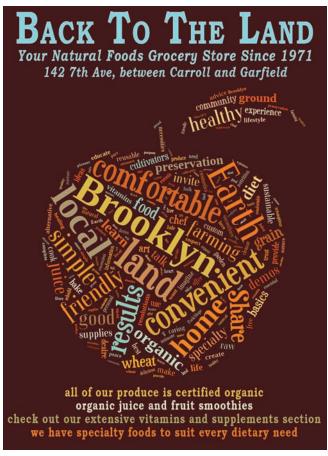
The ever-rotating menu will draw inspiration from Roth and Chack's multicultural upbringing. Roth is Australian and of Eastern European Jewish heritage, and has traveled frequently in Israel while living in New York—a lot of the dishes will have a nod to Chack's extensive traveling in Southeast Asia. At Mason and Mug's opening, these influences came together in dishes like the Daikon Carrot-Ginger Soup with Seaweed and Beech Mushrooms, a banh mi with pickled daikon and carrots, pressed tofu, cilantro, cucumber, and fish sauce, and a fish taco with pickled red cabbage, avocado, and jalapeno-cilantro mayo. Having a variety of small plates available, they hope, will encourage people to try new things and introduce them to new kinds of cuisine.

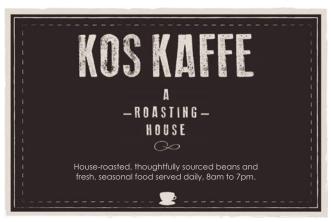
Don't pass over their delicious smoked fish and cheese boards-at \$13 and \$12 respectively, they are some of the best bargains in the borough. The details of the boards will vary slightly, but each offers an array of delights that is difficult to beat. The fish board, at the time of this writing, included Acme's Pastrami Lox, lemon pepper lox, smoked mackerel, and smoked whitefish accompanied by a sharp mustard dill sauce and marble rye (the good stuff), while the cheese board featured aged havarati, Bastardo del Grappa, and Pecorino with sourdough bread and apple pepper preserves. Wash all of this down with something from their short-but-sweet bar menu of local beers and wines. Then, take a peek at their corner of goods to go that includes obscure Israeli snacks, condiments, homemade breads, and groceries—including their pickles that are made in-house. And if you didn't get your fill of lox at dinner, be sure to check out their Lox and Bagel Brunch on Sundays. It's the perfect fit in the neighborhood's expanding dining scene.

#### A RESOLUTION'S HELPING HAND

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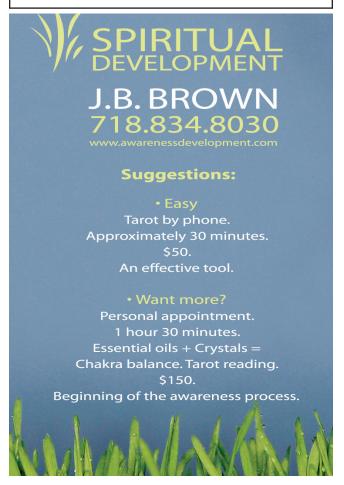


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There are several ways to take advantage of Schonborn's nonclinical one-on-one setting. Her most recommended program is her Six-Month Program, based on the theory that six months is how long it takes to fully develop or break habits. The longer time period allows you to focus on a series of small, gradual changes rather than being thrown a pile of huge, daunting changes that you'd be more likely to give up on. Having more successes—no matter how small—builds confidence and the likelihood that you will stick to your goals as a whole. The program includes two, hour-long sessions a month, email support in between sessions, a monthly wellness newsletter, and any books, handouts, food samples, or self-care products that are deemed helpful. If you don't have room for a six-month commitment, there are several other options to choose from including a three-month program, a One-Week Detox Program, and as little as a Six-Day Stress-Reduction Package. These can be carried out in person or over the phone, but since Schonborn is based in Park Slope, she's likely to be just a few blocks away. If you're unsure which is the best choice for you, or even if this would be a good fit, Schonborn always offers free one-hour consultations, which can be scheduled on her website.

Put simply, Schonborn's philosophy is that whole, natural, real food nourishes us better physically, emotionally, and mentally. If we stop the emphasis on convenience and speed, it can lead to making better food choices by focusing on more green vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and healthy fats, and cutting red meat, processed food, sugar, and dairy as much as possible. Schonborn suggests that the easiest way to stay healthy in the winter is to focus on supporting the immune system by remembering to exercise, catching up on sleep, working to reduce stress, and increasing our intake of leafy vegetables and whole grains. Try to cook at home as much as you can, and remember to focus on making small goals day-by-day to avoid getting discouraged. At this time of year, there will be a million tips thrown your way about how to put your New Year's Resolutions into practice, so if you need guidance, encouragement, and accountability, Jennifer Schonborn can help tailor the best approach to nutrition for you.

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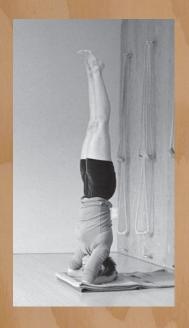
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# LETTING THE ELEPHANT

Story and Photography by Nancy Lippincott

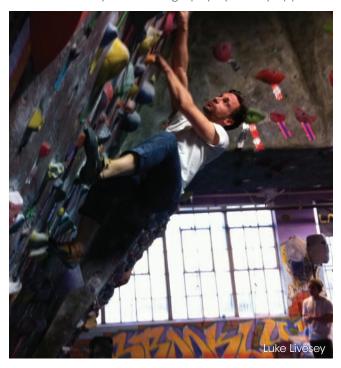
I ull disclosure: towards the end of the fall, my editor assigned me a story on winter wellness. At the time, I was in some of the best shape of my life. I was about to run my third marathon, I was taking care of myself, eating right, going to bed early, and striking a nice balance between work and rest. Then it all fell apart. The day after I ran the Philadelphia marathon, my live-in boyfriend of nine years ended our relationship. There was very little explanation. He was unhappy, we weren't working anymore. It took all of two hours before my life, as I knew it, crumbled in front of me.

Just a few days before, I was obsessing over getting enough sleep, eating right, and abstaining from alcohol for one of the biggest physical challenges of my life, and now here I was, forty-eight hours later on the complete opposite side of the health spectrum. I spent the next couple of weeks couch surfing, living out of the trunk of my car, suffering panic attacks, and vomiting into trash cans in Park Slope. My work was suffering and I had hit an all-time low—in body, mind, and spirit. Perfect time to tackle an article on winter wellness, right?

The funny thing is, it probably was. I was starting from ground zero and had to start building myself back up.

The first leg of my journey landed me in the lobby of Brooklyn Boulders. Not only was I sleep-deprived, but I hadn't eaten in a couple of days. I walked in, and truth be told, I was a little intimidated. First thing in the morning and the place was already buzzing with smiling faces, lean bodies, and Wu Tang Clan thumping over the sound system. But then I was warmly greeted by Luke Livesy, the Curriculum Director and all-around nice guy. We plopped down on the couch and Luke started to share his own story about how he fell in love with the sport. "I started climbing six years ago," explained Luke. "When I came here I started as a guy at the front desk, and then, well, eventually I ended up where I am now." He went on to explain his personal transition from skateboarder in England, to rock climbing aficionado here in Brooklyn.

"So what do you think? Are you ready to try it yourself?" After a twenty-minute crash-course, I'm staring head on at the climbing wall looking skeptically at an alien puzzle of shapes and figures. "You have to figure out your route," he said. So, not unlike a three-year-old, I stood and tried to decipher the shapes and colors, figuring out where to start my ascent, where my next move would take me, and then the next. I thought I had it all figured out. And then...it came to actually doing it. Turns out climbing the wall and looking at it are actually two, very different things. Once you're up there, it's very, very hard to see where to plant your feet. In a bout of self-consciousness, I took my first grip. My plan went out the window. I needed to get to the top, but I was getting tired and terrified immediately. My muscles weren't used to this type of fast-twitch anaerobic challenge. I wanted to give up right away. But meanwhile, I had my buddy below saying, "Hey there Nancy, you have a foothold there on your right. Use that for support!" Is this sounding oddly prophetic? Maybe. Well, in my mind it did. Thanks, Luke. So bit-by-bit, I made my less-thangraceful way to the top with a little guidance from my friend. I was unsure of myself the entire time, ready to fall and embarrass myself,



and each and every time, Luke cheered me on and pushed me to the next hold. Eventually I was inches away from the top. "Go for it, grab the top!" My heart was racing and I had zero faith in my muscles to finish the task. But then I did. And there I was, clinging to the top of the wall like panicked spider monkey. I solved the puzzle and made it!

By the way, when you free-climb, you have to get down. "Luke!" "What DO I DO??!"

"Let Go! I'll help fix your fall!" That was the best thing I've heard in a very long time. I was about to let go and plummet to a mat of undisclosed thickness under me and I was going to just trust a man I met less than an hour ago. I let go.

I didn't bust my ass. I didn't bust anything, actually. It felt really good to let go and just land. Luke explained, "Children have less fear than we do. They don't brace themselves for impact. Adults are the ones that need the most help learning how to fall." True story, brother. I felt like I had been doing a lot of falling lately, and more than anything I was terrified of getting hurt again. Luke, not knowing me more than a half an hour, was ready to make sure that didn't happen.

I highly suggest taking a lesson from the staff here. Whether you're familiar with the sport or a complete newbie, a quick tutorial will unlock a lot of the mystery and alleviate some potential fears. For complete beginners, you will learn the basics of how to move your body, and for more seasoned climbers, there's such a wealth of experience and knowledge that you will be sure to refine your technique and take your game to the next level. But no matter what,







I recommend everyone give the sport a chance, as there's no better feeling than making it to the top.

The next leg of the journey led me to the home of Michael McComiskey, a healer and practitioner of Qi Gong, and who I will forever refer to as the Park Slope Jedi Master. I had nearly zero reference points when it came to Qi Gong, but the very first thing Michael taught me was that you can't pronounce it unless your eyes



are closed. "It's pronounced *chi gong*" Michael said with a chuckle. So I closed my eyes, said *chi gong*, and then there I was, in front of a grinning man with a shirt that read "Keep Calm and Use and The Force."

"Qi, is life force and in Chinese, that is a very rich concept. Qi manifests itself in many ways. It's your aliveness. It's also the level of energy you feel. Your enthusiasm. When your Qi is high, you're optimistic, you're vibrant." (My Qi was most definitely not high as of late. So I was intrigued about how to get it up again.) Qi Gong is thousands of years old started by ancient Chinese shamans, or wu, and was later refined by Buddhist and Taoist monks. Qi Gong is a three-fold concept, and as Michael explained "It's a physical wellness practice that literally produces healthiness. It's a meditative practice, as it's very mind-calming and clearing. And then it's very much a Qi-cultivating practice." The body has a steady stream of electrical currents pulsing through it constantly, and Qi Gong is all about channeling that energy to boost your energy, centeredness, and aliveness.

In fact, Michael referred to his practice as a form of healing, and not so much a fitness-related activity. "The Chinese don't believe in no pain, no gain." My ears perked up. Getting through the marathon was all about working past the pain. It was intense, taxing, even devastating at times. Now, someone was telling me that I could achieve wellness through a peaceful and intuitive approach, working with my body, not against it. It's all built on slow, gentle, repetitive movements. "The idea is that each movement has it's own particular gift. Over the past few thousands of years, people have figured out a lot of different ways to move and reap the benefits from the variations."

While Qi Gong has hundreds of possible movements, we started with one simple exercise. "Relax your knees, tilt your hips forward, round your neck slightly. We are elongating the spine, and creating space for the energy to flow." We then began taking deep, long breaths, inhaling and exhaling slowly as we rocked back and forth from heal to toe, raising our arms with the inhale, lowering them with the exhale. I felt it after the first few repetitions. This was possibly the first time in weeks that I was able to breath fully. Michael explained that when our bodies are full of anxiety and stress, it's nearly impossibly to take a full, deep breath. Having suffered several panic attacks as of late, this simple exercise was offering some much-needed release and relaxation.

Michael left me with a quote: "After the elephant enters the tent, the tent will never be the same again." What it means is that once you begin to stretch your understanding of yourself, you will be inviting lasting change. I have a long way to go in healing, but opening myself up to new people and challenges was the first step.



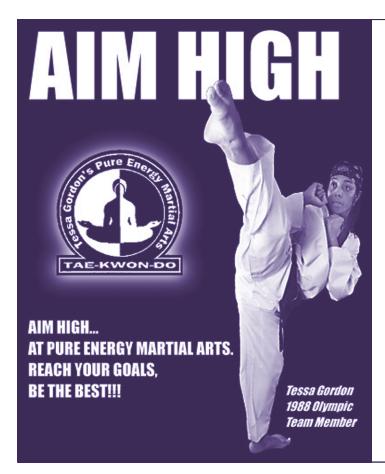
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Most of the services in our wellness guide are holistic in nature, providing benefit to the mind, body, and spirit. For the purposes of our directory, we've listed them according to their most obvious category. We encourage you to reach out and get to know all of our local practitioners, retailers, and service providers to make this winter a healthy, happy, and balanced one.

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# & THE LOWER BACK

By Joan Arnold



Ah, winter, when the shoulders involuntarily hunch against the cold, the muscles take their time to warm up, and the temptation to linger in an overheated apartment overwhelms the urge to get outside—to the gym, for a run in the park, or to a yoga class. As we meet the challenge of cold weather, the body demands that we take time to warm up, pumping blood to the muscles so they become less brittle, more supple, and ready to go. When it's cold, that's especially important for the lower back.

oga offers a wonderfully vocabulary of poses to help us maintain flexibility strength in the spine and torso. In a balanced practice, we move through a range far fuller than we would in daily life. Bending forward—flexing—helps stretch muscles that shorten while we sit, stand, walk, or run, and releases tight zones at the back of the legs, the Arching the hamstrings. spine-extension-lengthens the torso's front and strengthens the back muscles, the short and long fibers that travel from the base of the skull to the tail. As we add twists and side bends and subtle combinations of all these, we explore the beautyand the challenge—of yoga.

Though the practice of asana can solve back problems, it can also hurt. Back pain can afflict yogis of any level. Some beginners have injured themselves and abandoned the practice altogether. And there are adepts who—without realizing it—put undue pressure on the lower back. Understanding the spine's structure and applying some of the Alexander Technique's sensible movement principles can bring a sense of ease within challenge, as well as a powerful, balanced torso.

There are common forms of misuse I see in both the yoga classes I take and those I teach. The suggestions below arise from my observations and solutions for avoiding injury, to help us get the most out of our yoga practice.

#### More than Stretching

Most people associate yoga with flexibility. Since many folks have tight muscles from long days of sitting, yoga can be a welcome respite. But when an area is troubled or injured, students often tell me, "I just need to stretch." That urge is only one part of the picture. Working, then stretching, offers more balance to the back muscles. Though someone who's hurt their lower back may be averse to extending the spine, when done well, spinal extensions are crucial to keeping the back toned and ready for action. A good instructor can help you understand how to do that with clarity.

#### The Dynamic Center

The key to the back's ideal function is distribution of effort. We move courtesy of the muscles, a complex web of fibers that engage

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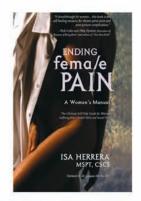
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and release in each action. If you think you are supported by outside muscles, like bricks holding up a building, consider this: The muscles that support us to stand and sit well are smaller and closer to the spine. Called the multifidus, they kick in when the more visible outside muscles—designed for larger gestures as we move through space—don't work overtime.

If the outside shell of muscle is tense, the inner muscles fail to engage, making the spine more compressed and more vulnerable. Studies have shown that, to protect the spine from injury, the multifidus muscles activate before any motion. Before you begin a pose, your spine can enliven to prepare for your next move. When sitting for meditation or pranayama, you energize this lively center with the ongoing pulse of the breath.

The Alexander Technique, a fundamental body management method, offers this idea: If we free the neck and allow the head to poise lightly, the whole spine releases and lengthens in a reflex natural to the body. At the waist—the lumbar spine—the vertebrae are at their thickest and most substantial. Rather than compressing, the lower back can expand.

When we sit or move with a clear fold at the hip joint, the lumbar spine functions as it should: as a center of weight. Then, when we add an arch, a curve or a twist, we have the firm bony support we need. The lumbar spine—the waist—is a power center, meant to conduct energy.

Those who are naturally flexible bend easily in the lower back. Because it can bend, we can overuse it, creating pain or injury. Many yoga students press down into the lower back in a lunge or warrior pose, even leaning back so that the rib cage dips behind the pelvis. This sends the front of the pelvis down toward the leg. Instead, we can guide the whole pelvis upward. It's fine to add a spinal extension—opening the upper body into an arch. But it works better when that upward flow is the cherry on top, expanding through the upper back, distributing the effort rather than repeatedly pressing down onto the lumbar vertebrae.

Rather than a place of compression or pain, the lower back becomes what it's meant to be: A powerful core, a river of nerve impulses, spinal fluid, of breath, of energy.

#### The Whole Torso—Top to Bottom

Identifying the top and bottom of the spine promotes distribution of effort through the whole torso. To locate the top, put your index fingers on each side of your head behind the lower jaw under your ear. This is where the head meets the spine.

At the bottom, where the pelvis meets the legs, are the hip joints. The hip joint is a ball and socket, with that big head of the upper leg—the femur—fitting deeply and neatly into the socket of the pelvis—the acetabulum. The hip joints support our weight in stillness and, as we shift among poses, the thighbone folds, twists, and opens. Its spherical design gives us a varied range of motion. You'll feel the hip joints by putting the sides of your hands at the top of each leg.

Moving at these two joints will lessen the lower back's overwork. Without holding the back stiffly, neither pushing nor pulling, you can envision space between the ears and, from deep within the torso, allow the spine its natural, gentle lengthening. Getting the lumbar spine and hip joint to function according to their job descriptions helps us protect and enhance the lower back's safe functioning so that we can curve and arch with ease.

#### Lift Your Heart, Then Let it Soften

Another common habit that puts pressure on the lower back is lifting the front of the spine—the part we can see—and shortening the back—the part we can't. Counseled to "open the heart" in class,

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Integrative Holistic Approach

I've seen many a yogi walk out of the studio holding that same posture. Any braced position is trouble, and this one puts pressure on your hardworking lower back. When it's over, let that lovely lifted heart soften in the front to let the full dimension of the back open. There's a lot of lung tissue back there. When you see where the lungs are, you'll want to let your breath fill all that available territory—a clearer, more reliable internal support.

#### A Center of Power

Every power move—a karate punch, a soccer kick, a baseball swing—is driven by a whip, a strong twist through the waist. Rather than a place of weakness, the lumbar spine becomes a center of power. When we stand in balance over our feet or sit well on the sit bones, the effort is distributed through the bodies of those thick, supportive vertebrae.

As we walk and breathe easily, the ribs are free and a twist in the waist propels us forward. The swing of the ribs and this natural twisting motion offers an ongoing massage for the lumbar spine and the internal organs. Yogic master BKS Iyengar expressed the contribution of twists to overall health as "squeezing and soaking." As you would squeeze out a cloth to soak it with fresh water, the wring of a twist squeezes out the organs' toxins. As we return, they are refreshed with new blood, lymph, oxygen.

The lower back is but one stop on the sequence of vertebrae from top to bottom. To free it from overwork, we can pause before moving, envision a light poise of the head and let the whole spine release into length. That awakens our lively, flowing center. Then, from deep within the torso, we are supported in stillness or poised for action. •

These Chinese arts have been shown to promote balance, coordination, bone and joint health...and inner balance.

For Class schedule and other info... taichiinparkslope.com

# SALLY RAPPEPORT

#### **ACUPUNCTURE**

#### CHINESE HERBS

Board Certified (NCCAOM)

#### **BODYWORK/BOWEN**

911 Union Street, Grdfl. Brooklyn, NY 11215 718.398.5284 tel/fax sally@sallyrappeport.com www.sallyrappeport.com



#### #1 DOCTOR'S CHOICE FOR **MOLD PREVENTION &**

- FULL HOME INSPECTION: Two certified technicians conduct a Full Home Inspection
- . AIR SAMPLING: Samples are taken from the interior and exterior of your home diagnostic comparison. This will determine if airborne mold spores and contaminants lurk in the air of your home or commercial property.
- SURFACE SAMPLING: Swab samples are taken from suspect mold growths to determine the severity of toxin levels growing in your home.
- INFRARED CAMERAS: Using state of the art Infrared cameras we are able to capture hidden moisture, leaky pipes, cracks in the foundation or roof and/or mold lurking behind the walls of vou home.
- · LAB RESULTS: Independent lab results are analyzed from Air and Surface Samples taken from your home with approximately a 2-3 business day wait period. A full detailed report is then provided detailing the finings of the technicians as well as the infrared images informing the client of any existing moisture and mold concerns, along with mold remediation processes and future prevention steps.

**BROOKLYN** 718-677-MOLD 6 6 5 3

#### **COMMON TOXIC MOLD SYMPTOMS:**

Psoriasis

Runny Nose

- Asthma
- Lung Disease
- Allergies
- Dizziness • Fatigue Rashes
- Red Eyes Miscarriage

#### **MOLD SERVICES:**

- Lab Testing
- NYC HPD Violation Odor Elimination Removal
- Allergy Cleansing
- · Dry Icing, De-Fogging • A/C Fumigation Inspections & Cleaning
- Reports Remediation/
- Sealing & Waterproofing Mold Removal • Organic
- Fumigation. Disinfecting

Materials Available

MANHATTAN

5 TOWNS

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